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GCSP Policy Brief Series

The GCSP policy brief series publishes papers in order to assess policy challenges, dilemmas, and policy recommendations in *all aspects* of transnational security and globalization. The series was created and is edited by Dr. Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan, Senior Scholar in Geostrategy and Director of the Program on the Geopolitical Implications of Globalization and Transnational Security.

Editorial of GCSP Policy Brief No. 5 Delivering Regional Security in a Globalizing World: The European Union's Enlargement to Turkey

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Review and Critique

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) is a process that involves a complex set of agreements and requires the achievement of certain criteria (conditionality) before admittance. The unanimous agreement of all current members states is a hurdle that applicant states need to pass. In 2004, 10 new member states were admitted to the EU, fundamentally changing the character of the Union and increasing the complexity of its decision-making structures, given that 25 members are now sitting at the table.

Turkey's application to join the EU has arguably thus far stirred up the most debate among members. Supporters of Turkey's admission to the EU argue that the country is already a member of the security community, being a member and active contributor to NATO; that it is a secular and democratic state; and that it is an important contributor to peace and security in an otherwise volatile region (its border states include Iraq, Syria, and Iran, among others). Those skeptical and/or opposed to Turkey's admission point toward the size and population of the country, to its potentially unstable Islamic population, poor human rights record, lack of political stability, and neighboring countries. Fundamentally, opponents believe that "Europe's" border ends in the south-east at Turkey, not beyond; proponents argue that Turkey is on the border and is historically an Islamic, Mediterranean, and European country.

Dr. Deighton's exploration of the issues involved in the EU's possible enlargement to Turkey, in the context of a globalizing world, highlights both of these sides and presents a number of possible scenarios for the next few years.¹ She particularly places the issue in a regional context, noting that Turkey is located in a rapidly changing region and one that is of great geopolitical importance. This in itself makes Turkey's accession to the EU particularly momentous. Dr. Deighton envisages three possible scenarios: (1) an end to negotiations, due, for example, to eroding support in member states; (2) a precipitate acceptance of Turkey to the EU or, most optimistically she notes; (3) a lengthy and constructive negotiation process that allows Turkey and the EU member states to develop a greater understanding of each other.

The issue is not simple, and its complexity is marked by the sectors that Dr. Deighton's brief explores – political, security, social, economic, etc. – and the position that vested, fixed ideas on debates between West and East, Christianity and Islam have on this enlargement debate. It should not be taken for granted that the Turkish population supports its country's membership in the EU. The EU remains an attractive "club" for the political establishment as well, but this could always change. Dr. Deighton's recommendations reflect the need for greater exchange of information, especially at the grassroots level, and understanding between the actors involved. Of course, it should not be forgotten that, while recognizing the importance of these aspects, they must to be accompanied by concerted change at the political and economic levels.

Policy Dilemmas and Recommendations

The dilemmas inherent in Turkey's application to join the European Union are multifaceted and evoke a number of themes and topics: religion, economic disparity, and ideas on what "Europe" actually is, which are illustrative of broader dilemmas facing the European Union today. The EU and Turkey face a difficult path in reconciling respective interests, finding a balance on the achievement of practical measures (economic, social, and political), and, of course, also on an more emotional level. The eight dilemmas and corresponding recommendations below reflect these aspects and present concrete options for increasing mutual understanding.



Each of the above pairs is important in its own right; however, for ease of analysis only a few will be discussed, evoking some of the broader themes.

First, the issue underlying Turkey's potential accession is related to the EU's own internal problems following a major enlargement in 2004. Turkey's process has been wrapped up with these bureaucratic issues, and admittedly a form of identity crisis of the Union itself. A longer accession process will be one way to handle any major negative impact.

Second, Turkey's possible entry into the EU needs to be viewed from the point of view of potential benefits. Turkey's young population can remedy labor shortages in the EU, and a robust Turkish economy in certain areas can be an asset to the European community. The country has made important contributions to NATO, and its experience in this multilateral forum should not be discounted. In addition, the importance of its location cannot be ignored, and its role as a regional force contributing to peace and cooperation in its neighborhood is a significant factor and something that will potentially multiply in effect if it becomes a member of the EU.

Third, promoting cross-cultural understanding among the populations of the EU and Turkey will produce important mid- to long-term results. Ignorance and a lack of understanding promote prejudices that will work against both Turkish and EU interests. Programs that encourage and support educational exchanges, as noted by Dr. Deighton, are one example of activities that could promote mutual understanding. Public information campaigns in EU member states on Turkey's political, social, and religious character and in Turkey concerning the EU accession process can only have a positive effect.

Conclusion

Given the complexity of the issues involved surrounding Turkey's possible accession to the EU, it is not possible to recommend one or two things that will for certain change the situation dramatically in the short term. Concerns surrounding Turkey's membership application to the EU stem from a certain degree of misunderstanding but also from genuine worries over an ever-decreasing effectiveness of an ever-enlarging Union and the number of outstanding requirements the country needs to fulfil before membership. Although these concerns are warranted, they need to be carefully weighed against the benefits of Turkey's accession as outlined above. The process of possibly admitting Turkey to the Union, which is already under way, will not be undertaken with haste, nor should it be. The process of democratic, economic, and social change in Turkey has already made significant gains, but it needs to continue. The full support of Turkey's population and of EU entities and members states is a crucial factor in making the possible future accession of Turkey to the European Union more than just a success but also an opportunity to bridge cultural divides and dispel broader misconceptions.

¹ For the brief in its entirety, please see the policy brief series as part of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy's Program on the Geopolitical Implications of Globalization and Transnational Security, <http://www.gcsp.ch/e/publications/Globalisation/index.htm>.