

EU Enlargement Between Political Conditionality and Cultural Compatibility as Exemplified by the Debate on Turkey in Europe

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Abstract

In view of the opening of EU membership negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005, this text deals with the debates on the country's accession to the Union conducted to date both in the European countries and in Turkey itself. The main point of reference are the concepts of European identity that can be derived from the European and Turkish debates. A distinction is made between two lines of argument: on the one hand, the aspect of Turkey's 'cultural compatibility' and, on the other, the aspect of 'political conditionality'. Some problems that may arise from this both for the future of Europe and for Turkey's future accession are examined. An additional excursus briefly outlines the peculiarities of the Greek perspective on Turkey's EU membership.

Despite the decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey at the EU Summit in Brussels on 16/17 December 2004 and the beginning of negotiations on 3 October 2005, Turkey's further integration into European structures seems more uncertain than ever. This is due not only to the fact that the outcome of the Turkey-EU negotiation process is open-ended in principle, as stated explicitly in the relevant conclusions of the Brussels European Council, which also formulated a series of safeguard clauses and preliminary conclusions (cf. Council of the European Union, Brussels, 16/17 December 2004, Presidency Conclusions, Brussels, 17 December 2004, 16238/04). This process is more uncertain than ever above all because, in the context of the European political and public debates, Turkey's integration is viewed as an issue that far transcends the hitherto enlargement process and has significant implications for the future of European consolidation. This sceptical attitude has grown even more since the rejection of the European Constitution by France and the Netherlands, and the decision to suspend the ratification process in EU Member States for one year. Meanwhile, it appears that both with regard to the enlargement process and institution-building, some things in the Union are out of control and that the EU is faced with an unprecedented challenge. In the context of all these current events however, it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss possible solutions or even less to define normative principles of European identity in view of Turkey's future accession. Based on the observation that the prospect of Turkey's accession to the EU has generated a process of self-determination in European societies while bringing a new dynamic to the process of Turkey's adjustment to the EU, this text seeks to elucidate relevant aspects of the country's further integration from the European and Turkish points of view, to look at their implications, and to identify the points of intersection of what is 'European' in the relevant discourses.

The approach used in this text is the following: the first part summarises the arguments for and against Turkey's EU accession and identifies the basic self-

conceptions of what is ‘European’. Part two offers an introduction to the socio-political situation in Turkey in order to explain the arguments of the debate on Europe in Turkey itself. The last part makes a connection between European identity and Turkey’s accession on the basis of the different models of a ‘universal law community’ (*Rechtsgemeinschaft*) and an ‘ethical cultural community’, and discusses different prospects for development.

1. The Debate on Turkey in Europe

Among the important steps which Turkey has taken since 1963 in order to fit into the European structures and which make its prospect of full membership look increasingly possible are the application for membership in 1987, the entry into force of the Customs Union on 1 January 1996, the granting to Turkey of the status of a candidate country at the 1999 Helsinki Summit and, finally, the decision to open accession negotiations in October 2005 at the EU Summit in December 2004. This tendency was further strengthened with the adoption by the EU Council of Ministers after the 2002 Copenhagen Summit of a pre-accession strategy and accession partnership document (2001–2003). At the same time, Turkey’s efforts to adjust to the EU intensified after the change of government in November 2002, with a view to the December 2004 decision to open accession negotiations.

After the 2002 Copenhagen Summit, a political and public debate on Turkey’s future membership erupted across Europe, in which Turkey is increasingly seen as a challenge to the determination of the identity of the European Union and of the essence of what is ‘European’. In this sense, Jan Peter Balkenende, President of the European Council and Prime Minister of the Netherlands, noted during the Dutch EU Presidency in the second half of 2004 that there was a need for a European discourse on Turkey beyond the ‘technical’ Copenhagen political criteria, especially with regard to the question ‘whether an Islamic country belongs to Turkey’ (EU Observer, September 2004).

The arguments in this long-lasting public political debate across Europe can be generalised as ‘historical-cultural’ and ‘cultural-political’. The ‘historical-cultural’ argument assumes that the institutional and normative concepts of order in Turkey – Kemalism and Islam – cannot be reconciled with European concepts of order in the sense of the shared socio-cultural characteristics of national societies in the current EU. The ‘cultural-political’ argument concludes that Turkey’s future EU accession will ultimately depend on the extent to which Turkey will be capable of accepting and imposing a common political culture. If we attempt to define the main characteristic of these debates, this would be the shift from a debate on the *political conditionality* of Turkey’s EU candidacy towards questions related to the *cultural compatibility* and model of European culture in that country (Giannakopoulos 2004a, 2004b, 2004c).

1.1 Lines of Argument

If we attempt to address the two opposite positions on Turkey’s accession with regard to the arguments upon which they are based, we wind up with seven reasons

for rejecting Turkey's bid for membership cited by accession opponents (Giannakopoulos / Maras, 2005, pp. 213–229).

Arguments Against Turkey's Accession

a) The economic disparities between the EU and Turkey are so great that the Turkish economy will hardly be able to fulfil the compatibility criteria in the foreseeable future. If Turkey nevertheless joins the EU, the EU will be faced with extremely high costs of adjustment and transfer of payments. Should, contrary to expectations, these efforts succeed after all, there is no guarantee that the financial support will not go down the drain, as according to the accession critics the corruption-prone and clientelistic Turkish business world, which is not free of its criminal dark sides, is a horrifying example in many respects. The well-known horror scenario of swarms of millions of cheap labourers from Anatolia seeking work also fits into this argument.

b) Even if Turkey reforms its political system and thus satisfies the EU criteria for democracy and human rights, the serious fear remains that the country will assume a dominant position in the EU institutions and decision-making processes due to its proportionately large population. This excessive power in terms of decision-making resources would also shake up the strategic structures of the EU, because the coordinates of the security and economic policy of the European community of states would have to be adjusted to the new constellation.

c) The accession of an Islamic country would not only endanger the enlargement process but also create insurmountable obstacles to deeper European integration. Accession opponents usually refer here to the enormous integration tasks which the EU is faced with following the admission of the ten new member countries. Additionally, conspiracy theories are often spread that the Turkish 'surge to the West' (*Drang nach Westen*) is supported by the USA, which wishes to weaken the EU as its potential competitor.

d) Against the background of global Islamic terrorism and the massive presence of Turkish immigrants in Europe, Turkey's EU accession would bring significant security risks, as Islamic terrorism would gain a broader radius of action through the Turks living in Europe.

e) If this does not occur, a comparison of the fundamental differences in political culture would suffice to convince oneself that Turkey's accession would plunge Europe into a kind of 'conflict of cultures'. Drawing upon the constitutional differences between the liberal democracies of the EU countries and the political system of Turkey, the argument first takes aim at the continuing existence of the Kemalist state doctrine, i.e. the dominant position of the army in the state system as the ultimate guarantor of the ideal of the post-Ottoman order. As can be detected in such arguments, Kemalism is in fact an iridescent phenomenon, as its autocratic and authoritarian features go hand in hand with certain claims to modernisation. Certainly, in the course of Turkey's process of adjustment to Europe, the observation can be made that Kemalism finds itself in a state of change, namely in (1) its gradual retreat from a state-managed economic policy, and (2) a certain opening up towards Islam. If the shift towards market liberalisation complies with EU demands, the case with the liberalisation of governmental policy towards Islam is more peculiar. For in

its effort to uphold the cohesion of the country, but at the same time to reconcile the ruling establishment with the Muslim society, the state generates significant problems, of which the most important is tangent to its self-conception, namely laicism or the secular character of the republic. The opponents to accession apparently do not have the necessary sensibility for this ambivalence, which is definitive for the reforms currently underway in Turkey.

f) The geographical proximity of the country to the hotspots of the Near and Middle East would put the EU's security policy to the test. Furthermore, the geopolitical situation after the Iraq war and the generally highly unstable balance of power in the region in view of the American strategic plans for the political restructuring of the Arab world should serve as a warning sign to the EU not to become involved in foreign policy adventures.

g) Finally, there are also accession-hostile attitudes which are fed by historical memories, for example in Austria, where the memory of the 'Turkish sieges' of Vienna in 1529 and 1683 is still alive. In such cases culturally and historically motivated arguments are mixed with present-day rational, i.e. comprehensible, arguments which are related to the economic and political as well as constitutional-legal dimensions of Turkey's adjustment to European standards.

This results in a mixed picture of economic, social, political, geographic, religious and cultural differences, which radically call into question Turkey's European compatibility. As is the case with the problem of migration, the presented arguments are indeed more appropriate for populist public campaigns and do not lend themselves to a systematic analysis. Since such an analysis requires a total weighting of all relevant factors, it is generally a state and governmental matter. The fact that the accession-friendly policies of the European countries are frequently and strikingly opposed to the public discourse and attitudes is certainly related to this. The political parties definitely also play a decisive role in shaping public opinion, and it is frequently the case that the negative attitudes towards Turkey's accession are defined by domestic party conflicts. Surely, the accession-friendly views are marked by historical traditions, self-interest and foreign policy rationale, but also by the momentum and dynamics of the European enlargement process. Nevertheless, they cannot be conceived merely as an output of geo-strategic and power-related strategies, as it can be demonstrated that they are compatible with certain universalistic argumentative patterns, which are at the heart of the liberal and pluralistic values of European civilisation.

Arguments for Turkey's Accession

If we take into account both pragmatic considerations and strategic foreign policy objectives as well as value-based arguments inherent to the liberal self-conception, we wind up with a picture in which the critical attitudes towards accession lose much of their apparent power/substance. Thus, we can state just as many reasons for accession as there are arguments against it:

a) The political and economic worries about Turkey's accession, which qualify the economic disparities between the Union and Turkey as an insurmountable fact that foils any further enlargement endeavours, can be countered with the argument that

they are based on or deliberately propagate an extremely short-term vision of the enlargement process. For it is obvious that the opening of accession negotiations does not automatically entail finalisation of full membership. On the contrary, it is the very framework of these negotiations and the associated long-lasting processes of adjustment which will provide Turkey with the conditions for bringing its economic structures and performance to an EU-compatible level – which of course cannot take place overnight. Currently however, there are some indications that the Turkish economy has some very favourable preconditions for the accession process (such as strong economic growth, a declining debt level, a decreasing inflation rate and growing foreign direct investments). Accession optimists in economic circles also put forward the argument that Turkey will function as a strategic partner in the regions of the Near and Middle East by adjusting its economic structures, i.e. that Turkey can assume the role of a ‘bridge’.

b) This bridge-function argument certainly is not limited to the economic sphere. Its diverse meanings can be used in various ways against the arguments of accession opponents seeking to exclude Turkey from the EU. Firstly, it can be applied as a central building block of European foreign policy: by adapting its economic, but above all its political and constitutional structures, Turkey can have a sort of ‘suction’ effect on the countries of the region, as the Muslim country would put the basic European principles of the universal applicability of the values of democracy and rule of law to the test in doing so. This would also weaken the thesis of the conflict of cultures and demonstrate that the purported irreconcilability of democracy and Islam is based on an ideologically motivated bias. Furthermore, in political and cultural terms, the perception of Turkey’s bridge function would additionally be a kind of ‘third way’ between the moderate, but sclerotic on the one hand, and militant and anti-western Islam on the other hand – or between modern capitalism and traditionalist Islam as well.

c) As regards Turkey’s political culture, i.e. primarily Kemalism itself, there are also arguments which display its authoritarian features in a more positive light. Firstly, one must point out that the Kemalist regime represented a certain form of development – or modernisation-oriented dictatorship. Regardless of how autocratic the military component of Kemalism may have been, it is a fact that unlike other modernisation-oriented dictatorships at the periphery of the world market, it gave back a portion of its power to politicians after short phases of overt dictatorial rule. The arguments against accession focusing on the dominant position of the army and the National Security Council indeed point out structural democratic deficits, but fail to make further necessary distinctions. For the hegemony of the National Security Council must be viewed within the context of a historical process of a shifting balance of power. This very process is what can be observed these days in the constitutional reforms of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government. Accession advocates can justifiably argue in this regard that it was the prospect of accession which created the preconditions for the political system and political parties to push back the military from its dominant position. Therefore it should be obvious that only the consistent further pursuit of the already initiated European

integration endeavour can guarantee the liberalisation of the party system, i.e. its freeing from the constraints of supervisory control by the military.

c) One must also address the role of Islam in Turkey's political culture in this context, as it only makes sense to speak of Islam if one is able to situate it in the web of state institutions, political and parliamentary parties and civil society groups. This political analysis angle is indeed expedient for two reasons: firstly, since the worldview neutrality of the state is anchored in the European constitutions and religion and confessional beliefs are part of the private sphere of citizens, most European countries wish to measure Turkey's performance in adapting to EU standards exclusively against the fulfilment of these very criteria. Secondly, it is to Turkey's advantage in this respect that it is the country that has excluded Islam from public institutions with its secular political orientation. Arguably, the development of the AKP best demonstrates what changes the Turkish political culture has undergone in the last decade against the background of its prospects for joining the EU. What characterises the 'changed' Islamists of the AKP is their project to fundamentally realign political Islam, as the priorities of the movement have changed from questions of belief to a political agenda, whose core elements are based on laicism and democratic party politics. All signs indicate that Erdoğan is striving for a new functional definition of Kemalism, i.e. an Islamic interpretation of Kemalist legality. As the strategy of outright confrontation with the military-dominated establishment has failed, political Islam is now striving to integrate the religious forces into the state, and to reconcile the Kemalist state and the Muslim society. Since religion is treated as a national democratic good in this process, the AKP is essentially not very different from the western European Christian democratic parties.

d) The anti-accession arguments based on potential geo-strategic dangers purportedly associated with Turkey's joining the EU also lose some of their suggestive justification as soon as one links together the bridge-function argument with the changed systemic character of political Islam and puts them in the context of Turkey's regional foreign policy role. Applied to the constellation at the beginning of the Iraq War, a certain stability function can be attested to Turkish regional policy, above all in view of the fact that Turkey opposes the American military's plans to station troops, but also the fact that Turkey refrained from an adventurous invasion of the Kurdish areas in Iraq. From the perspective of accession advocates, the advantages of a stabilising impact of Turkish regional foreign policy could also evolve into a stability factor, as the system liberalisation as well as the development of political Islam into a force for democratic order would likely have positive ramifications for the surrounding Muslim countries. Regarding recent developments however this is a matter still to be proved in the future.

e) On the other hand, one should not overestimate the security policy impact which would most likely result from Turkey's EU accession, if this would likely increase the danger of the spread of radical Islamic terrorism, as the opponents to accession forecast. In this sense, Europe would be faced with many more problems. However, if we take a closer look at the concept according to which Turkey's accession could lead to an expansion of the terrorist battlefield to Europe, we will easily find that it is unfounded. Firstly, with regard to the frequently presaged cultural clashes, one

should refute the widespread general suspicion that automatically equates Islam with terrorism. According to the accession supporters, the prospect of Turkey's European integration is necessary precisely because the unilateral foreign policy orientation of the USA with its Manichaeistic friend/foe scheme gives rise to various forms of an aggressive crusade mentality. If the EU is able to counter this in any way, the approval of Turkey's EU membership is the right signal for the Muslims in Europe. Improving the integration of immigrants and their offspring, and supporting the modernisation and secularisation processes in Muslim societies would constitute genuinely European approaches to the current situation in the world from this standpoint. As regards the phenomenon of terrorism itself, it would certainly be naïve to pin the escalation potential on Turkey, as the decentralised, cross-border and globalised strategies of terror no longer require nation-states as bases for operations.

1.2 Self-Conceptions of What Is 'European'

The December 2004 decision to open accession negotiations between the Union and Turkey sparked controversial debates in the societies of Europe. The imminence of the prospect of accession proved to be a veritable trigger for debates aimed at defining the European self-conception. From the European standpoint, Turkey's accession assumes the form of a borderline case, which sparks off identity issues and discourses on the perception of others. Since – contrary to the ten new Member States – the accession of Turkey is perceived as requiring particular justification, one can observe an array of arguments and interest-based stances, in which one may distinguish two levels of discourse. On the one hand, one must mention the level at which argumentative strategies come to bear as utility-oriented pragmatic intentions. In this context there is an open dispute on whether Turkey's accession can fulfil certain needs and rationales, i.e. whether it can meet geo-strategic and economic objectives, for example. These considerations are found most frequently in state and governmental policy, as the upcoming decisions will have a lasting direct impact on the institutional structures and capacity for action of the EU. With regard to the EU as an institutional decision-maker, Turkey's accession prospects are certainly a case which has generated controversial debates on how the central institutions in Brussels should weigh the two core dimensions of European integration: the widening and the deepening of the EU. Accession sceptics are inclined to point out that Turkey's accession will jeopardise the proportional relationship between these two dimensions and pose an obstacle to overcoming the tasks of integration arising from the accession of the ten new Member States. Although the fear that the completed enlargement will be at the expense of the deepening of European integration certainly cannot be dismissed, we cannot deny the fact that the process of integration has developed a certain institutional momentum.

Secondly, the prospects of accession have triggered a discourse on self-perception in the societies of Europe, in which Turkey doubtlessly assumes features of a 'symbolic boundary'. The 'differentness' frequently decried by the opponents to accession, which is opposed to the value-based cohesion of European identity, has given rise to processes of self-assurance, which certainly include a return to the constitutive elements of the collective European character. In order to get to the bottom of this

assurance which the European actors rely on, one must make a certain distinction that defines the attitudes towards Turkey's accession altogether, namely between self-image and the image of others, and between the perception of oneself and others, while simultaneously taking the mutual conditionalities and intermediary factors into account.

Ultimately, the accession of a Muslim, but secularly oriented country to the EU has generated controversial and indeed heated debates, as dissention exists on both the value base which constitutes the European self-conception as well as how it is to be weighted in the normative common home. Thus, not only issues concerning which values are an indispensable part of European identity are a bone of contention, but also whether priority should be given to the Enlightenment-humanistic or to the religious-worldview components when defining identity. Both questions are attributed extraordinary importance to the extent that they provide an orientation for the arguments of both the opponents and the proponents. In fact it appears that there is a clear separation of positions, which frequently leads to confrontational 'bloc thinking'. That is because to define the European identity, the proponents of the humanistic heritage of the Enlightenment revert to arguments, which are at most of secondary significance to the Euro-sceptics and accession opponents, who choose the Judeo-Christian traditions to be the main determinant of the European character. Conversely, the accession proponents purport that religious affiliations and religious denominations tend to be of limited significance in light of the fact that humanistic traditions have become sediment in values, patterns of conduct and institutions which are of universal applicability. Doubtlessly, they refer to the moral and political values of liberalism and the principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

In this context an observation is frequently made that the two value systems form a dichotomy to the extent that they are subject to the overarching system of cultural references. Through this the disputes shift to the question of what kind of culture makes up the European identity. This question is complicated by the highly controversial nature of the term 'cultural space', which as a rule provides assistance in thematically delineating the phenomenon of culture, because there is not even consensus on the geographic parameters of European integration. Furthermore, the endeavour of referring to European culture and the European historical heritage, i.e. to the homogeneity of what we conceive of as European nowadays, increases the claim of each system of reference to exclude the other. That is because they both can equally justifiably point to century-old historical processes, regardless of whether they were of a religious-ethical, moral and political or constitutional and political nature. Incidentally, all these processes have equally formed the profile of modern Europe. However, a certain disparity in terms of their relative value cannot be overlooked: the proponents of a European identity primarily defined by the political culture of liberal parliamentarianism, constitutional rule of law, human and minority rights, can claim a degree of applicability of their arguments which the opposing side cannot satisfy. Since European political culture is founded on basic principles and procedural rationalities, which are in principle generalisable, they put the accession-friendly groups in a position to assign the European identity a range of applicability

which goes far beyond the religious cultures and social morals which have originated in the European historical context.

Thus, for the accession opponents who insist on these religiously founded and passed-down cultural and historical morals, the only remaining argumentative strategy is to aim for an exclusivist approach, i.e. an approach based on delineation. As they regard the European cultural identity as something that has developed historically and has evolved to become the core definitive feature of the European social character in religious culture, they are bound to confront the accession of a country which comes from a different cultural sphere and has a different cultural identity with deep scepticism, and indeed with feelings of hostility. One must in fact speak of feelings in this context, as the arguments of the accession opponents for the most part rest on self-evident certainties and unquestionable fundamental convictions, which thrive on normatively binding traditional relationships, the continuity of persuasions and well-rehearsed ways and views of life. As Turkey has apparently not undergone the same cultural and historical processes, the feeling of togetherness, which is indispensable for Turkey's European integration, cannot emerge. Nonetheless, one cannot resist the impression that the anti-accession attitude – despite all efforts to make this togetherness dependent on the continuity of traditional ties – cannot circumvent elevating religion as the distinguishing and demarcating feature *par excellence*. After all there is no other explanation for the fact that they downplay the traditional lines of catch-up modernisation, which characterises both the European orientation of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc as well as the secular western fundamental orientation of Turkey. Of course, the accession opponents' religious and cultural notions of identity go far beyond confessional factors: what they are much more concerned with is the West European way of life, whose defining feature is supposed to be the commitment to Christianity. If Christian beliefs are hence at the core of the European identity and if they thus guide the self-perception of European actors, it is no wonder that the perception of Turkey's otherness is marked by an image of Islam, which in juxtaposition to Christianity fulfils an identity-forming function. If we put the usual, generally ethnically motivated prejudices about the 'Turks' aside, we can detect in the arguments and attitudes of the accession opponents, but also in the media depictions decisive for a broader public, an image of Islam which invariably includes terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, the limited rights of women, poverty, illiteracy, modernisation deficits and susceptibility to dictatorship.

As can be seen in the argumentative structure of the accession proponents as well, these reservations can primarily be traced back to the fact that the accession opponents (a) try to impose a too monolithic concept of Islamic society with regard to Turkey; (b) cannot (or do not wish to) do justice to the peculiarity and ambivalence of the Turkish phenomenon; and (c) (deliberately) misconceive the modern European identity. After all, this identity is primarily based on the institutionalisation of the commonalities which guide actions, be they at the level of the rationality of economic activity or within the context of the constitutionally anchored guarantees of democratic order and the rule of law, and the preservation of human rights and the protection of minorities. The political unity of Europe indeed

still lags behind the unification of the European economic area, but this does not mean that the process of consolidation of the political community is less significant than the economic aspect. And it implies to an even lesser extent that the political and legal principles as codified in the recently drawn up EU Constitution are mere epiphenomena of an otherwise contingent evolution of the unification of the European space. Instead they are the very things by means of which the European community of states was able to transcend the particularities of the nation-state historical communities with their pre-political traditions (origin, language, history). For the supporters of Turkey's accession it is certain that precisely these principles of universalistic political and legal common sense are at the very core of the European integration project. For this reason, Turkey should not be refused accession, as long as it acts in accordance with these principles.

2. The Debate on Europe in Turkey

2.1 Introductory Remarks

To explain the Turkish understanding of EU membership, we must first note that since the foundation of the Republic in 1923 there have been three main moments in the country: in the political sphere and despite the Kemalist tendencies towards modernisation, a *statist-authoritarian regime*; in the economic sphere, a *state-guided capitalism*; and in the field of law, the repression of *Turkish nationalism* (for details, cf. Giannakopoulos / Bozyiğit 2005).

Notwithstanding the introduction of a multi-party system in 1950, every political activity, especially after the 1980 coup d'état, is subservient to the absolute preservation of the Kemalist state doctrine. This turned the political multi-party system into a *nominal* difference, while guaranteeing the decisive supervisory role of the military establishment. This development culminated in the so-called 'post-modern coup' of 1997, which led to the overthrow of the Erbakan regime and the beginning of the restrictive '28 February 1997' process on the part of the military bureaucracy.

For its part, until the 1980s the economic sphere was characterised by dependence on the entrepreneurship of the state bureaucracy, which controlled the key sectors of the Turkish economy. Indeed, the situation gradually changed at the end of the eighties, when a new business class emancipated itself from the state and went on to demand, especially after the end of the Cold War, a greater say in economic decision-making. During the November 2002 parliamentary elections, which removed the old political elite and cleared the way of the Islamic AKP to power, this demand became especially relevant. This aspect played a special role in the 22 July 2007 parliamentary elections, when the AKP was re-elected as its liberal economic policy had led to unprecedented economic growth in Turkey after 2002.

In its turn, the rule-of-law dimension is subservient to the absolute doctrine of Turkish nationalism of 'the indivisibility of the Republic and of the Turkish Nation', expressed best in Article 8 of the earlier anti-terrorism law; a doctrine that has led to systematic abuse of fundamental civil and human rights. It is symptomatic in this respect that the Kemalist political camp and the military-bureaucratic establishment have been persistently regarding Turkey as a peculiar case, whose social and national

stability and unity could be jeopardised by the reforms the EU insists upon with respect to *demilitarisation* of the political system, *protection of minorities*, and *rule of law*. This attitude led, especially after the 1999 Helsinki decision and up to 2002, to half-hearted and slow harmonisation of legislation, because after the Helsinki decision to grant Turkey the status of a candidate country the Kemalist state elite found itself in a cul-de-sac. The Kemalist ideal of the 'nation as community', with all its socio-political and economic restrictions, would now have to yield to the rule of law (Kayder 2004). The irresolute European policy conducted by the Turkish governments after 1999, which failed to meet the expectations of broader segments of the public, plus a serious economic crisis, ultimately led to the landslide victory of the Islamist AKP in November 2002. The upheavals and conflicts which European policy had caused in Turkey until then are aptly described in the comment that Europe has divided the Turkish left and right through the centre (Insel 2005).

To gain a better understanding of the place and function of the Islamist AKP within the framework of the Turkish political system, at this point we need to address the issue of the concept of '*laicism*' in Turkey on principle.

Turkey is often given as an example of an Islamic and at the same time secular state that can serve as a role model in the Near East and the Islamic world. The definition 'secular' is somewhat problematic when it is applied to the real attitude of the Turkish state towards religion, as the word 'secular' implies more than just separation of the state and religion. It also presupposes a neutral attitude of the state towards the different religions. A truly secular state is not aligned with any religion; it neither supports nor obstructs religious life. In summary, the Turkish state does not meet the criteria by which a state qualifies as 'secular'. The opposition against religious life within the public sphere is a sign of the Turkish state's contradictory attitude towards religion. The closure of the *tarikats* [Sufi brotherhoods], the grave violations of religious freedoms and the establishment of state control over all religious institutions since the 1920s, show that the state saw Islam as its main opponent in the modernisation process. The enlightenment and modernisation of Turkish society was expected to lead to the disappearance of Islam. This view can be described more appropriately not as 'secularisation' but as 'laicism' (Grigoriadis 2005).

Still, the principle of laicism is undermined when it is used for political purposes. After the 1970s, the influence of socialism and Kurdish nationalism grew in Turkish society. One of the measures which Kenan Evren's military government took against socialism and Kurdish nationalism in the eighties was the partial 'Islamisation' of the state. Religious education was reintroduced in state schools. An ideological doctrine associating the Turkish nation with Islam was promoted. Sunni Islam was privileged over non-Muslim religions and other Muslim denominations. The growing influence of the 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' on the national ideology led to an alarming growth in the political power of Turkish political Islam. The civil and military bureaucracy was deeply worried when the Islamic Welfare Party (RP) won a majority in the 1995 elections and its leader Necmettin Erbakan became Prime Minister of a coalition government in July 1996. Islam again became the greatest threat to the Turkish Republic. In February 1997 the 'Islamisation' of the Turkish state was stopped by a

military ultimatum. In June 1997 the Islamic government resigned and a new wave of laicism rose on the Turkish political scene. In January 1998 the Welfare Party was banned by the Constitutional Court. Its successor, the Virtue Party (FP), was also banned in June 2001. Meanwhile, Turkish political Islam was transformed. The reformers from the Virtue Party decided to create a new party. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) set out to overcome its Islamic political past and become an Islamic liberal party. Turkey's EU membership was no longer an anathema and was declared to be the AKP's main political goal. The political party no longer spoke of Islamic law and the Koran, but of liberalism and human rights. The AKP accused the Kemalist elite of failing to introduce in Turkey the greatest achievement of European political culture, namely liberal democracy. Turkey's political liberalisation became the new political vision of the AKP. Within the framework of Turkish political development, the AKP was the only political force that called into question the state rationale and coup of 12 September 1980 and the '28 February 1997' process, which left a deep imprint on Turkish society and politics. The Kemalist elite viewed the AKP's political transformation with suspicion. In its view, the AKP was merely using liberalism as a cover for its Islamist political agenda in order to avoid being banned by the Constitutional Court, and Turkey's re-Islamisation remained its true goal. That is why the military prepared to counter any attempts that might lead to Islamisation (Grigoriadis, *ibid.*). Despite the mistrust of the military, the AKP won the elections in 2002 and succeeded in forming a government. Contrary to fears of the party's Islamic political origins, after the AKP government came to power it conducted a series of legislative reforms which largely met EU expectations regarding Turkey's democratisation. The progress in legislation and especially the abolition of the death penalty, the greater freedom of speech and the use of the Kurdish language in state-supervised audiovisual media, the reform of criminal law, the reform of State Security Courts, and above all the restriction of the state and political powers of the National Security Council (*Millî Güvenlik Kurulu*, MGK), were seen as long-needed steps towards preparing Turkey for EU accession. Although it found certain deficits in their application and implementation (Regular Report on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession, 2003 and 2004), the European Commission, in its October 2004 recommendation to the Council of the European Union, noted that there were no political, strategic, geographic, cultural or religious considerations against the opening of EU accession negotiations with Turkey. On the basis of this recommendation, the EU eventually decided at its December 2004 Summit, as noted above, to officially open negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005.

Parallel with the economic reasons associated with the AKP's liberal economic policy and the economic growth directly resulting from it, it was the AKP's consistent European policy that led to its sensational victory in the 22 July 2007 elections (Dedeoglu 2007). Meanwhile, the AKP had become a centrist party, as confirmed also by the parliamentary election results: it won almost 47 percent of the popular vote (Rainer Hermann 2007). The AKP certainly benefited from the strong polarisation between 'secularists' and 'Islamists' in the country, and especially from the renewed intervention of the military in politics which led to the early elections on

22 July. It is doubtful whether the AKP would have won such a high percentage of the vote in different circumstances (*Today's Zaman* 2007). On the whole, however, it may be expected that as Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared on election night, Turkey will make energetic progress along the road towards integration into the European structures and in implementing the relevant reforms.

2.2 The Arguments

If we first examine the arguments of the accession opponents in Turkey more precisely, it appears that they often reflect the very opposite of the corresponding points of criticism from European observers. According to them, the Kemalist constitution of the Turkish state is not a relict to be abolished in light of the prospects of the country's European integration but, rather, a political and cultural good which must be preserved by all means and whose renunciation would be equivalent to the abandonment of sovereignty. This of course primarily holds for the constitutional role of the military. Both the right-wing as well as left-wing nationalist forces are united in their quest to defend the Kemalist legacy. In their view, Turkey should continue its course towards modernisation, which is underpinned by the western integration of the secular state, but not succumb to the allures of a moralistic human rights discourse. Left-wing nationalists go one step further and claim that EU accession will put the country at the mercy of an imperialist power alliance dominated by capitalist, neo-liberal economic policy. There is also no shortage of culturally oriented arguments among the accession opponents, but this time they are reversed in comparison to their European counterparts: both in religious as well as cultural aspects, the line of argument boils down to the creation of an insurmountable conflict of civilisations, in which the Muslim world must not allow itself to be oppressed by the West (cf. Insel 2005).

For some of the accession advocates it is of course these very characteristics of Turkey (i.e. Kemalism, Islam), which are obstacles to the country's rapprochement with Europe. For this reason they focus on the driving forces of the external dynamics of the approximation process, which in their view remove the institutional blockades, neutralise the enduring influence of the Oriental legacies and provide solid foundations for democratisation. In doing so, they wind up in a position that bears similarities to that of the former national elites of the colonies, which legitimated their cooperation with the foreign rulers in the name of progress and civilisation. Along with this progress-oriented faction, which views EU accession from the standpoint of overcoming the socio-economic backwardness of the country, there are favourable attitudes whose basis for justification is narrower though. Here the accession proponents cite arguments related to the Kurdish identity and, by extent, human rights policy, which is certain to be guaranteed within the context of the country's European integration. The positive attitudes of some Islamic schools of thought, which appear paradoxical at first sight, can also be situated in the realm of these prospects of minority protection resulting from Turkey's integration into the EU. For part of the Islamic factions of the governing party, but also for broader segments of the population, EU membership is associated with a kind of exoneration of religious-cultural life from the political system imperatives of Kemalist dirigisme.

They point out that precisely European integration will be of vital significance and indeed a form of liberation for Muslims, because their fellow Muslims in Europe have been able to preserve their religious identity without being assimilated and moreover are not forced to give in to pressure from the state.

Besides the resolute proponents and opponents of accession, there is yet another attitude in the Turkish political landscape, whose adherents do not want to commit to a clear position, though. They indeed share the conviction that Turkey's European integration is equivalent to the loss of sovereignty, but do not want to rule out tight links with Europe. The reason for this ambivalent stance indeed is the contradictory character of the Turkish state project, which commits the Turkish society to a secular western course, but unlike western state liberalism does not want to refrain from the authoritarianism of state-guided modernisation. This ambivalent stance is also strongly present on the left.

Ultimately, this ambivalence in attitudes towards EU accession can be traced back to the great significance of state-centred nationalism in the origins of modern Turkey. On the one hand, there is a feeling of pride in the Turkish path of development, along which modernisation and social change were initiated and institutionally anchored by virtue of individual efforts. Yet this fact generally leads to certain notions of autarky, which entail a certain defensive reaction towards the 'unreasonable' European expectations. On the other hand, this very defensive stance gives rise to certain defiant reactions, especially when someone in Europe voices doubt about Turkey's compatibility with the EU. In reaction, accession proponents emphatically point out the political, but also historical and geographic proximity of Turkey to Europe as indisputable grounds why Turkey cannot be refused EU membership. That is why the prospects of accession have taken on the character of a historic decision by the EU in Turkish society, which must do justice to the national dignity of the country. Thus it would be no wonder if a possible principled rejection of Turkey's EU-membership application resulted in highly irritated reactions with unforeseeable consequences.

3. Excursus: The Greek Stance on Turkey's EU Accession

It must first be noted that historically, the processes of national identity construction in Greece and Turkey are connected more closely than the collective consciousness in these countries remembers. The 1821–1829 resistance against Ottoman rule is an inseparable part of the modern Greek self-conception. Greek national independence and identity are directly linked with this event and emerged in opposition to Ottoman rule (which *mutatis mutandis* characterised the process of national consolidation in other Balkan countries as well). The fact that from its foundation in 1832 to 1922 the Greek state expanded territorially foremost at the expense of the former Ottoman Empire, formed a lasting negative attitude towards the Turks and is one of the crucial moments in the formation of national identity in Greece.

The Greek occupation of Asia Minor at the end of the First World War – similarly to the Armenian alliance with Russia on the eastern Anatolian front – played a crucial role in the process of Turkey's national consolidation. For their part, the Turkish successors to the Ottoman Empire intended to found a modern Turkish state on its ruins. Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) knew very well that this would be impossible

without a final victory over the Greek army in Asia Minor. If the Greek national revolution against the Ottomans in 1821 was a *conditio sine qua non* for the creation of a state and the formation of a nation, ending the Greek military occupation in Asia Minor was a paramount task of the Turkish war of independence, which culminated in the 30 August 1922 appeal during the celebrations of the victory over the Greek army and the proclamation of the Turkish Republic on 29 October 1923 by Kemal Atatürk (cf. Giannakopoulos 2005a).

The negatively laden historical memory for both countries can be regarded as one of the main reasons for their strained relations. Foreign political developments from the so-called 'Asia Minor Catastrophe' in 1922 to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 strengthened this tendency. Since 1999 at the latest however, Greece, as an EU member, has been one of the strongest advocates of a concrete European prospect for Turkey. Admittedly, the reasons for the change in Greek foreign policy towards Turkey are real-political. They are associated with vitally important Greek national interests, above all in the Aegean and Cyprus. The Greek political leadership is guided by the idea that the conflict, influenced by nationalist rivalry and heated by historical catastrophes, can be ameliorated by offering the rival, Turkey, long-term economic prospects and binding it to supranational norms and transnational decision-making structures. The active Greek support for Turkey's European prospects is based on the hope for complete demilitarisation of Turkish politics through the country's gradual Europeanisation, as the Turkish military apparatus is seen as a main reason for bilateral tensions. In this sense, it is no accident that since November 2002, i.e. since the election victory of the AKP in Turkey, the Greek government has pursued its policy of rapprochement even more resolutely. That is because the AKP, in following a European course based on already concluded legislative harmonisation packages (as well as in pursuit of its own political interests), is trying to place the hegemony of the military in Turkey under civilian control (cf. Giannakopoulos, *ibid.*).

In connection with the debate in Greece on Turkey's possible EU accession and against the background of the conditions outlined above, one may summarise as follows: as noted above, Turkey's EU prospects have long been regarded in Greece primarily with a view to their foreign political aspects. Consequently, here the framework of the political debates differs significantly from the usual EU discourse. In the 1990s, parallel with its economic requirements, the EU began to assign growing importance also to the quality of democratic institutions and human rights protection in candidate countries. The change in Greek foreign policy came from the strong sense of a threat posed by the large neighbouring country that is dominated by the military. After 1999 the main political forces in Greece borrowed from the vocabulary of Brussels ('yes to EU membership, if) but did not concern themselves with internal developments in Turkey. Culture and religion did and do not play a role in the Greek discourse. Hence a whole series of questions, which influence the discourse in other countries, are only discussed, if at all, in exceptional cases: for example, would Turkey's EU membership deprive Europe of its identity, what would the expected wave of immigrants be like, or would Turkey's accession turn the EU into a free-trade zone? Of course, in the last few years academic studies in Greece

have focused more on the ideological transformations of the big 'poles' in present-day Turkey: Kemalism and political Islam (cf. Kazakos 2005).

4. Conclusion

The basic question regarding Turkey which the EU has been trying to postpone *ad kalendas graecas* for years remains unanswered despite the opening of accession negotiations on 3 October 2005: does the Union want not only potential but also factual membership of Turkey in the EU, and how exactly does it picture the development of Turkey's membership prospects beyond the safeguard clauses? Against the background of the ambivalent attitude towards Turkey in the European political and public discourse, one must clearly state that the debates on its membership will intensify both among the European and the Turkish public - not least because, as noted above, the perception of this prospect is characterised partly by opposite priorities, accents, internal political intentions, and so on. One must proceed from the assumption that there will continue to be a confrontation between the questions concerning the *political conditionality* of Turkey's potential membership and questions concerning its *cultural compatibility*. Regardless of the course and outcome of the political process of Turkey's consolidation in the next few years, one must bear in mind that public opinion in Europe will play an increasingly important role in this process, unlike the process of enlargement to date. During his visit to Turkey in December 2004, the President of the European Parliament, Josep Borrell Fontelles, noted that the Turkish government must win over European public opinion in favour of Turkey's future membership (Western Policy Center, Washington, D.C., Newsletter 13 Dec. 2004).

The question raised in this connection is the following: what effects can this conflict within the European public sphere have on the European Union's self-conception? That is because attaching excessive importance to the questions of *cultural compatibility*, i.e. the cultural factors in view of Turkey's membership, which is done even at the political level in some EU member countries, would mean shifting from the model of a European law community (*Rechtsgemeinschaft*) to an *ethical cultural community*. This, in turn, would conflict with the Turkish concept of potential EU membership, as in Turkey EU membership is seen as a necessary driving force for overcoming the main deficit of Turkish statehood, namely for bringing about the necessary shift from the restrictive version of the Turkish 'nation as community' towards 'rule-of-law statehood' (*Rechtsstaatlichkeit*). The presently existing possibilities for developing the relations between Turkey and the EU, i.e. the prospect of '*privileged partnership*' (see the stance of the European conservatives) or of '*non-privileged membership*' (see the decisions of the December 2004 EU Summit) are a problem not only for Turkey. In future they will also have a lasting impact on the definition of what is 'European'. After all, the answer to the question of whether Turkey can be an equal-righted part of European integration depends greatly on how Europe defines itself in the first place. This is not because Europe is compelled to do so because Turkey is at its doorstep, but because it must find an answer to the question of what exactly the EU wants to achieve in the context of the worldwide cultural debate of the twenty-first century, initiated by Huntington

(Huntington 1996, Tibi 1998). This answer cannot be derived only by exaggerating the experience of the nation-state. The EU must overcome precisely this blood-stained experience at the European level and avoid adjusting it to its internal realities. Not only with a view to Turkey's membership Europe must reflexively reconsider its authentic historical experience, which because of a painful socio-cultural historical ambivalence has generated, beyond organic solidarity, all abstract institutional forms of 'solidarity among strangers' (Brunkhorst 1997) on which our present political self-conception is based. With or without Turkey as a full member, 'privileged partner' or 'non-privileged member', the Union will have to change in the future.

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