
TURKEY'S EUROPEAN ASPIRATIONS IN THE LAST DECADE. A REAL DESIRE TO BECOME FULL EU MEMBER OR A MODEL EXAMPLE OF REALITY OF POLITICS?

by Piotr Mszyca

The Republic of Turkey came into existence in 1923. Right after its proclamation, the authorities of modern Turkey carried out a number of reforms towards country's modernization. The main goal of these changes was to integrate Turkey to the Western European countries in political, economical and, what is even more important, in the mental meaning. The reforms were related to every sphere of those days life, what for republican Turkey, the biggest inheritor of the Ottoman Empire, must have been a huge shock. From this moment of modern, Republic, an era Turkey in its every action heads to strengthen the bonds with the West. In support of this statement we should have a look at Turkey's foreign policy which is strongly directed to the cooperation with European Union and United States. What is more, the interior policy of Turkey is also part of such an approach with the object of full Europeanization and to show that Turkey is not only geographically part of Europe, but also politically and mentally.

Turkey is United Nations founder, member of: Council of Europe from 1949, North Atlantic Treaty Organization from 1952, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development from 1960, Organization for

Security and Co-operation in Europe from 1973 and the affiliated member of Western European Union from 1992¹.

In accordance with the idea of country's modernization and Europeanization, Turkish authorities took number of initiatives having in mind to bring Turkey closer to Europe. After Turkey joined NATO structures, which defined Turkey as USA ally in the Cold War conflict, it has become clear, that the next step on the way of the westernization will be tightening its political and economic ties with Europe.

With this end in view, in 1959 Turkish government applied for a membership in European Economic Community. The application was welcomed by the European side, and EEC's Council of Ministers expressed desire for the further negotiation with Turkey. Negotiations brought a real turning point in bilateral relations and resulted of signing the association agreement between EEC and Turkey, which is also known as *Ankara Agreement*².

The association agreement entered into force December 1, 1964, beginning thereby Turkey's cooperation with EEC. The association agreement's main goal was expressed in Art. 2: 'The aim of this Agreement is to promote the continuous and balanced strengthening of trade and economic relations between the Parties, while taking full account of the need to ensure an accelerated development of the Turkish economy and to improve the level of employment and living conditions of the Turkish people'. Although the final effect, by the meaning of full integration was mentioned in Art. 28: 'As soon as the operation of this Agreement has advanced far enough to justify envisaging full acceptance by Turkey of the obligations arising out of the Treaty establishing the Community, the Contracting Parties shall examine the possibility of the accession of Turkey to the Community'³. In short *Ankara Agreement* was meant to bring

¹ M. Ilgaz, İlke Toygür, EU-Turkey Updated on Negotiations: the State of Play and the Role of the New Turkish Foreign Policy, "Working Paper" 2001, No. 8, Elcano Royal Institute, Madrid – Spain, 04.04.2011, p. 3.

² http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/candidate-countries/turkey/relation/index_en.htm, (updated: 19.12.2011).

³ Republic of Turkey, Ministry for EU Affairs, Ankara Agreement, <http://www.abgp.gov.tr/index.php?p=114&l=2>, (updated: 5.06.2012).

Turkey politically and economically closer to Europe and prepare it for full integration with European structures⁴.

We can advance a thesis, that from this moment, the integration process gaining momentum. The negotiations do not slow down, even after few problems in Turkish internal policy occurred, like for instance *coup d'état* in 1971, but also after EEC suggested, in the end of 70's, that Turkey could join EEC together with Greece. It was one amongst other attempts made by the European Community, to standardize the relations between both countries, but also an effort to solve the Cypriots issue, which status was deteriorating year by year. However Turkey denied the common initiative with Greece.

In such atmosphere, Turkey entered an authoritarian regime In 1980, after military took over the power. These events occurred in 70's and early 80's, and slowed down the integration process vastly. It also showed, that Turkish democracy is flawed in many aspects and wasn't ready to adopt political model of Western European countries fully. In spite of it, economic relations greatly improved⁵, and the consequence of it was Turkish application for full membership in 1987. The European Community however, denied Turkish aspiration. As a cause, Brussels highlighted the political instability in Turkey over the last 20 years, imperfect dealing with human rights, and also claimed that Turkey didn't meet European criteria.

Without regard to this failure, both sides reached a conclusion that further integration was needed. Therefore, by the decision of Turkey's accession to the European Community Council, Turkey proceeded with a closer integration by agreeing to a customs union in 1995. The agreement finished the so-called 'association's second phase' and allowed for the starting the last one, on the road to the full integration. However, two years later, in 1997 after Luxemburg Summit, Turkish accession talks were blocked. The real breakthrough came in 1999, when the council of the European Union in Helsinki decided to recognize Turkey as an official

⁴ M. Ilgaz, İlke Toygür, *EU – Turkey...*, p. 3.

⁵ A. Eralp, *Temporality, Cyprus Problem and EU – Turkey Relationship*, Center for European Studies and Jean Monnet Center of Excellence, Middle East Technical University, July 2009, pp. 3–5.

candidate – country to the European Union, emphasizing though, that all the criteria to become full member of the EU must be fulfilled⁶.

It seemed that Turkish road to the European Union was straight and full integration was just a matter of time. After so many years of dealing with a growing number of new European requirements, Turks received of some sort of the vote of confidence for their efforts for the EU accession. We can define that period of time in Turkey – EU relations as a stabilization phase. Even though, after parliamentary elections in 2002, when Justice and Development Party (JDP) took power in Turkey, the world's political scene held its breath, because of general pro – Islamic attitude of the party. However after a few months of the uncertainty, charismatic Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became the head of the Turkish government, who determined the accession of Turkey to the EU as one of his priorities and the accession became the main goal of his government in the upcoming years. This aim has also turned up in the governmental works when Turkey started a number of reforms, which were meant of country's democratization. To sum up, Turkish accession to the European Union is one of the main point of JDP's agenda from the very beginning of its existence, and the official attitude of the Turkish government reached *status quo* in that issue till today.

What is more, between 2004–2005 Turkish citizens gave one of the biggest support to government's work aiming to join EU. It has been expressed in every poll taken in that time, marking that over 66% of Turkish people wished the EU accession to come true⁷. The assumption, that Turkey will become EU member within the next couple of years, was the most likely ever. The negotiations seemed to be at the final stage. The situation was quite clear and simple. There were introduced conditions, which Turkey must fulfill in order to become

⁶ V. Morelli, European Union Enlargement: A Status Report on Turkey's Access on Negotiations, 09.09.2011, p. 2.

⁷ L. Petkova, Turkey's Membership and the Public Opinion, "Central & Eastern European Watch" 30.12.2008, p. 6.

a member of European Union, and Turkey obligated itself to meet these criteria and confirmed full desire for the accession.

The whole process slowed down in 2006. The negotiations met its crucial point and the Turkish accession to the EU matter showed its complexity and ambiguity. One of the main problems was from the very beginning and still remains a Cyprus issue. It has been worsening the relations between both sides from the very beginning of the Cyprus conflict. In December, 2006, leaders of the European Union states, unanimously stated to not-opening accession negotiations in eight chapters⁸ and temporarily not-closing any of the so far opened, until Turkey will not fill the resolution up of the Additional Protocol, which the main goal was to extend customs union over the Republic of Cyprus. Status, when Turkey blocks the transport of goods coming directly from the Republic of Cyprus, maintains till today⁹. It is worth to mention, that Turkey does not recognize Republic of Cyprus in the international arena and is not in any diplomatic relation with this country, the country that is already part of European Union.

The year 2006 was crucial and from that moment Turkey's accession started to drift apart. We must indicate that the negotiation process have come to a deadlock and it would take couple of years to change it. This is not only a matter of Turkey, but also European Union needs to face new challenges in the beginning of the new century.

⁸ A country – candidate, that wants to join the EU, needs to fulfill the declaration form and submit it for the consideration of the Council of the European Union. The negotiation process begins, when the Council will review an application positively, but it doesn't mean the start of the updated on procedure. In conjunction with this, every country must meet so-called Copenhagen criteria. After that, the Council may start the negotiations with the candidate country only on the condition when the European Commission states that the candidate meets all the criteria required. Above many other, one of the most important is to adopt the European Union code of law (*acquis communautaire*). To make it easier and accelerate the negotiation process, the EU body determining its law, is divided to special chapters, and each of them refers to the distinct issue, e.g. Social and Employments Policy, Environment, Customs Union, Intellectual Property, etc...).

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/candidate-countries/turkey/relation/index_pl.htm, (updated: 5.02.2012).

International finance crisis have called in a question the whole customs union. Moreover, hard negotiations over the Lisbon Treaty lead to serious internal political crisis inside the Union. Also multi-speed Europe or the lack of unity in decision making, create the biggest obstacles in front of the European Union. All these reasons have caused that within the EU some anti-enlargement voices started to be heard. In short, Brussels has to solve all its problems firstly, before it starts to think about accepting Turkey¹⁰.

Many reforms, that Turkish authorities carried out in the last few years, caused that Turkey is just adopting to these changes. Additionally, such as like: ethnic minorities issue, army's influence in politics, human rights abuse, journalists trials, tensions with Armenia and so called Armenian Genocide accusations which Turkey still does not recognize, and many others, keep Turkey still far away from European Union. What EU enlargement we can speak about, if even today the most influential EU members, like France and Germany firmly oppose Turkish accession? Turkey, needs to close 35 chapters to become full EU member. In 2008 for 35 chapters, Turkey was able to close only 1 of them, opened but not closed were 7, not even opened – 19 and suspended – 8 chapters.

All these issues, are only a drop in the bucket of obstacles containing Turkey from joining EU. It is clear though, that it is not only a matter of few years, but many more, if the accession is possible of course. Today, Turkey's participation in the Union reminds a stalemate. Officially both sides still aiming to full integration, however neither Turkey nor Brussels is able to take the initiative. If such a situation maintains for so many years, we can advance a thesis, that it is beneficial both to Turkey and European Union. Keeping the *status quo* gives both sides wide range of political opportunities. There are some favourable questions determining such a Turkish policy towards European Union.

After general elections in 2002, Justice and Development Party took power in Turkey. JDP is often being called as pro-Islamic because of its connections to Islamic organizations and parties, which have been outlawed in the past for their anti-secular attitude and activity while secular-

¹⁰ M. Ilgaz, İlke Toygür, EU-Turkey..., pp. 9–11.

ism was the highest value in republican inheritance. It is clear that JDP's past is closely connected to the organizations recanting strictly to Islamic doctrine. In the beginning of its rules, the world was mistrustful in relation to Justice and Development Party's intentions. In time, Western leaders started to change their minds over Turkey and more of them believed that JDP doesn't want to ruin secular character of the country. The main reason of such an attitude was a governmental priority which remained fundamental from the very beginning of the Republican era – full integration with the West. The last stage of this integration is Turkish accession to the European Union and Turkish elites still claim that this is also the last phase of Turkish modernization.

There is no doubt that many reforms have to be taken on the way of Turkey's democratization process. There are many aspects giving us the right to claim that Turkish democracy is 'flawed'. One of them is the military role in the political life of Turkey. Turkey wants to be taken as democratic country and we must remember that democracy is the main condition a country – candidate to the EU has to meet to become part of it. The military is still a taboo subject in Turkey and whenever the army is criticized, its being taken in the West as a free of speech manifestation¹¹.

In September 12, 2010, on 30th anniversary of *coup d'état* in 1980, 77% of Turks took part in referendum deciding about implementing of amendment package to the Turkish Constitution describing the role of Turkish military in the political scene. 58% said 'YES' and the package have entered into force. The referendum results determined: changes in judiciary system, letting civil courts to try a military personnel, like also preventing military courts from trying civilians. More changes gave Turkish Parliament more power in choosing judges, removed immunities from being tried to those who were responsible for *coup d'état* in 1980, established ombudsman office, whose work from that moment, consisted of disagreements occurred between state institutes and citizens. The last but not least, the package gave Civil Service employees the possibility to strike¹².

¹¹ <http://www.esiweb.org/rumeliobserver/2008/10/17/taraf-the-military-and-taking-sides/>, (updated: 05.02.2012).

¹² European Stability Initiative, A very special relationship: Why Turkey's EU Access on Process Will Continue, Berlin–Istanbul, 11.11.2010, p. 17.

All these changes are only an overture to full democratized state but also show how important on the democratization process is the military role in Turkish politics. However, we must keep it mind that, if JDP's activities towards democracy are indisputable and democracy and EU accession are still JDP's priorities, but main goal of these changes in Turkish judiciary system were directed toward main opposition centre. It is well known that the Turkish military support Republican People's Party (RPP) founded by Atatürk. On one hand, those changes give evidence that the process of westernization or democratization in Turkey is ongoing. On the other hand they are simply realism in policy making, because by doing so, Justice and Development Party deflects the danger of giving power to the military after another, possible *coup d'état*, and being outlawed. Further to the above, by fulfilling EU's requirements, JDP cripples military's power in the state's policy. Hence, JDP is doing so with Turkish citizens and also international society permission. Of course, if we look at it from this point of view, full accession would help JDP to remove the military from Turkish policy totally, but it is not necessary. It is possible to have 'country – candidate' status to do such reforms, mentioned above. It is quite sure, that Justice and Development Party will continue with its 'democratic changes'.

One of the main reasons, a country decides to become EU member is economy. The statement that European Union is the land of milk and honey, the level of life is high and there are no difficulties with finding a job, is very common. It is also clear that EU is one of the main trading partners of almost every principal economy in the world. What is more, it is worth to mention that EU gives much money to support country's economy, which wants to become EU member.

The accession process of Turkey starting by 1999, when Turkey was recognized as official EU country – candidate, coincided with sudden and unexpected growth in Turkish economy. In 2002–2008 Turkey noticed GDP *per capita* growth on average level of 6% annually. In 2002–2006 Turkish GDP *per capita* factor almost doubled from 3 400 USD to 7 365 USD. It is estimated that in 2009 these factors were on the level of 8 248 USD. Even though Turkey is EU trading partner from decades and from December, 1995 is member of customs union, Turkish economy started

to attract foreign direct investment only several years ago. More than 2/3 of them, which come from European Union, raised with impressive pace from 1 billion USD in 2000 to more than 20 billion USD in 2007. The level of foreign direct investment maintained on the level of 8 billion USD even in 2009, when international economic crisis occurred¹³.

In the last couple of years Turkey quoted about 7,5% economic growth rate, and this indicator has become an envy from many countries, also these 'old' EU member. From the moment the customs union between European Union and Turkey entered into force, the trade between sides has doubled. The fact, that Turkey has officially become EU country – candidate altered positively to Turkish economy and evolution of liberalism in economy in Turkey¹⁴.

Of course this is also the result the reforms in Turkish economy started from 2001. On the other hand, the history shows that every country whenever became EU country – candidate, experienced also an economic boom. Poland and Bulgaria are model example of such case, where foreign direct investment and GDP nominal grew significantly right after they reached EU full membership waiting list. Turkey's GDP in 2010 on the level of 8% was the highest mark in Europe¹⁵. Unquestionably we can link economic growth rate with Turkey's accession aspiration. Secondly it is not that easy to interchangeably predict, how Turkish economy would react after breaking accession talks. What is more, Turkish economy is doing so well so far, noticing growth and reaching records year by year, and all this is partly because of 'never-ending' negotiation talks, why would Turkey change it and integrate and define itself on one side? If such state is profitable for Turkey, it can negotiate till the moment Turks recognize some other direction will be better for them¹⁶.

¹³ European Stability Initiative, *A very special relationship...*, p. 3.

¹⁴ D. Miliband, *Preface: Turkey's Access on to the EU – The Business Case*, [in:] *Turkey in Europe: The Economic Case For Turkish Membership of The EU*, The Foreign Policy Center, London 2008, p. 5.

¹⁵ <http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20101028-709395.html>, (updated: 06.02.2012).

¹⁶ European Stability Initiative..., p. 3.

These issues show that Turkish economy is getting better year after year and the EU negotiation process was one of the reason of economic growth. We must remember that this is about only the negotiations between Turkey and EU, not about Turkish accession. Of course after the accession Turkey would experience another economic boom connected to EU subsidies and investments but if we look at it in wider period of time, no one knows how it would affect Turkish economy. In the era of global economic crisis, Turkey wouldn't like to take collective responsibility for other EU members. The safest option in such situation for Turkey would be maintain the *status quo* in EU relations. The negotiation process can last as long as Turkey consider another alternative which would be better, more profitable and more efficient for Turks than being as a part of European family.

In the last decade Turkey's foreign policy has entered another dimension. By virtue of long negotiations with European Union and geopolitical changes in Middle East¹⁷, the foreign policy of Turkey has changed. Hitherto Turkey wanted to tie up its bonds with the Western World, and EU accession was considered as the last stage of Turkish modernization. During JDP rule it has transformed in more multipole when the main goal was to reach superpower status in the region. This priority burgeon when Ahmet Davutoğlu became Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey. From this moment, Turkey put less effort in negotiations with EU and started to improve its influences in the regions which were the most important from Turkish perspective. Turkey conducted to stabilization in Balkans, Middle East, and Central Asia regions. The definition *zero problems with neighbors policy*, first mentioned in professor Davutoğlu's book 'Strategic Depth', became very influential in Turkish foreign policy. Realizing politics in Davutoğlu's way, Turkey's power and its role in the region improved.

Turkey's foreign policy in the last decade showed that Ankara not only improved its relations with the neighbors but is also able to consolidate its position in Middle East. Inter alia Turkey invited to closer cooperation

¹⁷ The biggest changes which affected Middle East region the most in years 2000–2012 were: 9/11 attacks, war on Iraq, Iranian nuclear program and 'Arab Spring'.

other Muslim states, involved in finding a solution to Cyprus issue¹⁸, what directly influenced its relations with Greece. Moreover Turkish politicians played a big part in stabilizing Caspian Sea region¹⁹. Turkey also offered to mediate between Russia and Georgia in their conflict in 2008 and decided to support all the actions aiming to solve frozen conflicts occurred in Caucasus region²⁰.

In Middle East Ankara plays active role in almost every stabilization process, willing to create 'Islamic states bloc'. In the contrary Turkish politicians realize that on the way to regional superpower status stand other big actors at the head of Iran or Egypt for instance. Whereas, Turkish policy towards Iraq showed new opening to the country which is destabilized and reckoned almost as a 'failed state'. After fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, Kurds minority gain importance, not only in Iraq but also in the region. It caused another threat to Turkey from Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which Turkey has been fought for years. Ankara decided to leave the past and set up closer relations to newly established Iraqi government willing to help with country's democratization and to foil PKK's strengthening²¹.

Improving the relations with Syria, before Syrian riots connected to 'Arab Spring' occurred, is also entering into *zero problems policy*. Turkish authorities tried to enhance relationship with Damascus. The biggest progress came in 2009. In September, 2009 both sides signed Joint Political Declaration on establishing High Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) during President Assad's visit to Turkey. In October, 2009 within the scope of HLSCC meeting a Visa Exemption Agreement was signed on

¹⁸ Turkey supported Annan Plan in 2004 which in the beginning Ankara refused.

¹⁹ Z. Önis, P. Yılmaz, Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: Rhetoric or Reality?, "Political Science Quarterly" 2008, No.123, pp. 123-149; On Turkey's contribution to the EU neighborhood policy, further reading: M. Comelli, A. Eralp, Ç. Üstün, The European Neighbourhood Policy and the Southern Mediterranean, Ankara 2009.

²⁰ D. Devrim, E. Schulz, The Caucasus: Which Role for Turkey in the European Neighbourhood?, "Insight Turkey" 2009, No. 11, pp. 177-193.

²¹ E. Alessandri, The New Turkish Foreign Policy and the Future of Turkey-EU Relations, Istituto Affari Internazionali 2010, p. 9.

the Turkish-Syrian border²². What is more in 2007–2008 Turkey mediated between Syria and Israel after the crisis caused by Damascus' threats to enter the war on Hezbollah's side and allowing Iran to ship supplies to Hezbollah through its territory²³. If Turkey didn't do so, it might have disturbed the stabilization in whole Middle East²⁴.

Additionally Turkey stimulated its relations with Russia with regard to energy security or Central Asian states with which the policy is strengthened by Turkic roots. Above examples prove that Ankara's policy aims to become regional power. Turkey wants to pursue a global policy. It would allow it to become a 'bridge' between other Middle Eastern states and also represent their interest to the West as the strongest and the most stable country in Middle East.

We can raise a question then, whether Turkish accession to the EU wouldn't hamper *zero problems policy*? European Union is political – economic union and one of its main problems is unity in decision making. If Turkey joined the EU, Ankara would have to adapt oneself policy to Brussels'. This could generate conflict of interests, cause Ankara and EU's interests might have been different in some areas. In such circumstances we can say that Turkey would want to stay outside the Union to keep its own, autonomous policy towards regions mentioned above and are extremely important from geostrategic point of view. In the end, Turkey may also disagree with EU policy because it is not part of it and do not represent the interests of other countries but only its own.

Another circumstantial evidence which could show that Turkey would manage better outside the EU is the fact that Turkey would have had to fully define itself on Western civilization, what could possibly deteriorate its relations with other Muslim states and lower its prestige in wider international arena. The best example would be Iran which first of all after Turkish accession could lose its confidence in Ankara and second of all

²² Relations between Turkey and Syria, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/reasons-between-turkey%E2%80%93syria.en.mfa>, (updated: 23.07.2012).

²³ Jpost.com Staff, If Syria provokes Israel, Assad will be out of power, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=167762>, (updated: 23.07.2012).

²⁴ B. Aras, R. Karakaya, From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran, "Security Dialogue" 2008, No. 39, pp. 495–515.

could feel endangered having border with Western bloc. It is hard to predict what impact it could have had to whole Middle Eastern region.

Additionally Turkey's mediating role in Israeli – Palestinian conflict would be impedimental if Ankara was a part of European Union. Turkey wouldn't be so reliable if was a representative of the West. Ankara supports peace negotiations between the sides since late 60's²⁵. Turkey's biggest advantage in these negotiations was its neutrality and impartiality in the conflict and also the fact that both sides had their confidence in Ankara²⁶. It seems that Turkey is natural mediator between Israel and Palestinians, because on one hand Turkey is undoubtedly Muslim country, so as Palestinians, on the other hand there is a long-term alliance between Israel and Turkey. If Turkey joined the EU, it could disturb the balance in Middle East. One of the sides could have accused Turkey for bias. There could have occurred a suspicion that Turkey represents Brussels' and thereby for instance Berlin's or Paris' interests.

The best example of the possibility of such trajectory is Russian – Georgian conflict in 2008. Ankara didn't want violate its good relations with Moscow, so after US's request of sending via Bosphorus Strait and Black Sea ships with humanitarian aid and one warship to demonstrate Washington's support to Georgian side, Turkey reacted with significant delay. Turks remained their drowsiness, even though United States invoked NATO's articles. Turkey refused several times to send the ships, explaining they were simply too big²⁷. What is more, Ankara proposed the creation of a "Platform for Security and Cooperation in the South Caucasus," which would create a regional security framework involving Turkey, Russia,

²⁵ B. Aras, Turkey and the Palestinian Question, (in:) "SETA. Foundation for Political Economic and Social Research" 2009, p. 4.

²⁶ E. Çuhadar Gürkaynak, Turkey as a Third Party in Israeli – Palestinian Conflict: Assessment and Reflections, "Perceptions" 2007, p. 101.

²⁷ D.L Steinvorth, Turkey Walks a Tightrope Between Russia and the West, "Der Spiegel" 12.08.2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,577920,00.html>, (updated: 26.06.2012).

Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Washington wasn't satisfied with the initiative, because it totally omitted NATO²⁸.

In 2009 state of opinion was carried out in Turkey. The Eurobarometer indicated that only 45% of Turks would see their country in the EU. Social support for Turkish accession is now noticeably lower than in previous years. The biggest European support in Turkey was in 2004–2005. The indicator that time showed that almost 80% of Turkish society wanted Turkey to join the EU²⁹. By the way it was the highest mark in whole Turkey – EU relations history. That gives an evidence that Turkey's accession is year by year less wanted among Turks. Turkish people are simply fed up with 'never-ending' negotiations and do not like the fact that Turkey is a 'candidate forever'. Double standards or a growing number of new requirements to fulfill are the most common accusations from the Turks towards Brussels. Nowadays the majority of Turkish people think that EU accession is almost impossible.

From the moment the new foreign policy was fully implemented and taking into account social attitude, Turkish government do not take the EU accession as the only priority of its policy. It is obvious that Turkey will not resign from its plans of joining the EU now and will be still striving for a member status. But apart from this, Ankara will pursue its own policy, which could sometimes be totally different than Brussels³⁰.

Prime Minister Erdoğan will not break off the negotiations, because he would deprive JDP of one of its most important goals, which was also the main priority for his predecessors for years. It would also fully define Turkey as non – Western country and that Turkey wants to avoid. Turkey without strong and close relations with Europe would weaken its position in the international arena. We can advance a thesis that EU negotiations are only a 'smokescreen' and Turkey's main goal is not full accession at all. First of all, striving to join the EU, Turkey executes main policy stream, implemented in the beginning of 20's. Second of all, JDP carries out its political program which gave them power in 2002. In the end, Justice and

²⁸ E. Inbar, *The Deterioration in Israeli-Turkish Relations and its International Ramifications*, "Mideast Security and Policy Studies" 2011, No. 89, p. 133.

²⁹ <http://www.emergingmarketsoutlook.com/?p=1352>, (updated: 6.02.2012).

³⁰ M. Ilgaz, İlke Toygür, *EU Turkey Updated...*, p. 13.

Development Party averts the accusations that walks away from Europe and bringing Turkey closer to Islam.

If we look at the accession process, Turkey has to do the most in the political sphere to join the EU. To these political criteria we can include most of all: human rights, freedom of speech, liberalization in legislature domain³¹ and of course military's role in Turkish politics. Nowadays those accusations are the most frequently advanced to explain that Turkey's place is not within the European Union³².

The freedom of speech is very sensitive problem in Turkey. Not well-disposed to the ruling party journalists are an increasingly matter in Turkey. In 2011 famous case of Ahmet Sik and Nedim Sener who were being taken into the custody, *nota bene* both of them had Kurdish origins, was taken very badly by international public opinion. Both of them had the charges of being part of Ergenekon³³ and actions aiming to overthrow ruling Justice and Development Party³⁴. It is not an isolated case in Turkey and within last couple of years there were more of similar. There is a 'middle-of-the-road censorship' now in Turkey, mostly visible in the internet and television which is also a serious obstacle on Turkish road to the EU.

It is also common in Turkey's policy towards ethnic minorities. Kurds are the biggest minority in Turkey and most of all, this case concerns them the most. Even Turkish Constitution has many notations of discrimination nature towards minorities living in Turkey, promoting Turkishness and Turkish nationalism. It is still not allowed to teach in Kurdish in schools,

³¹ A. Aybey, Turkey and the European Union Relations: A Historical Assessment, "Ankara Avrupa Çal ıřmalan Dergisi" 2004, No. 1, p. 33.

³² H. Kramer, Turkey and the EU: The EU's Perspective, "Insight Turkey" 2006, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 30.

³³ Ergenekon – illegal, neo-nationalistic organization that has been accused for planning to overthrow 'pro-Islamic' Justice and Development Party's government. To do that, Ergenekon planned to use military and exalted high military officers by bringing a coup d'état in Turkey. Hence many military officers, journalists, academicians and intellectuals were criminated and waiting for their sentence. Further reading: Turkey – Guide to Ergenekon, Open Source Center, Report 19.03.2011, p. 2.

³⁴ Press freedom in Turkey. A dangerous place to be a journalist, 10.03.2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/18333123>, (updated: 6.02.2012).

to have documents or IDs in any other language than Turkish. It is also forbidden to apply for a job in Public Service for a Kurd³⁵.

EU's law is highly restricted in freedom of speech, national and ethnic minorities and human rights issues. So probable Turkish accession generates situation that Ankara would have to adopt all the restrictions with regard to mentioned above. The fact that Turkey is striving to save homogeneous character of the state from the very beginning of Turkish Republic, and the biggest uniting elements are Turkish roots of the people based on specific Turkish nationalism, creates a barrier that Turkey could not omit. On the other hand Turkey did anyways a lot of on its path to the country's democratization. The accession process was only an impulse to start democratic reforms in Turkey. Undoubtedly Turkey wants to become a democratic country, but on its own, not European way.

The examples mentioned above show, that Turkey on its way to become full member of European Union does not make a clean breast of it. Officially Turkey wants to become a part of EU but unofficially the negotiation process by itself, gave Turkey many positives. So if we look at the obstacles that hamper Turkish accession, and some of them are almost impossible to overcome, we can reach a conclusion that only by the negotiations Turkey profits greatly. Doing balance sheet of profits and losses, we can advance a thesis that Turkey wouldn't gain much more than already has. So why would Turkey want to join European Union? Isn't that only an *idée fixe* for Ankara for over half a decade? It seems that for today, the negotiations with Brussels is kind of double-dealing. Nobody knows how would it affect Turkey, if broke of the negotiations or Ankara became a full EU's member. So, for now, Ankara prefers to keep *status quo* with European Union, as long as it benefits. All the cases given above give evidence then, that Turkey performs politics according to the old iron rule of reality of politics in contacts with EU and it is not that obvious that Turkey really wants to totally join European family.

³⁵ Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency, "International Crisis Group. Working to Prevent Conflict Worldwide", "Europe Report", No. 213, 20.08.2011, p. 2.

Abstract

The examples mentioned above show, that Turkey on its way to become full member of European Union does not make a clean breast of it. Officially Turkey wants to become a part of EU but unofficially the negotiation process by itself, gave Turkey many positives. So if we look at the obstacles that hamper Turkish accession, and some of them are almost impossible to overcome, we can reach a conclusion that only by the negotiations Turkey profits greatly. Doing balance sheet of profits and losses, we can advance a thesis that Turkey wouldn't gain much more than already has. So why would Turkey want to join European Union? Isn't that only an *idée fixe* for Ankara for over half a decade? It seems that for today, the negotiations with Brussels is kind of double-dealing. Nobody knows how would it affect Turkey, if broke of the negotiations or Ankara became a full EU's member. So, for now, Ankara prefers to keep status quo with European Union, as long as it benefits. All the cases given above give evidence then, that Turkey performs politics according to the old iron rule of reality of politics in contacts with EU and it is not that obvious that Turkey really wants to totally join European family.