

BOOK REVIEW:**EU Influence Beyond Conditionality:
Turkey Plus/Minus the EU****Author**

Mario Zucconi

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Even though relations between actors in international politics are unique, some of these relations are worth more attention and especially the European Union (EU)-Turkey relations. There are several reasons for the unusual nature of these relations, and the leading cause is that Turkey applied to the EU, which was then the European Economic Community, in 1959 and has been maintaining its relations with the EU within the framework of full membership since the Ankara Agreement, which entered into force in 1963. The second factor is that Turkey, which was declared a candidate country in 1999, is the oldest candidate country in the EU. These are only a few examples of the differences that would make such relations material to investigate and research. This *sui generis* situation in Turkey's relations with the EU has also attracted the attention of academics working on the EU enlargement process, and, an extensive literature has emerged on EU-Turkey relations within the different conceptual frameworks of EU enlargement. One of these concepts is the EU's conditionality principle.

In this context, the book, titled “EU Influence Beyond Conditionality: Turkey Plus/Minus the EU”, written by Mario Zucconi and published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2020, presents an in-depth analysis of the role played by the EU accession process in Turkey’s democratic evolution and in the empowerment of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in the early 2000s and additionally indicated how Turkey's EU-driven democratic evolution

for some years had important implications in terms of regional and global order. The book consists of 7 different chapters. In the first chapter, titled "Introduction", there is information about Turkey-EU relations in the AK Party period in addition to brief hints and insight into the following chapters of the book. In this context, the book analyzes a historical process.

In line with the historical analysis, the second part analyzes the political polarization within Turkey in the pre-AK Party period. In this chapter, titled "Turkey's Polarized Politics in the 1990s", the process that created the AK Party is analyzed. This chapter includes 11 topics starting with the First topic, "The 1995 Election: Polarized Politics" in which the Refah Party plays a key role. The conflict between the center and the periphery, which peaked in the mid-1990s, was explicitly analysed regarding the Refah Party. The following sub-title, "Westernization and Secularization of the State" examines the Westernization and secularization historical processes from the Ottoman era until the beginning of the 1990s in Turkey. In "Religion in Turkish Politics", the topic of how effective religion is in Turkish politics was discussed. Following this, the Next topic, "Legal Limitations to Religion in Politics" deals with the limitation of religion in Turkish political history. The fifth sub-title is "Implications of the Limitation to Religion in Politics". In the "Religion-Associated Politics Comes to Center Stage", the historical process of religion-based politics finding a place in the center from Adnan Menderes to the 1990s is analyzed. The next topic is "Social Change and Changing Political Participation" in Turkey. In "From 'Deferential' to 'Autonomous' Electoral Participation", the connection between Ozal's economic reforms and Refah Party's electoral achievements has been looked at and examined in detail. The next topic, "New Identity in the Urban Environment" is about transformations of Turkish sociopolitical life. The following topics of this chapter are "The 'Periphery' Encounters Refah" and "The Impasse of Polarized Politics". Concluding this chapter, Zucconi argues that in Turkey in the late 1990s, it was either one way or the other, with the country being unable to move further ahead on the road to democratic politics.

The chapter titled "The European Union in the Rise to Power of the AKP" argues how the AK Party positions the EU in the Party's struggle to stay in power in the conflict between the center and the periphery. This chapter contains nine sub-headings, and as it can be understood from the sub-titles, the chapter chronologically analyzes the impact of the EU on Turkish democracy from 1985 to the first ruling period of the AK Party. Sub-titles of this chapter are "From 1995 to 2002", "Exit the 'Old Politics': Loss of Legitimacy of the Old Political Class", "Growing Relevance of the European Union Factor", "The European Union as Surrogate Authority in Turkey's Politics", "Debating the Causes of the AKP's Success", "From Refah to AKP", "The European Union in

the AKP's Rise to Power", "Broader Implications of the 2002 Vote", and "How the EU Factor Worked". Although the AK Party was new in 2002, it won the elections as the sole ruling party and started a significant transformation process in Turkey. EU harmonization packages also had a great impact on this transformation. At the end of the chapter, Zucconi claims that after the 2002 elections, the AK Party's transformed ideological and policy stands were not sufficient by themselves to sustain that new politics, and, the protection afforded by the presence of the EU factor would remain, at least for some time, an indispensable condition for the Party's survival in power.

The next chapter is titled "The European Union as Guarantor in Turkey's Democratic Evolution". The chapter consists of 7 sub-titles. In "The AK Party Builds Its Credentials as Reformer and Europeanizer", AK Party's achievements are analyzed. The achievement is about December 2004 decision. Thus, AK Party has accomplished something that no government has come close to before: ensuring Turkey's progress towards membership in the Union. The second part of this chapter is titled "Change in Civil-Military Relations in the Context of the EU Accession Process". In this section, a comparison is made between the change in Turkey and the change in Central and Eastern European countries. Zucconi claims that unlike similar reforms in Central and Eastern European countries in the 1990s, the Military Forces continued to have great respect and public support as the change took place in Turkey. The chapter "The Military, Europe and Public Opinion", analyzes the difficulties faced by Turkey-EU relations in 2004. On the one hand, Turkey opposed the membership of Cyprus (a country that it does not recognize) to the EU representing the whole island; on the other hand, it continued to support the Annan Plan. The next topic is "Membership in International Organizations and Democratic Transition". In "Further 'Protection' Offered by the European Union", there is an examination of how the perspective of EU membership and the consequent public support contributed to the creation of a changed political environment in the country and to the critical importance of issues such as the Kurdish and Cyprus problem, which have long been regarded as critical "security threats". In "The Return of Polarized Politics", reasons for re-polarization in Turkey after the 2005-2006 period and where the EU was in this polarization are discussed. As the final topic of this chapter, "The European Union and the Post-secularist Turkish State" summarises the chapter as a whole. Thus, the chapter analyses the way in which the influence of the EU helped Turkey solve political problems rooted in the early history of the Republic and move – if only temporarily – towards more advanced democratic politics.

The fifth chapter of the book is titled "Critical Erosion of the European Union's Credibility". The chapter consists of 6 sub-titles. The first two

chapters, titled "EU's Commitments Regarding Turkey's Accession" and "Backtracking on Commitments", deal with the EU's commitments to Turkey and the feedback of these commitments. In the next topic, "Evolution of the EU's Enlargement Procedures and Contents", the evolution of the EU's enlargement procedures and the reflections of this evolution on Turkey's membership process are examined. In the other two sections, "Cyprus as New Condition for, and Main Hurdle to Accession After 2004" and "An Imbroglio Impossible to Fix", the membership of Cyprus, which is the new area of struggle in Turkey's membership process, is discussed. As a consequence, in the final sub-title of this chapter, "The Erosion of the EU's Credibility with Turkish Public and Political Elites", Zucconi claims that the Cyprus issue and the difficulties it imported in the EU-Turkey relations constituted a key factor that fastly and drastically reduced the influence and transformational impact of the Union over Turkey's politics.

The fifth chapter of the book is titled "Turkey's Politics without the European Union" and the chapter includes seven parts. In the first two sub-headings, "Fading Out of the European Union and Defeat of the Secularist Establishment" and "Residual Influence of the European Union" there is a study of the EU's effect capacity on Turkey has decreased, and the reasons for this decreasing are examined. Following that, how the AK Party increased its political/popular support with the defeat of the secular segment in the country, and the decrease in the support for EU membership in Turkey are discussed in "The AKP's Political Support". As asked in the last title, "An Instrumental Use of the EU Accession?", the other two sections, "Reforms in Turkey: The EU Making a Difference" and "Later Reforms: Selective and Politically Instrumental", seek an answer to the question of whether the AK Party instrumentalized the EU and its conditionality.

The sixth chapter, titled "Turkey Plus/Minus the EU and Implications of an EU Minus Turkey" provides a summary of the book. While this chapter deals with the recent developments in Turkey, it also constitutes the book's concluding part. Zucconi thinks that the extraordinary significance of Turkey's democratic evolution under EU conditionality, even though EU conditionality no longer works on this country, merits further consideration.

The book has several strengths as well as some weaknesses in approaching Turkey-EU relations. The first strength is that the book draws attention to an issue that is rarely mentioned in Turkey-EU relations: It underlines the link between political polarization in Turkey regarding EU conditionality has led to a political atmosphere in Turkey in the early 2000s which also led to the creation of the AK Party, rejuvenating Turkish politics. On the other hand, the emerging AK Party became the actor of both convergence and alienation periods. Another critical issue is the comparative analysis of the steps taken by

the AK Party towards the EU with the Welfare Party, in which it grew up. Another comparison is the comparison of Turkey with the candidacy process of Central and Eastern European countries. The book closes a significant literature gap, especially with these two comparisons.

On the other hand, a major weakness of the book is that it puts the responsibility for Turkey's departure from the EU more on the shoulders of Turkey, ignoring crucial points of alienation such as the EU's insistence on the extension of the Turkey-EU customs union to Cyprus (an EU member that Turkey does not recognize) despite the promises given to Turkey and Turkish Cypriots in return for a positive approach to the Annan Plan. Although the book tries to focus on the perception of the EU in Turkey, the balance of its scales seems to be against Turkey. Another essential weakness in the book is that while analysing the link between Turkey's polarised political environment and EU conditionality, it ignores how Turkey achieved to continue with unprecedented political reforms despite polarisation in the country regarding EU conditionality. There was an intensely polarized political environment in Turkey in the 1990s, the beginning of the 2000s, and the following years. Turkey was declared a candidate country for the EU in 1999 under the coalition led by three different ideological parties. Similarly, the AK Party came to power in 2002 and started negotiations in 2005, rapidly implementing the EU harmonization packages despite similar hurdles. This shows that the target of membership in the EU is a state policy for Turkey above political ideologies. For this reason, it seems complicated to establish a link between Turkey's convergence and divergence from the EU and Turkey's politically polarized environment. This issue needs to be analyzed in more detail.

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