Sally Judson

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Turkey and EU Accession:

A Stalled Process

**Description of Research**

I investigated why the negotiations have stalled between Turkey and the EU and the potential consequences on the future of Turkish-EU relations. What are the potential consequences if Turkey is rejected? To explore these questions I traveled to Istanbul and Ankara for two weeks to meet with officials and scholars on Turkish-EU relations. The meetings were a result of both my personal networking and a tailored tour organized by Political Tours. The organization provided me with a guide in Istanbul and Ankara who accompanied me to meetings I had established and also additional meetings scheduled by the program.

My guides in Istanbul were Jonathan Lewis, a British photographer who focuses on urbanization patterns, and Piotr Zalewski, a reporter and analyst with the European Stability Institute, a Turkish think tank that focuses on EU-Turkish relations. Jonathan took me around the city and to several sites, including the Blue Mosque and the Eye of Sophia. With his help I was able to observe the income inequality within Istanbul and learn about the developmental patterns of the 1960’s. Piotr, a Polish citizen, previously worked for the EU Commission and was writing an article for Foreign Affairs on the influence of Turkish foreign policy on the upcoming elections. Piotr was extremely knowledgeable about the inner workings of the EU and how Turkish domestic politics influenced the process. In Istanbul I attended nine meetings with university professors on issues such as visa liberalization, minority rights in Turkey, Turkish foreign policy, the Cyprus issue, and the current state of negotiations. I also attended a high level meeting on visa liberalization between the EU and Turkey.

In Ankara, my guide was Aysegul Wilson, a PhD Law student. She accompanied me to meetings that I had arranged and also to Ataturk’s tomb, which demonstrated the intensity of Turkish nationalism visa vie the founder of the Republic. Born and raised in Ankara, Aysegul provided the opinion of a Turkish citizen. She said that she was never in favor of Turkey joining the EU, as she does not believe the nation is European. She stated “I do not feel European or Middle Eastern, I am Turkish.” In Ankara I met with five members of the EU Secretary General (EUSG), the institute in charge of negotiations and aligning Turkish policy with EU law, as well as a member of the European Commission Delegation to Turkey. I also met with a human rights lawyer and the director of the German Marshall Institute, an organization that works to develop transatlantic relations between the EU, US, and Turkey. Aysegul’s husband, Dan Wilson, works for the UK embassy in Ankara and therefore, I was able to speak to diplomats from the Greek and UK embassies.

**Budget**

The funds provided were sufficient for my research carried out in Turkey, not including the purchase of books and other research materials. The majority of the funds went towards the cost of flights to and within Turkey and the services provided by Political Tours. The flights from Germany to Turkey and from Istanbul to Ankara cost $1,223 and the cost of hotels was $986. I spent roughly $38 a day on food and local transportation. The guides and assistance from Political Tours cost $1,350.

**Preliminary findings**:

Turkey has become the most controversial of all EU candidate or potential candidate countries. Turkey’s modernization and Europeanization has “consisted of a 200-year love and hate relationship with the West.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Turkey has been a member of the Council of Europe since its founding in 1949 and a NATO member since 1952.[[2]](#endnote-2) Turkey petitioned to join the EU (then called the European Economic Community) in 1959. However, “full eligibility” was not certified for Turkey until 1999 at the Helsinki Summit, where the European Council stated, “Turkey is a candidate state destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to other candidate states.”[[3]](#endnote-3)

The Justice and Development Party (APK), a party with Islamic roots, came into power in 2002, and has produced the most stable phase of the Republic’s history, doubling the nation’s GDP per capita, and significantly improving the nation’s democratic record through several reforms.[[4]](#endnote-4) Two constitutional amendments, 8 harmonization packages, specifically targeting the EU harmonization process, and multiple laws through directives occurred mainly between 2001 and 2004. In these reforms, Turkey confronted several of the controversial structures within its political system, such as the role of the military, the criminal code, the issue of broadcasting in local dialects, the abolition of the death penalty, and the anti-terror law.[[5]](#endnote-5) The Turkish government abolished the anti-terror law that criminalized separatist propaganda, and allowed the broadcasting in local languages.[[6]](#endnote-6) Due to these reforms, Turkey was granted candidate status and in 2004 the European Council agreed that Turkey met the Copenhagen Criteria sufficiently to open negotiations.[[7]](#endnote-7) The EU and Turkey began membership negotiations in 2005, which were halted in 2006, when the Council of Ministers froze eight of the thirty-five negotiation chapters due to the refusal of the Turkish government to open its port to one of the newest member states, Cyprus.

Turkey’s long march towards the EU has resulted in a stalled negotiation process due to multiple factors. According to Aycan Akdeniz, a member of the EU Commission Delegation to Turkey, which is in charge of handling the negotiations, “the stalemate mainly stems from the fact that many chapters are vetoed by member states for lack of the implementation of the Ankara protocol.” The Ankara Protocol requires Turkey to extent the Customs Union, which Turkey joined in 1996, by opening its ports to all the member states, including Cyprus. However, she argued “there is a lot on the shoulders of Turkey…the government has slowed reforms and the adoption of new legislation required as necessary steps to align with the political criteria and the implementation of several laws between 2002 and 2005 is not satisfactory.”

There are four main groups of factors to explain the current state of negotiations. The first are domestic and economic factorsthat present formal obstacles. In order to join the EU Turkey must fulfill the Copenhagen Criteria and fulfill the acqui of all thirty-five negotiation chapters. The Copenhagen criteria was established in 1993, and states that an applicant country must have “stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the protection of minorities; have a functioning market economy capable of withstanding the competitive pressures of membership; have the ability to take on the obligations of political, economic and monetary union and adopt the acqui communautaire” which includes all EU legislation and norms.[[8]](#endnote-8) Furthermore, Turkey is expected to commit to friendly relations with its neighbors and resolve any border disputes, continue to support a solution to the Cyprus problem, and fulfill its obligations under the Association Agreement and its additional protocol.[[9]](#endnote-9)

The conditions of the Copenhagen criteria in regards to democracy and human rights have been a significant impediment to Turkish membership despite the APK’s reforms. No other European nation, including the Baltic States, has more cases come before the European Court on Human Rights, more restrictions on free speech, and worse gender equality.[[10]](#endnote-10) Between 2009 and 2010, Turkey was found to have violated the Human Rights Convention in 553 cases.[[11]](#endnote-11) Aycan Akdeniz stated that, “the most problematic is the treatment of minorities, freedom of expression, women’s rights and gender equality, and the issue of torture... the legislation is more or less there but the issue is implementation.” Burak Endir, who is in charge of the Political Affairs Directorate at the EUSG emphasized “the issue is really training those people who are in charge of enforcing the new laws.”

There are four main democratic deficits within Turkey that hinder accession. First, the treatment of minorities is problematic for EU accession, as the EU “defines the protection of minority rights as a moral condition for membership”.[[12]](#endnote-12) The Commission, the Council, and the EU parliament have emphasized the need for Turkey to improve its treatment of minorities.[[13]](#endnote-13) All EU countries possess constitutions that protect the freedom of religion and the right to manage their own affairs, which is not the case in Turkey.

The issue of minority rights can be traced back to the birth of the republic. In the 1950’s the Kemalists, a secular military party led by Mustada Kemal, began the process of democratization to westernize the nation. Kemalism has promoted two ideologies that divide Turkey today.[[14]](#endnote-14) The first is radical secularism, where the state enforces secularism and controls Islam by monopolizing religious functions. The Turkish constitution created a public body that regulated services and religious affairs of the Muslim and non-Muslim communities called the Directorate for Religious Affairs. The constitution discusses how those communities will choose their leadership, educate their clergy and pay their taxes. The second is assimilation nationalism, where the integration of Muslim minorities became policy and the concept of multiculturalism is rejected. The regime was less tolerant and faced violent opposition. This created a Kemalist/military suspicion of all things Muslim that remains to this day and convinced the Generals that they must be the maintainers of secularism and westernization.[[15]](#endnote-15) The military has taken over the civilian government in coups in 1960, 1971, 1980 and almost did so in April of 2007 to instill stability and enforce secularism. These ideologies have resulted in the continued mistreatment of Turkish minorities, particularly with regards to property rights and violence.

The right to establish religious institutions has been particularly problematic. Religious minorities have had great difficulty in regards to property rights and education. Minority schools have not received government funds and have undergone restrictions.[[16]](#endnote-16) It is extremely difficult to open a school for Armenians and other groups due also to the inability to attract students. Most Armenians do not want to attend an Armenian school because it disadvantages them in society. Until 2003, minorities could not establish places of worship, a right that was guaranteed in the Treaty, and minority foundations could not purchase or sell any property.[[17]](#endnote-17) Members of minority communities have claimed that their activities are monitored by security forces.[[18]](#endnote-18) Furthermore, throughout the early years of the republic even recognized minorities were subject to violence from mobs or riots. As noted in the European Parliament’s Report of 2006 and the European Council document entitled *Religious Freedom in Turkey,* there are abuses and discrimination based on religion, as well as religiously motivated killings, threats and attacks on churches and non-Muslims “in the name of cleaning Turkey of non-Muslims.”[[19]](#endnote-19)

Turkey has followed a two-pronged policy in regards to the treatment of minorities.[[20]](#endnote-20) First, the Turkish government has followed the EU’s demands and fulfilled the criteria while attempting to prevent any major shifts in the structure of the nation’s minority regime.[[21]](#endnote-21) Ozge Genc, who works at TESEV, an EU think tank, stated that the reforms that have been taken to address the deficits in Turkey’s minority regime “are always symbolic gestures that tend not to be put into written regulations. It was done for PR purposes to show Europe that the government is trying to change but there is not serious will behind those reforms.” For instance, in 2008 minority institutions were given the right to regain their property. However, there was great difficultly in the implementation of this law, as many properties were already settled by a third party.

Turkish authorities have also focused reforms on improving the historically denied linguistic, cultural and political rights of the Kurdish population.[[22]](#endnote-22) The Kurds are the largest ethnic minority in Turkey and have historically been denied linguistic, cultural and political rights.[[23]](#endnote-23) These restrictions have led to over 20 years of Kurdish terrorism, stemming from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and the death of over 30,000 Turkish citizens. Even after the capture of the leader Abdullah Ocalan, violence in the Kurdish region is still present. The Turkish government has increased the liberties of religious associations and allowed the teaching and broadcasting of the Kurdish language.[[24]](#endnote-24) However, Kurdish radio channels continue to face bureaucratic complications and often have to wait several years to complete their application.[[25]](#endnote-25)

The second policy the government has traditionally pursued in regard to the treatment of minorities is the placement of restrictive measures on minority rights.[[26]](#endnote-26) Turkish authorities have continued to insist on protecting the secular nature of the nation’s constitution and have demonstrated an unwillingness to extend minorities rights past the Treaty of Lausanne. The Treaty was signed by the Allied forces and Turkey following the defeat of the Greek army in the Turkish Independence War of 1919-1922.[[27]](#endnote-27) The treaty recognized only non-Muslim groups as minorities with equal rights to other Turkish citizens, with the right to utilize their own language, establish religious, educational, and social institutions, and the right to equality.[[28]](#endnote-28) However, only Armenians, Greeks, Catholics and Jews are recognized as minorities, while the other minority groups, such as Assyrians and Chaldeans are not.[[29]](#endnote-29) Genc argued that while Catholics are considered a minority according to the Treaty, these rights were never actually granted to them. She proclaimed “people in Turkey are not aware of their rights.”

This policy reflects the Turkish governments fear of the breakdown of secularism, the growth of Islamic extremism and ethnic separatism, which authorities argue leads to violence and war. Genc asserted that the issue with minorities stems from a “fear of multiculturalism that is embedded in the Turkish bureaucracy and policy culture because from the beginning of the formation of the nation state the main rhetoric was Turkey is under threat from neighbors and the minorities that ally themselves with those states.” A survey of the Turkish public revealed that over half of the Turkish public opposes non-Muslim religious gatherings and 59% stated that non-Muslims should not be allowed to hold meetings or publish literature on their faith.[[30]](#endnote-30) Piotr Zalewski further stressed that the issue is related to “a fear of civil society itself, of anything outside state control. If you go along a main street and see people protesting entirely peacefully, they will be surrounded by hundreds of police men in riot gear.”

A second major issue concerning Turkish democracy is the treatment of women in society. The 2009 Commission Report noted that gender equality is a major problem.[[31]](#endnote-31) Turkey is ranked 101st out of 110 nations in the UN’s 2009 Gender Empowerment Measure and the World Economic forum’s 2010 Gender Gap Index showed that Turkey is 126th, after Iran, Syria and Egypt.[[32]](#endnote-32) This stands in great contrast to Europe, as out of the top 15 most equal countries, 11 were member states. There is severe underrepresentation of women in the government. Turkey has the lowest representation of women in politics, as only 50 of 549 parliament members are women.[[33]](#endnote-33) Turkey also has the lowest participation of women in the labor market among the OECD countries and EU member states.[[34]](#endnote-34) Furthermore, Turkey has very high illiteracy rates among women. Literacy rates among women are four times lower and women account for 80 % of the illiteracy in Turkey.[[35]](#endnote-35)

Physical abuse of women is prevalent in Turkey, as 60% of women admit to being subject to some form of domestic violence. However, only a fourth of these crimes are reported.[[36]](#endnote-36) Honor killings remain a problem, especially in the South-East. In the first few months of 2009 there were over 900 cases of honor killings.[[37]](#endnote-37) There are also issues of polygamy, early forced marriages and discriminatory practices and many women are not aware of their rights.[[38]](#endnote-38) Orhan Cengiz, a human rights lawyer and president of the Human Rights Agenda Association, argued that in a judgment by the European Court of Justice it became clear that the court “saw an institutionalized neglect on the part of the police and judges… you hear stories of women who are stabbed, tortured, and beaten to death and our judicial mechanism is too slow to take any steps to protest women’s rights.”

The third major issue with regard to human rights is freedom of the press. The 2008 Commission Report stated that the Turkish legal system does not uphold freedom of expression to European standards. According to Freedom House, Turkish press is only “partly free” with a rating 51.[[39]](#endnote-39) One of the EU demands has been the elimination of article 301 of the Turkish penal code that makes ‘denigrating Turkishness’ a punishable offense.[[40]](#endnote-40) While Turkey revised article 301 in 2008, there are still prosecution and convictions based on the article, as well as several other provisions in the Turkish Criminal Code that limit freedom of expression.[[41]](#endnote-41) Orhan Cengiz stated that the “press has never been free in Turkey and there are serious problems. Ten years ago a Kurdish newspaper, for example, was bombed, their correspondents were tortured, kidnapped, and killed.” Today there are 5,000 cases pending against journalists. Furthermore “the Prime Minister is taking cases against journalists who insult him whenever any opportunity emerges.”[[42]](#endnote-42) For example, 6 months ago Prime Minister Recep Erdogan took a case against an editor and chief of a newspaper who said, roughly translated, that Erdogan was “like a boogy man… empty like a macho man…nothing exists.”[[43]](#endnote-43) This has created a self-censorship in Turkey.

Jonathan Lewis discussed how journalists have to register**.** If a journalist discusses a topic that the government dislikes, the police will often go after their family, often by investigating them for taxes, as most citizens do not pay taxes at all. He stated that his phone is most likely bugged and his friends have come back to their house and found their furniture moved around, bugs in the phone, and monitoring software installed in the computer. According Ege Erkocak**,** the member of the Political Affairs Directorate at the EUSG, the Ministry of Justice records 29 journalists currently jailed and “they are mostly arrested or their journalistic activities and we put some cover of that to bring charges against them. I think it requires a mentality change. A judge who has been serving the state for 12 years is used to their habits and how they handle their power. You cannot say ‘Now we change the laws, implement them’.”

The last major complaint about Turkey’s democracy is the maltreatment and torture of prisoners. The 2009 Commission Report on Turkey highlighted the fact that Turkey has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture that they signed in 2005, as well as three other Protocols to the European Convention on Human rights (ECHR).[[44]](#endnote-44) Aycan Akdeniz, argued that while there are several cases of maltreatment by security personnel, “if you look at the number of investigations and prosecutions there is a discrepancy that means these are not punished.” Furthermore, citizens are often put under custody for a long period of time without indictment or a trial. “Ten years ago we had systematic torture in every corner of Turkey” noted Orhan Cengiz, “Police use excessive force to disperse demonstrations but when people are taken into custody, we are getting fewer reports of incidents of torture. Ten years ago we couldn’t imagine someone being arrested on suspicion of terrorism and showing up to court unbeaten.”

Another formal obstacle to EU accession has to do with Turkey’s economic situation. Turkey will have a large economic impact on the EU for two reasons. First, despite spectacular growth rates, Turkey is a poor nation with unstable growth, high public debt, and low GDP per capita of $12,300 in 2010[[45]](#endnote-45). Unemployment is relatively high, at 10.6%. Income inequality is also high in Turkey, as the nation has a Gini of .415.[[46]](#endnote-46) These figures have created concern over the number of Turks that might migrate into other member states if Turkey was to join. The Eurobaromenter 66 revealed that six out of ten Europeans fear that Turkish membership would encourage immigration into other member states.[[47]](#endnote-47) Mensur Akgun stated that there is a fear, particularly in Vienna that “we will see millions of Turks in the streets begging.”

Second, if Turkey were to join in the near future, it would be a net beneficiary of EU funds, meaning the nation would receive more funds that it contributes to the budget. Turkey would get a majority of the structural funds allocated in the EU budget, which attempt to limit regional disparities within a member state, due to its extreme regional disparity.[[48]](#endnote-48) The Marmara region, where Istanbul is located, produces 40% of the total GDP.[[49]](#endnote-49) Furthermore, Turkey has a larger agricultural sector than the ten new 2004 member states combined. The large agricultural sector raises concerns, especially from the French, over the percentage of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) funds Turkey would receive. Agriculture represents 12% of the GDP in 2004 and 33% of the employment.[[50]](#endnote-50) If Turkey was to join in 2020 it would be eligible for 7.4 billion euros in CAP funds and 7.9 billion euros in structural fund support.[[51]](#endnote-51) Despite the contribution that Turkey would make to the EU budget, if the nation joined in 2015 it would receive net budgetary transfers between 5.6 and 6 billion euros.[[52]](#endnote-52) In total the budgetary cost of integrating Turkey would be the equivalent of integrating ten nations from Central and Eastern Europe.[[53]](#endnote-53)

The last formal obstacle involves the issue of Cyprus. Cyprus has been divided between the Greek and Turkish sides since 1974, when the Turkish military intervened following a Greek coup on behalf of the Turkish minority in the North.[[54]](#endnote-54) The Northern area of Cyprus is claimed by Turkey but recognized by no other nation. After 1999 the Turkish public, as well as the government, has shown an increased enthusiasm for finding a solution to the Cyprus issue.[[55]](#endnote-55) The Turkish government supported the Annan Plan to move forward in the EU negotiation process. The plan was proposed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2002, with a suggested timeline for agreement before the Copenhagen Summit in December 2002.[[56]](#endnote-56) Prior to the summit, there was a great deal of pressure placed on Turkey and Denktas, the leader of Northern Cyprus at the time, to negotiate the plan.[[57]](#endnote-57) However, the Second Annan plan was rejected by Denktas because the plan was devised “according to the EU calendar on the basis that Cyprus would be a member” while the EU would not give Turkey a date for membership regardless of the settlement.[[58]](#endnote-58)

Kofi Annan proposed a third version of the plan on February 26, 2003.[[59]](#endnote-59) The time table was devised so that regardless of whether the Greek Cypriots accepted the plan in a referendum, the island would still become an EU member. The Greek Cypriots signed the EU accession treaty on April 26, 2003, before the Annan plan was submitted to a referendum.[[60]](#endnote-60) The 2003 Commission Progress Report stated that the “lack of a solution in Cyprus can pose a serious obstacle to Turkey’s EU process,” officially linking Turkish membership to the Cyprus issue.[[61]](#endnote-61) The Annan plan was put to a referendum on April 24, 2004, and resulted in the acceptance from Turkish Cypriots with 65 percent of the population in support. However, 76 percent of the Greek Cypriots rejected the plan.[[62]](#endnote-62)

The admittance of Cyprus into the EU in 2004 has complicated the reunification of the island due to the position of power of the member state to reject Turkish membership. The decisions within the Council of Europe, composed of the heads of state of all the member states, are made unanimously for accession agreement, as well as the opening and closing of each negotiation chapter. While the EU was pleased with Turkish efforts to resolve the issue and promised to attempt to decrease the international isolation of Turkish Cypriots, the EU’s policy since Cyprus joined has been to allow the Republic of Cyprus (ROC) to handle the issue.[[63]](#endnote-63) Ziya Onis, a professor at Koc University in Istanbul, argued “the EU made certain promises to help the Turkish Cypriots and those promises from the Turkish perspective have not been fulfilled.”

The refusal of the Turkish government to open its ports to Southern Cyprus has escalated the dispute. While the Turkish government signed the Customs Union in 2004 which extended the union to all new member states including Cyprus, the government issued a statement arguing that the agreement “does not constitute recognition of the divided island.”[[64]](#endnote-64) However, the EU countered this statement by declaring that “recognition of all member states in a necessary component of the accession process.”[[65]](#endnote-65) The 2005 framework for negotiations for Turkey included references to the Cyprus problem, as Turkey was expected to “normalize bilateral relations with all EU members,” including the ROC.[[66]](#endnote-66) Erdogan declared that the Turkish government would not implement such obligations until the embargo on the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) was lifted.[[67]](#endnote-67) In late 2006, the EU blocked eight chapters of negotiations due to Turkish refusal to open its ports and airports to Cypriot ships and aircrafts.[[68]](#endnote-68) Since then, there has been no significant progress in the EU conditions for Turkish membership due to the Cypriot veto.[[69]](#endnote-69)

Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, the representative of the German Marshal Fund office in Ankara, stated that Cyprus is the most important problem and “I don’t see a way it could be solved… the Cyprus Republic is already in the EU so they don’t have an incentive to solve the problem. The fact that Cyprus has this position makes it very easy and legitimate for France and Germany to oppose because they can always hide behind Cyprus.” Ziya Onis concluded “The basic consensus in Turkey is that Turkey has done a lot to solve the problem and the EU treatment has been unfair. I don’t see without solving the problem we can make progress in the accession negotiations.”

The second group of factors that present an obstacle to Turkish membership is geo-institutional and security objections, as well as the opinions of certain member states which present semi-formal obstacles. Turkey’s geographical location has presented an issue, as only 10% of Turkey is within Europe.[[70]](#endnote-70) EU treaties state that a nation must be a European state as a prerequisite for membership.[[71]](#endnote-71) Turkey’s geographic location has also created security concerns, as Turkey borders a region with conflict, instability, and terrorism. There is a fear within member states that admitting Turkey will increase terrorist attacks within Europe. According to the Eurobarometer 66, 51% of Europeans think that Turkish membership would weaken security.[[72]](#endnote-72)

Part of this concern is related to migration and border control. The border between Syria and Turkey is over 1000 KM, making regulation extremely difficult. According to Joost Lagendijk, a former European Parliament member, writer, and senior adviser of the Istanbul Policy Center, “The EU will have to spend a great deal of money for modern techniques and control and there will always be people from those nations who will do their utmost to go through mountains and will succeed.” Kemal Kirisci, a professor at Bogazici University in Istanbul, argued that in some areas Turkey has been aligning itself with the EU and “in others it is acting in a rebellious and opposite direction… on the adoption of the Schengen visa system Turkey has been dismantling some of the harmonization it had put in place to meet the requirements” meaning the visa free travel agreements with Syria and Lebanon. Both nations are on the EU black list for visa free travel. If Turkey were to join, the nation would have to end visa free travel with those nations.

The large size of Turkey represents an obstacle due to the institutional structure of the EU. The nation’s size is larger that the size of the ten new 2004 member states combined.[[73]](#endnote-73) Such a large nation joining would result in a power shift within the EU institutions. This issue creates the fear that the EU could not function properly and would collapse if the EU accepted another large member. Therefore, the Council endorsed that the Union’s “absorption capacity” become an additional criteria for accession in 2006.[[74]](#endnote-74) Furthermore, it is projected that within ten years the Turkish population, which is currently at 72 million, will be larger than any EU nation, giving Turkey the largest share of votes in the Council of Ministers and the EU Parliament. Despite the increase in qualified majority voting in the Lisbon Treaty, the population weighted system in the Parliament will give Turkey the same amount of seats as Germany, currently the most populous member state, if the nation joined in 2015.[[75]](#endnote-75) The Franco-German alliance currently dominates decision making in the EU. If Turkey were to join and align itself with two other small powers, the nation could break the French and German dominance. Due to this possibility France approved a bill in 2008 that made a national referendum obligatory for the acceptance of a new member state if its population accounted for over 5% of the bloc’s entire size, ensuring a referendum for Turkey.

The objections of certain nation states also present semi-formal obstacles, as every member state has veto power over new members. France and Germany are the largest objectors to Turkish membership, as well as Austria, Denmark, the Netherland, and Finland for various reasons. The current president of France Nicolas Sarkozy has blocked the opening of five chapters that relate to full membership because he believes that privileged partnership is more suitable for Turkey. German Chancellor, Angela Merkel also stated that full membership is “out of the question.”[[76]](#endnote-76) Enlargement fatigue and the financial crisis play a part in the older member states objections, as there is increasing concern within certain member states over foreign workers taking domestic jobs in a time where unemployment is rising.[[77]](#endnote-77) Enlargement fatigue refers to the negative associations with enlargement, mainly the drain on resources and mass migration.[[78]](#endnote-78) There is decreasing enthusiasm for any enlargement within the Union but in regards to Turkey, it is particularly negative. In a 2007 poll, only 16% of the French public and 21% of the German public supported Turkish accession.[[79]](#endnote-79) Overall in 2010, only 31% of the European public support membership[[80]](#endnote-80) and only 23% believe that Turkey joining is a good thing.[[81]](#endnote-81)

The third group of factors is cultural and religious objections. These issues are informal obstacles but none the less affect the negotiations between Turkey and the EU. Turkey is 98% Muslim, which would make the nation the first predominantly Muslim country to join the EU. Merkel stated in 2004 that Turkey does not belong in the EU because it is “culturally different.”[[82]](#endnote-82) In 2002, former French president Valery Giscard d’Estaing stated that Turkey was not part of Europe and Turkish membership would mean “the end of Europe. Turkey has a different culture. Its capital is not in Europe, 95% of its population lives outside Europe. It is not a European country.”[[83]](#endnote-83) Sarkozy has made it clear that he is against Turkish accession because “a largely Muslim Turkey does not culturally belong to Europe.”[[84]](#endnote-84)

The critics of Turkish membership “share a culturally based concept of European identity that defines Europe primarily in terms of culture and geography.”[[85]](#endnote-85) They believe that the EU can only function if members share these characteristics, which Turkey lacks.[[86]](#endnote-86) They argue that Turkey will undermine European identity because Turkey is not geographically, historically or culturally European. This view is present in public opinion surveys that reveal that only 32% of Europeans think that Turkey has enough values in common with the West.[[87]](#endnote-87) Furthermore, the Eurobarometer demonstrated that 61% of European member states think that the cultural differences between the EU and Turkey are too important to allow Turkey to join.[[88]](#endnote-88)

Senems Aydin, a specialist and writer on the politics of identity and democratization, stated that Turkey is a limital country “in the sense that it’s perceived to be partly European and partly not because of other reasons whether religious, cultural, or historical … no one can really put their finger on it and say Turkey is a part of Europe. You can never reject it like we did in the Moroccan case but you can never fully embrace it like you did with Poland or the Czech Republic as there was no debate about its Europeanness.” Piotr Zalewski asserted that the Eastern enlargement was seen as unification of Europe and did not require the EU to rethink its identity as Turkey does, due to the possibility of over 70 million Muslims joining. If Turkey joined the EU, the Muslim population with in the Union would go from 3% to almost 20%.[[89]](#endnote-89)

Compounding this issue is that fact that Islam is the largest faith population in Europe, as well as the fasted growing, due to immigration and high birth rates.[[90]](#endnote-90) There are currently between 15 and 20 million Muslims in the EU, which represents 3 to 5 % of the population, and that number is expected to double by 2025.[[91]](#endnote-91) This has led to an increasingly hostile reaction towards multiculturalism, as some Europeans believe that it has “diluted national identities, their own culture, lifestyle, and religion.”[[92]](#endnote-92) The fear of Islamization has led to three consequences according to Bogdani: increasing Isalmophobia and Turkophobia, the resurgence of right wing parties in Europe, and tougher immigration policies.[[93]](#endnote-93) In 2008, there were several fires on Turkish houses, as well as xenophobic phrases and symbols in several German cities.[[94]](#endnote-94) Headscarves and the building of new minarets were banned in France and Switzerland respectfully. Germany introduced a new citizenship test, where Turkish immigrants must show their “German-ness” before they can get citizenship.[[95]](#endnote-95)

The “War on Terror” has also heightened concerns over potential membership.[[96]](#endnote-96) The increase in Islamic extremist groups and terrorist attacks created the fear that allowing Turkey to join would make it easier for Islamist terrorists to attack Europe.[[97]](#endnote-97) The issue of Islamic terrorism also increased discussions of the “Clash of Civilizations” and the culture differences between Islam and the West.[[98]](#endnote-98) These discussions created a greater anti-Muslim sentiment and distrust in Europe, which damaged Turkish accession negotiations.[[99]](#endnote-99) According to a Pew survey, 50% of Westerners believe that Muslims are violent, and 90% of the French think Islam is the most violent religion.[[100]](#endnote-100) Furthermore, a survey conducted by the Wall Street Journal in 2004 revealed that over 50 % of Europeans were suspicious of Muslims living in Europe.[[101]](#endnote-101) In Sweden and the Netherlands, the number was greater than 70%.[[102]](#endnote-102)

Nazlan Ertan, the Director of the Directorate for Civil Society, Communication, and Culture at the EUSG, further suggested that 9/11 may have played a role in the increasing concern over Turkey’s predominantly Muslim population both because of an increasing distrust of Islam and the fact that 9/11 “made Europeans aware of how little they had done to integrate the new Muslim immigrants in their own nation.” The lack of integration of Muslims, of which a large percentage is Turkish, “is leading to a growing hostility towards Muslims and Islamic values, and may be one of the reasons to explain the increasing opposition to Turkish EU candidacy.”[[103]](#endnote-103) According to a study by McLaren, the member states with the largest percentage of Turkish immigrants, which consists of Germany, France the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium, are the most vocal objectors to Turkish membership due to the lack of integration.[[104]](#endnote-104)

The Turkish reaction to these objections has contributed to the current state of negotiations. Although Turkey applied and began the process for membership long before the ten new nations that joined in 2004, Turkey is still far from obtaining membership. The percentage of the population that supports EU membership is the lowest yet, with a drop in enthusiastic for accession from 75% in 2005 to 40% in 2009.[[105]](#endnote-105) In the first few years of the accession process, there was much reference to the EU when reforms were carried out. In the recent June election however, there was little reference to the EU at all. Burak Endir explained that the decrease in enthusiasm creates a vicious circle. Public opinion is declining because the negotiations are not going well and this lowers political will to continue reforms, which slows the process further. In the Commissions Progress Reports of 2007 and 2008, which tracks Turkey’s progress, Turkey was given “bad marks” because reforms have slowed down since negotiations began.[[106]](#endnote-106)

Many Turks feel rejected by the EU. Part of this sense of discrimination arises from the perceived unfairness of the EU visa policy towards Turkey and the refusal of the EU to grant a clear roadmap towards visa free travel. To obtain visas to enter the EU, Turkish citizens must wait in long lines and pay high fees. Turkey is the only candidate or potential candidate country without an official EU roadmap towards visa free travel.[[107]](#endnote-107) Even though the EU has not begun negotiations with Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, citizens of these nations have been able to travel visa free to the EU since 2009.[[108]](#endnote-108) Joost Lagendijk emphasized that the EU visa policy is unsustainable and not defendable as the number of Schengen visas granted to Eastern Europe has risen by 180% between 2003 and 2009 and there has been no increase in the number of Turkish visas, despite the nation’s candidate status.

In order to begin negotiations for visa liberalization, Turkey is required to sign a Readmission Agreement, meaning that the nation will have to take back illegal Turkish immigrants living illegally in the EU, as well as third-country nationals that have transited to the EU through Turkey borders.[[109]](#endnote-109) For a nation that is a major transit for migrants from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, this is a large burden to take on. Turkey would have to improve border control, establish reception centers for returning third country nationals, and create bilateral readmission agreements with the countries of origin.[[110]](#endnote-110) In return for signing the Agreement, the Commission would begin negotiations to liberalize visas for Turkish nations. However, the Readmission Agreement has collapsed due to a disagreement over wording. While the term “roadmap” for visa liberalization was used with the Western Balkans, the word “dialogue” was used with Turkey. This gave Turkey little incentive to sign the agreement because, as Kemal Kirisci pointed out, the use of the word road map makes the end objective clear while the word dialogue is “wishy washy.”

Ozgur Eris concluded that there were four reasons why enthusiasm for joining the EU has declined. Almost all the surveys that are done to measure this concept show that there is a very big decrease that actually started after 2005. First, the issue of Cyprus resulted in the blocking of three chapters related to free movement of goods and custom union. The issue of Cyprus created the perception in the Turkish public that the EU is not very fair because they admitted a state as an EU member before solving the problem. Second, the statements by Sarkozy and Merkel that clearly stated that while negotiations have started, they believe that a privileged partnership rather than membership is appropriate for Turkey. Eris argued that this was perceived very badly by the public because “they ask why? Legal negotiations started and not a single country in EU history has started negotiations and didn’t end with full membership.” The idea of a privileged partnership has no legal basis in any EU documents.

“Thirdly, I personally think the current government isn’t helping either,” suggested Eris. She believes that in 2002 the government was successful is doing everything possible to start negotiations. However, Eris stated that the arrogant personality of Erdogan combined with the issue of Cyprus and the negative statements coming from Europe is problematic because it caused the government to adopt the attitude “if you don’t want us then, we don’t want you.” In 2010 Erdogan told Euronews “some of the EU member states are not acting honestly. They are trying to corner Turkey with conditions that do not exist in the acqui.”[[111]](#endnote-111) Eris asserted that “The government leads opinion and certain statements have turned public opinion against the enthusiasm that was there in the beginning.” Only 26% of Turks currently believe that it is likely that the nation will be able to join.[[112]](#endnote-112)

Lastly, the current situation is Europe is raising doubts over whether Turkey should join a Union in crisis. As a university professor on EU politics, Eris observed that the majority of her students follow the news and have read about the Euro crisis. She concluded “It looks even for a very standard person that the EU is falling apart both domestically and politically. They ask: why should we struggle to get into a union that is falling apart?” The percentage of Turks who think joining the EU is a good thing has dropped from 73% in 2004 to 38% in 2010.[[113]](#endnote-113) With regard to foreign policy, the percentage of the public that believes that Turkey should work closely with the EU has dropped from 22% in 2009 to 13% in 2010, while the percentage of those who believe that Turkey should work closer with the Middle East has doubled since 2009 to 20 %.[[114]](#endnote-114) There is a growing belief among the Turkish public that the “EU needs Turkey more than Turkey needs the EU and that Turkey can go it alone.”[[115]](#endnote-115)

Another issue is that only 21% of the Turkish population trusts the EU.[[116]](#endnote-116) Hankan Yamlz from Bosphorus University conducted the only survey on why Turks are skeptical and don’t trust the EU.[[117]](#endnote-117) He identified two reasons, one is the “Sevres syndrome,” the security conscious, and fears of being disintegrated. Ozgur Unluhisarcikli explained that Turkey has a subconscious that the Western powers have a secret plan to disintegrate Turkey as they attempted to 70 years ago. The Sevres Treaty was a treaty that the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign after the end of WWI which would divide the current map of Turkey into seven parts between the Allied Powers. Every schoolchild has to memorize the map of Sevres in elementary school “so when somebody sees the wife of the French president, we see the map of Sevres behind her.”[[118]](#endnote-118) In 2002, the Secretary General of the National Security Council (NSC), Tuncer Kilinc, stated that the EU was “a neo-colonial force that is determined to divide Turkey.”[[119]](#endnote-119) Unluhisarcikli further agued that the Turks possess a security and sovereignty conscious which creates tension with the EU, as many Turks think “how can the EU make demand of us, who are they?”[[120]](#endnote-120)

The second reason according to Yamlz is the perceived hypocrisy of Europeans. Ziya Onis agreed that the momentum has been lost partly because of the “ambiguous signals from Europe, the debate on Turkey, the reaction in France, and the feeling in Turkey that the nation will not be admitted as a full member.” The French justify their adoption of the referendum bill on the basis of democratic principles. However, in 2008 President Sarkozy reformed the law to make the referendum non-compulsory, allowing the government to choose whether the government or the people decide on new members.[[121]](#endnote-121) Therefore, it is apparent that the law is an attempt to block Turkish membership, as the French public is unlikely to agree. Furthermore, the debate on Turkey’s Europeaness has created much resentment towards the EU. Ozgur Unluhisarcikli noted that after negotiations began, some of the leaders of European countries said that Turkey was a Muslim country and therefore did not belong in Europe. Unluhisarcikli pointed out, “What did they think when they started the negotiation process, that we would change our religion?” Orhan Cengiz also stated that the discussion of whether Turkey’s geographic location and culture is European should have been discussed before Turkey was offered candidate status. “In the middle of the football match, you can’t change the rules.”

These objections have led to a standstill in the negotiations. Five chapters are blocked by France and six by southern Cyprus. A further eight chapters have been suspended by the Council. Only one chapter has been closed, only thirteen have been opened, and no new chapters have been opened in the last year. Today there are only three chapters left to open, which in Turkey are the most difficult to open because they affect both the economy and social rules. Public Procurement, Social Policy and Employment, and Competition Policy are the three most difficult chapters and are often the last to be closed in previous rounds of enlargement. As these chapters require the government to stop the policy of using state money for public transportation and state aid, the government would have to revise old deals and increase transparency which would be politically costly. Furthermore, the Environmental chapter, which is opened, is also difficult as it would cost 60 billion euros, according to a Dan Wilson, a member of the UK embassy who specialized on the Environmental chapter. Due to the four groups of factors discussed above, Turkey is very reluctant to push for the closing of these chapters, causing a standstill in the negotiation process.

**Reflection:**

Although I attended many meetings in both Ankara and Istanbul, I wish I could have stayed for longer and visited the poorer South area to gain a greater understanding of Turkey as a whole. Ankara and Istanbul represent the wealthier areas of Turkey. Regional disparity is large, as noted above. Therefore, the metropolitan areas do not provide a depiction of Turkey as a whole. I believe it would have been beneficial to meet more locals and visit more sites. However, due to cost restraints it was not possible.

The biggest surprise and greatest insight while I was in Turkey was the sense that despite the difficulties presented above neither Turkey nor the EU is likely to end negotiations all together. The relationship between Turkey and the EU has been described as a “Catholic marriage: divorce isn’t an option for either side.”[[122]](#endnote-122) For the EU, Turkish membership would be beneficial in many ways. First, according to Aycan Akdeniz, “Turkey will bring diversity within the EU. It will open up venues for healthier dialogue with the Muslim world.” As a Commission Member, she also stated that it is a manner of sticking to your principles. “Turkey applied and was accepted as a candidate… we have to complete the process… you cannot change the game once it has started.” Burak Endir asserted that admitting Turkey will “negate this argument that the EU is a Christian club. Instead of a clash of civilizations, it will be an alliance of civilizations.” It would confirm that the EU is not a Christian club but instead is a Union of democratic values. Nazlan Ertan further pointed out that admitting Turkey will give real credibility to the EU’s motto ‘unity in diversity.’ She suggested “by admitting Turkey the EU is going to put real action behind unity in diversity. It would also send a very positive message towards their own Muslim citizens in Europe that we are not discriminating against you.”

Second, Nazlan Ertan emphasized that Turkish accession will help the EU with its employment problem by bringing a younger set of workers and entrepreneurs to an ageing European population, whose economy is experiencing stagnation. The average age of the Turkish population is 28.8 meaning that 67% of the population is of working age.[[123]](#endnote-123) In Europe on the other hand, the average age is currently over 40 and is predicted to rise with an expectation that 30% of the EU population will be over 65 by 2025.[[124]](#endnote-124) Furthermore, Turkey has the 4th largest labor market in Europe with an increasingly educated labor force of 24.7 million.[[125]](#endnote-125) Krieger (2004) found that potential immigrants from Turkey, who are mainly between the ages of 15 and 39, are better educated than Central and Eastern Europeans.[[126]](#endnote-126) The net tax payments from these young migrants over a life cycle would be close to 50,000 euros, which would help sustain the welfare state to care for the older European population.[[127]](#endnote-127)

Second, the economy of Turkey is changing rapidly. Turkey is the 15th largest economy in the world and the 6th largest in Europe.[[128]](#endnote-128) Furthermore, Turkey has grown an average of 10.13 % between 2008 and 2011[[129]](#endnote-129), while the EU-27 only experienced a 1.8 % growth rate in 2008. By 2017 Turkey will have the highest growth rate after India and China.[[130]](#endnote-130) Burak Endir argued the fear that 72 million Turks will invade the EU following accession is incorrect, as figures show there is currently reverse migrations because “those Turks who went to European countries are coming back to Turkey because Turkey is becoming more democratic and more prosperous.” If Turkey joined in 2025, the migration to the EU (not taking into account reverse migration) would be 2.7 million, while migration from Eastern and Central Europe is estimated to be 2.9 million.[[131]](#endnote-131) The total net migration to the EU is estimated to be 1.07 million if Turkey joined in 2020.[[132]](#endnote-132) This number is lower than the net migration that occurred from Poland after joining. Thirdly, Turkish accession would benefit the EU by increasing returns on capital investment in Turkey, as 50% of FDI in the nation comes from Europe investors.[[133]](#endnote-133)

Fourth, Turkey is an “energy corridor” between Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, as 70% of crude oil and natural gas reserves are located in the regions surrounding Turkey.[[134]](#endnote-134) Concern over energy security has risen in recent years due to the depleted reserves in the EU and the issue of reliability of foreign suppliers, especially Russia.[[135]](#endnote-135) Russia currently supplies over 30% of the EU’s gas supply.[[136]](#endnote-136) The EU is in desperate need to break its energy dependence on Russia and diversify its gas and oil supply due to cuts in their supply in recent years and Turkey’s South corridor is seen as a way to do so. The Baku Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and the Nabucco pipeline would diversify Europe’s energy supply and help break Russia’s monopoly on natural gas. The Baku Tbilisi-Ceyhan transports oil from the Caspian Sea to the Turkish coast where it is shipped to Europe.[[137]](#endnote-137) The Nabucco pipeline is currently being built and is projected to be operating by 2013.[[138]](#endnote-138) The pipeline has two starting points along the borders of Turkey, one from Georgia and the other from Iraq. The pipeline goes through Turkey and then through Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary to Austria where it is shipped to the rest of Europe.[[139]](#endnote-139) Furthermore, Turkey as an EU member would be a more reliable partner than the Ukraine and Russia.[[140]](#endnote-140)

Lastly, Turkey would be valuable for the EU because of its relationship with the Muslim world. The European Commission stresses that Turkish membership will benefit the EU from a foreign policy perspective, providing a model for democracy as well as an anchor for stability in the Muslim world.[[141]](#endnote-141) Joost Lagendijk stated “Turkey has something the EU will never have, that is some cultural similarities with the region.” Turkey is the most popular Middle East tourist destination and the second most popular destination outside of the Middle East for citizens in the region.[[142]](#endnote-142) Turkish television is also extremely popular in the Middle East, as 78% of the population has watched Turkish TV, with numbers as high as 85% in Syria and 89% in Iraq.[[143]](#endnote-143) According to Sahin Aplay, a professor at Bahcesehir University in Istanbul, the Arab Spring has caused many intellectuals and journalists to suggest “Turkey is a good model for a Muslim majority country because it has an imperfect but functioning democracy and an increasingly perfect market economy. Many say that that the APK is the type of party they would like to see in those nations.” In a TESEV public opinion survey, 61% of the population in the Middle East region thought that Turkey can be a model for Middle Eastern countries and 63% thought Turkey was an example of the coherence between Islam and democracy.[[144]](#endnote-144) This gives Turkey a significant soft power advantage, which would extent to the EU if Turkey were to join.

Turkey’s relatively new foreign policy has increased the view that the nation would be a key asset for furthering EU goals in the Middle East. Turkey’s “zero problems with neighbors” policy uses a soft power approach to achieve two aims: to act as a mediator to find solutions to regional problems and better relations with its neighbors. Ozgur Unluhisarcikli noted “if we look at the EU neighborhood policy and Turkey’s neighborhood policy, the countries that are subject to these two policies are almost identical and the goals are the same.” Turkey’s soft policy approach uses similar mechanisms such as trade, investment, and dialogue. Turkey’s efforts have further contributed to a changing political culture in the Middle East that corresponds to the transformative goals that the EU tried to achieve in its own Mediterranean policy.[[145]](#endnote-145) With the second largest army in NATO and its geographical location, Turkey as an EU member could contribute to the success of the Common Security and Defense Policy of the EU and various international operations.

Turkey’s new foreign policy has also increased its popularity in the region as the nation has stopped turning its back on the Arab world, through increased trade, investments, and diplomatic relations. In 2010, 80% the population of seven Middle Eastern countries viewed Turkey favorably, while only 54% viewed Germany positively and only 37% viewed the UK favorably.[[146]](#endnote-146) In those nations, 59.4% of the public perceived Western and Muslim relations to be bad and 63.8% of the population saw Europeans as hostile towards Muslims.[[147]](#endnote-147) If Turkey were to join the EU, the public opinion within those nations about Western and Muslim relations would greatly improve. Furthermore, the regional average in support of Turkish accession to the EU was 57% in 2009.[[148]](#endnote-148) However, support in every nation surveyed this number has dropped, as citizens are aware of the current state of negotiations. If Turkey were to be rejected by the EU for cultural reasons, it is likely that many in the Middle East will view the EU and Western-Muslim relations with even less positivity.

Due to the benefits of a close relationship with Turkey and the importance of Turkey’s relationship to the EU, there was a consensus that the negotiations will continue and the connections between the two parties will not be severed. Joost Lagendijk suggested that despite all the opposition in France and Germany, the majority of the member states would vote in favor of Turkey. The largest support for Turkish accession is from the UK, with 57% of the population supporting accession and Spain, with 68% of the public in favor, as they believe that Turkish accession will make the Union a major global player, militarily and politically.[[149]](#endnote-149) Due to this support, negotiations are unlikely to be severed by the EU. According to the Lisbon Treaty, the suspension of negotiations requires the qualified majority vote of the member states, which is a total of 255 votes.[[150]](#endnote-150) Therefore, even if Germany, France, Cyprus, the Netherlands and Austria all voted for the suspension, they would only have 97 votes.[[151]](#endnote-151) The only way that the EU can stop the negotiation process is if the positive developments in Turkey have stopped or the nation reverts back to its position before negotiations began. In the 2005 Progress Report, the Commission concluded that “in the case of a serious and persistent break in Turkey of the principles of liberty, democracy, and respect for human rights…the Commission will recommend the suspension of negotiations.”[[152]](#endnote-152)

Joost Lagendijk asserted “Turkey is the only actor that could end the whole process by saying they are fed up with it.” However, that is unlikely to occur for four reasons. First, despite the growth of trade between Turkey and the Middle East and Northern Africa, it is only miniscule compared to the amount of trade with the EU. The total bilateral trade between the EU and Turkey was $23.8 billion in 2009 and 53.5 % of the FDI in Turkey is from EU companies.[[153]](#endnote-153) Their economies are closely tied, as the EU is Turkey’s number one trading partner and Turkey is the EU’s seventh.[[154]](#endnote-154) Second, the accession process starting in 1999 has brought unprecedented growth, with a GDP per capita increase from $3400 in 2002 to $7,365 in 2006.[[155]](#endnote-155) The accession process also includes financial assistance under the EU Pre-Accession Assistance Program. In 2008, Turkey received 540 million euros.[[156]](#endnote-156) Furthermore, EU accession would improve the Turkish economy is several ways. First, EU accession would improve economic growth by 1-2 % annually.[[157]](#endnote-157) Secondly, EU accession is expected to increase trade by 41%.[[158]](#endnote-158) Lastly, by joining the EU, Turkey would signal to investors that the Turkish economy can withstand competitive pressures and the government can carry out the necessary reforms.[[159]](#endnote-159)

The fourth reason that Turkey is unlikely to end the negotiation process is that Turkey is popular in the Middle East region partly because it is negotiating with EU. Turkey would lose part of its soft power attraction if negotiations ended. Fifth, Joost Lagendijk stated that “to all of a sudden say we are going to end this 200 year march to the West and all of a sudden go back to the East… they are not going to say that…. if Turkey wants to play on global scene they should join EU. Joining with Middle East? Not very attractive economically.” Lastly, according to Lagendijk “the APK agree that it is good to have the EU as a push for reforms. The EU agenda to limit the role of the military in politics runs parallel to the Party’s agenda.” The government limited the powers of the NSC in 2004, which was the main avenue through which the military influenced politics, by transforming it into an advisory body.[[160]](#endnote-160) This was a particular concern of the Commission, as the military was viewed as nationalistic and interventionist with significant influence on politics.[[161]](#endnote-161)

Due to the role of the EU as an anchor for reform, there is a growing sense in Turkey that the process of negotiations is more important than the end result. Seval Isik, the director of the Directorate for Accession Policy at the EUSG, emphasized that what is most important to the Turks is not the result but the process because the EU accession process “is an anchor for Turkey, a good incentive for our reforms. We don’t mind what is the end. It can be membership or not.” The Commissions Annual Progress Reports cover all policy areas, regardless of the status of the negotiations. In the 2010 Progress Report it was clear that Turkey has been pushing reforms that are related to blocked chapters. Out of the twenty-three chapters the Commission stated there was “good” or “some” progress, eleven are currently blocked.[[162]](#endnote-162) This demonstrates Turkey will continue to reform whether or not negotiations are moving forward. Furthermore, both the EU and Turkey continue to invest resources in the process. In 2009, Turkey increased the staff of the EUSG from 40 to 333 people.[[163]](#endnote-163) The EU delegation in Ankara is the largest of all the EU’s delegations around the world and the EU has increased financial assistance to Turkey for the reform process in all areas, even those areas where chapters are blocked.[[164]](#endnote-164)

The perspective that despite all the impediments to Turkish accession and the pace of negotiations that the process would continue was very surprising. It showed that even though progress is not being made, the process is mutually beneficial. For Turkey, the EU provides an anchor for reforms and financial benefits while the EU is invested in maintaining good relations with Turkey and strengthening democracy within the nation. Ozgur Eris suggested “if the time comes and all the chapters have been closed and there is a referendum in France and Austria that rejects Turkey, then it’s their loss. By meeting the criteria we will have a politically concrete country.”

During my research I was able to gain a greater understanding of why the negotiation process between Turkey and the EU has been so problematic. I realized that the controversy over Turkish membership does not mean the negotiations will not continue, whether it ends in membership or not. What is most important to the Turks is the accession process because it provides an anchor for reforms. Due to the fact that negotiations are unlikely to result in Turkish membership any time soon, future research questions for this topic could include: Will the EU as a motivation for reform and a subject of public debate continue to decrease? Will Turkey revert back to its authoritarian tendencies? Will Turkey seek greater relations with the Middle East at the expense of Western relations due to the Arab Spring and the growing assertiveness of Turkey’s foreign policy? Is the EU an economic or a cultural union? Are there really extreme cultural differences between Turkey and the EU or are they just perceived to be extreme? Is Turkey capable of changing its political and social culture with regard to human rights and the treatment of women? Will time result in a mentality shift or will it require a generational turnover?

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