

The Crucial Issue for the Enlargement Process of the European Union: 'Turkey'

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Abstract

The probable accession of Turkey to European Union has been widely discussed for last decade. Some thinkers believe that further enlargement of the European Union will harm the harmony of the current structure. If we use the realist point of view here, we can say that it is a controversial issue to accept Turkey as a member of EU, due to the fact that each member states seeks its benefits and agree on issues, if there is a mutual gain. Even though there is general agreement among the member states that Turkey is an important strategic partner and should be closely associated with the EU, the full membership of Turkey to EU raised deep skepticism in member states due to the perceived costs of Turkey's membership to EU. This skepticism prolonged the membership process of Turkey. However, throughout the new developments and events especially in the area of economy, Turkey came into prominence again. Yet, it is still overwhelming to acknowledge that Turkey is ready to full membership because there are tough problems such as unsolved Kurdish issue, economic stability etc.

In this paper, I will utilize from two significant international relations theories: Intergovernmentalism and Neofunctionalism. Then I will do the single-country study and analyses Turkey's circumstances with the framework of these two theories. In this single country study, I will explain the Westernization process of Turkey since 1923 and I will continue with three perspectives which give form to perceptions of Turkey in the foreign policy. After this, I will calculate the benefits and costs of the membership both from EU and Turkey.

Keywords: Turkey-EU Relations, Realism, Intergovernmentalism, Neofunctionalism, Unanimity, Supranational Institutions, EU Enlargement Process

Introduction

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Intergovernmentalist Approach:

Intergovernmentalism is one of the well-known approaches in international relations. According to this approach, nation states plays crucial role. George Bache thinks that European integration process would only go as far as the nation states were prepared to allow it to go (Bache, 2006: 13). Because of the fact that nation states are the most important and powerful actors in this approach, interests of nation states may postpones the integration process of candidate membership.

One of the measure or principle that the intergovernmentalist point of view passionately advocates in the body of the EU is the unanimity. Unanimity refers to the complete agreement between member states. Individuals consider unanimous decisions as the sign of agreement, solidarity and unity. If a decision has to be taken by unanimity, there must not be any negative vote to this decision. If there is just one negative vote to a decision, the decision will not come into effect. Thus, individuals also name unanimity as the 'veto power'.

But why is this unanimity principle crucial for Turkey? If the full membership negotiations which was launched on 3 October 2005 come to a conclusion positively and the final decision that determine the membership of Turkey to EU is decided to be taken by unanimity, for Turkey to be a member of the EU could be impossible. Today, there are some members states enthusiastically opposing to the membership of Turkey such as Cyprus, Greece and Austria due to the political and historical reasons and even though Turkish government conducts positive policy initiatives so as to get the support of these countries, it could be impossible to obtain their positive votes for the membership of Turkey to EU.

For instance, Austria does not support Turkey's membership mostly because of the historical reasons. The siege of Vienna by the Ottomans in 1683 caused stereotypes such as 'cruel Turks', 'barbarous Turks' and these stereotypes are still preserving its impact on Austrian politicians and citizens. "Even centuries later, the historical memory of the siege of Vienna serves as the most significant reason why Austria remains the most ardent opponent of Turkish membership" (Kösebalaban 2007:99). The bare truth is that for Turkey none of the initiatives may not be enough to eradicate these stereotypes so if the final decision about Turkey's membership to EU is decided to be taken by unanimity principle, Turkey could be out of the Union.

The same thing is valid in the case of Cyprus. The government of Cyprus puts forward the recognition of Cyprus by Turkey as the precondition for Turkey's membership to EU but as we all know that Turkey evaluates Cyprus issue as the national problem and conducts a strict politics and attitude towards Cyprus issue and rejects to undertake any initiative that leads to the recognition of Cyprus. So if the final decision about Turkey's membership to

EU is decided to be taken by unanimity principle, Turkey would not get the positive vote or support of Cyprus (Ker-Lindsay, 2007: 71-83).

Neofunctionalist Approach

Neofunctionalism is one of the well-known theories in international relations considered as the counter-theory to abovementioned intergovernmentalism. Neofunctionalism strongly argues that nation-states are not the only actors in international relations. According to neofunctionalist point of view, non-state actors are as important as nation-states, hence they give so much significance to the supranational institutions like EU and interest groups and bureaucratic actors (Bache, 2006:9). For neofunctionalism, the activities of interest groups and bureaucratic actors should not be restricted to the domestic political arena (Bache, 2006:9). That is to say, interest groups and bureaucratic actors should play a global or worldwide role in international arena instead of merely conducting activities related to domestic politics.

The most vital concept for the neofunctionalism is the concept of 'spillover'. The concept of spillover "refers to a situation in which a given action, related to a specific goal, creates a situation in which the original goal can be assured only by taking further actions, which in turn create a further condition and a need for more action and so forth" (Lindberg, 1963: 10). Clearer, this concept signifies that once national governments take a step for the integration of one sector, the process of integration will continue inevitably with the integration of other sectors. For instance, with the establishment of European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 with the Treaty of Paris, the sector of coal and steel was integrated and taken under the control of a High Authority and this process of integration continued and expanded more with the establishment of European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) in 1958 with the Treaty of Rome.

Furthermore, for the neofunctionalist thinking European Commission is the most significant non-state international actor. According to neofunctionalist logic, European Commission can manipulate both domestic and international pressures on national governments to develop the process of European integration even if the national governments are reluctant (Bache, 2006: 9. Through regular Progress Reports, Negotiating Framework, Paper on issues arising from Turkey's membership perspective, and Screening Reports, European Commission tries to impose the obligations which should be met by the Turkish government for the EU membership. As a result of these reports, Turkish government mostly endeavors to pass legislations in order to meet the obligations implied by the European Commission for the EU membership. So, the bare truth is that European Commission is the most influential institution with regard to Turkey's accession to EU.

The European Commission has played a key role in the membership process of Turkey to EU. In its Regular Report of 2004, the European Commission expressed that Turkey has achieved significant legislative progress in many areas, through further reform packages, constitutional changes and the adoption of a new Penal Code (Schimmelfennig, 2009: 425). At the end of this report, the European Commission declared that Turkey has fulfilled the necessary political criteria indicated in the Copenhagen Criteria and recommended that accession negotiations should be opened with Turkey (Commission of the European Communities). 2004 As a result of the recommendation of the European Commission, the European Council accepted the Commission's assessments and recommendation and on 3 October 2005, the full membership negotiations were launched with Turkey.

Besides, neofunctionalist point of view cares about the augmentation of new markets in the body of EU. Thus, they interpret Turkey's membership to EU in a positive and affirmative manner on the basis of 'creation or increase of new markets'. According to neofunctionalist ideology, Turkey, with its population of seventy-two million which consist of a considerable amount of young population, would be a great market and this would increase the trade volume of EU member states (Nugent, 2007: 484).

Apart from the notion of new market, the neofunctionalist logic seems confirmative to Turkey's EU membership due to the idea of democracy. According to neofunctionalist perspective, if Turkey is excluded from the EU, Turkey would turn its face to the East where there are lots of countries that have unstable and unconsolidated democracies and anti-democratic polity such as Iraq, Iran and Syria and this situation would damage the delicate structure of Turkish democracy. In addition, the neofunctionalist thinking states that Turkey which has unconsolidated and unstable democracy would cause a security problem for the Europe since it would be the sole European country that has unreliable democracy. In this case, Turkey would affect the democratic tradition, values and norms of Europe terribly (Oğuzlu and Kibaroglu, 2008: 945).

Conclusion

In both theories, there are constant doubts about membership of Turkey. However, not only Turkey but also member states of European Union may face with the dangerous potential of intergovernmentalism due to the fact that nation states can follow their own interests. Neofunctionalist approach can play a significant role for Turkey and EU. Membership of Turkey and future of European Union is strongly linked with each other. There is a mutual gain. Yet, there are homework should be done by Turkey. Turkish democracy has still some important problems, although some important steps done. On the other hand, European Union should minimize the negative discrimination against Turkey.

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