

## **ANKARA'S ACCESSION INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAKISTAN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper is to analyse the process of Turkey's accession into the European Union (EU). This new change in the status of the country would also bring a new change in its relations with other countries in general and Pakistan in particular. Recently, the European Union has granted Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) Plus status to Pakistan. This status will enable Pakistan to export its products in European markets. However, it can be argued that Ankara's accession into the EU will further increase trade opportunities for Pakistan in EU markets. Thus, this paper will also look at the ways in which Islamabad would benefit from its cordial relations with Ankara.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Turkey is only one of the countries on the world map that shares her border both with Europe and Asia and is therefore said that it is the country 'where East meets West' (Ugur, 2010). It is a secular Muslim country as has been proclaimed by her founding father Mustafa Kemal after abolishing the caliphate system in 1923. Further his ambition was carried by his associates Kemalists' in developing Turkey on the footprints of secularism despite being previously orthodox Muslim state (Keyman, 2007:220).

Ankara had associated herself very tightly with Europe ties throughout many decades as had remained allied during WW-II and member of NATO since 1952. Despite all her efforts of engaging with Europe, she has not been able to attain the accession. Ankara has long been striving for the accession but failed to achieve this aim and thus remained a burning issue within country, Europe and throughout the world. Her failure of attaining admission is due to number of factors. This paper is an attempt to highlight the core issues in the process of her accession. It also answers the question why Ankara has not yet been successful

despite her geographical proximity and a long enduring partnership with Europe. This paper will also look at ways in which Europe would benefit from Turkey's integration into European Union.

## **EUROPEAN UNION**

The European Union is an economic organization of '27 European nations' with 500 million people. The idea of its formation appeared when Europe was picking pieces of the Second World War, as to make the Europe a prosperous and the economic hub. From Treaties of Rome (1957) to the Treaty of Maastricht (1993), all were intended in order to unite the Europe which culminated in the formation of EU as an organization. The criterion for joining 'EU Club' enshrined at Copenhagen by the council in 1993 describes that the "member state has to achieve the stability of institutions that guarantees democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union" (The Copenhagen European Council, 1993:6, Sozen & Shaw, 2003:8).

## **TURKEY IN SEARCH OF EU MEMBERSHIP & CHALLENGES**

Turkey has a long history of allying herself with the West. For instance, during the World Wars associates with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952. During that period she was among the main members who joined the council of Europe in 1949 and remained the member of the European Union in 1963 (Balkir & Williams, 1993). In order to attain the full membership of EU, Turkey submitted on April 14, 1987. However, Turkey's proposal was rejected in 1989 and this issue became the central point of debate throughout Europe and Turkey (Sozen & Shaw, 2003).

There is a much controversy over the accession of Turkey to EU. Many in Europe believe her accession would lead to tensions and troubles due to her culture and religious identity, but on the other, some argue that her joining EU would boost economy in Europe. Her vast geography, strong military power and the youth

population will significantly contribute to the strength of EU. Moreover, it will act as the bridge between the East and the West as she had a great say in many Muslim countries and the Caribbean states. Both contradictory views ‘in favour and against’ about Ankara’s accession to EU have acquired major place in the discussion of Turkish media, politicians, military and the foreign policy experts. However, Turkey in order to couple with the Copenhagen criteria had done much so as to achieve her goal of becoming the permanent member of EU (Sozen & Shaw, 2003).

The very notion of modernization Ankara adopted, despite many in the country believed it is the westernization (Keyman, 2007:221). Since the creation of state as a sovereign Republic it had been the policy of her founding father and the Kemalist group to vanish the old Ottoman orthodox system (Ibid:221), as to enlighten the people and help them make progress’ as to achieve the Western Civilization (Heper, 1985:51).

A number of significant changes were made in constitution, almost 34 articles were amended that deals with the human rights, rule of law and the democracy. Moreover in 2002, the governments issued Law Amending Various Laws, which includes denouncing death decree, human rights protection including minority rights etc. and were hailed as the historic amendments by Turkish newspapers (Sozen & Shaw, 2003:116) so as to meet the Copenhagen criteria. In spite of these developments made by Turkish government, the EU urged their enforcement earnestly. Thus, Turkey needs to transform its modern system of public administration that would help her in attaining the accession process.

After winning the landslide victory by the Development and Justice Party (AKP) in 2002 elections, the government genuinely believed to fulfill the requirements for joining the EU. According to law, the government established the Secretariat General for European Union affairs under prime minister to constitute the cordial coordination in relations with the EU (Sozen & Shaw, 2003:117).

Only formation of organizations and amending articles is not solution of the problem. Keeping in view the Turkish political and bureaucratic system the government should adopt these measures earnestly and eagerly in real sense. It is due to this fact that EU had been putting pressure on Turkey regarding the enforcement of these laws in real sense. The Marmara earthquake of 1999 is the clear example in this case in which the governments was seemed hapless in overcoming the crisis. The concerns of the foreign investors are also another factor. The 2002 survey of foreign investors in Turkey stated that marked an investment of only “\$300 million – ten times less than a Hungary, a country whose entire economy equals to that of Istanbul” (BBC, 2006).

The unresolved issue of Cyprus is also one of the concerns of the many European countries. Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974 after clash with Greece that divided island into two parts i.e. the Greek controlled Cyprus in South and Ankara’s in the North. Consequently the Ankara imposed restrictions on trade from Cyprus and since then had remained the bone of contention between the both countries (EurActive, 2009, Howard, 2001, Robins, 2003:557). Greece, Germany, France and Netherlands are very skeptical of Turkey’s embargo and demanded its withdrawals of embargo as soon as possible otherwise serious restrictions will be imposed. As a result EU had been pressing Turkey to lift the trade restrictions on Cyprus but of no avail and therefore had remained as the major obstacle in Ankara’s accession to EU. Moreover the issue gained momentum when EU advocated the membership of Greek Cyprus to Union in 2004. It was much criticized by Turkish government and hailed that it is the violation of the international agreement. As a matter of fact EU has been putting pressure on Ankara to lift the trade embargo on Cyprus but it would be very hard for Turkey to change its mind regarding embargo (BBC, 2006; Robins, 2003: 558). Moreover, the Kurds issue, the women rights and scarf (Burqa) are also burning issues for the EU. Women are not being treated equal to that of men. The ‘honour killings’, discrimination and forced marriage are still the problems faced by them. The issue of scarf (Burqa) is also alarming to most of the Europeans. It is feared in Europe that on one hand a secular state Turkey’s Prime Minister is the secular and

most modern but on the other her wife wears an Islamic headscarf (Burqa). According to survey about 63 percent women wears Islamic traditional headscarf (BBC, 2006).

According the 2006 Barometer survey in Europe it was estimated that about 48 percent people were against the Ankara's entry (Servantie, 2008). Most of the people in Europe are of the view that the inclusion of Turkey in EU will diminish their culture, ideology, religion and a very essence of being the European. As Jacques Delors- a former president of the European Commission has stated about European Union as the "Christian club" (BBC, 2006), therefore, the entry of the immensely enormous Muslim would endanger whole the Europe and will increase their proportion of population in Europe from 2 percent to 20 percent (BBC, 2004; Togan, 2004; Sozen& Shaw, 2003).

The French president Sarkozy categorically had stated that:

"The Turkey's entry would kill the very idea of the European Integration. It would permanently burry the goal of the EU as the global power of common policies and of European democracy. It would be the fatal blow to the very notion of the European identity" (Empire, 2009).

Consequently, the nationalists in Europe are also skeptical about Ankara's admission to EU. Further, 'Treaties of Rome' focused the Europe and fomented that the membership rests on "the shared ideals of peace, liberty and collaboration" (European Economic Community, 1957:78).

However, the foundation of EU was not based on the religion or culture rather on the economic terms in order to boost the Europe after the World War II. Therefore many argue that the Turkey's admission would strengthen the very notion of its foundation. As has been rightly said by the British foreign minister David Milliband that "being European is about values not race or religion" (Milliband, 200:5). The 'Treaties of Rome' also refers to the shared ideals of peace, liberty and collaboration.

New Government of Erdogan in Ankara after 2002 general election brought number of significant changes so as to couple with the Copenhagen criteria. Number of laws have been implemented i.e. the death penalty has been abolished, inhuman treatment in jail banned, and have limited the frequent role of military in politics and allowed broadcasting in other languages such as Kurdish for the first time.

Despite all efforts Turkey been unsuccessful in achieving EU membership that had increased worries rather than decreasing the deadlock including the PM who was and is being annoyed to such a slow pace of response from the EU. It came clear in his address to nation speech on December, 30, 2009, in which he categorically castigated EU of not being sincere and behaving badly towards his country. He categorically castigated further that “we don’t ask for privileges but for the equal and fair treatment” and warned if such things continued Turkey can think of its support to the Nabucco pipeline project-that would bring gas from Caucasus to the Europe (Emre, 2009; BBC, 2009). According to an estimate Turkey’s opposition would lead to a serious blow to the worth of \$12 billion to Europe as it is facing the huge price from Russia and Ukraine (BBC, 2009).

Turkey had suffered a lot in order to acquire EU membership as compared to other member countries so far but her new prime minister is much committed to the cause and is sure that Turkey will join EU by 2015. Apart from the number of factors as discussed above regarding the delay in Ankara’s accession process, the opinion of Gunter Verheugen is noteworthy who professed that her admission was mainly due to “the veiled pressure and threats that came from within Turkey but also from the outside...caused a kind of overkill...It was just a fraction too much, the fraction that triggered a negative reaction in Europe” (Robins, 2003:556).

Turkey is economically poor country as compared to many EU states. If she joins in 2015 it is believed that she will be the second player beside Berlin with a population of 82.1 million and would be yielded to 15percent ‘Say’ in EU Council. Her admission will have minimal positive impact on EU rather it will boost economy of EU25 GDP of 0.1 to 0.3% of total GDP (Huges,

2004). It will be an asset for EU as it is the fastest growing economy and has a huge market in Middle East, Caucasus and the Balkan states. It is recorded by the World Bank that Ankara's GDP is as large as 80 percent of Russian GDP. Due to her geographical proximity to these states it will act as a bridge between Europe, Eurasia and the Arab world and has been rightly said that "Istanbul is intensifying as a transnational corporation headquarters for operations in the Caucasus and the Central Asian states" (Togan, 2004: 1044). The EU will be benefited from this enlargement by increasing its energy requirements and will achieve a huge market. The Ankara's accession would not be the problem for EU but might be for few member states (Lammers, 2006:287).

#### **EUROPEAN UNION AND PAKISTAN-TURKEY RELATIONS**

Recently, Pakistan has gained access to the EU markets. The award of GSP Plus status would enable Pakistan to export its products and earn lot of profits. It is expected that only Textile industry would earn RS 1 Trillion profits annually (Dawn, 2013). The award of new status has brought opportunities as well as challenges for Pakistan.

EU award to Pakistan indicates that International community has confidence in the exports by the country. This recognizes the quality of Pakistan products. However, Pakistan needs to maintain quality and to improve it further. This status also creates a new challenge for country to compete with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in the market. Thus, Pakistan needs to upgrade its physical infrastructure and to develop human resources. In addition, use of new technology would help Pakistan to survive in international markets.

This new trade status will also create opportunity to build new relationships. For instance Pakistan would also enhance its trade links with EU countries. In this way, Turkey would be able to play a vital role in in changing European trade and business. In future, Pakistan-Turkey economic cooperation will facilitate trade and business in the bloc and will increase growth rate and to achieve economic development.

## CONCLUSION

The Turkey's geo-strategic position make her a very important Muslim giant that has a strong sway in the Arab world, Caribbean and Asian states too. The 9/11 has completely changed the world scenario especially of the West towards the Muslim countries and "since then the religion has been linked to what has come to be known as 'the homeland security' inside the US and the 'so called war against terrorism' started outside the world" (Chomsky, 2003) in which mainly Muslim countries became the target such as Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. that had further increased the fundamentalism and extremism throughout the Islamic World. Consequently the West had expressed its fears of Muslim fundamentalism.

Ankara enshrined in the Muslim ideology is being ousted out of EU club is because of that too apart from other obstacles but her secularism and modernization process should not be ignored and had allied herself with the Europe throughout ages. Her Muslim ideology would act as the bridge between the 'Muslim East' and the 'Christian West' (Oguzlu, 2004: 100) and will not only boost EU economically but also militarily too. The demonstration of European Union as a moderate, multicultural but not a 'Christian Club' can only be overshadowed with the accession of Ankara (Ramadan, 1999).

Moreover Ankara should increase the pace of speed towards the progress as to meet the Copenhagen criteria. Further she had to heed to the Cyprus issue but Europe shouldn't forget that Ankara had allied herself with Europe during the major crisis throughout history either that may be the world wars or the Cold War; Turkey had remained shoulder to shoulder with the Europe throughout crisis period. Turkey is fast growing country and the accession talks are moving towards the right direction only Ankara has to fulfill the requirements to be the EU 29.

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