

TURKEY-EUROPEAN UNION (EU) RELATIONS IN THE PERIOD OF SINGLE PARTY RULE IN TURKEY¹

TÜRKİYE'DE TEK PARTİ İKTİDARLARI DÖNEMİNDE TÜRKİYE-AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ (AB) İLİŞKİLERİ

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ABSRTACT

This study will focus on the relations between Turkey and the European Union during the political parties (Democrat Party, Justice Party, Motherland Party, Justice and Development Party) ruling alone in Turkey. The positive and negative developments in Turkey-EU relations during the period of these parties will be evaluated and the perspectives of these parties on Turkey-EU relations will be examined in separate sections. The main problem of the study is related to the reason the relations could not reach the desired level, despite the important steps taken towards Turkey-EU relations during the period of the political parties, which were in power alone in Turkey. The study will be discussed by using a comparative method.

Keywords: European Union, Turkey, Turkey-EU Relations, Political Party.

Jel Code: Z-00, Z-19

ÖZ

Bu çalışma Türkiye’de tek başına iktidar olan siyasi partileri (Demokrat Parti, Adalet Partisi, Anavatan Partisi, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) döneminde Türkiye-Avrupa Birliği ilişkileri ele alınacaktır. Çalışmada bu partilerin Türkiye-AB ilişkilerine bakışları ayrı bölümlerde incelenecektir. Çalışmanın temel sorunsalı Türkiye’de tek başına iktidar olan siyasi partilerin döneminde Türkiye-AB ilişkilerine yönelik önemli adımlar atılmasına rağmen, ilişkilerde neden istenilen düzeye gelinemediği ile ilgilidir. Çalışma karşılaştırmalı bir metod kullanılarak ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avrupa Birliği, Türkiye, Türkiye-AB İlişkileri, Siyasi Partiler.

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¹ The concept of the European Union (EU) will be used in the study in order not to cause terminologic confusion.

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INTRODUCTION

Turkey-EU relations started on July 31, 1959 with Turkey's application for partnership (Çakmak, 2003:70). After the negotiations, Turkey said that the final goal was membership of the EU. Along with the application for partnership, the Agreement Establishing Association Relations Between Turkey and the EU, known as the Ankara Agreement, was signed on September 12, 1963, and Turkey-EU relations gained a legal dimension (Gülmez, 2008:427).

After the signing of the Ankara Agreement, the preparation process started as a priority. With the Additional Protocol approved in 1973, the transition process started, and the Customs Union was made with the decision of the partnership council numbered 1/95, accepted in 1995, and the last period began. Turkey applied for full membership of the EU on April 14, 1987, during the Turgut Özal period, without going through the last period. The European Commission prepared a report on Turkey's full membership application in 1989 and rejected the application because both Turkey and the EU were not yet ready, according to this report (Kuniholm, 2001:30). However, the EU emphasized that relations with Turkey should be developed within the framework of partnership relations (Bolkestein, 2004:23). Turkey also understood the Customs Union as a step forward in development of relations with the EU and the full membership process, and focused on the realization of the Customs Union. In this framework, the last period was passed by making a Customs Union between Turkey and the EU on March 6, 1995 (Keskin, 2001:37).

Although Turkey understood the Customs Union as a step towards the full membership process, the EU favored the continuation of relations with Turkey within the framework of partnership relations, so much so that, while the decision to start negotiations with Eastern European countries was taken in the Agenda 2000 Report and the Luxembourg Summit held in 1997, the partnership relations with Turkey continued (Arıkan, 2006:43). Subsequently, Turkey temporarily suspended its political relations with the EU with a unilateral decision (Verney, 2009:7).

While Turkey-EU relations were in this way, Turkey became a candidate country for the EU with the Helsinki Summit held in December 1999 (Baykal, 2002:22). After obtaining the candidate status, Turkey made important reforms in order to comply with the EU reforms. Following these reforms, the negotiation process between Turkey and the EU started on 3 October 2005 (Aksu, 2012:34).

While experiencing the golden age of Turkey-EU relations, in 2006 the European Commission suspended the negotiations in eight chapters, France in five chapters and Cyprus in six chapters, and Turkey-EU relations reached the freezing point (Maresceau, 2006:18). Although the Positive Agenda was adopted in 2012 to revive relations and speed up the negotiation process, the lack of trust and belief between Turkey and the EU prevented the Positive Agenda (Faucompret and Konings, 2008:40). The European Parliament recommended a suspension of negotiations with Turkey on November 24, 2016, as the state of emergency applied in Turkey after the coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016 and Turkey-EU relations faced a stalemate again (İçener, 2016:74).

Turkey-EU relations have been unstable in the historical process. There have been groups that view Turkey-EU relations differently in Turkey. Especially among the political parties in Turkey, there have been different ministers regarding the relations with the EU from a different perspective than the mainstream opinion. In Turkey, parties such as the Labor Party and Welfare Party opposed Turkey-EU relations, while parties such as the Motherland Party, Democrat Party and Justice Party supported it. (Akçay, 2016:133-142).

In this context, this study will examine the development of Turkey-EU relations in the single party periods in Turkey and their perspectives on Turkey-EU relations with a comparative method. In this study, the development of Turkey-EU relations in the period of these parties will be considered and an evaluation will be made on the basis of why the expected positive steps were not taken and the future of relations.

1. DEMOCRAT PARTY (DP) PERIOD

The Democrat Party, founded on January 7, 1946, has been an important party that influenced and shaped Turkish foreign policy during the transition to multi-party political life (Karakuş, 2021a:80). The DP took part in the elections twice between these periods. The first of these elections was held in 1946. In these elections, the DP could get 65 parliamentary seats out of the 273 MPs it nominated. The second general election was held in 1950, in which the motto was "Enough is the word for the nation." In these elections, the Democrat Party became the triumph party. The DP, which came to power with 408 MPs by taking more than half of the votes, was a right-wing party. However, the DP advocated liberalism in economy and democracy in politics. The party program promised a freer order in every field and welfare to the masses (Karpas, 1996:122).

The DP has been a party that supports Turkey's EU membership process since its inauguration. The period when Turkey applied for partnership with the EU/EEC was the DP period. The DP applied to the EU/EEC for partnership because of some reasons. The first of these concerns Westernization and security. The DP, which came to power in 1950, also favored integration with the West (Çalış, 2006:201). Because integration with the West was associated with modernization. Because of Westernization, orientation to the West, Europeanization or modernization meant integration into the international system. This situation was deemed necessary to ensure the national security of Turkey against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), whose national power capacity was not sufficient at the time (Koçer, 2009:44).

The second reason for a partnership application was economic. After World War II, Turkey was included in the Marshall Plan by obtaining help from the West for economic development (Bilgin, 2005:103). When the economic aid provided by the Marshall Plan was blocked in 1958, the economy was disrupted and problems arose in the balance of payments, and the system collapsed (Karakuş, 2021b:46). This period coincided with a period in which problems arose within the United States and economic aid decreased. Upon this, the DP created a new initiative with the EU and realized the EU was a lifeline in economic terms and prioritized the advancement of economic relations with this structuring in line with the economic development goal of Turkey (Eralp, 1997:86). EU members have an important place in Turkish foreign trade. In addition, because of its geographic proximity, Turkey must establish a relationship with the EU, where it can be used in the export of European goods to Asia and Africa, thus increasing Turkey's commercial gain.

The third reason for the partnership application was the Greek factor. Greece's application for partnership with the EU pushed Turkey to apply to the EU as well. Because Turkey produces similar things to Greece. Both countries are predominantly agricultural economy. If Greece enters the European market, Turkey is afraid of the decrease in its market share and loss. In addition, Turkey did not want to leave Greece alone in Europe in order not to get into diplomatic difficulties (Çalış, 2006:28). In addition, although the Cyprus problem with Greece seemed to be resolved with the London and Zurich Agreements, Therefore, after the DP came to power in 1950 for these reasons, it took care to bring Turkish foreign policy closer to the West. The EU/EEC also gained an important place among these institutions. In the program of the V. Menderes government, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes said that he wanted to be included in the structure established in Europe and it was aimed that Turkey's economic development would develop and speed up with this participation (Neziroğlu ve Yılmaz, 2013:1207).

The DP took part in the negotiations with the EU/EEC after the application for partnership and made an important effort for Turkey's membership to the EU/EEC. However, after the military coup on 27 May 1960, it fell from power and was closed. Relations with the EEC continued to be developed by the successor Republican People's Party (RPP) (Tekeli and İlkin, 1993:173).

2. JUSTICE PARTY (JP) PERIOD

The Justice Party (JP), a center-right, liberal-minded party that existed between 1961-1980, was founded in February 1961 under the chairmanship of Ragıp Gümüşpala. The JP, protecting the legacy of the Democratic Party and founded by Democratic party members, became the second party with

over 34% of the votes in the elections held after the 27 May military coup. The JP, which entered a coalition with the RPP in 1962, held power as the lone party after the elections in 1965, after Süleyman Demirel came to power in 1964. They remained in power during 11 different periods until October 1981 (Demirel, 2004:39). Since its establishment, the JP found Turkey's membership to the EU necessary. Moreover, JP stated that the necessary steps should be taken in order to provide an environment in which Turkey can profit. For example, in the 1965 Government Program, the JP government promised to take the necessary measures to enable the Turkish industry to withstand the competition in the partnership community, in order to become a full member of the EU (Çınar, 2011:37). However, the implementation of the Ankara Agreement did not make significant progress in Turkey-EU relations. The most important reason for this was that the EU scepticism on the executions of the Agreement in Turkey. Despite this, Turkey continued its relationship with the EU, and received financial support from the EU without being subject to any obligations, since it is in the preparation stage. The EU contributed to the development of Turkey's trade and has opened its markets to Turkey (Hale, 2003: 87).

In the 1969 election declaration, the JP emphasized that positive results in the development of Turkey's partnership with the EU/EEC would be increase during the transition period, which would include closer economic, social and financial relations (Adalet Partisi, 1969:12). For this purpose, the JP made attempts to transition to a period of preparation.

There were various reasons that Turkey seemed to be very eager to start the transition period. One of them was Great Britain's efforts to join the EU, while the other was the Junta administration's seizure of power in Greece. Great Britain persistently wanted to become a member of the Union, but the process was prolonged because of French leader Charles De Gaulle's desire to protect France's national interests. Turkey wanted to take advantage of this opportunity because it believed that Great Britain's membership to the EU would extend Turkey's path to full membership (Karluk, 2011:139). A second reason was that Greece's relations with the EU were frozen when the Junta administration came to power in Greece in 1967. This situation created an important opportunity for Turkey to close the gap with Greece, in which it lagged behind in the process of EU integration (Karluk, 2011:142).

Turkey first made a request to start the Transition Period on May 16, 1967. However, the European Union (EU) responded that the deadline had not yet expired. When Turkey made this request a second time via Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil on April 5, 1968, the European Commission responded (April 29, 1968) that it would be beneficial for Turkey to extend its Preparatory Period (Karluk, 2011:145). According to the EU, Turkey did not appear to be ready for a Transition Period economically, as Turkey did not have a fully productive Preparation Period and could not realize its structural transformations. The EU also focused industrialized countries such as Ireland, England, and Denmark during this period. In addition, the EU had developed a policy for Mediterranean countries. In this context, agreements were made with Morocco and Tunisia and the EU wanted to consider Turkey and Greece within this policy, attempting to stop the rapid progress of Turkey's full membership. However, upon Turkey's insistence, the Turkey-EU Additional Protocol negotiations began on December 9, 1968 (Keskin, 2001:36). Because of these negotiations, the Additional Protocol was approved by the Grand National Assembly on July 5, 1971, approved by the Senate on July 22, 1971, and was enacted on September 1, 1971. Later, the Protocol came into force on January 1, 1973, after it was approved by the parliaments of member countries (Keskin, 2001:38).

According to the Election Declaration of 1973, the JP emphasized the importance of the Additional Protocol and the EU's expectations of Turkey. According to party programs, the full membership process was deemed important, as it was necessary to consider and regulate to the EU/EEC perspective to serve the development and strengthening of the country, provide a market for exports and protect national interests. With this view, the JP stood out as the party that defended Turkey's right to be included in the EU without delay (Adalet Partisi, 1973:16). The JP focused on the need to start the Transition Period as soon as possible to ensure economic development and that it should be carried out accurately (Üste, 2006:337). The JP contended that Turkey should enter the Common

Market as to not be excluded from economic integration and that political integration that would follow. The JP did not seek short-term benefits in terms of membership in the EU/EEC, but instead was focused on long-term goals (Özgişi, 2012:151). In the long term, Turkey strove for full membership in the EU/EEC, so as to not be treated indifferently by Western Europe, and to create the political, economic, and cultural ties necessary to develop its economy. The JP saw the EU/EEC as an economic power and focused on this aspect of it, believing that the Turkish people would reach a higher standard of living (Demir, 1972:732). For this reason, the JP advocated the continuation of positive economic relations with the EU/EEC. During the transition Period, which begun after the signing of the Additional Protocol, it was in Turkey's national interest to eliminate any problems in the domestic market and to realize an outward-looking industrialization, which included foreign competitiveness.

3. MOTHERLAND PARTY (MP) PERIOD

MP and its leader Turgut Özal, who came to power after the November 6, 1983 election, took an attitude of continuing relations with the EU and openly expressed the goal of full membership in government programs. During this period, Özal, who was more interested in domestic problems and economic structure, tried to make progress by crafting economic initiatives in his relations with the EU. Thus, relations that were interrupted after the revolution then they were developed. So much so that the Association Council convened in 1986 and relations returned to normal. Even though Turkey was not fully ready due to economic and political reasons, it applied for full membership to the EU on April 14, 1987. MP stated that while making this application, they tried to show an understanding of prioritizing the balance of mutual interests in relations (ANAP, 1987:13). Similarly, Özal stated in his 1989 party program and election manifesto that the relations would include economic development, defense, and security, and that the interests would be balanced (ANAP, 1989:25). After the Cold War, MP stated it aimed to bring Turkey to the level of advanced members of the Union as soon as possible and that the relations that developed with the application for full membership would speed up this understanding. MP also stated that Turkey would attach special importance to efforts to strengthen NATO's European part within full membership to the Union (ANAP, 1991:17). Yıldırım Akbulut's and Mesut Yılmaz's governments established after Özal and they maintained Özal's policies about the EU. However, during the Yılmaz period, it was emphasized that the EU should do something to fulfill its responsibilities towards Turkey.

4. JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY (AK PARTY/JDP) PERIOD

The AK Party, which came to power with the November 3, 2002, elections, gave great importance to Turkey–EU relations in the early years of its mandate. Considering Turkey's close geographical and historical ties with the EU, the AK Party ensured that relations with the EU are given top priority in both its party and its governmental programs. Viewing Turkey's EU accession process as the most crucial for its modernization since the proclamation of the republic, the AK Party emphasized the importance of membership in the EU and put added urgency on the start of the accession negotiations. To that end, the party was determined to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria (AK Parti, 2002a:44), which required the strengthening of harmonization laws and the development of fundamental rights and freedoms (AK Parti, 2007:27). After coming to power, the AK Party, which had initially planned to start negotiations with the EU in 2004, was only able to start negotiations on October 3, 2005, towards the end of its mandate. This was due to domestic problems, such as terrorism, constitutional referendums, the global economic crisis, the Arab Spring, and the Cyprus problem with the EU. As a result, the EU membership process was given less importance.

The Privileged Partnership option, which was advocated by EU states, such as Germany, France, and Austria, was flatly rejected by the AK Party, considering it, as Abdullah Gül stated before the 2004 Summit, an unacceptable alternative to full membership (TBMM, 2004:68). Similarly, Ali Babacan

emphasized that the goal of the Turkey–EU negotiations was full membership with equal rights and equal responsibilities, pointing out that nothing short of full membership would be acceptable (Çayhan and Oğurlu, 2014:59). Other Turkish officials reiterated that Turkey was in the negotiation process to attain full EU membership and described the Privileged Partnership option as unacceptable. Turkish powers define the Privileged Partnership option as anything between the current state of relations and full EU membership. EU officials stated that they were concerned that if Turkey were admitted into the EU, its influence would increase, bringing harm to the union. This position, including the proposed Privileged Partnership option, is mostly taken by EU member states which have large Turkish populations who have historically problems with integration, causing trouble for the social structures of the host countries. These countries are worried that a similar situation would arise if Turkey were admitted into the EU. For this reason, it is thought that if serious steps are taken to establish the values that are important for Europe in Turkey and if current attitudes of European states towards Turkey change, it would be mutually advantageous for Turkey to become a full member of the EU, thus eliminating the Privileged Partnership option (Akçay, 2016:140).

According to the AK Party, the proposed “Privileged Partnership” between Turkey and the EU would inflict economic, political, and cultural damage on the EU and would give Turkey the status of a second-class country. The AK Party asserts that the EU needs the cooperation of Turkey in order to become a global actor and to successfully implement its own defense and security policies. However, the party accuses the EU of imposing new rules while the negotiation process is ongoing and, thereby, making it more difficult for Turkey to achieve membership. The AK Party, which sees Turkey's EU membership not as an end in itself, but rather as a useful tool for the Turkish people and one which they deserve, claims that if an option such as Privileged Partnership is offered and insisted upon, the “Ankara Criteria”—modeled on the Copenhagen Criteria required for full membership to the EU—will still be adopted. The party said that these criteria will be adapted and the process of their implementation will continue (AK Parti, 2012:23). For the AK Party, the process of gaining full membership of the EU and the fulfillment of the required criteria is a natural result of Turkey's modernization process. Implementing the EU criteria is an important step for our modernization as a state and a society. Meeting these conditions is considered necessary and inevitable, even outside the context of EU membership (AK Parti, 2002b:30). For this reason, the AK Party stands in favor of maintaining the goal of full membership and rejects the Privileged Partnership option that has been put forward as an alternative.

The party believes that EU membership would provide a number of significant advantages to Turkey. For example, it would contribute greatly to the establishment and development of democracy in Turkey and provide economic gains, so that the people of Turkey may have better living conditions, be freer, and hold more rights and guarantees than they currently do (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Avrupa Birliği Bakanlığı, 2014:10). Turkey's full membership of the EU would also contribute to the EU itself. With a population with that has an average age of 29.2 years, Turkey has the fourth largest labor market in Europe, with an active workforce of approximately 25.7 million. The average age within the EU is over 40 and the young workforce is decreasing day by day. It is thought that the social dynamism of the EU would be increased by the full membership of Turkey. Turkey's strategic location in the energy corridor and its ability to contribute to the resolution of disputes in critical conflict zones can help the EU with the diversification of its energy resources as well as its energy security. Turkey can also play an active role in helping the EU to combat criminal threats, such as international terrorism, illegal immigration, and the trafficking of drugs, arms and people (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Avrupa Birliği Bakanlığı, 2012:8). For this reason, the AK Party rejects the Privileged Partnership option and views anything proposed as an alternative to full membership with suspicion. For example, the recently adopted “Positive Agenda,” was only accepted after EU officials confirmed that it was not, in fact, being proposed as such an alternative (Böhler, Pelkmans and Selcuki, 2012:12).

For the reasons described, the AK Party government considers that Turkey must fulfill the criteria for full membership of the EU in order to avoid the Privileged Partnership option. It also hopes that if Germany adopts a positive attitude towards Turkey's full membership, states such as Austria and

France, which currently oppose this possibility, will also begin to see it in a more positive light. The AK Party stated in its 2018 election manifesto that it was focused on change within Turkey and continuity in foreign policy (AK Parti, 2018:12). During its rule, the party developed a foreign policy both visionary and realistic that is in line with Turkey's interests. It aims to use its position and understanding to produce solutions to the problems experienced both in neighboring regions and in other parts of the world. In this way, the AK Party places an emphasis on Turkey having an active rather than a passive foreign policy, and it believes that economic and social development can be achieved through this approach (AK Parti, 2018:14).

Stating that it would continue to pursue a multidimensional foreign policy, the AK Party started accession negotiations with the EU in 2005 and, up to the present, has opened 16 of the 35 chapters of the *acquis*. According to the party, although many chapters are ready to be opened and others provisionally closed during the negotiation process, there are obstacles because of the policies of some countries within the EU (Akçay, 2016:102).

The AK Party sees the development of Turkey–EU relations as a strategic goal. In its election manifesto, the party highlighted the importance it attaches to the EU by including a subsection for the European Union under the heading of “Foreign Policy” (AK Parti, 2018:17). The AK Party regards Turkey’s relationship with the EU as one that should provide integration with the Union, rather than as an interest-oriented cooperation. It aims to maximize the commercial relations between the two sides by expanding the cooperation of the Customs Union. In addition, the party sees the relationship with the EU as being complementary, rather than as an alternative, to relationships with other international bodies (AK Parti, 2018:24).

CONCLUSION

Turkey's EU adventure, which started with the partnership application made in 1959, has been fluctuant in the historical process and full membership has yet to be realized. Full membership in the EU has been an important state policy for Turkey, despite all the negativities in every period of history. Some negative developments between Turkey and the EU, especially in the last period, could not preserve their former importance. Many reasons, such as loss of trust and belief between Turkey and the EU, and the failure of Turkey and the EU to fulfill the obligations expected from them, have led to abyss in Turkey-EU relations. It remained unclear how the relations between the two sides will continue.

The perspective of many political parties on Turkey-EU relations and the development of relations have been an important issue. The economic and political instabilities experienced in the coalition governments negatively affected the process. The major subject of this study was what kind of developments took place in Turkey-EU relations during the single-party governments and the EU policy of these parties. Because during the single-party governments, there were important developments in Turkey-EU relations.

During the DP, JP, MP, and AK Party periods in Turkey, single-party governments were experienced and this situation continues with the recent AK Party government. Turkey's EU membership process was supported in every period of single-party governments and steps were taken in this direction.

During the DP period, Turkey made the first step of the relations by applying to the EU on July 31, 1959. Until the military coup of 27 May 1960, it took part in the negotiations on partnership relations and was the party that carried out the negotiations. However, after the 27 May military coup, the DP was closed, although Turkey-EU relations were not suspended, the meetings where the negotiations were held were postponed and the EU said that the executions in Turkey were contrary to democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Despite this, the negotiations between Turkey and the EU continued during the RPP period and although the DP laid the foundation for the relations, the Ankara Agreement, which put the partnership relationship between Turkey and the EU legally, was signed during the RPP period.

Turkey-EU relations maintained their importance during the JP period, which was the sole ruler after the general elections held in 1965, and some important developments took place in relations. The JP period was the period in which the preparatory period was experienced in Turkey-EU relations, the transition period negotiations were made and the Additional Protocol, which started the transition period, was signed. However, during the JP period, which was closed after the military memorandum of March 12, 1971, Turkey-EU relations remained not completed. Despite the important developments in Turkey-EU relations, as Turkey could not fulfill the obligations required during the transition period, it was not possible to experience a serious development.

After the military coup on September 12, 1980, in the general elections held on November 6, 1983, important developments took place in Turkey-EU relations during the MP period led by Turgut Özal, who was in power alone. Eager to revive and fix the relations that were suspended in March 1982 after the coup, MP made an unexpected move before the last period in the partnership relationship and applied for full membership to the EU on April 14, 1987. After the application for full membership, which was seriously discussed in both the EU and Turkey, the EU prepared a report on Turkey's application in December 1989 and rejected the application, saying that both the EU and Turkey were not ready yet. Faced with this attitude of the EU, which focuses on developing the partnership relationship rather than applying for full membership, Turkey has struggled to realize the Customs Union. While the Customs Union for the EU was a distraction for Turkey, it was an important step for full membership of Turkey. In this sense, the application for full membership in 1987 and the European Commission report published in 1989 paved the way for the Customs Union. However, from the 1989 Commission report to Turkey's candidacy status in 1999, the EU established a relationship with Turkey in the context of partnership, stated Turkey was not ready for full membership, the Agenda 2000 report in 1997 and the Luxembourg Summit with Eastern European countries. Despite the start of negotiations, Turkey's being put in the background damaged the relations and Turkey returned to where it started.

In the period of the AK Party, which was in power as a single party in the general elections held on November 3, 2002, and is still in power, Turkey-EU relations experienced a golden age at the beginning of the period. Empowering the relations developed by the Democratic Left Party (DLP)-Nationalist People's Party (NPP)-MP coalition government before it, the AK Party received a negotiation date at the summit held on 16-17 December 2004 and started negotiations with the EU on October 3, 2005. Finding the relations with the EU and the full membership process necessary at every opportunity, the AK Party has taken steps in this direction and has seen the full membership process as an important state policy. While the EU membership process was in its golden age, alternative types of relations other than full membership such as the Privileged Partnership proposed by some groups within the EU member states were persistently rejected by Turkey.

While Turkey's full membership process to the EU reached an important turning point, the European Commission suspended the negotiations under eight, France, five and Southern Cyprus six titles because of the problem over the Cyprus in 2006, and relations were severely damaged. Even though a Positive Agenda was started between Turkey and the EU in 2012 to revive relations and continue the negotiation process, both the loss of trust and belief between the two sides and the developments in the international conjuncture prevented the Positive Agenda from having the expected effect. However, especially economic relations continued, albeit with a heavy glitch. Upon the request of the EU, a report was prepared by the World Bank in which the Customs Union between Turkey and the EU was evaluated in 2014, and there were also discussions on updating and improving the Customs Union in line with this report. However, after the coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, 2016, the mutual attitudes of Turkey and the EU damaged relations and relations were almost frozen.

In this sense, the relations between Turkey and the EU never continued in a standard way in the historical process, sometimes positive and sometimes negative developments were experienced. Today, relations are shaped by the international conjuncture and the attitudes of both sides and the momentum on the bilateral relations was lost due to the negative developments. Although both Turkey and the EU have emphasized how important, they are to each other, no critical steps have been taken.

Therefore, the future of Turkey-EU relations and the full membership process remain uncertain. Although meetings are held between Turkish and EU officials from time to time, both sides are far from taking any concrete steps. It is almost certain that Turkey's EU full membership process will not take place soon, even in the long term, due to Turkey's population density, its possible stronger position in the EU, level of economic development, serious foreign policy differences between Turkey and several EU countries and ongoing political issues. It is also unclear whether Turkey will accept a non-full membership option such as the Privileged Partnership.

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