

'A long, narrow road'; full membership in the EU

In April 1987, when the Turgut Özal government applied for full membership in the EU, Prime Minister Özal said, "We are walking on a long, narrow road," referring to the membership process.

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it will definitely spread the idea that it will never make a full member.

We can fool everyone else about our shortcomings in meeting the Copenhagen criteria, let alone our economic collapse, but we cannot fool ourselves.

In the three years since the Helsinki summit, Türkiye's biggest shortcoming is the lack of political will to become a full member of the EU.

The fact that a prime minister who once declared "they are partners, we are the market" and caused Türkiye to miss a major historic opportunity is once again in power, and that an ultranationalist party, which declared the implementation of the Copenhagen criteria "these are imposed on Türkiye," is now a coalition partner, is, at the very least, a grave misfortune for Türkiye, because it is unrealistic to expect political will from such a partnership to achieve full membership.

Erdal İnönü, in a speech he delivered on the occasion of Europe Day, stated that when he was Deputy Prime Minister and went to Bulgaria to hold talks regarding its participation in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, he saw the EU flag on the Bulgarian Foreign Minister's desk next to the Bulgarian flag, even though Bulgaria was not yet a candidate for EU membership at the time. After their meeting, the Bulgarian Minister said that they might consider becoming a member of the BSEC, but they were unsure how this would affect their full EU membership policies. He added that he would only respond after researching the matter. He conveyed what he

said. Even our neighbor Bulgaria, before it was even a candidate member, had aligned all its policies with the EU and demonstrated political will towards membership.

After Türkiye's full membership was officially declared in Helsinki in 1999, which of us, let alone the official sector, even from the civil society organizations advocating for full membership in the EU?

Have we seen the flag used?

The fear of division and fragmentation inherited from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic has. The main reason for this may be that it still resides in the subconscious of the actors (why, then, are we trying to become full members of a supranational organization to which we would be handing over a portion of our sovereignty? That's another matter). However, the fact that even civil society organizations use at least one flag is the simplest yet most concrete example of the lack of full understanding of the EU issue, not only in the official sphere but also in the civilian sphere.

In conclusion, acting with emotions in foreign policy, just as in domestic policy, is the biggest mistake that can be made.

If no negotiation date is given in Copenhagen, the first thing that needs to be done is for the party or parties that will come to power in the November 3 elections to first engage in self-criticism and then demonstrate political determination and will towards full membership.

Let's not forget that Britain's application for full membership in the EEC at the time was vetoed twice by France, once in 1963 and once in 1967. Furthermore, France's justification for the veto was that Britain was not a European country because it was too close to the United States.

Despite all these vetoes, the UK did not resent the EEC and applied for membership for the third time, and after the death of General De Gaulle, it became a full member of the EEC in 1973.

It should also be remembered that Türkiye's membership in NATO was not that easy, and despite being established in 1949, Turkey became a member in 1963, together with Greece (the main reason for acceptance was that both countries sent troops to Korea), as a result of the opposition of some member European states.

We must never forget that the process of full membership to the EU is a long and winding road and that we need to change many things along the way, especially ourselves.

As the late Özal said, the EU membership process will be long and will likely be based on delicate policies. It seems certain that a date for starting full membership negotiations will not be given at the Copenhagen summit in December 2002.

The messages coming from the Commission, the Council members, and the term president all point to a different spring for Türkiye. Meanwhile, considering the recent past, Greece's support for Türkiye, which will hold the incoming Council Presidency, presents an ironic situation.

By supporting Türkiye, Simitis and Foreign Minister Papandreu are trying to appease Türkiye and reduce the harsh reaction that could come from Türkiye if the Council approves full membership for the Greek Cypriot side.

Despite everything, EU decision-making bodies will come up with a decision that tries not to anger or offend Türkiye and finds a middle ground.

Right now, EU diplomacy is preparing for this middle ground decision or has already completed it.

What should Türkiye's reaction be to such a decision, which now seems certain to be passed and which would give the Greek Cypriot side the green light for full membership?

Such a decision will strengthen the hands of the "non-opportunists" in Türkiye and will create a public outcry that "Europe is against us."