Why Turkish Accession Depends on Mediation of the Cyprus Dispute
Written by Neil Renic

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Is the accession of Turkey in the Strategic Interest of the European Union? If so, how can the EU hasten the accession of Turkey through a more Robust Mediation of the Turkey/Greece Cyprus Dispute?

Thucydides, a forefather of political realism, claimed that 'among neighbours, antagonism is ever a condition of independence' (cited in Waltz 1959: 210). For much of European history this had seemed an inescapable truism, having reached its logical conclusion in the Second World War, the most destructive conflict in human history. What emerged from this violence, however, was a level of cooperative European integration hitherto unimagined. The legacy of this process has been dramatic, with the animus and anxiety that had previously characterised European inter-state relations, replaced by 'functional debellicisation' – an unwillingness to consider war as a legitimate option under any circumstances (Mandelbaum 1999: 27). For this reason above all, the organisation that would evolve into the European Union (EU) stands as a singular achievement in international politics. As well as enabling a transcendence of the security dilemma within Europe, the EU has allowed its member states to maintain political relevance in a world still dominated by US hegemony, and increasingly by a rising China. Conceptualising EU foreign policy, however, is a more difficult task, as its failure to function on the international stage as a unitary actor accords it a status of 'sui generis' (Aggestam 2008: 361). Despite this, EU foreign policy does exist, and is manifested clearly through EU enlargement, a process of expansion through the accession of new member states. This essay will argue that the accession of Turkey is in the strategic interest of the EU, and should therefore be hastened through a more robust mediation of the Cyprus dispute. This will be achieved firstly by examining the most significant contemporary challenges confronting the EU, including its inability to project optimal levels of soft and hard power, and an emerging energy security dilemma. The ways in which Turkey's inclusion into the EU mitigates these challenges will then be demonstrated. Potential problems to Turkey's accession will next be highlighted, including the protracted Cyprus dispute. Lastly, recommendations will be provided to ensure the EU more effectively mediates the Cyprus dispute, thus facilitating a less problematic accession of Turkey into the EU.

The threat of militant Islamism within Europe represents a significant challenge to the non-coercive capabilities of the EU. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought to an end an historical epoch defined by the teleological struggle between Communism and the West. Many now, however, view militant Islamism as a successor danger to Europe, with the influence of its more pernicious branches ranging from the Middle East to the immigrant communities of Western Europe (Anderson 2011: 393). Of further concern, this growing threat to European security has been only worsened by those who seek to rigidly demarcate European and Islamic 'civilisations'. Perhaps the most famous proponent of this solipsism was Samuel Huntington, who, failing to grasp the heterogeneity of Europe and Islam, viewed conflict between the two as ineluctable. (Huntington 1996: 158). Advocates of this flawed narrative not only overlook the transcultural dimensions of European and Middle Eastern history, but unwittingly provoke the very 'clash of civilisations' they predict. Fortunately, however, the EU is ideally equipped to confront the threat of militant Islamism.

The accession of Turkey would both enhance the soft power of the EU and serve as a catalyst in normalising Europe's relationship with the Islamic world. Constructivists typically characterise the EU as a transformative institution, wielding high levels of soft power through a dissemination of its norms and values (Schimmelfennig 2001:

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77; Matlary 2009: 84). A more practical expression of this principle is present in the EU enlargement process, which functions to translate the institution's soft power into actualised foreign policy. The importance of the EU enlargement process, therefore, should not be understated. By enforcing highly conditional standards of entry, enlargement operates as the most successful structural foreign policy of the EU, inducing the structural reform of numerous European states (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 60; Aggestam 2008: 363). Given this, the EU enlargement process, and specifically the accession of Turkey, should be regarded as a prime means of confronting militant Islamism within Europe. Contemporary Turkey is pro-Western and increasingly democratic, and its accession would forge a valuable link between Europe and the Islamic world (Kubicek 2005: 71; Nugent 2006: 68). The potential benefits of this link would be substantial, as evidenced by Turkey's increasing status as a regional soft power. Turkey is currently viewed as a key diplomatic actor in the Middle East, improving its relations with the Arab world, adopting an active approach toward Palestinian grievances (Larrabee 2007: 1), and increasingly asserting itself as an ideological counterweight to Iran (Akyol 2012: 1). For the EU to fully benefit from Turkey's cultural and diplomatic influence, however, requires Turkey's full integration into the European community. Turkey's accession would strengthen the normative power of the EU by binding the institution to a Muslim populated democracy, able to better project European values and norms to the EU's southern and eastern borders (Muftuler-Bac 2008: 64). This would demonstrate to the Islamic world the normative value of EU ideals, and serve to counter those who view 'civilisational' differences as immutable. As former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fisher argued, "to modernise an Islamic country based on the shared values of Europe would almost be a D-Day for Europe in the war against Terror…" (cited in BBC News 2004: 1). While the soft power benefits of Turkey's accession are clear, significant challenges remain regarding the EU's hard power capacity.

Given the nature of contemporary security threats, the EU cannot rely on civilian mechanisms alone, and must demonstrate a greater willingness to project hard power. This deficit in EU hard power was most recently exposed during the 2011 Libyan crisis. While the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was praised for its 'unprecedented speed and unanimity', the reaction of the EU was criticised as 'essentially incoherent' (Koenig 2011: 3). Similarly, the EU's approach to the unfolding crisis in Syria has raised serious questions regarding the institution's hard power credibility. The EU's most favoured method of coercion, economic sanctions, has done little to end the violence committed by Syrian authorities (The Economist 2012: 2). Yet despite the implications of these examples – the seeming impotence of the EU in matters of hard power – hopes that the institution can exist as a credible military body are far from quixotic.

The accession of Turkey will allow the EU to increase its hard power capacity. While issues clearly exist regarding the EU's willingness to implement more coercive forms of power, it is worth noting that the military potential of the institution is substantial. As well as two EU states, France and the UK, functioning as both nuclear powers and permanent members of the UNSC, the collective defence spending of EU member states is second only to that of the US (Beatty 2005: 18). Furthermore, the EU has made important steps in the development of a more cohesive security doctrine. Moving beyond the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESDP), EU collective security gained an explicitness with the European Security Strategy (ESS) (Joenniemi 2007: 136). The ESS signifies a further expansion of the EU into global security matters. EU-led peacekeeping operations have taken place in Bosnia-Herzegovina, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Macedonia, The Central African Republic, Chad, and the Darfur region of Sudan (European Union 2011: 1; Missiroli 2003: 4). It must be stressed that while Turkey is currently a significant contributor to EU peacekeeping missions, the potential benefits of its accession go well beyond its military capability. This is primarily due to Turkey's position at a regional crossroads of strategic importance for Europe, allowing the state to function as 'both a spearhead and a bridgehead for European Interests' (Emerson and Tocci 2004: 4). For this reason, neither the EU nor Turkey should remain satisfied with merely maintaining a status-quo in its security partnership, but rather, must seek greater interconnectedness through the process of accession. Crucially, while Turkey is currently regarded as a key military partner of the EU, viewing this support as unconditional is unwise. A failure to meaningfully progress accession negotiations would very likely lead to the conclusion of Turkey's involvement in EU security strategy (Fajolles 2009: 2; Muftuler-Bac 2008: 65). The threat posed to the EU by amorphous security threats, such as terrorism and bellicose rogue states, necessitates the adoption of a more robust and cohesive EU security doctrine. The utilisation of Turkey's military capabilities and geostrategic position must be viewed as a crucial factor in this process. For these reasons, Turkey is an ally the EU can ill afford to discard. The need for Turkey's accession is further

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highlighted upon examining EU energy security.

EU energy demands constitute a profound challenge for the institution. Given the often critical role energy security plays in a state's foreign policy, conceptualising it as merely an economic issue should be avoided. Rather, the potential leverage exercised by energy exporter states over both transit and importer states, grants the issue of energy security a political significance and impact (Hadfield 2008: 324; Kovacovska 2007: 6). Energy-based conflict, therefore, clearly has the potential to escalate dramatically. This fact was highlighted during the 2009 Russian-Ukrainian dispute over natural gas prices. The crisis not only provoked debate regarding the credibility of both Ukraine and Russia as reliable business partners in the EU, but it also exposed the weakness of the EU's growing dependence on Russian energy supplies, which currently amount to a quarter of gas and fifth of oil consumption by EU member states (Tichy 2010: 2). This over-reliance on Russia as an energy exporter state is clearly untenable. Fortunately, however, Turkey again provides much-needed solutions to this dilemma.

Turkey's potential to advance EU energy security is a powerful argument in favour of its accession. This potential largely stems from Turkey's geographic location, and in particular, its proximity to the Black Sea. The Black Sea is a region of 'strategic importance' (European Commission 2007: 1) to the EU, functioning as a major transit route for oil and gas transported from Central Asia and Russia. Turkey's proximity to the Black Sea, therefore, signifies its potential to function as a crucial energy corridor for Europe. The EU currently relies on Turkey's neighbouring regions for approximately 60 percent of its energy needs (Aydin and Acikmese 2004: 54). Consequently, Turkey's accession would enable the EU to better diversify its energy imports, greatly reducing the likelihood of a crisis similar to the Russia-Ukraine dispute. This very fact was argued by the European Commission, which claimed that Turkey's accession, by allowing a diversification of EU energy supply lines, would provide alternative oil and gas export outlets for Russia, the Middle East, and the Caspian states (European Commission 2004: 9). Importantly, this increase in alternative routes would benefit the EU far beyond any actual increase in energy output. Roberts argues that the construction of Nabucco, a proposed gas pipeline which would run from eastern Turkey to Austria, would grant the EU greater leverage in its negotiations with Russia by its mere existence as an alternative supply route, regardless of its actual output (cited in Barysch 2007: 4). For these reasons, Turkey's accession must be granted a high priority by the EU. While the advantages of Turkey's inclusion into the EU have been clearly outlined, it is equally important to address the significant opposition within Europe to Turkey's accession.

Despite the profound way in which the accession of Turkey would strengthen the EU, there exists significant and entrenched opposition to the proposal. Most adamant in their resistance are those that conceptualise Europe as a fundamentally 'Christian civilisation', rejecting the inclusion of a primarily Islamic state (Lugo 2005, cited in Hurd 2010: 185). Arguments of this nature go beyond the issue of Turkey's accession, and indicate that the EU remains deeply divided over its cultural identity. The EU has long demonstrated an inability to answer the central question of whether its external boundaries should be defined by modern secular values of universal human rights, liberalism, democracy, and inclusive multiculturalism, or by its common heritage of Western civilisation and Christianity (Casanova 2006: 241). For Europe to fully realise its potential as a global power, it must forge an identity that gives primacy to the values of modernity. Similarly, if Turkey is to become a member state of the EU, and benign cohabitations between Christians and Muslims made possible, it must be finally and fully understood that 'Europe is an idea, not a tribe to be defined in ethnic or religious terms' (Erdogan 2004: 1).

While less reflexive than religious-based opposition, economically motivated criticisms of Turkey's accession are equally misguided. Many currently question the wisdom of continued EU enlargement, particularly due to the common perception that the Euro monetary crisis has emanated from states such as Greece, a 'reckless and unstable' periphery (Bosco 2011: 1). This has predictably led to calls for the EU to avoid further high-risk enlargement. An examination of the economic potential of Turkey, however, highlights clearly the inaccuracy of Greek comparisons. As well as possessing a rapidly expanding GDP of (US)$875bn (Kettle 2010: 43), Turkey has a comparatively young population that would help mitigate Europe's own demographic dilemma – an aging population struggling with labour shortages within many key sectors (Berglund et al. 2009: 85). This should highlight the importance of Turkey's accession, even among those hostile to the EU enlargement process. The issue of Cyprus, however, does have the potential to severely problematise the accession of Turkey.

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The viability of Turkey's accession is contingent upon a peaceful resolution to the Cyprus dispute. There is little question that the Cyprus dispute constitutes one of the most significant foreign policy challenges currently facing the EU. Its genesis can be traced to the 1974 coup d'etat by Greek Cypriots, and subsequent Turkish invasion of the northern third of the Island, dividing Cyprus along what would be known as the 'Green Line' (Pan 2005: 2). In the decades following these events, numerous attempts have been made by the international community to effectively mediate a peaceful resolution, most notably with the 2004 Annan Plan. This effort however, which would have effectively created a federation of two states, was rejected by Greek Cypriots in a 2004 referendum, ensuring "a unique and historic chance to resolve the Cyprus problem" was lost (de Soto 2004, cited in Onis and Yilmaz 2005: 282). Consequently, while the current likelihood of the Cyprus dispute escalating into armed conflict is low, there exist a host of ongoing problems associated with its continuation. The conflict is responsible for over 200 000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), as well as high levels of tension generated by the ongoing presence of Turkish troops on Cyprus (International Crisis Group 2011: 1). Additionally, the intractability of the Cyprus conflict has negatively impacted NATO and EU cohesion. Turkey's refusal to approve Cyprus' inclusion into the NATO framework, while Greek Cypriots continuously block Turkey's accession talks, demonstrates the way in which the conflict jeopardises the future operability of EU-led military operations, heavily dependent on NATO and Turkish assets (Muftuler-Bac: 74). For these reasons, it is crucially important for the EU to reengage with the Cyprus dispute and steer belligerent parties to a meaningful peace.

Despite its seeming intractability, the EU can effectively mediate the Cyprus conflict to a peaceful resolution. Given the near absence of mutual trust in the Cyprus dispute, a process of Graduated Reciprocation in Tension Reduction (GRIT) should be favoured by EU mediators. First theorised by Osgood, GRIT functions as a program of 'flexible, self-regulating procedures in which the participants carefully monitor their own initiatives on the basis of their own evaluation of the reciprocating actions taken by the other side' (1962, cited in Yamagishi et al. 2011: 303). This form of conflict mediation has been successfully implemented in numerous conflicts, including Cyprus itself. Unilateral gestures such as the Turkish Cypriot decision in 2003 to open its borders for all Cypriots, as well as the Greek Cypriot decision in 2004 to provide individual Turkish Cypriots with citizen benefits, have produced positive results in the past (International Crisis Group 2011: 2). Given the EU's greater leverage over Turkey, stemming from the offer of accession, Turkey should logically initiate the GRIT process.

The EU must firstly diplomatically pressure Turkey to immediately open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot air and sea traffic, thus fulfilling its signed 2005 obligation to meet the 'Additional Protocol' to its EU Customs Union (Schimmelfennig 2009: 419). This gesture, as well as placing Turkey more firmly on a path to EU accession, would demonstrate to the Greek Cypriots Turkey's willingness to deescalate the dispute in a meaningful way. This would be rewarded by the EU with a commitment to increase the level of aid currently stipulated under Council Regulation No 389/2006 for Turkish Cypriots (2006: 65/5; BBC News 2008: 2). Following this action, the EU should request from Greece an equally profound gesture, ideally in the form of a military deescalation. Security fears have had a significant effect on this conflict, essentially reframing it into zero-sum terms. Peace agreements frequently collapse during their implementation period for precisely this reason, as combatants fail to credibly commit to treaties perceived to produce unacceptably high levels of uncertainty (Walter 1999: 130). Therefore, the next and crucial step in EU peace efforts must be a phased mutual military drawdown. Following an EU monitored Greek demilitarisation of the Aegean islands, in accordance with a series of signed earlier treaties, Turkey must pledge to relocate its Fourth Army away from the Aegean theatre, with the security of Cyprus instead managed by EU policing personnel (International Crisis Group 2011: 1; Green and Collins 2003: 15). Free from the tension of security fears, robust negotiations among all relevant actors can continue with a far higher likelihood of success.

This essay has sought to highlight the ways in which the accession of Turkey is in the strategic interest of the EU. The contemporary EU has clearly reached a critical juncture, confronted with a host of highly complex challenges. Militarily, the collapse of numerous authoritarian regimes on Europe's borders presents the EU with a significant dilemma. The institution can no longer define itself in purely civilian terms, but must instead fully realise its military potential and engage with those that would threaten regional stability. Economically, there exist growing concerns regarding EU energy security, and in particular, the urgent need for diversification. Though vast and complex, these challenges are nevertheless surmountable. The accession of Turkey would significantly strengthen the EU, increasing the institution's military capacity and energy security. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the accession

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of Turkey offers an historic opportunity to repair the relationship between Europe and the Islamic world, as well as dramatically increasing the EU's soft power. Turkey's status as an important EU member state would do more to nullify Islamic extremism within Europe than any act of coercive force. For these reasons, the EU must not delay in its mediation of the Cyprus dispute. A focused effort, utilising the GRIT strategy, must seek the complete demilitarisation of Cyprus and the Aegean, with belligerent forces replaced by EU policing personnel. The accession of Turkey, while fraught with challenges, represents a powerful opportunity to strengthen the EU. To fully realise its potential as a global power, the EU must include the state of Turkey.

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