



Turkey – a Country on its Way into the EU

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Introduction

This article provides an analysis of Turkey and its ambitions to become a full member of the European Union as well as its consequences for the EU and its member states. Divided into three parts, the analysis starts with the historical background of Turkey and its long way to the West. Chapter 2 represents the main part of this work, whereby chapter 2.1. “Turkey at Present”, covers the country’s society, military, and economy, besides its Kurd conflict and Armenian “Genocide” objective, as well as its Cypriot issue, and its relationship to the USA. The analysis of those topics is necessary to better understand Turkish politics today – particularly considering the country’s application to become a full member of the EU. Therefore, chapter 2.2. “EU-Resentments”, focuses the challenges of Turkey as well as of the EU in case of becoming part of this community. The article closes with a final conclusion including recommendations for both parties.

However, the overall aim of this work is to offer a “value added” concept in order to avoid mistakes when planning respectively realizing a full membership of Turkey. The topic is therefore relevant and one of the biggest challenges for the European Union.

Drawing No. 1: European Union Member Countries and Turkey



1. Historical Development Turkey’s Urge to Europe

The so-called “Kizil Elma”, the “Golden”, literally the “Red apple”, was for centuries the symbol of aspiration for the Ottoman people¹. It (the aspiration) was always the “West”, first Constantinople², than Rome, and finally Vienna.

However, the decreasing dominance of the Ottoman Empire over the Mediterranean Sea was followed by the backwards movement from the Balkan. The “Ill man from the Bosphorus” of the 19th century only kept its foot in Istanbul, whereby just 3% of the city’s territory belongs to Europe.

Nevertheless, Istanbul with its direction to the Balkan still constitutes the anti-pole to the rural characterised capitol Ankara with its oriental background³.

The Islam was the dominating religion, and the “Sharia” was the law, both important parts of the Ottoman Empire for over 600 years. The elite of the Ottoman society again comprised numerical a small social class existing of government employees and military officers.

The “father of the Turks“, Kemal Atatürk⁴ ordered respectively forced the change of the Ottoman citizens to become Turkish people; which again was the starting point of a balancing act between Ottoman tradition and Western identity⁵. According to Atatürk, all groups of the society should benefit from this new development. The rural population though did not know what to do with that – resulting in social problems. However, a

¹ The Ottoman Empire, Osmanic Empire or Ottoman State, also known by its contemporaries as the Turkish Empire or Turkey, was an empire that lasted from 1299 to November 1, 1922 (as an imperial monarchy) or July 24, 1923 (de jure, as a state). It was succeeded by the Republic of Turkey, which was officially proclaimed on October 29, 1923. At the height of its power (16th-17th century), it spanned three continents, controlling much of Southeastern Europe, Western Asia and North Africa.

² Constantinople is the former name of Istanbul.

³ Zlepko, Dmytro (2009): Die Türkei und die Ukraine – zwei Länder auf dem Weg in die EU?, in Politische Studien, Themenheft 1/2009, 60. Jahrgang, März 2009, p. 3

⁴ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938) was a Turkish army officer, revolutionary statesman, writer, and founder of the Republic of Turkey as well as its first president. Atatürk became known as an extremely capable military officer during World War I. Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, he led the Turkish national movement in the Turkish war of Independence. Having established a provisional government in Ankara, he defeated the forces sent by the Allies. His successful military campaign led to the liberation of the country and to the establishment of Turkey,

⁵ Kreiser, Klaus (2008): Atatürk, eine Biographie, München, p. 5



complete structural development covering the entire society, the Kemalism⁶ could not master. Additionally, Atatürk's Republic including its one-party system was not a western-style democracy. Social deficits like less respect regarding human rights and minorities, and the dominating position of the military, as well as weak parties, were the results – Turkey still faces today.

With the decree to feel Turkish but not to become Turkish (which should happen on a voluntarily basis), Atatürk believed to satisfy the different ethnics and social groups.

Particularly considering the Kurds, that “feeling Turkish” should be enough concession: “The country will be stronger than all peoples previously and will bring the new Turk of the future; (...) wear different clothes, take the headscarf off, use another calendar and another alphabet to become more Western.”⁷

The other ethnic groups, especially the non-Islamic and non-Ottoman, however, maintained to claim the acceptance of their identity – without success.

Nevertheless, the “revolution from above” was not accepted at all.

The Turkish Republic again understands itself as the legacy for a permanent approach towards the West, similarly to the “Kizil Elma” during the Ottoman Empire, without giving up the Turkish identity. The “Turkish-being” as well as the Islam, both basic elements of the new Turkish country, created modern Turkey. This many regard as the untouchable legacy of Atatürk.

The consequence of it, though, in many parts was deadlock; further development could not be maintained. E.g. in the military, just the discussion about the legacy means treason until today.

During its eighty year development, the country was confronted with several military coups d'état as well as social and societal changes, in a positive and negative way.

Atatürks Kemalism however, affects modern Turkey until today.

Regarding its aspiration to the West in modern times, for a long time already, Ankara feels to be in the West, particularly caused by the incorporation into the European Council in 1949, as well as

through the integration into NATO in 1952.

The first unsuccessful application for admission to the EEC (European Economic Community) in 1959 followed the application of an associated membership in 1963, after a military coup in 1960. The application to become a full member of the EU in 1987 was delayed by two military coups d'états again.

On the domestic front, war against Kurdish separatists and polarisation between the secular establishment and political Islam moved Turkey away from liberalism and democracy. During the 1990s, Turkey still remained strategically important for the United States thanks to cooperation in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the containment of Iraq, but Ankara's relations with the EU turned increasingly problematic especially due to minority issues.

At the EU-summit in Helsinki, though, Turkey was announced as a membership candidate having equal rights, followed by the Copenhagen conference⁸ in December 2002 were Turkey was told that membership negotiation talks would start if the Copenhagen criteria will be realized.

The EU's October 3, 2005, decision to launch accession talks with Turkey was of course a major triumph and gave a significant boost to Turkey's EU aspirations. No country that ever entered into accession talks has failed to complete them, and the willingness of EU leaders to buck sceptical public opinion and make a strategic decision was appropriately welcomed in Turkey. Nevertheless, according to the EU-Commission, most parts of the membership negotiation talks were already suspended in November 2006 due to the missing progress in the Cyprus issue.

Until the summer of 2008, only 8 of the 35 negotiation chapters regarding an EU-membership were opened.

In Turkey however, one is patient, realizing that the modern “Kizil Elma” is a long way.

Having demonstrated Turkey's historical long and still lasting way to Europe, the next chapter shall

⁶ Kemalist Ideology, defines the basic characteristics of Turkey.

⁷ Pamuk, Orhan (2008): Der Preis, den ich zahlen muss, in Der Spiegel, Nr. 36, p. 184

⁸ The Copenhagen criteria are the rules that define whether a country is eligible to join the European Union. The criteria require that a state has the institutions to preserve democratic governance and human rights, has a functioning market economy, and accepts the obligations and intent of the EU. These membership criteria were laid down at the 1993 European Council in Copenhagen, Denmark, from which they take their name.



analyse the “country at present” to better understand Turkey’s political behaviour regarding a potential EU-membership.

2. Main Part

2.1. Turkey at Present

2.1.1 Society

The orientation covering the Kemalism on one hand side, and the over 1000 years oriental Muslim tradition on the other side, divides the Turkish society including 72 million people until today. Großbongardt describes Turkish lifestyle even somewhere in-between “the existence of mini-skirt and headscarf”⁹. A decision whether to belong completely to the Islamic East, or the secular West, is not possible. According to that, one can ask, where the point of decision is, to finally accept one or to abandon the other.

The basic inner-political antagonism of modern Turkey is best represented by the contradiction between the rural countryside and large cities:

Here, the understanding of “Kizil Elma” changed. The people migrating from Anatolia, the “Maganda”, do not see the “Red Apple” in Vienna or Rome, but in Istanbul. In 1962 the city had 1.5 million inhabitants. Today according to the official data, Istanbul has 12 million, according to appraisals even 14 million inhabitants.

The long-established Istanbul families, which were Persian, Arabic and Greek influenced traditionally define themselves not as a Turkish establishment, but rather as Ottoman elite. Characterised by private wealth, cultural oriented towards the West, rather tolerant in religious questions, often educated abroad and grown up multilingual, they consider the Anatolian migration towards Istanbul with concern.

The “Maganda” cultural oriented towards the East, religiously towards a more faithful Islam, considers itself physically connected to Istanbul, mentally though with Anatolia.

In the beginning, the “Maganda” consisting of Turks, Kurds, Armenian, Chechen, Georgian and other groups, dominated the “Symbol of Turkey” how Istanbul is also called. However, they did not succeed over the old Istanbul society¹⁰.

⁹ Großbongardt, Anette (2008): Istanbul Blues. Die Türkei zwischen Tradition und Moderne, Berlin, p. 22

¹⁰ Zlepko, Dmytro (2009): Die Türkei und die Ukraine – zwei Länder auf dem Weg in die EU?, in Politische Studien, Themenheft 1/2009, 60. Jahrgang, März 2009, p. 3

The distinction of the Turkish society’s structure though today is mainly given through the Islam. It is still one of the most important benchmarks for the own identity and development.

For example, the possibility for women to become a professional preacher today is legalised. Just recently the application of the first female preacher to become a deputy mufti was accepted. Female preachers although are still only allowed to preach to women¹¹.

Nevertheless, the transformation and adaptation of the Islam to the presence remains complex.

The population’s rate of illiteracy at Atatürk times was about 90%, at present it is only 4% regarding men and 20% considering women. 16% of the Turkish population belong to the rural population; two-third of the Turks lives in cities; effecting an increasing service-providing economy.

Young Turkish people basically say “yes” to *modernisation, democracy, social progress, religious tolerance as well as to reforms*; the implementation of these targets, they connect to the well-being of Turkey. However, everything, they consider as Turkish identity, is not negotiable¹².

Nevertheless, only one-third of the Turkish population has a positive view of the EU. Some parts of its society even dislike an EU-membership; 36% of the Turkish population are younger than 19 years of age.

However, Turkey has not been able yet to master its shaky identity effectively; “a military coupe d’état would bring Turkey back for 25 years, but the Sharia would setback the country for 250 years.”¹³ The process of decision finding between Ottoman and Turkish being as well as between oriental and western orientation still continues. Nevertheless, it hinders Turkey to do a step beyond¹⁴.

Anyhow, especially since the religious upheavals of the Arab-Islamic world, Turkey is on

¹¹ Ibid, p. 5

¹² Ibid, p. 6

¹³ Livanelli, Zülfü (2008): Ein tausendjähriger Marsch von Ost nach West. Auf ihrer Identitätssuche steht die Türkei vor einer der kritischen Phasen ihrer Geschichte, in Süddeutsche Zeitung, 17.06.2008, p. 12

¹⁴ Concerns regarding a potential conflict between a secular government, backed by the military and a traditional society deeply rooted in Islam just recently appeared due to the landslide election victory of the Islamist-based Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002; in Turkey profile, BBC News, 25.04.2013



the search for identity and strategic orientation inside and outside the country. Since the start of the current ruling party under President Erdogan, Turkey increasingly looks out for the former great power status of the Ottoman Empire. The simultaneous conflicts in the Middle East as well as between Russia and the West have increased the political weight of Turkey significantly, due to its geographical location.

2.1.2 Military

Since Atatürk founded the modern secular Republic of Turkey in 1923, the Turkish military has perceived itself as the guardian of „Atatürkcülük“, the official state ideology. This movement still represents an important influence towards Turkish politics and the decision making process (regarding issues related to Turkish national security); however, it decreased in the past decades.

The military possesses a history of intervening in Turkish politics. Indeed, it assumed power for several periods in the latter half of the 20th century. It executed coups d'état in 1960, in 1971, and in 1980. Furthermore, it maneuvered the removal of an Islamic-oriented Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, in 1997.¹⁵

However, current President Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP)¹⁶, which itself has Islamist roots, has made “curbing the military's political influence one of its main missions, and state prosecutors have pursued officers suspected of conspiring against current and former governments”¹⁷. Erdogan even has promoted the trials as part of the process of ending the generals' political power.¹⁸

Considering the military's approach towards minorities, it can be stated that no other line of action in terms of additional rights is planned. Many even interpret this as the fear to lose the own status. However, the unsolved problem of minorities stays as a hurdle on Turkey's way into the European Union; the implementation of the claimed minority

rights in Turkey is currently not conceivable.

At the same time, the military enjoys a high degree of popular legitimacy, with continuous opinion polls suggesting that the military is the state institution that the Turkish people trust the most.

Concluding the above, one can state that paradoxically, the military represents a major force regarding a continuous Westernization of the country; but at the same time also appears as an obstacle for Turkey's desire to join the EU.

2.1.3 Economy

During the first six decades of the republic, between 1923 and 1983, the Turkish economy was mainly characterized by strict government planning; private sector participation, foreign trade, flow of foreign currency, and foreign direct investment was very limited.

However, starting from 1983, Turkey began a series of reforms that were initiated by Prime Minister Turgut Özal and designed to shift the economy from a statist, insulated system to a more private-sector, market-based model.¹⁹

The recovery and growth of the Turkish economy is impressive. After an economic crisis, by 2003, it stabilised again, and inflation was reduced to levels that allowed the authorities to lop off six zeros from the currency. Because of lower inflation and interest rates, the Turkish economy began benefiting from domestic and foreign investment and grew by an average of 7% in the last three years. Such growth brought income levels to approximately \$4,600 per capita, higher than that of some EU countries, while its debt to gross national product ratio fell from 91% in 2001 to 65% in 2004 – less than the Eurozone average. Therefore, by December 2004, the EU concluded that Turkey had fulfilled the economic criteria necessary to begin accession talks. The long-standing Turkish dream of joining the West seemed closer than ever before.²⁰

Today, Turkey, as a founding member of the OECD and the G-20 major economies exports 40% to the EU; it possesses the world's 15th largest GDP.

During Erdogan's time as Prime Minister the country has grown economically enormous.

¹⁵ Kesen, Nebi (2009): Die Kurdenfrage im Kontext des Beitritts der Türkei zur Europäischen Union, Zürich, p. 119

¹⁶ The Justice and Development Party (AKP) is a Turkish political party. It portrays itself as a moderate and conservative party, that advocates a liberal market economy and Turkish membership in the European Union.

¹⁷ E.g. General Erdal Ceylanoglu, who is believed to have ordered tanks onto the streets outside the capital ahead of the military intervention 16 years ago, joined dozens already remanded in custody ahead of the court case. In: More Turkish generals detained over 1997 coup; www.reuters.com, 28.02.2013

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Kesen, Nebi (2009): Die Kurdenfrage im Kontext des Beitritts der Türkei zur Europäischen Union, Zürich, p. 40

²⁰ Gordon, Philip / Taspinar, Omer (2006): Turkey on the brink, in: The Washington quarterly: A Review of strategic and international Studies, No. 29/3, p. 57-70



2.1.4 Kurd Conflict

One of the most important challenges for the country, particularly in the 1990s was the Kurdish question. Between 1984 and 1999, Ankara was confronted with a violent Kurdish insurrection in southeast Anatolia. The separatist challenge posed by the PKK²¹, a Kurdish guerrilla movement with considerable regional support, appeared as very cost-intensive for the Turkish government; military expenditures amounted up to \$150 billion²².

Today, as a result of the war against the Kurdish population in the 1990s, more than half of Turkey's ethnic Kurds live in western cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, Mersin, and Ankara.

However, many Kurdish people still suffer from social and economic problems, lack of education, and massive unemployment; dynamics, which provide fertile ground for the PKK.

The Iraq war for Turkey appeared as a significant threat because northern Iraq represented a safe-haven for the PKK. In addition, a destabilization of Iraq many Kurdish people utilize for claiming their independence (from Turkey).

The Kurdish issue also strongly affects Turkey's perception of the EU, which considers the Kurdish conflict as the rebellion of an ethnic group, whose cultural and national rights were long suppressed by an authoritarian system. Brussels strongly recommends Ankara to accept the Kurds as a national minority with distinct cultural and linguistic rights. However, in a bid to improve its chances of EU membership, the government began to ease restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language from 2003 onwards. "As part of a new "Kurdish initiative" launched in 2009, it pledged to extend linguistic and cultural rights and to reduce the military presence in the mainly Kurdish southeast of the country."²³

In that context, anxiety about Kurdish nationalism is the common denominator of Turkey's anti-EU and anti-American feelings²⁴.

However, with the establishment of an autonomous Kurdistan, Turkey has created

something of a Turkish protectorate.

2.1.5 Armenian "Genocide" issue Debates over the Armenian "Genocide"

Yet another pressure is the Armenian issue, particularly the momentum behind long-standing efforts by Armenia and the Armenian diaspora to win international recognition of an Ottoman "genocide" against their people in 1915²⁵. Although this issue is not new, a growing number of parliaments, most recently those of France, Canada, and the EU, have passed resolutions asserting that genocide did in fact occur. French and other European officials have also said that they do not believe Turkey could become an EU member unless and until this issue is resolved²⁶.

2.1.6 Cypriot Conflict

The Republic of Cyprus is separated into two main parts; the area under the effective control of the "Republic of Cyprus", comprising about 59% of the island's area. The Turkish-occupied area in the north, calling itself the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", covers about 37% of the island's area; it is diplomatically recognized by Turkey only.

A move by Cyprus to leverage its own EU membership to win concessions from Turkey and Turkish Cypriots, could develop Turkey's relationship with the EU to a real crisis. Turkey feels a sense of betrayal over the Cyprus issue. In 2003 the AKP government took enormous domestic political risks and overturned 40 years of Turkish policy by pressing the Turkish Cypriots to accept a political compromise that would allegedly enhance Turkey's chances of joining the EU. The Turkish Cypriots complied and supported the UN-sponsored referendum in 2004, which the Greek Cypriot side rejected²⁷.

²¹ The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is a Kurdish separatist organisation, which fights an armed struggle against Turkey for Kurdish independence. The group was founded in the late 1970s and led by Abdullah Öcalan. The PKK's ideology is founded on revolutionary socialism and Kurdish nationalism. The PKK's goal has been to create an independent, Kurdish state.

²² Gordon, Philip / Taspinar, Omer (2006): Turkey on the brink, in: The Washington quarterly: A Review of strategic and international Studies, No. 29/3, p. 57-70

²³ Turkey profile, in: BBC News, www.bbc.co.uk/25.04.2013

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The Armenian Genocide – also known as the Armenian Holocaust, the Armenian Massacres and, by Armenians, as the Great Crime – refers to the deliberate and systematic destruction (genocide) of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire during and just after World War I. It was implemented through wholesale massacres and deportations, with the deportations consisting of forced marches under conditions designed to lead to death of the deportees. The total number of resulting Armenian deaths is generally held to have been between one and one and a half million.

²⁶ Fritz, Johannes (2010): Wahrnehmungen der EU in der Debatte über einen EU-Beitritt der Türkei, p. 80

²⁷ Bürger, Christian (2009): Türkei ante portas – Der Beitritt der Türkei zur Europäischen Union, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Frankfurt a.M., p. 33



Despite U.S. and European claims that there would be negative consequences for any side that rejected the plan and rewards for those who supported it, little has been done. The Turkish Cypriots still suffer from international isolation while the Greek Cypriots now try to use Cyprus's membership in the EU to extract concessions from Turkey and to continue to isolate northern Cyprus²⁸.

2.1.7 Relationship with the USA

The friendliness of Turkey towards the United States has declined markedly over the last years. A June 2007 survey of the Pew research Center found that only 9% of Turkish citizens have a favorable opinion of the United States, the lowest percentage out of all 47 countries surveyed, below the Palestinian territories (13% have a favorable view of the U.S.) and Pakistan (15%). The decline of U.S.-Turkish relations is primarily a result of the United States' instigation of and action in the Iraq War. Due to U.S. anger over the Turkish parliament's March 1, 2003, refusal to allow U.S. forces access to Turkish territory for the invasion and Turkish frustration over the U.S. support for Iraqi Kurds have led to unprecedented mutual resentment between Ankara and Washington. Also the intention of the United States to use a military airbase in Turkey for the fight against ISIS was refused just recently.

The most troubling aspect of Turkey's relations with the West though is that Ankara no longer has a fallback U.S. option in case its relations with the EU sour.²⁹

2.2. EU-Resentments

Even if Turkey continues to develop its democracy and economy, major obstacles still threaten to thwart its European integration. Ankara's hopes of membership could easily be dashed by anything ranging from a crisis over Cyprus to a national veto from one of the 25 EU countries. Equally troubling for Ankara are French and German proposals for a "privileged partnership" instead of full membership. Fuelling Turkish concern about second-class membership are EU guidelines for accession negotiations that

already spell out the possibility of permanent safeguards against Turkey on issues ranging from freedom of movement to regional aid. Similarly, the fact that the EU has described the accession process as not only open ended but also conditional to the EU's absorption capacity was not lost on the many Turks who believe, Brussels will always find reasons to say no to Turkey. Such dynamics do not bode well for the future of Turkey's relations with the West. Moreover, German chancellor Angela Merkel and former France's President, Nicolas Sarkozy, have both expressed scepticism about Turkish membership³⁰.

Values, as discussed in Europe, for the majority of Turks last incomprehensible. The happiness of "freedom of opinion", as well as of an "open society" besides the "fruits of democracy", for many Turkish people last further unknown. Turkey does not know democracy in terms of a western understanding. Considering the European "culture", including approaches like "EU-law breaks national law", or the "penetrability of national borders", it is difficult to make an arrangement with the alienated Turkish understanding of a government system.

However, already struggling with problems such as immigration, Islamic terrorism, and Muslim integration within their borders, Europeans are currently in no mood to embrace 70 million more Muslims.

The current backlash against Islam and multiculturalism in the aftermath of terrorism, the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh, urban riots in France, and the prophet Muhammad cartoon crisis only complicates Turkish-EU relations. European scepticism about welcoming a relatively underdeveloped Muslim country, which would immediately become the second-largest member of the EU (or the largest, as Turkey's population is predicted to surpass that of Germany within the next 10 years), is unlikely to change in the short term.

Europe's structural unemployment and anti-immigration tendency also continue to pose additional problems for Turkey³¹. Close connected with that is the problem with migration and the

²⁸ Gordon, Philip / Taspinar, Omer (2006): Turkey on the brink, in: The Washington quarterly: A Review of strategic and international Studies, No. 29/3, p. 57-70

²⁹ Bürger, Christian (2009): Türkei ante Portas – Der Beitritt der Türkei zur Europäischen Union, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Frankfurt a.M., p. 33

³⁰ Gordon, Philip / Taspinar, Omer (2006): Turkey on the brink, in: The Washington quarterly: A Review of strategic and international Studies, No. 29/3, p. 57-70

³¹ Ibid.



movement of the labour force from East to West in an enlarged future EU. Probably, there would be enforcement for transition rules for the complete EU or just for certain countries and professions. New migrants, whether for the labour market or family unification, would have to show respective qualifications.

However, if Turkey will fulfil all of the EU standard claims, it will always differ from the rest of this community. It wants to keep its oriental identity also as a full EU-member. The Europeans should – from a Turkish perspective – not only tolerate the Muslim being but also accept it. That the society in Turkey is still on its way of self-discovery is well known by the government in Ankara. Accepting and communicating that openly, the political leadership does not risk. Still there is a lacking centre of power like the military, the mullahs or any “world politicians”, which could act as sole authority.

The protection of the own identity for most of the Turks is more important than the direct economic advantages due to an EU-membership. This is based on a continuity of a self-confident Turkish state. Therefore, many economic circles declare that economic relationships with the EU already exist without a formal treaty – a fact that cannot be ignored. According to this Turkish opinion, the EU should start not necessarily to adopt but to accept the (unknown) Turkish values.

The most critical political problem however would be located in the change of the institutional structure of the EU, because it touches the question of power and influence in-between the EU. The old EU countries already do not let change the former EU order and supremacy in the existing EU. In Ankara one follows the three-way and four-way group decisions of several single questions interestingly. The necessity of the unanimity of decisions already today makes more concessions for the single country necessary³².

Regarding the financial consequences of a full membership of Turkey, it is still not possible to assess it precisely. Without an increasing farmers perish in the old EU-countries it won't be possible though.

³² Bürger, Christian (2009): Türkei ante Portas – Der Beitritt der Türkei zur Europäischen Union, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Frankfurt a.M., p. 26

Still Ankara and Brussels take comfort with the fact that the difficult topics between both parties are only touched during the sporadically conducted contact talks. The protocols of these talks do not count as an official EU document. Their results however result in the country's analysis. Out of that, future problems can be identified, approaches for solutions can be covered and the status of convergence of the candidates towards EU-claims be stated, as for example agricultural policy in Turkey as well as in the EU.

Concluding the above, one can state that there are still many hurdles to get over for Turkey to become a full member of the EU. However, as in the Ottoman Empire, the aspiration of the Turks towards Europe continues to be an element of Turkish identity.

In 2005, the completion of the admission negotiations was expected until the end of the year 2015. Particularly due to the financial crisis of the European currency, this date appears no more valid.

Germany's former Foreign Minister Westerwelle said he supports renewed talks over Turkey's EU membership. However, he added, “no one can say if and when Turkey will be ready to join the EU and if and when the EU will be ready to accept it”³³.

3. Conclusion

This article has addressed the hurdles for Turkey as well as the consequences for the EU, if the country would become a full member of the European Union. In considering the historical background, it was stated that Turkey follows a course in the western direction since the Ottoman Empire. However, Turkey's future is of course mostly in Turkey's hands, but the West also has an important role to play. Europe needs to do what it can to ensure that Turkey continues to see its future as part of the West. Both the EU as well as the United States need to take Turkish national priorities seriously. They need to show that they value Turkey's partnership and its contribution to regional peace and democracy in an extremely difficult neighbourhood.

One key goal should be to keep Turkey firmly on track for EU membership. Turkey's European

³³ German Foreign Minister backs talks for Turkey EU bid, in: www.dw.de/12.05.2013



partners should be clearly aware that none of the recent political and economic reforms in Turkey would have been possible without the EU incentive. It is therefore crucial to keep this incentive and Turkey's European vocation alive, at least in the long term. This will not be easy.

The main part of this assignment has demonstrated that many Turks (still) want to see their country as a member of the EU, yet an even larger majority believes the EU will never fully embrace Turkey. This perception can only change if Europe shows more sensitivity to Turkey. The EU should avoid giving the impression that there are double standards for Turkey on issues ranging from future immigration laws to qualification for regional aid.

Turkey must do its share well. Turkish leaders need to explain to their public that the EU will need time to digest its enlargement of central and Eastern Europe as well as in terms of mastering the community's crisis due to the weakness of the Euro-currency and the high debts of EU-countries.

European and US policymakers again would be well advised to stop taking Turkey's pro-Western orientation for granted. It is time to revisit the conventional wisdom that Turkey has no strategic options other than the West. Unlike the situation during the Cold War, Turkey now has a Eurasian strategic alternative that looks increasingly appealing to a growing numbers of frustrated nationalists within the country. If Turkey's relations with the United States continue to deteriorate and its relations with Europe also take a negative turn, Ankara could very well opt for closer strategic relations with countries such as Russia, Iran, China, and India. To downplay this risk is to underestimate the nationalist resentment already building in Turkey³⁴. An example for that is the visit by Russian President Putin just recently. The EU imposed penalty sanctions against Russia (due to the Crimea annexation), but Ankara and Moscow decided to triple their trade.

The following chapter, "EU-Resentments", has shown that European hesitation to admit Turkey is not always based on racism but on legitimate concerns.

³⁴ Gordon, Philip / Taspinar, Omer (2006): Turkey on the brink, in: The Washington quarterly: A Review of strategic and international Studies, No. 29 / 3, p. 67

Turks will have to gain familiarity with the EU institutions, their operation, and the problems of European economies. Most Turks have only a limited knowledge of Europe and share a one-dimensional tendency to see the EU as a Christian club. Although some European politicians do their best to strengthen this image, Turkey's own tendency to consider its European vocation in grandiose civilization and cultural terms is part of the problem as well. A more open Turkish debate would be helpful in terms of addressing the real costs and benefits of EU membership.

However, Turkey basically considers itself as a part of Europe, independently from formal EU membership; the "Kizil Elma" keeps on going.

Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
US	United States (of America)

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