

1. Summary

Turkey's EU accession process has been stalled since the middle of 2010. The country has only opened 13 of the 35 chapters of EU law in more than six years, the last one during Spain's EU presidency in the first half of 2010. The Cyprus problem remains mired in a blame game. Meanwhile, Ankara's foreign policy toward the countries in its neighbourhood is much more assertive and the 'Turkish model' is gaining influence in the Arab spring countries.

2. The current situation¹

Turkey's European Union accession talks have ground to a halt in all but name. They started in October 2005 and since then 13 chapters of EU law have been opened out of a total of 35, with none opened since July 2010, and only one provisionally closed. The last chapter to be opened was the one on the uncontroversial issues of food, phytosanitation and veterinary safety on the very last day of Spain's EU presidency during the first half of 2010.

The government of Spain is one of the few in the EU that actively supports Turkey's EU membership, and this backing cuts across the political divide. Both the Popular Party, back in power after eight years in opposition, and the Socialists are in favour of Turkey joining the EU if the country fulfils all the conditions.

Eight of the remaining 22 chapters have been suspended by the European Union since December 2006, because of Ankara's failure to open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot traffic, five related to economic and monetary union are blocked by France, although Turkey meets the Maastricht criteria on the budget deficit and the level of public debt, and six by Cyprus (see Appendix 1). Ankara refuses to extend its customs union with the EU (since 1996) and implement the 2005 protocol regarding Greek Cypriot vessels –and hence recognise the Republic of Cyprus– unless there is also direct trade for the internationally unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Cyprus, divided since Turkey's invasion² of the island in 1974 into a Greek Cypriot south and the TRNC, which was triggered by a Greek-inspired coup, joined the EU in 2004, but Ankara only recognises the enclave in the north.

¹ This Paper arose out of a seminar on Spain and Turkey on 16 December, 2011 organized by the Institute for European Studies of the San Pablo-CEU University in Madrid. I would like to thank Marcelino Oreja, the president of the Institute and a former foreign minister, and José María Beneyto, the director and a member of parliament for the Popular Party, for inviting me to participate in the seminar, and also the other speakers: professors Kemal Kirisci and Refik Erzan of Boğaziçi University, Istanbul; Manuel de la Cámara, a former Spanish ambassador to Turkey; Alberto Carnero, the international affairs director of FAES, and Román Escolano, the former director of institutional relations at BBVA. I also acknowledge guidance from Ayşe Sinirlioğlu, Turkey's ambassador in Madrid, and Antonis Toymazis, the Republic of Cyprus ambassador in Madrid.

² The Turkish government refuses to use the word invasion and calls its action a military intervention under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee between Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Not surprisingly, Turkish support for EU membership has declined since the peak of 73 per cent in 2004, before the negotiations started, according to the latest Transatlantic Trends Survey produced every year by the German Marshall Fund of the United States (see Figure 1). However, there was a ten-point increase in 2011 in the percentage of Turks who thought EU membership would be a good thing (48 per cent), the highest level since 2006, but only 26 per cent of respondents in the 12 EU countries surveyed expressed the same sentiment. While the proportion of Turks who thought it was likely the country would join the EU increased by seven points to 33 per cent, there was virtually no change in the EU, where 53 per cent still thought Turkey's membership was likely.

Figure 1. Turkish Attitudes Toward Membership of the EU: Good vs. Likely (%)

	Membership a good thing	Likely to join
2004	73	
2005	63	
2006	54	
2007	40	26
2008	42	26
2009	48	28
2010	38	26
2011	48	33

Source: Transatlantic Trends 2011.

Half of those polled in the 12 EU countries said Turkey's membership would not be good in economic terms for the EU, while 39 per cent agreed it would be beneficial. The French (63 per cent), Swedes (62 per cent), Germans (58 per cent) and Spanish (55 per cent) were the most likely to see Turkey's EU membership as negatively affecting the EU economy.

Disenchantment with the EU has led one-in-five Turks (20 per cent) to express support for Turkey to act in closest cooperation with the countries of the Middle East on international matters (see Figure 2). This is the same level as in 2010 (double that of 2009) and hardly signifies that Turkey is 'turning its back on the West', as claimed in some international media and government circles. Indeed, a larger share of Turkish respondents in 2011 (19 per cent) than in 2010 said Turkey should cooperate the closest with the EU on international matters.

Figure 2. With Whom Should Turkey Cooperate Closest (percent agreeing)?

	2009	2010	2011
Turkey should act alone	43	34	27
Countries of the Middle East	10	20	20
European Union countries	22	13	19
Russia	3	5	9
All	7	11	9
United States	4	6	8

Source: Transatlantic Trends 2011.

With no new chapters opened and the accession process deadlocked, the European Commission's latest annual progress report on Turkey, released last October, focused on constitutional reforms, the government's democratic opening, the trials of the alleged plotters, the Kurdish issue and, in particular, freedom of expression³. The EU's reports used to be road maps for Ankara to engage in legislative and political action, but now have little influence and are little more than a ritual exercise.

The deadlock has led to a slackening of reforms in Turkey and creeping authoritarianism. The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2011 democracy index labelled Turkey a 'hybrid regime' and ranked the country 88th out of 167 states. The socially conservative Justice and Development (AK) government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which has Islamic roots, has been in power since 2002 and has become less tolerant. Thanks, however, to a stellar economic performance (which shows signs of petering out), the AKP won an increased share of the vote (almost 50 per cent) in the 2011 general election.

One of the reasons for the rising intolerance is the lack of an effective opposition in parliament. The fiercely secularist Republican People's Party (CHP), the social democratic party that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk the founder of the Turkish Republic in 1923 established, is a pale shadow of its former self. It has tended to concentrate on petty issues. The CHP has been out of office since forming part of coalition governments between 1993 and 1996 and was not even represented in parliament between 1999 and 2002. However, its new leader, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, an ethnic Kurd from the heterodox Alevi sect (Erdogan is from the dominant Sunni sect), won more seats (135 of the 550) in the 2011 general election. Democracy within parties is also weak.

Turkey leads the world in the number of imprisoned journalists (97 at the latest count including distributors and publishers), according to the Turkish Journalists' Union⁴. The European Human Rights Court received nearly 9,000 complaints against Turkey for breaches of press freedom and freedom of expression in 2011, compared with 6,500 in 2009. Orhan Pamuk, a Turkish writer and Nobel laureate, was fined about \$3,670 last March for his statement in a Swiss newspaper that 'we have killed 30,000 Kurds and one million Armenians.'

While the EU report acknowledges that the 'media and public continued debating openly and freely a wide range of topics perceived as sensitive, such as the Kurdish issue, minority rights, the Armenian issue and the role of the military,' it expressed concern at the 'high number of violations of freedom of expression.' Turkey dropped in the press freedom ranking of Reporters without Borders from the 102nd position in 2008 and 122nd in 2009 to 138th out of 178 countries in 2010.

The government says that with the exception of four cases, the journalists arrested have all been charged with activities other than reporting such as their alleged involvement in the plot to topple the government known as Ergenekon. No one among the more than 300 suspects charged in the four-year long investigation, including senior military officers has yet been convicted, even though courts have heard more than 8,000 pages worth of indictments. Detainees in Turkey can be held for years before their cases are resolved⁵.

³ See the analysis of the report by Ilke Toygur published by the Elcano Royal Institute at http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_eng/Content?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/europe/ari152-2011

⁴ See "Charges Against Journalists Dim the Democratic Glow in Turkey" by Dan Bilefsky and Sebnem Arsu (New York Times, 4 January, 2012) at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/05/world/europe/turkeys-glow-dims-as-government-limits-free-speech.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Charges%20against%20journalists&st=cse

⁵ See the report of 10 January, 2011 by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights criticizing the legal system at <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2005423&SecMode=1&DocId=1842380&Usage=2>