

**INT 426**

**TURKEY-EU RELATIONS: MAJOR  
OBSTACLES**

## What are the major arguments of those in Europe **who are opposed to the Turkish membership of the EU?**

- A) **Turkey is too big** to be absorbed by the EU considering its population of 76 million (in 2013). Turkish population is constantly growing.
- B) **Turkey is a Muslim country** which suggests that its identity is not compatible with the Christian roots of European identity.
- C) The GNP per capita in Turkey is well below the EU average.
- D) **Freedom of movement for workers** is a major cause for concern. EU states cannot confer on the Turkish workers freedom of movement in Europe which will eventually lead to the uprooting of scores of indigenous workers from the labour market to be replaced by Turkish migrant workers.
- E) The standards of democracy and human rights in Turkey, despite many advances, **still fall short of the Copenhagen criteria.**

- F) **The regional inequalities** in Turkey are alarmingly high, which means that the lion's share of the regional fund would have to be channelled into Turkey after its membership of the EU. This is unacceptable.
- G) Contrary to most of the EU members, **Turkey shows some characteristics of an agricultural country**. Nearly a third of all workforce in Turkey is employed in agriculture. Naturally, after membership, by far, Turkey will be the largest recipient of the agricultural fund.
- H) **Turkey is geographically situated in Europe**; only 3 percent of the Turkish territory lies in the European continent.

# Turkey's counter-arguments against the rejectionist views in Europe about Turkish membership

- A) Contrary to the exaggerated views about the population growth in Turkey, the growth of population in Turkey was 1,2 percent in 2010. Based on the current trend, it is predicted that this figure will decline to 0,76 percent in 2030. Besides, **one should not forget that the European population is aging, which means that the Turkish accession would be an 'injection of youth' into Europe.**
- B) **EU is a secular international organization. There is no reference to Christianity in the official EU documents.** There are large numbers of people in Europe from different religious faiths ranging from Hinduism to Judaism. In any case, as the EU supports cultural pluralism, there is no sensible to reason to leave out Turkey on grounds of religion.
- C) The GNP per capita in Turkey will in all probability approach to the EU average if Turkey's current economic performance persists in the next 10 to 15 years. Let us not forget that the standard of living in **Turkey is better than some EU members such as Bulgaria and Romania.**

- D) Turkey does not object to the temporary freeze on the free movement of workers even after Turkish accession to the EU. When considering the fall in the Turkish population growth and increasing prosperity in the country, **it is most likely that the Turkish nationals seeking employment in the EU member states are going to decline in the next decade.**
- E) The ambitious set of reforms which have been launched, *inter alia*, in the last decade in order to bring Turkey in line with the **Copenhagen Criteria** has brought **Turkey closer to the benchmarks set by the EU**. Besides, we should not forget that Greece, Spain and Portugal as well as the Central and Eastern European members of the EU set about the goal of membership also for democratic consolidation and human rights advances. These motives are also valid for Turkey.

F) The current **government in Turkey is working hard to reduce the disparities between reasonably developed and less developed regions** of Turkey. Ambitious projects have been put in place. The current peace process which is intended to satisfy Kurdish demands within a democratic framework has effectively put an end to the armed confrontation between the PKK and Turkish security forces. This has brought about an ideal atmosphere for uplifting poverty-stricken parts of Turkey.

G) **The agricultural population in Turkey is constantly decreasing.** Besides, the Turkish agricultural reforms accompanying the negotiation process for Turkish membership will lead to the eventual flow of rural population into cities. With the financial support from the EU agricultural fund, Turkey will be able to establish market principles in the agricultural sector and more rational organizational structure which will trigger an increase in productivity.

H) Turkey's 'Europeanness' was already reaffirmed when the Ankara Agreement was signed of 1963. That is why Turkey was able to launch an application for associate membership of the Community in reliance of Article 238 of the Treaty of Rome which holds that such an arrangement can be made with the European states only. That Turkey is today negotiating for the 'membership' of the EU is further evidence for Turkey's credentials as part of Europe. Finally, let us note that the 3 percent of the Turkish territory situated in Europe hosts 7 million people and a land mass of 24 thousand km<sup>2</sup> both of which are larger than the populations and territories of many existing member states of the EU.

**What are other assets and advantages referred to by Turkey to reassure the European circles about the aptness of Turkish membership?**

- A) Turkey can act as a 'bridge' between Europe and the Middle East,** reduce misunderstandings between the parties and contribute to dialogue and even to the forming of alliance among civilisations.
- B) Turkish membership of the EU would give the world a clear signal about the compatibility of Islam, on the one hand and democracy, human rights and secularism, on the other. Besides, once a member of the EU, the 'Turkish model' could have a better chance of emulation by the rest of the Muslim world.**



- C) Turkey is a growing market with its young population and high consumption patterns. The EU's unhindered access to this market will put it at an advantage in comparison to its archrivals, such as China, Japan and the USA.
- D) If the EU is joined by Turkey, it will gain a very significant geopolitical and political advantage on its way to becoming a global political actor.
- E) Turkey is a pole of attraction for foreign investors on account of cheap labour and developed infrastructure.

## **What are the main arguments of the 'nationalist' circles in Turkey against the Turkish membership of the EU?**

- A) Turkey will be converted into a semi-colony of the EU after accession. The 'Turkish nation' has all along lived in freedom. Thanks to this free will, the Turks have played a major role in the history of humanity, such as being founders of great states. Once sovereignty is shared with others, it is no longer sovereignty but dependence.
- B) European will continue to treat Turkey as a second-class member state, because they have never abandoned their hatred of the Turks.

- C) The EU will not shed its lack of generosity towards Turkey even after membership. Neither the Additional Protocol nor the Customs Union has served Turkish national interests. In other words, it is the EU that gains through an economic partnership with Turkey. Neither the historical habits of Europe nor the ruthless precepts of capitalism permit the beneficial treatment of Turkey.
- D) The EU was, is and will always remain as a 'Christian Club' in which there is no place for 'Muslims'.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUXmZQPZ0bw>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2hAzrl-JY8>

- E) Since the Turkish people are short of true knowledge about the EU, the majority seems to support membership.
- F) The Turks have played no role in the construction of the European or Western civilisation. Therefore, the two worlds cannot possibly fuse like olive oil and water.
- G) The 'nationalist-conservative' sections of Turkish society have turned into EU supporters following their subjection to maltreatment and repression during the February 28 (1997) process which saw the ousting from power the coalition government by the army and its collaborators. Advocacy of membership simply as a 'reaction' to a temporary deviation in Turkish politics is hardly a sensible posture to adopt.

H) Europe has always closed itself to the influence of other cultures and civilisations. Western civilisation is prone to marginalising the 'others'. European states have sought to assimilate immigrant Muslim communities and other non-Western groups living in Europe. Therefore, it is sheer ignorance to claim that Muslim Turks will play some role in the shaping of European identity in the future.

J) Turkey is in possession of the necessary assets and requirements for development. It has a sizeable geography, large population with the youth as the largest segment, with considerable human capital and mineral sources. This suggests that Turkey does not lack alternatives to integration with Europe. If Turkey remains itself and pursues an independent development strategy based on its own needs and priorities, it could go through a developmental breakthrough along the lines of Japan and China.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTcHELnZf74>
- [GREEK](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkPEZ2JAHuk>



- **What are the possible ‘provisional protective measures’ which Turkey and the EU would wish to insert into the accession treaty?**

- -Turkish farmers would be entitled to receive their share of the EU agricultural fund. However it will be clear from a glance at the latest enlargement process that the funds accruing to the Turkish farmers will remain well below the average aid provided for the farmers of old member states.
- To give an example, Spanish and Portuguese farmers would, according to their accession treaties, begin to enjoy equal treatment with their peers in other member states after a passage of ten years.

- -Turkey will, in all probability, be immune from an obligation to integrate itself into the environmental policies of the EU for some time as has been the case with the most recent wave of EU enlargement.
- -Freedom of movement for workers has, when one looks at the accession treaties from 1986 onwards, been put in place generally after a period of transition. A similar proviso about workers will most probably be incorporated into Turkey's accession treaty with the EU.
- -Turkey may seek to obtain immunity from the EU rules in respect of the free movement of capital for a number of years. This is an arrangement that was recognized in the accession treaties of some of the previous member states.

- -Turkey may not immediately become part of the economic and monetary union. To be part of this system, a member state of the EU ought to meet the Maastricht Criteria requiring a stable economy with a minimum rate of inflation and budget deficit.
- Some EU member states have not been able to accede to the economic and monetary union. This suggests that, it may take some time before euro replaces Turkish lira as the country's monetary currency.

- **What are the primary economic, social and political benefits which Turkey could gain after membership of the EU?**

- The ten latest entrants to the EU have made substantial economic and social gains through membership. Although European economic and financial crisis of 2008 continues to cause havoc in this continent to this day (May 2013), 'new' members of the EU still conceive membership as a positive asset for further economic leap forward and a key guarantor of their economic prosperity.

- The bloc of 10 states which acceded to the EU in 2004 obtained 40,16 billion Euros from the EU funds in the period between 2004-2006. This amount consisted of regional funds and other structural funds (64 percent), agricultural funds (24 percent), and the remaining funds.
- When considering that, in Turkey, the average per capita income is well below the EU average, the population is high, the high ratio of those employed in agriculture and the huge gap between the level of development among different regions in Turkey, fairness requires that Turkey be granted at least 40 billion Euros during the first three years of its membership.

- Following membership, Turkey will be relieved of the customs tariffs and quantitative restrictions which the Turkish textile and agricultural exports have faced during the Turkish search to penetrate into the European markets. This will cause an increase in the Turkish exports to the EU member states.
- Should, by contrast, Turkish textile and agricultural products continue to face tariff and quota restrictions even after membership, this would render Turkish accession to the EU meaningless.