Turkey in the EU's Enlargement Process: Obstacles and Challenges

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The European Union (EU) has embarked on an ambitious programme of enlargement. In this process, Turkey, as one of the candidates, has a particularly difficult position. This article argues that Turkey's relationship with the Union should not be treated as bilateral, but rather should be placed in the larger framework of EU enlargement. In this context, the main proposition is that Turkey's EU candidacy and its negotiations for accession are affected by four factors: the Copenhagen criteria, the EU's institutional set-up, member state preferences (and related to that, Turkey's population) and public opinion within the EU. The article analyses the interplay between these factors and discusses Turkey's future with the European Union in a multilateral perspective.

At its Nice summit in December 2000, the European Council agreed on a draft outline of institutional reforms to prepare for the next wave of EU enlargement. The European Union included all the candidate countries except Turkey in these projected institutional reforms. Similarly, the European Council initially decided to exclude Turkey from the Convention on the Future of Europe when the issue of participation was discussed at the Council's informal summit at Ghent in October 2001. The reservations over Turkey's participation in the Convention were resolved only at the Laeken Council of December 2001. These developments seem to indicate that the EU is hesitant towards Turkish accession even though it included Turkey in its enlargement process at the Helsinki Council of December 1999. In addition, Turkey currently is the only candidate country with which accession negotiations have not begun yet, while seemingly less qualified candidates such as Bulgaria and Romania are negotiating their accession deals.

This article maintains that Turkey's EU candidacy should be evaluated within the larger framework of enlargement and that Turkish membership will not be determined solely by the country's ability to meet the accession criteria. Turkey's relations with the EU are problematic partly because of EU-specific factors that impact on the Union's approach to Turkey. This is

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Mediterranean Politics, Vol.7, No.2 (Summer 2002), pp.79–95
PUBLISHED BY FRANK CASS, LONDON

not to deny that the enlargement process is guided by objective criteria. The EU's Copenhagen criteria, which all candidate countries must fulfil before accession negotiations commence, are, of course, not negotiable. The objectivity of these criteria was best summarized by the Commissioner responsible for Enlargement, Günter Verheugen, when he said that 'negotiations should proceed on the basis of merit not on the basis of compassion' [Norman, 1999: 6].

Turkey, as a candidate country, is subject to this evaluation in terms of its ability to meet the Copenhagen criteria. That said, Turkey's ability to meet the criteria did not improve significantly between the Luxembourg summit of December 1997 – when it was excluded from the enlargement process – and the Helsinki summit of December 1999, when it was included as a candidate country. Thus, this article proposes that Turkey's ability to meet the Copenhagen criteria is only one major factor influencing its prospects of accession negotiations with the EU. Other EU-specific factors complicate Turkey's position in the enlargement process. These factors include the EU's institutional set-up (and particularly important here is the Europeanization of the Turco-Greek conflict), member state preferences (and related to them the question of Turkey's population) and the European public's attitudes towards Turkish membership.

The article consists of a brief discussion of Turkey's ability to meet the Copenhagen criteria, followed by analysis of the EU's institutional set-up and the impact of Turkish-Greek relations on Turkey's relations with the EU. Finally, it examines the impact of Turkey's population on EU institutions and public opinion towards enlargement in general and towards Turkish membership in particular. By placing Turkish-EU relations in a multilateral analytical framework of EU enlargement in general, the article represents a departure from previous work on the subject [Buzan and Diez, 1999; Kubicek, 1999; Yesilada, 2002; Müftüler-Bac, 1997]. This approach is the main contribution of the article to the debate on EU-Turkish relations.

Turkey's Accession to the European Union: The Copenhagen Criteria

Turkey signed the Ankara Treaty/Association Agreement on 12 September 1963 and applied for full membership of the EC in April 1987. The European Commission responded with its Opinion of 18 December 1989 stating that Turkey's accession was unlikely in the near future. Instead, the Commission proposed the establishment of a customs union for industrial products as envisaged already in the association agreement. In 1995 Turkey became the first country to establish a customs union with the EU in anticipation of subsequent full membership. This is partly why, when the European Union embarked on its latest process of enlargement through the

European Commission's Agenda 2000 and decided to exclude only Turkey from this process at the Luxembourg summit in December 1997, the Turkish public was surprised. Two years later, at its Helsinki summit, the Council finally accepted Turkey's candidacy. On 8 November 2000 the European Commission adopted an Accession Partnership Document for Turkey, which was approved by the Council on 8 March 2001. Turkey then adopted its National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis on 19 March 2001. Despite these positive developments, at present Turkey is the only candidate country with which accession negotiations have still not begun.

To turn to the first factor affecting Turkey's relations with the EU, namely the Copenhagen criteria, Turkey demonstrated its capacity to deal with the pressures of a market economy far better than the Central and Eastern European countries, at least prior to the financial crisis it experienced in 2001. 'Turkey has many of the characteristics of a market economy. It should be able to cope albeit with difficulties, with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union' [European Commission, 1999: 25]. Of course, Turkey has a lower per capita income than existing EU member states do; it has a staggering inflation rate and a budget deficit. All these are obstacles to Turkey's incorporation. It has to 'address the risks and vulnerabilities of the domestic financial sector and seek to reduce government intervention in many areas of the economy' [European Commission, 2001: 45]. Thus, it seems that the effectiveness of Turkey's new economic programme adopted in March 2001 will also determine its capacity to satisfy the economic aspects of the Copenhagen criteria. As for its ability to take on the responsibilities of membership, Turkey's adoption of Community law and the harmonization of its laws since the beginning of the customs union demonstrate that Turkey should not have serious problems here. Thus, it is no coincidence that Turkey's adoption of the acquis is most advanced in these areas. 'Turkey has made substantial preparatory efforts for the implementation of the Accession Partnership' [European Commission, 2001: 95].

According to the Commission progress reports of 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001, the most important obstacle to membership is the political aspect of the Copenhagen criteria. The main problems are structural problems of Turkish democracy, such as the role of military in politics, respect for human rights and the Kurdish question. Thus, when the Helsinki Council decided to elevate Turkey's status to that of candidate country, it specifically stated that accession negotiations would be possible only when Turkey fulfilled the political preconditions. According to the Commission, 'The basic features of a democratic system exist in Turkey, but a number of fundamental issues, such as civilian control over the military, remain to be

effectively addressed. Despite a number of constitutional, legislative and administrative changes, the actual human rights situation as it affects individuals in Turkey needs improvement' [European Commission, 2001: 32]. On 3 October 2001, the Turkish Grand National Assembly adopted 34 amendments to the 1982 Constitution, which included a series of political reforms affecting the death penalty, usage of the 'mother tongue', increased civilian control of political life and freedom of expression. These reforms are in line with Turkey's process of adjustment to the Copenhagen criteria.

To sum up, Turkey had a particularly rocky relationship with the EU up to the Helsinki summit, but the prospect of EU membership now provides an additional incentive for reform. On their own, the legislative changes are not sufficient and need to be enforced as envisaged by the Madrid Council of 1995 and Gothenburg Council of 2001. However, Turkey's ability to meet the Copenhagen criteria did not improve significantly between Luxembourg and Helsinki. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of Turkey's relations with the EU must take into account the EU-specific factors. Thus, a latent proposition of this article is that meeting the Copenhagen criteria is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for accession negotiations to begin, especially for a candidate country such as Turkey. The EU's institutional set-up and member state preferences are important factors determining the nature of EU relations with Turkey. This argument takes us to another factor that impinges on Turkey's relations with the EU: the European Union's decision-making mechanisms and the role that Greece plays in this context.

The EU's Institutional Set-up and the Europeanization of Greco-Turkish Conflict

Since its accession to the EC/EU in 1981, Greece has succeeded in Europeanizing and internationalizing the Turco-Greek conflict. Prior to the Helsinki summit, a German official stated that 'the Greeks have the biggest problems' with Turkey's candidacy [BBC Monitoring, 1999a]. At the Luxembourg summit of the Council in 1997, Greece – along with Germany and Luxembourg – opposed the inclusion of Turkey among the list of candidate countries. When at the 1998 Cardiff summit and 1999 Cologne summit of the Council, the United Kingdom and Germany (which hosted these meetings as current EU President) tried to adopt new proposals for Turkey, Greece was among the most ardent opponents of such moves. In addition, during the preparation of the Commission's Accession Partnership Document for Turkey, 'Greece persuaded its 14 fellow members in the Union to add resolving the division of Cyprus to the list of short-term

actions that they [Turks] must carry out before the start of membership negotiations' [Frantz, 2000: 13].

This article, however, does not argue that Greece on its own was able to prevent the development of an EU consensus towards Turkey and therefore was the main factor complicating Turkey's relations with the EU. One might consider the role of Greece to have been accentuated by the general unwillingness among the EU member states to forge closer ties with Turkey: therefore Greece found fertile ground in which it could use the EU as a platform to develop its foreign policy objectives towards Turkey. It is interesting to note that many other EU members have benefited from Greek opposition to Turkish membership: while opposed to it for reasons of their own, they have been able to 'free ride' on Greek obstruction.[1]

Greece's opposition to Turkish entry has removed the need for the EU itself to respond to Turkish demands and provided a valid excuse in confrontations with the Turkish officials; Brussels could simply use the argument that it was Greece that was blocking further co-operation between the EU and Turkey [Önis, 2001]. None the less, Turkey's relations with Greece were directly relevant to Turkey's relations with the EU since membership of the EU enabled Greece to Europeanize the Turco-Greek conflict through the EU's decision-making mechanisms.

The EU's institutional set-up reflects to some extent the relative power of the various member states. In this respect, there are two important institutional factors that must be noted: the 1966 Luxembourg compromise and the practice of unanimity in EU decision-making relating to external relations. The Luxembourg compromise deserves a special note in this context. Initially adopted to overcome the 1965 'empty chair' crisis between French President Charles de Gaulle and the European Commission, the compromise led to member states acquiring *de facto* veto power over decisions. The protection of national interests against supranational authority via the veto became a legitimate EU practice. The Luxembourg compromise and unanimous voting in the field of external relations decreases the likelihood of collective action and co-operation in the EU. Even though the Single European Act of 1987, the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 and the Treaty of Nice of 2001 relaxed the commitment to that compromise, it remains applicable to EU external relations and thus all aspects of the Union's relations with Turkey.

When Greece became a member of the EC in 1981, it greatly benefited from the Luxembourg compromise and was able to invoke the compromise on various occasions to block EU policy towards Turkey. The unanimity principle is important for two reasons. First, since Turkish membership has to be decided unanimously, any state that has reservations about it may veto the process. Second, if Turkey becomes a member and unanimity remains

effective on certain issues, Turkey would have an instrument with which to block Community legislation in policy areas where it is most vulnerable, such as agriculture. However, following the Nice summit this second option became less of a possibility since the Council decided to expand the use of qualified majority voting and thus when the Nice Treaty comes into effect, over 90 per cent of decisions are expected to be taken that way. This reform was necessary to decrease the probability of stalled decision-making in a Union enlarged to 27 members.

At the supranational level, policy-making towards Turkey gets stuck between the three main organs of the EC: the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. The decision-making procedure is such that the Commission makes a proposal, but the Council of Ministers/Council of the European Union has to adopt the proposals for them to become Community decisions. This sometimes hampers Turkey's relations with the EU in instances when the Commission would like to adopt a package on Turkey but sees it blocked in the Council of Ministers by one or more of the member states. For example, in 1990 the Commission's Matutes Package recommended the release of the 4th Financial Protocol to Turkey, but Greece blocked the proposal in the Council of Ministers.

Similarly, the financial aid packages for Turkey under the auspices of the Customs Union Agreement and the MEDA programme of the EU met with the same fate as the Matutes Package. Thus, even though the Commission adopts a proposal in relation to Turkey, its implementation is not always possible owing to EU policy-making procedures. In addition, since 1993, with the Treaty on European Union (TEU) coming into force, the European Parliament has had a direct influence over Turkey's relations with the EU. The institutional reforms of the 1990s increased the EP's role in EU policy-making with regard to external relations. The Maastricht Treaty has expanded the role of the EP in relations with third countries by requiring the assent of the EP for their accession to the EU, under the assent procedure regulated by Article O of the TEU. The European Parliament has specific reservations about Turkey's democracy and human rights record. Thus, the assent requirement made the EP an important player in Turkish–EU relations.

Up to the Helsinki Council when the EU finally granted Turkey candidacy, EU-Turkish relations were shaped to a great extent by the Union's policy-making mechanisms and the Europeanization of the Turco-Greek conflict through Greek membership of the EU. However, since Turkey is now part of a larger group of candidates, themselves already negotiating accession agreements with the EU, the general concerns that apply to the enlargement and their specific projections into a possible Turkish membership complicate Turkey's relations with the Union. This

brings us to the third factor influencing Turkey's future status *vis-à-vis* the EU: namely, member state preferences and the potential impact of Turkey's population on EU institutions.

Enlarging the European Union: Member State Preferences

In 1997 the EU embarked on its most ambitious enlargement process to date, a process that will nearly double its size in terms of number of member states. There are two important challenges to consider in the EU's enlargement process: member state preferences regarding enlargement in general and certain candidates' accessions in particular, and public support for EU enlargement. These two challenges are not mutually exclusive but rather feed upon each other, for example, Scandinavian support for the Baltic countries' accession to the EU influences Swedish and Danish government preferences and vice versa. In addition, the expansion of the EU increases the urgency of institutional reform as the institutions of the European Union – established in the 1950s when it was only a Community of Six – are seen to be inefficient. Through the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, the member states accepted the necessity of a comprehensive institutional reform that would enable an enlarged Union to continue performing efficiently and effectively.

The divergence among EU member states over what kind of a Union they prefer – federal or inter-governmental – affects their preferences regarding Turkey. Some member states such as the UK are more supportive of Turkish membership because it would hinder the process of political integration. Member states that would like to enhance the EU's political integration are less enthusiastic about Turkish accession owing to the possible negative impact it would have on the speed of European integration. Each member state has different concerns that determine its attitudes towards enlargement in general and to the accession of specific candidates in particular. A member state is most likely to get its preferences reflected in EU policy when its own preferences are close to the 'median' preferences of the other members [Peterson and Jones, 1999: 38-42]. EU member state attitudes towards Turkey are more or less similar with slight variations over some issues, but the most important concern seems to be the impact of Turkey's population on the EU's integration process. This concern over the institutional impact of Turkey's membership in the EU led to the country's exclusion from the institutional reform calculations made at the Nice summit of the European Council in December 2000.

At the summit, the institutional reforms that needed to be introduced prior to EU enlargement were decided, concerning the number of commissioners, the weighting of votes in the Council and the composition

of the European Parliament. In the European Union, the distribution of votes in the Council of Ministers and seats in the European Parliament are based on size of population of the member states. Turkey's population is larger than those of all the member states (and of the candidate countries), except Germany. In Table 1, the post-Nice votes of the members and the candidate countries in the European Council can be seen.

Even though all the other candidate countries were included in the arrangements established through the institutional reforms, future Turkish membership was not included in the calculations. One should note that Turkey has a rapidly increasing population of approximately 71 million, while the second most populous candidate country is Poland with 39 million people – little more than half the Turkish population. According to the EU, Turkey was not included in the Nice projections because it had not begun its accession negotiations yet. The problem that the EU faces over Turkish

TABLE 1

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES ARISING FROM THE NICE SUMMIT

Countries	Votes in the European Council	Number of Commissioners
Germany	29	2 currently, 1 from 2005
UK	29	2 currently, 1 from 2005
France	29	2 currently, 1 from 2005
Italy	29	2 currently, 1 from 2005
Spain	27	2 currently, 1 from 2005
Poland*	27	1
Romania*	15	1
Netherlands	13	1
Greece	12	1
Belgium	12	1
Portugal	12	1
Hungary*	12	1
Czech Rep.*	12	1
Sweden	10	1
Austria	10	1
Bulgaria*	10	1
Denmark	7	1
Finland	7	1
Ireland	7	1
Slovakia*	7	1
Lithuania*	7	1
Latvia*	4	1
Slovenia*	4	1
Estonia*	4	1
Cyprus*	4	1
Luxembourg	4	1
Malta*	3	1

Note: *currently possessing candidate status.

membership is to find a formula to prevent Turkey from dominating the EU institutions owing to its large population. Turkish entry would make it the second largest member state after Germany. Therefore, on top of the burden that enlarging the Union brings in terms of deepening, enlarging to include Turkey further complicates the picture as a result of Turkey's sheer size in population. Even countries that are supportive of enlargement have doubts about Turkey's membership because of its population.

If Turkey becomes a member and the EU decides to adapt the existing formula of population-based voting and representation, then Turkey would have more votes in the Council and more seats in the Parliament than all the other members except Germany. There is a high probability that the Nice Treaty will be the last opportunity for the revision of voting rights in the EU institutions determined by population. This might explain Turkey's exclusion from future planning by the EU: by the time Turkey would be included in EU decision-making processes, its population would not be allowed to determine its representation in the EU. In short, concerns about Turkey's population may explain in part the EU's hesitancy over Turkish membership, which cannot be explained solely by reference to the Copenhagen criteria.

The EU's enlargement process is unprecedented in its scope of expanding the European democratic community to former communist states and to Turkey, previously defined as peripheral to Europe. The European public seems to have diverse feelings towards the enlargement. The September 2000 referendum in which the Danes said no to the Euro and the June 2001 referendum where the Irish people rejected the Nice Treaty seem to indicate that the public is ill at ease with the EU. Therefore, it is important to consider public attitudes towards enlargement in each member state [Anderson, 1998: 571].

There is a two-level game being played in the EU. On the lower level, within each member state, there is a bargaining process between social groups, most of which is beyond the focus of this article. To give an example of the role of domestic social groups in determining EU policy toward Turkey, in Greece ultra-nationalists oppose Turkish membership, more moderate groups favour it, and their relative power within the Greek polity determines overall Greek preferences at the EU bargaining table. On the higher level, that is, the EU level, there is a bargaining process between members over this issue, and again the relative power of the players – in this case the member states – determines EU policy. At the lower level, even when state elites may perceive a greater benefit in granting Turkey candidate status, they may refrain from doing so owing to domestic opposition [Putnam, 1988].

To return to the example of Greece, where bilateral relations with Turkey are an important political matter, popular opinion and political

opposition constrain even a moderate government in its policy choices. On the other hand, policy-makers, as in the case of former foreign minister Theo Pangalos, may capitalize on the issue to boost their own popular support, as in a 'rally-round-the-flag' type of political mobilization. The preferences of domestic groups and their relative power in influencing member state positions towards EU policies [Moravcsik, 1993] need to be taken into account in any analysis of Turkey's position in the enlargement process.

> At the most extreme point, EU enlargement internalizes political space in the EU ... Whether the EU maintains, blurs or moves its boundaries will therefore in the last resort depend on its ability to strike a balance between the benefits and costs involved for each member state [Friis and Murphy, 1999: 217].

The role of public opinion and domestic preferences are important in 'internalizing political space in the EU'. To put it in other words, one needs to assess whether the 'Europeans' – or the French, Germans, Austrians, British, etc. – want 'others' to join. The French presidential elections of April 2002 might be a good indicator of things to come in Europe. Thus, the European public constitutes an important element in setting the boundaries within which governments may act *vis-à-vis* a candidate country such as Turkey, over whose 'Europeanness' the public is sceptical. Indeed, public opinion may be as significant a factor as meeting the Copenhagen criteria in determining the outcome of Turkey's accession prospects. This brings us to the fourth factor affecting Turkey's relations with the EU: the current lack of public support for Turkey's membership. This is important because the public within the member states does influence EU decision-making, especially over matters relating to the external relations of the Union.

Public Opinion

Of all the current candidates, Turkey has the lowest level of support from the European public. Attitudes towards Turkish membership are influenced by the general concerns about enlargement: an influx of foreigners, the loss of structural funds and a loss of resources and revenues. As seen in Tables 2 and 3, there seems to be some correlation between states that oppose enlargement in general and Turkey's inclusion in particular, the most striking case being Austria, with France and Germany following more or less closely. This is interesting given French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's relative enthusiasm for Turkish membership.

TABLE 2

% OF POPULATION IN EACH MEMBER STATES IN FAVOUR OF NEW COUNTRIES JOINING THE EU (AVERAGE SUPPORT FOR THE 15 COUNTRIES AND VARIATION FROM LOWEST TO HIGHEST % SUPPORT)

Country	Average support % Eurobarometer 55 (Fall 2001)	Average support % Eurobarometer 54 (Spring 2001)	Variation
Italy	51	59	–8
Sweden	50	56	–6
Denmark	50	56	–6
Spain	55	58	–3
Luxembourg	43	46	–3
Belgium	44	45	–1
EU15	43	44	–1
Germany	35	36	–1
Greece	70	70	0
Portugal	52	52	0
Finland	45	45	0
France	35	35	0
Austria	33	32	+1
Netherlands	42	40	+2
United Kingdom	35	31	+4
Ireland	59	52	+7

Source: Standard Eurobarometer 55.1, First Results in Sept. 2001 – surveys conducted in Spring 2001, Table 3.6a, and Eurobarometer 54, April 2001, fieldwork Nov.–Dec. 2000, B76.

TABLE 3

EU MEMBER STATE ATTITUDES TOWARDS TURKISH MEMBERSHIP (%)

Country	In Favour	Against
Spain	43	25
Netherlands	42	41
Portugal	41	34
Ireland	39	28
Sweden	37	46
Italy	34	48
Denmark	34	54
United Kingdom	32	34
Belgium	28	59
Finland	27	53
Greece	26	67
Luxembourg	25	65
Germany	24	57
West Germany	25	58
East Germany	23	56
France	21	62
Austria	21	63
EU Total	30	48

Source: Standard Eurobarometer 54, Spring 2001, Table 5.12a, p.B.78.

Fears about an influx of foreigners has an important role to play in shaping public attitudes towards enlargement in general and towards Turkey in particular, for the following reasons relating to fear of an alien culture, that is, xenophobia, and a loss of resources to foreigners. First, public support for enlargement is influenced by concerns about the effects of expansion on the core values of the community that the EU symbolizes. To put it differently, xenophobic tendencies within the European public make them hesitant about enlarging the Union. Closely related to the impact of xenophobic tendencies on expansion of the Union is the issue of racism. Racism and xenophobia are unspoken factors in the EU that complicate Turkey's relations with the Union. A Commission survey on racism of 1997 revealed a high proportion of EU nationals, some nine per cent of all interviewees, who defined themselves as very or quite racist [Eurobarometer, 1997].

In terms of self-definition, the Spanish and Portuguese emerged as the least racist whereas the Austrians, Belgians, Danes and Germans emerged as the most racist. Spain and Portugal are also the two countries that are most strongly in favour of Turkish membership. Interestingly, high proportions in Austria (25 per cent), France (23 per cent) and Belgium (22 per cent) declared that the EU should not enlarge at all when public attitudes towards the nature and speed of enlargement were explored in Eurobarometer number 55 of 2001, whereas larger cohorts in Portugal (41 per cent), Italy (34 per cent), Sweden (31 per cent) and Spain (27 per cent) held the view that the EU should be open to all the candidate countries.

Second, the issue of immigration is a cause of concern in many member states, where it is associated with the fear that enlargement will bring 'outsiders' claiming resources that naturally belong to 'insiders', as well as threaten the norms, values and basic structure of their community [McLaren and Müftüler-Bac, 2001; DeMaster and Le Roy, 2000; Ehin, 2001]. For example, during the Amsterdam Treaty negotiations, Germany wanted to increase the EU's role in co-ordinating immigration policy because it feels greatly threatened by immigration. Germany's insistence on more supranational control over immigration also reflects its attitudes towards Turkey, which traditionally provided the German economy with an influx of migrant workers.

Since immigration is a priority issue for Germany, it is not too far-fetched to claim that Germany has serious reservations about Turkish membership owing to migration issues. According to Eurobarometer number 55 of 2001, 52 per cent of all Germans believe that enlargement would lead to a significant increase in immigration and 77 per cent of this majority group perceive this as an undesirable outcome. Some 33 per cent of those people believe that increased immigration would lead to increased

unemployment and a decrease in wages while 17 per cent fear that crime and illegal drug trafficking would increase.

Similarly, in France 51 per cent of the people interviewed voiced their fears about increased immigration. It was also this sort of fear of an influx of 'alien' cultures that the Freedom Party of Jörg Haider was able to manipulate in the Austrian general elections of October 1999. The general proximity of Austria and Germany to the central and eastern European countries is of course a cause of concern for the public in these countries. This is partly the reason why the commissioner responsible for enlargement, Günter Verheugen, suggested in September 2000 that a referendum should be held in Germany in order to assess the public's attitudes towards enlargement. According to Verheugen, 'the EU should not "decide over the heads of the people [but hear] the valid fears of their citizens". These would include worries about the resulting influx of cheap labour and possible increases in cross-border crime' [Helm, 2000: 12].

This declaration, in turn, caused uproar among EU governments because of the perception that the German public would not endorse enlargement as a result of the effects on immigration and fears relating to foreigners. Austria and Germany suggested a seven-year transition period before opening the EU's labour market completely to the newcomers, and thus adhere to one of the four freedoms on which the Rome Treaty (1957) and the Single European Act (1987) rest. This is reminiscent of the transition periods that were established for the Iberian countries. Hungary was the first candidate to accept this proposal; as foreign minister Janos Mortanyi declared, 'We have to be realistic and take people's fears into consideration' [BBC Monitoring, 2001: 1]. But it would appear to be no coincidence that France, Germany and Austria, where fear of immigration is strongest, also have the weakest public support for enlargement of the Union.

Third, public attitudes towards enlargement are shaped to a great extent by perceptions of the costs of enlargement. This is a central question for the EU public in general: who is going to pay for enlargement? The issue became the central concern behind the Irish people's rejection of the Nice Treaty on 7 June 2001. Ireland is a net beneficiary of EU structural funds, but from 2006 – under the next Community budget – it will most probably change from being a net beneficiary to a net contributor, because it will no longer qualify for support and will have to contribute towards the cost of accession of the new members. On the one hand, existing net contributors – such as Germany, the Netherlands and the UK – are wary of increased financial burdens; on the other hand, net recipients such as Spain, Greece and Portugal are wary of losing their share of EU funds.

Of all the EU members, public opinion in Spain is most favourable towards Turkish membership, closely followed by Portugal. However, Spain and Portugal are the major beneficiaries, along with Italy and Ireland, of the EU's structural funds and Cohesion Fund. Turkish membership of the EU would cause Spain and Portugal to receive less from these funds. So why do the Spanish and Portuguese people express relatively high support for Turkish membership, given their concerns about losing their current share of the structural funds? To this question, one might point out that Spain and Portugal would like to increase the geo-strategic weight of the Mediterranean in the European Union.

The issues discussed above help constitute a multilateral picture of Turkey's relations with the EU; the issues of immigration, racism and distribution of funds affect public support for enlargement in general and this in turn affects Turkish prospects of admission to the Union. With the possible exception of racism (to a limited extent), almost all of these concerns apply to all the current candidates for membership of the European Union. Tables 2, 3 and 4 demonstrate that Turkey is the least preferred candidate even in countries that are supportive of EU enlargement. Spain seems to be the only exception, both supportive of enlargement and of Turkey's inclusion. It is the general reservations and concerns about enlargement and the possible changes in the delicate balance within the EU that are affecting Turkey's prospects in the enlargement process as well.

TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF AVERAGE SUPPORT FOR ENLARGEMENT AND FOR TURKISH MEMBERSHIP (%)

Member state	Average support for enlargement	Average support for Turkish accession	Difference
Spain	58	43	15
Portugal	52	41	11
Ireland	52	39	13
Netherlands	40	42	–2
Sweden	56	37	19
Denmark	56	34	22
Italy	59	34	25
United Kingdom	31	32	–1
Belgium	45	28	17
Finland	45	27	18
Greece	70	26	44
Luxembourg	46	25	21
Germany	36	24	12
France	35	21	14
Austria	32	21	11

Source: Standard Eurobarometer 54, Spring 2001.

This also fits well with the general thesis of this article that Turkey's relations with the EU should be evaluated within a multilateral framework rather than bilaterally.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Turkey's relations with the European Union should not be evaluated strictly through a bilateral lens through which Turkish accession would appear to be determined by case-specific factors that are endogenous to Turkey (in other words, its ability to meet the Copenhagen criteria). Instead, an analysis of Turkey's position within the enlargement process should take into account the EU-specific factors: the Union's institutional set-up and the Europeanization of the Turco-Greek conflict, member state preferences (and related to that the potential impact of the Turkish population) and the role of public opinion in relation to enlargement in general and Turkish membership in particular.

On the domestic front, there are important challenges for Turkey to meet in order to strengthen its case for membership in future negotiations with the European Union. The most visible of these relates to its political system, and a second one is concerned with national economic stability. Turkey might be more democratic than Greece, Spain or Portugal were in the early 1970s, but this is no longer a valid argument to enhance the country's prospects.

Turkey's immediate tasks are to reform its democratic institutions and acquire more transparent government policies. According to one EU official, the first thing that needs to be done is 'to correct the divergence of Turkish reality with the Copenhagen criteria' (author's interview with an EU official, 22 December 2000, Ankara). The constitutional reforms of October 2001 are appropriate steps in that regard. In the economic sphere, the national financial crisis of February 2001 demonstrated the fragility of the Turkish economy and the lack of macroeconomic stability. Nevertheless, despite its current problems, Turkey has one of the most dynamic economies among the candidate countries. The European Commission acknowledges this fact in its progress reports of 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001. Turkey's efforts to meet the Copenhagen criteria – irrespective of the question of EU membership – are desirable national development goals in themselves.

However, this article has argued that Turkey's ability to meet the Copenhagen criteria is only one factor influencing its relations with the EU. Turkey was as far from meeting the Copenhagen criteria in 1997 (when the EU left Turkey off its candidate list) as it was in 1999 when the EU granted Turkey candidacy. Therefore, a proper analysis of Turkey's

position in the EU's enlargement process has to take into account EU-specific factors.

These factors are the EU's institutional set-up, which empowers members such as Greece in terms of influencing overall EU policy towards Turkey, and member-specific concerns regarding enlargement. As for the public attitudes towards Turkish membership, the European public is not united in support of, or in opposition to, enlargement. In member states such as Ireland and Denmark, the public speaks with a more powerful voice because it has a constitutional right to ratify government agreements via referendums. As illustrated by the Irish people's rejection of the Nice Treaty in June 2001, EU governments do not have an easy task ahead of them in terms of convincing public opinion of the benefits of enlargement. However, this is not a problem specific to Turkey even though the latter among all the candidates has received the least support for its accession; the point is that the European public is not at all enthusiastic about enlarging the European Union. The only exception seems to be Spain with the highest level of support for enlargement and for Turkish accession.

However, in answering the question of why Turkey is included in the EU enlargement process despite all the question marks and obstacles, the following quote from Mr Verheugen points to the heart of the matter: 'This decision was made long ago. For decades, Turkey has been told that it has prospects for becoming a full member. It would have disastrous consequences if we now tell Turkey: actually we did not mean this at all' [BBC Monitoring, 1999b]. This declaration illustrates that the EU's institutional credibility would be at stake if Turkey were excluded from the process of enlargement.

To conclude, it must be evident that even if Turkey fulfils all of the Copenhagen criteria, its accession is still going to be influenced by issue-specific reservations held by the European Union as well as by public attitudes towards Turkish membership within the member states. Turkey's negotiations with the EU require an understanding of the overall enlargement process and the factors that guide it, rather than an emphasis upon bilateral negotiations and the extent to which Turkey meets the Copenhagen criteria.

NOTE

1. For example, Germany and Austria fear increased migration from Turkey, Sweden, Denmark and the Benelux countries are sceptical about Turkey's democratic credentials and some political forces, such as the European People's Party, have doubts about Turkey's European identity.

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