

Turkey, the EU, and the Bulgarian Debates

Antony Todorov

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The EU decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey has put a series of questions back on the agenda: where (rather than when) should Europe's enlargement end, where do Europe's borders lie and, ultimately, what is the essence and identity of Europe? That is because for the first time in its history, the EU decided to invite a country which can be defined geographically, historically and culturally both as European and – arguably even more – as Asian or non-European. As Bulgarian journalist Toni Ivanov justifiably notes in *Obektiv*:

In this sense the decision ... wasn't even 'yes' or 'no' to Turkey. It meant saying 'yes' or 'no' to Europe. And, moreover, to what kind of Europe? If not up to the Urals, as de Gaulle once dreamt, then up to where? (Nikolov 2005).

This question has opened up a visible divide: between opponents and proponents of Europe's enlargement towards Turkey. But this visible divide hides a much greater division and diversity of viewpoints. The opponents of Turkey's accession are as diverse in their politics and values as are the proponents. This division on the question has not simply reinforced the already existing divisions between Left and Right, conservatives and socialists, liberals and nationalists, but has appeared within almost all of the classical political camps.

The arguments used by the opponents and proponents of Turkey's EU accession represent different political visions about European enlargement. This difference can be traced back to the very beginning of European integration, which was launched empirically, without an initial 'master plan' indicating what kind of community would be built in the long term. That is why at every point in its existence, the EU has been faced with the question of what is its essence, where does it want to go, what is the big goal it wants to achieve.

The invitation to Turkey has given new urgency to these questions, especially after the Member States signed in Lisbon a new treaty replacing the failed EU Constitution, with which they reached a successive compromise on the nature of the Union. However, along with these questions related to institutional development, the accession of a country like Turkey poses a number of new problems, as it affects delicate consensuses and balances within the Union and allows every participant in the debate to expound their vision for the EU in a more explicit way.

This paper will analyse these arguments in an attempt to classify them by type and reconstruct the underlying visions about Europe. The typology of these visions will help us understand the European political process precisely as a supranational one. As regards the national political debates, in them the issue of Turkey's EU membership has an instrumental character, enabling political parties to distance themselves from or align themselves with other parties, and to identify themselves politically.

The arguments used in the debate on Turkey's accession can be grouped into several main types: historico-cultural, geopolitical, military-strategic, socio-economic and socio-political. All of them are used by different political circles in almost all Member States. In Bulgaria, in particular, there is also a specific group of arguments associated with the specific political process and role of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS) in Bulgarian politics.

The issue of Turkey's membership has divided political parties in Bulgaria into two groups. The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), Simeon II National Movement (NDSV) and DPS, which make up the ruling coalition, have backed the government's official position, expressed both by the prime minister and by the foreign minister, that Bulgaria supports Turkey's bid for membership. In an interview for the Focus Agency, Foreign Minister Ivailo Kalfin expressed Bulgaria's official position, which is in favour of Turkish accession without ignoring the reservations of other European countries:

Bulgaria has an interest in Turkey's developing towards the EU – in Turkey's adopting EU rules, standards and values, as it is our neighbour and a large country next to us. At the same time, EU membership cannot happen without compromise. This means

that before it becomes an EU member, Turkey must convince all European countries that it fully supports the rules, that it is fully capable of integrating into the European economy without any shocks (Kalfin 2007).

Boyko Borissov, the leader of Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), also spoke out in favour of Turkey's accession:

GERB's attitude towards Turkey is the same as that towards Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia... Everyone who meets the EU criteria will be accepted by the European countries.

The Union of Democratic Forces (SDS), too, supports Turkey's membership – unlike the other main right-wing party, Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria (DSB). Dimitar Avramov, a political analyst close to the SDS, expressly declares in his blog:

Turkey was a loyal political ally of Bulgaria and supported our bid for NATO membership at a time when this was a strategic choice of key importance for our national security. ... That is why Bulgaria must support, and not block, Turkey's integration into the EU! (Avramov 2006).

The extreme nationalist "Ataka" and the DSB are the only two political parties that have taken a firm stand against Turkey's accession. In Bulgaria, as in the other EU countries, the dividing line between proponents and opponents does not fully overlap with the dividing line between Left and Right.¹

1. Historical and Cultural Arguments

One of the arguments frequently used by the opponents of accession is that Turkey is not a European country not so much in geographical as in cultural terms. The reason for their opposition is 'Turkey's unfitness to become a lodger in the well-ordered Christian home of the Old Continent', as Stefan Solakov writes in the *Ataka* daily (Solakov 2007). This thesis is supported most vehemently by extreme nationalists in Europe, and was repeated by French nationalist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen during his visit to Sofia in 2007.

The argument that Turkey is not a European country is based less on geographical evidence (just ten percent of the country's territory is in Europe, the rest being in Asia) than on the thesis of the incompatibility between the 'Christian roots' of Europe and the Muslim religion dominant in Turkey. It is precisely this aspect of 'cultural incompatibility' that is most often cited by opponents. That is because this argument sees Europe primarily as a Christian community, or at best, as a community sharing 'Christian values'. Opponents of Turkey's accession often point out that Turkey is an Islamic country and a member of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, therefore has no place in the EU which is predominantly Christian. Dimitar Stoyanov, an MEP from Ataka, told participants in an anti-Turkish demonstration in Brussels on 3 October 2007 that it was unnatural for a society based on Christian values to unite with a Muslim country which, furthermore, is outside Europe's borders (Shkodrova 2005).²

In the course of the debates on the European Constitution, there were heated arguments over whether to include a reference to the EU's Christian cultural roots. Even before he was elected Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger had declared that as a Muslim country, Turkey has always been different from Europe, whose main characteristic is Christianity.

¹ It is interesting that in the programme declaration of an entirely new party, Society for a New Bulgaria (ONB, founded in January 2007) – whose leaders are young people, including the former leader of the Youth Union of Democratic Forces (MSDS) Kalin Metodiev – states clearly: 'In our view, Europe should not enlarge beyond its cultural and geographical boundaries. Turkey's accession to the EU is not in the interest either of Bulgaria or of Europe' (<http://www.obshtestvo.net/?p=466>).

² Writing on a discussion forum of the *e-vestnik* online newspaper devoted to a *Libération* article by Turkish expert Cengiz Aktar about French President Nicolas Sarkozy's position on Turkey's EU accession, one of the participants (using the nickname Man's Friend) points out the following arguments against: 'The question is whether Turkey really is a secular state, and how Islam and Christianity will co-exist in one community. For Islam is 1,240 years old, while Christianity is 2,007. And while Christianity has outgrown its childish-adolescent implacability and militancy for presence and rule over the whole world, the same cannot be said of Islam. On the contrary, Islam is now at the age of Christianity (1,240 years) when human life had no value whatsoever to the Inquisition and the crusaders' (<http://e-vestnik.bg/2907>).

That is why, according to the future pope, two so very different continents (Europe and Asia) should not mix solely in the name of economic considerations – a common market – as this will harm cultural diversity. This thesis is also supported by the majority of Christian Democratic parties in Europe, such as those in Germany and Austria, which insisted on including the above-mentioned reference in European Constitution.

However, the religious argument against Turkey's EU accession poses a serious problem related to the very concept of the nature of the Union. Should it be conceived of as a Christian community? If it is, what implications would that have for non-Christian Europeans (the majority of which are Muslim and Jewish)? Isn't the EU, rather, a supra-national projection of the European secular state, in which religion is a matter of personal choice and of the private sphere only? The paradox is that the Turkish Republic, as conceived and created by Kemal Atatürk in the 1920s, is a secular state and that until now its secular character has been defended most resolutely both by a significant part of Turkish society (primarily its modern-minded, West-oriented part) and the top military, who are especially active in Turkish politics. The religious argument against Turkey's EU accession de facto calls into question one of the major achievements of European civilisation: the secular state.

Hence, the counter-argument of the proponents of accession is that Europe's refusal may lead to Turkey's Islamisation, rejection of the principles of the secular state and an end of the 'Atatürk era'. This argument cannot be ignored, as how Turkey will develop in future is undoubtedly important for the EU, regardless of whether it becomes a full member or remains a neighbour country in privileged partnership.

Another argument used occasionally by opponents is that Turkey is continuing to follow the policy of expansionism pursued by the Ottoman Empire, of which it is the successor. This argument is based on the idea that irrespective of changes in the political regime, irrespective of modernisation and democratisation, states continue to follow their own logic, which is not changed by historical circumstances.

Also among the historical arguments against Turkey's EU accession are those related to the Turkish state's refusal to recognise the Armenian genocide. The tragic events at the end of the First World War which led to the death of almost a million and a half Armenians remain a taboo in the political debate in Turkey. Bulgaria's argument here has another, specific dimension: the accusation that the DPS openly supports the Turkish position on this question. As Bulgarian historian Bozhidar Dimitrov declared at a news conference:

The parliaments of the USA, France, Poland and many European countries have condemned the Armenian genocide which Turkey conducted in 1915–1918. Under pressure from the DPS, the MPs from the three-party coalition are the only ones who have refused to do so (Chertova 2006).

In the case of the Armenian genocide (even Turkish university intellectuals would never use this word), things are even more dramatic. Not because the scale of the event was unprecedented, but because in present-day republican Turkey this subject remains a taboo, whose very mention can lead to prosecution (as in the case of Orhan Pamuk, for example).

This apparently historical argument is in fact a socio-political one, as it concerns the effectiveness of democracy in present-day Turkey. Now this is an argument of another order. But in the context of the protests of Armenian communities in Europe against Turkey's accession because of its refusal to recognise the Armenian genocide, far-right nationalist parties rallied and tried to use the political mobilisation around the issue to promote an extreme anti-Turkish discourse. For if the Armenian communities and their representatives as well as the social circles supporting them argue against Turkey's accession because of the still existing 'taboo' on the subject (using the argument 'insufficient democracy today'), the extreme nationalists advance the primitive thesis that 'the Turks haven't changed', i.e. that they have remained as violent and brutal as they were in the fourteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

A similar type of difference in the arguments is found in the case of the division of Cyprus and non-recognition of the Republic of Cyprus (a member of the EU) by Turkey. The problem is quite serious, especially considering that the EU has not recognised the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus founded as a result of the Turkish invasion in 1974. One should not forget, however, that the events back in 1974 were provoked by far-right nationalists in Greece, who organised a coup d'état against the president of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, which led to

the Turkish counter-reaction. And that in the referendum on unification, held in Cyprus on the eve of EU accession, Greek Cypriots voted no while Turkish Cypriots voted yes.³ Regarding the division of Cyprus, Greek far-right nationalists argue that it is proof of Turkey's expansionism, of its subscription to the historical idea of the unification of all Turks within one state. Paradoxically, extreme nationalists in the EU often support the idea of 'every nation in one state' as well. And they use this to criticise the nationalism of others – which, incidentally, is an all too familiar story.

The question here is: What kind of EU do we want? A 'Europe of sovereign nations' is what the far right wants – a union without supra-national powers, where every nation strives to promote its own interests but where Christian values unite all nations. A Christian, albeit supra-national, Europe is also what Christian Democrats want – but, unlike the far right, they insist on keeping alive the dialogue with other religions and civilisations. If the EU is a historico-cultural community based on common religious roots, there is a huge risk that it will find itself involved in Samuel Huntington's scenario of a 'clash of civilisations'.

2. Geopolitical Arguments

While historical and cultural arguments tend to be used mainly by the opponents of Turkey's EU accession, geopolitical arguments are advanced more often by the proponents of accession. Turkey is a large country with a huge demographic potential, which has a key geographical location between Europe and the Middle East and can play an important role as a 'guard', 'buffer', and so on. These arguments are also often used by Turkish politicians and intellectuals in favour of accession.

Turkey could be very useful as an external border of the EU: this is one of the common arguments in favour of accession. The EU needs such a border, especially as regards the Near and Middle East, a source of risks of economic immigration, drugs and people trafficking, and generally, of transmission of insecurity and crime. That is why Turkey's admission to the EU will increase the effectiveness of the European border, as Turkey will have the resources to become an effective 'guard' against these threats. And these threats are seen as threats to a key concept of the EU as a zone of security (individual and collective).

The problem here is that these arguments represent the EU as an 'island of prosperity and security' which is surrounded by an ocean of poverty and insecurity and therefore needs a 'defence wall'. I will not review historical examples associated with this idea, such as the Roman forts or the Great Wall of China, which proved totally ineffective in stopping the invading barbarians or Mongols. The question is whether we imagine the EU as 'Fortress Europe' guarded by 'loyal guards' (in this case, Turkey).

During the political debate on Bulgaria's NATO membership, enthusiastic proponents of accession pointed out as an advantage the fact that the country will be a 'border' or 'defensive line' of NATO to the East. In other words, that it will play the role of 'guard'. The paradox here comes from the obvious contradiction between the aspiration for greater security through NATO membership and the declared desire to play a role full of insecurity and risks, such as the role of every 'defensive line' or 'guard' is.

There is a similar paradox in the case of Turkey's EU membership. The EU needs the Turks because they will serve as a 'defensive line', but the Turks need the EU in order to feel more secure. We hear essentially the same argument from a number of neoconservatives in the USA who promote Turkey's EU accession – a position typical of the school of realism in international relations.

³ See Georgi Kamov's interesting commentary at blogger.com, where he reminds readers of the following: 'In November 2002 then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan proposed a plan for settling the Cyprus conflict on the basis of the federal principle. Just one month later, the EU invited the Republic of Cyprus to join the Union together with another nine countries. The denouement of the long and tortuous negotiations between the presidents of the Greek Republic of Cyprus Tassos Papadopoulos and of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Mehmet Ali Talat was the scheduling of simultaneous referendums on the Annan Plan in the two republics on 24 April 2004. The results of the referendums were that the Greek Cypriots rejected the Plan by more than 75 percent, while the Turkish Cypriots approved it by approximately 65 percent of the vote. Yet despite these results, the Greek part of the island officially became an EU member on 1 May 2004 – one week after the referendums on the unification of Cyprus' (Kamov 2006).

From this geopolitical perspective, Turkey can also be seen as a mediator in EU relations with the Muslim world. If it doesn't want to get drawn into 'the-clash-of-civilisations' scenario, the EU must admit Turkey precisely because the latter can be an excellent mediator in relations with the Islamic countries. A predominantly Islamic but also a modern, European country, Turkey can be both a spokesman of Europeans among Muslims and a spokesman of Muslims among Europeans.

Accession proponents would also add another argument in this perspective: despite the risk of introducing the religious dimension, it is indisputably better to have secular Turkey as an advocate of Muslims in Europe rather than, as in many cases, Saudi Arabia. Experts on Islamic doctrine would add that the Wahhabi Saudi strand of Islam is much more radical and fundamentalist than the Sunni strand of Islam dominant in Turkey.

Such a role looks acceptable and is used as an argument in favour of Turkey's accession. As Iliya Petrov, a former MP from the SDS who joined the Conservative Union EKIP, notes:

As Turkey's admission is also of key importance for relations between the EU and the Islamic world, it will also confirm the vision that we can live together in Europe while keeping our diversity (Petrov 2006).

On the other hand, however, such a role raises a number of questions. The main question is whether it presupposes that as an EU member Turkey will have an almost monopoly right (for no other country in the Union is regarded as predominantly Muslim) to speak on behalf of the Muslims – both in and outside Europe. Such a claim conjures up memories of the caliphate, abolished in the secular republic even upon the first reforms conducted by Kemal Atatürk. In other words, in an effort to rule out 'the-clash-of-civilisations' scenario, we again assign particular countries a specific role in the religious, i.e. civilisational, perspective.

In the same geopolitical perspective, accession proponents also point to Turkey's role as a bridge between Europe and Asia. Conversely, opponents argue that bringing the EU borders close to high-risk regions like the Near and Middle East (Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan) would increase the risks to European security. Some suggest that instead of granting Turkey full membership, it would be wiser to consider other options such as, for example, granting it special privileges in the field of trade and movement of people in exchange for a commitment to act as a 'buffer' or 'mitigator' of risks.

From a geopolitical perspective, Turkey is not the only country that has good reason to claim the role of a bridge between Europe and Asia. Russia has maybe even better reasons and, arguably, so do the Caucasian countries like Armenia, Georgia or Azerbaijan (which is also defined as predominantly Muslim). Asia is not Islamic only, it includes such large countries as India, China and Japan; that is why from this point of view, Turkey's role as a bridge to Asia would be comparatively limited. The argument here is primarily geopolitical: bringing the borders of the EU (i.e. of the West) closer to key regions in Asia. In this perspective, such a role would be much more in the interest of the USA and NATO than of the EU as an autonomous player (Nikolov 2007). Or, rather, such a possible role of Turkey corresponds to the vision of the EU more as a strategic actor than as an economic, political and value-based community.

Also in a geopolitical context, opponents of Turkey's EU accession point to the use of the Turkish minorities for overt Turkish expansion, even if not necessarily a military one. For example, a demographic expansion which, in the longer term, would change the demographic ratios in some European countries, including Bulgaria, in favour of the Turkish communities. This would lead to corresponding political changes. As Bulgarian political analyst Ognyan Minchev notes:

If today approximately ten percent of Bulgaria's citizens are ethnic Turks, after the visa restrictions on Bulgarian territory are lifted the ratio will change fast, becoming similar to that in present-day Cyprus (Minchev 2006).

The suspicion that Turkey has not abandoned its expansionist plans as we know them from the history of the Ottoman Empire is another argument used by accession opponents. Conversely, proponents define the role of Turkish communities in European countries as a positive one, since these communities will facilitate Turkey's future integration and help allay fears of 'Turkish immigrant expansion'.

The geopolitical arguments, however, also promote a vision of the EU as a 'fortress' defending the prosperity and security of Europeans. Especially if the 'bridge' role is understood as a metaphor for barriers, such as the drawbridge over a moat surrounding the fortress walls.

3. Military Strategic Arguments

The arguments used primarily by proponents of Turkey's EU accession also include military strategic ones. Proponents point out, for example, that with its strong army (400,000 troops), which is actually the largest in Europe, Turkey ought to be of special interest to the EU and its European security and defence policy. This argument is supported by military experts, including NATO experts, because whenever there has been an arguable need for EU military participation in resolving different conflicts (for example, in Bosnia), European collective participation has often been ineffective – owing to the lack of a joint effective military mechanism, but also owing to the fact that the only national armies in Europe capable of conducting modern warfare effectively are those of Germany, France and Britain.

On the other hand, the same argument – concerning the strong Turkish army – is also used by accession opponents. Above all, because of the very close connection between the Turkish armed forces and US military support for Turkey. As Turkey is a key strategic partner of the USA in the region, it gets significant American military assistance. In exchange, the Turkish government provides political and logistic support to the USA, especially in the operations in Iraq but also in Afghanistan. Turkey is no doubt a key military factor in the region. But it is precisely because of the strong US-Turkish ties that opponents of Turkey's EU accession warn of the danger that it may serve as 'America's Trojan Horse' – in the same way as General de Gaulle long regarded Britain when he was president of France. The UK became a member of the European Community in January 1973 – after the retirement and even after the death of de Gaulle. In an extensive article published by the Bulgarian Diplomatic Society, Simeon Nikolov notes the following:

With Turkey as a Trojan Horse in the future EU, ten to fifteen years from now the USA would be able to exert pressure and manipulate important international issues in its interest (Nikolov 2007).

This is not the only military strategic argument of accession opponents. Some critics of Turkey's accession base their case on anti-military considerations. In their view, the fact that the argument about Turkey's strong army is used so often – at that, not only by Turkish politicians but also by Turkish intellectuals – is alarming. That is because such frequent use implies a vision of the EU as a military-political organisation, something like 'NATO's European pillar'.

In the same vein are the arguments of accession opponents that Turkey would demand to play the role of a regional hegemon. Such a role would suit a NATO member country (which Turkey has long been) much better than an EU member country. It is precisely in the mixing of roles and organisations with different goals and of a different character (NATO and the EU) that critics of Turkey's bid for EU membership see a significant problem when the argument of 'the strong Turkish army' is used.

4. Socio-economic Arguments

Socio-economic arguments are also significant in the debate on Turkey's EU accession. Such arguments are used both by proponents and opponents.

Turkey as a huge and dynamically developing market is an argument used by proponents. In their opinion, this is Turkey's most important advantage, as it will help increase the competitive power of the European economy. In contrast, accession opponents argue that the Turkish market is far below EU standards, therefore Turkey will need decades before it succeeds in meeting EU requirements. Such a long period of adjustment will probably be futile and will give rise to anti-European sentiments in Turkey itself, they claim.

The question is whether we conceive of the EU only or primarily as a common market – in the form of which the European Communities originated more than fifty years ago. If that is our

vision for the EU, then expanding this common market by including the large Turkish market is an indisputable advantage.

Analysing the specific advantages and risks that Turkey's accession will have for Bulgaria, some Bulgarian economists⁴ conclude the following:

The concrete effects that an improvement of investment opportunities in Turkey will have for Bulgaria are not so directly related to the prospect that Bulgarian companies will invest in the neighbour country and vice versa. The more significant effects for the Bulgarian economy will come from the opportunities for establishing regional clusters (Hristova/Ganev/Bogandov 2006: 24).

At the same time, they point out the negative effects as well: redistribution of EU structural funds and, to a lesser extent, influx of cheap labour.

This last is a standard argument against the EU's enlargement by way of countries which are economically poorer than the others. Similar arguments were also used against the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. The main point in this argument is that the richer countries must foot the bill for the adjustment of poorer countries; that the citizens of richer countries must pay for the citizens of poorer ones. The Open Society Institute study quoted above also analyses the effects of Turkey's accession on the EU budget (Hristova/Ganev/Bogdanov 2006: 15–17). Viewed from a purely economic perspective, this argument seems plausible. But from a political perspective, the decision to admit or reject a candidate country must be made with a view to more strategic goals. The EU budget itself consists of contributions amounting to a tiny fraction of the GDP of member countries and is therefore a relatively light burden on the national economies.

In the case of Turkey, the argument concerning its relative poverty cannot be pivotal in determining Bulgaria's stance on the issue of accession precisely because Bulgaria was (and, to some extent, remains) in a similar position in the EU – Bulgaria was admitted despite similar objections, which goes to show that European integration is above all a political process. The other view – primarily of a common market governed by the logic of economic efficiency and effectiveness – cannot be the only criterion. As ordinary economic logic is often in contradiction with other, social and political logics, even the very calculation of cost-effectiveness (as a ratio of costs and benefits) can no longer be limited only to material benefits but must also count all social and political benefits.

The most significant arguments against Turkey's accession are the expected waves of huge economic immigration from the Muslim world. The fears in Europe are of a qualitative change in an already existing situation in which countries like Germany, France, Austria or Belgium already have large Turkish minorities, whose integration seems problematic. In several texts on the subject, Ognyan Minchev argues extensively that such fears are justified precisely from the point of view of Bulgaria and its demographic balance. He claims that the danger of permanent settlement of large Turkish communities in Bulgaria if Turkey joins the EU is a real problem for Bulgarian society (Minchev 2006).⁵

In addition to everything else, these arguments are in line with old historical prejudices, which are common enough in Bulgarian society and are now used to promote various nationalist strategies. The main fear here is of a 'new Turkish bondage' understood as a change (demographic, and subsequently economic and political), as a result of which the Turks will become a majority in Bulgaria and impose their views on the Bulgarians who will have become a minority. Underlying such fears (and arguments against Turkey's accession) is a specific concept of the EU as a 'union of nations' in which each nation has its own space, guaranteed security and autonomy, and is never subservient to another's will. This is a concept of the EU without supra-national powers, of a community made up of separate national communities, of some sort of communitarianism with supra-national institutions.

⁴ Asenka Hristova, Georgi Ganev and Lachezar Bogdanov from the Centre for Liberal Strategies and Industry Watch.

⁵ One of the participants in the aforementioned *e-vestnik* discussion forum formulates these fears very clearly: 'Europe already has enough problems caused by immigrants who are Muslim, and if a wholly Muslim country joins the Union these problems will become, in my opinion, unsolvable, while the Kosovo syndrome will spread to many parts of Europe' (<http://e-vestnik.bg/2907>).

5. Socio-political Arguments

Among the arguments for or against Turkey's EU accession, socio-political arguments have a special place. The main argument against is the often-emphasised deficit of democracy in Turkey and its incapacity to meet 'the Copenhagen criteria'. This deficit of democracy means, according to opponents who cite the European Commission's latest report, that:

Turkey is not fulfilling key political commitments undertaken in the course of negotiations; does not guarantee observance of human rights, protection of minorities, freedom of speech, religious freedoms, independence of the judicial system; does not exercise politico-civil control over the armed forces in the country; and is not normalising its relations with the Republic of Cyprus and Armenia (DSB 2007).

The above quote is from a special declaration of the DSB on the negotiations between the EU and Turkey.

Observance of the rights of the person in general is one of the main lines of criticism of Turkey and will most likely be one of the most critical points in accession negotiations. Especially as regards private freedoms like inviolability of the person or public freedoms like freedom of speech and religious freedoms. The trial against Orhan Pamuk, mentioned earlier, is just one of the examples of these problems. On the other hand, the EC notes that Turkey has made significant progress in this area; furthermore, considering that all countries of Central and Eastern Europe succeeded in making such progress in about fifteen years, proponents are certain that present-day Turkey is capable of meeting the political criteria for accession.

The question of ethnic minorities and especially of the Kurds has a special place among these criteria. This sphere is especially sensitive for the EU. The question has two aspects: legal and factual. The legal aspect is related to the enumeration in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne of the communities in Turkey which have the status of ethnic minorities. This treaty, which Turkish governments have been citing for years, does not mention the Kurds. On the other hand, the Kurdish community in Turkey is a large one, it lives in a comparatively poor region of the country and is associated with the long guerrilla war which the radical party PKK has been fighting against the Turkish governments, using any means, including terror against civilians. In a special survey from 2003, *The Economist* notes the following:

Until last year, when Turkey passed liberalising laws aimed at being accepted into the European Union, the Kurdish language and even the word "Kurdish" were banned. People are still being arrested for speaking Kurdish in public and for demanding Kurdish-language education, even though these are now supposedly legal. (The Economist 2003).

The situation in Turkey is complicated by the circumstance that unlike the Kurds in Turkey, since 1991 the Kurds in neighbouring northern Iraq have enjoyed autonomy.

The issue of ethnic minorities is also sensitive for Bulgaria, which has dramatic experience in this area as well. The Bulgarian Turks are very well-integrated, do not support separatist trends and have political representation in the form of the DPS. This is often referred to as 'the Bulgarian ethnic model', which has helped keep ethnic peace and political stability in the country. The Kurds in Turkey are not in the same situation, even though quite a few of them have been integrated into Turkish society – but in exchange for distancing themselves from their Kurdish identity.

On the other hand, the Bulgarian opponents of Turkey's EU accession cite the situation of the Kurds but are at the same time very critical of the political role of the DPS in Bulgaria. This gives rise to a paradox, as there is in fact a double standard regarding the political representation of ethnic minorities. The DPS is criticised for having monopolised the political representation of Turks in Bulgaria. As Ognyan Minchev writes:

The other face of the DPS is the face of a centralised, monopoly ethnic corporation which is pursuing a slow, persistent and aggressive strategy to isolate the ethnically mixed regions in Bulgaria and place them entirely under its hegemony and control' (Minchev 2006: 2).

The reasons for this, however, largely lie in the other political parties, which have failed to find a way to win more significant support from the Bulgarian Turks. As for the Kurds, one of the

main criticisms against the Turkish governments is their banning of Kurdish political parties, i.e. of ethnic-based parties. This, however, is the subject of dispute in Bulgaria as well (the Bulgarian Constitution contains a provision banning ethnic-based parties, which is also criticised by the EC). This has not stopped the DPS, which has never proclaimed itself to be an ethnic party, from operating as a lawful party.

Finally, one of the main arguments of accession opponents is the role in politics of the Turkish army, which has been granted the right to intervene outside the accepted democratic procedures. There is another paradox here, as the army in Turkey has represented itself as a guarantor of secularism and has intervened to prevent the Islamisation of the country.

Proponents of Turkey's EU accession insist that guaranteeing the secular character of the state and countering Islamist tendencies is an important condition. That is why allowing the military elite to have some role in politics seems admissible. This, however, is inadmissible in the EU according to accession opponents. On the other hand, there is the question of guarantees against fundamentalist Islamism. The EU, too, is not protected against the risk of the coming to power by democratic means of parties which subscribe to non-democratic principles, such as xenophobia, or which use religious arguments to justify the exclusion of particular communities. However, observance of democratic standards in the EU is obligatory. Thus, Turkey would hardly be an exception. As Borislav Angelov writes in a positive commentary:

The EU needs a democratic Turkey which will be an inseparable and indivisible part of it, and whose desire and intention in this respect must be supported. The EU must not allow even a shadow of suspicion or send the slightest signal that it does not want Turkey, because this will clear the way and possibility for Turkey's Islamisation (Angelov 2006).

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Specifically Bulgarian arguments have also appeared in the debates on Turkey's EU accession. The first type of such arguments is associated with the political role of the DPS, noted above. Bulgarian nationalist circles are convinced that the DPS is Turkey's 'Trojan Horse' in Bulgarian politics, and that it is precisely the DPS's participation in the presently ruling three-party coalition as well as its almost uninterrupted participation in government that has determined the positive attitude of the Bulgarian governments towards Turkey's EU accession. The only political parties that officially oppose Turkey's accession are Ataka and the DSB – all other parties officially support its candidacy. Additional arguments include the demands for compensations which Turkey must pay for confiscated property of what are known as the Thracian Bulgarians (Bulgarian refugees from Aegean Thrace in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars) if it wants to receive Bulgaria's support for membership.⁶

At the level of mass attitudes, however, things look quite different – at least judging from Internet discussion forums. There is a significant sector in Bulgarian society, which thinks that Turkey has no place in the EU. Although its arguments differ, the common view is that of 'civilisational incompatibility'. This last is based on a persistent prejudice – which is, incidentally, found among generations of Europeans too – about 'Europe's superiority' as compared with the rest of the world. Added to this is the specifically Bulgarian 'memory of the Turkish bondage' which is somehow transmitted automatically from one generation to another and must not be forgotten.

Still, the debate goes on because, as the proponents of Turkey's integration note, the EU was created precisely for this purpose: to overcome old historical conflicts and to create an effective community of nations sharing common political values based on respect for the rights of the person, guaranteeing public and private freedoms, and developing the rule of law.

⁶ Evgeni Kirilov, an MEP from the BSP, has moved an amendment to a resolution of the European Parliament, demanding the following: 'The EP shall call on the Turkish authorities in a spirit of goodneighbourly relations to activate their dialogue with Bulgaria for settling the unresolved mutual claims regarding property, social and financial questions, including the right to ownership and compensation, of Thracian Bulgarians according to the Treaty of Angora' (Sega, 19 September 2007).

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