TURKEY’S ROAD TO THE EUROPE UNION: A

TRANSITION TO DICTATORSHIP?

A Thesis
presented to
the Faculty of Law and Political Science

at Notre Dame University-Louaize

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in International Affairs and Diplomacy

by

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MAY 2019
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the 
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Notre Dame University-Lebanon
2019

Approved by: Supervisor: 

First Reader: 

Second Reader: 
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to make this thesis a success, especially my supervisor Professor Chahine Ghais, as well as the Committee members, Professor Michel Nehme and Professor Dany Ghsoub.

I would also like to thank my family and my friends, who always support me spiritually to fulfil this work.
ABSTRACT

Turkey has not been granted membership of the European Union, even though the accession negotiations were formally launched in October 2005. Nevertheless, while negotiations have had an initial significant economic and social progress in line with the Union’s requirements, they officially ended in December 2016 following the July 15th coup that brought Turkey on its path to an autocratic rule.

This thesis studies why Turkey is interested in the EU and why it has not achieved its membership goal. In order to identify the problem, the implications that blockade or delay the Turkish membership are observed. Moreover, it is argued that the slow progress of Turkey in the accession to the European Union is not simply due to a failure to comply with the “official” membership criteria. European attitudes towards these official requirements have represented a double standard and have prevented Turkey from acceding to the Union. The proposed idea of a “Privileged Partnership” to be established between EU and Turkey, aiming towards a closer association with the Union is analysed as well.
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<tr>
<td>AKP</td>
<td>Justice and Development Party</td>
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<td>ANAP</td>
<td>The Motherland Party</td>
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<td>AP</td>
<td>Accession Partnership</td>
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<td>CCT</td>
<td>Common Commercial Tariff</td>
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<td>CDU</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Union</td>
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<td>CSU</td>
<td>Christian Socialist Union</td>
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<td>DECAF</td>
<td>Democratic Control of the Armed Forces</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Community</td>
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<td>EEC</td>
<td>European Economic Community</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>NPAA</td>
<td>National Program for the Adoption of the <em>Acquis</em></td>
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<td>NSC</td>
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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

I. Statement of Problem and Focus
The European Union-Turkish relationship started shortly after the creation of the European Economic Community when Turkey first applied for membership in 1959. Soon after, the Ankara Agreement was signed between the two parties, launching the official association by considering Turkey as an associate member. In 1987, Turkey applied for the full membership and eventually became a candidate country in 1999 at the Helsinki Summit. Despite the status acceptance, the period is marked with ups and downs, due to the European Union’s fear of fragmentation and Turkey’s inability to fully adopt the democratization policies. Throughout these years, the list of problematic issues which exert preventive influence on Turkey becoming a full EU member include inter alia Turkey’s complicated relationship with some EU members, the deficit of human rights and rule of law, including its discrimination of the Kurdish people, and the doubts over Turkey’s European identity.

Turkey has not been granted membership of the European Union, but is a member of the Customs Union since 1996, which is a customs free zone between the concerned parties, thereby initiating the long list of reforms to comply with the acquis communautaire that brought Turkey on the path to democracy. The customs union, which was seen as the first step for the full membership, did not yield the results expected by Turkey.

The accession negotiations were formally launched in October 2005. Nevertheless, while negotiations have had an initial significant economic and social progress in line with the Union’s requirements, they officially ended in December 2016 following the July 15th coup that brought Turkey on its path to an autocratic rule. However, some EU members have proposed and introduced a new concept based on the idea of a “Privileged Partnership” to be
established between EU and Turkey, aiming towards a closer association with the Union. The vision of the “privileged partnership” falls considerably short of a full EU membership.

II. Literature Review

When reviewing a wide range of the literature on Turkey’s EU accession, it is notable that most scholars argue that Turkey has shifted its focus away from the European Union accession and is currently on the path of adopting and implementing an authoritarian form of governmental policies as a result of its domestic and cultural issues. Ziya Onis (2008) analyzed the Turkish-EU relations dividing them into two distant sub-phases: from the end of 2002 to the end of 2005 and the post-2005 period. He indicated that during the first period, the Justice and Development Party (the AKP) was inspired to fulfill the membership criteria by pushing for country-wide economic and democratization reforms, while the second phase is marked with a loss of enthusiasm and commitment on the side of the AKP. Here, the author highlighted France’s and Germany’s public withdrawal of their support for the Turkish membership bid that started a nationalist movement and strengthened the anti-EU and anti-reform groups in the society at large. EU’s mishandling of the Cyprus issue also served as one of the major turning points as it failed to fulfill its promises to the Turkish Cypriots after their support of the Annan Plan. He further outlines AKP’s Islamic roots and in particular, their core political agenda of ‘religious freedoms’ as one that weakened the government’s commitment to the EU.

Ergun Ozbudun (2014) described the events of the Gezi Park in June 2013, when environmentalists protested peacefully against cutting down of trees in the park area to prevent the building of a shopping center there. The protests resulted in violent clashes with the police, killing five people, injuring thousands and destructing public and private property. These events have shifted the international image of Turkey upside down. The authorities stated that the protests of the environmentalists were the work of a sinister international and national plot
intended to oust Erdogan and his government. The accusations served as a further evidence of Turkey’s incapability to maintain the status of being the only secular and democratic Muslim country and diminished Turkey’s chances in the EU accession negotiations.

Considering the recent developments in Turkey’s accession process, one must take a deeper look into the causes of Turkey’s rejection. Despite a few journal articles, there is little scientific documentation analyzing and examining Turkey’s current transition to an autocratic rule as a direct result of its inability to reach EU membership and the inability of the EU to grant the membership due to various reasons described throughout this thesis. Accordingly, this thesis aims to fill this gap. Furthermore, it will study the alternative to Turkey’s membership bid that was proposed in 2005 by France’s and Germany’s leaders, when they declared their opposition to Turkey’s accession, namely the ‘privileged partnership’. Kerem Oktem and Karabekir Akkoyunlu (2017) focused on the cultural issues in Turkey that resulted in: “the traditional hegemonic rivalry between a conservative, religious and neoliberal wing, mainly represented by AKP, and a statist extreme secularist wing largely, but not exclusively represented by the Kemalist inspired Republican People’s Party.” Furthermore, they described the events of the failed July 2016 Turkish coup d’etat and the state of emergency that followed, thereby reasoning Turkey’s de-democratization and de-Europeanization due to the revolution that instigated political ideas based on Islam. Siret Hursoy (2017) argues that the July 2016 military coup further deteriorated the already unstable relationship between Turkey and the European Union, thereby making the full membership seem an even more distant prospect. The author goes further to propose the privileged partnership deal, thus “offering a ‘special status’ to Turkey that goes beyond association with the EU institutions and policies through ‘enhanced partnership’ but falling short of full membership. According to the author, the concept can still bring for ‘right balance’ between Turkey and the EU that would still encourage further democratization and improvement of human rights in Turkey.
III. Research Question
The relationship of Turkey and the European Union has passed through many stages in terms of economics and politics. Since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, successive Turkish governments, political elites, and the population have striven to adopt the systems of the European civilizations in transforming the country into a secular state. EU-Turkey relations started with the Association Agreement signed in 1963, progressing to the establishment of the Customs Union between the parties in 1995, and eventually initiating the accession negotiations in 2005.

Therefore, when analyzing Turkey’s accession negotiations with the European Union, certain political, economic and cultural factors must be taken into consideration. Each of these factors has its own dynamic and significance for Turkish-EU relations. Evaluating the recent accession negotiations of Turkey, it is obvious that doubts over Turkey’s European identity present a major obstacle for its EU accession, together with Turkey’s troubled relations with Greece and Cyprus and its domestic problems. Hence, this study has the purpose to review Turkey’s significant efforts to change its domestic and foreign policies in meeting EU’s membership criteria. Recently, however, the accession negotiations revealed a new dimension that is of equal importance – the absorption capacity of the Union, hence this concept will also be explored. Additionally, other causes serving to the slowing down of the accession negotiations will be explored. The thesis will come to answer the following research questions:

*What caused the ‘rejection’ of Turkey’s EU membership?*, *How did this ‘rejection’ affect Turkey?* and *What are the alternatives?*

IV. Methodology
Throughout the research, several methodological approaches appropriate for a qualitative research were used: critical assessment of content analysis, case studies and the original
literature. Tables and graphs are provided to display the rising power of Turkey and the developments it made encouraged by the prospect of EU accession. Additionally, the thesis used primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include official EU documents such as the European Commission documents and progress reports as they show the actual economic performance and the reforms made by the various Turkish governments towards preserving human rights and enhancing the country’s minority rights. In contrast, secondary sources include books, journals, reports and newspaper articles describing and analyzing the primary sources. These were taken from the European Union, Turkey and other countries concerned with the Turkish membership in the European Union. Secondary sources are of critical importance since they review the history of EU-Turkey relations, the attempts and reforms made by Turkey to join the EU. For proper analysis, all views and discussions are presented equally with up-to-date information to keep track of the changes and developments made in recent years.

V. The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is composed of five chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the Second Chapter presents a historical overview of Turkey-European Union relations, beginning from the Turkish application to the European Economic Community in 1959 up to the opening of accession negotiations in 2005. The discussion takes into consideration the positive effects of EU’s accession process on Turkish reformation that was initiated by the reform policies that the Turkish government undertook to meet the Copenhagen criteria. The Third Chapter consists of analysing the factors that are shaping EU’s approach to Turkey’s probable membership. Thorough examination of the reasons behind the rejection of Turkey that was caused by both internal and external constrains, and most specifically by the ‘unofficial’ European concerns about the Turkish European identity, is included. Here, the Turkish-Cypriot issue will also be considered as it serves as the main obstacle for Turkey’s inability to become a member of the
EU. Chapter Four continues by explaining the July 15th coup of 2016 and its connection to the current Turkish transition to an autocratic rule, how it started, why it started, and how it affected Turkey’s relation with the European Union. Chapter Five focuses on the concept that has been offered by some EU member states as a substitute of a full membership, namely a ‘Privileged Partnership’. The notion will be explored from different sides and the discussion will mainly focus on information taken from European leaders’ statements and various studies conducted to assess the essence of a Privileged Partnership and proposing ways for its application. Chapter Six is the conclusion and it summarizes the study as a whole. This chapter provides the significant outcomes of this study.
CHAPTER 2: European Union-Turkey Relations in a Historical Perspective

Relations with Turkey can be described as one of the most difficult and complex aspects of European integration’s external relations. The integration process between Turkey and the EU started with the Association Agreement signing in 1963 and was planned to conclude with Turkey’s full membership. The process has lasted much longer than initially planned, taking almost four decades for Turkey to be declared as a candidate for EU membership, and with accession negotiations launched in 2005. This chapter looks back over several decades in order to explore the evolution of these relations over time, specifically the period from Turkey’s association until the opening of accession negotiations, and why they turned out to be problematic.

For decades Turkey has dreamed of becoming part of Europe. Few countries can claim to have pursued an objective with such determination and dedication as Turkey has with its longing to become European. Despite numerous ups and downs throughout the years, Turkey has always set as its primary goal the European membership. It has sought closer relations since the initial years of the European integration and is one of the first two countries that established formal relations with Europe.

I. Establishment of the Turkey-EC association

Turkey’s history is characterized by the constant objective of reaching Europeanization.¹ The main obstacle that stood in its way was transforming the country from an Islamic empire to a secular nation state. This transformation, known as Westernization, has been slow and hard.

As Ziya Onis puts it clearly “Westernization and a European identity have always been fundamental goals for the Turkish political elite from the very inception of the secular Republic in 1923.” This, together with the rise of Kemalism intensified the belief that everything had to be rebuilt and a new identity had to be developed.

In the nineteenth century at their peak, the European empires were spread around the globe, thus appearing invincible in terms of both economic and military aspects. Even after being weakened by two world wars, the European nations still emerged as prosperous and powerful countries. Thus, as Europe began to organize itself into a common market, the Turks set their goal to integrate themselves into this new European structure. Turkey’s first achievement was becoming a co-founder of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1948 and the Council of Europe in 1949, and a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952.

II. The Association Agreement

After the success in participating in the European political, economic and military organizations that formed after World War II, Turkey considered the newly established European Economic Community’s (EEC) membership as a reasonable outcome of its westernization and modernization policies. Therefore, in 1959, it applied for associate membership to the EEC, wanting to become part of the economic system and in 1963, Turkey signed an Association Agreement that was intended to pave the way for full membership. The negotiation process took this long due to a setback caused by the 1960 military coup, thereby suspending negotiations until 1962. Furthermore, the military intervention caused doubts among the

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members of the EEC and they started reconsidering whether Turkey was a suitable country for establishing such a close relationship like an association.

The Association Agreement, known as the Ankara Agreement, went into force in 1964 and provided that when Turkey-EU relations have “advanced far enough to justify envisaging full acceptance by Turkey of the obligations of the [EC] Treaty, [the EC] shall examine the possibility of the accession of Turkey to the European Community.”\(^3\) According to the agreement, Turkey was scheduled to become a full member in 1995 after completing a preparatory stage envisaged to last a minimum of five years and a maximum of ten, followed by a lengthy transition period. Article 4 of the Ankara Agreement states that the aim of the transitional stage was to establish progressively a customs union between Turkey and the Community that would align the economic policies of Turkey with those of the Community. The transition from the preparatory stage to the transitional stage, according to Article 3 of the agreement, would not be automatic, but rather provided through a protocol by negotiating on conditions of the transitional period. Indeed, the Additional Protocol, which was signed on the 23rd of November 1970 and entered into force on the 1st of January 1973, provided for conditions, detailed rules and timetables of the transitional stage and therefore the completion of the customs union. Since the ratification of the Additional Protocol by both the parliaments of member states and the Turkish parliament would take a long time, a Provisional Protocol was signed on the 1st of September 1971 to implement the commercial provision of the Additional Protocol. Hence, the Community started to abolish customs duties on imports from Turkey and with the Provisional Protocol, the preparatory stage ended, and the transitional stage started with the Additional Protocol’s entry into force in 1973.

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\(^3\) Agreement Establishing an Association Agreement between the European Economic Community and Turkey, art. 28.
There are frequent allegations that following the Protocols, Turkey missed an important opportunity to apply for full membership in the latter half of 1970s. In 1980, the EEC asked Turkey to apply for full membership at the same time as Greece, but Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel put off the application in order to gain the support of the anti-Islamists that were at the core of his weak minority government. The following year, Greece joined the EEC, while Turkey missed its chance. These doubts however, don’t necessarily suggest that had Turkey applied for full membership at the same time as Greece, it would have been granted a membership status, especially given the Cyprus intervention of 1974, the growing economic and political instability on the domestic front, as well as the deeply-held reservations on the part of the European elites about Turkey’s bid for full membership.

III. The Loss of Momentum

When Demirel’s minority government failed to elect a president in 1980, his government came to an end, thus leading to the Turkish coup d’état, which banned Demirel from politics. The military intervention dramatically affected the domestic political scene and had a damaging effect on the civil and political rights. With the first ruling of the National Security Council (NSC), the Parliament and the government were dissolved, all political activities were banned and the leaders of four major political parties were put under custody. Legislative power was transferred to the NSC.

The military regime in Turkey lasted for two years. It formally ended when new elections took place in November 1983, and a newly elected civilian government, led by the Motherland Party (ANAP) came to power in December. A year after the military intervention, the EEC suspended its relations with Turkey in protest of the military intervention. However, the suspension, which came into force in January 1982, was lifted in September 1986 when the EEC-Turkey Association Council met for the first time after a long break. Shortly after
Turkey’s return to parliamentary democracy from authoritarian rule that started in 1983, the leader of the ANAP, Turgut Ozal, handed in Turkey’s formal application for membership in the EEC on the 17th of April 1987.

However, Turkey’s application came at a bad time, since the relations were only beginning to normalize, and the European Community (EC) was still in doubt about Turkey’s political and economic suitability as a candidate for membership. Moreover, the European Commission was not ready to negotiate accepting new members until 1993, because of its concentration on the completion of its internal market. It tried to reform itself by removing the internal barriers and increasing harmonization and competitiveness among its members through the Single Market Programme defined by the Single European Act, signed in 1986. Furthermore, the EC usually welcomed applications from groups of countries that have close relations with each other, but Turkey applied as a single country.

Under these circumstances, it took more than two years for the European Commission to prepare its report on Turkey. When it was delivered on the 17th of December 1989, the Commission stated that while Turkey was eligible to be a member, it was not ready to meet the requirements arising from full membership. The Commission further made reference to Turkey’s human rights record and its disputes with the member states – Greece and Cyprus, as obstacles to Turkey’s membership. What was offered instead of full membership was the completion of the customs union between Turkey and the EU. This meant that the Commission proposed to leave aside the path towards membership opened by Turkey’s application and to revive the path of the Association Agreement. The EC adopted the Commission’s opinion unanimously, viewing the customs union as establishing closer economic cooperation rather

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4 The European Commission is the EU’s executive body with powers of initiative, implementation, management, and control.
5 European Commission, 18 December 1989. Press Release Database
than being a pre-accession instrument. Turkey also agreed on the establishment of the customs union particularly since it regarded it as a stepping stone towards membership rather than an end itself. Therefore, in the Association Council meeting of November 1993, Turkey and the EC agreed to establish a customs union between themselves by the end of 1995. Following the summit, Turkey started initiating the necessary measures needed to establish the customs union. The customs union, being the only such agreement ever signed between the EU and other state, was signed on the 1st of January 1996, creating a customs free zone between the parties, marking Turkey’s entry into the world of globalization.

The Additional Protocol of 1970 had already laid down the rules for implementing the final phase of the customs union. Various measures and a timetable regarding the remaining aspects, such as the removal of existing trade barriers on imports and exports between the EU and Turkey and Turkey’s adoption of the EU’s Common Commercial Tariff (CCT), were also specified. Moreover, adaptation of Turkish legislation to the common trade and competition policies of the EU was further required for the proper functioning of the customs union. Since the EU had already removed many of the customs duties and quantitative restriction on industrial goods imported from Turkey in the first two phases, Turkey had to do the same by the 1st of January 1996.

The customs union has been regarded as a major instrument of integration for the Turkish economy into European and global markets. As a result, the Turkish economy has become the most integrated non-member country with the EU in the European perimeter. Trade and investment linkages between the EU and Turkey have deepened with bilateral trade between the EU and Turkey reaching $147 billion in 2012, making Turkey the EU’s sixth largest trading partner and the EU Turkey’s biggest.6 Owing to the customs union, the EU is

the largest foreign investor in Turkey, accounting for three-quarters of total foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows.\textsuperscript{7} Hence, both the EU and Turkey have greatly benefited from the customs union since 1996.

Undoubtedly, Turkey expected that EU membership would be achieved in a short period of time, ranging from four to eight years, after the customs union was established.\textsuperscript{8} Especially, considering that the EEC was based on a customs union and once Turkey demonstrates that it can perform the obligations arising from membership, accession negotiations would follow as provided in the Article 28 of the Association Agreement. And while, the customs union requires that Turkey align its trade policy with that of the European Union, it cannot be involved in the Union’s decision-making mechanism, as it is not an EU member. Turkey didn’t consider its exclusion from the EU’s decision-making procedure as a significant problem, since it believed that by signing the customs union a full membership would result. Nevertheless, after two decades, Turkey still doesn’t have a clear prospect for EU membership, thus making the operation of the customs union rather challenging for Turkey. Bilateral trade agreements with third countries are negotiated and signed in the absence of Turkey.\textsuperscript{9} Said otherwise, EU member states decide Turkey’s trade relations with non-members without the involvement of Turkey. This has served as the main source of criticism by the Turkish government, as it prevents the development of Turkey’s trade relations with third parties.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
IV. From Luxembourg to Helsinki and Beyond

During the 1990s, some European Community members, specifically two leading member states, France and Germany, were firmly opposed to granting Turkey a full membership status. They considered an alternative of granting a special status. Thus, at the Luxembourg summit meeting in 1997, the European Council decided against starting accession negotiations, although it did extend such status to eleven other candidates, ten of which were former communist countries. What was offered was granting Turkey a special status with a long perspective of full membership, thus continuing the operation of the Association Agreement and the realization of a customs union as foreseen by the 1963 Ankara Agreement and the 1970 Additional Protocol. It was to be included in the enlargement process, but not given a preaccession strategy, as were the other countries. This strategy was thought to be the best way to solve the Turkish problem. On the one hand, the EU would include Turkey in the enlargement process, and on the other hand, it would not commit the EU, since Turkey would not be included in the pre-accession strategy. The pressure would be on Turkey to reform its economic and political structures.

Thereafter, relations between Turkey and the European Union reached crisis point. After the summit, the Turkish prime minister, Mesut Yilmaz, described the decisions as unjust and politicized, and made under the influence of Greece. The prime minister further accused the EU of applying double standards to Turkey - some of the candidates were put ahead of Turkey, which was more advanced than them in terms of economic and political criteria, as well as in adopting the acquis communautaire.\(^\text{10}\) The inclusion of Cyprus, in particular, caused a deep feeling of resentment in the Turkish community, as it was considered a clear sign of

\(^{10}\) The acquis communautaire refers to the full set of rights and obligations deriving from EU treaties.
EU’s stance with Greece in the Turkish-Cypriot issue. Accordingly, the parties in the Turkish government distanced themselves from the EU, thereby suspending the political dialogue with the EU and not participating in the European conference in 1998, to which Turkey was invited together with the other applicant countries. In this setting, the implementation of the customs union between Turkey and the EU became increasingly difficult.

Some argue that the Turkish government lost the momentum of attaining the EU membership, due to the fact that they failed to recognize the changing nature of the European integration project. The European Economic Community became the European Community and was then transformed into its present shape, the European Union. These changes signified the changing foundation and purpose of the European integration project as politics increasingly became more important than economics. Since the 1980s, European integration has been shifting its focus from being primarily economic to a political project. The Turkish political elite missed this dramatic change and kept focusing on the economic aspects for its EU membership bid. It continued insisting on the implementation of the provisions of the Ankara Agreement, and stressed the economic progress made by Turkey. When the EC emphasized Turkey’s deficiencies in human rights and democracy, Turkey took offense. Its governing elite failed to realize that if they aim at becoming members of the EU, Turkey’s domestic affairs were to be defined in terms of democracy and respect for human rights. This delusion caused a somewhat self-exclusion of Turkey from the process of deepening and widening of the European Community.

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In view of the European Community, Turkey’s role was crucial in promoting stability in the Middle Eastern and Eurasian regions, especially since it was one of the few countries with long-standing Western links and has remained relatively stable in comparison with the rest of the region. The Council assumed that the exclusion of Turkey from the European security system might lead not only to instability in Turkey but might also affect the whole region. When rejecting Turkey’s application due to the EC’s concentration of the incorporation of the Central and Eastern European states, it largely seemed to have disregarded these geopolitical considerations.12

Somewhat paradoxically, however, within two years of the Luxembourg summit, Turkey was given the status of a candidate for full EU membership at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999. The Helsinki European Council stated: “Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States.” The decision marked yet another U-turn in Turkey-EU relations, reversing the deep sense of isolation that prevailed over the past two years. Indeed, the Helsinki decision brought renewed interest and confidence in Turkey, giving way to the future democratization and economic reforms during the early months of the new century.

The conditions which Turkey had to meet to attain EU membership were spelled out in the Accession Partnership (AP) Document that was finally agreed upon in November 2000 by the European Council of Ministers in Nice. The Accession Partnership was adopted in 2001 and defined the principles, priorities, immediate conditions, and short, and medium-term objectives for Turkey’s integration with the EU.13 Moreover, it set the steps that Turkey must

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take to satisfy the Copenhagen criteria in the political and economic field. In the political field, it identified the set of changes involving the extension of citizenship rights and the elimination of human rights violations. The most important of these were granting freedom of expression, elimination of torture practices, as well as the removal of the prohibition of education of Turkish-Kurds in their mother tongue or the use of their native language in television and radio broadcasting. Moreover, the AP gave priority to finding a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus problem.

In response to the AP and encouraged by the retrospect of accession, Turkey published “The Turkish National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis” on 19 March 2001, laying out the reforms it would take in order to achieve the objectives established in the Accession Partnership. The reforms were initiated under the Ecevit government and later continued by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) that came to power in 2002. The Parliament adopted a package of 34 constitutional amendments, primarily centered around the area of human rights and freedom of expression, of religion, of the press, and of organization. The right of a free trial was enhanced. Particularly striking was the removal of the death penalty, even in times of war, including for those convicted of terrorist activity. The grounds for the prohibition and closure of political parties were restricted. The most radical change, however, was the change in the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC which was traditionally dominated by the military and constituted the formal mechanism through which the Turkish Armed Forces’ influence on domestic political affairs was exercised, became a predominantly civilian body. Greater civilian oversight of military expenditure was introduced. A new Civil and Penal code were adopted. These were followed by two harmonization packages designed to translate the

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constitutional amendments into concrete action by bringing Turkish laws into line with the European *acquis*.

The European Commission’s 2004 report on Turkey was of critical importance with regard to opening accession negotiations. It highlighted the significant legislative progress achieved by Turkey, through the reform packages, constitutional changes and the adoption of a new Penal Code. Furthermore, it emphasized the considerable progress towards being a functioning market Economy by reducing its macroeconomic imbalances. The Commission attached to the report a recommendation on Turkey’s progress towards accession that concluded that “Turkey sufficiently fulfilled the political criteria and recommends that accession negotiations be opened.” The recommendation listed the areas that Turkey improved considerably and added a list of some law that had not yet entered into force.

After lengthy discussions, the European Council approved the Commission’s recommendation and Turkey’s accession negotiations officially started on the 3rd of October 2005. The Council requested from the Commission to prepare a framework for negotiations and asked for the inclusion of some protective measures, such as long transition periods, derogations or permanent safeguards, and emphasized on the open-endedness of the accession process. The ‘open ended’ nature of the negotiations was considered as the application of a double standard by the EU on Turkey, specifically compared to other candidate states as each accession negotiation ended in granting the EU membership. Hence, the Turks considered the inclusion of such precautions in the Commission recommendation, Conclusions of the European Council and the Negotiating Framework Document as pretexts to avoid granting membership to Turkey as a result of the accession negotiations. It stipulated the adoption of an alternative route short of full membership. Even though the Negotiating Framework included
a statement with regard to the end result of the process being accession, it also made provision for failure of such a goal:

The shared objective of the negotiations is accession. These negotiations are an open-ended process, the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand. While having

full regard to all Copenhagen criteria, including the absorption capacity of the Union, if Turkey is not in a position to assume in full all the obligations of membership it must be ensured that Turkey is fully anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond.15

Furthermore, ‘long transitional periods, derogations, specific arrangements or permanent safeguard clauses’ in the areas of free movement of persons, structural policies and agriculture, are also considered in the Negotiation Framework. The document also stipulates the possible termination of accession negotiations stating that:

In the case of a serious of persistent breach in Turkey of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights, and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law … The Council will decide by qualified majority … whether to suspend the negotiations and on the conditions for their resumption.

Thus, the EU is thought to trying to take precautions against any mistake done by Turkey that may occur during Turkey’s accession process. And even if Turkey becomes a member state at the end of the accession negotiations, transition periods and safeguard clauses will prevent it from benefitting from some of the fundamental rights and policies of the EU at least for the time specified.

With the start of Turkey’s EU accession negotiations on the 3rd of October 2005, started also the problems. As a first obstacle to the continuation of the process was the fact that Turkey did not officially recognize one of EU’s 25 member states. And indeed, after the opening and provisionally closing the first chapter of Science and Research on the 12th of June 2006, it remained the only one until today. A decision taken by the Council on the 11th of December 2006 not to open eight chapters and not to provisionally close any one chapter, prevented the continuation of the negotiations. The decision came after Turkey’s non-compliance with the Ankara Protocol in refusing to open its ports and airports to vessels from Cyprus. Moreover, France and Germany’s refusal to grant Turkey a membership status and encouraging instead the adoption of an alternative route, namely a Privileged Partnership, discussed later, also gave fruits and in 2007, Nicholas Sarkozy vetoed the opening of chapters directly related to membership, including the chapters on regional policy, economic and monetary policy, agricultural policy, financial and budgetary matters and institutions.\(^{16}\) In 2009, Cyprus further decided to block six more chapters as a further sanction against Turkey.

In 2013, Sarkozy was succeeded by Francois Hollande, who advocated the withdrawal of the blockage in some of the chapters and renewal of accession talks, thus, the year was supposed to set a new momentum to Turkey’s EU accession. The step was supported by many EU member states, even though some remained in doubt. Eventually, an agreement was reached to open new chapters of the acquis that was set to begin in June.\(^{17}\) However, public protests broke on the Taksim Gezi Park in Istanbul that same month, resulting in extreme use of force by the police towards the protestors, violation of human rights and the monopolization of the media in prohibiting its reporting of the protests and the violent police attacks. As a result of


the violent use of force by the police that brought to the death of five people and Erdogan’s provocative speeches, the peaceful environmentalist protests turned into a social uprising against the government’s oppressive measures. Hence, the events questioned the determination of Turkey in the accession process, especially regarding the human rights violations, thereby shifting Turkey’s international image upside down, triggering a harsh reaction from the European Union. A resolution from the European Parliament expressed the “deep concern at the disproportionate and excessive use of force by Turkish police.”18 Although the EU agreed to open a new chapter and resume negotiations, it postponed the reopening of the remaining chapters until October 2013. Last but not least, after a two-year break in the accession negotiations Chapter 17 on economic and monetary policy was opened on 14 December 2015. More recently, Chapter 33 on financial and budgetary provisions was likewise opened on 30 June 2016, evident of the significant developments made after the stalemate in accession negotiations.

V. Conclusion

Westernization and Europeanization have been primary goals of the Turkish foreign policy since the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was the first Turkish leader who declared that Europe is the main source of the Turkish modernity. Hence, with the formation of the European Economic Community, Turkey saw itself worthy of becoming a member state after its continuous commitments to applying westernization and modernization policies. Therefore, four years after applying for associate membership in 1959, Turkey signed the Association Agreement that was meant to drive the country on the path for full EU membership. However, military coups, Turkey’s intervention in the Cyprus dispute and the EEC’s changing nature and increased focus on its internal market, were bound to cause

obstacles in Turkey’s application to the Union. These internal and external complications were the cause of EU rejecting the Turkish membership at the Luxembourg Summit in 1989. However, after only 2 years, the decision was reversed and Turkey gained a candidate status for full EU membership at the Helsinki European Council. This initiated a reform process in Turkey that produced substantial changes in the direction of meeting the membership criteria, eventually resulting in the opening of Turkey’s accession negotiation on October 3rd 2005.

The aim of this chapter was to analyze EU-Turkey relations that date back to the formation of the Turkish Republic until the Opening of Negotiations on the 3rd of October 2005. This development bolstered Turkey’s international image and was considered as a step that would inspire the states of Middle East and Central Asia for modernity and democracy. Hence, the period from the beginning of 2000 onwards could be described as a period of profound change in Turkish history.
CHAPTER 3: Factors Shaping the EU’s Approach to Turkey’s Probable Membership

After continuous desire of reaching the goal of Europeanization, Turkey successfully concluded the first step after signing the Association Agreement. The signing was meant to pave Turkey’s way to European Union membership scheduled in 1995 after the completion of a preparatory stage and the establishment of a customs union between the parties. However, along the way, many obstacles came to define Turkey’s EU membership. Thus, joining the European countries and their project turned out to be significantly harder than the Turks expected.

On the eve of 18th December 1989, in response to the Turkish application, the EU Commission presented a number of factors that made Turkey’s accession almost unattainable: “these were the expansion of political pluralism, the poor state of democratic government, the persistence of disputes with a Member State, namely Greece, the lack of a viable solution to the Cyprus problem, economic backwardness compared to EU members, the Kurdish problem and human rights abuses.” Moreover, in 2004 the Commission stipulated that Turkey’s accession would be different from previous enlargements due to its population, size, geographical location, economic, security and military capabilities. Thus, the accession negotiations and the eventual Turkish accession present challenges to both Turkey and the EU. Moreover, taking into consideration that the EU currently has twenty-eight members, the issue of unanimity becomes a crucial matter for a possible Turkish accession.

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EU-Turkey relations entered a new phase on October 3rd, 2005 with the opening of Turkey’s accession negotiations. Even though all EU member states unanimously approved the Negotiating Framework Document in 2005 stating that “the shared objective of the negotiations is accession,” there are still ongoing doubts whether Turkey will ever become a member of the EU. These doubts were initiated by the French President Nicholas Sarkozy’s declaration that “Turkey’s place is not in Europe.”

In order to make Turkey’s accession possible, adopting the EU’s *acquis communautaire* is a requirement but not a sufficient one on its own, as other factors shape the Turkish accession. The opposition in France and Germany, the existing disputes with some EU member states, the weight Turkey will have on the EU as a nation of 82 million citizens, its middle-income capacity and low-level economic development compared to EU’s average, the large voting rights that Turkey will receive in case of EU accession, the Kurdish and human rights problem, the ongoing involvement of the military in Turkish politics, doubts of Turkey being a European country, resentment against Islam and cultural influences that Turkish membership might have for the EU, a closer boarder to Middle Eastern conflicts, the fear of further migration from Turkey once it enters the EU, and EU’s internal dynamics, namely its absorption capacity, are just some of the factors that must be taken into account in an analysis of Turkey’s accession to the EU. Therefore, Turkey’s size, geography, history, economy and culture all contributed to the slowing down of the accession process. This chapter aims at exploring the aforementioned factors shaping Turkey’s EU accession process.

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I. Opposition in France and Germany

Justification for excluding Turkey from full membership of the EU is premised on a number of contentions. Among these is the fact that, with a population of over 82 million citizens, the country is simply too big. The former French President and chairman of the presidency of the European Convention, Valery Giscard D’Estaing, has stated his opposition to Turkey joining the EU, noting that Turkey has “a different culture, a different approach, a different way of life … its capital is not in Europe, 95 per cent of its population lives outside Europe, it is not a European country … in my opinion it would be the end of the EU.”

Other arguments suggest that in spite of having the conditions necessary to begin accession negotiations satisfied, which were formally opened in October 2005, Turkey is not ready to join the Union. Germany’s Christian Democrats opposed Turkey joining the EU on the same basis as the other 27 member states, preferring instead to offer Turkey a ‘privileged partnership’, a concept that is considered short of full membership, discussed in another chapter. This view has also been declared by the first President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, who, during a meeting held at the Belgian Parliament in 2004 stated, “Turkey is not a part of Europe and will never be part of Europe … The universal values which are in force in Europe, and which are also fundamental values of Christianity, will lose vigour with the entry of a large Islamic country such as Turkey.”

Even though Germany has consistently supported the closer association between Turkey and the European Union, it has been against the idea of full membership. The reluctance to support the full membership is derived from the fear of bringing even more immigrants to

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the Union, adding up to the already 3 million Turks living there, if free movement of labor came as part of Turkish accession.\textsuperscript{25}

Table 1 demonstrates that there is a substantial division among EU members and variations among the European public with respect to Turkey’s accession. According to the Euro barometer 63, the opposition to Turkey’s membership in France is 70%, in Germany 74% and in Austria 80%.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Member State} & \textbf{Support to Turkey’s Accession (%)} & \textbf{Opposition to Turkey’s Accession (%)} \\
\hline
Poland & 54\% & 31\% \\
Slovenia & 53\% & 40\% \\
Hungary & 51\% & 38\% \\
Sweden & 50\% & 40\% \\
United Kingdom & 45\% & 37\% \\
Malta & 43\% & 39\% \\
Portugal & 43\% & 33\% \\
Lithuania & 42\% & 32\% \\
Spain & 42\% & 33\% \\
Netherlands & 39\% & 53\% \\
Ireland & 38\% & 34\% \\
Czech Republic & 37\% & 51\% \\
Slovakia & 37\% & 50\% \\
Belgium & 36\% & 61\% \\
Latvia & 36\% & 44\% \\
Italy & 33\% & 52\% \\
Finland & 31\% & 66\% \\
Denmark & 30\% & 62\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Comparison of Public Support in the EU for Turkey’s Accession}
\end{table}

II. Foreign Relations with EU Members

Turkey is involved in a long-standing conflict with Greece which started a long time ago and was deepened by the ongoing Cypriot dispute. Both of these constitute a problem for the Turkish accession since any bilateral conflict with any EU member constitutes a natural barrier to full membership. This section analyses the issues behind these conflicts, their nature and their current situation.

A. Greece

Since it became itself a member in 1981, Greece stood in Turkey’s gateway to the EU. In the first nineteen years of its membership, it has sought to either block or severely slow down Turkey’s path to Europe. Relations between the two neighbours were worsened by the division of the Cypriot island. Due to the inability of finding a solution to reconcile Turkish and Greek interests, the issue has become a major source of conflict between them. Since its membership, Greece has sought to gain the support of the other EU member states with respect to its national policy in this conflict with Turkey. At the June 1990 Dublin European Council summit, after continuous pressure from Greece, a connection between the Cyprus issue and EC relations with Turkey was established. As a consequence, the EU turned the Cyprus dispute into an issue between itself and Turkey, even though it had been previously between Turkey and Greece.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>27%</th>
<th>56%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EuroBarometer 63.4, 2005, QB2.12.
solely. It therefore lost its political credibility as a mediator for finding a peaceful settlement for the divided island.

Moreover, disputes arose not only on the island itself, but also in the Aegean, ranging from demilitarized status of the islands to the extension of the territorial waters. Relations between Greece and Turkey deteriorated even further when the leader of the separatist Kurdish organization, Abdullah Ocalan, was captured in Nairobi in February 1999, as he exited the Greek embassy in possession of a Greek Cypriot passport. This event led to the fall of the Greek Foreign Minister Pangalos and to a drastic change in Greek foreign policy.

At the Helsinki Summit of December 1999, Turkey was granted a candidate status. Thus, the cycle of Greece vetoes broke, and Greece not only ceased to pose an obstacle to Turkey’s accession negotiations to the EU, but began to champion the cause of its accession. Greece’s decision to lift its veto for Turkey to gain its candidate status was a consequence of their improved relations after the July 1999 earthquake that shook both countries. Citizens and official organizations from both countries worked together in dispatching medical supplies, equipment and rescue teams. This event contributed to an advancement in Greek-Turkish relations. The improvement was also accelerated by the bilateral treaties signed between Greece and Turkey in the areas of military cooperation, trade, energy, the environment, tourism, culture, drug trafficking, anti-terrorism and illegal immigration.26

B. Cyprus

The Cyprus problem is an important Turkish security and foreign policy issue. Not only is the island’s geographical location one of the major issues in the relationship between Greece and

Turkey’s relations with the EU since Greece joined the Union. Furthermore, since 1974, the Cyprus problem has posed itself as a major rigid conflict in Europe.

The Republic of Cyprus was established in 1960, with Turkey, Greece and the UK as its guarantor states. Yet, shortly after, in 1964, the constitution broke down, inter-communal violence broke out between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Later that year, a United Nations peacekeeping force was established creating the ‘Green Line’ to prevent an imminent Turkish invasion. Ten years later, Greece organized a coup d’état in Cyprus leading to Turkey’s invasion and presumed control over the north of Cyprus, driving Greek and Turkish Cypriots across the Green Line, and seizing control of 36 per cent of the island.27 The fighting ended and eventually the island went through a complete partition.

The European Union became a key player in the Cyprus conflict with the application of the Republic of Cyprus for EU membership in July 1990. Meanwhile, in 1983, Turkish Cypriots established an independent republic called the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), with Turkey alone recognizing the new state. Originally, the application gave hope to the international community for a new opportunity to resolve the Cypriot conflict. However, in 1999 the hope for conditional resolving of the Cypriot issue vanished, with the decision to include Cyprus in the next phase of enlargement without making settlement of the Cypriot issue as a precondition.

When Cyprus acceded to the EU in 2004, it brought significant challenges to the EU’s internal dynamics. Bringing a settlement to the divided island was at the core of its EU membership. For that purpose, the United Nations Secretary-General at that time, Kofi Annan, initiated a plan to deal with the Cyprus conflict called “The Basis for Agreement on a

Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem,” thus designing the most creative draft to reach a solution for the long-going Cypriot issue, namely the Annan Plan. It was submitted to a referendum in both North and South Cyprus on the 24th of April 2004. Surprisingly, the Turkish Cypriots managed to put their concerns on the settlement issue aside and as a result 65 per cent of them voted to accept the plan. Meanwhile, the Greek Cypriots objected by 76 per cent. Reunification did not take place, but a week later, on May 1, the Republic of Cyprus formally entered the European Union as a divided island. As a result, the benefits brought by the European Union membership applied only to the Greek Cypriots.

Turkey was therefore disappointed with the EU since it did not stimulate and pressure the Greek Cypriots into finding a feasible solution and did not grant any economic aid to the Turkish Cypriots; instead, the EU facilitated the role of Cyprus as a veto player within the EU. Therefore, the Cyprus question has posed an additional complication in Turkey’s European Union accession bid since the negotiations need to proceed by unanimity at every stage and Cyprus uses every opportunity to use its veto to block the progress. This has resulted in the suspension of several chapters in Turkey’s accession process.

The opening of Turkey-EU membership negotiations was conditional upon the expansion of the Customs Union Agreement to the new members, including Cyprus. In other words, Turkey was obligated to open its ports and harbors to vessels from Cyprus, which was widely interpreted as de facto recognition of the Greek Cypriot government. 28 Hence, Turkey refused to open its ports to Cyprus unless the EU lifts the isolation to the Northern part of the island as it has agreed to in April 2004. EU commissioner for Enlargement, Oli Rehn stated “Turkey is expected to ensure full implementation of the customs union and remove obstacles

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to the free movement of goods, including restrictions of transport.”29 In this context, in 2005 Turkey signed the protocol expanding the customs union to all EU member states, but included an appendix that stated that the signing of this protocol did not amount to a formal recognition of the Greek Cypriot administration. This statement was considered to be of great conflict since there has never been an applicant state that doesn’t recognize an older EU member. The EU declared that the appendix was unilateral, not legally binding and not a part of the Protocol.34 Thus, at the December 2006 summit, the EU Council upon the Commission’s recommendation decided to suspend the opening of eight chapters with Turkey and agreed on a resolution to the Cyprus problem as a precondition for the provisional closure of all chapters negotiated.

Therefore, Turkey’s accession became ultimately tied to the solution of the Cyprus question. It is clear that Turkey will not be able to become a member without recognizing the Republic of Cyprus or unless another resolution of the conflict is found. Recognition would potentially undermine the position of Turkish Cypriots and the possibility of a constitutional solution that would be based on the principles of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation as interpreted in the 2004 Annan Plan. The main mistake in this respect was accepting Cyprus’ membership without a prior solution, thereby, on the one hand, preventing Turkey from becoming an EU member before the issue is solved, and on the other hand slowing down the membership negotiations.

III. Domestic Factors

There are some requirements for Turkey to complete in order to accede to the EU. These requirements are based on the Copenhagen criteria35 which are rules that define whether a country is eligible to join the European Union. The criteria requirements are classified to be

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Declaration by the European Community and its Member States, 21 September 2005, 12541/05. The accession criteria, or Copenhagen criteria (after the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 which defined them), are the essential conditions all candidate countries must satisfy to become a member state. These are:

1. **political criteria:** Stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
2. **economic criteria:** a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces;
3. **administrative and institutional capacity:** to effectively implement the *acquis* and ability to take to the obligations of membership.

The economic, political and social that a country must abide by to reach the accession. Turkey has accomplished some of these criteria and some were in a process of accomplishing. In this section, the economic performance of Turkey will be assessed as to how well it did in the past years. Moreover, political and human rights issues will also be explored as they serve to evaluate the governmental performance towards the minorities in the state. It is also noteworthy to mention the cultural and social differences between the EU and Turkey for clarifying the origin of the refusal. As will be shown, Turkey’s performance has improved considerably especially after the 2009 world financial crisis. Therefore, it is necessary to assess these changes and evaluate Turkey’s application for joining the EU.

**A. Economic Implications for the EU**

The most considerable factor of Turkey’s accession to the EU is its size. With a population of 82 million today, it would be the second-largest member of the EU. As an example, the 2004 EU enlargement included ten countries with a total population of 75 million, while the 2007 enlargement included two countries (Bulgaria and Romania) with a total population of 30 million. Additionally, according to the World Bank, Turkey is likely to surpass Germany and become the largest country in about 2020. Furthermore, Turkey is among the poorest candidate countries and has an approximate income per capita as Bulgaria and Romania.

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Turkey has a large agricultural sector. The proportion of Turkey’s workforce engaged in agriculture is over 10% (compared with around 1% of most EU member states).\(^{32}\) This rural workforce of over 8 million people is larger than the population of several EU member states, and its levels of income are far below the average.\(^{39}\) Therefore, transforming it from an economy dependent on agriculture into a modern economy will require massive and lengthy structural reforms.

Moreover, Turkey suffers from a high number of unemployed citizens thus adding yet another problem for its EU accession since those citizens would represent a threat to other member states’ economies once free movement of labor becomes a possibility with Turkey’s entry in the Eurozone. Said otherwise, in case of eventual Turkish membership, the internal problems of the state will be automatically transferred to the EU under the rules of open borders integration.

Figure 1. Unemployment Rates in Turkey 2018

![Unemployment Rates in Turkey 2018](source: Trading Economics)

Source: Trading Economics


Figure 1 shows the significant performance of Turkey in managing the unemployment rate after the 2008 economic crisis, compared to other EU member states. It has managed to cut down its unemployment rates by increasing and creating new jobs as a way of redistributing wealth among the Turkish people. The Eurozone unemployment rate is set at around 8%, thus the figure displays the great change in Turkey’s unemployment rates. However, since recently, the figures have sky-rocked after Turkey’s coup d’état of July 2016, thereby, bringing EU’s fears back on the accession negotiations agenda.

Conversely, Turkey has an economy with high and fast-growing production and a rather increasing GDP. The Gross Domestic Product in Turkey as shown in Figure 2 was worth 851.10 billion US dollars in 2017. The GDP value of Turkey represents 1.37 per cent of the world economy. GDP in Turkey is reported by the World Bank Group. Previously, from 1960 until 2017, Turkey’s GDP averaged 252.70 USD Billion, reaching an all-time high of 950.58 USD Billion in 2013, and a record low of 8.02 USD Billion in 1961.

Figure 2. Turkey’s GDP Billions of U.S. Dollars

Source: Trading Economics
Another aspect of Turkey’s economic implication for the EU is the Turkish economy. From Table 2, it may be concluded that Turkish economy is thought to be much better than some EU countries. For instance, Spain’s economy has been decreasing for some time now and the country is still struggling to come back to its flourished economy and high GDP before the global financial and economic crisis. Moreover, as a result of the economic crisis, the Greek economy faced its most-severe crisis since the restoration of democracy in 1974. Until last year it was considered as the very example of a collapsing country. EU member states were in great debate whether to improve the country’s status by taking some money from the members budget and give to Greece, thus giving Greece the power to get back up, manage to pay its debts and improve its status as a European country. Table 2 demonstrates the position of Turkey in comparison with European countries in terms of economy.

Table 2. Top Ten European countries with Turkey GDP per capita growth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP – real growth rate (%)</th>
<th>Year of Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Index Mundi\(^{33}\)

\(^{33}\)https://www.indexmundi.com/map/?v=66&r=eu&l=en
As is clear from Table 2, Turkey has a GDP growth per capita higher than most of the European member states, that is true also for right after the financial crisis, owing it to the fast recovery which most states took a while to do. It took Turkey only one year to recover and take control of its own economy, thus proving its ability to recover from any crisis alone. Moreover, in 2010, Turkey’s GDP per capita was 12,300$, reaching a double amount of 26,500$ in 2017.\textsuperscript{34} Therefore, in terms of flexibility, Turkey is able to score pretty high especially when motivated by such an outcome as EU membership.

Turkey is a middle-income country with a level of economic development well below the EU average for which it has been regarded by many in the EU as a potential burden on the budgetary resources. For the member states that are net contributors to the EU budget, Turkey is considered as a country that would receive more than it would contribute. For the other member states that are net receivers, Turkey would be perceived as a competitor for funds. Moreover, based on recent data, with its lower-per capita income and largest agricultural sector, Turkey’s regions may become the largest recipients of financial support from the EU budget.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{B. Human Rights and Kurdish Problem}

Deficiencies in Turkey’s human rights regime became visible during the customs union negotiations in December 1995. Since then, human rights issues have remained a persistent feature of EU-Turkey relations. The period between 2001 and 2005 saw a remarkable advancement in the improvement of human rights, marked by the constitutional amendments passed in 2001, primarily centred around the area of human rights. Following the onset of the

\textsuperscript{34} https://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=tu&v=67

accession negotiations in October 2005, the reform process decreased significantly. This was caused by the emergence of multiple obstacles in Turkey’s prospective path to EU membership, with some European leaders, in France and Germany in particular, voicing their opposition to the eventual Turkish membership, giving way to those in Turkey who opposed further political reforms or closer alignment with the EU. Between 2008 and 2010, Turkey resumed the reforms, with the amendment of Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code, which makes insulting the ‘Turkish identity’ and state institutions a punishable offence, now requiring permission from the Minister of Justice to launch a prosecution.36

Human rights abuses in Turkey deteriorated even further following the state of emergency imposed after the July 15th, 2016 attempted military coup. In an April 2017 referendum, following the coup, constitutional amendments took place marking Turkey’s entry to a presidential system of governance, the most significant change to its political institutions in decades. Turkey’s new presidential system represents a setback for human rights and rule of law, lacking sufficient checks and balances against abuse of executive power, greatly diminishing the powers of parliament, and consolidating presidential control over judicial appointments. Human Rights Watch’s World Report 2019, an annual survey of human rights conditions throughout the world, describes serious violations of human rights in Turkey, including the imprisonment of many journalists and parliamentarians from the pro-Kurdish opposition; the dismissal and suspension of public officials by decree without due process; torture and ill-treatment in police custody and prison; and repression of human rights advocates. Turkey remains the world leader in jailing journalists and media workers. Moreover, as stated in the report “most media lack independence and promote the government’s political line.” The result of all these violations of human rights was a deterioration of the EU-Turkish relations,

with a resolution in the European Parliament and some member states calling for a suspension of the Turkey’s accession negotiations.

The Kurdish problem in Turkey has become a source of concern in the EU. Approximately 15 to 20 million Kurds live in Turkey, amounting to 18 to 23 per cent of the country’s population and account for about one half of all Kurds. However, they speak a different language and have a different culture than the Turks. Thus, repression of the Kurdish identity started in 1925 during the Kemalist regime. Since then, the official state policy has been to deny these differences and to ban the use of the Kurdish language. Massacres, executions, deportations incarcerations, destruction of villages and the imposition of martial law were just some of the ways the Turkish government used to crush the Kurds’ aspirations. Political, cultural, linguistic expressions of Kurdish identity were forbidden and the very existence of Kurds as a distinct ethnic identity was denied.

Kurdish demands for recognition started in the 1970s, however, the government harshly suppressed these demands, specifically the political expressions, for fear they would lead to the breakup of the state itself. Following the 1980 coup, discussed below, the Kurdish problem became militarized by the establishment of a Kurdish terrorist organization – Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), led by Abdullah Ocalan and in 1984, it initiated a violent separatist war. Thus, the suppression of expression of Kurdish identity was intensified. The use of Kurdish language in private conversations was officially forbidden. Since then, the violent conflict between the PKK and Turkish security forces has claimed the lives of almost 40,000 people. Today, as a consequence of the war, an estimated fifty per cent or more of Turkey’s ethnic

37 All figures for Kurdish population are approximate for a variety of reasons: the absence of recent or reliable census figures, ethnically insensitive data gathering, dispersal, intermarriage, assimilation and registration of Kurds as other nationalities.
46 Ibid., p.423.
Kurds have been displaced from the country’s traditionally Kurdish provinces, often in urban ghettos, thereby spreading assimilation and intercommunal tension to Turkey’s cities. This conflict has turned into a transborder refugee problem. In the 1990s, approximately 10,000 Turkish Kurds departed to Iraq, many of whom are still in the UN-administered camp at Makhmur. Other Turkish Kurd refugees migrated to Iran, Syria, other neighbouring states, and Western Europe. In 1993, as a result of the internationalized conflict and Turkey’s violation of the human rights of Kurds, EU-Turkish relations began to deteriorate, thus causing some governments to impose arms embargoes on Turkey, and the European Parliament to suspend all financial assistance to Turkey except that to be used to restore democratic practices.\(^{39}\) The signing of the customs union with Turkey was also postponed as a consequence of these events.

Some reforms such as easing the Kurdish freedom of expression were presented, however, it wasn’t until the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999 and Turkey’s acceptance as a candidate for membership, that the Kurdish problem began to change drastically. Furthermore, improvement of Turkey-EU relations was witnessed with the new coalition government in June 1999 and later with the AKP government’s reforms. The adoption of the Accession Partnership and the National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA) presented in an effort to meet the Copenhagen criteria in 2001, served to instigate political reforms that helped alleviate the Kurdish issue to a considerable extent in Turkey.

Evidently, the Kurdish question constitutes one of the most crucial obstacles to stand in the way of Turkey’s membership bid to the EU. The Kurdish question arguably the biggest challenge facing the country, is neither a purely national issue nor can it be solved by itself. Yet Turkey’s domestic, regional, EU, and global aspirations will continue to depend on it.

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\(^{39}\) European Parliament, Resolution on the political situation in Turkey, Doc. Pe 252.050, 19 September 1996.
C. Military in Politics

One of the components of liberal democracy is civilian control of the military. Said otherwise, if in a country the military is involved in the government and restricts the powers of the executive and the legislature, that country cannot be considered as a democracy. In Turkey, military has always occupied a central place in Turkey’s state and society, therefore not fulfilling the condition of a liberal democracy. And even though Turkey follows Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DECAF), the military influences civilian governments until now.

The military has intervened in politics five times since the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923 and with each military coup the privileges of the armed forces were further increased. In 1960, the first coup was staged and was followed by other interventions in 1971, 1980, 1997 and the most recent one in 2016, discussed later. After each coup, the military increased its own autonomy and political powers more than ever before.

After the 1960 military coup, the Constitution was amended thereby allowing the National Security Council (NSC) to impose its opinions on national security to the Council of Ministers as a pretext of assisting the government in forming the national policy.\footnote{Article 111 of the 1961 Constitution. \textit{Constitution of the Turkish Republic. Ankara.}} In 1971 after the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) issued a memorandum and asked the government to step down, the NSC’s responsibility was further expanded to providing policy recommendations to the government.\footnote{Law on Amendment of the Constitution No.1488. 22 September 1971.} Following the 1980 coup, the number of civilian members serving on the NSC was reduced to five, thereby equalizing the number of military and civilian participants. Moreover, the new constitution stated that the Council of Ministers shall give precedence to NSC’s recommendations and decisions. In 1997, the armed forces intervened indirectly by pressuring the government in power to step down. For these reasons, after the constitutional
amendment that increased the powers of the military in the NSC, the main objective of the EU in Turkish accession negotiations was the improvement of the civilmilitary relations.42

In the 1999 Helsinki Summit of the European Council, the EU reversed its 1997 Luxembourg decision and granted Turkey a candidacy status of the European Union. This development triggered a reform process in Turkey, first under the coalition government and then more intensively under the AKP government. In October 2001, the Turkish government initiated a reform process with major constitutional amendments. One of the most remarkable amendments was related to the NSC. An amendment to Article 118 of the constitution increased the number of civilian members on the Council, making civilians the majority.

In July 2003, the seventh harmonization package was introduced and further changed the function of the NSC and downgraded it to merely an advisory body. The frequency of NSC meetings was reduced to once every two months, rather than once every month. Moreover, a civilian could now be appointed to the position of the Secretary General, and the first civilian secretary general was appointed in 2004.43

In May 2004, the eighth harmonization package was approved in parliament, and with it an increased civilian oversight of defence expenditures was introduced, by expanding the right of the Court of Auditors to oversee the budget. The same package also removed the remaining seats of the military on civilian boards. Furthermore, the seats of the NSC on the Board of Inspection of Cinema, Video and Musical Works, the Radio and Television Supreme

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Council, the Council of Higher Education and the seat at the Supreme Communication Board were abolished.\textsuperscript{52}

Another crucial area of change was related to the judicial functions of the military. In 2004, the state security courts were closed down. The jurisdiction of the military was diminished and trying civilians was abolished and trying military officers in civilian courts of law was now an important step toward the legal cases of military officers accused in plotting a coup against the government.

Civilian control over the armed forces is a necessary condition for democratic consolidation in Turkey. Given the Turkish political past and the role of the military in it, controlling the armed forces was one of the biggest challenges in Turkish democratization. The granting of candidacy status in the 1999 Helsinki Summit was an important trigger needed to initiate a change in this direction. Thus, right afterwards, Turkey introduced many significant reforms to align its constitution with that of the EU requirement. And even though military coups in Turkey were supposed to be a thing of the past, on 15 July 2016 yet another coup, discussed later, took place.

D. Turkey’s European Identity?

According to the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the founding document of the European Economic Community, for a state to join, it must be European.\textsuperscript{44} That treaty and the other EU treaties have avoided defining the term ‘European’. Thus, while it is generally accepted that

\textsuperscript{44} According to Article 237, ‘Any European State may apply to become a member of the Community. It shall address its application to the Council which, after obtaining the opinion of the Commission, shall act by means of a unanimous vote. The conditions of admission and the amendments to this Treaty necessitated thereby shall be the subject of an agreement between the Member States and the applicant State. Such agreement shall be submitted to all the contracting States for ratification in accordance with their respective constitutional rules’ (Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community, 1957).
enlargement is a definite process, the exact limits of Europe, particularly towards the east, have remained undetermined. The issue appears in the case of Russia and Turkey. While until now Russia has demonstrated no interest in applying to the EU, Turkey has been an EU associate member since 1963 and being a full member has been its top foreign policy determinant.

Categorizing Turkey among a group of states is almost impossible: it is neither a part of Christian Europe nor part of the Muslim, Arab Middle East. Ever since the Eleventh Century, Turkey has been part of Europe. Yet throughout history the Turkish people have never been classified as European. The difficulty of situating Turkey in Europe is part of the EU’s problem of what to do with Turkey.

According to Huntington in his *Clash of Civilizations*, Turkey is regarded as the classic torn country, with a single predominant Muslim culture whose leaders want to shift it to the West. The author considers such a task nearly impossible. There are at least three requirements that must be met for a torn country to successfully redefine its civilizational identity:

First, the political and economic elite of the country has to be generally supportive of and enthusiastic about this move. Second, the public has to be at least willing to acquiesce in the redefinition of identity. Third, the dominant elements in the host civilization, in most cases the West, have to be willing to embrace the convert.

The first requirement has been effective since the 1920’s. Mustafa Kemal, ‘Father of the Turks’, considered Westernization to be a part of modernization. According to a national survey in February 2005, over 70 per cent or the Turkish population said they would vote yes if a referendum was held on Turkey’s membership in the European Union. Therefore, the second requirement has also been met. The problem here is with regard to the third requirement.

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46 Ibid, p.139.  
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Until now, the Europeans, the political elites as well as the citizens, are unwilling to accept a modern Muslim democratic Turkey into the EU.

The question of Turkey’s Europeanness has been a primary topic for decades. In principle, the issue was settled at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999, when Turkey was given the status of a candidate for full EU membership. Then and there, European member states, regardless of European public opinion, decided that Turkey is a European nation, eligible to become a full member, provided it complies with the *acquis communautaire*. In this context, Turkey is no different than other candidate states. However, following the Accession Negotiations in 2005, they started doubting their decision, France and Germany, namely the Christian Democrats, as discussed earlier, were the ones to openly express their opposition to Turkey joining the EU. From then on, the question of Turkish Europeanness has forced the Europeans to reconsider what it means to be a secular European. Therefore, until this question is settled, Turkey’s accession negotiation path will be difficult and lengthy.

IV. Impact on European Security

Turkey has a strategic location near non-democratic and unstable regions, thus it poses a great challenge to the European security, and its accession is regarded as stretching the EU borders to such unstable states. The European Commission gave its opinion on the matter by stating that “Turkey’s accession would extend the EU’s borders to countries which are presently a source of tensions and bring problems of the region higher onto the agenda of the EU’s external relations.”48 The instability was accelerated in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and thus increased EU’s attention on the above statement. The prolonged Syrian civil war gave rise to terrorism and radical groups, such as ISIS, and led to the emigration of more than 4 million

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refugees fleeing to adjacent countries and to Europe via Turkey. Turkey’s Kurdish problem also contributes to the security threats that the EU would face in case of Turkish accession, since aspirations for recognition and national separation would increase the instability in the region.

Advocates of Turkey’s accession argue that due to its strategic location, Turkey would add new dimensions to the Union’s regional cooperation in Turkey’s adjacent regions – the Middle East, Asia and the Caucasus. Furthermore, Turkey maintains good relations with the Arab states, specifically Iran and Syria and enjoys credibility in Israel, thus contributing to further efforts towards peace-making and stabilization in the strategically vital region. Turkey’s contribution to the control of weapons of mass destruction and fight against terrorism also cannot be overlooked. Turkey contribution to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations by providing military assets and diplomatic peace-building initiatives, is also considered as an advantage for managing security threats.49

A. Immigration

Immigration has been considered as a further source of security threat for the European Union. For centuries, migration has been part of human experience. It is perceived as a defining feature of modern-day globalization. Due to migration, societies long based on race and culture have had to adjust to the realities generated by the newcomers from quite distant and different cultural backgrounds. The freedom of movement in the modern, globalized world has brought new challenges to the issue of migration.

Since its establishment in 1923, Turkey has absorbed nearly 1.5 million immigrants, mainly from the Balkans and from amongst the Turkic people of the Soviet Union. Beginning from the early 1990s, factors such as wars and civil wars, human rights abuses, free human

49 Ibid.
movement, economic differences between the developed and underdeveloped countries, have all led to the rise of irregular and illegal migration from the poor and unstable countries to the rich West.

Due to its geographical location, forming a bridge between the more prosperous and stable western Europe and the poor and strife-prone Middle East and Asia, Turkey has become a major transit zone for such migration. Evidence of the large numbers of migration suggest that around 500,000 irregular migrants were apprehended in Turkey only between 2000 and 2006. These immigrants mainly came from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.\footnote{IOM (2008). Migration in Turkey: A country profile 2008, Geneva: international Organization for Migration. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/turkey_profile2008.pdf.} They usually only pass by Turkey on their way to Europe. Many of those who are apprehended are not returned to their country of origin and either stay in Turkey or continue their attempts to reach Europe. The EU’s Turkey 2010 Progress Report has noted that in the past couple of years, the flow of illegal migrants from Turkey into Greece and Bulgaria – as routes to Europe – has dropped significantly. This decrease is partly due to Turkey’s EU accession process. The process obliges Turkey to align its asylum regulations and its treatment of apprehended irregular migrants with the EU acquis. Since 1951, Turkey has been granting refugee status only to asylum seekers coming from Europe.

In recent decades, Turkish people have also joined this wave of global migration. Although the figures can vary, it is estimated that there are more than 3 million Turkish citizens resident in EU countries, with an additional 1 million having been naturalized. Moreover, almost 850,000 Turks have managed to migrate to north America, Australia, Middle East and
Russia.\(^{51}\) These numbers suggest that around 14 per cent of Turkey’s population is living abroad or have lived abroad at some point.

Hence, Turkey has emerged as a country of emigration. This development has made the migration a critical factor affecting Turkey-EU relations. Since recent years, control of irregular migration to the EU has been one of the major areas of cooperation with Turkey, leading to the signing of the Readmission Agreement and more recently the Joint Action Plan of 29 November 2015 and EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016 regarding the situation of Syrian refugees.\(^{52}\) Conversely, the increasing number of irregular migrants passing through Turkey targeting EU’s borders, have impacted the migration sensitivity of the EU. All these events had a negative effect on Turkey’s bid to EU membership since Turkey’s eventual accession would increase the flows of immigrants.

B. Absorption Capacity of the EU

There is no doubt that Turkey needs to fully comply with the accession criteria and become fully democratic to accede to the EU. However, even if all the *acquis communautaire* is fulfilled, the EU’s internal dynamics will play the decisive role with regard to Turkey’s accession. Here, one needs to look at the absorption capacity of the European Union. This is a rather new concept in the EU’s enlargement process as previously the candidates’ adoption of the accession criteria was sufficient for the accession Treaties to be signed and ratified.\(^{53}\)

The recent significance of the matter on the EU’s absorption capacity is based on the notion that the criteria for a country’s accession will now be further based on its institutional

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\(^{64}\) Copenhagen European Council, “Presidency Conclusions”, June 21-22, 1993, para.7 (A) iii.
and budgetary impact on the EU. Thus, in 1993, the Copenhagen European Council raised the issue as a condition along the Copenhagen criteria by stating that: “the Union’s capacity to absorb new members, while maintaining the momentum of European integration, is also an important consideration in the general interest of both the Union and the candidate states.”64 And even though the concept has not been debated in enlargement waves of 2004, 2007 and 2013, due to Turkey’s size and its cultural difference from other European states, the EU’s absorption capacity has become a serious challenge in Turkey’s accession negotiations. The inclusion of such a clause in the Negotiating Framework Document serving as a potential justification for rejecting Turkish membership was perceived as a sign of the EU’s unwillingness to accept Turkey. Thus, even if Turkey is able to comply with all the accession criteria, the EU can still decline Turkey’s membership on the basis of the EU’s inability to absorb a country like Turkey.

Turkey’s entry to the EU, will dramatically affect the allocation of power and the influence on decision making, policy formulation, and EU’s dynamics in the political sphere. Under present rules, as a large member state, Turkey will have a powerful voice in the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, where most decisions need a qualified majority to be approved. Since Turkey’s population is increasing at a fast rate, in case of accession, Turkey would be the most powerful country in the voting system. As Giscard D’Estaing claimed, “this is a rule we can’t change. With accession, Turkey would become the most populous country in the EU with the greatest voting power in the Council.”54 This shift of power is causing scepticism in some Western member states.

Turkey’s accession negotiations were officially opened on the 3rd of October 2005. The Negotiating Framework Document also underlined the importance of integration capacity in

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the case of Turkey’s probable accession to the EU, even though it wasn’t imposed on previous EU candidate states. It stated that: “Every effort should be made to protect the cohesion and effectiveness of the Union.”\(^{55}\) Moreover, the report added that “the Union's capacity to absorb Turkey, while maintaining the momentum of European integration is an important consideration in the general interest of both the Union and Turkey.”\(^{56}\) Then and there the Commission was assigned to monitor whether this condition was met during the negotiation process – that is, to caution the Council whether Turkey’s eventual accession to the EU might impact the institutional balance and operation of the Union.

With this, the EU almost lost its credibility with respect to delivering membership. Thus, Turkey’s case is uncertain over its eventual membership despite being in accession negotiations. In previous enlargements, when an accession process started it always ended up with membership unless the candidate countries themselves chose not to join. The Turkish government has perceived the addition of the absorption clause as a lack of clear and consistent EU conditionality, thereby decreasing its efforts in making any more additional radical political reforms and bringing to a drastic slowdown in transforming Turkish democracy.

V. Conclusion

So why is Turkey still not a member of the European Union?

Turkey-EU relations started with the Association Agreement in 1963 and for over 50 years membership could not be reached. The main obstacle of Turkey’s accession to the EU has been the opposition of the EU member states’ elite and public opinion. According to Eurobarometer data, support of Turkey’s EU membership among member states varied between 28 and 31 per cent, while opposition was higher, between 55 and 59 per cent, for the period between 2005

\(^{56}\) Ibid.
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and 2010. Leading EU member states are generally more opposed to Turkey’s EU accession as they worry that due to Turkey’s large population, Turkey would have the greatest number of council votes and would receive the largest budget transfer on the expense of their large contribution, thus affecting the balance of power among the member states and challenge their present influence. Freedom of movement is also a concept that would greatly affect EU’s demographics, especially concerning the Muslim nature of Turkey, thus making it difficult for the EU to cope with the problem.

Turkey’s deficiency in rule of law and human rights, the failure of successfully addressing the Kurdish question, its relative proximity to boarders that are a source of tension are only a few issues that are leading to a further decline in viewing Turkey as a suitable candidate country. The most recent coup d’état that took place on July 15th 2016, discussed in another chapter, also brought to the worsening of EU-Turkey relations and it served as an evidence that Turkey’s long problem of Turkish armed forces’ intervention in politics has not been solved yet.

This chapter served to explore the reasons behind EU’s rejection of Turkish membership relating to internal and external factors, namely the political and economic issues. As was clear, complying with all the accession criteria will not be enough for Turkey to reach its longing for EU membership. EU’s integration capacity is also one of the criteria that Turkish accession would be based on. After the inclusion of the clause in the opening of Turkey’s EU accession negotiation, it served to end the long process of setting the European membership as a primary goal for Turkish elite and public.
CHAPTER 4: Turkey on the Verge of Becoming under an Autocratic Rule

Turkey’s Justice and Development Party, the AKP, was for many years believed to follow the path of moderate Islamism. However, after being in power for a period of seventeen years, having won four successive general elections, the AKP has turned the course. From the violent repressions applied in the Gezi protests of 2013 and the corruption allegations, to the failed coup of July 2016 and the shift to a presidential system, the party has lost all resemblance of moderate Islamism and turned authoritarian.

After successfully entering the period of the golden age of Europeanization in Turkey in the initial years of AKP’s rule, extensive reforms were carried out in order to fulfill the EU accession requirements. However, not long after Turkey entered a process of deEuropeanization following events discussed below. The most striking of these was the offer of a privileged partnership as a substitute to full-membership, proposed by some and the subsequent inclusion of clauses in the 2005 Negotiating Framework that made Turkey’s EU membership bid harder than it already was. These and others instigated a significant drop in Turkish government’s and population’s support for EU membership, decreasing the country’s commitment to EU reforms. Moreover, the EU itself was preoccupied with its internal dynamics and its previous commitment to granting Turkey a membership status became almost nonexistent. This chapter serves to study the AKP’s rise to power and how it turned Turkey’s regime into an autocratic rule.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was Prime Minister for eleven years became President in 2014. His authoritarian approach to politics in the aftermath of the 2016 coup and the following arrests and detentions of thousands of people in the military, judiciary and the public sector, has reversed Turkey’s image of a liberal European democracy. Hence, Turkey today looks less
like a liberal European democracy and more like the kind of one-man autocracy commonly found in the Middle East region. After all, during Erdogan’s mandate as mayor of Istanbul in the 1990s, he declared that democracy was but a train and that one should get off of the train at the right station.\footnote{The Economist (2016, February 4). Getting off the train}

I. The Golden Age of Europeanization in Turkey

When the Constitutional Court closed down the Islamist Virtue Party in June 2001, the movement split among its leadership between the old guard traditionalists and the new moderate reformists. While the traditionalists formed the Felicity Party (FP), the reformists formed the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve KAlkinma Partisi – the AKP). Less than a year and a half later, at the elections in 2002, the AKP together with Recep Tayyip Erdogan as its leader won a plurality of 34.3 per cent of the popular vote for parliament, while the FP became a minor player in the political scene.\footnote{Yeşilada, B. (2016). The future of Erdoğan and the AKP, Turkish Studies, 17(1), 19-30,} The AKP came to power, scoring a majority of seats in the Parliament, making the November 2002 election a turning point in Turkish politics. The party’s clear majority was a rarity in Turkish politics.\footnote{Waldman & Caliskan (2017). The New Turkey and its Discontents. US: Oxford University Press.}

With the elections won, the AKP successfully carried out the EU accession programme in continuing the reform process started by the previous government of Bulent Ecevit and initiated new reforms needed to bring the Turkish politics in alignment with the EU political criteria. The government had several strategic incentives in continuing the reform process. The first one was Turkish citizens’ increased support for EU accession, which eventually helped Erdogan and his party increase their power base to include liberals and those groups that demanded a reform of the system. Second, the AKP saw an opportunity of minimizing the influence of the military and the judiciary through the initiation of the necessary reforms required for EU
accession process. This was to ensure the party’s survival in power. The third incentive was that the previous coalition government had already started the democratic reforms, hence, in abandoning these reforms the AKP risked losing its credibility. Last but not least, coming from an Islamic origin, the party needed to adopt a pro-EU reform agenda to strengthen its alleged turn to ‘conservative democracy’ ideology, thus allowing it to expand its electoral support base towards the centre in order to increase its vote share.\footnote{Bashirov & Lancaster (2018). End of moderation: the radicalization of AKP in Turkey, Democratization.}

Despite initial fears concerning AKP’s Islamist origin, the government displayed clearly its commitment to implementing the Copenhagen criteria by adopting five harmonization packages between 2003 and 2004, intended to enhance the freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of association, torture and ill-treatment, and the influence of the military on domestic politics. As a result, at the December 2004 Summit in Brussels, the European Council decided to open Turkey’s negotiation process without delay. The decision encouraged even further transformation and reforms leading to the opening of accession negotiations on October 3\textsuperscript{rd} 2005. Hence, the period between 2002 and 2005 corresponded to the ‘golden age of Europeanization’ in Turkey.\footnote{Onis, Z. (2008). Turkey-EU relations: Beyond the current stalemate. Insight Turkey, 10(4), 35-50.} However, in the post-2005 era, a loss of enthusiasm and commitment is evident on the part of the AKP government, hence bringing the era of following a ‘loose Europeanization’ or “soft-Asianism” strategy.\footnote{For a detailed elaboration see Onis and Yilmas, “Between Europeanization and Euro-asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era,” Turkish Studies (Spring, 2009).} The loss of enthusiasm for the EU membership in Turkey was not caused by a single turning point, but several interrelated points.

\section*{II. De-Europeanization in Turkey}

As Turkey’s accession process advanced following the 2004 enlargement, the EU was preoccupied with its existential crises of enlargement fatigue and deepening in the form of a
constitutional treaty, thereby weakening its commitment towards Turkey. Moreover, the period witnessed the changing attitudes of the member states towards Turkish membership with the rise of right-wing politics in Europe. The leaders of centre-right parties in Germany and France, Angela Merkel and Nicholas Sarkozy, openly expressed their opposition to Turkey’s EU membership, bringing to the discussion of offering Turkey a privileged partnership as an alternative to EU membership. These doubts resulted in the addition of the EU’s ‘absorption capacity’ to the Copenhagen criteria, thus serving as a justification for Turkey’s rejection. The 2005 Negotiating Framework also added the prospect of ‘open-ended’ negotiations, diminishing the credibility of EU membership. Moreover, for the first time in EU’s enlargement history, provisions pertaining to ‘permanent safeguard clauses’ were also included, suggesting that even if Turkey becomes a full member, it would have a ‘second-class membership’\(^63\) or said otherwise a ‘second division status and a special partner position’.\(^{64}\) These raised concerns about the double-standards employed in EU’s accession negotiations, thus weakening both the Turkish public’s and the government’s confidence in the membership process.

The Cyprus issue additionally deepened the Turkish public’s sense of the unfair treatment applied by the EU. When the United Nations sponsored Annan Plan was presented to Greek and Turkish Cypriots in 2004, the AKP played a crucial role in pushing for a settlement despite opposition in Turkey. This was the first time a Turkish government had expressed willingness to consider an internationally acceptable solution to the Cyprus dispute.

However, the referendum resulted in a rejection by an overwhelming majority on the Greek Cypriots’ side, as opposed to an overwhelming endorsement by the Turkish Cypriots. Shortly after, Cyprus became an EU member state in May 2004. This brought disappointment to the

\[^{63}\text{Dugut \& Keyman (2012). EU-Turkey Relations and the Stagnation of Turkish Democracy. Instituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Istanbul.}\]

\[^{64}\text{Onis, Turkey-EU Relations, op. cit, p. 41.}\]
AKP as the EU didn’t pressure the Greek Cypriots enough to accept the plan and didn’t come through on its promises of granting economic aid to the Turkish Cypriots. Instead, the membership initiated the role of Cyprus as a veto player in Turkey-EU relations. Since then, Turkey’s membership has been conditional on resolving the Cyprus dispute, even though the EU didn’t impose a settlement as a precondition for Cyprus’ integration into the Union. Moreover, before the opening of the Turkish negotiations, in July 2005, Turkey signed an Additional Protocol that meant to extend the provisions of the Ankara Agreement, namely the Customs Union, to the newly acceded Eastern members (including Cyprus). After Turkey’s refusal in extending the Protocol to Cyprus, the Commission recommended the partial suspension of accession talks. In December 2006, EU member states adopted the recommendation and in December suspended talks on eight of the 35 negotiation chapters, and no chapter could be provisionally closed until Turkey fulfills its obligations towards the Additional Protocol.

All these developments, together with the inclusion of Turkey’s acknowledgment of the Armenian genocide as an additional pre-condition, caused a massive reversal in Turkey-EU relations which damaged the transformation of Turkish democracy. According to the 2017 Eurobarometer, as shown in Chart 1, Turkish public support for EU membership drastically fell from 71 per cent in Spring 2004, the highest period of Turkish support, to 28 per cent in Fall 2014, demonstrating a generally declining trend in between, implying that EU membership is not necessarily considered a good thing. The most rapid decline was from 55 per cent in Fall 2005 to 44 per cent in Spring 2006. These negative trends led to a serious nationalist backlash in Turkey, and strengthened the standing of anti-EU, anti-reform groups, consequently leading to the Turkish government’s loss of enthusiasm and commitment in support of continuing the necessary reforms required for EU accession process. Hence, from then on, the negotiation
process became extremely slow and politicized, effectively reversing the “golden age of Europeanization”.

IIII. The Effectiveness of EU Conditionality

According to Karen Smith, “conditionality entails the linking, by a state or international organization of benefits desired by another state to the fulfilment of certain conditions”. 65 Frank

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Schimmelfenning furthermore defined the political (or democratic) conditionality as the core strategy of the EU to induce candidate states to comply with its fundamental rules of statehood as defined by democracy, human rights and rule of law.\textsuperscript{77} Said otherwise, the EU offers “reactive reinforcements” varying from technical and financial assistance to institutional ties in the form of trade cooperation and cooperation agreement, followed by association agreements, and last but not least, full membership is offered as the strongest institutional tie, in return for the adoption of its demanded principles and norms by the candidate states.

EU conditionality in the case of Turkey has come into effect after the Helsinki declaration of Turkey’s candidacy in 1999. By declaring Turkey as a candidate country but at the same time refusing to open accession negotiations because of Turkey’s non-compliance with the Copenhagen political criteria, the EU effectively enforced a credible conditionality on Turkey. This strong, clear and credible conditionality was at the core of stimulating the Turkish public and elite to follow the path of democratic transformation. Moreover, during this period, the EU seemed to be committed to Turkish accession and member states were not designing alternative to EU membership. Double standards in the application of accession criteria and strategies were inexistent.\textsuperscript{66} Turkish government and policymakers were confident that Turkey would receive the reward of full membership only if it met the requirements. Hence, the radical reforms towards democratic transformation were initiated. It is important to point out that political reforms did not start immediately after the 1999 Helsinki decision, but instead Turkey waited until a formal framework was created for its accession process in 2001. This serves as an indication of how important the credibility of conditionality is for inducing Turkish democracy.

The more the EU is committed to accession, the more credible its conditionality is, hence the


more effective it is in transforming Turkish democracy. However, since 2005 conditionality has not induced enough enthusiasm in Turkey for the continuity of the reform process and reforms became limited, superficial and largely unimplemented. Ali Usul (2011) argues that had the EU pursued a more constructive pre-accession policy as it did in the eastern enlargement, then EU conditionality would have been more successful and effective in transforming Turkish democracy.

IV. The Historic Elections of 2007 and AKP’s Rise to Power

Ever since AKP’s formation in 2001, many in Turkey and in the EU did not believe that the AKP is actually different from its Islamist predecessors. For the AKP, religion is an important source of inspiration just like it is for many Christian Democrats. In daily politics, it is not a defining feature. Up until 2005, the EU believed that the AKP was the party it claims to be: a conservative democrat with conservative views on social policy and liberal views on the economy. However, the party’s actions after this period, proved wrong.

In 2005, the European Court of Human Rights issued a judgement that Turkish secular advocates had the right to ban the wearing of headscarves at universities. This served as a huge blow for Prime Minister Erdogan and other AKP leaders who hoped to get European support in getting rid of this ban. According to some, and as argued by Nathalie Tocci, “Turkey’s headscarf ban does not constitute a violation of fundamental rights has tarnished the appeal of

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Europe amongst the AKP and its sympathizers.”70 Hence, the AKP realized that its agenda of religious freedoms could not be reached within the EU, and lost its previously strong commitment to Turkey’s EU accession. Evidence of this loss of commitment is apparent in the fact that the government has not pushed for some of the key reforms required by the EU.

Before the 2007 elections, the parliament was unable to elect a new president, therefore the AKP nominated Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul as a candidate. This nomination led to mass demonstrations by the secular segment of the population voicing their desire to have a secular president thus protesting Gul’s candidacy, mainly because his wife wears a headscarf. The Turkish General Staff published a memorandum on its website warning the government not to challenge the secular constitution of the republic. The following day, the AKP responded by criticizing the military’s guardianship role over Turkish politics, stating that “a military warning against the AKP is democratically unacceptable. According to our Constitution, the military chief of staff is responsible to the prime minister.”71 The military’s attempt to intervene in the presidential election process was also criticized by the EU, warning Turkey’s military not to intervene in politics. The EU’s Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn, stated that while the EU respected the Turkish military, it was important that the military left democracy to the democratically elected government.85 Civil society organizations, the media, and business circles gave significant support to the AKP in opposing the military. Even demonstrators against the AKP expressed their criticism towards the military with the slogan: “no Islamic government, but no coup either.”72 Eventually, in the July elections, the AKP

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85 BBC News (2007, April 28). EU warns Turkish army over vote.
succeeded in being elected to a second term, winning 47 per cent of the votes, increasing its support by almost 13 percent. This was the second time in Turkish democratic history that a party has increased its support from one election to another while in government. Moreover, this was the largest share that a party had received in general elections since 1969. Hence, the AKP won a historic victory in July 2007.

The victory came despite the country’s mixed performance during its first term. The party hardly implemented any substantial reforms in dealing with the PKK and the threat of terrorism. The period witnessed high unemployment rates and increased crime rates, and the party couldn’t cope with Turkey’s mounting foreign debt. But AKP’s success in responding to the socioeconomic needs and demands of the poor and the increase in the economy’s growth by 6 to 7 per cent a year, translated into votes.

After the success in 2007, the civil society hoped that the AKP would return to the reform agenda. Before the elections, the party promised that it would present a new democratic constitution to replace the present one, which dates from 1982 and was drafted by the military after the 1980 coup. But having an even stronger power base, the party could now afford to pursue its political preferences, independent of its previous strong need and commitment to EU membership and democratic reforms. Thus, instead of pushing for a new constitution, the party focused on promoting fundamental religious freedoms, such as lifting the constitutional ban on wearing a headscarf at universities.

Due to these policies taken by the AKP to instigate religious freedoms and the party’s Islamic roots, the country became increasingly polarized along secularist-Islamist dimensions. The result was the opening of a case by the Chief Prosecutor to the Constitutional Court in

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March 2008 for the closure of the party. The appeal requested the banning of Prime Minister Erdogan, President Gul and 69 of AKP’s members from politics, on the grounds of anti-regime activities, citing statements by the AKP leadership and the government’s attempt to lift the constitutional ban on wearing the headscarf on university campuses by parliamentary vote a year earlier. The Court found evidence supporting the charge but fell just one vote short of the seven (out of 11) needed for the closure of the party. Instead the Court issued a serious warning to the AKP. While the party was saved, the AKP believed that the military was behind the case, hence the government ordered the arrest of two dozen suspects in investigation directed at militant secularist groups allegedly conspiring to undermine the government.\textsuperscript{74}

The cases that started with the confessions of a journalist with links to the intelligence organization began to be tried under the name of Ergenekon, followed by the Balyoz (Sledgehammer) cases regarding the alleged coup plans by the military.\textsuperscript{75} The cases led to the additional arrest and trial of hundreds of active and retired military officers of all ranks, the most notable of which was the arrest of the former Chief of Staff Ilker Basbug, hence triggering the public debate on the role of the military in politics. It was later found that the trials were initiated by Gulenists in the judiciary establishment. The trials were dropped in 2016 after the judgement of the Supreme Court of Appeal in 2016 and all accused military officials were released without conviction. Nevertheless, a constitutional amendment that Prime Minister Erdogan brought before the Turkish population in September 2010 referendum marked an important step in the AKP’s consolidation of power. It introduced extensive changes to the constitution, reorganizing the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors in order to bring them under the government’s control. These changes made it


\textsuperscript{75} Aydini, E. (2011). Ergenekon, new pacts, and the decline of the Turkish "inner state". \textit{Turkish Studies, 12}(2), 227.
almost impossible to close down a party in Turkey.\textsuperscript{76} The amendment was combined with other constitutional changes including the right to appeal, freedom of residence, and the protection of children’s rights. Furthermore, in June 2009, the Parliament passed a legislation allowing civilian courts to try military personnel in peacetime, making it possible to prosecute and try active or retired military officers on allegations of attempted military coups, and abolished the powers of military courts to try civilians in peacetime.\textsuperscript{77} The constitutional amendments significantly decreased the possibility of challenges to the AKP government from the military and the judiciary, leaving greater space for the AKP at the center of the political system. In sum, what this sequence of events suggests is that the AKP is not only resisting the secularism of the country, it is actively fighting back against the secular establishment, including the military. The events after 2007 showed the intensity of the struggle between Islam and secularism.

\textbf{V. The Elections of 2011 and the Aftermath}

The AKP won the June 2011 general elections with an increased vote share of 50 per cent strengthening its dominance over Turkish politics. Consolidating its electoral hegemony as a mass party, the elections increased the party’s confidence in ruling as they saw fit, without taking into consideration the demands and concerns of the other half of the electorate. With the significantly diminished role of the military in Turkish politics, the AKP increased its political power both in the society and against the secular establishment, thus reducing even further the need to follow EU’s agenda to pursue its interests. This is mostly visible during the 2012 AKP Congress, when Prime Minister Erdogan omitted any reference to the EU in his 2023 vision speech. Onis (2015) described the period between 2011 and 2014 as the third phase of AKP’s

\textsuperscript{76} Bashirov & Lancaster, End of moderation, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{77} Duzgit & Keyman, EU-Turkey relations and the stagnation of Turkish democracy, \textit{op. cit}, p.6.
rule, where the party’s performance has significantly dropped in the areas of economic
development and democratization process, thereby giving rise to authoritarianism.\textsuperscript{78}

Accordingly, concepts such as “illiberal democracy,” “hybrid democracy” or “competitive
authoritarianism” have been frequently mentioned to characterize this phase of AKP’s rule.\textsuperscript{79}

\textbf{A. Gezi Park Protests: A Real Turning Point?}

Turkey’s growing democratic deficit is evident in the events following the 2011 elections. The
June 2013 Gezi Park protests is the first such event. These started as merely a small-scale
environmental protest to prevent the demolition of a city park, only to later evolve into
nationwide street protests involving millions of people. What escalated the demonstrations was
the government’s harsh reaction and the excessive use of police force, leading to loss of lives
and thousands of injuries and detentions.\textsuperscript{80} In its eagerness to prevent the public expression of
opposition towards the government, the AKP resorted to media controls and social media bans,
which amounted to limitation of freedom of media and freedom of expression. As a result, the
Gezi events became a symbol of resistance to the rising authoritarianism of the AKP
government and undermined the popularity of Erdogan and the AKP.\textsuperscript{81}

The European Parliament harshly condemned the excessive use of force against the peaceful
demonstrators and issued a statement calling on the government “to stop immediately the
violence against the demonstrators”.\textsuperscript{82} In the resolution the EP noted the ‘authoritarian style of
governing’ of the AKP government. Moreover, following the Gezi incidents, serious corruption allegations involving key AKP figures, including Prime Minister Erdogan’s son, emerged in December that year. Erdogan characterized these as a judicial coup designed by the Gulen movement and hence ordered the arrest of the police officers in charge and replaced the prosecutors of the case. Both of these events contributed to a clear reversal of democratization, prompting criticism from the EP and causing member states, such as Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, to object to the opening of a new chapter in the accession negotiations.

B. EU Refugee Crisis and the Readmission Agreement
The summer of 2015 witnessed an unprecedented influx of refugees to EU borders, mostly Syrian and Iraqi refugees fleeing war and terror, passing through Turkish borders. With this problem in mind, the EU turned to Turkey for help, proposing a refugee deal. On the 6th of October 2015, a draft action plan was published by the Commission aiming to accelerate EU-Turkey cooperation to deal with the refugee crisis.\(^83\) Eventually, in a summit meeting on the 29th of November 2015, the Joint Action Plan was adopted by Turkey and the EU.

A further development during the period was the negotiations for a readmission agreement between Turkey and the EU. In an attempt at accelerating the negotiations, the EU tied visa liberalization to the signing of the Readmission Agreement to encourage Turkey to fulfill its side of the agreement. The Readmission Agreement was signed in December 2013 and entered into force in October the following year. The visa liberalization roadmap included 72 criteria for Turkey to accomplish in order to qualify for visa-free travel. The progress achieved during the negotiations showed the Turkish government’s readiness of returning its attention to the EU and expected this agreement to further the accession process. However, the

subsequent corruption allegations and the July 15 coup showed Turkey’s departure from democracy and rule of law, thus again losing the momentum in their relations. Moreover, after the July 15 coup of 2016, no progress has been made by Turkey in the fulfilment of the remaining five criteria required for visa liberalization. In sum, due to the probably continued future flow of refugees in the EU, and the rise of right-wing populist and Islamic tendencies in leading EU member states, cooperation on minimizing the flow of irregular refugees will be one of the prominent issues in Turkey-EU relations in the years ahead.

C. The Repeat Elections of 2015

The AKP was able to increase its votes in consecutive elections until the 2015 national elections. In August 2014, Erdogan was selected as the President of Turkey with 52 per cent of the vote and expressed a clear agenda to change the Constitution and shift to a presidential system. However, one year later in the June 2015 elections, the AKP lost its parliamentary majority and its vote shares dropped from 50 percent to 41 per cent. The main reason behind the shifting electoral dynamics was the “Kurdish Peace Process,” a campaign initiated by the AKP government in 2013. Turkish nationalists largely opposed the initiative and hence these concerns turned into votes for the other parties. Moreover, the Kurdish voters also weren’t pleased with the peace process and regarded it as “insincere.”

The loss of the parliamentary majority forced the AKP to form a coalition with one of the remaining three parties to form a government. The AKP, however, sabotaged the coalitionbuilding efforts and called for repeat elections in November which resulted in a spectacular reversal: Erdogan and the AKP successfully gained back their power, receiving 50 per cent of the votes in the new elections. For the first time in Turkey’s electoral history since

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1950, an election result was ignored, thus marking Turkey’s exit from democracy. The turn in the votes was caused by the PKK’s terrorist attacks that erupted between June and November after the AKP signaled the end of the peace process. During the fighting, Erdogan campaigned on behalf of the AKP, demonstrating that only he and his party would be able to deliver safety and security.\(^{86}\) The terror caused by the PKK violence led the Turkish voters to believe that the reason behind the new wave of terror was AKP’s loss of power, hence voted for the AKP in the snap election in November.

The Gezi events, the corruption allegations and the manipulations of the votes brought to the EU’s increased concern about the continued fulfilment of accession criteria. In its 2015 progress report, the Commission pointed out its frustration at Turkey’s regression in terms of the political criteria, especially in the areas of media freedom, freedom of expression and association. The report used the term ‘backsliding’ for the first time to describe Turkey’s situation instead of the usual descriptions of limited progress or no progress.\(^{87}\) Additionally, in the 2015 World Press Freedom Index, Turkey was ranked 149 among the 180 countries, rising slightly from 154\(^{th}\) in 2014.\(^{88}\) Likewise, the Freedom House’s report on ‘freedom of press’ for 2015, listed Turkey as ‘not free’ having downgraded it from ‘partly free’ in 2014.\(^{103}\)

VI. July 15 Coup

Much of the details surrounding the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016 remain in mystery. The AKP government blamed the Gulenists for the coup, consequently justifying the mass detention of not only Gulen movement members but anyone who criticized Erdogan and his


political regime. Hence, on the night of the coup, Erdogan managed to mobilize his supporters and end the coup. In the aftermath, a state of emergency was enacted that gave the government “the power to issue executive decrees which have the force of law and are subject to little scrutiny by the Parliament or the courts.”

Thousands were relieved of their duties and/or detained from the military, bureaucracy, judiciary, media, schools, universities, and other public institutions due to their links to Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETO – followers of the Gulen movement). Around 40 per cent of the military’s high command were dishonorably discharged. According to Amnesty International report of 2017, more than 100,000 public sector employees were suspended and 60,000 dismissed.

According to many, most of the people who are in prison or suffered an assault on their social status had little to do with the FETO network or didn’t participate in the coup attempt. The government further targeted not only the FETO but also those with a critical view of the government, and/or supporting the Kurdish movement. The large-scale arrests even reached elected politicians, including the co-chairs of People’s Democratic Party (HDP), a development severely condemned by EU officials. During the purges, the possibility of reintroducing the death penalty began to be debated by Erdogan and his government.

Therefore, on November 22nd, the European Parliament asked the Commission to temporarily freeze Turkey’s accession to the EU. The resolution voted by the EP is not legally binding, since the Parliament has no formal role in the activation of these mechanisms. However, on the 25th of April 2017, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe decided to place Turkey under surveillance regarding human rights, democracy and rule of law.

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90 EU-Logos (2017, January 25). EU-Turkey strange relationship: forced but necessary
Since the coup attempt, President Erdogan’s approval rating jumped from 47 per cent to a record 68 per cent.\(^\text{93}\) Aware of his new power, Erdogan sought to restructure state institutions as he sees best. His main goal was to establish a presidential system, concentrating power in his hands and undermining traditional check and balances. On April 16\(^{th}\) 2017, the shift of the political system from a parliamentary to a presidential one was adopted by a Constitutional Referendum and implemented in July 2018. The office of prime minister was eliminated, enabling the President to serve as head of the ruling party. Accordingly, the President has the sole authority to appoint and dismiss high-level civil servants, limiting courts’ ability to provide checks and balances on the executive. Hence, Turkey’s image as a democratizing country which served as a model to the Middle East and Muslim countries deteriorated, leaving in its place an image of an increasingly authoritarian country. This shift damaged Turkey-EU relations and contributed to the view that Turkey is not likely to complete the accession process anytime soon. Moreover, EU membership seems to no longer be a priority of the government.

\textbf{VII. Conclusion}

The de-Europeanization process accelerated after 2013, when the EU began to criticize the AKP government’s harsh treatment of the peaceful demonstrators at the Gezi Park and its frequent human rights violations. Turkey-EU relations came to a halt after the failed coup of July 15 2016 with the EP’s vote to freeze Turkey’s EU membership accession negotiations in November. The following year, in April, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe voted to restart its human rights monitoring procedure against Turkey, effectively downgrading Turkey’s status to a pre-candidate one.

The developments concentrating around the refugee deal between Turkey and the EU showed that the illegal immigration has constituted the main focus of relations. Indeed, the refugee

\(^{93}\) The Economist (2016, August 20). Turkish Anger at the West: Duplicity Coup.
issue, rather than advancing Turkey’s membership negotiations, has become the priority of the parties. The situation has harmed EU’s inconsistency and advantage in pushing for democratic reforms in Turkey. This is particularly shown in the delaying of the publication of the 2015 Progress Report, which harshly criticized Turkey’s record in fulfilling the EU membership criteria, until after the November elections due to concerns that the expressed criticism would complicate negotiations on the refugee deal. Moreover, EU’s concentration shifted to its internal problems, like the euro crisis and the refugee crisis, making its conditionality on the Turkish government weak. However, Turkey’s internal problems and its recent turn to authoritarianism have also contributed to the stagnation of the negotiations. In Freedom House’s report of 2018, Turkey was classified as “not free” for the first time.\(^\text{94}\) The report noted “a deeply flawed constitutional referendum that centralized power in the presidency, the mass replacement of elected mayors with government appointees, arbitrary prosecutions of rights activists and other perceived enemies of the state, and continued purges of state employees, all of which have left citizens hesitant to express their views on sensitive topics.”

Considering the developments following the 2011 elections and the decreased dependence on promoting democracy, Turkey needs credible and strong EU conditionality more than ever before in order to initiate the country’s return to democracy. Without a strong EU anchor, Turkey will continue deviating from democracy, thereby consolidating its tendencies towards authoritarian rule.

CHAPTER 5: Privileged Partnership: An Alternative to Accession for Turkey?

Turkey’s EU accession negotiations started on October 3rd, 2005. While previously the discussion was about whether Turkey would attain full-membership or a ‘privileged partnership,’ apparently now it is shifting to one of Turkey’s choice between non-accession and ‘privileged partnership.’ The main reason for this change is that the process of the accession negotiations has gone without much emphasis on Turkey’s side for further introducing any significant reforms that would enable it to meet the criteria requirements to reach its ultimate aim. Additionally, leading member states of the EU, namely Germany and France openly declared their opposition to Turkey’s accession. Therefore, alternative options to full membership should be explored in advance.

The EU-Turkey Negotiation Framework declared that “these negotiations are an openended process, the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand.”\(^95\) The inclusion of such a statement entails that Turkish membership is not a sure thing even with the launch of the accession negotiations. This gives the EU the opportunity of granting Turkey restricted rather than full membership rights, in case the EU doesn’t have the “absorption capacity” to add new members or Turkey fails to fulfil all Copenhagen criteria, thus introducing “the strongest possible bond” as an alternative to membership. Therefore, this stipulates a legitimate basis for the EU’s search of new ways to integrate Turkey, even though the coverage of such ways is not mentioned in the official documents.

The idea of a privileged partnership as a substitute to full Turkish membership was raised as an option in the early 2000s. The discussions were initiated out of the suggestion that

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Turkey did not belong in Europe because of a number of geographical, cultural and identity reasons. The leaders of two chief member states of the EU, Angela Merkel and Nicholas Sarkozy, were the first to oppose full membership and search for an alternative route for EU-Turkey relations, namely a privileged partnership. German Chancellor Angela Merkel claimed that “A Europe with Turkey as a fully-fledged member won’t be a Europe that is fully integrated.” 

Along this line of thinking, leaders of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Socialist Union (CDU/CSU), argued that Turkey’s accession would be culturally incompatible and would “weaken the positions of existing member states and undermine EU efficiency.”

The former French President Nicholas Sarkozy shared a similar position stating that “Turkey would kill the very idea of European integration.. It would be a fatal blow to the very notion of European identity.” These concerns were voiced in the EU-Turkey Negotiation Framework after these leaders demanded that an option of a possible alternative destination for Turkey be included through the concepts of an ‘open-ended process,’ ‘absorption capacity’ and ‘fully anchored.’

There is no concrete definition of what a privileged partnership is or what it might include, therefore, the discussion in this chapter has been merely taken from leaders’ statements, studies of foundations and academic studies in order to assess what it might envisage and whether it is a feasible alternative. From these observations it is concluded that a privileged partnership entails offering a ‘special status’ to Turkey that goes beyond association, which Turkey has since 1963, but falling short of full membership. It is generally understood to be a ‘light’ type of membership, that offers more than the current customs union between the parties, but which doesn’t allow the state to act as a fully-fledged EU member. However, due

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to the lack of substantial amount of information for defining the basis of a privileged partnership, the proposal hardly makes any change to the current status quo and fails to provide a deeper sense of Turkey’s privileges that would come from choosing this alternative route.

I. Privileged Partnership: A Plausible Alternative?
Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, a German politician from the CSU who became Minister of the Economy and later Minister of Defense, was the pioneer in preparing a report outlining the contents of the possible partnership between Turkey and the EU as early as 2004, when the talks for such an alternative started. According to Guttenberg, the EU-Turkey customs union would be extended to new areas, such as agriculture and services, institutional cooperation would be enhanced and instead of giving Turkey access to the European Economic Area, the economic area’s structures and institutions would be used as a model to expand cooperation in the Association Council.98 The paper proposes the establishment of an EU-Turkey Committee that would adopt and monitor the implementation of EU legislation applicable in the Privileged Partnership. It is further elaborated that in case of extending the existing Customs Union, freedom of movement of workers should be denied and the easing of visa regulations should be introduced instead. Furthermore, accordingly, Turkey should be offered full participation in the EU’s foreign, security and defence policies, namely in European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

Guttenberg supports the implementation of such a “special relationship” on the basis that it wouldn’t “overstretch” Europe as a membership would, since in case of eventual Turkish accession, Europe’s borders would be close to the problematic countries of Asia and the Middle

East. He further denotes that having no alternative to Turkish EU membership other than the failure of negotiations is unacceptable. Therefore, the prospect of a privileged partnership should be included in the open-ended negotiations.

Another policy report was prepared by the Foundation Robert Schuman policy in 2017 on what a privileged partnership might include based on four main chapters. The first possible chapter would be the modernization of the Customs Union as envisaged by the EU-Turkey Summit on 29th of November 2015, when an agreement was made over the preparation of a modernized Customs Union which would include products, services, technical barriers to trade, public procurement and intellectual property. However, as a consequence of the failed coup on 15th of July 2016, the arrests and criminal prosecution of German citizens, Germany blocked the opening of talks on the Customs Union. The second chapter would be an update of the Association Agreement that dates back to 1963 and would be made in accordance to the recent EU-Ukraine Agreement, that would provide political dialogue and closer cooperation in some key areas such as justice and fundamental rights, security, energy, transport and the environment, among others. Turkey’s adoption of the European legislation in vital areas such as energy or the environment, or even norms and standards that are not included in the new CU, would comprise the third chapter. As a last chapter, the inclusion of Turkey in the Foreign Affairs Council regarding regional issues of common interest, is considered. The report further suggests that modernizing the Customs Union would acknowledge Turkey’s strategic position, thereby making the offer attractive to Turkey.

Another advocate of the notion is Edmund Stoiber, the leader of the CSU. He proposed the extending of EU’s basic freedoms to Turkey thereby adding: “free movement of goods, greater freedom for the movement of individuals, freedom of provision of services, free movement of
Moreover, he supports the full participation of Turkey in the ESDP and CFSP, as mentioned by Guttenber. At the same time, Stoiber has also declared that he would do “everything within his legal power” to keep Turkey out of the Union.

Unfortunately, until now, the proposals on Privileged Partnership fail to offer any new privileges to Turkey in case of adopting the *acquis* concerning economic and financial chapters. Unless the EU agrees to share decision-making power with Turkey, at least in some key policy areas, privileged partnership has limited attraction. Therefore, an answer to the question ‘Why does Turkey need to accept a privileged partnership instead of full EU membership?’ should be found in order to make the offer more tempting and appealing to Turkey. In case of failure in answering such a question, Turkey will not view it as a possible route and will continue pursuing the ‘lost cause’ of EU membership and might even blame the EU for applying discrimination against Turkey, especially since accession negotiations have always resulted in granting full membership to the candidate country.

Hence, opponents of Privileged Partnership have argued that removing the perspective of membership or offering Turkey something less than membership as an alternative to final destination is likely to cause problems. Inspired by the EU membership, Turkey took extensive reforms between the period of 2000 and 2005 in the areas of human rights, Kurdish rights, Cyprus question, limiting the role of Turkish military, among others. Moreover, Turkish economy boosted between 2002 and 2007 and foreign investment grew heavily, coming mostly from European countries. Therefore, the belief is that in case of non-accession, Turkey would not have any incentive to perform any other significant reforms to improve the state’s

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118 By an average of 6.8% a year.
human rights record and its relationship with EU member states. Although, there is no guarantee that the EU will give up conditionality in case of proposing a privileged partnership.

A further problem that might emerge is observed in the speech of the 1999 Commissioner for Enlargement, Gunter Verheugen. He stated that “if we deprive Turkey of the prospect of accession, we will be held responsible for everything that goes wrong in the country. Then the question might become: ‘who lost Turkey’?” 101 Consequently, if Turkey is offered a privileged partnership, it would strengthen the voices of nationalist and religious groups in Turkey.

Moreover, Turks have dreamed of ‘Europe’ since the 1920s. Since then, they have recognized themselves as European and have tried to turn Turkey into a European country through extensive reforms. EU membership has been Turkey’s primary objective and removing this possibility will most definitely result in a catastrophic outcome. Thus, privileged partnership proposals should be explored and revised, highlighting the benefits that Turkey would receive from it, if it is to be considered an alternative to membership without isolating Turkey. Additionally, the differences between full membership and privileged partnership need to be clearly stated. Besides having the EU membership as the ultimate foreign policy goal, Turkey’s pessimism comes from the fact that there isn’t any preceding example of the implementation of such an idea with any candidate state. Thus, the question should be not whether Turkey would accept such an offer, but rather ‘What does a Privileged Partnership cover?’ and ‘Why should Turkey accept the offer?’.

II. Consequences of the July 2016 Coup

Relations between the EU and Turkey have deteriorated since the failed July 15th 2016 coup. Following the coup, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker declared on France2 radio that he believes that “Turkey – as matters stand – is not in a situation to be able to join soon, nor even over a longer term.” That served as a response to the thousands of arrests and repressive measures taken by President Erdogan, thereby putting an end to the pretense of the ongoing accession negotiations. In November, the European Parliament asked the Commission to temporarily freeze the talks for Turkey’s EU accession, following the success of the Turkish referendum in changing the governing system from a parliamentary to presidential system and the reintroduction of the death penalty.

On the 25th of April 2017, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe declared that Turkey is now under surveillance regarding human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The essence of suspending the negotiations is provided for in the 2005 Negotiating Framework, stating that “in the case of a serious and persistent breach in Turkey of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law on which the Union was founded,” a suspension is recommended. The suspension, which might be recommended by the Commission or requested from one third of the Member States, is decided by qualified majority; the ending of the negotiations, however, has to be decided unanimously. Until now, the outcome of the procedure is still uncertain since most of the member states prefer “a de facto freezing to a suspension de jure,”102 as long as the migratory risk remains.

The coup gave the AKP government the confidence that it does not need the EU, and vice versa. The EU and the European member states’ governments clearly showed their lack of support for continuing the accession negotiations. Especially, since the return to the democratization process now would be very difficult for both sides and would cost the EU more than the benefits it would receive in case of Turkish accession. In Turkey, voices of the anti-Western, anti-European groups and the Islamists for adopting the privileged partnership instead of EU membership are now increasingly spreading.\textsuperscript{103} They argue that with the privileged partnership the Turkish foreign policy will have considerably more freedom of action, and the possibility of preserving its sovereignty and its Islamic identity would be enhanced. Therefore, the privileged partnership is now considered to be a real possibility. Thus, revising and improving such a proposal is of crucial importance especially since Europe wants to keep Turkey at an arm’s length to fight terrorism and control the immigration issue that started to be of an increasing importance to the EU after the Syrian civil war.

\textbf{III. Conclusion}

Over the course of almost sixty years, Turkey’s relationship with the European Union has become a complex and debated matter. Turkey’s geographical size, its rapidly growing population, its negative effect on the allocation of power and the influence on decision-making, its Muslim identity can be all listed as the primary motives behind this debate. Furthermore, the absorption capacity of the EU and the over-stretch of its boundaries in case of Turkish accession have also contributed to the problematics of the issue.

This chapter has meant to cover the alternative model to Turkey’s EU full membership, namely the Privileged Partnership, which was prompted by many EU member states, and has

\footnote{\textsuperscript{103} Hursoy, S. (2017). On the Edge of the EU: Turkey’s choice between ‘privileged partnership’ and non-accession. \textit{Asia Europe Journal}, 15 (3), 319-339.}
particularly been encouraged by German and French governments on several occasions. And even though their explicit demand for the inclusion of a possible alternative final destination in the 2005 Negotiating Framework did not come through, their input can be clearly seen. The document makes references to the absorption capacity of the EU, the open-endedness of the negotiations and includes a clause in case of Turkey’s failure to assume in full the obligations of membership, it would be “fully anchored in the European structures through the strongest possible bond.”

Even though the calls for a privileged partnership have increased recently, such proposals are surprisingly underdeveloped and offer only minor changes to the status quo.

Turkey’s anticipated benefits from adopting the privileged partnership rather than membership have been barely mentioned and need to be further explored in-depth. But even though Turkey is still persistent in its view that “if we are offered a privileged partnership, we will not even consider it and simply reject it,”104 in the choice between non-accession and privileged partnership, it would definitely choose the latter one. This choice is further strengthened by the country’s evident exit from democracy after the failed coup of July 15th 2016, as it demonstrates that Turkey has been detaching itself from the EU accession path. Nevertheless, even after the failed coup, both parties would greatly benefit from a privileged partnership rather than merely cutting their ties altogether. Moreover, as Siret Hursoy (2017) argued in his paper, a privileged partnership would serve a right balance between the EU and Turkey and as with the membership, it could still reach the objective of further democratization and advance the human rights in Turkey.105

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CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

Turkey’s relations with the European Union have proven to be the most controversial of all the EU’s enlargement experiences so far. In addition to the lengthy application process, during the first 15 years, Turkey has opened 15 chapters, which is less than half of the negotiation chapters. Since then, only one of these has been provisionally closed.

Turkey-EU relations are currently based on the 1963 Association Agreement that contains a clause of a definite membership perspective, envisaging the integration of Turkey into the European Community. The current Customs Union between the parties was meant to be more than what it is now, evolving into a common market between the parties. Hence, indicating that the establishment of a customs union would not be the end of the association. However, certain events prevented the furthering of their relationship into the Turkish integration in the EU.

With the grant of candidacy status at the Helsinki Summit in 1999, Turkey undertook significant reforms with the purpose of fulfilling the conditions for opening accession negotiations. Eventually, accession negotiations were opened on the 3rd of October 2005 but until today could not be finalized. The main reason for the inability to continue the negotiations was the conditionality of the Cypriot issue. Even though the Turkish Government tremendously supported the Annan Plan, the most prominent initiative taken by Turkey so far, and successfully convinced Turkish Cypriots into accepting the settlement, Greek Cypriots rejected the plan. The admission of Greek Cyprus as representative of the whole island in May 2004 has made the Cyprus dispute much more complicated since now as a member it can instigate a solution on the divided island for its own benefit. For this very reason, since the Republic of Cyprus acceded to the EU, a peaceful settlement has become less likely.

The shift of EU’s focus away from Turkey’s membership bid into the introduction of a “privileged partnership” instead of full membership constituted an additional major reason for
the failure of the negotiations. The proposal of alternative to full-membership prompted the view of Turkey being an essential strategic partner rather than a potential partner, hence bringing the concept of EU’s absorption capacity as an additional condition. Therefore, even with Turkey’s inability to fulfill the required *acquis* criteria, the lack of political will on the side of the EU also served for the deterioration of Turkey-EU relations. The 2008 global crisis and the refugee crisis have further shifted EU’s focus to its internal dynamics in an effort to maintain its integrity.

Currently, their relations are going through a critical and turbulent period. The most recent engagement between Turkey and the EU has been over the refugee crisis that promised progress in their relations. The 29 November Turkey-EU Refugee Action Plan envisaged more engagement not only in the area of fighting irregular immigration but also in the area of Turkey-EU relations with provisions of visa liberalization for Turkish citizens based on Turkey’s fulfilment of 72 criteria in addition to opening new chapters in the accession negotiations. These agreements succeeded in reducing the number of migrants using the Turkey-Aegean route hence diminishing the pressure on the EU.

However, two developments brought the relations to a halt again. The first development was the dismissal of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu due to his reluctance in supporting Erdogan’s ambition to end the parliamentary system, establishing a presidential one, and his willingness to establish a coalition government after the AKP’s loss of its majority in the June 2015 elections. President Erdogan replaced him with Binali Yildirim, a loyalist prepared to facilitate the transformation of the political system. Davutoglu was a crucial figure in the enhancement of Turkey-EU relations during the refugee crisis negotiations. With his resignation, President Erdogan filled the void with accusations towards the EU of the slow pace of negotiations and
the inability to yet complete the visa liberalization process. Even though the negotiations continued, close cooperation was no longer attainable.

The second and more dramatic development was the events that took place in Turkey after the failed coup of July 15th 2016. Even though, the president succeeded in initiating the civil resistance against the coup, a state of emergency was declared for three months on July the 20th and extended for a period of two years, ending on July 19th 2018. During the state of emergency, the European Convention of Human Rights was suspended, and the purges started. Through governmental decrees aiming to restructure the military establishment and eliminate the Gulen plotters’ influence and supporters, thousands of people were dismissed and/or detained from different public institutions. The purges that targeted not only the Fethullah Terror Organization but also all those critical of the government and/or supporting the Kurdish movement, are still ongoing. EU officials and leaders perceived the events following the coup as a move away from democracy towards authoritarianism with the majority of EU parliamentarians voting in favor of freezing accession negotiations in November 2016. The stalemate in the visa liberalization has also contributed to the uncertainty and deterioration of Turkey-EU relations. During the period, Turkey improved its ties with Russia and reports of a shift of axis for Turkey started to come up. Germany’s Chancellor, Angela Merkel, stated in an interview that the goal of Turkey’s EU negotiations is not membership but to prevent Turkey from allying with Russia and China.\textsuperscript{106} The possibility of reintroducing the death penalty, a definite redline for the EU, began to be debated in Turkey after the failed coup. Several EU officials noted that reintroduction of the death penalty would definitely bring to the end of Turkey’s EU perspective. Moreover, on continuous occasions President Erdogan cautioned the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{106} N-tv (2016, August 5). Wie weiter mit der Turkei? “Verhandlungen ja, aber kein EU-Beitritt”.
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EU that if visa liberalization isn’t realized soon, he will no longer apply the provisions of the refugee deal. The April 2017 referendum aiming to amend the Turkish Constitution and change the system to a presidential one, brought to the additional damaging of the relations.

In sum, in the last few years, Turkey has seen the most radical authoritarian shift after the failed coup of July 15th 2016, exiting the most basic provisions of a democratic regime, hence making the termination of Turkey’s accession negotiations a real possibility. Turkey’s shift of the political system from a parliamentary to a presidential one after the approved referendum on the 16th of April 2017, distant Turkey even more in its quest for promoting democracy and rule of law. Nevertheless, even with the shocking events in mind, the parties cannot deny their interdependence. The EU needs Turkey’s cooperation in dealing with vital problems, such as migration and security issues and preventing Turkey from realizing new partnerships with rivals. For Turkey, the EU is seen as a promoter of political and economic reforms and a source of foreign direct investment (FDI). Even with membership out of the question, the continuation of their relationship is strategically important for both parties.

Recently, the migration issue has occupied a central role in Turkey-EU relations. After eight years of negotiations, the Readmission Agreement was signed on the 16th of December 2013, with a visa liberalization in place in an effort to revive their relations. The refugee crisis showed that Turkey was an indispensable partner for the EU. Since then, the deal has been successful in effectively reducing the number of migrants passing through Turkey, however, visa-free travel for Turkish citizens has not yet been obtained.

What will determine Turkey-EU relations in the upcoming years is whether the common cooperation in the refugee crisis will bring to visa liberalization for Turkish citizens, therefore bringing Turkey closer to the goal of full-membership or will it pave the way for a Privileged Partnership between the parties. What will determine the outcome lies in the
developments in both Turkey and the EU. In case Turkey is able to return to a normal
democratic system and carries the reforms needed and achieves the required aspects of rule of
law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the membership bid might be
considered again. However, if Turkey continues with its authoritarian tendencies and keeps
limiting the human rights and basic freedoms of its citizens, then the perspective for
full membership in the EU will shrink even more. In view of the path that President Erdogan
has chosen for Turkey, a privileged partnership between Turkey and the EU expressed by
Germany and France, might be the more realistic option for the near future. Yet, an advanced
version of the proposal should be created to make it more attractive for Turkey as it is stipulated
that with the current proposal Turkey already enjoys this special relation with the European
Union.
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