

The Case for Turkish Accession to the EU

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In April 2009, President Obama made headlines for urging the EU to accept the Republic of Turkey as a member of the Community. Many European leaders were angered by the President's comments, including French President Nicolas Sarkozy who responded by stating in an interview, "When it comes to the European Union it's up to member states of the European Union to decide... I have always been opposed to this entry, and I remain opposed" (Champion & Fassihi 2009). Turkey has been pursuing membership in the Community since 1959 and has experienced substantial resistance in recent years. Opponents to Turkish accession to the EU cite the economic infeasibility of such a move, not to mention the fact that the majority of Turkey lies outside of Continental Europe, and many within Europe consider Turkish culture to be more Middle Eastern than European. Those who support Turkey's bid for membership, including President Obama, highlight Turkey's unique position as a bridge between the East and West, between the Islamic World and Europe.

This paper will examine the opposition to Turkish accession to the European Union, as well as some of the potential ramifications should Turkey be admitted into the Community, and then weigh the costs against the potential benefits of Turkish integration. While it is certain that Turkish accession to



the EU would come with a high price tag in the short-term, the Community has much to gain strategically – and even economically – in the long-term. Ultimately, Turkey presents the EU with an excellent opportunity to create new bonds of peaceful interdependence across cultural lines into a critical region for international security and for future European economic expansion.

Turkish History & EU Application Process

The modern Republic of Turkey descended from the Ottoman Empire, an Islamic superpower in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which survived for over 600 years. The Ottomans enjoyed political, military and economic success until the empire began to decline in power following the failed Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683 and the subsequent retreat of the Ottomans from Europe. Following this initial loss, the Ottomans suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the Europeans who took back their land and then began to occupy Muslim territory, culminating in Napoleon's famous invasion of Egypt in 1798. The empire finally collapsed at the conclusion of the First World War and was officially dissolved in 1922.

Modern Turkey was established in subsequent years following the Turkish War of Independence when General Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ascended to power. Atatürk sought to modernize Turkey and began to enact reforms that



would transform the fledgling state from an Islamic theocracy¹ into a new, pro-Western, secular nation. During the Cold War, Turkey allied itself with the United States and Western Europe, joining the Council of Europe in 1949, and NATO in 1952.

Turkey took its first steps toward European integration in September 1959 when Ankara applied for associate membership in the European Economic Community (EEC), signing the Ankara Agreement, which indicated that Turkey was on the road to membership in the Customs Union and later, in September 1963, signed the Association Agreement in pursuit of full membership in the EEC. An Additional Protocol was signed in November 1970 laying out a roadmap for how and when tariffs would be removed and the Customs Union would be established.

Turkey officially applied for full membership in the EEC on April 14, 1987, but received a response that negotiations needed to be postponed until a better climate developed, citing both political problems within Turkey and the imminent launch of the Single Market in Europe. Negotiations on Turkey's entrance into the Customs Union continued with an agreement being signed in March 1995 at the Turkey-EU Association Council; and the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 officially recognized Turkey as a candidate for full membership in the EU without pre-conditions.

¹ The Ottoman ruler, the sultan, was not only the political leader of a state, but was broadly considered to be the Caliph, the head of Sunni Islam with roots dating back thirteen centuries to the time of Mohammad (Lewis 2003, p. xvii)



The next development in Turkey's progress toward EU membership came in December 2002 at the Copenhagen European Council, where it was resolved that if Turkey was able to meet the Copenhagen political criteria by the next European Council in 2004, the EU would open accession negotiations with Turkey. The Copenhagen Criteria require all potential members of the EU to fulfill three criteria before accession:

Stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;

The existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union;

The ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic & monetary union (European Commission n.d.).

In October 2004, the European Commission presented a progress report on the major political reforms in Turkey since the Helsinki European Council, concluding that the Copenhagen political criteria had been sufficiently met and recommending the opening of accession negotiations. At the Brussels European Council in December 2004, EU leadership accepted the Commission's recommendation and agreed to open negotiations with Turkey in 2005.

Symbolic accession negotiations began in October 2005 and more concrete negotiations for Turkish accession to the EU began in June 2006, with a



negotiating framework being established which specified 35 chapters of the EU's acquis (harmonization of EU and member-state rules), each of which must be unanimously opened and closed by the Council. In order for Turkey to join the EU, it must satisfy the European Commission's requirements on all 35 chapters and then be voted in unanimously by the current EU members. Technically, the earliest date that Turkey could enter the Community would be in 2013, when the EU begins its next six-year budgetary period. In February, Turkey's Foreign Minister Ali Babacan told journalists, "We have a full determination to join the EU. By the year 2013, Turkey will say it's ready, but we don't know if the EU will be ready for it" ('Turkey will be EU-ready by 2013: Foreign Minister' 2009). Mr Babacan is right to question the preparedness of the current EU leadership as many believe 2013 is an unrealistic goal for Turkish accession. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso has indicated that it will likely be fifteen to twenty years before Turkey becomes an EU member (Barroso 2006).

Obstacles to Turkey's Accession to the EU

Despite having opened EU accession talks in 2005, Turkey has so far opened discussions on only 12 of the 35 acquis, eight others have been frozen due to Ankara's dispute with Cyprus. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has been pushing for an indefinite pause to the EU enlargement once Croatia becomes the 28th member of the Community: "When it comes



to Turkey [Merkel commented], we want ... very close relations but not full membership" ('Merkel Party Wants Pause in EU Enlargement' 2009). Long-term tensions between Turkey and the EU over the issues of freedom of speech, human rights and the island of Cyprus have made it difficult to gain political support for Turkish accession. One 2006 poll demonstrated that 59 percent of current EU member-state citizens are opposed to Turkey joining the EU compared to only 28 percent in favor (European Commission 2007). Some of the negative rhetoric coming out against Turkey has been extremely harsh, such as comments made by former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who has said of Turkey, "[It] is not a European country," and that Turkish accession to the EU "...would be the end of Europe" (Sciolino 2002). Opposition to Turkish accession stems from three main sources: the dispute over Cyprus; human rights violations in Turkey; and the potential economic and social ramifications for the EU should Turkey be granted full membership.

The Dispute over Cyprus

The long-term dispute between Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus, an EU member since 2004, has created what is perhaps the greatest obstacle to Turkish accession. Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974 in response to a coup d'état, which had been executed four days earlier by Greek Cypriots attempting to integrate Cyprus with Greece. Turkey, having committed to preserving Cyprus' independence and territorial integrity at the Zurich-



London Accords, intervened in the hopes of preserving the status quo. From the Turkish perspective, there has yet to be an acceptable resolution to the dispute and Turkey refuses to recognize the Republic of Cyprus' authority over the entire island, supporting a breakaway Turkish Cypriot state in the north.

At this moment, Turkey has approximately 30,000 troops on the ground in Cyprus ('UN Envoy Sees Cyprus Talks Heading into 2009' 2008), and continues to occupy some 37 percent of the island's territory, refusing to open up Turkish ports and airports to vessels and airplanes from Cyprus in spite of a requirement to do so in the Ankara Protocol ('Cyprus Problem is an Obstacle to Turkey's EU Accession' 2008). Turkey has taken a hard line on the issue of Cyprus, as evidenced by the recent comments from State and Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek who said that while Turkey certainly desires entrance into the EU:

We do not approach EU membership at all costs. No one can force us to choose between Cyprus or the European Union. When we began our path in 1999, Cyprus was not a requirement of the EU. The negotiations are based on the Copenhagen criteria. There is no topic of Cyprus in the Copenhagen criteria" ('Turkey says it will not be a Member of the EU 'At all Costs'' 2008).

Despite long-term disagreements, Demetris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and Mehmet Ali Talat, the Turkish Cypriot leader, began talks in September 2008 hoping to resolve the political and territorial



problems in Cyprus. These negotiations continue as the two sides discuss the potential reunification of Cyprus into some form of two-region federation. Hopes for the reunification of the divided island were dealt a blow in April as Turkish-Cypriot hardliners won a decisive victory in parliamentary elections in Cyprus. The right-wing National Unity Party (UBP), which favors a two-state solution supported by Ankara, won 44 percent of the vote, while the Republican Turkish Party (CTP) took 29 percent. In 2004, before Cyprus entry into the EU, the UN presented a plan for reunification, which was accepted by Turkish Cypriots, but rejected by Greek Cypriots. Now, Cyprus vows to block Turkish accession to the EU unless reunification is achieved (Jansen 2009, p. 9). A survey published in March reported that 72 percent of Greek Cypriots opposed Turkey gaining full membership in the EU, and 87 percent indicated that Cyprus should use its veto if Ankara continues to refuse to recognize the Republic ('Cyprus and Greece Confirm Support for Turkey Joining EU' 2009).

The dispute over Cyprus has presented a major set-back to Turkey's hopes of accession to the EU and has fueled opposition in EU member-states. Recently, diplomats from Finland and Italy have expressed their respective countries' commitment to Turkish membership in the EU, but both have also cited the Cyprus conflict as the chief concern and hurdle to fulfilling this goal ('Finnish Envoy Backs Turkey's Bid for EU Membership' 2009; 'Italian Envoy Echoes Support for Turkey's EU Bid' 2009). In addition, Cyprus and Greece have stated that they will support Turkey becoming a full EU member on

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condition that Ankara fulfills its obligations. Greek Prime Minister, Costas Karamanlis remarked, “We support Turkey’s accession because we believe a Turkey that adopts European rules of behavior will be much better for its people, the entire European Union and its neighbors.” Greek Cypriot leader, President Demetris Christofias, concurred, stating that Cyprus would back the Turkish bid for EU membership only when relations were normalized and Greek Cypriot aircraft and vessels were allowed into Turkish ports (‘Cyprus and Greece Confirm Support for Turkey Joining EU’ 2009).

Human Rights Issues

In addition to facing fierce opposition over the dispute with Cyprus, Turkey has been experiencing damaging criticism of its human rights record. The EU’s 2008 Progress Report for Turkey remarked, “Despite its strong political mandate, the [Turkish] government did not put forward a consistent and comprehensive program of political reforms” (Simsek 2008). The report went on to cite restrictions on freedom of speech and government interference in the media, as well as undue military influence over politics in Ankara as evidence of this failure to reform. The EU has indicated that Turkey must enact judicial reforms and better protect minority rights in order to continue down the path toward accession. Specifically, human rights advocates have identified the areas of freedom of speech, minority rights, women’s rights, police use of torture, and restrictions on the freedom of religion as areas where Turkey must make significant improvements.



In terms of Turkey's human rights short-comings, the majority of criticism leveled at the country over the past few years has been concerning the passage of a 1995 law, Article 301, which states: "Public denigration of Turkishness, the Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey shall be punishable by imprisonment of between six months and three years" and "Public denigration of the Government of the Republic of Turkey, the judicial institutions of the State, the military or security structures shall be punishable by imprisonment of between six months and two years" (Amnesty International 2005). The EU expressed serious concern about this law during the trial of novelist Orhan Pamuk in September 2005. Pamuk had made comments regarding the deaths of a million Armenians and thirty thousand Kurds that had occurred in Turkey. Upon hearing of the trial, members of the European Parliament responded by calling it "regrettable" and "most unfortunate" (Dymond 2005) and a year later the European Parliament called for the abolishment of all such laws "which threaten European free speech norms" ('New EU Warning on Turkey Reforms' 2006).

Due to negative press and pressure from outside sources, the case against Pamuk was eventually dropped. In April 2008, Article 301 was amended to require authorization of the Justice Minister; the maximum punishment reduced to two years in jail; and the language adjusted from banning inflammatory comments against "Turkishness" to those against the "Turkish nation" – reforms that were welcomed by the EU as being necessary, albeit insufficient ('EU Hails Turkey Free Speech Move' 2008). The EU has also

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criticized a ban of certain websites in Turkey, as well as the Government's strict control over the media. The Turkish Government was criticized this year for infringing on the freedom of the press. The Dogan Group, Turkey's largest media group, was fined 826 Turkish pounds (\$426 million) earlier this year for tax fraud. European Commission Chief, Jose Manuel Barroso urged Turkey to be careful not to infringe on press freedoms, as this particular group had been critical of the Justice and Development party (AKP), making accusations that the Islamist-rooted government was undermining the secular Turkish society ('EU Urges Turkey to Respect Press Freedoms' 2009). These restrictions on the freedoms of speech and the press continue to be a source of contention between the EU and Turkey and will have to be addressed before Turkey can continue down the path towards EU membership.

Women's and minority rights in Turkey have also come under EU scrutiny. Concerning the former, a 2007 EU report stated that Turkey's legal framework on women's rights "has in general been satisfactory, but its substantive implementation remains flawed" (European Parliament 2007). For example, in certain regions in Southeast Turkey, female babies are not registered at birth, making it more difficult for authorities to monitor and prevent forced marriages (Ibid.). In regard to minority rights, many are critical of Turkish legislation that isolates the Kurdish population, such as a law that restricts children with a native language other than Turkish from learning it in public schools (Simsek 2008).



Moreover, Turkey has received negative attention recently for failing to address torture and the maltreatment of prisoners in the law enforcement system. Until the most recent EU enlargement progress report, Turkey had been praised for its improvement in the treatment of criminals, but an increase in complaints of torture has raised eyebrows in the EU and caused many to wonder whether the important reforms are being properly enforced (Villegas 2008). While the number of incidents of torture has declined since the 1990s, the report indicates this is still a major problem and that the perpetrators are being protected by the Turkish Government (Sinclair-Webb 2008). On a positive note, Turkey appears to be taking action to address the EU's criticism; one report last year noted that sixty police officers were called to trial following accusations of torture and the death of a prisoner (Rainsford 2008).

Finally, Turkey has been criticized for failing to respect religious freedoms. A recent report from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom claimed that Turkey tends to misapply the idea of secularism, which has "resulted in violations of religious freedom for many of the country's citizens, including members of majority and, especially, minority religious communities" ('Religious Freedoms in Turkey Curbed by Hard-line Secularism' 2009). The report cited the Constitutional Court's ruling to restrict women from wearing Islamic headscarves at universities, as well as the Government's failure to recognize religious minorities as legal entities. A 2008 U.S. State Department report came to similar conclusions, noting that:

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“the government of Turkey generally respected religious freedom in practice; however, the government imposes limitations on Islamic and other religious groups and significant restrictions on Islamic religious expression in government offices and state-run institutions...” (Ibid).

All in all, Turkey is a country that has a troublesome history of human rights abuses, but it is clearly taking important steps to mitigate these problems. While these human rights issues may hinder Turkish accession to the EU, the process of accession has benefited Turkey by bringing the abuses to light and providing the impetus for the Turkish Government to make the necessary reforms.

Ramifications of Turkey’s Membership in the EU

Examining the question of Turkish accession to the EU by bringing into question such items as the dispute with Cyprus and human rights laws within Turkey is to adopt a perspective, which assumes the most critical questions revolve around Turkish preparedness for integration. This, however, is not the only valid or necessary perspective to adopt. On account of the size of Turkey, the economic situation within the country, and the significant social/cultural differences between Turkey and the majority of European countries, it is just as important to question the preparedness of the European Union itself. Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy have raised the issue of the EU’s “absorption capacity,” arguing that the EU is not politically,



economically or institutionally able to integrate new members – specifically Turkey ('EU-Turkey Relations' 2004). In order to address this line of objection to Turkish accession to the EU, it is important to consider how Turkey's membership would affect the EU's balance of voting power, the budget, and cultural composition.

Effects on the EU Balance of Power

Turkey's large population has become a major issue for some within the EU as they consider the prospect of integrating Turkey into the Community. The population of Turkey currently stands at approximately 77 million with an annual growth rate of 1.3% (United States Central Intelligence Agency 2010). If Turkey were to join the EU today, it would instantly have the second largest number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), with greater voting power than any other EU member, except Germany; who, if present demographic trends continue, would fall behind Turkey by 2020. Considering this fact, one German MEP, Elmar Brok, remarked that negotiations never should have been initiated with Turkey in the first place, but rather the Turks should have been offered something short of full membership ('The Ins and Outs: The EU's Most Effective Foreign-policy Instrument has been Enlargement But how far can it go?' 2007). Brok is not alone in his sentiments; the thought of adding a new member to the EU who would instantly command so much authority within the organization is



sobering to many and may play a significant role in the final decision as to whether Turkey should be admitted.

Effects on the EU Economy and Budget

Prior to last year's historic, world-wide economic downturn, Turkey's economy has experienced impressive growth. The average GDP growth rate between 2004 and 2007 was 6.9 percent, and the World Bank estimated a 5.4 percent GDP growth rate for 2008 (World Bank 2008). Membership in the Customs Union with the EU has been a key driving force behind the expansion of Turkey's economy, as evidenced by a notable increase in Turkey's exports (a 60 percent increase from 2000 to 2004 (Kaminski & Ng 2006)). Yet despite several years of strong economic growth, Turkey still trails behind all EU countries except Bulgaria in terms of its GDP per capita. A recent study conducted by the General Directorate of EU Affairs in Turkey found that by 2009 the average EU citizen will be 2.3 times richer than the average Turk. The study estimated that by the end of 2008, the average GDP per capita in the EU will be 25,900 Euros compared to 10,900 Euros in Turkey. ²

On account of how the EU budget works, with richer nations paying more and having those funds re-distributed to poorer nations through agricultural subsidies and the Structural and Cohesion Funds, integrating Turkey into the

² Turkey's GDP IS just above Bulgaria, with an estimated GDP per capita of 10,800 Euros ('Turkey Still Lagging Far Behind EU Average GDP per capita' 2008)



EU would present a huge, short-term financial burden to the current members of the Community. The previous EU expansions, particularly the large expansion in 2004, which incorporated many of the Central and Eastern European Countries, was extremely costly because those countries were so much poorer than the fifteen members of the EU at the time. With that historic enlargement, the population of the EU increased by 20 percent, but the average income dropped ten percent, rendering most of the EU15 countries³ who had been receiving structural funds ineligible to continue receiving those funds in the future on account of their “relative prosperity” (Allen 2005, p. 233).

For the Eastern and Central European countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, the accession process - with its requirements for privatization and liberalization - was incredibly demanding, but it paid immediate economic dividends. Slovakia and the Baltic states experienced growth rates as high as seven to ten percent. The unemployment rates in many of these countries fell substantially, such as in Poland, where it dropped from 19 percent to 9.5 percent, and in Lithuania, where it went from 11.4 percent to 4.7 percent (Cendrowicz 2009). Unfortunately, the economic downturn has affected many of these newly liberalized economies the most. The IMF has had to provide bailout assistance for Hungary, Latvia and Ukraine, and forecasts a 3.7 percent drop in GDP for eastern European states this year (Ibid.).

³ The EU15 countries are the group of states that were already EU members before 2004.

To complicate matters further, on account of the great size of Turkey, following accession to the EU, one of two things would have to happen: either the wealthier members would have to increase their payments into the EU budget in order to maintain current programmes – an unattractive option for the EU's net contributors like Germany, France and Britain – or the amount of money distributed to poorer countries must be greatly diminished – an unattractive option for those members currently benefiting from the Structural and Cohesion Funds. Either way, it is highly unlikely that the EU has either the political will or economic vitality to integrate Turkey into the Community without making some significant changes to how the EU budget is collected and distributed.

The economic crisis has taken a serious toll on Turkey. This situation is problematic for Turkey on two counts. First, Turkey's economy has been greatly weakened. The World Bank anticipates a contraction in the Turkish economy between two and six percent this year. In addition, unemployment hit 15.5 percent in the first quarter of 2009, a record for Turkey (Simsek 2009). Second, because the other EU countries have suffered so much during this same period, the likelihood that the current EU members would be willing to admit another state, who would be a financial drain in the short-term, have greatly diminished. Additionally many of the older EU member-states are wary of migrant labor in a climate of job scarcity, some blaming the EU expansions in 2004 and 2007 for the economic woes felt today (Cendrowicz 2009).

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Effects on the EU Demographic Composition

Some of the more pointed arguments against granting Turkey membership in the EU center on demographic and cultural differences. As a nation that straddles two continents,⁴ Turkey is unique in a number of ways; Turkish culture assimilates elements of the East and West, but the most obvious difference between the social and cultural make-up of Turkey and the EU concerns religion. Unlike any other EU member-state, Turkey has a majority Muslim population. Whereas there are roughly 15 million Muslims living in the 27 countries of the EU today, France with the largest number of Muslim inhabitants at five million, approximately 99 percent of Turkey's population of over 70 million is Muslim. It is important to note that while the majority of Turks are Muslim, Turkey has been a secular state since the 1930s. The U.S. State Department reports that, "[Turkey's] constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice" (United States Department of State 2006).

Despite this, Turkey's bid for EU membership is receiving some opposition because of its Islamic identity. Olivier Vedrine, a lecturer for the European Commission and professor at Schiller International University in Paris, argues that the EU is not ready for Islamic integration, emphasizing that it is Europe rather than Turkey that is unwilling to accept another religious

⁴ Although only three percent of Turkish territory is in Europe



culture ('Atatürk's Turkey Acceptable for EU, says French Professor' 2008). Italian ambassador to Turkey, Carlo Marsili, affirms this notion, that it is the perception of Turkey as a Muslim country, which is the leading cause of opposition coming from some European countries to Turkish accession to the EU ('Italian Envoy Echoes Support for Turkey's EU Bid' 2009). If Professor Vedrine and Ambassador Marsili are correct, this may account for the opposition coming from the Western European nations who have had somewhat rocky relationships with their Muslim populations.

Support for Turkey's Bid for Membership

While it is certainly true that Turkey is facing some fierce opposition, it is not without support. The UK has been a stalwart supporter of Turkish membership in the Community with Queen Elizabeth II visiting Turkey last year and remarking, "Turkey is uniquely positioned as a bridge between the East and West at a crucial time for the European Union and the world in general" ('Atatürk's Turkey Acceptable for EU, says French Professor' 2008). Additionally, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi pledged to help Ankara win support for its accession, urging the EU to accelerate the application process ('Italian PM Urges EU to Speed Up Turkish Accession' 2008).

Supporters of accession argue that Turkey would provide a strategic military and economic addition to the EU. While it is obvious that integrating Turkey would create a significant cost to the EU budget in the short-term, many



believe the young labor force in Turkey would benefit the Single Market and the overall effect on the EU economy could be positive (Avery 2008, p. 192). In response to the European leaders who blame EU expansion on their current economic woes, George Dura, a researcher at the Center for European Policy Studies in Brussels, notes that: "It's unfair and selfish to regret a decision when times are lean, but to reel in the profits in good times. The old E.U. countries, who are partly responsible for the economic downturn, need to show more solidarity with their poorer neighbors" (Cendrowicz 2009). From a purely economic perspective, the European leaders who stand in opposition to Turkish accession are making a strategic error; retreating to protectionism during times of economic crisis only exacerbates the problem.

Others argue that Turkey is crucial to economic and political stability in Europe. On account of the gas pipeline transit route from Central Asia, which moves through Turkey - Europe needs an economically stable Turkey (Vilhelbeitia 2008). Further, the strategic position between continental Europe and the Middle East and Black Sea, combined with its strong military with more soldiers than any other European NATO partner, would make Turkey a valuable security asset for the EU (Avery 2008, pp. 192-3). The editorial board of the Financial Times has given its supports for Turkey's bid for EU membership based on the argument of regional stability: "The prospect of EU membership is one of the best guarantees of Turkey's political stability. It would also help improve relations between Islam and the

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west" ('Turkish Challenge; Ankara must Display Quiet and Responsible Diplomacy' 2009, p. 8).

This last note is of special importance; while some cite the cultural/religious differences between Turkey and the EU to oppose Turkish accession to the Community, others contend that offering membership to Turkey would send a strong signal of acceptance to the Islamic world, whereas rejecting Turkey's bid for accession might send a damaging message (Avery 2008, p. 192). While few would argue that the final decision on Turkish accession ought to be based solely on Turkey's religious heritage, it is worthwhile to explore how cultural differences have been addressed by the EU in the past.

The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the precursor to the modern EU, was created for the marked purpose of binding together countries with a history of rivalry and conflict (specifically Germany and France) so as to create a peace-promoting interdependence. The concept of a unified Europe had been circulating for years. In an influential and controversial speech, after having cited Europe's impressive history and culture, as well as the great evils that had sprung forth from the Continent, Churchill stated: "We must build a kind of United States of Europe... I am now going to say something that will astonish you. The first step in the re-creation of the European Family must be a partnership between France and Germany" (Churchill 1946). This was a profound notion; nearly fifteen million had died during the First World War, and approximately 55 million

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during the Second. Three generations of Frenchmen had fought against Germany, and many Europeans blamed the Germans for the bloodshed of previous decades. It was only a few short years after Churchill's speech that the Schuman Declaration proposed that the Franco-German production of coal and steel be placed under the control of a common authority. This plan precipitated the establishment of the ECSC in 1951. The concept of intertwining European economies as a means of engendering a Kantian-style, peaceful relationship was brilliant and so successful that in 1955 the ECSC expanded into a customs union incorporating all kinds of goods and services, the European Economic Community (EEC). While this process was economically beneficial to all countries involved, the pertinent historical point is that this economic benefit was not the sole aim of the arrangement; economics was utilized as a means to promote the ends of international security.

The EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007, which integrated the Central and Eastern European Countries into the Community fulfilled a similar role by bringing together former rivals who had been divided during the Cold War. Within this context, Turkey presents a valuable opportunity for Europe to bind itself to the Islamic/Eastern World in a way that would promote peace. Are there cultural and religious differences between the current EU countries and Turkey? Absolutely, but these differences ought to be viewed as presenting the Community with an opportunity rather than an insurmountable hurdle. The question should not be whether offering Turkey



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full membership in the EU would be economically beneficial to each of the other member-states in the short-term, but rather, would such a step be economically feasible in the short-term and whether it might ultimately promote international security.

Conclusion

While those taking adversarial positions toward the Turkish bid for EU membership make valid points in regard to the lack of preparedness on behalf of both Turkey and the EU, the accession process must continue to move forward. At this point, Turkey has a number of weaknesses that need to be addressed before it is ready for full membership in the Community, but the scrutiny of the application process has been valuable in that it has highlighted these weaknesses and provided the needed impetus for the Turkish government to begin dealing with the problems. In truth, Turkey is making headway and ought to be receiving as much – if not more – applause for the positive reforms that have been made as criticism it receives for the areas that still need improvement.

The EU has been less successful in preparing itself for Turkey. The current EU budget and economic programs designed to assist poor and economically developing members, as well as the voting rules within the Community, simply could not support Turkish integration and will need to be re-engineered before Turkey becomes a member. This should not, however,



be allowed to derail the Turkish application process. The most important thing to remember is that, at its heart, the EU is not a purely economic organization, but an organization designed to create mutually-beneficial economic bonds between nations that promote peaceful coexistence. Turkey provides the opportunity for the EU to strengthen such bonds. For this reason, and in spite of all of the difficulties and costs that Turkish integration into the Community may bring, the EU simply cannot afford not to continue down the road toward Turkish accession.

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