

Faculty of Political Science

Subject: Political Science

**EUROPEAN UNION AND TURKEY. INTEGRATION
SCENARIOS: SUCCESSES AND FAILURES**

SUPERVISOR

Prof. Leonardo Morlino

CANDIDATE

**Tommaso Pochi
Matr. 066462**

SESSION

2012/2013

ABSTRACT

For centuries, Turkey has played the role of chief enemy of Christianity: in the collective imagination of the Europeans, it represented the barbarian invader from the East, who rose, threatening, at the gates of the West: murderer, violent, torturer, infidel.

The whole Europe turned its gaze to the east with terror, praying not to see the Turkish sails approaching from the sea. Then, when the Ottomans ceased to be a threat, they continued to symbolize decadence, barbarism, perversion, while, in the meantime, Europe and the West entered the golden age of industrialization and global hegemony.

However, Turkey has always been the crossroads between the West and the East, the real gateway between Asia and Europe. As such, in addition to the immense wealth derived from trade and commerce, the Empire, which elsewhere was considered the archetype of evil, could get an equally great cultural enrichment.

The image of dying giant that already characterized the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century was inherited by the Turkish Republic up to recent times. For decades now, this has been a banal stereotype. The Republic of Turkey spent much of the twentieth century without relevant events. Then, it rose from its own ashes. It is now impossible to ignore that it rises to the role of regional power, with a population that, in Europe, is second only to the German one, and with a vast territory rich in natural resources. As in the past, still today we cannot forget its strategic geographic position, but, above all, it is necessary and fundamental to look at the huge and sudden industrial, technological and urban development and to the resulting huge business volume.

The data on huge production growth, the creation of new industries and jobs, the increase in the GDP of the nation are nothing short of remarkable.

The fundamental questions that will be the subject of this short essay are: what does the European Union represent to this emerging regional giant? And what Turkey to the EU?

Certainly, a hypothetical form of collaboration / integration between the two would generate, for both, enormous opportunities for economic and business development.

For a long time, the European Union has been considering with keen interest the rising star of the Middle East. It is now a widespread opinion that Turkey could become a full member in the sphere of the "big" through EU accession. The volume of trade and commercial and economic cooperation between Turkey and the EU has increased enormously over the past two decades, along with the economic growth of the former Ottoman Empire.

According to many, there are no distances as to prevent its full membership in the EU. Of course, its presence would revolutionize the organization of the Union since it would be the second largest country by population. The difficulties would be many, but from both the economic and commercial point of view, the benefits for the EU would probably be very relevant. Thus, in 1996, came into

force the customs union between the EU and Turkey, and in 1999 the European Council agreed to the Turkish candidacy for membership, submitted more than a decade earlier, posing a series of conditions and providing economic aids, so that the Republic could carry out substantial reforms towards the democratization of the country. These reforms were partly realized between 2001 and 2005, with significant results, especially with regard to the judiciary and electoral issues.

In those years, the interest was definitely reciprocal, but it was the period in which Turkey, economically booming, most desired to enter the circle of the powers of the union, glimpsing great opportunities for development and trade expansion, perhaps more than it was for the EU. Therefore, Turkey was willing to endure several limitations, even to give up some of the basics of its system, part of its strong and independent identity and of the glorious, revolutionary past, so inconvenient for its future partners, in order to benefit from the exceptionally favourable market conditions of the Community and the international prestige that the accession to EU would have conferred to it.

On the other hand, Turkey had to cope with strong resistance within the EU: while some member states, major trading partners of the Republic, have always been very favourable to its accession, we cannot forget that also Cyprus and Greece are member states and, at the same time, historical opponents of Turkey (if not enemies), with which tensions have never really loosened.

We must also analyse the democratic quality of political life in the country: the army has always exercised an enormous influence on the national political balance. Human rights represent another sore point: Turkey is formally respectful of them and has taken a number of measures to demonstrate that it has finally cut all ties with the past, especially with regard to torture, which has been outlawed. Yet, there is recent evidence of torture practices by the security forces.

Moreover, we must also remember the cultural factors and the historical dramatic events in which the country has been involved in a fairly recent past, such as the Armenian Genocide, recognized since 2000 by most of the international community, and the treatment of the Kurdish and other minorities, especially the non-Muslim, whose rights are still restricted within the Republic.

Thus, the fundamental issue to the EU, together with human rights (and, in part, coinciding with them), is the democratization of the country. Certainly, the democratic quality of the Turkish system has greatly improved over the past two decades, and particularly since the late 1990s, when true democratic elections were held, unlike those "controlled" by the army in the previous 20 years. However, quite substantial deficits still persist: the European Union is generally in favour of Turkish accession, which depends on the attainment of a minimum acceptable standard of democracy. The EU becomes a promoter of democratization within the country, through a system based on a combination of stimuli, pressures, negotiations and aids. Such a policy would not be carried out if the EU had no interest in Turkey's accession.

The hope to solve the above-mentioned problems arose with the advent, in 2004, of the government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan with the Adalet ve Kalkinma

Partisi or AKP, which has shown an increased will to immediately implement specific economic, social and institutional reforms to support the EU accession procedure.

The " Turkish Program for the Adoption of the Acquis " was launched in March 2001 and since 2002 it has been pursued by the AKP.

The reforms envisaged a series of 34 amendments to the constitution, the introduction of the new Civil Code (in 2001), of the Criminal Code and of the Code of Criminal Procedure (more complex and challenging, implemented between 2004 and 2005) and two Harmonization Packages, as well as a series of other changes. The sector that turned out to be the most important to reform was that of justice, in which the EU had found the greatest number of objections.

These hopes and reforms have led the EU to consider Turkey's entry as a real possibility. The Republic of Turkey seemed firmly convinced in its intention to join the EU and the chances of success were rather positive. However, within a few years, a shift in the sphere of interest and a gradual, but clear, change in the policies of Turkish government had a negative impact on the negotiations. The path of reforms, after the first success, fundamental even for the legal and institutional health of Turkey, has bogged down in a series of technical difficulties, as well as in the opposition of powerful groups of Eurosceptics or groups opposing a real revolution in the justice system.

Moreover, in recent years, the AKP has once again directed the Turkish policy towards nationalistic positions, contrasting, sometimes, at the international level, the positions of the NATO countries (Turkey is a strong and active NATO member, with a subsidy of 90 nuclear warheads as part of the Nuclear Sharing Agreement with the U.S.), including the United States and many EU member states.

All of this is meant to demonstrate Turkey's awareness of its rising power, notably at regional level (Turkey is also a founding member of the G20). Emblematic cases are: the position taken against the military intervention in Iraq in March 2003, its "autonomous" relations with the State of Israel, the increasing tensions with the nearby Syria (further exacerbated by the spreading of the civil war) which suggest an increasing desire to interfere in the affairs of the neighbouring country.

Thus, while the path of reforms required for the admission to the EU, became increasingly bumpy and impervious (if not interrupted), Turkey turned its gaze to the East, conscious of its own steady and progressive growth of GDP (around 6% until 2008, only marginally and temporarily arrested by the economic and financial crisis of recent years), of its business volume, of its economy and of the strongest army in the Middle East.

In addition, we must also consider the increasingly important role played by Turkey in the transport of oil products from Central Asia to Europe, with the gradual monopolization of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

The constraints imposed by the EU would hinder Turkey's will to exercise its influence in that context, since the costs would outweigh the benefits.

The reforms to be made are still many, but Turkey seems to lack the constructive initiative to carry them out. The road to modernity is difficult, Turkey is aware of it. Now it is facing a fundamental choice: to turn its interests and sphere of action towards one side or the other and, consequently, to follow certain rules or others. In the meantime the hopes of a successful integration process appear increasingly remote..

Chapter 1 will cover the following topics:

the vision of Turkey that the EU has had, in recent decades and has today; the mutual opportunities offered ahead of prospective membership in the economic / commercial field; the limiting factors for accession and the EU internal oppositions headed by some member states and their political, historical and cultural motivations.

Chapter 2 will analyze the position of the Republic of Turkey towards the European Union over the past few years, the current position and the one that will potentially be in the coming years, along with the reasons (political, economic, social and cultural) that determined the changes in the vision of the relationship with the EU. Moreover, in light of Turkey's position towards the Middle East region and of the new displacement of its political interests from West to East, we will try to verify if an actual will to join EU still exists. Finally, the Conclusion will deal with the issue of the public opinion of both sides: what European and Turkish citizens think about the possibility of adhesion (surveys and graphs). Future scenarios will also be taken into account: what Turkey's accession could lead to in practice; how the obstacles to such an event could be overcome.