

# The Turkish Moonwalk

## Who is responsible for the backsliding of Turkish accession into the EU?

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### Abstract

Recently, there has been much public debate on the deterioration of the EU-Turkish relationship in terms of accession prospects for Turkey, many often blaming the democratic backsliding within the country for the declining likelihood of accession. Enlargement literature generally treats Turkey as a sui generis case for reasons such as geographic location and religious background. This paper, however, considers Turkey a sui generis case for a different reason: it is the only candidate country so far to transition away from, rather than towards, democracy. The main aim of this paper is to address whether the deterioration of the prospects of Turkish accession to the EU has been more the result of Turkish or EU actions. By analyzing the development of Turkish accession through changes over time of indicators of democratic backsliding and economic interdependence between Turkey and the EU, the paper shows which actor has caused the pulling back of relations in a given time period. This study aims to fill a gap in enlargement theory by analyzing a factor traditionally overlooked, regime change. Preliminary empirical observations show that, as Turkey progressed from asymmetric to symmetric economic interdependence with the EU, accession conditions began to delay until the halt we witness today. The analysis demonstrates that, with Turkey sliding towards illiberal democracy and progressing independently as a growing economic power, the EU has lost the leverage it once had over Turkey. This outcome allows some predictions on the future of the EU-Turkish relationship and the possible paths it may continue upon.

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When determining the success of the European Union (EU), many point to enlargement as a key example of how the EU has fostered cooperation and spread peace across the continent. They give the European Union credit as a normative power diffusing values of democracy, respect of human rights, and free market economies to member and potential member states alike<sup>1</sup>. As the European Union has grown, it has widened (increased the number of member states) and deepened (increased its competences) thus making it more challenging institutionally to make decisions. In particular, enlargement which requires unanimous voting across member states is extremely difficult and many scholars theorize that “enlargement fatigue” has occurred and predict the EU has possibly reached its cap in membership<sup>2</sup>. As more EU members have joined and struggled with implementation of EU law after admittance in particular Eastern European countries, it has led to a growing field of criticism against EU enlargement. Some critics have suggested that EU candidate status has produced political consolidation in candidate countries while trying to complete the *acquis communautaire* leading to a frustration among citizens, further widening of the democratic deficit, and rise of populist parties and technocracy<sup>3</sup>.

Turkey has always proven to be the most controversial candidate country of the European Union. First admitted as a candidate in 1999, Turkey has closed more chapters than other candidate countries totaling 16<sup>4</sup>. However, Turkey has become a unique EU candidate as it is now in danger of potentially having to stall or halt accession entirely. Since the reign of President Erdogan, public support of EU membership has declined<sup>5</sup>. In the past, the EU was able to use a carrot and stick approach by incentivizing Turkey to cooperate by soliciting the potential

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<sup>1</sup> Hiski Haukkala, “The European Union as a Regional Normative Hegemon: The Case of European Neighbourhood Policy.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 60, no. 9, 2008, pp. 1601–1622.

<sup>2</sup> Ferdinando Nelli Feroci, “EU Enlargement Policy: From Success to Fatigue.” *The Frontiers of Europe: A Transatlantic Problem?*, eds. Federiga Bindi and Irina Angelescu, Brookings Institution Press, 2011, pp. 25–34.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher J. Bickerton, “EU enlargement: a critique,” *Key Controversies in European Integration*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Eds. Hubert Zimmermann and Andreas Dur. London: Palgrave, 2016. 212-218.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission - PRESS RELEASES - Press release - Key findings of the 2016 Report on Turkey.

<sup>5</sup> Nesibe Hichret Soy, “Survey: Turkish Support for EU Membership on Decline, Opinion Divided on NATO.” *The Atlantic Council*. September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

of future EU membership. Recently, the EU has continuously postponed the accession progress of Turkey and the carrots it can offer have declined as well as the perceived benefits of membership<sup>6</sup>. Today accession has come to a boiling point as certain EU officials have demanded all accession funds be cut due to concerns of human rights violations within Turkey after the coup attempt of 2016.

There is large debate on what effect being an EU member has had on the evolution of Turkish politics. Supporters of Turkish accession believe that being an EU member has caused Turkey to pursue more liberal democratic policies than it would have on its own due to the desire to join the EU such as removing the death penalty<sup>7</sup>. On the contrary, others have argued that the EU had little influence on the progression of Turkey suggesting that the “Europeanization” of Turkey’s was a strategic decision by the AKP party, rather than a result of wanting to become an EU member<sup>8</sup>. This implies that Turkey would have evolved in the same way it has today had it never been an EU candidate country. This paper aims to put these two phenomena of decline of the EU-Turkish accession relationship and the impact of the EU on Turkish policy creation to determine which actor, the EU or Turkey, is more to blame for the deteriorative relationship.

The paper is organized in the following order. It begins by introducing existing literature on EU enlargement and what factors lead to accession. We then discuss why Turkey is treated as a sui generis case and excluded from enlargement literature. Through our methods and application section, we demonstrate what independent variables we will be testing and state our hypothesis on the evolution of Turkish EU accession. The analysis section will exhibit through a historical timeline and emphasis on moments of critical juncture how the relationship has

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<sup>6</sup> Nathalie Tocci, “Influencing Europe Through the Back Door: The Role of US-Turkey Relations.” *Turkeys European Future: Behind the Scenes of Americas Influence on EU-Turkey Relations*, NYU Press, New York; London, 2011, pp. 104–127.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Kubicek, “Turkish Accession to the European Union: Challenges and Opportunities.” *World Affairs*, vol. 168, no. 2, 2005, pp. 67–78.

<sup>8</sup> Tarik Oğuzlu, “Turkey and Europeanization of Foreign Policy?” *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 125, no. 4, 2010, pp. 657–683.

evolved and categorize each time period by whether accession progress (or lack thereof) occurred. The conclusion will elaborate on the implications of this study and evaluate the validity of the hypothesis. In addition, the conclusion will explore the limitations in this study, where it could further develop, and our predictions on the future of the EU-Turkey relationship.

### **Literature Review**

This section will compare existing literature on whether the EU or Turkey has been the greater culprit in the deterioration of Turkish accession to the EU. We will analyze the theories of EU enlargement and how the EU engages with national actors to push for EU accession. Then we will analyze why Turkey has often been excluded from enlargement rhetoric and considered as a sui generis case where the theory does not apply. This paper will argue for different reasons why Turkey is a sui generis case for EU enlargement and what factors make it an unprecedented EU candidate country.

### ***European Union Enlargement Theories***

#### *Why is EU membership attractive?*

Joining the European Union is not an easy task. Before the long and slow process of opening and closing chapters of the EU *acquis communautaire*, countries first must meet the criteria to even be considered an EU candidate. EU candidacy is determined by the 1993 Copenhagen criteria which requires that countries have institutions that guarantee political values aligned with the EU (democracy, respect of human rights and minorities, and rule of law), liberal economic principles (free and open market economy that is capable and promotes competition), and the aptitude to meet commitments and duties of being an EU member<sup>9</sup>. So why do countries want to subject themselves to these huge reforms and endless legislation of the EU? Countries want to join the EU both because of the perceived benefits and for fear of exclusion.

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<sup>9</sup> European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations. Last updated 06/12/16.

EU membership grants countries benefits in three specific areas: prosperity, security, and aid in reinforcing democracy. From the prosperity perspective, many countries that have joined the EU including recent additions of Romania and Bulgaria doubled their GDP in a little over a decade after joining the EU<sup>10</sup>. In terms of security, though the EU is still lacking in terms of foreign policy in comparison to its economic competencies, it still offers advantages such as a naval forces to aid in migration in FRONTEX, a united foreign policy with delegations around the world in the European External Action Services, and police coordination across borders through Europol. Lastly, being an EU member not only helps countries become democracies, but helps instill and enforce that democracy remains protected once a member. Non-EU members take the enormous task of transforming their countries in order to become a member state in order to reap the economic, defensive, and democratic benefits of EU membership.

On the other side, countries want to join the European Union for fear of the repercussions of exclusion. In economic terms, countries that do not join the European Union will be subject to much higher financial costs to import goods and services into EU countries unless they are part of a negotiated agreement between the EU and a third country such as free trade agreement and customs unions. In terms of security countries that do not join the EU can be more likely pressured by other world powers such as Russia and China and thus will be enticed to have the protection of the EU against coercive world powers. On the regional level, the cost of exclusion to the EU means that countries will watch their neighbors that are granted EU membership rise while they lag behind in benchmarks such as GDP growth. On the world stage, countries that do not join the EU will see things such as foreign direct investment (FDI), development aid, and trade diverted away and instead directed to EU member states due to outside actors favoring the

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<sup>10</sup> Rachel Epstein, "The benefits of EU enlargement: defending security, democracy, and prosperity," *Key Controversies in European Integration*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Eds. Hubert Zimmermann and Andreas Dur. London: Palgrave, 2016. 206-212.

accountability and stability of the EU over a single less powerful country<sup>11</sup>. Thus, the desire for EU membership and the large hurdle to become a member is pursued by countries for the perceived benefits as well as out of fear for marginalization and impediment of growth if they do not join the EU.

*How do candidate countries match the EU *acquis communautaire*?*

Once EU candidate countries overcome the large obstacle of meeting the Copenhagen criteria, they must match the EU *acquis communautaire*, meaning all EU existing laws, so that national legislation reflects EU legislation. How is this done? The European Union acts as the pull factor that pulls candidate countries and their prospective institutions in the direction of matching the *acquis communautaire*. There are two dominant theories of how the European Union utilizes this pull factor. First, rational choice institutionalism focuses on the fact that actions are taken by domestic actors in response to EU incentives as a result of cost/benefit analysis<sup>12</sup>. Specifically the European Union uses an external incentives model (EIM) to encourage democratization of candidate countries through conditionality by rewarding matching the *acquis communautaire* with opening more chapters and punishing defections by delaying opening additional chapters or imposition of sanctions<sup>13</sup>. It must be clear that sanctions are not issued lightly by the EU and are not issued due to slow or gradual reforms to meet *acquis communautaire*, but rather are issued only in severe cases such as democratic backsliding<sup>14</sup>. The EIM model is the main pull factor where through cost/benefit analysis, the EU increases the benefits over the costs so that they pull countries into matching *acquis communautaire*.

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<sup>11</sup> Milada Anna Vachudova, “*Democratization in Postcommunist Europe: Illiberal Regimes and the Leverage of International Actors*,” *Center for European Studies Working Paper Series #139* 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Tanja A. Börzel and Digdem Soyaltin, “Europeanization in Turkey. Stretching a Concept to its Limits?”, *Kolleg-Forschergruppe (KFG) “The Transformative Power of Europe”* Freie Universität Berlin. No. 36, February 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Schimmelfenning and Ulrich Sedelmeier, “The Europeanization of Eastern Europe: The External Incentives Model Revisited,” *JMF@25 Conference*, June 22-23 2017, Florence, Italy. Unpublished conference paper. European University Institute, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier, “The External Incentives Model Revisited,” 3.

Alternatively, sociological institutionalism explains that EU candidate countries adapt by the rise of norms and customs that align with EU values into domestic institutions<sup>15</sup>. The EU often combines strategies of both theories in incentivizing member countries to match EU acquis.

Through reformation of political institutions and pressure from domestic actors, candidates are pushed towards pursuing actions to meet the EU acquis. Through cost/benefit analysis, domestic actors see opportunity of EU incentives and create reform coalitions with different political groups who support EU membership to enact policy to meet the EU acquis communautaire<sup>16</sup>. Through the practice of norms and using identity of “Europe”, norm entrepreneurs and epistemic communities advocate for EU membership by promoting values of EU such as protection of minorities, value of human rights, and democracy. Often the EU is likely to find an ally in groups that have been highly marginalized in the past by older institutions of member states and thus will likely to advocate for new norms of inclusion and cohesion. Additional domestic factors that explains variation in success of adhering to EU acquis are: power asymmetries, domestic incentives for change, and degrees of statehood<sup>17</sup>. Power asymmetries represent that countries that are more dependent on EU are more likely to adopt EU acquis communautaire at a more rapid pace, whereas countries that possess resources the EU does not, such as minerals, may be slower and have fewer incentives to push to match the acquis communautaire. Domestic incentives for change includes what national actors expect to gain from EU membership, including non-liberal actors that do not share EU values. Even national opposition to EU membership benefit by locking in institutional changes while their states matches EU acquis<sup>18</sup>. Statehood represents how well a country can draft EU compatible law and

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<sup>15</sup> Börzel and Soyaltin, “Europeanization in Turkey”, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Börzel and Soyaltin, “Europeanization in Turkey”, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Ulrich Sedelmeier, “Is Europeanization Through Conditionality Sustainable? Lock-In of Institutional Change After EU Accession,” *Western Politics* 35, no. 1, 2012: 20-35.

implement it at both the national and local level. Thus the pull of the EU, in benefits and norms, is important but works best when accompanied by a strong push from domestic actors.

### *Exception to the rules: Turkey*

Many existing theories on EU enlargement exclude Turkey as the “exception” to the rule that cannot be analyzed in their theory and data. Turkey is excluded due to regional factors<sup>19</sup> (the questioning of whether Turkey should even be considered as part of Europe) and cultural factors<sup>20</sup> (questioning of a predominately Muslim demographic as just cause for exclusion). This logic of excluding Turkey from enlargement theories is inherently flawed. This study proposes that Turkey is excluded from EU enlargement theory because enlargement theory focuses on democratization of countries and the EU having a fundamental role in this transition. Many of the theories we presented stem from analysis after the enlargement of 2004 of countries from communist to democratic states. On the contrary, Turkey has been a democracy since the founding of the Republic after WWI in 1923. Thus, Turkey is a unique case in enlargement theories not because of its cultural or geographical nature, but because it is the only EU candidate country that has been a democracy long before accession talks ever began or rather the EU even existed. However, the Turkey of the past decade has involved numerous reforms that have caused Turkey to backslide into an illiberal democracy.

### *Turkey as a “special” European case*

Turkey is different than other Muslim countries, other MENA countries, and EU member states because it has a consolidated democracy. According to Samuel Huntington, democracy

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<sup>19</sup> Famous statement of former French President Nicolas Sarkozy. “I do not believe that Turkey belongs to Europe, and for a simple reason: because it is in Asia Minor”

<sup>20</sup> Melek Saral, “Turkey's 'Self' and 'Other' Definitions in the Course of the EU Accession Process, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2017.

must be consolidated twice in order for a democracy to show stability<sup>21</sup>. In 1993 Bernard Lewis argued that Turkey had been the only Muslim country to successfully solidify its democracy twice over<sup>22</sup>. We can analyze four main factors that have separated Turkey from other countries: first Turkey has never been subject to imperial rule or colonized by another world power, second due to location and strategic decision Turkey has always had a close relationship with the West and emulated democracy from a very early stage, third the founding of the Turkish Republic as secular was fundamentally different than its neighbors at the time of its founding and lastly Turkey has always had a large presence of civil society through its creation of a middle class during the economic changes under Ataturk<sup>23</sup>. Why do all of these factors matter and how were they able to be successfully consolidated? Turkey successfully created a democracy by doing it gradually and by opting into it, rather than it being imposed upon by outside forces. EU enlargement theory largely focuses on democratization that has been forced upon a country or helped built by an existing democracy. Turkey after WWI, voluntarily restructured itself into a democracy without the imposition of third actors. All of these factors and the historical legacy of Turkey are important factors to consider for our case in determining why Turkey has pursued certain policies relating to accession and how the EU has responded.

### *Illiberal vs. Liberal Democracy?*

Now that we have distinguished Turkey from most EU candidate countries as most candidates transition to democracy whereas Turkey today is transitioning away from democracy, we must define what an illiberal democracy is. According to Fareed Zakaria, illiberal democracies are democratic governments that bypass means of checks and balances, lessen the

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. Print.

<sup>22</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Why Turkey Is the only Muslim Democracy." *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 1, no.1, 1993, pp. 41-49.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, "Why Turkish Is the only Muslim Democracy", 49.

power of judiciary, and transfer power from the regional to the national level in order to have consolidated controlling power<sup>24</sup>. The key difference Zakaria makes is that democracies are on the rise, but there has been an naïve assumption of constitutional liberalism as the only type of democracy. Constitutional liberalism is what many think of when referring to western democracies including things like freedom of speech, universal suffrage, secularism, and separation of powers<sup>25</sup>. However, countries can be democratic and have these inherent civil liberties missing or rather ignored through a powerful executive. It is clear that the EU only wants to admit candidate countries that fall under the constitutional liberal frame; however, it is often a challenging and time consuming task for countries to adapt from autocratic governments to constitutional liberal democracies. This can be seen through the fact that many Eastern Europe countries are “hybrid” democracies in that they have the institutions established to support a constitutional liberal democracy, but often leaders still show signs of their autocratic past.

Turkey is a sui generis EU candidate country. Not because of its geographic location or demographic makeup, but because it is an established democracy that is now backsliding toward an illiberal democracy. Through our methods and analysis section, we will analyze how Turkey has transitioned from a constitutional liberal democracy to illiberal democracy especially in the last decade under the rule of President Erdogan.

## **Methods and Application**

This paper aims to fulfill a hole in the enlargement theory, through the case study of Turkey, by including the additional factor of type of democracy into analyzing the evolution of accession. Three characteristics must be present to optimize candidate countries incentives to join

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<sup>24</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy.” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 7, no. 6, 1997, pp. 22-42.

<sup>25</sup> Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy”, 30.

the EU: asymmetric interdependence, enforcement, and meritocracy<sup>26</sup>. The first factor implies that the EU has more power to get candidate countries to match the *acquis communautaire* when the candidate has more to gain from EU membership than the EU does from their membership to the EU. The second factors centers on the idea that the EU must be able to enforce what they write in annual reports on candidate countries by only opening and closing chapters once all factors match the *acquis communautaire* and staying firm in their delays if defections. The last factor of meritocracy signifies that an EU candidate country must believe that EU does not hold an unfair grudge against their submission as a member and this factor is especially important to Turkey as meritocracy has been higher for this candidate than most<sup>27</sup>.

We have identified two variables that can help explain the deterioration of the EU Turkish relationship: level of economic interdependence and democracy. This paper measures economic interdependence because Turkey is the EU's 4th largest export market and 5th largest provider of imports and the EU is by Turkey's number one import and export partner<sup>28</sup>. By using indicators such as GDP per capita and levels of import and export between EU and Turkey compared to other trade powers, we will analyze the evolution of economic interdependence between the EU and Turkey. Secondly, we will analyze the level of democracy of the candidate country, Turkey, as another variable to fill the hole of regime type in the enlargement literature by using Freedom House scores. This paper will expand on moments of meritocracy in Turkish accession, but not measure it directly in the hypothesis. By combining these two variables, this paper aims to fill a gap in the hole of EU enlargement studies and how accession can deteriorate.

	<i>Turkey</i>
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<sup>26</sup> Vachudova, "Democratization in Postcommunist Europe", 7.

<sup>27</sup> Atila Eralp and Torun Zerrin. "Europe as Seen from Turkey: From a Strategic Goal to an Instrumental Partnership?" *Perspectives*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2012, pp. 83–101.

<sup>28</sup> European Commission, "Countries and Regions: Turkey Trade". 19, October 2017.

<b>European</b>		Liberal Democracy	Illiberal Democracy
<b>Union</b>	Symmetric interdependence	Delay	Halt
	Asymmetric interdependence	Progress	Delay

Before we can begin to apply predicted outcomes to our study of Turkey, we must define what progress, delay, and halt in terms of accession means. Below we offer some signals we anticipate<sup>29</sup> to find in the data collection of accession conditions that will act as indicators as to whether progress or stalling has occurred during the EU-Turkish accession.

**Accession Conditions**

<b>Progress</b>	<b>Delay</b>	<b>Halt</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening new chapters</li> <li>• Closing already opened chapters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU member states blocking chapters from closing</li> <li>• Perception of lack of democracy in Turkey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU stopping all accession funds being sent to candidate country</li> <li>• Candidate country leadership declaring intention to not join EU</li> </ul>

Based off initial research, we hypothesize the following:

- *The higher the level of asymmetric interdependence and the more liberal democracy, the more likely for accession to progress*
- *The higher level of symmetric interdependence and the more illiberal democracy, more likely that accession will be delayed or halted entirely*

**Analysis section**

The EU-Turkey relationship and evolution of accession is a long and complicated phenomenon. For this purpose of this study, we will begin our analysis in 1999, the year Turkey officially became an EU candidate country and the year Freedom House scores began. Prior to candidacy, it is important to note that Turkey and the EU created a Customs Union in 1995

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<sup>29</sup> The table of Accession Conditions is an original thought based off trends and data collected during our research.

creating a high level of asymmetric economic interdependence<sup>30</sup>. Our study has divided 1999 to the present into subcategories based mainly on factors including changes in Freedom House scores, change of ruling political parties in Turkey, and EU internal decisions.

### **Evolution of Turkish EU Accession**

Time frame	Democratic conditions	Economic interdependence	Accession conditions
1999-2002	4.5	Asymmetric	Delay
2002-2005	↑ trend 3.5	Asymmetric	Progress
2005-2010	↑ trend 3	Asymmetric	Delay
2010-2012	↓ trend 3	Asymmetric→Symmetric	Delay
2012-2016	↓ trend 3.5	Asymmetric→Symmetric	Progress→delay→progress
2016-present	↓ trend 4.5	Symmetric	Delay→halt

#### *1999-2002: Turkey focuses on domestic affairs and little progress on EU accession*

The first period we will analyze can be characterized as liberal democracy and asymmetric interdependence, but a Turkish government that was too distracted by domestic issues to really push for EU enlargement. Turkey from 1999-2002 was controlled by a coalition government made up of the social- democratic Democratic Left (DSP), right of center Motherland (ANAP), and the far right National Action Party (MHP)<sup>31</sup>. These three parties worked together to accomplish economic goals, but resisted creating reforms that would have fallen under the Copenhagen Criteria for enlargement. Frustrated by the lack of progress by during this period, Turkey had a Freedom House score of 4.5, with one being the best and seven being the worst and was labeled as “partially free”<sup>32</sup>. Since the Freedom House scores began in 1999, there is no comparison to what score Turkey would have received prior to being an official EU candidate. Turkey’s Freedom House Score was on the poorer side and remained stagnant

<sup>30</sup> Sübidey Togan, “Opening up the Turkish Economy in the Context of the Customs Union with EU,” *Journal of Economic Integration*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1997, pp. 157–179.

<sup>31</sup> Ergun Özbudun, “Changes and Continuities in the Turkish Party System”, *Journal of Representative Democracy* vol 42, no..2, 2006: 129-137.

<sup>32</sup> See Table 1

from 1999-2001 because of the challenges the coalition government faced including the 2001 February financial crisis and Kurdish population challenges in Northern Iraq<sup>33</sup>. During this period, Turkey was able to raise their GDP per capita by \$600 and saw an average growth rate of 2% in GDP per capita<sup>34</sup>. Especially in the period from 1999-2000, GDP per capita grew by 10% in one year showing commitment of EU to meet the Copenhagen criteria in its first year as a candidate country<sup>35</sup>. However this enthusiasm, did not last long as 2002 saw a GDP per capita decrease of -4% after the 2001 financial crisis which required an IMF bailout to save the Turkish banks<sup>36</sup>. Thus, we would classify this time period as delayed accession due to initial enthusiasm for meeting economic requirements of the EU, but internal turmoil of the Kurds and financial problems caused the government led by an unstable coalition to focus on internal matters rather than on pushing for the EU to begin accession negotiations.

*2002-2005: AKP pushes for change and is rewarded with accession negotiations*

In 2002, the golden age of Turkish EU enlargement began with the electoral win of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) led under Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The party not only won the national elections, but dominated winning almost 2/3<sup>rd</sup> majority of parliamentary seats<sup>37</sup>. The 2002 parliamentary elections were historic because the secularist military allowed the Islamist AKP political party to win without intervention, unlike multiple other elections since 1960 where the military intervened to stop the rise of Islamic political parties. Since the electoral win, Erdogan aggressively pushed for reforms as to increase Turkey's standing and gain a definitive start date on when chapters could be opened for accession. His efforts included legislation in the summer of 2003 to remove broadcasting and teaching bans of Kurdish programming, reducing

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<sup>33</sup> Saral, "*Turkey's 'Self'*", 101.

<sup>34</sup> See Table 2

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> CNN, "IMF Approves Turkish Loan," 15, May 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Gözde Yılmaz, "EU Conditionality Is Not the Only Game in Town! Domestic Drivers of Turkey's Europeanization," *Journal of Turkish Studies* vol 15, no.2, 2014, 303-321.

the formal power of the Turkish military, and a law banning torture and these efforts were followed by constitutional reforms in 2004 that revised the penal code<sup>38</sup>. In addition, the Cyprus dispute found a resolution under the Annual Plan for Cyprus led by the United Nations and the Turkish Cypriots cooperation was also good signal to the EU of Turkey's commitment to accession<sup>39</sup>. We can clearly see the improvement in addition with the upward trend of Freedom house score going from a 4.5 to 3.5<sup>40</sup> the year after AKP came to power. In addition, after the reforms of 2003 and constitutional reforms of 2004, the civil liberties rating, a subcategory under Freedom House scores, went from a 4 to 3<sup>41</sup> thanks to inclusion of Kurdish culture in Turkish legislation.

EU internal meritocracy was present in the early 2002 when former French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing<sup>42</sup> declared Turkish accession would destroy the European Union. In a 2003 report, the EU commended Turkey for its progress, but said additional reforms were needed before negotiations could begin. The following year, the EU showed solidarity with Turkey when the Kurdish separatist group, the PKK, was added to the EU terrorism watch list. This solidarity was evident in Europe's own past of secessionist terrorist groups including the IRA of Ireland and ETA of Spain. In 2005, Turkey's hard work finally paid off when the Commission rewarded Turkish efforts with the opening of accession negotiations.

Erdogan's commitment to pushing for EU backed reforms in order to get the EU to begin opening chapters is also evident by the large increase in economic performance of Turkey in this time period. From 2005-2002, Turkey's GDP per capita grew by \$2565 with an average growth of 7% and from 2003 to 2004, GDP per capita grew by 13% in one year and 10% the following

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> UN News, "Cyprus misses 'historic chance' as it rejects UN reunification plan, Annan says," 24, April 2004.

<sup>40</sup> See Table 1

<sup>41</sup> See Table 3

<sup>42</sup> Ian Black, "Turkey must be kept out of the Union, Giscard says", *The Guardian* 20, November 2002.

year as well<sup>43</sup>. In addition, in terms of imports and exports to and from Turkey the economic interdependence between the countries grew exponentially in this short time frame. From 2002-2005, Turkish exports sent to the EU grew by 26% and 25% two years in a row as well as EU imports into Turkey increasing an average of 28% in this period<sup>44</sup>. The interdependence was still asymmetric in that the European Union was Turkey's largest market to export goods, whereas Turkey was the 5<sup>th</sup> largest market for EU goods behind the USA, MEA region, followed by China and Russia. Thus the beginning years of the AKP party can be categorized as a commitment to get the European Union to begin accession discussions by improving the liberal democratic aspects of the government and making the economy more open and connected to the European Union.

#### *2005-2010: Accession begin*

Entering 2005, all signs showed to positive progression for Turkey opening and closing chapters if Turkey under the AKP party continued to pursue its rapid pace of change; however, things did not go as planned. 2005 began with the screening process where the EU determines which laws must be changed to match the *acquis communautaire*. Since chapter discussions have begun, of the 35 total chapters, Turkey has opened 16 chapters, but only successfully closed one chapter (Science & Research)<sup>45</sup>. What has been the blockade? The European Union naively believing that the Cyprus dispute had been settled with the Annual Plan for Cyprus, allowed Cyprus to join the EU in 2004. In reality the Cyprus dispute was not settled at all<sup>46</sup>. In 2006, due to lack of progress in finding a solution, the European Union decided to freeze discussions on all

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<sup>43</sup> See Table 2

<sup>44</sup> See Table 4 & 6

<sup>45</sup> Amanda Paul, "Turkey-EU Relations: Time to Rebuild Trust," *European Policy Centre* October 2012.

<sup>46</sup> The Turkey- Cyprus dispute is still an ongoing battle between the two powers. The island is divided by control between the government of Cyprus and the northern part under the Turkish republic of Northern Cyprus. The two nations have been through violent battles in the 1970s for control over the island. Although today there is not violence, the dispute between who the island truly belongs to continues today. Thus, Cyprus (the non-EU Turkey controlled part) joining the EU in 2004 has caused a large obstacle to Turkish accession.

8 open chapters<sup>47</sup> and stated that no chapters will close until Cyprus and Turkey can find a long term solution. The blockades on opening new chapters continued in 2010 by efforts led by France and Cyprus.

From 2005 to 2012, Turkey was able to maintain its highest Freedom House score, a “3” by stably maintaining new civil liberties and political rights in Turkish legislation<sup>48</sup>. The increase from rating 3.5 in 2004 to 3 in 2005 can be accounted for by the fact that constitutional reforms of 2004 were taken into account for the score of 2005 as they are evaluated at the conclusion of the year. Specifically, Turkey made great gains by going from a 4 to 3 in the civil liberties rating<sup>49</sup> thanks to inclusion of Kurdish rights into national legislation. However, 2005 and 2006 witnessed the beginning of domestic challenges in Turkey including increased PKK violence after the end of its long ceasefire and slowdown in reforms<sup>50</sup>. Turkey had an election in 2007 where focus shifted from appealing to pro EU voters instead to AKP’s religious voters who opposed many of the 2004 reforms that got Turkey to open chapters in the first place. Despite this, the 2007 elections were deemed fair as more opposition parties including secularist and pro-Kurdish parties won parliamentary seats<sup>51</sup>. The following year voting transferred to a referendum on constitutional amendments that extended the power of the executive within Turkey.

The period following 2009 is where we begin to notice downward trends arrow given to Turkey from Freedom House as a result of illiberal actions. 2009 was the first year to receive a downward trend as a result of protests following the banning of pro-Kurdish party DTP<sup>52</sup>. 2010 was made up of the approval of constitutional changes that centered on reducing power of military courts, reorganization of the judiciary, and persecution of leaders of the 1980 coup by a

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<sup>47</sup> Paul, “Turkey-EU Relations: Time to Rebuild Trust,” 2.

<sup>48</sup> See Table 1

<sup>49</sup> See Table 3

<sup>50</sup> Börzel and Soyaltin, “Europeanization in Turkey”, 14.

<sup>51</sup> Freedom House, “Turkey Scores,” 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Sebnem Arsu, “Court Bans Kurdish Party in Turkey,” *New York Times*12, December 2009.

higher margin of 58%<sup>53</sup>. For a third term, AKP dominated parliamentary elections in June 2011. Throughout this period, trials against military officers attached to an attempted 2003 coup against the AKP party caused declining arrows for suppression of political opponents. In 2011 these trials led to a mass resignation of many officers, allowing Erdogan to replace AKP skeptics in the military with new officers more friendly towards his rule. Thus, in terms of democracy we can characterize the period of 2005-2012 as an initial increase in democracy and civil rights followed by a slowdown of reforms beginning in 2009 and a slow progression of the AKP party to restructure Turkey into a more Islamic state and replace political opponents in the government through constitutional referendums and trials. Thus, Freedom House Scores remain stagnant from 2005 to 2012, but the first downward trend symbolizes a warning of the future decline in scores that were soon to come.

In terms of economic interdependence, this period saw the initial increase of cooperation between the EU and Turkey, followed by a halt as a result of the economic crisis in 2008. Despite the economic crisis, from 2005-2012 Turkey was still able to increase their GDP per capita by an average 12% percentage, high compared to the average 4% the EU grew GDP per capita<sup>54</sup>. From 2005-2008, imports and exports between the EU and Turkey continued to grow, but favoring the EU as EU imports into Turkey grew at a more rapid pace than Turkish exports into the EU did<sup>55</sup>. 2008 was the first decline in interdependence since Turkey became a candidate country. Following the typical asymmetric interdependence, Turkey was hurt more by the crisis than the EU witnessing a -26% decline in Turkish exports to the EU compared to a -22% decrease in EU exports to Turkey in 2009<sup>56</sup>. However, the crisis only seemed to be a hiccup in

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<sup>53</sup> Freedom House, "Turkey Scores," 2011.

<sup>54</sup> See Table 2

<sup>55</sup> See Table 6

<sup>56</sup> See Table 7

the relationship as trade between the countries and their GDP per capita seemed resilient and to bounce back rather quickly. In 2010 and 2011, GDP per capita in Turkey grew by 13% year over year two years in a row, adding to the popularity of Erdogan and his electoral victory in 2011<sup>57</sup>. Turkish exports in particular bounced back from the crisis and an increased percentage of exports began to be sent to China in particular<sup>58</sup>. Thus the relationship remained asymmetric, but we begin to see the first signs of Turkey turning to other powers over the European Union for trade at the same time that illiberal democratic actions begin to occur within Turkey.

*2010-2012: Period of delay*

From 2010 to 2012, not a single new chapters was opened in Turkey's accession to the EU which led to an attempt to revive the relationship through the Positive Agenda<sup>59</sup>. In recent years, especially after the termination of the Western European Union (WEU) in 2011. The WEU was a military alliance between EU member states and partner countries that was replaced in 2011 after the Treaty of Lisbon was implemented. Thus in 2011, Turkey lost a voice in participating in European military policy outside of NATO and felt betrayed due to their higher commitment to Europe both within NATO and WEU<sup>60</sup>. In the Positive Agenda meetings were held in Turkey in 2012 where Turkish and EU leaders came together to create benchmarks to allow for closing of EU chapters. Part of the desire for the revival was the sense of pro—EU sentiment in Turkey declining through the rise of the less secular AKP party under Erdogan. However, this renewed cooperation was put on hold from July to December 2012 under the rotating presidency of the Council under Cyprus.

*2012-2016: Illiberal democracy begins and Turkey looks for other trade partners*

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<sup>57</sup> See Table 2

<sup>58</sup> See Table 4

<sup>59</sup> Amanda Paul, "Turkey-EU Relations: Forever Engaged, Never to be Married?," Heinrich Boll Stiftung European Union 8, July 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Seiju Desai, "Turkey in the European Union: A Security Perspective – Risk or Opportunity?," *Defence Studies* 5, no.3, 2006: 366-393.

Turkey began their first decline in Freedom House scores in 2012 against civil liberties following court verdicts. The court verdicts were against military officers against supposed coup attempts and Kurdish activists, causing civil liberties score to drop from a 3 to 4<sup>61</sup>. The following year did not include an actual drop in score, but did receive a downward trend following the Gezi Protests in 2013. These protests began in Istanbul against the creation of Gezi Park, but soon spread to the entire country and took on the nature of anti-government and dissatisfaction with the illiberal ruling of Erdogan. The government responded through police brutality in order to clear the crowds throughout the country. The Gezi protests as the first true social resistance experienced in Turkey since becoming an EU candidate country, saw automatic delaying of accession when the Commission postponed opening of Chapter 22 for fear of Turkey shifting more and more towards an illiberal democracy<sup>62</sup>. The importance of Gezi Protests according to Saatçioğlu is that the level of democracy within Turkey will determine the future of Turkish accession and that the Gezi Park protests and EU backlash is a clear example of this retaliation from the EU against defections in accession. This coincides with our theory and the first variable that increase in illiberal democratic tendencies will be punished through delaying or halting of accession.

2014 was also followed by another declining trend arrow in response to the corruption charges against AKP and Erdogan in 2013, which did not prevent him from winning the inaugural president post. Erdogan followed this political win through purges of business leaders, journalists, and religious minorities by accusing them of engineering this 2013 corruption scandal. As a result of the Gezi Protests and purges, in October 2014 the European Commission

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<sup>61</sup> See Table 3

<sup>62</sup> Beken Saatçioğlu, "Turkey's EU Membership Process in the Aftermath of the Gezi Protests." *Everywhere Taksim: Sowing the Seeds for a New Turkey at Gezi*, edited by Isabel David and Kumru F. Toktamış, Amsterdam University Press, 2015, pp. 267–282.

submitted its annual accession report that was more critical than ever before expressing concerns in Turkey against democratic values<sup>63</sup>. Despite EU concerns, these purges continued in 2015 leading to a 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive downward trend arrow especially against political opposition ahead of parliamentary elections in November to allow Erdogan to press forward with the revised executive system through a constitutional referendum. The European Union did not retract and decide to give up on Turkey during this period, but rather reinvigorated the relationship through the EU-Turkey summit in November 2015 where the EU decided to use the migration crisis and the help they need from Turkey as leverage for EU accession. This summit involved the original idea of the EU-Turkey deal allowing EU to return migrants to Turkey by promising future visa liberalization for Turkish citizens to Schengen zone and progression on accession<sup>64</sup>.

In terms of economic interdependence, the period 2012-2016 witnessed the rise of Turkey towards more economic symmetric dependence with the European Union. From 2012 to 2016, Turkey overall saw an average -4% decrease in imports into Turkey worldwide<sup>65</sup>. Specifically after 2014, the amount of EU imports sent to Turkey drastically reduced while Turkish exports entering the EU stayed relatively stable. Thus, we can see the beginning signs of asymmetric interdependence fading as the balance between import and export between the EU and Turkey begins to favor Turkey on a more equal playing field with the EU. Why is this significant? According to our hypothesis then, this will likely reduce EU's leverage on Turkey as the perceived benefits of EU membership will decline as the candidate country becomes more economically self-sufficient. In addition to trading of goods, this period began to see the increased trading of services and FDI as over half of FDI going into Turkey came from the EU<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> European Commission, "Turkey Progress Report," 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Council of European Union, "Meeting of the EU heads of state or government with Turkey, 29/11/2015,".

<sup>65</sup> See Table 8

<sup>66</sup> European Commission DG NEAR, "Turkey factograph," 2016.

The EU Turkey summit resulting in 2016 in the EU-Turkey deal to curb migration awarded Turkey €3 billion in aid from the EU. Again, this shows the growing interdependence between the EU and Turkey shifting from asymmetric towards symmetric interdependence. The EU rewarded Turkey by progressing with accession for the EU-Turkey deal by thawing previously frozen chapters.

#### *2016-Present: Past the Point of No Return*

The past two years have proven to be the most illiberal of Turkey as Turkey has regressed from “partly free” to “not free” making it the largest decline by a single country in the past decade according to Freedom House scores. 2016 witnessed the largest drop in Freedom House scores dropping a whole point from 3.5 to 4.5, the levels Turkey once was in 1999, after the 2016 coup attempt and the government’s crackdown as a response<sup>67</sup>. In the beginning of 2016 in an effort to silence Gülenist influence, the government closed Gülenist newspapers, television stations, and seized companies; thus, the July coup was an attempt to overthrow the government before the annual rotation in August of senior officials in the military and government before Erdogan could replace Gülenist supporters<sup>68</sup>. The attempted coup of July 2016 was a tragic event that left 260 people dead in Turkey<sup>69</sup>. Erdogan’s government was quick to punish those who initiated the coup resulting in 58,000 arrests within a week of the coup and as of January 2018, 30 decrees have been issued by the government leading to the dismissal of more than 150,000 public servant, closure of 3,000 schools, and prosecution of almost 5,000 judges<sup>70</sup>. As a result of these actions, both the overall score and subcategories of political rights (dropped to 4) and civil liberties (dropped to a 5) reached unprecedented levels<sup>71</sup>. In November of 2016, the voice of EU

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<sup>67</sup> See Table 1

<sup>68</sup> Amanda Sloat, “The West’s Turkey Conundrum,” *Brookings Institution* February 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Sinan Ülgen, “A Resilience Approach to a Failed Accession State: The Case of Turkey”, International Affairs Institute October IAI Working Paper 17/30 2017.

<sup>70</sup> Sloat, “The West’s Turkey Conundrum,” 5.

<sup>71</sup> See Table 3 and 5

citizens, the European Parliament voted to suspend all accession negotiations with Turkey<sup>72</sup>.

Although the vote did not suspend accession, the European Parliament does have the power to influence enlargement as accession treaties must be approved by the European Parliament with absolute majority. The European Parliament has never rejected an accession treaty thus far; however, hypothetically, if Turkey progressed far enough to finalize an accession treaty the European Parliament has the power to block EU membership<sup>73</sup>.

2017 marked the largest departure of Turkey yet as they officially transitioned to a “not free” country through their decline in freedom rating from 4.5 to 5.5 as a result of the 2017 constitutional reform<sup>74</sup>. This reform centralized power further in the power of Erdogan as president by transferring power away from local leaders and continued to remove his opponents from government positions. Erdogan even called Germany reminiscent of its fascist and declaring that “a battle has started between the cross and the half moon” days after Merkel stopped rallies in Germany ahead of the April 2017 Turkish referendum due to the large Turkish population in Germany<sup>75</sup>. The April 2017 referendum was successful (despite accusations of voter fraud due to the close marginal win of 51%) for Erdogan as citizens voted to shift from a parliamentary to presidential political system which further consolidated Erdogan’s power<sup>76</sup>. Angela Merkel retaliated for these actions in September of 2017 when she declared that she would seek to end Turkey’s membership talks, in an apparent shift of position during a televised debate weeks before a German election<sup>77</sup>. Some now say that we are past the point of no return and in April 2017, the European Parliament called for the formal suspension of Turkey’s

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<sup>72</sup> European Parliament, “Freeze EU accession talks with Turkey until it halts repression, urge MEPs,” 24, November 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Dr. Abdullah Yuvaci, “Views on Turkish Accession in the European Parliament: A Comparative Analysis,” Suleyman Demirel University, The Journal of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, vol. 18, no.2, 2013, pp.101-117.

<sup>74</sup> See Table 1

<sup>75</sup> Deutsche Wells, “Erdogan accuses EU of ‘crusade’ against Islam,” 17, March 2017.

<sup>76</sup> Sloat, “The West’s Turkey Conundrum,” 7.

<sup>77</sup> Reuters, “Factbox: Turkey’s collapsing EU Membership,” 14, September 2017.

membership bid with support from the Council. Even the Council of Europe, which Turkey is a member of, has shown its disdain for this democratic backsliding by voting to reopen monitoring of Turkey. This is a signal of embarrassment for Turkey as minorning was a prerequisite to become a candidate country back in 1999, signaling that even an organization that Turkey is a member of recognizes their democratic backsliding<sup>78</sup>.

Economic interdependence has been minimally affected by the decline in democracy within Turkey since the 2016 coup. Although inflation reached a 14 year high of almost 13% in 2017 and Turkish lira lost 11% of its value, GDP continue to grow at 11% with the third quarter of 2017<sup>79</sup>. In addition, although FDI from the US declined from 2017 to 2016 by €172 million due to fears of political instability, FDI from the EU grew by €700 million in this same period<sup>80</sup>. Thus, foreign investors from Turkey's biggest trade partner, the EU, were not scared away of continuing to engage in economic interdependence after the coup. The EU despite intense criticism of Erdogan after the coup has reinitiated conversations to revamp the EU-Turkey customs union for the future<sup>81</sup>. In this same period, we see an increase in Turkey turning trade towards China and Russia thus continuing along the pattern of the previous period toward symmetric interdependence as Turkey diversifies its trade partners<sup>82</sup>. The significance of this is that although the coup of 2016 and transition to consolidated presidential system of 2017 have had strains on EU-Turkish accession, they have not had a great influence on decreasing trade interdependence between the two powers.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>78</sup> Sam Morgan, "Turkey's EU bid in jeopardy after Council of Europe vote," Euractiv 26, April 2017.

<sup>79</sup> Sloat, "The West's Turkey Conundrum," 10.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Sinan Ülgen, "Trade As Turkey's EU Anchor," *Carnegie Europe* 13, December 2017.

<sup>82</sup> CGTN, "Is Turkey's economy still suffering one year after the coup attempt?," 16, July 2017.

The deterioration of Turkish accession into the European Union is the fault of both Turkey and the European Union with each member pulling back from the relationship more at different time periods. After gaining candidacy status in 1999, the real push for accession negotiations began after the election of the AKP party under Erdogan in 2002. Through reforms expanding political rights and increasing trade with the European Union, Turkey was rewarded in 2005 when the EU deemed it ready to begin opening chapters and earned an increase in Freedom House scores. Throughout the history of EU accession, meritocracy has proved an obstacle to EU accession from specific member states mainly from France, Germany, and Cyprus causing a halting of chapters. Economic interdependence temporarily declined as a result of the crisis in 2008, but trade quickly revived after the crisis, although first signs of illiberal actions began to be shown in Turkey through constitutional referendums. From 2012 to 2016, Freedom House scores declined from “partly free” to “not free” through purges, reduction of the powers of the courts, and hitting a boiling point in the July 2016 coup attempt. At this same time, Turkey moved from asymmetric towards more symmetric interdependence with the EU as it expanded exports away from the EU and towards other powers such as China and Russia and overall decreasing the level of imports from abroad. The European Union’s leverage to threaten to delay or halt accession has decreased as Turkey has become a more powerful economic actor. Thus Turkish accession has mirrored a Michael Jackson style moonwalk, constantly moving backwards, but switching which foot or country is taking the actions to pull accession backwards.

*What if the future of EU-Turkish relations?*

What does the sui generis case of Turkey teach us about future prospects for EU membership? The more illiberal the candidate country became, the more meritocracy the candidate country faced in the EU. In the beginning of accession, when the EU halted or delayed

accession, Turkey was quick to alter policy to get back into the good graces of the EU and accession negotiations such as in the 1980s. So how has Turkey changed? Economic interdependence between Turkey and the EU is still important; however, Turkey's is not the same country it was when it joined the Customs Union or became an EU candidate. GDP of Turkey has increased fivefold just since the election of Erdogan in 2002 and by more than 80 times since first applying in the 1960s<sup>83</sup>. In addition, recent policies of Erdogan have seen new friendliness towards other illiberal powers such as Russia and China.

Turkey continuing to pursue illiberal democratic actions despite EU threats to cut off accession well turning trade away from the EU and towards other partners, would suggest that the Turkey has become less interested or at least fed up with waiting for EU membership. However, in February of 2018 President Erdogan visited EU leaders in Italy and France and declared that, "We want full membership. Other options are not satisfactory"<sup>84</sup>. What can explain this recent revival of desire for EU membership on behalf of Erdogan? Throughout this study, we have seen increased emphasis on the side of Erdogan towards positive EU discourse during his political campaigning. Some have argued that AKP uses supporting EU accession as a scapegoat to escape the suspicious activity of its Islamist agenda within the domestic and international atmospheres<sup>85</sup>. Thus some theorists like Börzel and Soyaltin believe that, "domestic change in Turkey is less driven by EU and its fading conditionality, but by the political agenda of the Turkish ruling elites and their preference for consolidating their political power"<sup>86</sup>. The next Turkish elections are set for November 2019 for both President and the National Assembly; thus,

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<sup>83</sup> Ibrahim Kalin, "How to reset Turkey-Europe Relations," European Council on Foreign Relations 4, October 2017.

<sup>84</sup> Euractiv, "Erdogan in Rome: Let Turkey be full EU member," 5, February 2018.

<sup>85</sup> Yilmaz, "EU Conditionality Is Not the Only Game in Town!," 313.

<sup>86</sup> Börzel and Soyaltin, "Europeanization in Turkey", 16.

we predict that Erdogan will continue to push a positive EU discourse while he remains on the campaign trail if he believes it will help him to continue to consolidate power within Turkey.

There are three possible paths for the future of EU-Turkish relationships. The first option would be convergence (EU accepting Turkish accession), competition (Turkey continues to turn towards other trade partners and accession completely comes to a halt), and cooperation (Turkey and EU work together but through a privileged partnership and give up on accession)<sup>87</sup>. An example of this “privileged partnership” rather than full EU membership may include the revamped Customs Union. We predict that if Turkey continues to grow economically and slide further to illiberal democracy, the competition scenario will be the most likely and accession will slide fully from delay to a full halt as EU leverage continues to dissipate.

### **Limitations**

This paper attempted to study the deterioration of Turkish accession by focusing on democratic standing and level of interdependence between Turkey and the EU. Future research could expand on different definitions of democracy beyond using Freedom House scores. In addition, there could be many ways to measure interdependence to include goods and services, FDI, international organization interdependence that are beyond the scope of this paper. In addition, this paper may have lessons for future enlargement, but many of its key findings are limited to Turkey as a candidate country. The EU has shown great excitement for the Western Balkan countries joining by 2025 and although they are far from ready, they have not experienced democratic backsliding like Turkey has either. Some additional factors that was beyond the scope of this paper was to dive into the correlation between deterioration of Turkish EU accession and its connection with Turkey’s role in NATO. In addition, this analysis did not dive deep into the Cyprus settlement issue with Turkey, but could be further elaborated in how

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<sup>87</sup> Bianca Benvenuti, “The Migration Paradox and EU-Turkey Relations,” *Instituto Affari Internazionali IAI Working Paper* 17/05 2017.

this has had consequences on EU accession at given time periods. Future research could also include the analysis on the role of civil society within Turkey and how they have pursued the continuance of Turkish accession to the EU. Lastly, an interesting elaboration on this study would be to see if the deterioration of Turkish accession has coincided with declining US-Turkish relationships over time.

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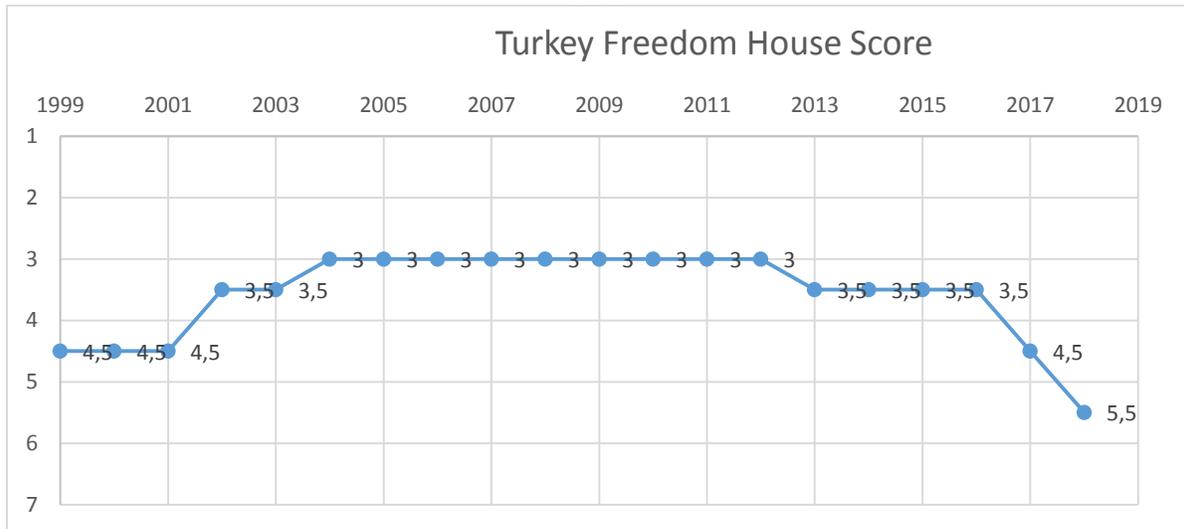
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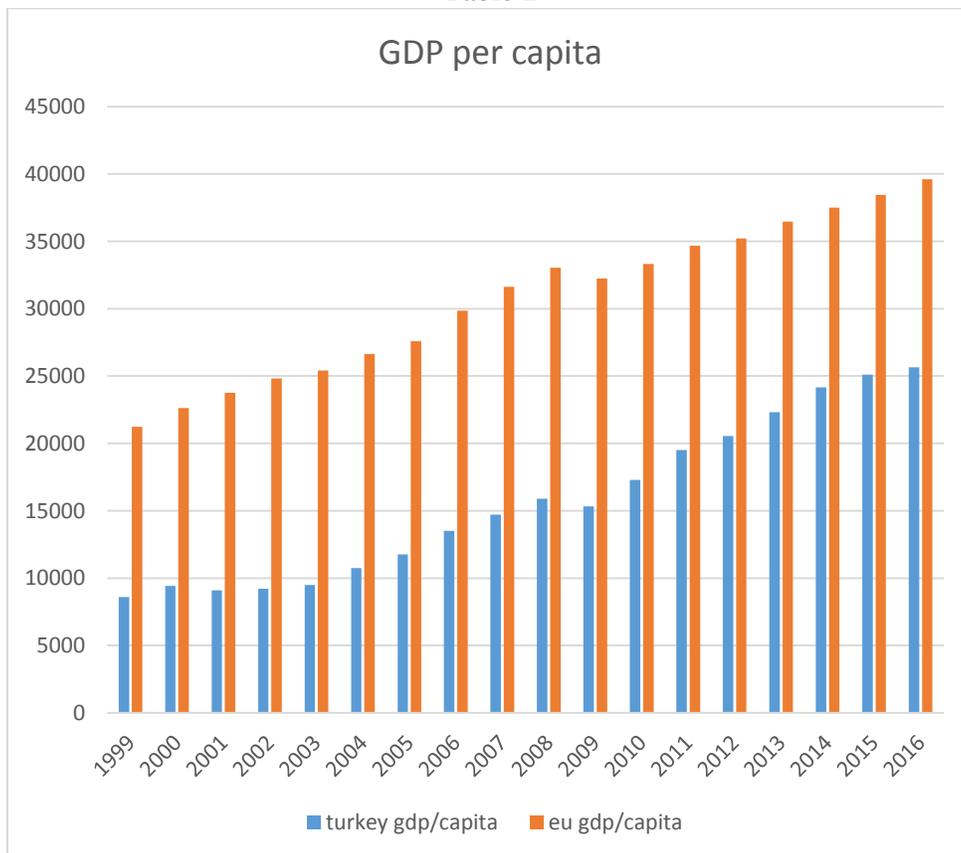
Table 1



1= Best, 7=Worst

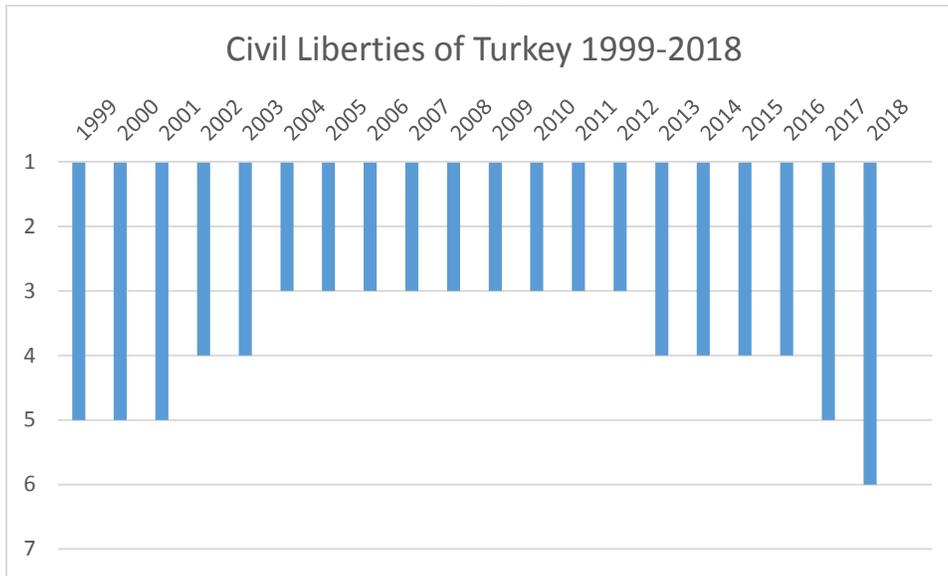
Source: Freedom House Scores

Table 2



Source: OECD (2018), Gross domestic product (GDP) (indicator). doi: 10.1787/dc2f7aec-en

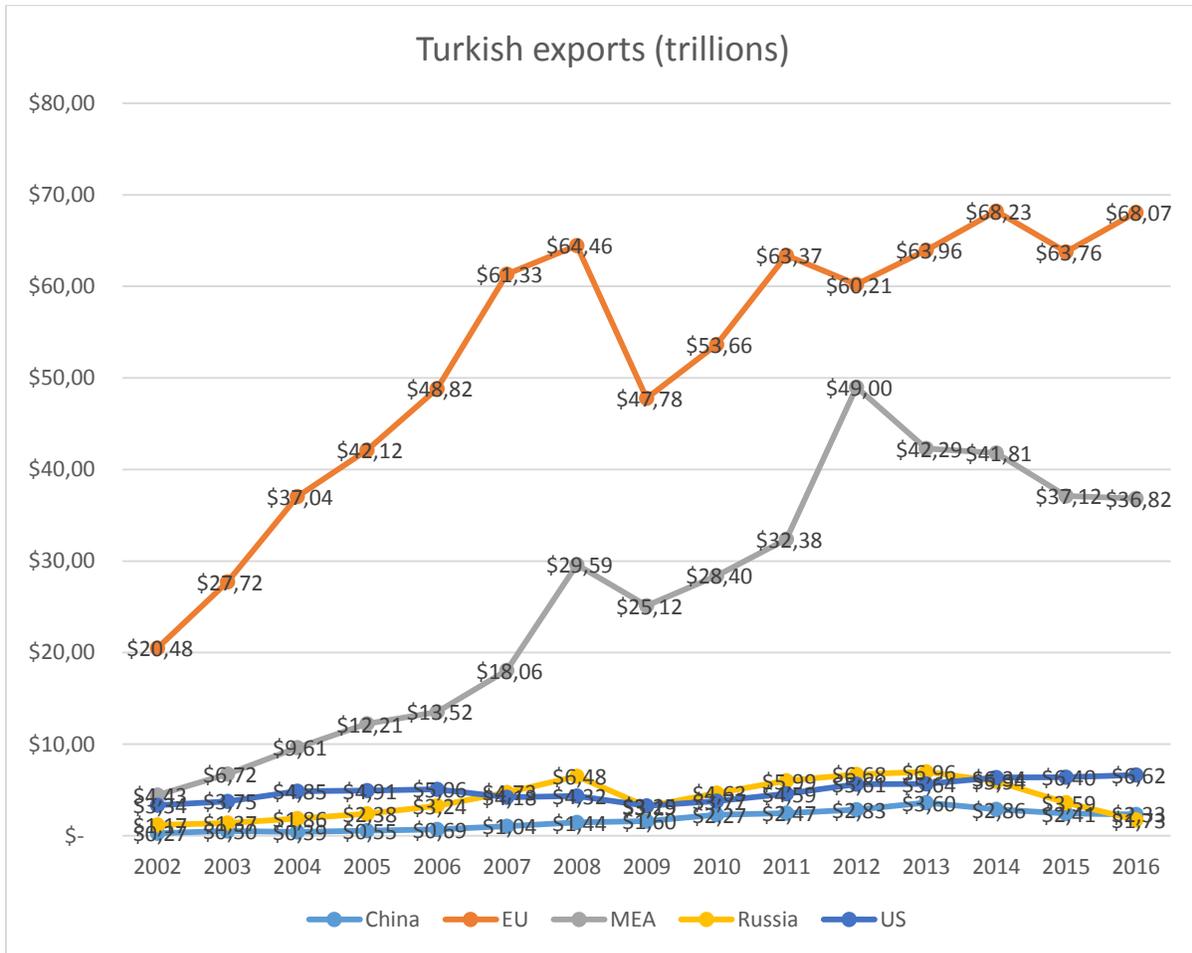
Table 3



1= BEST, 7=WORST

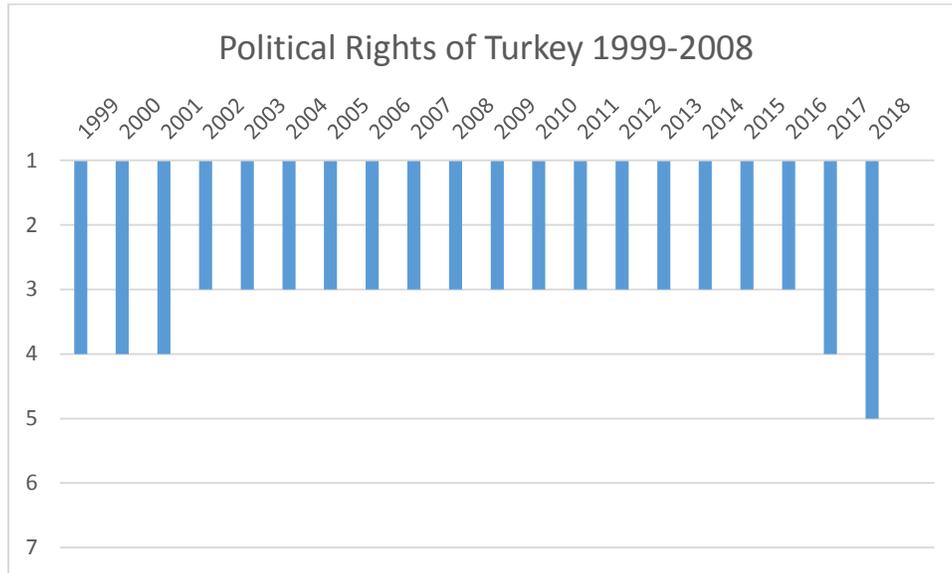
Source: Freedom House Scores

Table 4



Source: WITS WorldBank Data.

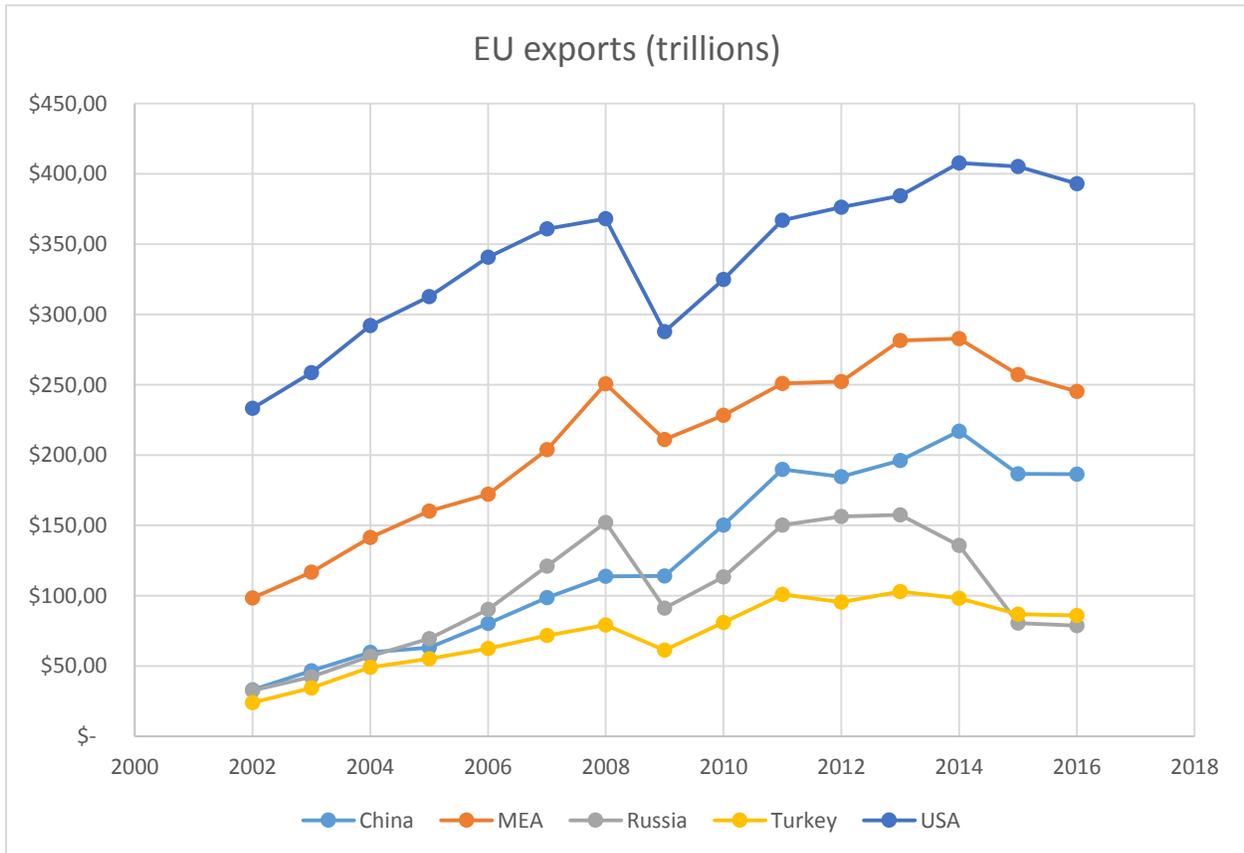
Table 5



1=BEST, 7=WORST

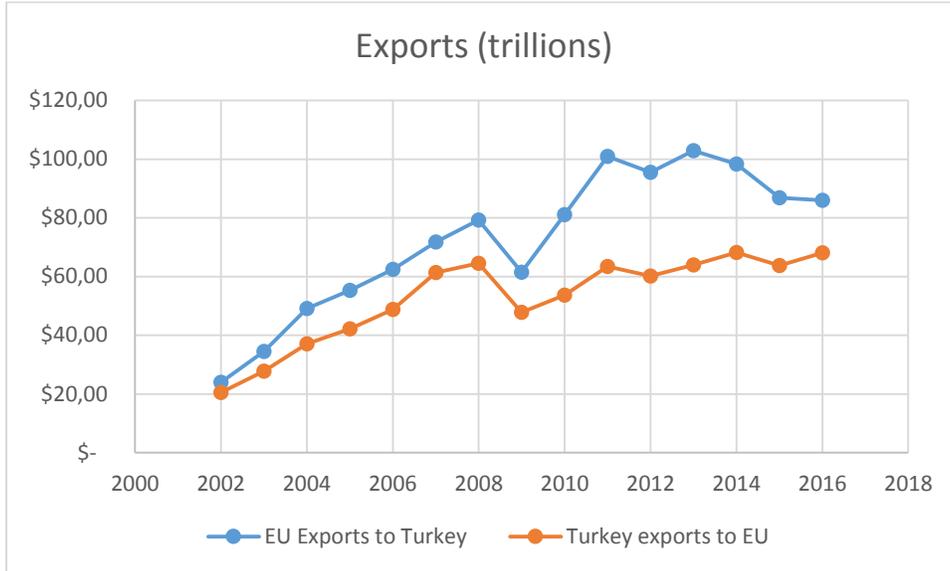
Source: Freedom House Score

Table 6



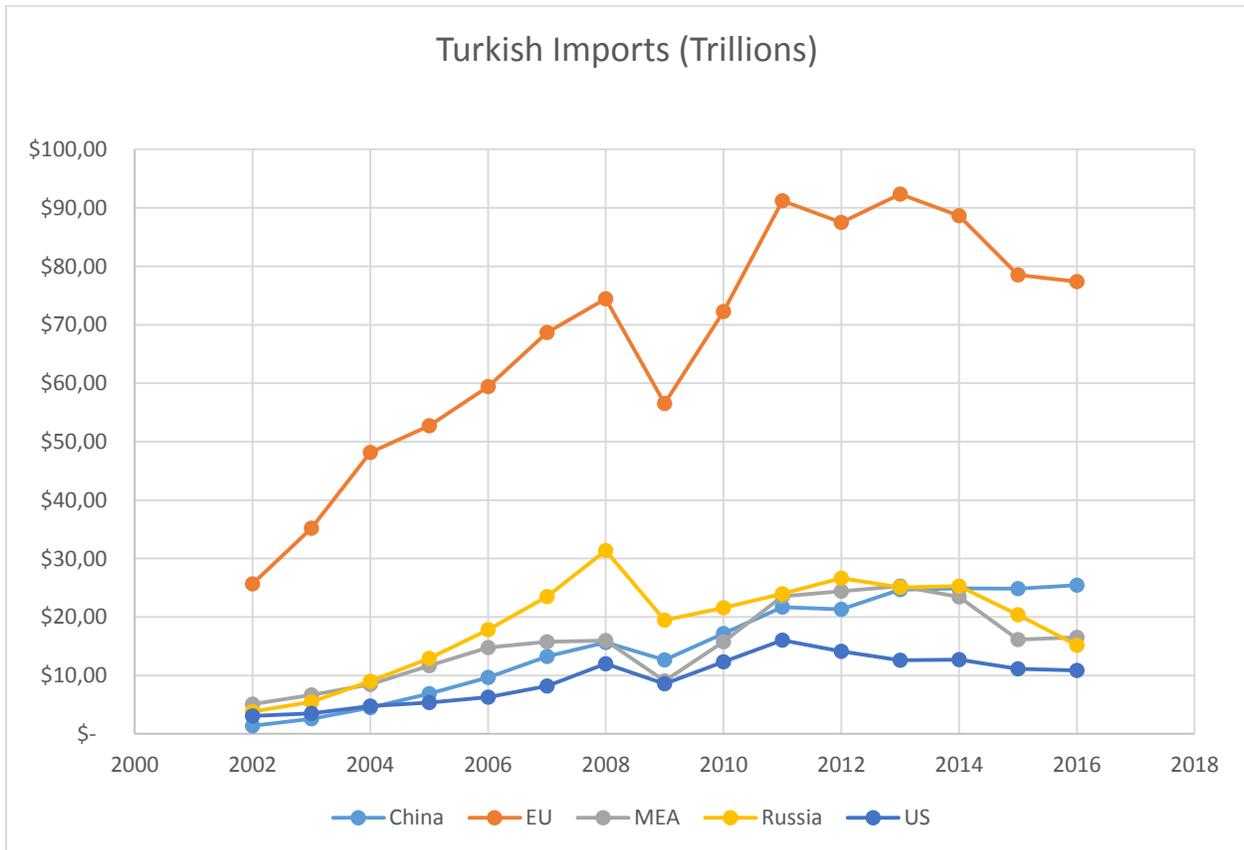
Source: WITS WorldBank Data.

Table 7



Source: WITS WorldBank Data.

Table 8



Source: WITS WorldBank Data