

KAPIDA BEKLEMekten YORGUN TÜRKİYE VE BİR KERE DAHA AB ÜYELİK MÜZAKERELERİNİ CANLANDIRMA ÇABALARI; HALA KARAR VERME ZAMANI GELMEDİ Mİ?

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ÖZ

Yarım yüzyıldan fazla bir zaman önce, Avrupa Birliğinin (AB) oluşumunu müteakip, 1959 yılında yaptığı ortaklık başvurusuyla başlayan Türkiye'nin AB rüyası hiçbir zaman gerçeğe dönüşmedi. Daha önce birçok defa olduğu gibi, şu günlerde Türkiye-AB ilişkileri bir kez daha benzer zor bir aşamadan geçmektedir. İçinde bulunulan durumu uzun bir rüyadan uyanmak, aşırı yorgunluk, ümitsizlik ve benzeri hangi terminoloji ile açıklarsanız açıklayın, resmi müzakereler daha önceki gayri-resmi pazarlıklar gibi anormal bir şekilde uzamakta ve iki taraf için de çekilmez bir hal almaktadır. Pazarlığın içinden çıkılmaz bir hal alması ve sonuçsuz bir evrede bulunması, belki de birileri için tam da arzu edilen, kültürel ve dini konularda diğer üyelerle farklı olan Türkiye'yi dışarda bırakarak birliği bir Hristiyan kulübü olarak tutma çabalarının bir parçasıdır. AB, Türkiye gibi büyük bir ülkeyi üye olarak kabul edecek güç ve kapasiteden yoksun mudur, gibi birçok soru da akla gelmekte ve devam etmekte olan müzakerelerin iyi bir sonuç vereceği sorgulanmaktadır. Bazı AB ülkeleri Türkiye ile pazarlıkları dondurma, sonlandırma veya üyelik dışında Brexit benzeri kalıcı bir ortaklık yapısını hayata geçirmek gibi üyelik dışındaki diğer seçenekleri dillendirmeye başladılar bile. Kalitatif keşfedici veri çözümlemesi vaka çalışmaları metodlarını kullanan bu çalışma, gündemin ilk sıralarında yerini koruyan, Türkiye'nin AB üyelik sürecinin geleceği, katılımı ilgili devam eden güncel sorunlar ve sonucu garanti olmayan bir oyalama taktiği gibi algılanan müzakerelerin bitirilebilir olup olmadığını irdelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AB, Türkiye, Türkiye-AB Üyelik, Serbest Bölge

Jel Kodları: M0, M1, P4, F1

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FATIGUED TURKEY AND THE ATTEMPTS TO RE-ENERGIZE THE 54 YEARS OLD EUROPEAN DREAM ONE MORE TIME; ISN'T TIME FOR DECISION MAKING YET?

ABSTRACT

Since the formation of the European Union (EU) was created over a half century ago, Turkish dream of EU membership has never become a reality. Currently, the European Union (EU) membership dream of Turkey is going through a rough period similar to its prior stalemate episodes. Call it a rude awakening, fatigue, hopelessness, or whatever the terminology we may like to use to describe the condition, it is getting old and wearing both of the negotiating sides down. The stalemate may be the goal of preserving the persona of the EU as a strictly Christian “club,” one that would consider Turkey to be an un-European country from cultural and religious standpoints. Is the EU club incapable of incorporating a larger candidate country like Turkey into the free trade block, or are there other reasons we may have for questioning the viability of the ongoing talks? Some of the member states of the EU already started to pronounce suspension, ending the ongoing accession negotiations, or otherwise formulating a relationship similar to Brexit that is something other than the full membership of the EU for Turkey. Assuming the EU membership is no longer an allure with great benefits, is it something worth the price that Turkey and its citizens must pay after a half century delayed arrival? Using multiple exploratory qualitative case study methodologies, this paper will evaluate the prospects of this hotly debated membership status of Turkey for the EU, the current issues surrounding the ongoing accession negotiation processes, and the progress toward the completion of the now open ended and ongoing formal accession talks.

Keywords: EU, Turkey, Turkish Membership Application of EU, Free Trade Block

JEL Codes: M0, M1, P4, F1

INTRODUCTION

After WWI and its devastating aftermath, European visionaries were vocal about the idea of forming a unified Europe. The Pan-European Movement, formed in 1922 by Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, was the driving force that fueled these ideas into a reality in the coming years. In an attempt to avoid similar bloodshed in the continent following WWII, Winston Churchill called for a “United States of Europe” which, in 1946, nurtured the seed for an European Union (EU) which was planted during the earlier decades. In order to coordinate cooperation with each of the member states, the Council of Europe was established in 1949. Cooperation followed by regulating coal and steel production when the Paris Treaty was signed by Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and the Netherlands creating the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. Evolution of the EU continued by formation of the European High Authority and the Common Assembly. Integration of the ECSC original 6 states continued by formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) as the result of the Treaties of Rome signed in 1957. The European countries were able to reach yet another agreement in 1965 to merge all three separate organizations of EEC, ECSC and EUROATOM into one entity, called European Communities (EC), after signing the Merger Treaty in Brussels. The Maastricht Treaty signed in 1992, which was the following step that came into effect in 1993, was the agreement that created today’s unified European Union (EU) with its structure, name and the currency (Kurter, 2010).

Similar to the evolution of the EU, the Turkish European dream started in 1959 as an Associated Membership application in to the EEC, which was signed and finalized in 1963, qualifying Turkey to become an Associate Member of the European Family. Turkey’s application to the EEC for a full membership in 1987 was followed by a declaration in 1997 by the EU side that Turkey was finally eligible to be considered as a candidate country to join the formal negotiations phase of the EU membership process. The next major successful step on Turkey’s Europeanization path was its acceptance into the European Customs Union (ECU) in 1995. While the ECU agreement and elimination of 14% of tariffs starting January 1996 catalyzed growth of trade between both the EU and Turkey for most of the goods and industrial commodities, it excluded free movement of services, agricultural products, capital, labor and movement of various other trade items. Similar to most other studies, Keegan and Green’s study showed that after implementation of the ECU, European export to Turkey increased by 1.5 billion US dollars in a few short years (Keegan and Green, 2003). While benefits of the Customs Union agreement for both sides proved to be beneficial and desired, the agreement is currently in need of amendments to rectify a few shortcomings. The initial sought after full membership into the ECU will, if accepted, be able to remove all of the exceptions that were put in place as part of the ECU agreements signed by the EU and Turkey in 1995 (Flam, 2003). Failure of the Turkish-EU membership

talks will necessitate the revision, or amendments, to the 1995 ECU agreement to satisfy today's bilateral and global needs.

In 2005, after 42 years of informal negotiations filled with so many ebbs, flows, a few instances of suspension of the membership application, and the ECU agreement and its implementation; and with so much fanfare, enthusiasm and photo ops, the EU finally began its long-awaited official accession negotiations with Turkey. During the subsequent 12 years of formal negotiations for accession, other than the exception of provisionally closed Science and Research chapter out of total 35 negotiable chapters, the Turkish membership into the EU is still bogged down with fundamental political issues without any certainty and the absence of a real game plan (Phinnemore and İçener, 2016; Turhan, 2016). While Turkey conforms to some or most of the EU acquis in order to accommodate the membership talks, due to the individual member states' blockages and vetoes on various negotiating chapters for various reasons, the talks are currently locked into a standstill state. The lack of any real advocacy for the Turkish cause within the EU bureaucracies and the member states, coupled with heavyweight countries of the EU, France and Germany's frequent second thoughts about Turkey's eligibility for the EU membership seem to push the ongoing process to pre-formal negotiation era, and make "no progress" as the only expected outcome in this pursuit for Turkey.

Prior projections of realization of the EU membership of Turkey by some supporters of the accession by 2012 have long gone; and the pessimistic estimation of finalizing the accession negotiation within 10 to 15 years from the start of the negotiations would be reached in about next three years (Kurter, 2010; Phinnemore and İçener, 2016). However, overlooking the current deadlocked condition of the talks, and having almost half of the negotiating chapters blocked by the member states with the other half unopened with only one conditionally closed progress outcome, completion of the talks on the remaining chapters and the materialization of membership of Turkey to the EU would be almost impossible within the next three years, even in a miraculous setting. While Turkey was never turned away from applying for the EU membership and never fully informed of the EU expectations from Turkey in order to become a full member state at the beginning of the process, both sides are currently exhausted and vocalizing the impossibilities of this marriage. Very similar to the UK who is currently negotiating its exit from the EU for a full autonomy in its own affairs, Turkey is not a small marginalized country like others who can relinquish its sovereignty to the superior authority of the EU, and the Franco-German controlled union who is not so liberal and diverse to share the decision-making process with an equally powerful outsider country such as Turkey. After so many years of arm twisting and fruitless trials, finally, both sides are understanding that the differences are not rectifiable, and a brake-up is on the horizon.

This paper examines the causes of the prolonged application process of Turkish membership into the EU in the current context. After a brief analysis of the prolonged applicant status, the author tries to assess the current situation, the ongoing issues surrounding the negotiations and the possible outcomes of the one-half century Turkish dream of becoming an EU member state. Just like President Erdogan's most recent complaints regarding the ongoing negotiations' longevity and the deadlocked situation captured by most of the media outlets, the business community of both Turkey and the EU would like to see the possible positive outcome of the ongoing negotiations for its strategic planning and future business activities. Shifting some of the production facilities to the youngest and the most cost-effective labor markets of the EU, would not just make the business community happier; it would also make the anti-immigrant EU countries more at ease suggesting the Turkish citizens would remain in their home country, rather than immigrating to an EU member state for any potential job prospects.

1. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

This study uses qualitative methodology, applying a mixture of intrinsic and exploratory case study approaches to understand the Turkish endeavor of joining the EU (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1993). In order to assure the ethical needs for accuracy, triangulation techniques and the use of multiple source practices were also applied for analysis of the case. The study investigates the ongoing process of Turkish membership application into the EU, its viability and the estimate time frame for this complex process to come to a fruition.

2. CAUSES OF THE STALEMATE - CURRENT ISSUES

Both the EU member states and Turkey have multiple issues on the table as to the reasons why the negotiations are currently at a standstill; and each side accuses the other side for the irreconcilable differences and the reasons for the deadlock. There are also defined reasons that are not vocalized but seen as the root cause of the "no progress" membership application process.

Since the EU was built on the foundation of the ECSC which was formed by the six original European proper states (Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Luxembourg) who signed the Paris Treaty in 1951 absent of the UK, France and Germany were always considered to be the engine of the organization from the start. In fact, under the powerful leadership of Charles de Gaulle, France was deliberate to a point of contention in order to keep supranational powers out of the EU such that the UK was not able to join the EEC and the other member countries were unable to influence France in that direction. Britton's entry application in 1963 was not processed and the country was kept out of the organization for the next 10 years until 1973. Historical French-British rivalries not only kept the UK out of the EU for 10 years, France's collusion with Germany on various political issues and their influence on the direction of the EU had marginalized the UK and pushed her in search of an equally stronger ally to counter the French-German dominance. Turkey's population size, parallel to its voting

potential in the EU parliament if accepted into the EU, would have provided the best opportunity for the UK to counterbalance the French-German block and its influence on the direction of the Union. These internal politics of the EU was one of the main reasons why the UK supported Turkish membership into the EU, while France was always on the side of the naysayer's block. In addition to its influence on the commission and the other EU decision making mechanisms as a whole, it is ironic that France is one of the most important member states, after Greek Cypriots, who currently uses its veto power to block Turkish negotiation to continue on various accession chapters.

While Greece had softened its historical and habitual objections to everything that involved Turkey's acceptance into the EU to a more neutral stand, and conveyed support for the ongoing negotiations, the Greek Cypriot's accession into the EU allowed this member state the needed opportunity to carry out the historical duty of Greek action to create roadblocks for the Turkish accession processes for its own bilateral gains and recognition attempts. The traditional main advocate of Turkish membership out of the big three EU countries, the UK's current preoccupation with Brexit is leaving Turkey without any real support and a powerful ally within. Rather than focusing on how to prepare Turkey and its institutions to conform with the EU standards just like it was historically done for the other accessing countries, the big two and some of the other smaller EU member states, such as Greek Cypriots, Austria and Netherlands, seem to be entangled in championing the creation of obstacles to block the opening of any new, or formerly blocked negotiating chapters. These are all done in an effort to receive concessions for their own bilateral political issues with Turkey, or to satisfy their own current domestic political audiences at home. In the current context, the veto power of the individual countries is being used more carelessly and frequently for the newly accessing member states. This issue alone is seen as "empirical evidence" by Müftüler-Bac and Çiçek that the stalemate of the ongoing negotiations is not solely caused by any Turkish shortcomings of the EU acquis, but rather bilaterally and due to member states' opportunistic actions (Müftüler-Bac and Çiçek, 2017). After many years of fruitless negotiations and the current stalemate status of the ongoing negotiation process remind us and give credence to the former British PM David Cameron's assessment of the situation and his dissatisfaction of the veto system. Cameron, seeing similarities between the UK's and Turkey's petitions to join the EU, placed these naysayers into three different categories: The first group of people are the market protectionists, who see Turkey as an economic power to threaten its share of the pie; the second group of people is cultural naysayers, who do not like Turkey's Eastern versus Western characteristics and want Turkey to choose one side over the other; and the third group of people according to Cameron are the ones who misunderstand Islam and has prejudicial feelings toward majority Muslim Turkey (Castle, 2010).

The absence of any real encouragement by the EU institutions, a lack of any positive developments on the urgently sought-after and time-to-time promised visa liberations for Turkish

citizens, the absence of cooperation and support against Turkish terror groups and extradition of wanted criminals back to Turkey, as well as other added obstacles and blockage of almost half of the negotiating chapters by the member states, puts Turkey in an exhausted state. The condition is exasperated further by discouragements which were vocalized by Sarkozy of France prior to leaving the French Presidency office, and later resonated by Chancellor Merkel of Germany, President Macron of France, and other member state representatives that Turkey should not be admitted into the EU. Researchers studying this case and the Turkish leadership may treat the statements of the other individuals as “free speech”, but these two, Merkel and Macron, are the leaders of the remaining locomotive countries that influence the direction of the EU. If Turkey is not eligible to join the EU, then why were the still ongoing formal negotiations started in 2005? Don't these stated discouragements from the EU heavyweights nullify the whole process and present Turkey with no reason to implement the EU reforms and not cooperate further with any of the EU demands? While pluralism and diversity are seen as an excellent virtue in many social and political aspects of our daily lives, it is causing disarray and producing counterproductive outcome for Turkish entry into the EU.

The European Commission, who traditionally functions as a motivator, advocate and sometimes performs balancing acts between negotiating and the current member states to discard any of their unreasonable demands from the accessing countries, has not been observed adequately in the case of Turkey during its accessing negotiations. In the earlier cases of similar unjustifiable attempts by the member states, while offering Turkey a limited partnership rather than a full membership, and pressuring Turkey into accept Armenian Genocide claims as a prerequisite for the membership process were all rejected by the earlier European Commission, saying the rules cannot be changed in the middle of a game. The Commissioner Allie Rehn's earlier balancing act during the member states' demands for suspension of the accessing negotiation talks with Turkey for not opening up its sea and airports for the Greek Cypriot flagged vessels in 2006, and Turkey's refusal to comply with these demands were examples of an effective Commissioner behaviors. Rehn, at that time, dismissed those demands stating the fact that the EU were also not able to fulfill its 2004 promise of trading directly with the Turkish Cypriot side if Greek Cypriots were not able to ratify the Annan plan (Burgin, 2016). While there are Turkish claims of EU defaulting on the agreed payments for the Syrian refugee exchange program, and recanting on its promise of visa liberalization for Turkish citizens, the EU Commissioner's inaction and absence may have been viewed questionable and discouraging for the Turkish side. Prejudicial treatment claims of Turkey by the EU were not only limited to the political statements coming from the politicians, academic research also showed discrepancies between Turkish accessing negotiations and the other member and accessing states.

Phinnemore and İçener (2016) compared the first 10 unusual years of Turkish accession negotiation process with Croatia, Montenegro and Iceland; and Müftüler-Bac and Çiçek (2017) did a similar comparative study on Bulgarian and Turkish formal talks during the same time period. Despite the current Turkish stalemate position, Croatia is currently enjoying its full membership into the EU, Montenegro has 28 of 35 chapters opened for discussion, and 3 chapters are already provisionally closed. Iceland, prior to abandoning its ongoing accession talks in 2013, had 27 negotiating chapters open for talks, and 11 of them were already provisionally closed at that time. At the end of their studied period of the first 10 years of the formal negotiations, the Syrian refugee exchange agreement between the EU and Turkey was seen as the only hope to re-energize the paralyzed accession talks. The hope that the researchers were talking about hasn't produced any positive outcome, and the stalemate condition of the accession negotiations emerged only after one year from the Syrian refugee exchange agreement (Phinnemore and İçener, 2016). For the Bulgarian and Turkish comparison study, Müftüler-Bac and Çiçek not only found differences in the commission's opening of multiple chapters for Bulgaria while opening only one chapter at a time for Turkey, the EU seemed to alter its commission rules to allow member states to use their vetoes against Turkey more freely when there was no singular bilateral veto against the Bulgarian accession progress. Researchers saw stark differences in the treatment of Turkey as compared to Bulgaria and point out an implementation of a new set of rules to hinder the Turkish negotiation's pace in every step of the process (Müftüler-Bac and Çiçek, 2017).

It is also point of contention for the Turkish side that fairly easier and quicker accession process followed by the other member states, evolved so much, or made specifically complex, long and almost impossible for the case of Turkey. Keeping the length and difficulties of the informal negotiation phase of Turkey in mind, it was expected that the length of time for the formal negotiations would take longer and without any guaranteed outcome of membership, but no one expected the process to be this exhaustive, bitter and terminally deadlocked. There was a cautious optimism by Turkey that the negotiations would produce a positive outcome, with a gradual progress toward a final membership. The idea of a 'privileged partnership' propositions by the EU member states, as vocalized earlier by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, along with the recent offers of Brexit type arrangements short of a full membership have been categorically rejected by the Turkish side. After about half a century of European dream and 12 years of fierce formal negotiations and hard work, being proposed something short of full membership in attempts to salvage the relationship is creating the current situation which is beyond the definitions of 'deadlocked,' 'impasse' and 'stalemate' terminologies applied by the recent studies conducted on the investigation of Turkish membership of the EU (Phinnemore and İçener, 2016; Yaka, 2016).

All of these negative developments and unorthodox negotiating methods are influencing the public opinions on both side of the stalemate. The current trend of public opinion for the EU

membership of Turkey are counterproductive and becoming more negative as time passes (Aydın-Düzgıt and Kaliber, 2016). The European's negative public opinion of Turkey may have some historical roots into the European psyche based on the Ottoman era and it is beyond the sphere of our study here; nonetheless, it may be one of the main reasons behind the unsuccessful membership negotiations. Especially in recent years, due to the rising nationalistic, xenophobic, Islamophobic and protectionists political trends in Europe, Turkey has been presented as the best scapegoat for these European emotions. As it was seen in the election cases of President Sarkozy of France, as well as Austrian, Dutch and recent German elections, it seems like the contenders' anti-Turkish stance is the second most important ticket item that allows contenders to settle into the driver's seat of the country, second to economic issues. These negative feelings, politically incorrect statements and discriminating policies from the European side are producing equally negative, sometimes agitating "fascist Europe" responses from Turkey and Erdogan to further exasperate and polarize the situation to the current stalemate condition.

The loss of confidence in the EU and the rise of conservative political parties into power or influential positions in the member states have further deteriorated the relationship of Turkey and the EU and the bilateral relationships with the member states. Public opinions in Europe and Turkey equally have turned sour, and the approval rating of the ongoing accession talks by Turks of the EU, and the Turkish membership of the EU by the European public has suffered greatly. According to the Eurobarometer data, Turkish approval poll rates for the EU has dropped from 75 percent in 2001 to only 33 percent in 2005, which was the lowest amongst all of the member states (Aydın-Düzgıt and Kaliber, 2016). A swift change in the Turkish public opinion was the result of the Cyprus referendum which was engineered by the UN's Annan and supported by the EU with the promise of removing trade restrictions on the Northern Turkish Republic of Cyprus (NTRC) ports in exchange for the "yes" vote for the Annan Plan. After NTRC's overwhelming yes, and Greek Cypriots' no vote for this referendum, Greek Cypriots was admitted into the EU as the Republic of Cyprus representing the whole island; however, the trade liberalization with Turkish Cyprus' ports and trade with Turkish Cypriots directly were never initiated. Greek Cypriot's entry into the EU without fulfilling the required EU acquis of resolving all of its problems prior to entry in the EU, and recantation on the promised direct trade with NTRC ports and institutions seemed to cause a permanent blow to the Turkish trust into the EU.

All of these negative developments and rhetoric has entered into a terminal stage after the EU countries exhibited subtle support for the Gezi Park demonstrators and the botched July 15, 2016 coup plotters. Instead of siding with an accessing state and ally who became a victim of an unsuccessful take-over leaving about 240 dead and 2400 injured, the EU member states provided home and protection for the majority of the suspects and the convicts accused of plotting and carrying out these two political events. Turkish fugitives were not only given shelter in the EU countries while not being extradited back

to Turkey despite Turkey's repeated requests, they were regarded highly as invited guests into presidential palaces and social events and platforms to keep their attacks fresh on the Turkish government as it was seen in the example of Can Dündar's invitation to the German Presidential Palace. These counterproductive developments by the EU member states, were followed by the EU as a pretense to clamp down on Turkey to obtain better terms while applying leverage and pressure in the ongoing negotiations. According to President Erdogan and the other Turkish officials' public claims, only about 800 million Euro of the total first installment of 3.5 billion Euro agreed amount for the Syrian refugees was forwarded to Turkey. The remainder of the first instalment of 3.5 billion Euros and the second installment of 3.5 billion Euros are all currently unpaid; and the promised visa liberations for the Turkish citizens for their travel to the Schengen countries never implemented. On top of failing to fulfill its side of the Syrian refugee exchange agreements, the EU has recently implemented rearrangements and punitive financial cuts and penalties on its pre-accession fund payments to Turkey. These measures were supposed to punish the Turkish side for not conforming to the EU demands on alleged "human rights violations", "freedom of press" and "authoritarianism" practices.

After the formal negotiations started and while trying to corner Turkey into submission, the EU economic strength and popularity has been declining steadily while Turkish economic conditions and political strength have been increasing measurably. Loss of luster and erosion of presumed elite club status of the EU were first observed during the recent economic crises that hit Europe in 2008, and it was also seen during Iceland's exit from its EU accession talks early on. After opening 27 negotiating chapters for discussion and provisionally closing 11 of them, Iceland decided to suspend its ongoing accession talks with the EU in 2013. The suspension became permanent when Iceland finally asked the European Council to remove its candidacy status in 2015. Following Iceland's abandonment of the EU membership negotiations, the UK also wanted to relinquish its' membership of the union by employing a controversial Brexit referendum in June 2016. After a vote whereby, 52 percent of British voters were in support for the exit, and 48 percent for the status quo, the current UK administration is mandated by the referendum to negotiate its exit from the EU. While the EU is currently resembling a sinking ship metaphor economically and politically in disarray, Turkey has been described as a shining star. Due to the regained lost confidence and strength, Turkey was able to compose its own political and economic direction independent of the EU (Esfahani and Çeviker-Gürakar, 2013).

Turkey's recently gained political and economic strengths and its regained ability turn down any unreasonable demands of the EU, exasperating the current stalemated situation further. The EU decision makers who are assuming Turkey is still the sick man of Europe, or the country whose economy has had exemplified a "yo-yo economy" requiring IMF rescue funds and austerity programs every decade or so, are shocked to see an able and equal negotiating party. The EU decision makers had failed to see the fact that Turkey, since 2002, has maintained continued positive growth and growing above average

in the top performers' league along with India, China, Indonesia, and a few others. According to the World Bank Indicators database, after 15 years of steady annual 5 percent above average growth rate, Turkish economical and human indexes are currently better than some of the EU member states: 273 billion dollars of GDP in 2000 has tripled in 15 years and reached 856 billion dollars in 2016. According to the OECD Economic outlook published in 2015, the Turkish economic growth rate is the highest in the world for the years 2011 and 2013. All of the other economic and human development indicators were not any less impressive than the economic growth. One of the most important human development indicators, the Turkish life expectancy, jumped from 70 to 75 years during the same period. Foreign direct investment, the indicator that shows foreigners' trust in the local economy, also jumped from close to 1 billion dollars in 2000 to over 12 billion dollars in 2016 (World Bank, 2017).

According to the Eurostat, OECD and World Bank data, while the Turkish economy has the highest growth rate in Europe since the formal negotiations started in 2005, the EU-28 economy as a whole is performing the second slowest growth rate among the G-20 countries after Japan. Coupled with sluggish growth rates, the individual member states' economies have been going through economic crises periods since Turkey started its accession talks. The European countries' borrowing and spending spree as a whole, which started around 2008, was followed by major economic breakdowns of the individual member states between 2012-2014. According to the Eurostat numbers, the total gross government debt as a percentage of the GDP for the EU and the individual member states reached alarming levels. The Irish economic crises was followed by the installation of an independent caretaker administration to get Italy out of its economic crises condition. Following the Irish and Italian economic crises was the biggest economic crises involving the fictitious Greek bookkeeping practice that caused the Greek economic meltdown which required unprecedented global efforts by the EU, IMF and the World Bank to rescue Greece out of its bankruptcy. The current government debt to GDP ratios of Greece, Italy, Portugal, Ireland and Cyprus are all between 100%-200%, while the EU-28 as a whole has a debt to GDP ratio of 84.1% and increasing. According to the same data, Turkish government debt to GDP ratios are currently under 30% with the second lowest rate among the current accessing 7 countries of Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Although 2018 started with some contacts and attempts by both the EU and Turkey to repair the break-up, many of the researchers and the politicians are not so optimistic about the fate of Turkey's EU membership. Both of the two heavyweights of the EU, Germany and France, attempted to warm-up the strained relationship with Turkey. President Erdogan of Turkey was welcomed by President Macron of France in Paris on Jan 5, 2018 to attempt to overcome the differences. German FM, Sigmar Gabriel, also met with Turkish FM Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in Antalya, Turkey on November 4, 2017 and this visit was reciprocated by Çavuşoğlu in Gabriel's hometown in Gossler, Germany on January 6, 2018. Macron

repeated the earlier offers of “Privileged Partnership” arrangements rather than a full membership while stressing the importance of keeping Turkey “anchored” in to Europe as a member of NATO; President Erdogan noted the Turkish wait of 54 years at the door of the EU cannot be expected to last forever, and the continuation of the current conditions may finally force Turkey to turn its back to the EU (Samuel, 2018).

After evaluating most of the comparative case studies and analysis of the current situation, I found former British PM David Cameron and French President Emanuel Macron’s statements to be the most informative pieces of information which shed light on the current stalemate situation. As Cameron stated eloquently in his speech in Ankara on July 28, 2010, there are three strong camps inside European countries who do not like to see Turkey in the EU (Castle, 2010). The first camp is fearful that Turkey will become the strongest economy and, therefore, voting block with its projected population and the population of Turkish diaspora in the EU countries. The second camp has racism in their hearts and having its bigger land mass and cultural roots in the Asian continent, Turkey is not “European” and must not join the EU. The third and the last camp sees the EU as a Christian Club, and Turkey, being Muslim as the predominant religion, Turkey must be kept out of the EU to preserve its religious identity. Regardless of the archaic and not so universally accepted feelings, these emotions are the ones which drive the European people and their voting practices and guide the EU policies. The second and equally important point that summarizes and concludes this paper was made by President Macron of France in January 2018 during a joint press conference with President Erdogan of Turkey, deciphering the real intention of the EU. He says, a formula must be found to keep Turkey with Europe. According to him, the goal must be to keep Turkey as a NATO member, looking West and on the path of Europe, but out of the Union and without the planned or agreed EU integration (Samuel, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to understand the prolonged applicant status of Turkey with the EU. I tried to assess the current frozen Turkish accession negotiations with the EU, understand spoken and unspoken reasons for the delay and the possible outcomes of the Turkish dream.

After studying and analyzing most of the relevant events and case studies written on the topic, it is easy to deduce and conclude that Turkey has been working very hard on its Europeanization process and waiting at the gate of the EU for over 54 years. The EU, on the other hand and due to its public opinions and internal politics, neither wants to totally lose Turkey, nor wants to grant her the desired membership. The member states’ frivolous vetoes, the Commission’s unconstructive and discriminating approaches and delay tactics which were observed during the process, are all parts of the EU policy of rejection; all the while keeping Turkey at the door while not allowing her to go too far away. Since

stalling is the name of the game, another 54 years, or as long as Turkey can stay at the door, the play will go on.

The fruitless process has been beneficial for Turkey during the earlier periods by importing know-how and the use of Pre-Accession Funds (IPA). In the current state, not only are promised funds not being delivered, the EU's counterproductive demands and support of the elements that are targeting the very existence of the Turkish state bring further detriment to any future negotiations. The protection of Turkish terror suspects, botched coup plotters and outlawed individuals seem to outweigh all of the benefits that Turkey receives from the EU. Changing socio-economic conditions on both sides, long wait time, exhaustion and discomfort is finally kicking-in. I can project that the status quo is no longer sustainable, and if it is not the EU, Turkey will no longer be at the door waiting for the entry.

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