

Turkey's Acceptance into the European Union

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Members of the Dais:

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I. Introduction

Following the impending withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the **European Union (EU)** as of 2016, the question of whether a candidate country for EU membership should replace the **Outer Seven**¹ country has become a topic of great debate in European geopolitics. Accounting with the seventeenth largest



GDP, the **Republic of Turkey** is seen as a possible prospect to be admitted into the European Union; however, as cause of many cultural, political, and economical differences between EU Nations and Turkey, anti-enlargement sentiments among the European public and the eurozone crisis have obstructed a long term vision for the future of EU enlargement and Turkish membership. For the purpose of this committee, Turkish membership in the European Union will be analyzed and debated by **European Council (EC)** members and Turkey

itself, taking in consideration the lengthy historical background that these share among them.

II. Historical Background

In 1959, relations between the **EU and the Turkey** were established as means to generate greater cooperation with the **European Economic Community (EEC)** and develop Turkish westernization.

¹ Outer Seven: The **Inner Six**, or simply **'the Six'**, were the six founding member states of the European Communities. They were in contrast to the **outer seven** who formed the European Free Trade Association rather than engage in supranational European integration.

This newly established relationship with the EU was therefore formalized in 1963 with the **Ankara Agreement**, which looked to create a “customs union” in which Turkey could trade goods and agricultural products with EEC countries without any particular restrictions.² While the Agreement was limited to trade and financial matters, the prospect of full membership on future unspecified date was offered. Furthermore, Turkey’s intervention in **Cyprus** in 1974, following a Greek sponsored coup, and the Turkish military’s overthrow of the civilian government in 1980, led to a real rupture in Turkey’s relations with the EC. Yet, in 1983 tensions eased as democratic elections in Turkey prevailed and led to the election of the pro-reform prime minister and later president, **Turgut Özal**. The newly-elected prime minister permitted the Turkish government to consequently apply for full EU membership on pragmatic geopolitical and economic grounds. Nevertheless, the Mediterranean enlargement with Greece (1981), Portugal and Spain (1986), had eroded Turkey’s trading position with the EC, giving countries with similar trading patterns an advantage over



Turkish products.³ Furthermore, Turkish involvement in fighting **Kurdish**⁴ insurrection in South-East Anatolia consequently caused them to face accusations over the abuse of human rights and the rights of minorities

The implementation of the **customs union (CU)** in 1995 marked a key moment in the trade relationship between the EU and Turkey. The CU with Turkey was the EU’s first substantial functioning CU with a non-member state and was one of the earliest attempts by the EU to share some of its legal system with another country. Following the **1999 Helsinki Council** decision to grant candidate status to Turkey, relations went through a brief episode of mutual confidence in Turkey’s eventual integration into the Union. Especially during the early years of the **Justice and Development Party (AKP)** government,

² *Turkey's Quest for EU Membership*. European Union Center of North Carolina, 2008.

³ *Evaluation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union*. World Bank, March 14, 2014.

⁴ **Kurds**- an Iranian ethnic group situated along the Middle East which holds its own language, culture, and government.

Turkey's agenda for reform in accordance with EU conditionality and its reconciliatory stance towards a common solution in Cyprus led to an unprecedented transformation of the EU's perception of Turkey and its prospect of joining the Union.

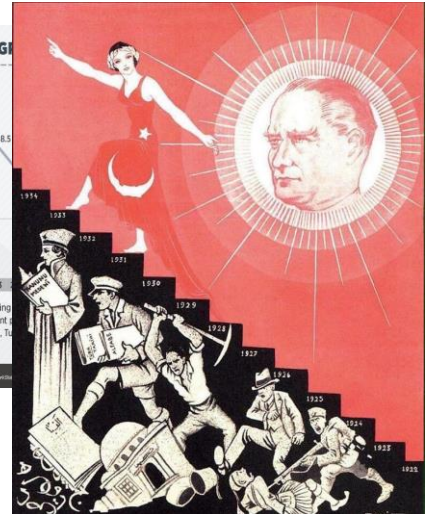
Through the early 2000's, Euro-Turkish cooperation was indeed at its peak, especially during 2003 when the then prime minister (later president) **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** asserted the government's determination to join the EU stating it as "our debt to our people and our country".⁵ Certainly, Turkey was seen as the pinnacle and model of democratization in the Muslim World and believed to be the panacea for radical Islamism in the Middle East. After a positive assessment by the **European Commission** a Turkey was willing to comply to resolve the Cyprus dilemma, the **December 2004 European Council** set out the final requirements for opening negotiations on October 3, 2005. However, the opening of accession negotiations did not pass without further drama and high politicking amongst EU member states. A last-minute objection by the Austrian government almost derailed the accession process and could only be overcome by simultaneously initiating accession talks with Croatia, which had been a long-standing Austrian priority. Nonetheless, talks of accession that swiftly began in 2005 gradually slowed down as **Abdullah Gull's Islamist** presidency began focusing more on a purge on secularists and **Kemalists**⁶ from the army, judiciary, and bureaucracy. As the concentration of power began to lie more and more on the executive branch of the Turkish government, as result from Erdogan's election as president, the deterioration of democracy and the rule of law have taken a systematic turn. Following the 15 August 2016 coup attempt, the government continues to use the state of emergency to issue decrees against the constitution and the basic principles of the rule of law. The undemocratic turn that the Turkish government is conveying essentially has worsened any opportunity that Turkey possesses for full EU membership as one of its fundamentals and requirements is a stable democracy.

⁵ Yabancı, Bilge, *The future of EU-Turkey relations: between mutual distrust and interdependency*. FEUTURE, November 2016.

⁶ **Kemalism**- referring towards the reformist ideologies of Kemal Atatürk. It is based on three main pillars: republicanism, secularism, and nationalism.

II. Economy

One of the main topics in the accession of Turkey is its economic impact on the EU. In recent years Turkey's economic performance has been impressive. Macroeconomic and fiscal stability were at the heart of its performance, leading to increased employment and incomes and making Turkey an upper-middle-income country.⁷ As a matter of fact, Turkey has a GDP per capita of \$10,592 and it grew 8.5% in 2010 and 11% in 2011. However, some of Turkey's development have been stagnating after long periods of growth. Growth rates are projected to go from 7.4% in 2017 to 3.7% in 2018 and 2.3% in 2019.⁸ Turkey managed the fiscal crisis of 2008/09 better than most European counterparts. It has also halved poverty during 2002 and 2015. At the same time, wealth has been unequally spread and poverty decreasing rates appear to slow down. Turkey's has failed to reform various labor sectors causing women labor force participation to stay relatively low. During earlier periods of political instability, Turkey's economy maintained resilience thanks to the country's solid public finances, well-capitalized and well-regulated banking sector, and vigorous, diversified private business sector.⁹ Nonetheless, Turkey's faces many economic challenges due to the lack of transparency and necessary reforms.



III. Society

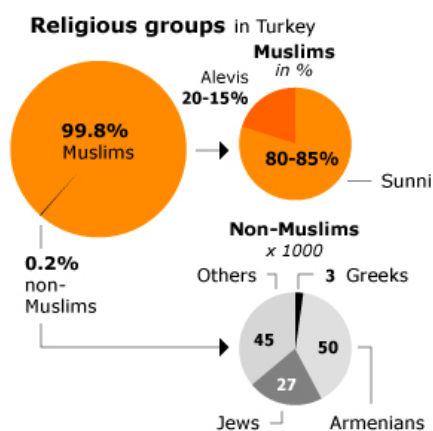
Turkey is a culturally diverse nation as bequeathed by its **Ottoman** predecessors who possessed a multi-ethnic and multi religious empire. Sunni Islam is the predominant religion in the country accounting

⁷ Country Context. World Bank October 11, 2018 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/overview>

⁸ Economy Recent Economic Developments. World Bank October 11, 2018 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/overview#3>

⁹ 2018 Index of Economic Freedom. Heritage Foundation 2018 <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/turkey>

for a 83.5% of the population and Islam as a whole accounts for 99.8% (including Shia and other Islamic denominations).¹⁰ The other 0.2% of the population are either Christians and/or Jews. In contrast to the EU, whose population comprises of 71.2% Christians.¹¹ Along ethnic lines, Turks make up the majority of the ethnic makeup with 70-75%; secondly, Kurds with 19%; and thirdly, other minorities with 7-12% (2016 est.).



Islamism permeates Turkish society and influences social interactions. The government recognizes schools, hospitals, orphanages, charitable foundations, and places of worship established by most religious sects in Turkey. However, previous government regulation of religious matters and secularist policies prevent Islam or any religion from adversely impacting public life.¹² Nonetheless, the prevailing of Islamist policies of the Erdogan administration has essentially resulted in a sudden increase of religious officials being placed in secular bureaucratic positions. The AKP polarized the public through the headscarf debate, the attempt to criminalize adultery, and restrictions on the sale of alcohol. Increasing Government pressures on independent media outlets also resulted in an ongoing arrests and oppression of academics, intellectuals, writers, and critical journalists. As of 2018, Turkey is the world’s biggest prison for professional journalists, with members of the press spending more than a year in prison before trial and long jail sentences becoming the new norm—in some cases, journalists are sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of a pardon.¹³

Until 2011, Turkey’s domestic policies were shaped by debates on democratization. The AKP commenced a reconciliation process towards the Kurdish and non-Muslim minorities. However, the Turkish government fell short of expectations as they failed to genuinely incorporate the demands of

¹⁰ CIA WORLD FACTBOOK. Turkey.

¹¹ CIA WORLD FACTBOOK. European Union.

¹² World, Trade Press. Turkey Society & Culture Complete Report : An All-Inclusive Profile Combining All of Our Society and Culture Reports, World Trade Press, 2010. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/columbia/detail.action?docID=536352>.

¹³ Reporters Without Borders. Turkey.

minority communities. In fact, sanctions on Kurdish education have not been lifted by the Turkish government in spite of some restrictions being lifted off the manifestation of Kurdish politics and culture.¹⁴

IV. Politics and Geopolitics

Modern Turkey is a constitutional secular republic. Turkey prospered after adopting Western reforms but it has alternated between democracy, authoritarian or military rule. It is no lie that Turkish democracy has been at a crossroads after the failed **Coup** attempt. Under those circumstances, **Erdogan** declared state of emergency after the attempt to topple his government.

Consequently, President Erdogan narrowly wins a referendum to switch the parliamentary system with a presidential system. By the same token, many have accused the administration of ruling an “illiberal democracy”, centralizing power in the office of the



president and silencing critics with litigation.¹⁵ Human rights are constantly being violated in Erdogan’s administration. Many accounts of free speech violation have occurred. One of the biggest media crackdowns happened July 2016 when sixteen TV channels were shutdown. These events have led many **euroceptics**¹⁶ to believe that Turkey is not a mature European-style democracy.

Many European governments have taken the geography of Turkey as an argument for its rejection or accession. A vast majority of Turkey’s territory is located in Asia. However, many believe that Turkey could work a bridge between Europe and Asia. The connection would allow



¹⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17994865>

¹⁵ Debating Europe Arguments for and against Turkey’s EU membership <https://www.debatingeurope.eu/focus/infobox-arguments-for-and-against-turkeys-eu-membership/#.XB03T3DQhPY>

¹⁶ **euroceptic**: A person who is opposed to increasing the powers of the European Union

Europe to energize from the Caucasus instead of Russia. In contrast, it would also make Europe neighbors with Syria, Iraq and Iran, which are now more insecure and volatile due to Trump removing the military from Syria. The connection between Asia and the Middle East has the potential to become a valuable or a detrimental one.

V. Timeline

1959- Turkish relations with the European Economic Community commence

1963- The Ankara Agreement is officialized and Euro-Turk relations are officially established with the opportunity of creating a customs union

1974- Turkish troops invade Cyprus

1983 - General election won by Turgut Ozal's Motherland Party.

1984 - Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

1987- Turkey applies for full EEC membership

1995- Turkey enters EU customs union

2002 - Parliament approves reforms aimed at securing EU membership.

2004- EU demand that Turkey recognize Cyprus as an EU member

2005- EU membership negotiations officially launched after intense bargaining.

2006- EU freezes Turkey's membership talks

2007- Abdullah Gül elected as president

2009- The government introduces measures in parliament to increase Kurdish language rights and reduce the military presence in the mainly-Kurdish southeast as part of its "Kurdish initiative".

2014- Prime Minister Erdogan wins the first direct popular election for president.

2016- A coup d'état is attempted in Turkey against state institutions, including the government and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

2017- President Erdogan narrowly wins referendum to extend his powers. Opposition launches appeal against result.

2018- President Erdogan wins another term in snap elections. Lira reaches record low.

VI. Guide Questions

1. What is your delegation's standpoint on the acceptance of Turkey in the EU?
2. If your delegation is not pro-EU Turkey, what alternative does your delegation propose in order to replace Turkish EU ambitions?
3. What economic, political, and social affiliations does it share with said country?
4. What should be an imminent solution to the Cyprus-Turkey conflict?
5. What are your delegation's views on Erdogan's Islamist policies?
6. Does your delegation believe that Erdogan's Islamist policies are beneficial or hurtful towards the democratization of Turkey?
7. Is your delegation in or not in favor of British withdrawal from the European Union?
8. Does your delegation deem suitable the Republic of Turkey as placement of the United Kingdom if their withdrawal prevails?
9. Does your delegation believe in the enlargement of the European Union? Which countries does your delegation believe to be essential to this process?

VII. Message from the Dais

Hello delegates, in this committee we exhort you to look for out of the box solutions to the extremely intricate dilemma that is the acceptance of Turkey in the EU. We look forward to seeing each one of your plans and arguments. The dais would like to make clear that you are not bounded to information of this briefing. We expect you to do outside research on the topic, since it is one of great complexity. The committee will occur in real time, so we ask the delegates to stay informed on current events as they can

influence the debate. The position papers will be due **Friday, January 18th by 11:59pm**. This is the last day that CIMA is allowing us to receive the position papers, so there will be no extensions. We ask the delegates to try and be punctual because points will be deducted for late submissions. The papers should be written in **Times New Roman 12, double spaced, maximum of 3 pages**, no points will be deducted for extra pages for charts, images or a work cited page. The delegates should include footnotes or a work cited page from credible sources. **ALL** position papers should be emailed, with your delegation as the subject, to the committee email: cimaturkeyeu@gmail.com.

Finally, we expect this committee to be an enriching experience for both the delegates and the dais. Delegates, if you have any questions or doubts, feel free to contact any member of the dais or the committee email.

Cordially,

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VIII. Useful Resources

1. **Center for Turkey Studies:** <http://ceftus.org/>
2. **CIA World FactBook:** <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>
3. **Arguments for and against** <https://www.debatingeurope.eu/focus/infobox-arguments-for-and-against-turkeys-eu-membership/#.XB03T3DQhPY>
4. **Which countries are in favor or against** <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-eu-relations-which-countries-are-for-or-against-turkish-accession/a-40381533>