

Inauguration of Turkey's entry course in the EU: Prospects for the region and the status-quo with Greece

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Abstract

The official commencement of Turkey's negotiation with the EU member states that will eventually lead to a complete membership, represents a major shift in the balance of the entire Balkan region. This paper attempts to analyse the implications of this course and what new patterns are now likely to form as Turkey will focus its energies in converging with the criteria set by the EU. Furthermore, it investigates the possible change in the relationship between Turkey, now a candidate member nation and Greece a longtime member state. Two neighboring nations, with a long history and at a constant edge with political, cultural and economic influences. We endeavour to examine the possibility that a fragile balance that exists between the two forces in the region can move into a new dimension beneficial for all parties helping to form a better future.

Keywords: *EU, Greece, Turkey, military spending*

1. Introduction

The Balkans area is indisputably the most ``heated`` region in Europe with a history of animosity, tension, military campaigns and re-shifting of political regimes. Inside this climate, the two most important players in terms of power, size and capabilities are Greece and Turkey. Both countries have centuries old rivalry that has moved along the decades in the present time. Greece is the only country in the Balkan region to belong in the EU since 1980 and has been adamant in following the most advanced European nations in the level of economic and institutional transformation. Turkey, after a long period of negotiations and discussions in October 7th 2005, took the green light to get the nomination as a candidate country for the European Union.

This paper examines what are the implications of this opportunity for Turkey, Greece and the entire region as a whole. First of all we provide a background on the course of Turkey towards converging with the EU and pay particular attention to the role of Greece in this endeavour. Additionally we examine the positive elements in the prospect of Turkey joining the rest of Europe for itself, the Union and the area in total. Passing on the other side, we analyse the main problems and drawbacks that exist and the criticism the ascension effort has been subjected to. Furthermore, in particular we analyse the rivalry with Greece on the level of military spending, its parameters and effects. Rounding up this part of research, there is a general evaluation of the current situation between the neighbouring countries, a recapping of the main developments that are or are not under way in Turkey and suggestions for the further improvement.

2. Turkey and Europe- A growing relationship:

European Union has been a dynamic organization since 1952 when it was first established in a preliminary form with 6 members and as time progressed it reached 25 member states with the last enlargement. Turkey first applied to become a full member of the EEC in 1987 but at the time the process was cut-short due to the intervention of the army in the politic life of the country (Yoruk & Zaim , 2003;European Commission,2006). In spite of the poor economic situation of Turkey as it will be shown in more detail later, the past 6 years the country has undergone major changes moving from the conservative model of an agricultural economy to a rapidly transforming industrialised entity (Tanova & Nadiri, 2005). Simultaneously, with a population circa to 70 million inhabitants and its geographical position as a link between Europe and Asia present significant opportunities for organizations and a potentially large market. (Tanova & Nadiri, 2005).

Turkish economy has been boosted by a major waves of reforms after 2001 that involved the privatisation of large formerly state-owned organisations such as Turk Telekom and Turkish Petroleum refineries; The decline of government intervention to the banking system leaving thus the central bank of the country to conduct a tight monetary policy (Plummer, 2005). Another significant step has been the revaluation of the country's lira dropping the value of one million old liras to one new lira in January 2005 (Plummer 2005; European Commission, 2006).Another note-worthy feature of the Turkish administration has been the sharp decline of inflation rate from 65% in 1999 to 12 % in 2004, a development that itself facilitated tremendously the majority of the monetary reforms (European Commission, 2006).Table 1 below presents a break-down of Turkey's general economic picture.

Table 1. Turkish economy at a glance

GDP per capita	US\$ 6,390 (€4,952)(Sources: UN Human Development Index, 2004. Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report April 2005. ECFIN- CCEQ Candidate Countries Economic Quarterly.) per capita (in purchasing power standards), or 27% of the EU average
Economic (GDP) growth	7.4% (2002), -7.5% (2001), 7.9% (2002), 5.8 (2003), 8.0% (2004)
Inflation rate	12% (2004)
Unemployment rate	10% (2004)
Currency	New Lira, introduced 1 January 2005. 1 New Lira = 1,000,000 Turkish Lira. 1 New Lira = €0.56 (April 2005)
Government budget balance	-7.3% of GDP (2004)
Current account balance	€11.9 billion -4.7%
Foreign debt	75% of GDP (2004)
Trade with EU (2004)	Exports to the EU: 54% of the total Imports from the EU: 46.7 % of the total

In relation to Europe, Turkey has a long history not only trying to achieve membership but also in financial terms since from 1995 it has been a member of a customs union with the EU. The later has resulted in that more than half of the country's trade is with EU member-nations (European Commission, 2006;Plummer 2005). Equally, Turkey is one of the attractive destination for holiday-makers and thus the tourist industry has become over the years the second largest revenue source for Turkey (Plummer, 2005). In spite of the positive steps achieved in the economic side, the country still lags greatly from the European averages. As it can be seen in figure 1, the GPD is the lowest even among the other candidate countries. Furthermore, Turkey has a large external debt equal almost to 80% of its GDP which casts significant shadows over the capability of the Turkish economy to retain its current fast pace (Plummer, 2005).

Apart from the economics, more complex and difficult to gauge are the issues in regards to politics and human rights and the levels EU demands each candidate state to achieve. As stated by the European Commission (2006), the main issues in regards to Turkey converging with the rest of Europe refer to:

- The continuation of political reforms in light of the Copenhagen political criteria, including the respect for democracy and the rule of law, the protection of human rights and guaranteeing the rights of minorities.

- The enhanced political dialogue between the EU and Turkey supporting, in particular the efforts of the UN Secretary General to reach a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus issue.
- Maintaining positive relations with neighbouring countries.

Figure 1. GDP in the EU zone and the candidate countries in Purchasing power strands

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
EU-25	15 200	16 000	16 900	17 700	18 500	19 800	20 500	21 200	21 400 (f)	22 300 (f)	23 100 (f)	24 100 (f)
EU-15	16 900	17 700	18 600	19 400	20 400	21 700	22 500	23 200	23 300 (f)	24 300 (f)	25 100 (f)	26 100 (f)
Euro-zone	17 000	17 800	18 600	19 500	20 400	21 700	22 200	22 700	22 800 (f)	23 700 (f)	24 500 (f)	25 400 (f)
Belgium	18 300	19 000	19 800	20 500	21 500	23 100	24 000	24 700	25 200	26 400 (f)	27 300 (f)	28 400 (f)
Czech Republic	10 700 (e)	11 500 (e)	11 700 (e)	11 800 (e)	12 200	12 800	13 500	14 300	15 000	15 900 (f)	16 800 (f)	17 800 (f)
Denmark	19 000	20 100	21 300	22 000	23 600	25 100	25 800	25 700 (f)	26 100 (f)	27 200 (f)	28 300 (f)	29 400 (f)
Germany	18 200	18 900	19 500	20 200	21 000	22 100	22 500	23 000	23 100	24 000 (f)	24 600 (f)	25 400 (f)
Estonia	5 400 (e)	5 900 (e)	6 800 (e)	7 400 (e)	7 600	8 600	9 200	9 900	10 400	11 200 (f)	12 200 (f)	13 200 (f)
Greece	11 000	11 500	12 200	12 700	13 300	14 300	15 100	16 400	17 300	18 400 (f)	19 200 (f)	20 100 (f)
Spain	13 300	14 100	14 800	15 700	17 000	18 100	18 900	20 000	20 900 (f)	21 800 (f)	22 600 (f)	23 500 (f)
France	17 500	18 300	19 300	20 200	21 200	22 500	23 500	23 900	23 700	24 800 (f)	25 600 (f)	26 600 (f)
Ireland	15 100	16 500	19 000	20 700	22 600	25 000	26 500	28 100	28 300	30 000 (f)	31 600 (f)	33 300 (f)
Italy	17 600	18 400	19 000	20 100	20 800	22 000	22 800 (e)	23 100 (e)	22 800 (f)	23 400 (f)	24 000 (f)	24 900 (f)
Cyprus	13 100 (e)	13 600 (e)	14 100 (e)	14 900 (e)	15 700	17 000	18 300	17 700	17 600	18 200 (f)	19 000 (f)	19 900 (f)
Latvia	4 500 (e)	4 900 (e)	5 500 (e)	6 000 (e)	6 300	7 000	7 700	8 200	8 800	9 800 (f)	10 700 (f)	11 600 (f)
Lithuania	5 200 (e)	5 700 (e)	6 300 (e)	6 900 (e)	7 000	7 600	8 300	9 000	9 800	10 700 (f)	11 600 (f)	12 600 (f)
Luxembourg	27 200	28 400	31 100	34 000	38 600	43 200	43 600	45 000	45 900	48 400 (f)	50 700 (f)	53 200 (f)
Hungary	7 600 (e)	7 900 (e)	8 500 (e)	9 100 (e)	9 700	10 600	11 500	12 400	12 900	13 800 (f)	14 600 (f)	15 500 (f)
Malta	:	:	:	:	14 400	15 400	15 100	15 500	15 600	16 100 (f)	16 500 (f)	17 100 (f)
Netherlands	18 300	19 300	20 400	21 400	22 300	24 000	25 400	25 800	25 800	26 700 (f)	27 400 (f)	28 400 (f)
Austria	19 700	20 700	21 400	22 100	23 500	25 300	25 400	25 900	26 100	27 100 (f)	28 000 (f)	29 000 (f)
Poland	6 200 (e)	6 800 (e)	7 400 (e)	7 900 (e)	8 500	9 100	9 400	9 700	9 800	10 600 (f)	11 300 (f)	12 000 (f)
Portugal	11 100	11 700	12 500	13 300	14 300	15 300	15 800	16 200	16 000	16 400 (f)	16 800 (f)	17 300 (f)
Slovenia	10 400 (e)	11 200 (e)	12 000 (e)	12 700 (e)	13 700	14 500	15 300	15 900	16 400	17 500 (f)	18 500 (f)	19 600 (f)
Slovakia	6 800 (e)	7 400 (e)	8 000 (e)	8 400 (e)	8 700	9 500	10 000	10 900	11 200	12 000 (f)	12 900 (f)	13 800 (f)
Finland	16 100	16 900	18 700	20 000	20 700	22 600	23 300	24 100	24 300	25 700 (f)	26 900 (f)	28 100 (f)
Sweden	18 000	18 800	19 600	20 300	21 900	23 700	23 800	24 300 (f)	24 600 (f)	25 900 (f)	27 100 (f)	28 200 (f)
United Kingdom	16 800	17 900	19 200	20 100	21 000	22 500	23 600	24 900 (f)	25 500 (f)	26 800 (f)	28 000 (f)	29 200 (f)
Bulgaria	4 700 (e)	4 500 (e)	4 400 (e)	4 700 (e)	4 900	5 300	5 800	6 100	6 400 (f)	6 900 (f)	7 500 (f)	8 000 (f)
Croatia	5 700 (e)	6 400 (e)	7 000 (e)	7 500 (e)	7 400 (e)	8 200 (e)	8 600 (e)	9 300 (e)	9 700 (e)	10 300 (f)	10 900 (f)	11 600 (f)
Romania	:	:	:	4 700	4 800	5 000	5 500	6 100	6 300	7 000 (f)	7 600 (f)	8 100 (f)
Turkey	4 600 (e)	5 000 (e)	5 500 (e)	5 700 (e)	5 500	6 000	5 400	5 600 (f)	5 900 (f)	6 400 (f)	6 800 (f)	7 200 (f)
Iceland	18 500	19 900	21 200	22 600	23 700	24 800	25 500	25 000 (f)	24 900 (f)	26 500 (f)	28 100 (f)	29 800 (f)
Norway	20 200	22 400	23 900	23 600	26 200	31 900	32 400	31 600 (f)	31 500 (f)	33 000 (f)	34 800 (f)	36 100 (f)
Japan	19 000	20 200	21 100	21 200	21 600	22 900	23 400 (f)	23 800 (f)	24 400 (f)	26 600 (f)	27 300 (f)	28 300 (f)
United States	23 400	24 700	26 200	27 500	29 000	30 700	31 200	32 200	32 900	35 500	37 100 (f)	38 500 (f)
Canada	19 100	19 900	21 100	22 100	23 700	25 500 (f)	26 200 (f)	27 500 (f)	27 800 (f)	29 500 (f)	30 500 (f)	31 700 (f)

The role of Greece and its relationship with Turkey is prominent in this line of negotiations. The history of both countries in one of rivalry and competition in areas such as the Aegean sea and the issue of Cyprus. The purpose of this paper is not political and as such there will be minimum reference to this sensitive issues only at the level to achieve the aims of the analysis and maintain the impartiality required. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that tensions are often (Morris, 2004) with both sides persisting in their side of the disputes. Apart from political movements, the rivalry is also translated in tremendous military spending from both countries which relative to their size and financial situation is of great

burden to their budgets as both countries go headlong to an army-equipping race (Athanasiou, Kollias, Nikolaidou & Zografakis, 2000).

The issue of military spending merits more consideration and will be revisited later. Nevertheless, Greece is a full member of the European Union as well as Cyprus, perhaps the main point of argument between the two countries since 1974. An issue that as already pointed needs to be resolved before Turkey can be eligible for membership. One important observation we can make from this condition, is the possibility for solutions or at least a leeway for negotiations on years old conflicts under the base and weight of such a powerful coalition of nations that EU is. That itself is very positive sign taking into account that other Bulgaria is already an ascending country, and almost all the countries in the region are oriented in the same pathway. This course could enhance the welfare in the region as a whole and for each country individually. Furthermore, for the EU stability in the Balkans region is mostly desired as tensions among member nations and candidate countries are counter-productive in any respect. On the contrary, under a steady surrounding economies can flourish, trade can increase and perhaps most importantly events such as the situation in Serbia, Croatia and Kosovo in the 90s could be averted in the future.

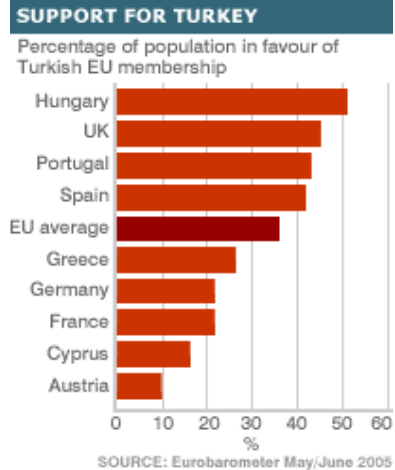
Concluding Turkey's relationship with the EU, it is worthwhile mentioning besides the prospects for commerce and trade with a 70 million market, the aspiration that the integration of a Muslim country in the Union would provide a shield against muslim fundamentalists and the terrorism climate that has been spreading globally the last 5 years. Although the positive facts, there is also significant opposition and issues raised in regards to Turkey's ascension. There are fears that a country as large as Turkey would deprive and could lead to exhaustion European funds. Especially as next to the size, the country is in total a poor and the quality life as pointed at low levels compared to the other member-states and candidate countries (Plummer, 2005). As we can in figure 2 there is a strong wave of negative outlook of Turkey as a candidate country which is reflected in the low support the nomination found amongst EU populations.

3.Greece-Turkey:The race

We have already mentioned that among the conditions for Turkey to be accepted in the European family is good relationships with the neighbouring countries and a solution to the Cyprus issue. Essentially this pictures the relationship between the EU member Greece, the newly entered Cyprus and Turkey now as a candidate nation. By restating the players in this game we are entering the "European" dimension to the contention that extends from the time of the Ottoman empire for some and after 1974 for the Cypriots more intensely. In both countries there is a strong feeling of patriotism named by some or nationalistic sentiment by others and an underlying fear of each other. Characteristically as Moustakis (1999) observes "*Both Turkey and Greece ...fear that small technical revisions away*

from the status quo can be used for expansionist purposes and claims from both sides.`(pg 13).

Figure 2. Support for Turkey in EU population



Although both countries are members of NATO since 1952 and are forced to work alongside in the alliance, the main disputes include:

- (a) *disputes over the extent of territorial waters in the Aegean;*
- (b) *disputes over the extent of territorial airspace;*
- (c) *disputes over continental shelf rights;*
- and (d) *disputes over Greek militarization of certain Aegean islands.* (Brauer, 1999:2).

There have been several attempts to follow the race between Greece and Turkey in their military budgets and efforts to investigate the patterns that shape this course. For example, Avramides (1997) finds that Greece tends to follow the lead of Turkey in modernizing and adding equipment in the military infrastructure. Others argue that the military spending of the two countries cannot be viewed as a race because of Greece's economic exhaustion and small population size relative to Turkey's (Brauer, 2001). Nevertheless, statistics can offer a different interpretation, in table 2 from data extracted from the World Bank we can see the % of both countries military expenditure in relation to their annual GDP in 2000 and 2003. Firstly we can see distinct similarities in the figures as they are very close with a divergence of 0.1 to 0.2 percent. Characteristically, over the period 2002-2004 Greece alone spend 5,2 billion

Table 2. Greece and Turkey's military expenditure as % of the GDP

Year	2000	2003
Military expenditure (% of GDP) Greece	4.9	4.1
Military expenditure (% of GDP) Turkey	5.0	4.3

Dollars for the purchase of conventional defense systems whilst Turkey for the same period spent 3,3 billions (Cosma, 2005). The debate about the definition `race` indeed could change by adopting different criteria, what is most important is that both countries commit a large amount of their resources to military expenditure, in two economies that are already spread thin for different reasons. Turkey as we explained has to battle with its large external debts and inflation rate to meet the criteria of economic integration. But Greece also strives really hard to decrease its budget deficit to under 3% and meet the criteria of the EMU (Alogoskoufis, 2006).

Consequently, the simplified picture to the external observer is of two countries with striving economies allocating tremendous amounts of their resources in building their military capabilities. The practical meaning of such expenditure is the lack of funds for other sectors such as health, education, social infrastructure and the general welfare of the population and overall growth of the countries (Athanasίου, Kollias, Nikolaidou, Zografakis, 2000). Equally pronounced are the effects particularly for Greece and Turkey and although paradox in economic terms for two countries pressed to accomplish painstaking goals each to commit this level of funds on military expenditure. Ironically, research by Collier and Anke (2006) suggests that high-military spending can act as a signal for renewed conflict. Applied in the case of Greece and Turkey the situation might not be of a renewed conflict but more as a signal for getting a leverage in a possible conflict thus leading to vicious circle.

Of course the picture is not so simple as military spending in not so easily associated with economic rationale and numerous other factors prevail. Further to protection of each country's sovereignty (Murillo, 2000) after 9/11 came to fore what is typical known as ``asymmetrical threats`` or as the Greek ministry of defence defines it¹ `` *connoting the threats that cannot be countered with the use of conventional military power, because the enemy is not visible. We do not have to deal with the army of a state, which, for example, can be defeated in the battlefield, but with "terrorist groups", which can "strike" unexpectedly in unconventional and extremely destructive ways*``. So, alongside the continuous vigilance for `external threats` modern armies have to deal with this new, more subtle kind of warfare or more adequately put potential threat. An analysis of this extension is beyond our scope, what we can comment though is that still puts

¹ Greek Ministry of National Defence (2004). `` Special Issues: Defence Policy``<http://www.mod.mil.gr/Pages/MainAnalysisPage3.asp?HyperLinkID=3&MainLinkID=12>[01/05/2006]

additional burden to the economics of the situation and it contributes to the vicious circle of excessive military expenditure.

It should be stated that by no means the contribution of armed forces in any country is to be underestimated and that of course applies for the case of Greece and Turkey. Simultaneously, the analysis does not criticize the sacrifices by people and governments in equipping and preserving capable militia. We examine simply means to reduce the necessity of such expenditure through the possibility of diplomacy and co-operation between countries in order for governments to be able and channel the additional funds from the savings towards the welfare of the people.

4. Greece, Turkey and the European horizon

In the previous section we dealt primarily with the controversy between Greece and Turkey and the consequences it has on military expenditure for both countries. In light of this environment, the fact that Turkey has begun its course as a candidate country and that Greece is already a member of the EU offers unique but perplex opportunities for the differences to be discussed under a completely new prism. Previously, we mentioned that among the criteria that Turkey has to adhere with in order to rise over time in the status of a full member in the union are good relationships with its neighbouring countries and a comprehensive solution on the Cyprus issue. Essentially these are the main thorns between Greece and Turkey that need to be negotiated.

Greece from its part as a member of the Union has a vantage point in the European prospect of Turkey. It is a positive step that among the most warm supporters of this prospect is in fact Greece which tangibly was proven in October 2005 when Turkey was to take the nomination and there were strong reactions from some member-nations and most eminently from Austria. The request at the time was that Turkey should be granted a special relationship with the EU and not the right for a full membership, something that was outright rejected by the Turkish side (BBC, 2005). Greece decided to invest in the prospect of Turkey's entrance in the Union and the framework that opened up from the date of the nomination. Aspiring the normalisation of the relationship among the two countries and a solution to the Cyprus issue (Bakoyanni, 2006).

Similarly, Turkey stands to gain an unexpected ally in its effort to join the EU, an endeavour long and tenacious as everybody admits and the benefits it expects from joining the EU in terms of funds, improved quality of life and completion of the democratization process. The inauguration of the entry course provides the basis for negotiations especially as Turkey takes the steps designated by the EU, allowing also to diplomacy enough space and goodwill to resolve the differences among the two countries in the most satisfactory fashion for both. Additionally, in the long-term if the normalization process continues it is possible for both countries to loose the rigid outlook of each other and mutually lay down the

steeled defensive doctrines. Not undermining their capacity to defend their sovereignty but input a more rational spending policy and exploiting their resources in more beneficial ways.

Undoubtedly, the situation is far from easy and straightforward. The course of Turkey is merely at its inauguration stage as there is a long and ``bumpy`` road ahead. There many reforms that need to be implemented and above all centuries old mistrust to be put aside. As of present, most issues are at a stalemate and little progress has been made in the flaming issues of Cyprus and the Aegean (Bakoyanni, 2006). Nevertheless this must not act as a deterrent as the process has only begun. It requires steady steps and open culture to enable the override of obstacles towards a better future.

5. Conclusion

Recapping the main points, Turkey's nomination as a candidate country to join the EU and the ensuing reforms the Turkish government has undertaken represents a unique opportunity for Turkey, Greece, the entire Balkan region and the EU. Turkey anticipates that in the process, the country will improve at all levels, institutional, economic and political. Aligned in these changes, Greece expects the establishment of a more constructive dialogue under the auspice of the EU, putting the problematic areas closer to solution. Normalisation of the relationship between Greece and Turkey and the process of Turkey's candidacy will enhance the stability in the region placing more solid foundations so that the other countries can follow in the same path. For the EU, a new market and vibrant pathway to middle-east opens, the combination of a Christian Europe with a Muslim counterpart provides an appealing prospect in a time where tensions between fundamentalist Islamist and the Western world are rising. The issues are many and it will necessitate patience, reciprocal concessions and a large dosage of goodwill among the involved parties but the wheel has been put to motion and it must take its course.

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