

A Long Standing Relationship Ambivalent of being Rewarded: Turkey's accession into the European Union.

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Abstract

As an integral part of Europe for over centuries, Turkey has been knocking at the European Union's (EU) door since 1963 when it became an associate member of the European Economic Community. Despite the relations between the two are being characterized by cooperation and convergence, the European Council's decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005 has proved to be a *sui generis* case of the EU enlargement. This paper explores the role of the EU Member States in determining the trajectory of Turkey's European future by focusing on accession negotiations on the basis of 35 chapters. A qualitative content analysis on news items and scholarly articles centered on Turkey's membership bid is carried out to analyze Turkey's commitment and the reaction of the EU statesmen that reflects the public opinion in European states. As per the findings, no nation in the 28- nation bloc favors an unconditional accession for Ankara. Germany, Austria and Belgium as the leading opponents of the full membership, are of the opinion that Ankara's failed coup is a clear indication that Turkey's democratic standards are insufficient to justify the accession and that the current autocratic President of Turkey, Recep Erdogan disregards European values. Albeit a 'privileged partnership', rather than full membership, is favored for Turkey due to mutual security interests as NATO allies. France and the UK are indecisive of well receiving a Muslim country, while the rest is in favor of Turkey. However, the refugee deal to keep a plethora of migrants inside Turkey's borders in return for financial aid in 2016 struck outside the formal framework of the membership negotiations and brought the EU Members and Turkey closer without questioning Turkey's identity. In conclusion it is obvious that even though Member States' influence is inevitable due to the institutional design of the EU's decision-making processes, Turkey will continue to gravitate towards Europe, holding the refugee crisis as a major bargaining chip irrespective of the changing political weather. Nevertheless, Turkey's chances for the full membership will further languish as long as President Erdogan remains in office, as he is considered pugnacious, which is against European values.

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