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Multilateral Framework of the EU Enlargement Process and Public Opinion: The Case of Turkey

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Abstract

Enlargement policy of the European Union (EU) is one of the crucial tools that affect the future of the Union in terms of deepening and widening. In this process, as one of the negotiating candidate countries, Turkey stands in a quite difficult and problematic situation. This article argues that Turkey's candidacy to the EU is not just dependent on the Copenhagen (accession) criteria¹, there are also EU specific factors that are able to change the direction of EU-Turkey relations. In that regard, these factors are **bargaining power of member states, preferences of member states related to the preferences of their domestic and social groups and public opinion both in the EU and in Turkey towards enlargement and each other**. This article tries to analyze the role of these factors in preventing Turkish accession to the EU and discusses how the future of the EU-Turkey relations is dependent on these factors.

¹ Any country seeking membership of the European Union (EU) must conform to the conditions set out by Article 49 and the principles laid down in Article 6(1) of the Treaty on European Union. Relevant criteria were established by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and strengthened by the Madrid European Council in 1995. To join the EU, a new Member State must meet three criteria: political: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; economic: existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; acceptance of the Community *acquis*: ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union. For the European Council to decide to open negotiations, the political criterion must be satisfied. http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm

Introduction

Enlargement policy is one of the most powerful policies of the European Union, with regard to its role in shaping the fortune of its member states, as well as their citizens. Even though the main content of the policy stays quite constant, which aims to help ‘the transformation of the countries involved, extending peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law across Europe’², the geography that it expands changes regularly after each enlargement wave and that makes enlargement a dynamic and unique policy. However, the relation between Turkey and the EU has the longest history in comparison with past enlargement processes. Turkey still continues to remain a non-member state with its dense social, political and economic relations with the Union for decades, while the conditions and geography of the enlargement policy has been changing. Today, Turkey is mentioned together with the Western Balkan countries for further enlargement of the Union³.

This article argues that in the case of Turkey, EU enlargement process cannot be considered only under the general framework of accession criteria and process. It should be evaluated within a larger framework, which includes ‘EU-specific factors’ and ‘public opinion’ both in the EU member states and in Turkey, as additional reasons for the problematic accession process of Turkey to the EU for decades. This does not mean that the enlargement process of the EU is not guided objectively. It is for sure that the first and foremost condition of being a full member of the EU is to meet the Copenhagen criteria, which are not negotiable. However, this article mentions that meeting Copenhagen criteria is just one of the factors which have been affecting the enlargement process of the EU in the case of Turkey. EU specific factors of the multilateral framework of enlargement process in regards to Turkey such as the member-states’ respective bargaining power and preferences, with the latter related to the preferences of domestic social groups, and the role of public opinion both in the EU member states and in Turkey, have prevented Turkey from becoming a full member of the EU for decades and will continue to do so.

This article consists of brief discussion about Enlargement and Turkey, followed by analysis of EU specific factors, which are bargaining power of member states and preferences of member states, related with preferences of domestic, social groups and supports the prevention of Turkish membership to the EU for decades. Finally, it examines the role of both public opinion in the EU and in Turkey towards Enlargement policy and each other.

Enlargement and Turkey

According to the definition of the European Commission, ‘Enlargement is one of the EU’s most powerful policy tools[...]Enlargement is a carefully managed process which helps the transformation of the countries involved, extending peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law across Europe’⁴. According to this definition, it can be understood that the process of Enlargement and integration is not such a simple project. There are several factors, and first

² Southeast Europe: People and Culture, ‘History of EU Enlargement’, <http://www.southeast-europe.eu/eu-enlargement/history1.html>, accessed 12 June 2010.

³ ‘The governments of the EU member states, coming together in the European Council, have agreed to extend the EU perspective to countries in South East Europe - Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and Turkey. Membership will only happen when the necessary requirements are met. A gradual and carefully managed enlargement process creates a win-win situation for all countries concerned’. European Commission Enlargement, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/the-policy/index_en.htm, accessed 12 June 2010.

⁴ ‘Delegation of European Commission to Turkey’ http://www.avrupa.info.tr/DelegasyonPortal/AB_ve_Turkiye/Muzakereler.html, accessed 12 June 2010.

of them is the ability to meet the Copenhagen criteria, which affects the ongoing process of Enlargement. The Copenhagen criteria accepted during the European Council meeting in Copenhagen in 1993. It requires from candidates to have ‘stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; a functioning market economy, as well as the ability to cope with the pressure of competition and the market forces at work inside the Union; the ability to assume the obligations of membership, in particular adherence to the objectives of political, economic and monetary union’⁵. In addition to these factors, when it comes to the candidacy of Turkey, the role of different factors in the enlargement process becomes much more crucial. In that regards, as Muftuler-Bac states, ‘Turkey’s relationship with the Union should not be treated as bilateral, but rather should be placed in the larger framework of EU enlargement’⁶.

When the ‘Turkey’ chapter is evaluated within the overall story of European integration, its start dates back to the 1963 Ankara Agreement, which entered into force on December 1, 1964. In April 1987, Turkey applied for full membership to the European Community (EC). In 1989, the European Commission announced its opinion that Turkey, although deemed as a country eligible for EC membership, was not meeting the conditions of being an EC member and was not ready to be a part of it in the close future. Later on, in March 1995 Turkey became the only country, which has Customs Union (CU) decision 1/95 with the EU without being a full member and with very little financial assistance from the EU. However, as Yilmaz also mentions, at that time Turkey was not forced by EU to have CU decision with the EU. It was only recommended by the EU. It was the decision of Turkish elites, in regard to conclude the final phase of the Ankara Agreement that was signed in 1963. According to Yilmaz, ‘instead of seeking for an alternative preferential trade arrangement with the EU, they preferred the CU because it gave them the opportunity to pursue the economic integration with the EU without undertaking serious political and institutional reforms viewed as a precondition for the full membership’⁷. Additionally, since Turkey could not become a full member until that time, CU gave opportunity to Turkey to continue her relations with the EU.

Also at that time, there was a strong belief in Turkish political elite and public opinion that the full accession to the Union would be achieved in the close future, at most three-five years later. One of the most popular Turkish newspapers, ‘Hurriyet’ shared this point of view was reflected in its 7 May 1995 headline: ‘We will be full member of the EU at the latest in 1998’⁸. In that regard, the Customs Union decision 1/95 was accepted by Turkey before being a member of the EU in 1995 and came into effect on 31st of January 1996.

However, things were not the same from the EU point of view. In 1997 Luxembourg Summit, surprisingly Turkey was excluded from the next enlargement wave while other ten potential candidate countries became official candidates of the EU. On the other hand, just two years after, in 1999 Helsinki Summit, Turkey was accepted as a candidate country. It is important to discuss the reasons of this policy shift of the EU towards the beginning of Turkey’s candidacy process. Muftuler-Bac mentions that ‘Turkey’s ability to meet the criteria did not improve significantly between the Luxembourg Summit of December 1997 and the Helsinki Summit

⁵ ‘European Commission Enlargement’, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/the-policy/conditions-for-enlargement/index_en.htm, accessed 12 June 2010.

⁶ Muftuler-Bac (2002), ‘Turkey in the EU’s Enlargement Process: Obstacles and Challenges’, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 79.

⁷ Yilmaz (2010), ‘Taking Stock: The Customs Union Between Turkey and the EU Fifteen Years Later’, *TÜSİAD – Koç University Economic Research Forum Working Paper Series*, Working Paper 1023, July 2010, pp. 1-4, http://www.ku.edu.tr/ku/images/EAF/erf_wp_1023.pdf, accessed 5 August 2010.

⁸ Hurriyet Newspaper, 7 May 1995, http://www.atonet.org.tr/yeni/files/files/UNUTULAN_MANSETLER/1993-1997.pdf, p. 11, accessed 10 July 2010.

of 1999, when it was included as a candidate country'⁹. However, as it is mentioned earlier in this paper, it can be said that the multi-lateral framework of Turkey's EU accession process paved the way for this decision. It is also necessary to draw the attention to the strategy change of the EU from 1997 Luxembourg to 1999 Helsinki, it has shifted from an exclusive strategy to an inclusive one towards Turkey. This is mainly due to the rise of EU's security concerns in the Balkans, Middle East and Eurasia. Kosovo crisis emerged in 1999 and the Middle East has been full of unresolved conflicts. In that regard, it was also a strategic choice for the EU to accept Turkey as a candidate state.

Finally, accession talks with Turkey began in 2005. Even though, Turkey is criticized because of its slow pace of negotiations and reforms by many from the EU, one has to keep in mind that the opening of 18 chapters are blocked now by a Council decision regarding to the ongoing conflict in Cyprus and also by two EU countries, France and Cyprus. Therefore, Turkey has still the status of a negotiating candidate country, while the EU has doubled its member states since the application of Turkey for full membership. The long ongoing accession process of Turkey proves that it is not just enough for Turkey to meet the Copenhagen criteria to be an EU member. EU specific factors and the public opinion of both EU and Turkish citizens must be taken into consideration in analyzing Turkish accession process. This argument moves us into one of the significant EU specific factors for Turkey, which is the bargaining power of the EU member states, to discuss.

Bargaining power of EU member states

Bargaining power of the member states is one of the significant factors that affect the relations between member and candidate states of the EU. Even though, there are some other examples of bargaining power used by member states towards some candidate countries during previous enlargements of the EU, it has been more effective in the Turkish case. Especially, Greece's bargaining power as a member state, in different periods, during the accession process of Turkey until 1999 Helsinki Summit, was the most decisive one. Also, recently, after the opening of negotiations with Turkey in 2005 and the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as the President of France in 2007, bargaining power of France still continues to affect Turkish accession to the EU.

'Since its accession to the EC/EU in 1981, Greece has succeeded in Europeanizing and internationalizing Turco-Greek conflict'¹⁰. Additionally, the existence of '1966 Luxembourg compromise and practice of unanimity in EU decision-making relating to external relations'¹¹ as institutional challenges till 2001, created an important veto power for all of the member states, especially for Greece in regards to Turkish accession. 1966 Luxembourg compromise was giving de facto veto power to existing member states over decisions. Both compromise and unanimity voting procedure were creating difficulties in having collective decisions, actions and cooperation among the member states and this was the most common case in regards to topics and decisions related with Turkey.

After its accession to the EU in 1981, Greece benefited from this institutional structure of the EU to support its own foreign policy aims. However, this created several problems in every decision about Turkey in the Union. In 1995, during the negotiations for Customs Union decision, Greece preferred to block the financial aid packages for Turkey¹². It was called

⁹ Muftuler-Bac (2002), 'Turkey in the EU's Enlargement Process: Obstacles and Challenges', p. 80.

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 82.

¹¹ *ibid.* p. 83.

¹² *ibid.* p. 84.

'package deal of the EU' that enabled the approval of Customs Union decision by the removal of Greek veto in return for the inclusion of the republic of Cyprus as a candidate during the next enlargement process and requires the resolution of disputes in the Aegean for stability¹³. Importantly, during the Luxembourg Summit of 1997, all applicant states, except Turkey, had been declared as a candidate and this came as a shock in Turkey. There was again significant role of the bargaining power of Greece in this decision. In this summit, all of the applicant countries, including Cyprus, except Turkey were accepted as candidate states. Additionally, 'when at the 1998 Cardiff summit and 1999 Cologne summit of the Council, the United Kingdom and Germany (which hosted these meetings during their EU Presidencies) tried to adopt new proposals for Turkey, Greece was among the most ardent opponents of such moves'¹⁴.

However, in 1999 Helsinki Summit, even though there were not any significant social, economical and political developments in Turkey's situation, after two years, Turkey was also accepted as a candidate country. In both of these decisions, there is a huge impact of the bargaining power of the EU member states. Until the 1999 Helsinki Summit, Greece was always opposing to Turkish candidacy with its bargaining power. In 1999, Greece did not oppose to Turkish candidacy because first of all, the EU had to respond Turkish demands and provide valid arguments, then, the Greco-Turkish conflict has been Europeanized and the opportunity for finding a solution to the Cyprus conflict became clearer. One can say that, Greece could find a fertile ground to use the EU as a platform to develop its own foreign policy objectives. Importantly, during the 1999 Helsinki Summit, Greece received the guarantee that Cyprus will become a member in 2004 with the fifth enlargement regardless of the result of Annan Plan referendum, which would be held before this enlargement round in both sides of the island.

The capture of Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of internationally listed terrorist organization PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), in the Greek Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya in February 1999 was also a diplomatic shame for Greece that affected the withdrawal decision of Greece in 1999 Helsinki Summit. After the capture of Ocalan in the Greek Embassy in Kenya, even Greece's Foreign Affairs Minister Theodoros Pangalos resigned. Last but not least, in 1999, in New York the first seeds of Greek-Turkish rapprochement had been sown by the ministers of Foreign Affairs of both countries, Yorgos Papandreou and Ismail Cem. Also, Greek-Turkish rapprochement paved the way for the beginning of a new era in the EU-Turkey relations, in regard to the role of Greece in Turkish accession.

In all of these turning points during the accession process of Turkey to the EU, the role of Greece in using its bargaining power were so effective in the EU and represented a problematic for Turkey. Despite the strong influence that Greece had with its bargaining power, it cannot be considered as the main reason why Turkey could not join to the EU for decades. However, it is clear that this bargaining power made Greece the scapegoat of the EU, when Turkey had been considered for years. Other member states, which were also not so ambitious for Turkey's membership, benefited from the existence of Greek opposition to Turkey and did not need to develop any other explanation for delays about Turkish accession. Therefore, until 1999, Turco-Greek conflict was totally Europeanized by the EU's decision-making mechanism¹⁵ and bargaining power of member states.

¹³ Leser (2008), 'From Advocate to Stakeholder: US Policy Towards Turkey and Implications for EU-Turkey Relations in Nathalie Tocci, ed., *Talking Turkey in Europe: Towards a Differentiated Communication Strategy*, Talking Turkey II IAI-TEPAV Project', p. 219.

¹⁴ Muftuler-Bac (2002), 'Turkey in the EU's Enlargement Process: Obstacles and Challenges', p. 82.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 83.

Finally, recent behaviour and intention of the French and Cypriot governments towards Turkey's accession process can also be considered as one of the examples of the use of bargaining power by member states. As it is mentioned in this paper earlier, Turkey started negotiations with the EU in 2005. However, according to the conclusions adopted and endorsed by the Council of the European Union in December 2006, 'as long as restrictions remain in place on the free movement of goods carried by vessels and aircrafts registered in Cyprus or whose last port of call was in Cyprus, Turkey will not be in a position fully to implement the *acquis* relating to eight chapters'¹⁶, which are Free movement of goods, Right of establishment and Freedom to provide services, Financial Services, Agriculture, Fisheries, Transport policy, Customs Union and External Relations. Therefore, according to the Council, Turkey should meet the criteria of the Additional Protocol of Ankara Agreement.

In this situation, today after five years of the opening negotiations, there is only one chapter, which has been discussed and temporarily closed, that of 'Science and Research'. Twelve other chapters are still undergoing negotiation, but importantly there are five chapters, which have been blocked by France until Turkey will meet the criteria of the Additional Protocol of Ankara Agreement related to the opening of borders to the Republic of Cyprus¹⁷. These five crucial chapters (Agriculture, Economic and Monetary Union, Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments, Financial and Budgetary Provisions, Institutions) are considered as a taboo for the French government¹⁸. In this situation, France uses its bargaining power as a member state by blocking the negotiating process of Turkey, which causes long term delays in Turkish accession to the EU.

Additionally, Cyprus also uses its bargaining power as an EU member state against Turkey by vetoing the opening of negotiations in six chapters (Freedom of movement for workers, Energy, Judiciary and fundamental rights, Justice, Freedom and Security, Education and Culture, Foreign, Security and Defence policy, regarding to the same reason with France.

Today, blocked chapters are a crucial problem for the pace of Turkey's accession negotiations. Out of 35 chapters totally 18 of them are blocked by the Council, France and Cyprus. Out of the rest only one chapter is discussed and temporarily closed (Science and Research). Twelve of them (Free Movement of Capital, Company Law, Intellectual Property Law, Information Society and Media, Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy, Taxation, Statistics, Enterprise and Industrial Policy, Trans European Networks, Environment, Consumer and Health Protection and Financial Control) are still undergoing negotiation and this situation makes available only few more chapters to be opened in the close future.

Preferences of member states, domestic and social groups towards EU policies

Apart from the bargaining power of member states, the preferences of the EU member states, governments' preferences in their domestic politics and also the demands and preferences of domestic and social groups in the member states play an important role in the accession process of Turkey.

¹⁶ Council of the European Union, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/92122.pdf, accessed on 15 June 2010.

¹⁷ Bilefsky (2007), 'Sarkozy Blocks key part of EU entry talks on Turkey', *International Herald Tribune Europe* <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/06/25/news/union.php>, accessed 18 June 2010.

¹⁸ Mahony (2007), 'France eases stance on EU Turkey talks', *euobserver.com* <http://euobserver.com/9/24639>, accessed 18 June 2010.

Related to the dynamics in world politics, end of the Cold War period in 1989 also changed the preferences of EC member states. It was obvious that during the Cold War, there were two camps as rival to each other, West Camp, where the United States (US) and European states were included and the Soviet camp which included Eastern European states with the Soviet Union. However, by the end of the Cold War, Europe's perspective started to change towards Eastern European states. The change in discourse, such as the use of "returning to Europe" was the evidence that the aim of eventual integration was emerging. These countries came to be depicted as "Central and Eastern European" states rather than just "Eastern". 1989 was also the year when the opinion regarding the application of Turkey to the EC, had been announced by the EC Commission. The Commission confirmed Turkey's eligibility for membership yet expressed Turkey's shortcomings in the political economic and social fields. Thus Turkey's membership was not evaluated as feasible in the near future. In this decision, member states' preferences played a significant role in regard to the ground-breaking changes in world politics, which had affected the enlargement perspective of the EC member states and directly the enlargement policy of the Community. At that time, Central and Eastern European states got the attention and priority of the EC and they had started to be seen as potential candidates. Turkey's status as a potential candidate country was not acknowledged by the EC and Turkey lost ground vis-à-vis the growing importance and priority attributed to the post-communist states of Eastern Europe. Therefore, it can be said that a political conjuncture change in world politics, which caused also a change in the preferences of member states and the enlargement perspective of the EC, affected Turkish accession to the EC/EU negatively.

In addition to significant changes in world politics, which affected the perception and preferences of member states collectively, there are also political and ideological changes in the domestic politics of member states, which also influence directly preferences of these individual member states towards enlargement policy of the EU, candidate states and especially towards Turkey. Change in Germany's domestic politics can be considered as a good example for this argument. One can not deny the role played by German political leaders and ideologies of country's political parties who and which were in power in Germany during the turning points of Turkey's accession process to the EU. During the period of 1997 Luxembourg Summit, when only Turkey was denied formal candidacy to the EU, conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) Party and its leader Helmut Kohl was in power in Germany. At the time, Germany's view towards Turkey's accession to the EU was not positive. However, only two years later, in 1999, even though there was not any significant change in the political and economic situation of Turkey, the country was given the status of an EU candidate. In this decision, in addition to many other reasons, there is also the role of the change in the government in Germany between 1997 and 1999. During the 1999 Helsinki Summit, when Turkey was declared as an official candidate to the EU, Gerhard Schröder was in government, who was in favour of Turkey's accession to the EU, because of Turkey's strategic importance and other assets. His party, the Social Democrat Party (SPD) had a more positive attitude towards Turkey's membership to the EU provided that Turkey met the criteria for membership, whereas the former governing party, CDU was sceptical about Turkey's membership based on cultural arguments¹⁹.

As it is seen in the case of Germany, preferences and policies of individual EU member states can change according to domestic political changes, especially with the changes in government and leadership in the country. This situation can relatively affect the accession process of candidates, especially Turkey's, because of its problematic and long standing relations with the Union and because of Turkey's perception by political powers in the EU

¹⁹ 'European Stability Initiative' (2006), 'The German Turkey Debate Under The Grand Coalition', October 2006, http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_94.pdf, accessed 6 July 2010, p. 1.

member states, especially in the ones which are major players in the EU, such as Germany and France.

The term “privileged partnership” is another idea that was pushed forward by the German Conservative Party (CDU) in 2004 for Turkey-EU relations, as an alternative to membership of Turkey to the EU. At that time, the leader of the party was Angela Merkel, who is now the Chancellor of Germany. She had been supporting the idea of privileged partnership for Turkey, because of both domestic politics of the country and the impact of social groups in Germany, which oppose to Turkish membership. According to an article published on 23 July 2007, ‘Mrs. Merkel brought the idea of a privileged partnership as a supposedly appropriate alternative to Turkey’s full membership of the EU. “You know our position and it has not changed,” said Merkel at a news conference. During her parliamentary campaign in 2005, Merkel, along with her colleagues from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), called for a privileged partnership to be established between the EU and Turkey. “We want a very close linkage of Turkey to the EU; we favour the idea of a privileged membership...”²⁰.

It is not just Germany today, who is the supporter of this idea. In International Crisis Group’s Europe report about Turkey, it is mentioned that ‘significant opposition to Turkish membership in some key states has been expressed in an unprecedented way by important EU political leaders’²¹. Current French President Sarkozy is also one of the fierce supporters of privileged partnership for Turkey. Dempsey and Bilefsky mention in International Herald Tribune that ‘Sarkozy made his opposition to Turkish entry an election issue. He shares Merkel’s view that Turkey should be offered a privileged partnership instead of full EU membership, while Britain, Spain and the new member states from Eastern Europe support full membership’. In the same article Ulgen, chairman of EDAM, an Istanbul-based think tank, states that “the unending rhetoric on the privileged partnership gives rise to suspicions about the EU’s true intention, Turkey more than ever needs the anchor of stability that the EU process provides”²². The privileged partnership instead of a membership to the EU, can not be accepted by Turkey, which voices against this notion raises from different parts of society. Chairman of Economic Development Foundation, an institution devoted to Turkey-EU relations for 45 years, Prof. Dr. Hâluk Kabaalioğlu also mentions that ‘it is so injurious for Turkey to talk about privileged partnership five years later from the beginning of accession talks with the EU, whose aim is full membership of Turkey. This can not be accepted’²³.

Additionally, France also blocks opening of negotiations on some crucial chapters in Turkish accession. Any change in the governance of member states relatively affects the relations of the EU with its candidates and enlargement policy, because of the priorities, ideas and preferences of the leading party and its leader in a member state, as it is seen significantly in German and French cases towards Turkey recently. Importantly, Sarkozy’s stance towards Turkey’s membership contrasts with the former President Jacques Chirac’s positive approach. His policy can be assessed as a mixture of domestic political considerations, effort to gain the following of right-wing and anti-Chirac votes in France, a strategy developed to accommodate voices raised against Turkey’s membership in French public opinion and a policy developed at the EU level with considerations of France’s position and interests as a leading member

²⁰ ‘Germany and Turkey’s EU bid’, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-174020141.html>, accessed 12 December 2008.

²¹ International Crisis Group, *Europe Report*, (15 December 2008), No. 197, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/197-turkey-and-europe-the-decisive-year-ahead.aspx>, accessed January 2008.

²² Dempsey & Bilefsky (2007), ‘European leaders greet Sarkozy with mixture of hope and caution’ *International Herald Tribune Europe*, <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2007/05/07/news/europe.php>, accessed 10 December 2008.

²³ Economic Development Foundation (İKV), Press Release, 24 March 2010, <http://www.ikv.org.tr/icerik.asp?konu=haberler&id=2613&baslik=%DDKT%DDSAD%DD%20KALKINMA%20VAKFI%20BASIN%20DUYURUSU>, accessed on 18 June 2010.

state.

When the enlargement policy of the EU is on the agenda in the member states, it is important to note that the preferences of member states towards EU policies change according to the preferences of domestic groups and their relative power. One has to keep in mind that these political arguments existing in some EU member states are directly related to an economic and social fear of some classes in Europe. It is obvious that some social classes fear from a Turkish immigration wave, consequently the loss of their jobs and weakening of social state. Historical prejudices towards Turks and cultural concerns as well as social and economic concerns, which would come out from the competition when Turkey will become an EU member state, affect the political choices and individual preferences of EU member states directly.

It is also obvious that every enlargement process enabled people of Europe to be much more aware about the EU and created more dynamic social groups, which voice up and react quickly to any decision of the institutions of the Union. '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 Nice Treaty seem to indicate that the public is still at ease with the EU'²⁴. Also, referendum results in France and the Netherlands as "No" to the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 and finally, Irish rejection to Lisbon Treaty on June 2008 support the argument that depending on the circumstances, political constellations and the nature of the issue area, different groups in member states may have powers and impacts in the decisions and preferences of each member state at varying degrees and levels. European Stability Initiative states that 'since the spring of 2005, when the proposed European Constitutional Treaty was rejected by referendum in France and the Netherlands, debate on the drawbacks of enlargement has gained in intensity. Senior politicians across Europe have called for a slow-down, freeze or even a permanent halt to enlargement. Voices opposing enlargement regularly make headlines, creating the impression that the future of enlargement is hanging in the balance'²⁵. In that regard the speech of German CSU leader, Edmund Stoiber, who said 'Turkish accession is out of the question and that commitments made to the Western Balkan countries should be revoked'²⁶ proves the strong relation between domestic preferences, member state preferences, enlargement policy and Turkey.

The fifth enlargement of the EU in 2004 can be considered as a turning point in the perception of domestic and social groups in the EU member states towards enlargement. With the fifth enlargement, 10 new member states joined to the EU family and Union's population almost doubled. However, while Austria, Sweden and Finland were joining the EU in 1995, the preferences of domestic and social groups in the EU member states were not taken into consideration during the decision talks for the accession of these countries. The EU project was considered more as an elite project at that time in comparison to late 2000s. The fifth enlargement constitutes the biggest one in the EU history. Also, it is important to note that these 10 new member states were significantly poorer than the rest of the EU member states. Therefore, this enlargement was perceived as a threat and this increased prejudices in the EU member states against further enlargement, which includes especially Turkey. Moreover, it was the first time in the EU that the issue of 'democratic deficit' started to be questioned. Instead of being an elite project, the EU has started to consider the choices and thoughts of its citizens. Maastricht Treaty referendum of 1992 in Denmark can be considered as the first

²⁴ Muftuler-Bac (2002), 'Turkey in the EU's Enlargement Process: Obstacles and Challenges', p. 87.

²⁵ 'European Stability Initiative' (2006), 'Beyond Enlargement Fatigue? The Dutch Debate on Turkish Accession', 24 April 2006, http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_74.pdf, accessed on 6 July 2010, p. 1.

²⁶ Ibid.

solid example of the role of domestic and social groups of the member states in the EU integration. In this referendum, Danish voters had rejected ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and euroscepticism gained prominence²⁷.

In such cases, member states begin to determine EU policy. This situation is totally true for Turkish case in the EU Enlargement process. Although, the state elites perceive that Turkish candidacy or membership grant greater benefits, they may refrain from doing so owing to domestic opposition. Therefore, the preferences of domestic groups and their relative power in influencing member state positions towards EU policies need to be taken into consideration in any analysis of Turkey's position in the enlargement process. The role of public opinion and domestic preferences are becoming important in the decision-making process of the EU. One needs to assess whether the Europeans want others to join. Related with the preferences of domestic and social groups in the EU member states, public opinion in the EU, thoughts of Europeans towards Turkey and Turkish citizens are also another significant factor that affects the process of Turkey's accession to the EU.

Public Opinion in EU Member States

Public opinion in the EU member states is one of the most important factors that affect overall enlargement policy. Also, when Turkey is considered, the role of the public opinion in the EU member states becomes more crucial within the decision-making process. Ruiz-Jimenez and Torreblanca state that 'the dominant mood existing among EU founding member states is negative, when it comes to support for enlargement. Europeans show little enthusiasm for enlargement in general, and for Turkey's accession in particular'²⁸. Importantly, 'according to Eurobarometer surveys, citizens' support for Turkey's accession to the EU is not only low, but also shrinking'²⁹. While Turkey was also one of the candidate countries with the ones, who became full members by the 5th enlargement in 2004, she had the lowest level of support from the European public³⁰.

Two of the reasons of phlegm for enlargement are the general concern of European citizens about Enlargement and Turkey's view from the European perspective. Jones' and van der Bijl's survey mentions that lack of information about the candidate country in the public directly affect people's opinion towards country³¹. According to Muftuler-Bac, the general concerns of Europeans about enlargement are the fear of an alien culture, increasing xenophobia and racism, loss of resources to foreigners, loss of structural funds, the issue of immigration, increase in unemployment, crime and illegal drug trafficking, and costs of enlargement to them, which are also directly related with skepticism towards Turkey³². Also, Giannakopoulos mentions that 'in the Turko-skeptic perspective, Turkey emerges as a danger to the European economy, the deepening of European integration, and the future of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. This perspective stresses a negative picture of economic, political, social, geographic, religious and cultural differences, which it is argued, obstruct Turkey's ability to become a full EU member'³³.

²⁷ Harmsen & Spiering (2004), *Euroscepticism: Party Politics, National Identity and European Integration*. (Amsterdam: Radopi B.V.), p. 25.

²⁸ Ruiz-Jimenez & Torreblanca (2008), 'European public opinion and Turkey's accession making sense of arguments for and against', *European Policy Institutes Network (EPIN) Working Paper*, No. 16, p. 2.

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 7.

³⁰ Muftuler-Bac (2002), 'Turkey in the EU's Enlargement Process: Obstacles and Challenges', p. 88.

³¹ Jones & Bijl (2004), 'Public Opinion and Enlargement. A Gravity Approach', *European Union Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 331.

³² Muftuler-Bac (2002), 'Turkey in the EU's Enlargement Process: Obstacles and Challenges', p. 90.

³³ Giannakopoulos (2008), 'Public opinion in Member States as a factor in the debate on Turkey's EU membership', p.1.

Both the EU and its citizens have mixed views towards Turkish membership. Moreover, several arguments against Turkey make the country's accession to the EU much more difficult than the other candidate states. According to both European public and the media, there are different factors related to Turkey that create negative approach towards Turkish membership. Religious and cultural elements, which emphasize the existence of Christian values in Europe and dilemma between Islam and democracy; demographic factor that Turkey has a huge population, which creates concerns about immigration; economic reasons related to structural and agricultural policies of the EU; importance of security and stability that some Europeans believe Turkey would create instability and insecurity in the EU, while some Europeans totally believe the opposite; are the main arguments of European public against Turkish membership³⁴.

In the Turkish case, the role of public opinion increases and also affects the enlargement policy. When Turkey is considered, some of the member states started to signal that 'they might opt for holding referenda before ratifying Turkey's accession treaty' which means at the end, full accession of Turkey can be in the hands of European citizens. 'Turkish government must win as much sympathy for Turkey's future membership among the European public as possible' according to former President of the European Parliament, Josep Borrell Fontelles³⁵. Public opinion towards Turkey is important also because of recent awareness and reactions of both European officials and public towards any developments in Turkish domestic politics, such as European reactions against the court case for the closure of governing Justice and Development Party in 2008³⁶, reactions against tax penalty to Dogan Media Group in regards to freedom of media in Turkey, European follow ups regarding to Ergenekon case and interrogations of high-ranking Turkish military officers. The EU and European public scrutinize any political and economical development in Turkey closely.

In a recent survey, conducted by Prof. Hakan Yilmaz, in a joint project of Istanbul Boğaziçi University's Center for European Studies, the Autonomous University of Madrid and the University of Granada, called 'How Turkey's EU bid was seen in five European countries -- France, Britain, Germany, Spain and Poland?', it has come out that young Europeans support Turkey's EU accession more than the elders. Yilmaz also mentions that 'half of the university graduates support to Turkey's EU bid but support diminishes as education level reduces'³⁷.

It is significant to note that domestic politics, preferences of member states and general public opinion in member states are directly correlated with each other. A party's opinion towards enlargement and specifically towards Turkish membership can affect people's opinions or vice versa. For example, Austria is the leading country in the EU, which opposes Turkish accession. This is a general trend among Austrian citizens, when it is asked about Turkey's membership to the EU. It is important to note that, while opposition to Turkish membership is a right-wing issue in many EU countries, Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), which is the winner of last elections in the country, clearly opposes Turkey's full accession to the EU. It is clear that in Austria, regarding to Turkey there is a cross-party rejection and this is reflected in public polls held in the country. According to 2006 Eurobarometer survey, only 5% of Austrians are in favour of Turkish accession³⁸. Even the issue of Turkish accession

³⁴ Ruiz-Jimenez & Torreblanca (2008), 'European public opinion and Turkey's accession making sense of arguments for and against', p. 2.

³⁵ Giannakopoulos (2008), 'Public opinion in Member States as a factor in the debate on Turkey's EU membership' p. 2.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ Yilmaz (2010), *Young Europeans back Turkey's EU bid more, poll* <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-199499-100-young-europeans-back-turkeys-eu-bid-more-poll.html>, accessed 23 January 2010.

³⁸ 'Attitudes Towards European union Enlargement', *Special Eurobarometer*, July 2006, p.2 http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_255_en.pdf, accessed 17 June 2010.

becomes an important election topic in Austria in each election campaign.

Furthermore, majority of Germany is also against any Turkish accession. The position of German government towards Turkey has not changed as the supporter of privileged partnership increased and it is not surprising that ‘the German population remains, according to the most recent Eurobarometer surveys, among the most skeptical in Europe’³⁹. According to bi-annual Eurobarometer polls, 69% of German participants said that they are opposed to Turkey’s accession to the EU⁴⁰. According to Tocci, the approach of the EU countries towards Turkey’s membership depends on whether it is a foreign policy issue like in the UK and Spain or an issue of national politics like in Germany and France⁴¹. According to the results of surveys in Austria and Germany, which are the major European countries hosting Turkish immigrants for decades, there is a positive correlation between the number of Turkish immigrants and the level of opposition to Turkish accession. The existence of Turkish immigrants in some EU countries does not help Turkey in its accession to the EU. Oppositely, this situation accelerates the increase in the number of opponents to Turkish accession in the EU countries⁴².

Turkey’s image in the EU is like a brand, which can be so effective in the minds of individual Europeans, while talking about Enlargement, future of the EU and Turkey. In addition to the public opinion in the EU member states, it is also important that similar skepticisms in Turkish people towards the EU also affect EU-Turkish relations and any negative approach causes a delay in any improvement in the country.

Public Opinion in Turkey

Public opinion in Turkey towards the EU, also directly influences relations with the EU and there are multi-dimensional reasons which affect public opinion in Turkey. Additionally, like EU citizens, Turkish citizens display a great deal of diversity in their opinions towards the EU. Especially they tend to shape their views according to the leaders’ or governing party’s tendency, popular and easily understandable frameworks expressed by opinion leaders, and the approach of the mass media. ‘Mass media and political leaders are considered to be the most influential instruments of building up the public opinion, though, at the same time representing an evident result of societal attitude (in democratic societies)’⁴³. Two important academic surveys conducted by Çarkoğlu and McLaren give general opinion of Turkish citizens and elite groups towards the EU.

Çarkoğlu mentions that in Turkey there is a very limited knowledge about issues related to the EU and enlargement process. People’s preferences are very much context dependent. According to his survey, religiousness, anti-democratic attitudes together Euro-skepticism create resistance towards EU membership in Turkish public opinion. There are also some so called “sensitive issues”, such as the role of military, Kurdish issue, national sovereignty, Cyprus conflict, that can be easily used by some parties and opposition groups against the EU

³⁹ European Stability Initiative (2006), ‘The German Turkey Debate Under The Grand Coalition’, October 2006, http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_94.pdf , accessed on 6 July 2010, p. 2.

⁴⁰ ‘Attitudes Towards European Union Enlargement’, *Special Eurobarometer*, July 2006, p. 2.

⁴¹ Tocci (2007), *Unpacking European Discourses: Conditionality, Impact and Prejudice in EU-Turkey Relations IAI-Tepav Report*, IAI Quaderni English Series, No. 9, p. 14.

⁴² European Stability Initiative (2006), ‘The German Turkey Debate Under The Grand Coalition’, October 2006, http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_94.pdf , accessed on 6 July 2010.

⁴³ Balytska (2006), ‘Public opinion in Turkey and EU member states on the Turkish EU membership’, http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/2/4/2/5/pages124257/p124257-1.php, accessed 2 June 2010, p. 6.

membership. Therefore, it seems that short-term changes in Turkey, in regards to meet the Copenhagen criteria, are not so effective. However, longer-run tendencies such as people's education level, democratic tendencies, their age and ethnicity, religiousness seem much more effective while they are looking at EU-Turkey relations. Also, the leadership role of politicians and public relation campaigns seem much more effective. During the periods of campaign to support EU membership or when the leader is trying to approach the EU and its policies positively in the domestic politics, the opinion of the people also seems much more positive towards the EU in Turkey⁴⁴.

In another survey, which has been conducted by McLaren, the Turkish elite's (including business people, government ministers, journalists, professors) perspectives towards EU and membership have been analyzed just after the beginning of Turkey's candidacy process, before the beginning of negotiations. Many individuals would perceive that the real reason for the rejection by the EU revolves around cultural and religious factors -since Turkey is a Muslim country and culturally different from the EU and EU seems as a "Christian Club". Turkish elites seem to believe that there were more fundamental problems with Turkey's application than the opposition of Greece, during the time of 1997 Luxembourg Summit. These problems, some of which are still ongoing and Turkish elites still continue to attach explanatory power, are economic and social structural problems, size of Turkey's population, concerns within the EU about issues of free movement, political problems, human rights violation, identity problems.

The vast majority of the respondents of this survey were in favour of Turkey joining the EU as a full-member. They usually believe that if Turkey will be a full-member, the economic and social level of Turkey will increase, the regional differences within Turkey will disappear, standards will increase in all of the sectors, including education, health, environment and Turkey will gain prestige in the international arena as a European country. However, only a few of them responded to the developments about democratization, development of the legal system in Turkey, creation of political stability like the processes in Greece, Spain and Portugal. On the other hand, while most of the respondents believe that EU will bring no harm to the country, some of them are concerned about the forthcoming economical difficulties, the loss of national sovereignty and the deterioration of traditional values and norms. Finally, it can be said that according to this survey, the majority of the Turkish elite would like to believe that Turkey will be a member of the EU one day⁴⁵.

In Turkey, there was much more support to the EU membership, during the 2002-2005 period, when the governing Justice and Development Party was more vocally supportive of EU accession, just after the elections that brought the Justice and Development Party into power, and before the opening of negotiations⁴⁶. In addition to academic surveys, according to Eurobarometer's 2007 survey, 49% of the Turkish participants still consider the EU as a "good thing", while 25% also thinks as a good thing than a bad thing for Turkey. On the other hand, the results of the German Marshall Fund of the United States Transatlantic Tendencies 2008 survey, shows that Europeans believe that Turkish membership will happen more than Turks do believe. Even though 21% of Europeans believe that Turkish membership is a good thing, 60% believe that Turkey will be member of the EU one day. However, according to the survey, while 42% of Turks, who participated to the survey, believe that EU is a positive

⁴⁴ Çarkoğlu (2004), 'Societal Perceptions of Turkey's EU membership: causes and consequences of support for EU membership', in Mehmet Ugur and Nergis Canefe, eds., *Turkey and European Integration: Accession prospects and Issues*, (London: Routledge), pp. 17-47.

⁴⁵ McLaren (2000), 'Turkey's Eventual Membership of the EU: Turkish Elite Perspectives on the Issue', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 117-29.

⁴⁶ 'Turkey in the EU-What the public thinks', *Euractiv Turkey*, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/opinion/turkey-eu-public-thinks/article-171187>, accessed 3 December 2008.

thing, only 26% of them believe that this will happen⁴⁷. Turkish public opinion towards the EU and Turkey's EU membership was positive and supportive until the results of 2004 Annan Referendum in Cyprus. Then, the support continued to decline in 2006, when 8 chapters in negotiation talks have been blocked by the Council decision because of the Cyprus issue. Since then the enthusiasm and support in Turkish public and politics towards EU membership have declined regularly. In addition to these, recent developments regarding the difficulties related to Schengen visa requirements for Turkish citizens, increasing notion of "privileged partnership" in Europe as an alternative for full membership and the emphasis on a transition period for free movement of Turkish citizens, even though Turkey becomes an EU member, caused the belief in Turkish public that material benefits of EU membership, such as accession to the EU funds and free movement of persons, have gone away.

Importantly, in a recent report entitled 'Social Inequality in Turkey' published by Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu, there are recent significant results in regards to Turkish public opinion towards the EU. The survey was conducted in 65 cities and towns of Turkey with 569 participants. Results of the survey show that the support of Turkish public for Turkey's EU membership is sharply declining since 2005. While 56% of Turkish people had been supported Turkey's EU accession in December 2008-February 2009, according to recent survey it declined to 46% in October-November 2009. Also, the percentage of the ones who say 'no' to the EU increased to 41%⁴⁸.

To sum up, it is clear that public opinion in Turkey still keeps its skeptical view towards the EU, first of all because of cultural preconceptions, stereotypes and concerns of Turkish people related to lack of information about EU and also country's domestic politics. Even though some elite groups continue to support the full membership, Turkish public is not really aware of the EU and its benefits for Turkey. Also, according to political choices and the tendency of media in the country, the support of EU membership can change rapidly into both ways, negatively or positively and in the recent situation it is declining obviously. This shaky ground of Turkish public towards EU creates a challenge for a peaceful accession of the country to the EU and delays many reforms and decisions, which are necessary for full accession.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper argued that Turkey's accession to the EU differs from the general trends of the EU's enlargement policy and when Turkey is considered, it is not easy only to follow the general pathway of enlargement process. When Turkey is considered as a potential member state to the EU, the concept of "multilateral framework of EU enlargement" assumes explanatory power in analyzing Turkey's process of accession which rests on a complex combination of factors. In addition to the standard membership requirement of meeting the Copenhagen criteria, there are also other EU specific factors which affect the accession of the country to the EU. While analyzing the Turkish position in the enlargement process, these EU specific factors should be taken into account, which are bargaining power of some EU member states, preferences and interests of their social groups, the role of their domestic politics and public opinion both in the EU and in Turkey.

⁴⁷ Yezdani (2008), 'Turks do not believe that they are going to be member of the EU', <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Guncel/HaberDetay.aspx?aType=HaberDetay&Kategori=guncel&KategoriID=&ArticleID=989581&Date=11.09.2008&b=Turkler.%20Abye%20uye%20olacaklarina%20inanmiyor>, accessed 22 December 2008. 'The German Marshall Fund of the United States', *Transatlantic Tendencies: Immigration 2008*, http://www.transatlantictrends.org/trends/doc/TTI_2008_Final.pdf, accessed 20 December 2008.

⁴⁸ Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu (2010), *Social Inequality in Turkey Report*, <http://www.euractiv.com.tr/ab-ve-turkiye/article/turk-halki-saga-yaklasip-abden-uzaklasiyor-010357>, accessed 27 May 2010.

Turkey faces prior challenges in the way of EU membership which are intrinsic to the country and which have to be dealt with in the short to medium term such as deficiencies and weaknesses associated with the political, economic and democratic level of the country. However, a solution of these problems is not by itself adequate for Turkey's accession to the EU. Similarly, meeting the Copenhagen criteria is just one of the factors, albeit an important one, that Turkey needs to fulfil on its road to the EU membership.

The approaches of individual Member states may have an important impact on Turkey's accession process if one considers such countries like Greece that has important, unsettled bilateral issues with Turkey. Bargaining power of Greece was an important factor for years and was used by the country as a strategic tool to place obstacles in front of improved relations. This situation more or less changed with the Europeanization of Turco-Greek conflict, Greece's policy change at the 1999 Helsinki Summit and ongoing Turkish-Greek Rapprochement. Also, recently the bargaining powers of countries like France, Germany and Austria affect the turn of negotiations with Turkey. In this paper, it was argued that the preferences of member states according to their domestic politics, interests and demands of social groups and their citizens are also crucially important for the future of the enlargement policy and Turkey. There are several ongoing debates in many member states about Turkey-EU relations. The unclear and ambiguous thoughts and opinions of Europeans towards Turkey and its integration to the Union, create also fear and mistrust in Turkish public opinion. Additionally, because of several domestic issues and preferences and reflecting the attitude of the EU, there is growing EU skepticism in the country, which prevents Turkey to be member of the EU and keeps it in the slow-track for decades. The complex factors shaping Turkish public opinion in Turkey may be the topic of another working paper.

Explained by the multilateral framework of enlargement process in the case of Turkey, both Turkey and the EU and also, EU member states should be much clearer and more open in their approaches towards each other. An open and transparent attitude is necessary to find solution on the ongoing confrontations and misunderstandings and most importantly for better understanding each other, especially at the public level. It is obvious that for Turkey, just meeting the Copenhagen criteria in all of the chapters of the accession process is not enough to be a full member. The progress of the technical aspects of negotiations is a must for achieving membership. However, by itself this is not sufficient to solve the remaining obstacles and concerns about Turkey's membership in the EU.

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