

# **TURKEY-EU RELATIONS AFTER ÖZAL**



# New president, New Government and **New Goal**

- -After Özal passes away, the prime minister and the leader of the True Path Party, Süleyman Demirel, is elected as the new president by the Parliament.
- Tansu Çiller becomes Turkey's new prime minister, and Murat Karayalçın, the leader of Social Democratic Peoples Party, the deputy prime minister.
- **The new government prioritises the goal of establishing (or, rather, completing the process of) customs union with the European Union. (EU)**

# -The Copenhagen European Council summit (21-22 June 1993)

- 10 states are announced as being “candidate states”.
- **Cyprus** (Greek Cypriot Administration) and Malta are not in the list. That which turns this summit into a historic gathering is the formulation of the famous “Copenhagen Criteria”.
- Accordingly, for a state to join the EU, apart from its being a European state, **it must fulfil the following conditions:**

# The Copenhagen Criteria

- **Political criteria:** A functioning democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, and the protection of minority rights;
- **Economic criteria:** A functioning market economy and the ability of the candidate to withstand the competition from the EU member states;
- **General:** The candidate state should, in order to integrate itself into the political, economic and financial structure of the EU, be willing and able to incorporate *the acquis communautaire* of the Union into its legal system.

- However **Turkey failed to appreciate the significance of the Copenhagen Criteria in the 1990s** and thus declined to undertake the necessary reforms in order to achieve greater adaptation to the EU norms and mechanisms.
- Turkey conceived the goal of Customs Union as the most vital step in its long march towards membership of the EU.

# EP approval of the CU

- -Although the CU decision (**1995**) does not constitute a separate agreement granting that the process was foreseen in the Additional Protocol of 1970, **the EU insisted** that the **European Parliament had to approve** of this arrangement as a procedural requirement.
- This unexpected requirement caused a great deal of anxiety on the part of Turkey.

# EP's homework to Turkey

- The European Parliament was known to be utterly sensitive about democracy and human rights. So long as Turkey declined to embark on human rights reforms, there was little possibility that a “yes” vote could get through the European Parliament.
- As expected, **the Parliament presented Turkey with a list of changes in the beginning of 1995**, that included the release of the imprisoned deputies from DEP (Democracy Party), the lifting or at least amendment of Article 8 of Anti-Terror Law, and greater liberalisation in the area of freedom of expression.



- **-Turkey could not afford to ignore these calls.** Only a few weeks before the European Parliament voted Decision No. 1/95, Turkey made some changes in Anti-Terror Law, provided better guarantees for freedom of expression, while trade unions, public servants and youth organizations were permitted to engage themselves in the activities of political parties.

The US and EU member states began **lobbying** the European Parliament for a “yes” vote. **What sort of arguments did they use?**

- a) Customs Union is the end product of a long process which began in 1973. This is not a separate agreement. It would thus be legally unsupportable to refuse the arrangement;
- b) The refusal of Customs Union by the European Parliament would inevitably **distance Turkey from the process of European integration**. This will in turn create an anti-European and anti-Western climate in Turkey. Granting the critical role played by Turkey in the Balkans, in Caucasia and the Middle East for the furtherance of European strategic interests, a negative vote in the Parliament would undermine European interests.

- c) The rejection of the CU would also strengthen the hands of “Islamic fundamentalists” in Turkey. The current PM, Tansu Çiller, represents the Westward-looking and modern face of Turkey. In the case of a “no” vote for the CU, the upcoming elections at the end of 1995 will most likely produce a clear victory for the “Islamist” Welfare Party.
- d) In the case of the likelihood of the approval of the CU by the European Parliament, **the EU will be able to use its leverage to encourage democracy and human rights in Turkey**, and to get Turkey adopt a more conciliatory posture vis-à-vis the Cyprus problem. Otherwise, Turkey will not pay any attention to the warnings and suggestions from the EU.
- e) **The CU is in fact to the benefit of the EU member states.** As a result of this decision, a large and expanding market –Turkey- will be fully accessible to European exporters with no taxes or quotas.

# TURKEY'S DEMANDS

- The European Parliament votes to approve the customs union between Turkey and the EU with handsome majority.
- Turkey takes membership of the EU as the primary goal as of **1996** when the customs union takes effect.

As the interim phases of membership, **Turkey raises following demands from the Union:**

- a) Turkey should be declared as the 12<sup>th</sup> “candidate state”;
- b) Turkey should be included in the list of states that qualify for the participation to pre-accession negotiations; this will bring Turkey closer to eventual membership;
- c) Turkey should be presented with **a clear timetable for membership.**

# EU REJECTS

- **-Nonetheless Turkish requests are not accepted.**

**Why does the EU decline to accommodate Turkish demands?**

- A) The Turkish-Greek crisis over the rocky island of Kardak in 1996;
- B) The intransigence of Germany (fearful in particular of the possible flow of Turkish migrant workers).

- -The summit of European Christian Democratic Parties from six EU states in Brussels on 4 March 1997, concludes, *inter alia*, with an alarming announcement as far as Turkey is concerned:  
***“Turkey is not eligible for membership, for it is not part of European civilisation and culture.”***
- Ironically, it is the “more secular” leftist political alliances in Europe, such as **socialists and greens**, **that come to the defence of Turkey**. These circles condemn this anti-Turkish manifesto.

- -Nonetheless the chains of support which Turkey gets do not, at least in the short term, lead to the extension of “candidate status” for Turkey.
- **Why did the EU refuse to open its doors for Turkey during this period?**

## **-The Luxembourg Summit of 12-13 December 1997:**

- Turkey launches a diplomatic offensive in European capitals, while the US President Clinton lobbies for Turkey in the run up to the summit. However Turkey cannot get what it wants: “candidate status”.
- In the summit conclusions, **it is merely said, of Turkey, that it is eligible for membership**. As can be expected, the **Turkish government is utterly disappointed** as it is incensed.
- The “deficiencies” of Turkey: **economic and political reforms should be made; Turkey should display greater respect for international law in its disputes with Greece over Cyprus and the Aegean**. Turkey is thus called to pay greater attention to the UN Security Council resolutions and the authority of the International Court of Justice (with regard to these specific problems).



# Yes to (Grek) Cyprus, No to Turkey

- The summit decides to start the accession negotiations with Cyprus.
- Turkey reacts by refusing to continue political dialogue with the EU. Besides, it announces that it will not participate to the European Conference which was in part intended to placate Turkey.
- -Turkish-EU relations remain cool during the course of 1998 and the middle of 1999. Contrary to the Cold War years, European “left” takes a constructive view of Turkey, as opposed to the European “right” which holds an unsympathetic view of Turkey.

- On the eve of the **Helsinki European Council** summit on **10-11 December 1999**, Turkey receives a **warm invitation** for its participation to the summit. It is in this summit that **Turkey is granted the status of a “candidate state”**.
- US President Bill Clinton all along tries his utmost to convince the European governments for a favourable decision that could meet Turkish aspirations. He also seeks to alleviate Turkish fears about the set of conditions which accompanies the package of offer for Turkey’s candidate status.

## **But why did the EU change its outlook about Turkey within such a short span of time?**

- a) In the post-Luxembourg period, **the EU began to lose its influence over Turkey.** This country now generally ignored the European Parliament resolutions on Turkey.
- b) It became manifest that, once Turkey was outside of the equation, **the EU could not perform an affective role in crisis that erupted in the Balkans, Caucasia and the Middle East.** (Examples: II. Chechnian war; conflict over Kosovo; the prolonged crisis in Iraq.)
- c) Turkey's "new" foreign policy orientation which was further inclined towards the **US-Israeli duet, proved damaging to the strategic interests of the EU member states.**
- d) Gerhard Schröder, the leader of the **Social Democratic Party**, became the new Prime Minister of Germany when the Christian Democratic Party of Helmut Kohl lost elections. **Schröder held a favourable view of Turkish membership.**

- e) Turkey had already accepted the IMF conditionalities and passed some liberal economic laws, **amended the constitution** to open the way for **international arbitration** (in case of a dispute between foreign investors and state institutions). These changes as well as minor human rights improvements in Turkey gave a further boost to the endeavours of those that wanted to extend a hand to Turkey.
- f) **The seizure of Öcalan**, in the beginning of 1999 and the seeming defeat of this armed group, coupled with Öcalan's announcement that the armed struggle shall give way to political struggle, provided a better climate for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem in Turkey. The government –albeit cautiously- got the right message by revealing its intention to seek a democratic solution.
- g) The Simitis-Papandreu duet, **Greek PM and FM respectively, decided to support Turkish membership of the EU**. A more democratic and peaceful Turkey, in their view, could reduce the risk of military confrontation with Turkey. The support given by Greek relief agencies to the victims of the 17 August **1999 earthquake** in Turkey contributed to the **rapprochement between these two countries**.





# Towards Helsinki Decisions

- As said before, Turkey became a “**candidate state**” as proclaimed in the Helsinki summit.
- During the drafting of the text of the Summit Conclusion, a **hard bargain** between the EU and Turkey about the wording of the text left its imprint on the negotiations.
- As stated in the Conclusion, the Turkish government undertook to embark on comprehensive reforms to elevate the standards of democracy and human rights in the country, to take on bold steps for the resolution of the **Kurdish problem**, **to support a diplomatic solution to the Cyprus dispute**, to recognize the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice if the parties, namely Turkey and Greece, failed to find a negotiated solution to the Aegean Continental shelf dispute by 2004.

# The Helsinki Decision

- **12.** The European Council welcomes recent positive developments in Turkey as well as its intention to continue its reforms towards complying with the **Copenhagen criteria**.
- Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States. (...) progressing towards fulfilling the political criteria for accession with particular reference to the issue of human rights, **as well as on the issues referred to in paragraphs 4 (Aegean Solution by ICJ- at the latest by the end of 2004) and 9(a) (Cyprus solution by UN- Annan Plans)**.
- (...) accession preparations must concentrate in the light of the political and economic criteria and the obligations of a MS.
- (Monitoring) With a view to intensifying the harmonisation of Turkey's legislation and practice with the acquis, (...)
- (...) coordinating all sources of European Union financial assistance for pre-accession.