

Don't Exaggerate the Problems! Why can't Turkey and the European Union Divorce?

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Abstract

This article explores why the European Union and Turkey have preferred to maintain the accession negotiations despite recent problems in their relations. It is argued that the crucial political and economic interdependence between the partners prevents them from ending stops them ending the accession negotiations. The European Union's dependence on Turkey stems from its policy of using Turkey as a barrier between the problematic Middle East and the peaceful continent of Europe, the key role of Turkish territories in the European Union's energy diversification policy, and the large Turkish market that attracts major companies from Germany and France, the two driving forces for European Union integration. Turkey is dependent on the European Union because it is the main source of Turkey's modernization, has a large share in Turkey's foreign trade and foreign direct investments, and benefits Turkey through the customs union. Terminating the accession negotiations would put the gains of both parties at risk.

Keywords: Turkey, European Union, Interdependence, Accession Negotiations

Sorunları Abartmayın! Türkiye ve Avrupa Birlięi Neden Bořanamaz?

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Öz

Bu makale iliřkilerde yařanan sorunlara raęmen neden Avrupa Birlięi ve Türkiye'nin katılım müzakerelerini sürdürmeyi tercih ettięini açıklamaktadır. Ortaklar arasındaki çok önemli siyasi ve ekonomik karřılıklı baęımlılıęın katılım müzakerelerini sona erdirmeyi engelledięi iddia edilmektedir. AB'nin Türkiye'ye olan baęımlılıęı Türkiye'yi sorunlu Orta Doęu ve barıř kıtası Avrupa arasında bir bariyer olarak kullanma politikasından, Türk topraklarının Avrupa Birlięi'nin enerji çeřitlendirme politikasındaki kilit öneminden ve Avrupa Birlięi bütünleřmesinin iki itici gücü olan Almanya ve Fransa'nun önemli firmalarının büyük Türkiye pazarına olan ilgisinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Türkiye ise Avrupa Birlięi'ne modernleřmesinin temel kaynaęı olmasından, dıř ticareti ve doğrudan yabancı yatırımlardaki büyük payından ve gümrük birlięinin getirilerinden dolayı baęımlıdır. Katılım müzakerelerini sona erdirmek tarafların tüm bu kazanımlarını riske atacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Türkiye, Avrupa Birlięi, Karřılıklı Baęımlılık, Katılım Müzakereleri*

Introduction

There is a saying in Turkish that "the child is the cement of a marriage". In other words, the responsibility of looking after and raising the child prevents divorce despite many marital problems. Similarly, despite all the problems experienced in recent years in relations between Turkey and the European Union (EU), the two parties have maintained the accession negotiations because they are highly interdependent, politically and economically. This interdependence is thus the cement of the Turkey-EU marriage that prevents the divorce. The EU's policy of using Turkey as a barrier between Europe and problematic countries of the Middle East, Turkey's key role in the EU's energy diversification plans, and the large Turkish market that attracts giant German and French companies make the EU dependent on Turkey. Turkey is dependent on the EU because it is the main source of Turkey's modernization, has a large share in Turkish foreign trade, has a leading position through EU companies in foreign direct investments, and provides benefits from the customs union. The interdependence between Turkey and the EU is indeed one of the most important examples of interdependence between international actors in international relations. Termination of the accession negotiations would jeopardize all the gains of both parties.

The first section of this article focuses on the recent tense relations between Turkey and the EU. The second and third sections explain the main reasons for the EU's dependency on Turkey and Turkey's on the EU. The conclusion makes a general evaluation of the paper.

Recent Tense Relations between the EU and Turkey

Since being declared a candidate country at the European Council's summit in Helsinki in December 1999, Turkey has been involved in comprehensive democratization reforms to open accession negotiations with the EU. Between 1999 and 2004, the Turkish parliament adopted nine harmonization packages and two constitutional amendment packages. These reforms ranged from the protection of human rights, freedoms of speech, association, assembly and religion to democratic control of the armed forces. They were in fact the most comprehensive demo-

cratic development in modern Turkish history since the Atatürk era (1923-1938) and the liberal 1961 constitution. At the time, European and American politicians regularly praised Turkey for its march towards meeting the Copenhagen political criteria, which stipulate that candidate countries must ensure “the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities” to become an EU member (Council of the European Union, 1993). As a result of this democratization process, the EU decided to open accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005, by stating that Turkey had met the Copenhagen political criteria. However, in opening accession negotiations, the EU also received, via an Additional Protocol, a formal guarantee from Turkey to enlarge the Treaty of Ankara, which had established an association between Turkey and the EU in 1963, to new EU member states (10 countries that joined the Union in 2004, namely Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Malta, and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus). This led to future significant problems because Turkey refused to implement the protocol for the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, which it does not officially recognize.

In December 2006, the EU decided that until the European Commission could verify that Turkey had applied the Additional Protocol to the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, eight of the 35 chapters regarding Turkey’s restrictions on the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus would not be opened. Moreover, no open chapter would be provisionally closed (Council of the European Union, 2006). The accession negotiations further deteriorated following French President Nicholas Sarkozy’s decision in 2007 to block five other chapters to benefit from rising populism in his country and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus’s blockage of six chapters in 2009.

In addition to these suspensions and blockings, the EU imposed new conceptualizations like ‘open-ended negotiations’ and ‘absorption capacity’. These significantly weakened Turkey’s motivation for further reforms to gain membership. The idea of ‘open-ended negotiations’ meant that the final result was no longer guaranteed beforehand while EU signaled that, even if the negotiations were successful, it would first consider whether it could properly function politically and economically in

terms of its 'absorption capacity' before granting membership to Turkey. Consequently, negotiations reached a dead end during the second half of the 2000s while high tensions between the parties had not even started.

In the 2010s, the political priorities of the partners changed. The EU focused on tackling the financial crisis and the wave of immigration towards the continent. These two problems strengthened far-right parties and resurrected fascism, the continent's twentieth-century disease. After these parties began using Turkey's EU membership process to increase their popularity, Europe's mainstream political parties stole their rhetoric to secure their voters (Yıldız, 2018). Suddenly, mainstream political parties were making statements that did not reflect the past or the partnership values of the relationship. This led to harsh reactions from the Turkish government. Meanwhile, Turkey was focused on efforts to prevent the establishment of a PKK/PYD-controlled state below its southern border after Syria disintegrated into civil war and carried out successful military operations in the region.

The EU-Turkey deal on Syrian immigration on March 18, 2016, encouraged the hopes of those who wanted to see more positive relations. However, it soon became clear that these hopes were empty. The first confrontation occurred in March 2017, when the Netherlands denied entry to two Turkish government ministers who wanted to campaign to Turkish residents in the Netherlands about Turkey's upcoming constitutional referendum to switch from a parliamentary to a presidential system. The Turkish government had decided to send ministers to different Dutch cities just a few days before the Dutch general elections of March 15, 2017. Geert Wilders, Chairman of the anti-Islamist, anti-immigration, and Eurosceptic Party for Freedom, had strongly opposed the visits in a final bid to increase his party's votes. This was a very clever move to take advantage of growing negative attitudes towards immigration and Islam in Holland. Understanding this tactic, Prime Minister Mark Rutte did not allow the two ministers to enter the country despite knowing that his decision would greatly damage 400 years of excellent Dutch-Turkish relations. The same night, Turkish residents in Rotterdam went onto the streets, leading to confrontations and police intervention. The Turkish government reacted very harshly to the decision and the inci-

dents in Rotterdam, accusing the Dutch government of being fascist and applying Nazi methods ("Erdoğan Calls", 2017).

The EU chiefs sided with the Dutch government in the crisis. Addressing the European Parliament, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, declared in both English and Dutch that "We all show solidarity with the Netherlands ... The Netherlands is Europe and I want to say that Europe is the Netherlands." ("EU Chiefs", 2017). Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, added, "I will never accept this comparison between the Nazis and the modern-day governments." He then threatened Turkey regarding its membership bid: "The European Union is not joining Turkey, Turkey is joining the EU." (Ibid.). While these statements were made to show a "sense of community" after the Brexit referendum and to prevent Geert Wilders winning in the Dutch election, they forgot two important things: the democratic value of freely campaigning, and Turkey's candidacy status as a possible member of the club. That is, the EU chiefs might have preferred to act fairly.

The second confrontation occurred after the failed coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, 2016. On the night of the 15th of July, although many Turkish people defended their democracy and prevented the coup attempt, some at the expense of their lives, the Turkish government did not get enough support from its European allies. Turks wrote heroic epic while fighting against the coup plotters on the streets of the country, however, most European allies failed to condemn the coup attempt because of their dislike for President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Turkish government. Rather than condemning the coup attempt, later statements merely called on the Turkish government to treat the coup plotters proportionately. Tensions were further increased by Turkish government statements that it might reinstate the death penalty for the coup plotters of July 15. Following these developments, prominent European political figures called on the EU and its member states to call off negotiations with Turkey. However, an important underlying factor was their need to avoid losing more votes to far-right parties, which hate Turkey and its EU membership bid. President Erdoğan also declared that his government might call a referendum on whether to end the accession negotiations ("Erdoğan Says Turkey", 2016). These problems led to perceptions in both Europe and Turkey that accession negotiations might be aban-

done. Ultimately, however, despite the many calls from the both sides to terminate the accession negotiations because of the serious deterioration in relations, neither party can afford a divorce due to their interdependence. The next two sections analyze the main reasons for this interdependence.

EU Dependence on Turkey

One of the most important reasons why the EU has pursued accession negotiations with Turkey is Brussels' strategy of using the country as a barrier between the Middle East and Europe. This is rational since the majority of threats to Europe, like international terrorism, illegal immigration, and trafficking in humans, guns, and drugs, come from or through Middle Eastern countries. Brussels therefore wants Turkey to build a wall against these threats and help to reduce them significantly. The EU's concerns have indeed been justified by the recent migration crisis. Since the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, which transferred the right to sign immigration deals from member states to the EU, the EU has tried to prevent irregular immigration by signing readmission agreements with third countries (Batr, 2017, p. 585). After civil war broke out in Syria, a sudden flow of migrants severely threatened European security and its social system. On March 18, 2016, the EU and Turkey therefore signed the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement to decrease migrant flows from Turkey to the Greek islands. This was vital for the EU since Turkey is the only transit route from the eastern Mediterranean to Europe (Aka and Özkural, 2015, p. 259).

The agreement stipulated that "All new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey" and "For every Syrian being returned to Turkey from Greek islands, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the EU." Additionally, Turkey promised to "take any necessary measures to prevent new sea or land routes for illegal immigration opening from Turkey to the EU", and promised to "cooperate with neighboring states as well as the EU to this effect" (European Council, 2016). In return, the EU pledged to lift visa requirements for Turkish citizens by the end of June 2016 if Turkey fulfilled all the conditions in the agreement (Ibid.). The

agreement enabled the EU to both decrease Syrian immigration flows from Turkey and register immigrants to prevent threats from them. A year after the agreement, irregular immigration from Turkish soils to Greek islands had decreased by 85 percent while deaths of migrants in the Aegean Sea had decreased by 95 percent (“Türkiye Sözüünü Tuttu”, 2017). EUROSTAT, the EU’s statistical office, also provided that 1.2 million number of registered asylums in 2015 in the member states of the EU decreased to 654,000 in 2017 and 580,000 in 2018. In short, the agreement has been very effective, (Becatoros, 2019) thereby demonstrating how vital cooperation with Turkey is as a barrier protecting the EU’s security interests.

Due to its strategic position for transferring Caspian gas to Europe, Turkey is critical for the EU’s energy security plans, which aim to diversify its energy supply to reduce its dependence on Russian gas (Tagliapietra, 2018, p. 113). This makes it difficult for the EU call off accession negotiations with Turkey. While the EU was founded to increase cooperation in the coal and steel industries, energy became more economically important with the signing of the Single European Act in 1986. The goal of creating a single market led the European Commission to take steps to liberalize the electricity and gas markets. Soon after, the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht stipulated that the EU should develop cross-border projects within the framework of the Trans-European Networks to strengthen the continent’s energy infrastructure. In response to climate change and its increasing dependence on Russian gas, the EU has adopted more aggressive energy policy in recent years. Its targets are described in Article 194 of the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), which states, among others, that the EU must ensure the security of its energy supply (Eriş, 2016, pp. 620-621). In 2014, to achieve the targets in the treaty, the EU adopted its Energy Security Strategy with short, medium, and long terms actions. One of the most important aims was to reduce EU dependence on Russian gas through diversification (European Commission, 2014). By 2017, 69% of the EU’s gas supply was imported, (European Commission, n.d.) with 38.5% of this supplied by Russia (followed by Norway with 37.7%, Algeria with 11.9%, and Qatar with 5.2%) (European Commission, 2018). 11 members of the EU (Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland) are highly de-

pendent of Russian gas, since they provide more than 75% of their gas consumption with Russian gas (Ibid.). What is more worrying is that Germany and Italy, two of the EU's main industrial giants, import nearly half of the EU's total gas imports from Russia (Girardi, 2018). This dependence on Russian gas brings many risks for the EU, including vulnerability to supply disruptions, Kremlin's political pressures, and the anger of the Trump Administration in the US – which in June 2019 threatened Germany with sanctions if it did not limit its gas imports from Russia and stop the construction of the Nord Stream 2 project (“Thrupp Threatens”, 2019). These wide-ranging problems make Turkey a key country for the EU in terms of its energy diversification targets.

Turkey has a very significant geostrategic position in terms of energy transition since it is located between rich European markets and countries with three-quarters of the world's oil and gas reserves. Thus, Turkish governments have developed policies to strengthen its position on the North-South and East-West corridors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, n.d.). Regarding the East-West corridor, Turkey started some crucial projects with partners to suit the EU's energy diversification targets. The most famous was the Nabocco pipeline project, intended to transfer 31 billion cubic meters of gas per year from Azerbaijan, Iraq, Turkmenistan, and Iran to Austria across Turkey. However, the project collapsed in 2013, and has been replaced by the construction of TANAP (Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline) and TAP (Trans-Adriatic Pipeline). When complete, TANAP will initially transfer 10 billion cubic meters of gas per year from Azerbaijan via Turkey to countries that TAP passes, namely Greece, Albania, and Italy as the end point (Tagliapietra, p. 114). Inaugurated on June 12, 2018, in Eskişehir, Turkey, and described as the energy silk road, TANAP will eventually have a capacity of 31 billion cubic meters of gas per year (TANAP, n.d.). Gas supply from Turkey via TANAP to TAP is expected to start in 2020 (Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Turkey, n.d.). TANAP, together with TAP and the South Caucasus Pipeline, form one of the most important components of the Southern Gas Corridor, a crucial European Commission initiative to import gas from the Caspian region to diversify the EU's energy routes and reduce its dependence on Russian gas.

Yet despite the EU's efforts, recent projects have increased its dependence on Russian gas, particularly Nord Stream 2 between Russia and Germany, Turkish Stream, and Tesla. Turkish Stream will transfer 31.5 billion cubic meters of Russian gas per year across the Black Sea to Turkish Thrace (from Anapa to Kıyıköy). In Turkish Thrace, Turkish Stream will join the European pipeline Tesla, which will carry 27 billion cubic meters per year of Russian gas arriving in Turkey through Turkish Stream to Austria via Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, and Hungary. Both projects are expected to be finished by the end of 2019. Turkish Stream will enable Turkey to exert significant leverage over some EU member states, namely Greece, Hungary, and Austria.

Another reason why the EU cannot abandon the accession negotiations is that Turkey is a very large market for especially for Germany and France, the EU's industrial giants. The importance of the Turkish market for these countries can be easily understood from population figures. Whereas the total population of the 11 East European countries that joined the single market in 2004, 2007, and 2013 is 105 million, Turkey has 81 million alone. One of the most important reasons why the EU granted membership to East European countries was of its need to create new free markets for the EU's major industrial countries. Turkey's market was opened to the EU's giants many years before the Eastern enlargements. In 1995, with Association Council Decision 1/95, the EU created a customs union with Turkey for industrial products. Since then, European products have gained the largest share of daily consumption in Turkey. In 2018, Turkey was the EU's fifth largest export destination with 88.6 billion dollars, followed by the US (with 466 billion dollars), China (with 239 billion dollars), Switzerland (with 179 billion dollars), and Russia (with 97 billion dollars) (European Commission, 2019). Therefore, losing the large Turkish market in a world where everyone is looking for new markets would definitely cause great losses for major EU companies. It is beneficial here to firstly evaluate the Turkish market's importance from a German perspective since Germany is the EU's biggest exporter of goods to Turkey and the EU's unquestioned industrial leader.

After two devastating world wars, becoming a powerful economy has become critical to make Germany an influential actor in European and

world affairs. The EU's role has been vital in this regard. One of the most important reasons for Germany's participation in European integration was to sell its industrial products in European markets without customs duties. Indeed, thanks to European integration, German products now dominate EU member states' markets. In addition, as the EU's biggest economy, Germany is the most powerful influencer of the Union's political priorities and orientations. To protect and increase its economic power, Germany also needs strong trade relations with Turkey because of its significant share of German exports. In 2018, for example, while German exports to Turkey were worth 20.4 billion dollars, (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2019a) it made 134 billion dollars worth of exports to the US, (World's Top Exports, 2019, February 26) which is the most powerful economy in the world and Germany's main trading partner. Germany also invests significantly in Turkey, with 7,333 companies in Turkey having a German share in March 2019 (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı, n.d.). Since 1980, German companies have invested about 14.5 billion dollars in Turkey (Almanya'nın Türkiye'deki Dış Temsilcilikleri, n.d.). German Chancellor Angela Merkel has many times underlined the importance of a stable Turkey for the German economy: "Germany has a strategic interest in a sound economic development in Turkey. If we behave in a way that would weaken Turkey that would not be in our interest." ("Merkel Vows Support", 2018). Although she many times stressed her opposition to Turkey's EU membership, Merkel has consistently rejected calling off accession negotiations by considering, among others, the critical position of Turkey for Germany's economy. For Merkel, accession negotiations with Turkey should continue, because they are in the form of an 'open-ended process'. With such an attitude, she indicated that she finds the right balance because foreign policy is always made with the mixture of values and interests (by mentioning values, she possibly means concerns about Turkey's democratization and creating a European identity, which, according to many EU politicians, supposedly cannot include Turkey) ("Merkel: Türkiye İle Müzakereler", 2019).

Economically and politically, France broadly shares Germany's understanding of European integration. Economically, France has used the integration project to sell its industrial and agricultural products without

duties and targeted to take the common funds for its farmers. Politically, France wanted to lead the continent during the early years of the European integration to create a Europe independent from the US. For example, President Charles De Gaulle twice vetoed Britain's membership application in the 1960s with that purpose. Indeed, France's desire to lead the EU has always continued. It has pioneered several crucial projects, such as the common market and the Maastricht Treaty, through French citizen Jacques Delors' ambitious leadership of the European Commission. In recent years, however, the global financial crisis has hit the French economy by decreasing production, increasing unemployment, and reducing the purchasing power of the middle class, which together provoked the yellow vest movement on the streets of France. During his successful election campaign, Macron promised to revive French economic power. Accordingly, one of the main efforts of the current government has been to strengthen France's foreign trade relations. In this context, Turkey's large market has become crucial for France. For example, French exports to Turkey were 7.4 billion dollars in 2018 (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2019a). Turkey ranks 14th among countries importing from France (World's Top Exports, 2019, May 29). Between 2002 and March 2019, total French investment in Turkey was 7.2 billion dollars (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı, n.d.). As for March 2019, 1,534 companies in Turkey had French shares (Ibid.). These investments in Turkey have had quite positive effects on France's growth, employment, and competitiveness. The automobile, textile, and pharmaceutical industries are key sectors in these economic relations (Türk-Fransız Ticaret Derneği, n.d.). For example, Renault has a significant presence in Turkey. Established in Bursa in 1969, OYAK Renault Automobile Factories, a French-Turkish partnership with a share of 49% for OYAK and 51% for Renault Group, is one of Renault's most productive facilities outside Western Europe, with an annual production capacity of 360,000 cars and 750,000 engines (Oyak Renault, n.d.). In 2018, Renault became by far the best-selling auto brand in Turkey with 76,931 cars, followed by German Volkswagen with 49,749 cars, and Italian FIAT with 41,668 cars ("2018 Yılında En Çok Satan", 2019).

Turkey's Dependence on the EU

The most significant historical reason why Turkey cannot abandon accession negotiations is that EU accession has long been Turkey's most important modernization target. After its construction on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, the largest Islamic empire in world history, Turkey managed to rapidly modernize social and political life thanks to its founding leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who defined Turkey's vision as rising beyond the level of contemporary civilizations. Some of Atatürk's important modernization reforms after the proclamation of the republic in 1923 were as follows: the Caliphate was abolished in 1924; the post of *şeyhülislam*, the chief religious official in the Ottoman Empire, was abolished in 1924; the education system was completely secularized under the Law of Unification of Education, adopted in 1924; with the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code and the Italian Penal Code in 1926, the legal system removed the influence of the *ulema* or religious scholars; the provision defining the state religion as Islam was removed from the constitution in 1928; the use of Arabic script was stopped and a new Latin alphabet adopted in 1928; the weekly public holiday was changed to Sunday from Friday in 1935 (Zürcher, 2009, pp. 277-278). Perhaps the most impressive evidence of the forward-looking nature of these modernizations is that women gained the right to vote and be elected in the early 1930s, many years before the majority of Western countries, such as France (in 1945) and Switzerland (at cantonal level in 1959 and national level in 1971). As part of its modernization and Westernization project, Turkey entered alliances with Western societies and participated in various economic, defense, political, and human development organizations, such as the OEEC (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and the Council of Europe. Through social and political modernization, and organizational cooperation with Western societies, Turkey was able to differentiate itself from other underdeveloped countries in the Middle East.

Since the 1960s, one of the most important elements of achieving Westernization and modernization for Turkey has been joining the EU. As Turkey's most important foreign policy priority, it has been maintained by all governments to a greater or lesser extent. Crucially, despite

various political crises with the EU or individual member states, Turkish people have always supported accession as they desire more political, economic, and social modernization, in line with Atatürk's vision. For example, an opinion poll conducted by the Economic Development Foundation (*İktisadi Kalkınma Vakfı - İKV*) in 2017, when the crisis between Turkey and the EU was very intense, shows that 78.9% of Turkish citizens support EU membership. The poll results indicate that economic welfare, democratization, and protection of human rights are the main motivations of supporters ("Turkish Citizens' Support", 2018). The EU's role in Turkey's democratization is indisputable. Notably, between 1999 and 2004, the Turkish parliament passed nine harmonization packages, two comprehensive constitutional amendment packages, and other legislative reforms, which have introduced reforms in freedoms of speech, worship, assembly, and association, and the protection of human rights, to open accession negotiations with the EU. Given that these reforms have improved the life of Turkish people and contributed to their Europeanization, many intellectuals in Turkey dream that the government will one day resume the reforms. Simply put, the EU is Turkey's main source of democratization.

Turkey's extreme dependence on EU trade, direct investment, and the benefits of the customs union also prevent Turkey from ending accession negotiations. Economically, the process has already made Turkey more prosperous, stable, and attractive. The EU is by far its largest export market and the main foreign direct investor. In 2018, it took 50% of Turkey's total exports (83.9 out of 167.9 billion dollars), (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2019b) while EU companies provided 4.2 out of the total 6.5 billion dollars in foreign direct investment ("Türkiye'ye Doğrudan", 2019). The customs union, signed in 1995 to cover industrial products, is also vital for the Turkish economy. Some Turkish scholars have harshly criticized the agreement because it does not include basic agricultural products and forces Turkey to accept EU trade agreements with third countries (That is, while Turkey must abolish duties for countries that sign free trade agreements with the EU, these countries are not obliged to do the same for Turkey). However, it has significantly contributed to Turkey's economic development. Foreign trade volumes between Turkey and the EU have increased almost six-fold since 1995, from 28 billion

dollars in 1995 to 159 billion dollars in 2017. Due to increased competition and duty-free imports of intermediate industrial goods, Turkish industry was forced to modernize and produce to EU standards. Consequently, demand for Turkish goods from neighboring countries has significantly increased – almost 20-fold since 1995. By integrating Turkey into the world economy, the customs union has also encouraged Turkey to become an international trading state (Kirişçi and Ekim, 2015).

Conclusion

Various key developments have damaged relations between Turkey and the EU during the 2010s. First, mainstream political parties in EU member states have stolen the discriminatory rhetoric of far-right parties regarding Turkey to avoid losing more votes (as reflected in the Turkish-Dutch diplomatic crisis of March 2017). Secondly, Turkey's European allies did not give sufficient support to the Turkish government during and after the July 15 failed coup attempt. Thirdly, Turkey announced that it could reinstate the death penalty, which it abolished in 2004 as a part of fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria, against the coup plotters of July 15. The resulting tensions made many prominent politicians in both Europe and Turkey call to terminate the accession negotiations. This has created a perception in public opinion in both sides that the accession negotiations process may be discontinued. However, despite the problems, this is an exaggeration. Such a divorce between these partners seems impossible due to their significant political and economic interdependence.

The principle reason for the EU's dependence on Turkey is the latter's use of Turkey as part of its security strategy to prevent new security threats entering Europe, such as international terrorism, illegal immigration, and trafficking in guns and drugs. Considering that these problems generally come from Middle East countries, Turkey has become indispensable for the EU. For example, Turkey's accommodation of Syrian immigrants and its signing of the readmission agreement with the EU have significantly eased the refugee load of EU member states. In addition, the EU has become dependent on Turkey through its Southern Gas Corridor initiative, which is part of its strategy to reduce its energy de-

pendence on Russia by diversifying its energy supply routes. By hosting the Southern Gas Corridor's TANAP pipeline, Turkey has become a crucial country for the EU. Economically, the EU is dependent on the large Turkish market, which is the sixth largest importer of EU goods. Turkey's duty-free market of 81 million consumers is critical for the EU's industrial giants, Germany and France.

In turn, Turkey is significantly dependent on the EU politically as the main source of modernization. Since 1963, Turkey has seen EU membership as a key element to rise beyond the level of contemporary civilizations, which Atatürk determined as the vision of modern Turkey. This viewpoint has always been important, although implemented less by some governments than others. Economically, Turkey sends half of its total exports to the EU while two-thirds of foreign direct investment in Turkey comes from the EU. In addition, thanks to the EU-Turkey customs union, trade volumes have increased almost six-fold since 1995. Turkey has also become an important good supplier for its periphery countries as it can import intermediate industrial goods duty-free from the EU.

Given all these mutual gains, it would be irrational for either side to risk them by terminating the accession negotiations. In short, the accession negotiations process is likely to continue against all the odds and despite any new problems in the Turkey-EU relationship.

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