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Historical evolution of the Europeanization process of Turkey

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The concept of Europeanization has become a widespread political phenomenon since the beginning of the European integration process of Central and Eastern European states during the 1990s. Even though there is an increasing academic interest in the concept, most theoreticians argue that it has not been clearly defined yet, and that its meaning is ambiguous.[1] This concept is mostly used as the European Union's main tool for analyzing the impact on member states and candidate states. As the European Union (EU) keeps enlarging its borders by integrating new member states and expanding its authority over national governments, arguments concerning the nature and future of the European Union are understandably becoming more profuse. Also, the widening and deepening of the EU bring about the question of adaptation to European laws, regulations, norms and values. This process of adaptation to European standards by both member states and candidate states is basically defined as 'Europeanization'.[2] Because the central argument of this article is that there is a strong link between Turkey's Europeanization process and the country's European vocation in accordance with European standards and procedures, it is fair to analyze the relationship between Turkey and the EC/EU in a historical perspective, paying close attention to the main events impacting Turkey's goal of EU membership.

Historical relations between the Ottoman Empire and Europe

The Europeanization process of Turkey did not start with the Ankara Agreement of 1963; it has longer and deeper historical roots that go back to the Ottoman Era. In fact, the history of the Turkish people over the past thousand years has been largely a journey towards the West, starting from Central Asia around the 4th century, and presently ranges from Anatolia to Europe. For about two millenniums, this migration towards the West has shaped not only the social structure but also the ideology of the present Republic of Turkey. Turks, on their way to the West, encountered Islam around the 9th

century when they reached the Near East. Then, in the 15th century, as heirs of the Byzantine Empire, they started to extend themselves, not only territorially, but also ideologically and culturally. After the takeover of the Byzantine Empire with the conquest of Constantinople/Istanbul in 1453, accompanied by the assimilation of Byzantine institutions, population, political customs, architecture and even cuisine, the European Balkans became the richest and most favored provinces of the Ottoman Empire for the next four centuries.[3]

In the meantime, diplomatically Turkey had been a part of the European state system since the 19th century, when the Ottoman Empire was included in the Concert of Europe. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1856, Europe's great powers decided that the territorial integrity of the Empire was essential for European stability. In this sense, the Ottoman Empire and the European system of states began to emerge simultaneously. Here we can highlight that the two were separated by religion, culture and politics, and were constantly at war.

Europeanization era of the Empire

From the 15th century to the 17th century's Karlowitz Agreement, the Ottoman Empire was a significant world player who had an important role in the European system of balance of power, with the ability to resolve conflicts and lead the European states. In the early 17th century, as the Empire lost its military superiority and fell behind the European states in technological developments, the Ottoman elite began to import European ideas, lifestyles, and ways of thinking. During the end of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Ottomans showed a special eagerness to adapt to European culture, science and technology, and tried to catch up with the European project of modernity in order to Europeanize the Empire. In the first place, they built military schools and academies which emulated their Western counterparts; and, they penned the first Constitution of the Empire in 1876,[4] a document called "Kanun-i Esasi", establishing a Constitutional Monarchy and a parliamentary system which would be an important development along the road to the supremacy of law. The First Constitutional Monarchy was abolished later by Abdülhamit the Second, only to be reestablished in 1908.[5]

The first Ottoman Sultan who aimed to develop relations with Europe was Selim the Third. Channels of communication between Europe and the Ottoman people were opened up during his time. He associated extensively with foreigners, and was thoroughly persuaded to reform his state. Sultan Selim introduced the idea of joining the Western pact and changing methods of communication with other European allies. After reaching peace with Russia, he launched a reform program named Nizam-ı Cedid (New Order) aimed at strengthening the central state organization. Mahmud the Second, who ascended to the throne after Selim the Third, was responsible for more concrete actions,

such as the introduction of the Tanzimat reforms in 1839, marking the beginning of Europeanization.[6] The reforms introduced by Sultan Mahmud had immediate effects on every aspect of life in the Empire, including fashion, architecture, legislation, institutional organization and land reform. The reign of Sultan Mahmud also witnessed more radical reforms especially with the Sened-i ittifak concerning the closest step toward constitutional harmonization. Sultan Mahmud the Second is considered to be the first Sultan who put the Ottoman Empire on the European track, bringing it closer to the idea of Westernization.[7] In 1856, the Islahat Imperial Edict was enacted, and with these two edicts, non-Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire were afforded the same rights as the Muslims of the Empire. However, these reforms could not stop the dissolution of the Empire, and the new Turkish state rose from the ashes of the Empire.

Europeanization and the Republic of Turkey

Following the collapse of Empire, the new Turkish State was founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his followers. At first, Atatürk – a pioneer who embarked upon the political transformation of Turkish society into a secular and modern state – aimed to build a secular, Western-style, democratic country with a liberal economy. In one sense, Europeanization was the result of this new country's desire to survive and followed logically from the 19th century reform movements.[8] The founders of the Republic decided to adopt the path of 'Europeanization' to make the political transition from the theocratic Ottoman Empire to a secular nation-state. Hence, Europeanization has been the guiding principle of the Turkish Republic, which is also founded on the principles of peaceful foreign policy, secularism, rule of law, a pluralistic and participatory democratic system, and fundamental human rights and freedoms. This has meant a consolidation of democracy on the basis of European norms since 1950.[9] Moreover, Atatürk distanced Turkey from its Eastern ties and influences, thus focusing attention on one and only target: Western civilization. He stated that "the West has always been prejudiced against the Turks ... but we Turks have always consistently moved towards the West ... In order to be a civilized nation, there is no alternative".[10] Consequently, the Europeanization process was accelerated in the early 20th century, especially after the formation of the Turkish Republic. Atatürk also sought to modernize Turkey by eliminating almost all aspects of the Ottoman system and adapting European practices, ranging from legal codes to alphabet and style of dress so that "the whole nation had turned its skin inside out."[11] Beginning with the abolition of the Sultanate in 1923, and of the Caliphate a year later, Atatürk introduced a series of reforms designed to transform Turkey into a modern, secular European state.[12] Additionally, Atatürk's Europeanization was modeled in many ways after the values of the French Revolution. He threw out the Ottoman's mix of common and Islamic law and copied the Swiss civil code, the Italian penal code and

the German commercial code into Turkish statues. Ultimately, Atatürk and his allies imposed their vision on the Republic of Turkey, which would be based upon secularism, Turkish nationalism and Europeanization.[13]

Relations after World War II

Turkey has always considered itself a part of the West and has shared its values since the country's foundation. It regarded the association with the EU as an important asset for its foreign policy objective of Europeanization. Following the World War II, Turkey aimed to join the newly formed European institutions by ratifying political and economic agreements.[14] Actually, the Cold War era provided a golden opportunity for Turkey to be acknowledged as a European power. Turkey's strategic importance and military capacity rendered it a perfect and powerful partner for the Western alliance against the Soviet threat.[15] In the aftermath of that period, Europeans attributed more importance to Turkey's political and economic qualifications than to its strategic capabilities.[16] In this context, Turkey applied to join all the European political, military, and economic organizations; at first, it became a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1948, and a year later it joined the Council of Europe.[17] Turkey signed the European Convention on Human Rights and also joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952,[18] then became an associate member of the Western European Union (WEU).[19] While closely cooperating with Western Europe on the political sphere, Turkey aimed to pursue this relationship in the economic field. Following the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC), Turkey made its first application for full membership and signed the Association Agreement on September 12th 1963 in order to be a member of the Western world. Due to the military intervention of 1980, relations have come to a virtual freeze between Turkey and the Community. In April 1987, Prime Minister Turgut Özal applied for full EC membership and the European Council confirmed Turkey's eligibility for membership in 1990. In January 1996, the Customs Union between Turkey and the EU entered into force. A year later at the Luxembourg Summit, EU leaders declined to grant candidate status to Turkey. The Summit's conclusions stated that Turkey would "be judged on the basis of the same criteria as the other applicant states."[20] At the Helsinki European Council in December 1999, Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate country for EU membership.

Europeanization process after the Helsinki Summit

In the 21st century, Turkey's most important goal has been to become a more democratic state in the global system, with the support of human rights, rule of law, and participatory democracy, in order to gain access on the way of full membership. At this point, the European integration project has understandably become a vital tool for Turkey to continue its policy of Europeanization. With the recognition of Turkey as a candidate state in Helsinki (1999), a new era started in relations between Turkey and the EU. Following the Summit, Turkey underwent a process of reform to satisfy the Copenhagen criteria for opening accession negotiations with the EU. After the approval of the Accession Partnership and the adoption of the Framework Regulation on February 26th 2001, the Turkish Government immediately announced its own National Program for the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* on March 19th 2001. On the other hand, Turkey went through general elections in 2002 and the Justice and Development Party (AKP), under the presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, came to power. Since that time, reform efforts have been bolstered by the Turkish government and it was stated that the new government would accelerate the transformation of the country, a process which began mainly in the 1980s, and reached its peak with the realization of the Customs Union in 1996 and being granted candidate status in Helsinki. The Europeanization process began by monitoring the European Commission's annual reports on progress towards accession based on the Copenhagen criteria. With the clear intention of fulfilling these criteria, nine reform packages and two constitutional amendments have been successfully adopted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in a swift and determined manner.[21] The most considerable amendment was the Turkish Parliamentary decision approving a package of 14 reforms, including the abolition of the death penalty and providing solutions for the Kurdish issue. For instance, the first two-harmonization packages brought amendments to the freedoms of expression and association. The third harmonization package abolished the highly contentious death penalty and lifted the prohibition on broadcasting and education in other languages, such as Kurdish. The laws on political parties and penalties for torture crimes were amended with the fourth and fifth harmonization packages. Then two more packages were passed in 2003, amending the law of the National Security Council (NSC), which used to be dominated by the military. With this significant amendment, the number of participants from the Turkish armed forces was reduced while the number of civilians was increased. This amendment is also known as the 'civilianization of the National Security Council'. The sixth and seventh harmonization packages also extended freedom of speech and association; as well as cultural, religious and linguistic rights. The second phase of constitutional amendments, which changed ten crucial articles in the constitution, was passed in 2004. These amendments civilianized the Higher Education Board (YÖK) and abolished the State Security Courts (SSC). Both institutions were the products of the 1982 Constitution promulgated after the *coup d'état* of September 12th,

1980. Consequently, these reforms played a major role in strengthening, deepening, and embedding democratic norms and values in the Turkish political system,[22] leading the EU to open accession negotiations with Turkey for full membership on October 3rd 2005. Since the start of accession negotiations, EU-Turkey relations have taken a step forward in historic terms. Turkey has been undergoing a great number reforms, taking enormous strides towards democratization by implementing the Copenhagen political criteria and struggling to join the Union as a way of further completing its Europeanization/ Westernization process. Turkey has become the only pluralist secular democracy in the Muslim world and has always attached great importance to developing its relations with other European countries. It has shown that it is very keen on furthering its democracy and has proved its commitment to the Europeanization process. In other words, Turkey's drive to join the EU can be seen through this specific lens as the "culmination of a perennial quest for participation in the European political and social space".[23]

Conclusion

In this study, we tried to stress the importance of the Europeanization process of Turkey in terms of convergence with European values, norms and social practices. With this process, Turkey has taken important steps towards readjusting its political system so that it falls in line with the EU's democratic conditionalities. By attaining candidacy status in the European Council's Helsinki Summit in 1999, Turkey has turned an important corner in its longstanding walk towards full membership. Subsequent reforms in the areas where the EU had demanded improvements gave way to accession negotiations between the EU and Turkey. On the way, Turkey sets out to benefit from the economic, social and political gains of becoming a full member of the EU. We set out to study in concrete terms how far Turkey had become Europeanized – not just since the beginning of relations with the EC/EU and later during negotiations to become a full member of the EU – but even prior to that, i.e. back in the times of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. We have attempted to demonstrate that the history of modern Turkey since its the foundation in 1923 has been strongly shaped by Europeanization and democratization. The project of Europeanization in Turkey makes a significant contribution to the process of democratic consolidation and societal modernization. After the recognition of the Turkish candidacy in Helsinki, Turkey took serious steps and prepared its own National Program to adapt to the EU *acquis*. The Turkish government, which has been pursuing concrete policies with respect to reforms required by the EU, immediately passed harmonization packages with major constitutional amendments. These major reforms include alterations in anti-terror laws which put restrictions on freedom of thought and expression; freedom to establish private schools for Kurdish children; and broadcasting in Kurdish and other languages

commonly used in Turkey through private television and radio stations: it removed the National Security Council's executive powers and changed it into an advisory council. Finally, other reforms eradicated the state of emergency in the Southeast and introduced rights for non-Muslim minorities. We can admit that the impact of the harmonization packages has been revolutionary in Turkish life. During this process, Turkey has started to discuss sensitive issues such as cultural rights especially for Kurdish people, freedom of expression, the death penalty, and civilian-military relations. As a result of these reforms, Turkey is today more democratic, more open, and more Europeanized than it was before the Helsinki Summit in 1999. With these significant reforms, Turkey improved its human rights guarantees, created stronger safeguards against torture and mistreatment, expanded freedom of expression and freedom of the press, strengthened the freedom of association, assembly and demonstration, broadened the cultural rights of minorities, and consolidated civilian democracy. With the aim of furthering Europeanization, Turkey has achieved progress through necessary reforms, required both by the EU and by the Turkish elite, intellectuals and public. For instance, opening a public TV channel that broadcasts 24 hours in Kurdish nation-wide was a very positive step forward. Likewise, the government has begun a process of broad consultation with political parties and civil society to comprehensively address the Kurdish issue. However, Turkey still needs to work on the implementation of reforms. By allowing broadcasting and education in minority languages, liberalizing laws restricting freedom of speech and association, the country has made major progress in these fields.[24] We must highlight that in the absence of the EU's transformative impact and pressure, Turkey would have not been able to make these reforms on such sensitive issues. At the same time, this study has shown that Turkey has been taking decisive and coherent steps to be a more democratic state in the global system and to become a member of the EU, irrespective of the final date of formal accession. This study has also underlined the fact that that this process has only been possible because there is a strong connection between the Europeanization of Turkey and Turkey's European vocation. This vocation has served all along as the factor enabling, but certainly not determining, the outcomes that we analyzed throughout the study and that can be read through Gregoriadis' lens of a perennial quest to be part of Europe and participate in its institutions as a full member. Irrespective of advances made in the Europeanization of Turkey that were described in this study, we are aware that the full integration of Turkey into the EU is not in its hands to decide. Eventually, each member will have to ratify the accession treaty, and some have already mentioned the possibility of holding a popular referendum on the subject. This is the case in France and Austria, but also Cyprus, which looms as a dangerous obstacle in the whole process, for some an insurmountable one. Consequently, accession to the EU is the only project capable of providing Turkey with democracy and prosperity. Turkey's aim of integration is a social reform project that will affect both the present and the future of its citizenry. It is a challenging reform movement that will bring universal standards

and practices to all areas of daily life, from production to consumption, from health to education, from agriculture to industry, from energy to environment, from justice to security. Every political, legal, economic or social reform on the path to membership, whilst increasing living standards of individuals and groups, will also increase Turkey's international economic influence, democratic respectability, and the security of the country in line with international standards. Accession to the Union is a national goal, which is supported by and reflects the common purpose of the vast majority of the people. This aim, which is also an integral part of Turkey's strategic vision, fully corresponds to the founding philosophy of the Republic and Atatürk's vision for the nation's integration into Modernity and Civilization.

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