Knocking on the European Door?

Normative Power Europe and the Turkish EU Accession

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Abstract:
This thesis deals with the discussions on the ‘Normative Power Europe’ thesis, EU enlargement, conditionality and compliance, and the extent to which rational and ideational forces are mutually exclusive in this context. Through a qualitative case study of Turkey, it will investigate to what extent the EU can be seen as possessing and exercising normative power through its enlargement policy. The findings, based on fieldwork conducted in Istanbul during April 2013, suggest that rather than being mutually exclusive, rational and normative processes occur simultaneously and independently, sometimes even reinforcing each other.

Keywords: Normative Power Europe, Conditionality, Compliance, Enlargement, Turkey.

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List of Abbreviations

AKP Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
ATL Anti-Terrorism Law
BDP Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi)
CHP Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)
EU European Union
FDI Foreign Direct Investment
GDP Gross Domestic Product
GNI Gross National Income
KRG Kurdistan Regional Government
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
MHP Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)
PKK Kurdistan Worker’s Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan)
SRII Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul
TCC Turkish Criminal Code
TEU (Consolidated Text of the) Treaty on European Union
UN United Nations
WGI (World Bank) Worldwide Governance Indicators
Introduction

After having been an associate member of the European Union (EU) and its preceding organisations for nearly two decades, Turkey was officially granted candidate status in Helsinki in 1999, and since accession negotiations started in 2005, the Turkish bid for EU membership has become a major controversy of EU enlargement. The Turkish economy is one of the fastest growing economies in Europe, growth rates under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have been averaging at 5% per year since 2004, and investors around the world have turned their attention towards the country that ties the knot between the European continent and the Middle East.

According to the World Bank, Turkey’s socioeconomic development is also advancing, with a 2.1% reduction in the poverty headcount ratio since 2005, and the country has overtaken the average rate of Europe and Central Asia in terms of both Gross National Income (GNI) and life expectancy at birth. Nevertheless, the dates for Turkish accession have been pushed and delayed, and the negotiations seem to have reached a state of deadlock, as several acquis chapters remain frozen, mainly due to the EU’s perception of Turkey as obstructing – in particular – when it comes to solving the Cyprus dispute, and lagging behind in terms of democratisation and fundamental rights and freedoms.

This thesis will deal with the Turkish accession process in terms of the normative aspects of conditionality and compliance rather than economic factors, as, if one consults the EU Progress Reports on Turkey, they do not seem to be the area in which the main barriers for Turkish accession are to be found. It will build on the theoretical framework of the Normative Power Europe thesis in the context of EU enlargement, conditionality and compliance. Through examining the EU political criteria and compliance in the case of Turkey, it will answer the following research question:

To what extent can the EU be seen as possessing and exercising normative power through its enlargement policy?

By considering the normative basis upon which the EU itself rests, the values of the Copenhagen Criteria and the Consolidated Text of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), and three contemporary

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issues that the EU refers to as main barriers for the Turkish accession process will be examined in
the search for a correlation between normative conditionality and compliance, with the goal of
assessing the legitimacy of conflicting theoretical perspectives suggesting that normative and
rational considerations are mutually exclusive. The findings, based on fieldwork conducted in
Istanbul during April 2013, indicate that rather than being mutually exclusive, rational and
normative processes occur simultaneously and independently, sometimes even reinforcing each
other. Therefore, there is a need for further research within the field of International Relations and
EU enlargement in the context of the combined rational-ideational framework.

The thesis is divided in five sections. In the first section, the theoretical framework is discussed
through looking at theories concerning the Normative Power Europe thesis and its critics, and the
discussions on EU enlargement, conditionality and compliance. In this section, the research questions
are presented in detail and a hypothesis is developed. The second section discusses the
methodological considerations, research design, and data collection used to explore the research
questions. In the third section, normative power is discussed in the context of the Turkish accession
process. The main barriers, the choices of units of analysis, as well as the normative conditionality are
explained and conceptualised. In the fourth section, the units of analysis are analysed in relation to
both the theoretical framework and Turkish compliance, through examining both EU Progress
Reports and representation in Turkish mass media. A comparative analysis is then conducted in order
to establish whether there is such a thing as Normative Power Europe, through reflecting back on the
findings in the units of analysis and by drawing on the interviews conducted on site in Istanbul.
Finally, a concluding section will discuss in detail the findings of the research as well as the
theoretical implications for further research.

Theoretical Background

Normative Power Europe

“My intuitive idea of power [...] is this: A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do
something that B would otherwise not do.”

The vast majority of literature within the field of International Relations based on traditional

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rationalist IR theory such as Realism and Liberalism, deals extensively with theorising the concept of ‘power’, and although they all seem to share Dahl’s overall definition, they differ in their views on the means through which this persuasion is achieved. Lukes outlines three different interpretations of this general definition based on either the capacity itself or the exercise of that capacity. According to the one-dimensional view, power is intentional and active, and must be examined through the acts of exercising it. The two-dimensional view of power focuses only on conflicts that can be directly observed. However, as power can also be exercised through socialisation, Lukes makes a distinction between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ power, that is, exercising power through direct action versus having passive influence in the form of, for instance, attraction or charisma. Hence, the third dimension of power, on which he places emphasis, is the power to shape perceptions, preferences and ideas in a passive manner, by which legitimacy is acquired. What Lukes describes seems closely linked to the normative features of power, the study of which, however, is not without complications. Passive or inactive power is often difficult to identify or prove and sometimes happens unconsciously, therefore one needs to justify that if A had not been inactively exercising the power over ideas, perceptions and preferences, B would in fact have acted differently.

The two classical and often opposing theories make clear assumptions about the nature of the international system and which kind of power is strongest in that particular order. Realists assume that the world is anarchic, and the main actors are sovereign states only able to count on themselves to achieve national interest and security, as others will always possess some level of offensive capability and can therefore not be trusted. As a result cooperation other than temporary alliances is improbable – if not impossible. Liberals, on the other hand assume that the global system is interdependent, and that states do engage in long-term cooperation because there is an (especially economic) incentive to do so. In other words, institutions are rooted in national interest and power realities, but also in security concerns. And therefore they do matter in international relations in the sense that they, in many cases, offer the motivation for states to cooperate through treaties and agreements that facilitate the alignment of interests among states.

Along with the classic debates on power, cooperation and institutions between Realism and

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Liberalism, earlier discussions of power in the context of the EU can be roughly grouped in two main strands – ‘military’ and ‘civilian’. Traditionally, there has been a tendency of speaking of power in terms of military capacity in international relations, especially among realists, where it is believed that influence in international relations is best exerted through the use of military means. When it comes to the EU, however, this idea seems a bit misplaced. While military power is definitely present among its member states, the EU itself has never advertised or been especially prone to the use of military force in its international dealings – possibly due to the military interventions currently being undertaken by the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and the USA. Instead it has in the past relied largely on economic cooperation, diplomacy and supra-national institutions as the main way of attending to its international interests. Duchêne has written extensively about this idea of a ‘civilian power’, to which military power allegedly had to give way. Through civilian power could global development be sustained, and the security of the EU be safeguarded. While being highly relevant in the past, however, its recent economic misfortunes have arguably diminished the EU’s power in this respect, and while the multiple treaties signed within the European framework indicate some level of importance, it is hardly a unique feature of the EU.

The idea of ‘civilian’ power, as well as the liberal idea of economic interdependence has been contested by the English School, most notably by Bull, who claimed that although civilian power exists, it is to a large extent dependent on military power, especially after the return of power politics in the 1980’s. Actors cannot be powerful in international relations without some level of military capabilities, which is only achievable through supranational integration rather than cooperation. Without military self-sufficiency and security, in other words, the EU cannot be said to be very powerful, as relying on the military power of the USA or NATO is not sustainable in the long run. What the two otherwise opposing concepts share, however, is a wish to strengthen international society while still focusing on the national interests of the sovereign nation states, through a form of power, which takes an actual physical form.

The discussion of ‘military’ versus ‘civilian’ power forms the basis of a relatively novel, third conception of European power, ‘Normative Power Europe’, a term coined by Ian Manners in the early 2000’s. Building on the theories of Galtung and Carr, Manners argues that several events of

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the last 25 years have transformed the global order and created a new global agenda to an extent where it is no longer as relevant to speak of ‘military’ or ‘civilian’ power as before. This is not to say that they are no longer important as they are often used in combination with normative power, but not focusing so much on the state-like features of the EU and applying a more holistic approach is advocated.\(^\text{11}\) Many of the ideas and assumptions inherent in the above discussion were constructed and sustained by the political environment during the Cold War, but the Soviet collapse, Manners argues, saw an end to the norms and values of an ideology rather than the power of force in international relations, as many of the former Soviet states have now become members of the EU and have adopted a new ideological mind-set. As the EU’s actions are arguably driven by a certain norms-based agenda, it is thus, according to Manners, more fitting to speak of persuasive ideational power (the power of ideas and norms) rather than ‘civilian’ or ‘military’ power (the power of physical action and material incentive), especially when dealing with the contemporary global role of the EU.\(^\text{12}\)

The principles inherent in contemporary foreign policies and relations need sustainable normative justification in order to be effective. Normative justification depends on three factors: legitimacy, coherence and consistency. Legitimacy refers to whether the normative principle is in accordance with those of previous agreements, especially those relating to the UN system. Coherence refers to whether the promoted principles and their practice are non-contradictory. Consistency implies that the principles and practices can be seen as applied in a uniform manner that prevents allegations of double standards. The norms and values that the EU, a highly principle-based project, bases both its internal and external policies and relations on are outlined in a variety of covenants, treaties and charters, and include ideas generally viewed as being of Western origin, such as democracy and human rights.\(^\text{13}\)

Normative power can thus be seen as a socialising process, wherein the incentives of being part of the normative majority guides outsiders in the direction of an open-ended process of engagement, debate and understanding, resulting in norms diffusion through contagion, transference, cultural


\(^{13}\) Manners 2002, pp. 242-244.
transfer, informational-, procedural-, or overt diffusion.\textsuperscript{14} Although the impact of EU norms promotion can be difficult to assess, Manners argues, this is clearly reflected in its foreign relations, and especially in enlargement processes, where promoting and expanding normative ideas is a key aspect, and the normative justification serve as a persuading incentive for prospective members to align with EU standards.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, normative interests of the EU as an organisation, become as important as the national interest of the individual member states.

The EU is not only a normative actor; it is a normatively constructed entity, as the norms and values it represents are conducive to its identity and international image. The EU, according to Manners, can therefore be conceptualised as a norms agenda setter that acts to change norms. The normative quality lies in the sense that the EU should actively work towards norms diffusion. If the EU focuses on normative power in international relations, it can develop its influence and assume a role that is far more powerful than the physical or material – the role of defining what is considered ‘the norm’ in international relations.\textsuperscript{16}

Manners’ theory has become central to current debates about the power of the EU in international relations. Although discussing the idea of normative power in the context of EU foreign policy is generally considered relevant, Manners’ theory is subject to a large amount of critique. For example, realists theory argues that military power matters more than marginally, and it dismisses the ontology and epistemology underpinning both the ‘civilian’ and ‘normative’ conceptualisations of power.\textsuperscript{17} Hyde-Price, building on arguments made by Bull, states that as states rely primarily on themselves to achieve their national interest, external EU policy is consists of ‘second-order’ concerns aimed at shaping the external security milieu.\textsuperscript{18} In this respect, it could be argued that there is a clear incentive for the EU to approve Turkey’s accession. Turkey bridges the EU and the Middle East, which would mean increased opportunities for the legitimacy of the West intervening as part of conflict resolution. On the other hand, Turkey would be a new member of significant size and would probably claim corresponding leverage. Also, Turkey borders many conflict stricken regions, and may cause an influx of refugees to the EU.

While some critique can only be expected from the realist theory, the idea of Europe as a

\textsuperscript{14} Manners, 2002, pp. 244-245.
\textsuperscript{15} Manners, 2002, pp. 248-249.
\textsuperscript{16} Manners, 2002, pp. 252-253.
\textsuperscript{18} The EU may help in that respect, but states will only condone promoting norms and outright expansion if the benefits are considerable. Hyde Price, 2008, pp. 222-223.
‘normative’ power is often critiqued within more liberal and constructivist circles as well. While many condone the initial idea, it is generally perceived that in order not to be as dangerous as ‘military’ power, ‘normative’ power has to be developed so as to embody more reflexivity and therefore become more universally fitting. Among these critics is Diez,¹⁹ who argues that the ‘normative’ power of the EU, or the impact it has on others regarding their sense of appropriateness, is not that different from that of the USA. However, the USA has suffered severe damage due to the construction of an identity that is too exclusive for ‘others’ to successfully conform, causing a decline in legitimacy. The EU may suffer the same fate unless the normative representation that the EU has set as a precondition for others to conform to, and therefore the way EU policies treat ‘others’, takes a more reflexive form, as it is otherwise difficult to make the distinction between the EU as a ‘normative’ and a ‘civilian’ power. ²⁰ In this sense, the case of Turkey is particularly interesting, due to the cultural impact Turkey would have on the composition of the EU should accession be successful. If Turkey is not granted accession due to reasons relating to religion and culture, EU norms are arguably not reflexive enough, as continuing to view Turkey as an ‘other’ would limit the consistency of its normative power.

Furthermore, Manners’ argument that an actor’s normative power can be backed up with military power is problematic, as the more an actor relies on military means, the more it resembles traditional forms of power due to the lack of an independently normative socialisation process. ²¹

Manners subsequently responded directly to Diez’ (and others’) problematisation of the concept of EU normative power as practices based on exclusive constructions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ and how it resembles to a large extent that of the USA. The EU, he argues, may at first glance resemble the USA in terms of normative power, but the EU has been a forerunner in ratifying international treaties, whereas the USA is lagging behind. This is in part due to the fact that the EU is not a state but a union, in which the ‘pooling of sovereignty’ has facilitated external influence in the form of treaties that are sometimes symbolic. Also, the use of military force that the USA has been prone to, is enough to determine that the USA is not a normative power in the sense that the EU is, simply due to the fact that the EU’s use of military force in diffusing the norms it represents remains

¹⁹ Other authors, who offer a critique of Manners’ theory include Helene Sjursen and Michael Merlingen. However, as their points are similar, and Manners has responded directly to Diez, he is used as a representative of this group.


²¹ Diez, 2005, pp. 620-621.
relatively minor. With regards to reflexivity, and universality, he argues, the EU has never claimed exclusive ownership over norms and values such as peace, freedom, democracy and human rights, as the USA has been known to do. Again, this may be linked to the fact that the EU is not a single state, and therefore does not embody the same level of shared nationalism as seen in American society, a nation state that has labelled itself ‘the land of the free and home of the brave’. The EU can therefore be said to be a unique actor in terms of normative power, one that has the capacity to reach a higher level of legitimacy than any single nation state can aspire to, due to its ‘pooling of sovereignty’ which leads to higher reflexivity and universality. It therefore has greater potential to set the normative agenda and determine what is deemed appropriate in contemporary international society – a power arguably far greater than that of ‘military’ or ‘civilian’ nature.

What Manners, and others who deal with the concept of power, generally focus on is power – whatever form – as something the EU should be doing in its international relations in order to increase its influence. Rather than exploring how the EU acts in accordance with Manners’ prescription, what this thesis will do is examine whether this ‘normative’ power approach seems to be working. Therefore it will incorporate the theory of Normative Power Europe into the debate about conditionality and compliance as part of EU enlargement negotiations. The ‘normative’ aspect is key in the sense that the EU is a definer of norms and it can get prospective member states to act in a way that they may not have done otherwise.

**Enlargement, Conditionality and Compliance**

“Enlargement is often claimed to be the most successful foreign policy of the European Union (...) The EU’s political accession conditionality has been the cornerstone of this success.”

In his 2008 article, Schimmelfennig discusses the preconditions for the EU political conditionality to be effective and argues for the continuing relevance of credible membership criteria and prospects, especially due to the effect of domestic conditions. One of his main arguments is that non-material incentives and socialisation are far from enough to cause recipient countries to

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overlook considerable domestic costs, politically and in terms of national interest.\textsuperscript{25} However, many of the elements inherent in conditionality (human rights, peaceful conflict resolution and democratisation) that Schimmelfennig discusses, are significantly normative in their nature, and by arguing that rule transfer embodied by enlargement is where the EU is most powerful, he also opens up for connecting it directly to the Normative Power Europe thesis. If the EU’s values are considered the norm, it also represents what aspiring members would aim to live up to, and the EU can therefore be said to possess a certain level of ideational or normatively based power during processes of accession negotiation.

Enlargement is widely considered to be the area in which the EU has been most influential as an actor in international relations, due to the incentives of complying with its conditionality in return for a seat at the European table. As what this thesis is dealing with is external governance and rule transfer rather than internal governance and rule creation, it will not go deeper into the latter and will avoid examining the construction of the norms themselves. Instead, focus will rest on \textit{what} these rules are and \textit{how} they are transferred from the EU onto prospective member states. Generally, bargaining strategies are of great significance for most scholars dealing with enlargement, conditionality and compliance. Although it will not be discussed further as it is not relevant to Turkey in its current status, it is worth mentioning that another strand of research in recent years has focussed on post-accession compliance of new EU members since 2004.\textsuperscript{26}

Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, outline useful frameworks for the study of conditionality and compliance and rule transfer from the EU to prospective members by exploring the idea of reinforcement by reward, which provides these candidates with a string incentive to comply. It is worth mentioning, however, that compliance is not necessarily due to the use of conditionality or coercion, but often cause implementation due to pragmatic policy-makers. This may question the actual power of the EU in terms of material incentive, and it is therefore possible that there is a certain level of rule transfer through socialisation – not punishment or special benefits.\textsuperscript{27}

Its success, however, depends on the level of interaction between the EU and domestic factors as well as requiring the presence of several conditions. Generally, the rule-setter should have superior bargaining leverage in order to succeed. For example, if the EU wants enlargement more than the

\textsuperscript{25} Schimmelfennig, 2008, p 920.
\textsuperscript{26} For this discussion, see for instance works by Milada Vachudova and Gergana Noucheva.
recipient country, rule transfer cannot take place, as the incentive for compliance disappears. On the other hand, the conditional offer that the EU proposes has to be significant. Financial aid or a ‘maybe’-attitude, as well as weak or inexplicit conditions diminish the incentive for the target country to make the effort to comply. Furthermore, the enlargement policy has to be normatively consistent in terms of ‘carrot and stick’ approaches, meaning that unless compliance efforts are followed by rewards, negative discrimination will ruin or hinder the process of compliance. The effectiveness of the conditionality depends highly upon the credibility of the demands. If the EU sets out clear determinate descriptions both for what compliance means, what the rewards will be and when they will come, credibility increases and candidates are more likely to make sufficient efforts.

Vachudova and Moravcsik agree to a large extent with Schimmelfennig’s arguments, However, they point to a significant problem within the EU’s approach, which both Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier ignore to a large extent, namely discrimination in terms of both time and criteria, which results in a perception of double standards. Many of the criteria posed for later applicants did not exist in earlier enlargement rounds, so many of the existing EU member states have never had to live up to these. This particularly applies to issues such as minority rights. Also, the timeframe of the European expectations is problematic. It seems that in many cases change is expected to happen very quickly, whereas the old European countries have had decades to adjust. Applicants are forced to adjust because prospective membership remains highly valued, but as the criteria becomes tougher and more unclear, the efforts suffer accordingly.

However, despite obvious risks within the EU’s policy, the success of political conditionality is not the sole responsibility of the superior bargaining power. The general principle in rule transfer is that states will agree to adopt certain measures if the benefits exceed the domestic costs, so conditionality has to fall on fertile domestic grounds. The incentive will diminish if compliance is seen to affect domestic conditions, for example if it endangers the government/regime, or jeopardises the national interest in the target country.

In the case of Turkey, for instance, it is generally argued that the Cyprus dispute stands as the main barrier for accession negotiations to continue. The fact that Turkey objects to expanding the

28 Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004, pp. 664-665
29 Schimmelfennig, 2008, pp. 920-925.
customs union to include Cyprus conflicts with the EU’s fundamental principle of equal treatment and recognition of all member states. However, from the perspective of the Turkish people, the conceding the current standpoint is seen as harming national interest to an unacceptable extent, which could ultimately put the government’s power consolidation at risk.\textsuperscript{33}

As can be seen from Figure 1, the average length of an accession process lies around 9 years for member states acceding 1995–2013. In the case of Turkey the negotiation process has now reached its 26\textsuperscript{th} year, and still has not reached a point where a clear prospect has been given. In addition, the bargaining dynamics have arguably changed as well in the wake of economic growth in Turkey and economic crisis in the EU.

\textit{Figure 1: Length of Accession Process (Years) by Country 1995-2013.}

![Bar chart showing length of accession process by country](image)

Note: Other candidates currently involved in negotiations are not included.
*Croatia has been given a date and is set to accede in July 2013.

\textbf{Normative Versus Rational Incentives}

According to the Normative Power Europe thesis, a correlation between EU conditionality and Turkish compliance in terms of the normative political criteria would indicate that the EU is successfully diffusing its norms and values through its enlargement policy. While Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier, Vachudova and Moravcsik do not denounce the normative aspect of conditionality, they

\textsuperscript{33} Schimmelfennig, 2008, p 927.
tend to focus on the more rational aspects, such as cost-benefit calculations. Combining arguments favouring the rational aspects of compliance with Lukes’ notion of inactive versus active power suggests that either rational or ideational forces are influencing compliance. The latter will have to give way to the former, unless sufficient evidence proving that the rational incentives do not exist can be presented. This aligns with Diez’ argument that unless the socialisation process is independent, normative power resembles other forms of power too much and its existence becomes difficult to prove.

A number of studies incorporating and bridging the rational and ideational arguments do exist. Checkel, for instance, makes the argument that while both approaches agree on norms as both constraining and conducive to the way states act, studies coming from both strands are too fixed on their own approach to contribute to a discussion that transcends the boundaries of theory. In order to address the gap, Checkel shifts the approach and examines socialisation processes and rational incentives, through taking compliance as a dependent variable, and looking at normative compliance in a variety of European countries, both EU and non-EU members.34

This thesis will continue along these lines, but instead of focusing on the methodologies and epistemologies of realist and constructivist arguments, on which the existing studies are countless, it will combine the key ideas, or the ontologies of these approaches, through the framework discussed above; that is, the ideational importance and rational incentives for aligning with EU conditionality. It will argue that the existence of rational incentives does not necessarily limit the impact of the EU’s normative power on prospective member candidates, and rather than being mutually exclusive, rational and ideational forces can coexist, and sometimes even reinforce each other. The research for this thesis has been conducted by asking the following research questions:

To what extent can the EU be seen as possessing and exercising normative power through its enlargement policy?

- Under what circumstances would one expect the EU’s normative power to transfer into Turkish compliance?
- What values form the basis of the EU’s normative conditionality?
- What issues relating to this normative conditionality are seen as key in the EU frameworks and contemporary Turkish politics?

- To what extent is there a correlation between the EU’s normative conditionality and Turkish efforts towards compliance?
- To what extent can Turkish efforts be linked to rational incentives and ideational influence?

If the combination of alleged unfavourable domestic conditions, shifting bargaining dynamics and lack of a credible EU membership perspective diminishes the material incentive for member candidates to work actively towards compliance, the normative power of the EU may suffer accordingly. However, if recent developments in Turkey relating to EU norms are positive, and the EU continues to be referred to in terms of norms, the rational and ideational ontologies may coexist, and not necessarily be mutually exclusive, despite the weakness of the Turkish membership perspective and the fact that bargaining dynamics have shifted. If both domestic incentives exist and EU norms seem to be explicitly deemed appropriate, this would indicate that rational incentives and an independent normative socialisation process are both significantly influencing conditionality and compliance in the context of EU enlargement process, even though their weights differ from case to case. Due to the amount of unknown factors as regards the future of the process, and the absence of several of the preconditions for compliance as listed by the compliance scholars, the case of Turkey is in many ways an extreme. It therefore presents studies of conditionality and compliance with the ultimate example for illustrating the hypothesis that rational and ideational forces independently take up important places in the minds of decision-makers, and that European norms diffusion remains active.

**Methodology**

**Method Design**

This research will explore the Normative Power Europe thesis as a contemporary phenomenon in the context of the conditionality and compliance of EU enlargement policy, the boundaries of which are not always completely clear. The above research questions will be studied by focusing on a particular set of decisions.\(^{35}\) The decision set explored relates mainly to the fundamental political principles and aspects of conditionality in terms of both the TEU, and the Copenhagen Criteria which form the normative basis of what the EU represents: peace, democracy, rule of law, human

Through looking at these normative values and conditions in terms of three different units of analysis (three issues given priority in contemporary Turkish politics), the level of compliance in the case itself – Turkey’s EU accession process – and thus the normative power of the EU will be explored. Through exploring the phenomenon and the context, the theoretical framework will be tested to see if it maintains any contemporary relevance. As compliance in the context of both the TEU and the political aspects of the Copenhagen Criteria – contrary to many of the acquis chapters – is quite difficult to measure quantitatively, it will be based mainly on qualitative data. Therefore, the most fitting research design seems to be that of a theory-testing, qualitative, exploratory and contemporary single instrumental case study, focusing on three embedded units of analysis. It could be seen that based on the argument of uniqueness, this is an example of an intrinsic rather than single instrumental case study. However, as can be seen from the main research question, focus remains on mainly on the phenomenon and context, while the case itself, albeit being very important due to its uniqueness, remains secondary.

As Yin notes, a single instrumental case study may jeopardise the validity of the research, due to the risk of putting “all your eggs in one basket.” However, its critical nature and goal of testing a theory, justifies this as the design of choice for this particular research. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the fact that Turkey’s accession process is going on its 26th year, and is yet to experience a breakthrough in terms of a credible membership prospect, the extent of both length and lack of progress facilitates the argument that its extreme conditions cause this particular case to represent something unique. In addition, Turkey’s cultural background and its population size would arguably have an impact significant enough on the cultural identity and current power structures of the EU, that making extensive comparisons to other candidates – previous or current – is not a feasible option. By having three embedded units of analysis, breadth is added to the single case study without diluting its focus. It is imperative, however, to be aware of the pitfalls of focusing so much on the details of the embedded units so that the overall hypothesis ends up being

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36 It may be argued that such norms are not exclusively European and could perhaps originate somewhere else (peace and mutual respect are important norms in Islam, for instance). Nevertheless all interviewees agreed on the EU as the main normative rule-setter as seen from a Turkish perspective. (See appendix).
37 Yin, 2003, pp. 21-33.
40 75,627,384 as of December 31, 2012 according to the Turkish Statistical Institute. [http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=13425](http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=13425) (last viewed: 21/5-2013).
neglected.42

Data Collection

While much of the collected data for this research is qualitative, in order to illustrate the uniqueness of the case of Turkey as well as set the context of the research problem, quantitative data, such as statistics on Turkey and its accession process had to be gathered. The sources include the EU’s Eurostat database, the Turkish Statistical Institute, and the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). Also, as Freedom House (which is used in many studies including those by Schimmelfennig) is contested, the ratings of Polity IV have been used. While these databases provide attempts of measuring country performances within areas relating to the values of the TEU and the political Copenhagen Criteria, and are indeed relevant as such, they deal with normative factors that are more difficult to quantify than economic ones, such as poverty headcounts, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In addition, as Creswell notes, a case study is a largely qualitative approach, through which a subject is explored within its context using in-depth multiple-source data collection.43 Therefore, the majority of the data on which this research builds, is largely qualitative and consists mainly of primary sources, such as interviews, documents and reports.

Primary sources in the form of relevant documents about the Turkish accession process were collected, including the Progress Reports from the EU. Furthermore, one month of fieldwork was conducted with the help of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (SRII) in April 2013. During this period, the two largest national daily newspapers in English were collected when they were available: Hürriyet Daily News and Today’s Zaman, the former being mainly a source of news stories, while the latter is more heavy on opinion pieces and journalistic and academic analyses. Among the stories covered during this period, the three issues given the most attention form the units of analysis: the Cyprus dispute, the Kurdish question and domestic reforms.

Due to the language barrier, it was deemed that English language news sources were hardly enough to make the field study valid or reliable, therefore a series of interviews with Turkish academic experts and journalists were conducted in order to close these gaps as much as possible. Initial contact with a couple of interviewees was facilitated with the assistance of Yeditepe University, and from these more occurred from a snowball effect. One interviewee was introduced

42 Creswell, 2007, p 76.
43 Creswell, 2007, p 73.
through a researcher at the SRII. The fact that the interviews were not conducted for purposes of doing a survey led to the decision of making them open-ended, so as to have as little influence on the direction and topics of discussion as possible and allow the discussion to move freely in the direction that the interviewer and interviewee decided to take it. Hence, rather than being based on predetermined questions they are more conversational in nature, as this was deemed to be the most informative and appropriate approach. It could be argued that the selection of interviewees is not particularly representative for the Turkish population as a whole, as they all belong to the academic elite, are based in cosmopolitan Istanbul, and are therefore bound to be biased towards the EU. However, in addition to originating from different parts of Turkey, being experts or experienced individuals within their respective fields and professions, they do provide a credible source of information about current moods and state of affairs in Turkish politics and society. Therefore, the interviews will not be treated as representative as such, but rather used as a means of confirming or questioning the findings coming from other sources. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed as accurately as possible, although certain parts have been edited out due to the interviewees requesting them to be ‘off the record’. In addition, while the overall profession or title of all interviewees is included in the transcript, they were given the opportunity to remain anonymous, and unless giving written consent, they have not be identified by name or exact position.

**Normative Power and the Turkish EU Accession Process**

**Defining European Norms and Values**

“The Union’s aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples”

In order to examine the normative power of the EU it is first necessary to establish what these norms consist of. The TEU outlines the basic principles and the goals of the EU, and in the lack of an actual European constitution, this is potentially a good starting point. It is also set as the basic framework on which Turkish accession negotiations shall be fundamentally based. While the EU

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44 See appendix.
defines its principles upon which its normative basis rests, this definition is rather vague. Article 2 of the TEU states that the aim of the EU is to “promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.” This does not only apply within the EU itself, but also to its external relations. Promoting peace, security, solidarity, mutual respect and human rights is deemed key in the EU’s actions on the international arena, and these actions should be guided by the same principles that have inspired the creation, development and enlargement of the EU itself. In the end, one ends up with a list of values including democracy, rule of law, universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, principles of equality and solidarity as well as respect for the principles of the UN Charter and international law. The importance of the normative principles of the EU is also reflected in the political conditions of the Copenhagen Criteria, which is divided in four parts, democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. Again this document lacks an elaborated description of these concepts, so one has to find other means of developing a conceptualisation of the norms that the EU is aiming at diffusing. What can be determined, however, is that as promoting peace is regarded as the overall aim of the EU, it is rather safe to label it the overall normative umbrella, covering subjects all embodied by one or more of four political Copenhagen Criteria.

**Normative Conditionality and the Main Barriers for Turkish Accession**

The principles outlined in the TEU and the Copenhagen Criteria all relate in some way or another to the Polity IV ratings, WGI or the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, which between them cover subjects such as democratisation, accountability, government effectiveness, freedoms, mutual respect and equality. In terms of the overall goal and purpose of the EU, one issue poses a clear obstacle to advancement of Turkish-EU negotiations. The fact that Turkey remains in conflict with Greece over the Cyprus dispute and does not recognise the Republic of Cyprus as a sovereign state is problematic, as peace is yet to be achieved and mutual respect and recognition of all EU member states a fundamental principle.

Polity IV measures democracy according to the general qualities of political institutions and processes. The overall Polity score combines these ratings into a single, scaled measure of
governance, rating regimes from -10 (fully institutionalised autocracy) to +10 (fully institutionalized democracy), while the WGI list countries according to their worldwide percentile rank. In a constitutional sense, Turkey fits the description of a competitive multiparty democracy as it holds regular elections, where voters (individuals aged 18 and over – with a few exceptions) choose their decision makers every five years. The fact that the people have the constitutional right to vote and can therefore deprive a current government of power at the end of a term, guarantees accountability to some extent. However, as the Polity IV 2011 Global Report points out, “the military continues to exercise substantial, albeit often indirect, influence over executive recruitment.” According to both the Polity IV rankings and WGI, Turkey seems to lag behind countries in earlier enlargement rounds (see figures 2a &b), which suggests that this is an issue, which Turkey must address in order to proceed with its accession negotiations.

Figure 2a: Polity IV Ranking (0-10)

Source: Polity IV, 2003
Source: Polity IV, 2011

Note: Rankings for Bulgaria and Romania when accession date was set (2003), and latest rankings for Turkey and Croatia (2011). http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm (last viewed: 25/5-2013).


In terms of freedom of association, certain parties and organisations have been banned from activity altogether, due to various issues, the most prominent case being the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), who has been internationally accused of terrorist activities. In terms of freedom of expression, Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code (TCC) remains controversial, as it enables individuals to be prosecuted for making statements that can be interpreted as offending ‘Turkishness’. The extent to which there is freedom of press is also debatable, as while mass media in particular is subject to some extent of censorship, it is not exercised directly by the government, but rather by their sponsors who often use financial leverage and close links to the government to limit what can be reported by mass media. A variety of independent media sources do exist, and as they do not rely on conditional finances, they are thus not subject to such censorship.

Instability also remains a problem in Turkey. The PKK and the Ergenekon network are listed in the 2012 Progress Report as major obstacles for Turkish democracy, and the trials relating to the activities of these organisations can be viewed as problematic for the rule of law, as the constitutional bans and allegations against politicians, journalists and members of the public for

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53 Interview D, Beyoğlu, Istanbul, 23/4-2013 (see appendix).
54 An ultra-nationalist organisation with possible ties to members of the Turkey’s military, that is accused of planning and attempting coup d’état.
association are at times dubious. So in this respect there is a legal paradox in the sense that the articles of the constitution that are aimed at preserving stability, also cause doubt about their motivation and the legitimacy of the measures taken to enforce them. The legal paradox also interferes with human rights aspects of Turkish society, as the constitution also guarantees freedom of culture and religion.\(^{56}\) The PKK’s activities have arguably stigmatised the Kurdish minority to the point where they are often suspected of terrorist affiliation.

Naturally, when the freedom of mass media is limited, and a legal loophole enabling critics to be silenced exists, participation and accountability as well as human rights suffer. The tension caused, among other things, by the Kurdish question, causes instability and limits government effectiveness. Consequently the perception of democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities is reduced.

Among the issues mentioned above, three seem to have special priority attached to them in contemporary Turkish politics. In the collected sample of Turkish mass media, Today’s Zaman and Hürriyet Daily News from April 2013, the top three most covered political stories, are issues considered of great importance in the EU that the government is apparently putting great effort into: the Cyprus dispute, the Kurdish question, and domestic reforms. These issues provide for a broad coverage of Turkey in the context of the normative impact of Europe and accession, as the first is an international dispute, the second a domestic conflict and the third regards national political reform in general. These are all areas where alignment with political accession conditionality in terms of ideational influence and rational choice can be assessed relatively easily. As a result, the hypothesis that rational and ideational incentives coexist independently, and that EU norms diffusion is therefore evident, can be tested.

**The Key Issues**

*The Cyprus Dispute*

The origins of the Cyprus dispute stem from centuries of uncertainty about the legal status of the island. Due to its strategic position in the Mediterranean Sea, it has always been a desirable territory to conquer. The Cypriot population experienced somewhat of an identity crisis when the island was officially granted independence from British rule in 1960 following years of violent conflict among

the residents. Instead of perceiving themselves as Cypriots after independence, they maintained their identity links with their respective ethnic groups: Greek and Turkish. Conflict quickly arose over certain constitution amendments targeting the Turkish population. The tension escalated to the point where the UN intervened in 1964, a mission that is still in force today. In 1974 an attempted coup by the Greek Southern part led to attacks on the Turkish enclave in the North, causing Turkey to intervene militarily. The following year both the Northern and Southern parts of Cyprus declared themselves independent.\textsuperscript{57} Due to the Southern Republic of Cyprus being recognised internationally as the sole legitimate government of the entire island, it has secured extensive embargos and isolation of the former (which remains recognised only by Turkey), and while it has acceded to the EU (an application originally made on behalf of the North as well) the North has continued to declare association with Turkey. The dispute remains a problem for the Turkish EU accession process, as the EU favours a one-state solution while the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey favour a two-state solution, and it is frequently referred to by both sides as a major issue and in the best interest of all parties to resolve, as it not only affects Turkey, but also the credibility and financial situation of the EU, the Turkish Cypriots, the Republic of Cyprus and the Greeks.\textsuperscript{58}

Developments relating to the Cyprus dispute was covered in most editions of \textit{Hürriyet Daily News} and on a weekly basis in \textit{Today’s Zaman}, thus making it the third most covered subject in Turkish mass media during April 2013, suggesting that at present this issue receives significant priority in Turkish politics, for which the possible reasons are many.

The dispute is often cited as one of the main obstacles for Turkey’s EU accession process. The negotiation framework of 2005 states that (among other conditions) successful accession depends on

\begin{quote}
“Turkey's continued support for efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem within the UN framework and in line with the principles on which the Union is founded, including steps to contribute to a favourable climate for a comprehensive settlement, and progress in the normalisation of bilateral relations between Turkey and all EU Member States, including the Republic of Cyprus.”\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

Since negotiations were started in 2005, the issue has received significant attention in the yearly Progress Reports, and according to these, little progress has been made. Although every report notes

\textsuperscript{59} European Union, 2005.
that Turkey continues to express support and willingness towards finding a comprehensive settlement, they all mention alleged breaches of human rights by Turkey in Northern Cyprus, where freedom of religion, right to property and access to education have been violated, and many of these issues remain pending. These issues remain relatively minor, however, compared to the fact that no progress since 2005 has been made in normalising bilateral relations between the two parties, and Turkey not having fully implemented the Additional Protocol of the Ankara Agreement, which extends relations with the EU to include the Republic of Cyprus. The EU has on several occasions called for Turkey to walk the talk and take concrete steps towards creating the favourable environment needed for entering into negotiations that can lead to a comprehensive settlement of the issue. Until these issues are solved several chapters of the negotiations remain frozen, and none will be provisionally closed either as long as Turkey does not comply.60

While the Progress Reports continuously state that no progress has been observed, despite Turkey repeatedly stating its good will, the perception of the situation changes if one examines the Turkish point of view. Naturally, as no mentioning of advancements in the alleged human rights breaches was found from either of the two news agencies, it is safe to assume that this is indeed the case, as Turkish media would have otherwise reported it. However, according to mass media, Turkey made several steps towards reconciliation, including both discussions with the UN about establishing a ‘Retreat Centre’ in Istanbul, which will host conferences, peace talks, and actual settlement negotiations.61 The Republic of Cyprus has refused to cooperate in the latter, blaming their current financial situation, according to Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who stated that


impression that this will not be possible in the near future. We hope that Anastasiadis will take action in accordance with messages he gave before the election.”  

So despite the risk of a bias, it does seem credible that the Turkish claims are real and the Progress Reports have failed to recognise their initiatives, due to the fact that the Republic of Cyprus is economically inferior compared to Turkey at the moment, and therefore less likely to be interested in entering a negotiation process. The shift in bargaining dynamics, supports opponents’ allegations that Turkey is using its current superior position to force an unfair solution favourable only for Turkey on the Republic of Cyprus and the EU.  

While it is easy to establish that several forces (both government, opposition and academic) within Turkey wish to see the issue resolved, and many refer to the EU membership as an important aspect, these often come in the context of concerns about the unfairness of the issue posing a barrier to Turkish accession. Most prominently, Turkish EU Minister Egemen Bağış has equated the Cyprus dispute to a married couple relying on their parents to make a decision regarding divorce:

“Turkey, Greece and Britain are like parents who want to save their marriage. Both sides in Cyprus should decide if their marriage will continue or not, just like adults. Whatever their decision is, we will respect this.”

He argues, that attributing the problem to Turkish unwillingness, and listing it as an obstacle for Turkish accession is unreasonable. Similarly, Speaker of Parliament Cemil Çiçek conveyed a message to the EU in late April 2013 saying that although Turkey wishes to continue making efforts in the context of the membership negotiations, if the EU continues to put pressure on only the Turkish side to solve the dispute through forcing them to choose between EU membership (that may never become a reality) and conceding the claims of Northern Cyprus, they would have to choose continued alliance with the latter. “We always show good intentions, but can’t get a response. We no longer want to wait forever.” Also, Davutoğlu has criticised the Republic of Cyprus’ seeming lack of ambition as well as questioned EU conditionality, arguing that it is unreasonable that solving the Cyprus dispute poses a barrier for Turkey, when it was never part of conditionality for either Greece or the Republic of Cyprus. Stressing that the EU must also put an effort into the accession

62 Davutoğlu, quoted in Today’s Zaman, April 9, 2013.
64 Bağış, quoted in Hürriyet Daily News, April 18, 2013(a).
65 Hürriyet Daily News, April 18, 2013(a).
negotiations and stop blocking chapters, he complained that Turkish efforts and good performance is never recognised.\textsuperscript{67} Hence, normative consistency and the credibility of the EU’s conditional offer seem questionable. If Turkey is indeed trying to comply and the EU fails to recognise the attempts, incentives should diminish, according to the compliance scholars. Also, while the incentive to comply for Turkey is there in the form of accession, the EU has arguably missed an important opportunity to set in motion for the Republic of Cyprus to reciprocate in the sense that no such criteria was part of the conditionality for the economic bailout. Therefore, there may be an issue of perceived double standards as well in this particular matter, due to the fact that resolving the issue with Turkey was never so essential for the Cypriot or Greek accession processes, and as it takes two to tango, it may appear as if the conditionality in the case of Turkey is particularly strict and perhaps even a bit unfair. The possible reasons for this are many and are often speculated upon, but it is certainly not causing the membership perspective to appear more credible or consistent.

The Cyprus dispute is of great normative importance, as the fact that Turkey is not willing to recognise the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus (now a full member of the EU) is in violation of the TEU. The Turkish position was reiterated when Cyprus took over the presidency of the EU, as Turkey declared that they would freeze all relations with the presidency and would not attend any meetings chaired by the Cypriots.\textsuperscript{68} In short, the dispute goes against both the principles of promoting peace and mutual respect on which the very foundation of the EU rests. The normative side to the conflict is scarcely mentioned in news reports, and although Turkish officials often stress the importance of ‘peace’ and ‘mutual respect’, this suggests that the EU, in this case, places more normative emphasis on the need to solve the Cyprus dispute as a barrier for accession than Turkey does, due to considerations for national interest.

With regards to rational choice, the material incentives for Turkey lie within the energy field. Throughout April 2013, international energy projects and deals, and the recent discovery of natural resources in the waters surrounding the island are frequently mentioned in reports concerning the conflict. The fact that Israel and Turkey have stabilised their relationship following Israeli apology for the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010, have lead to renewed opportunities for securing an energy deal between the two countries. Also, the financial crisis hitting Greece and Cyprus hard has arguably made a pipeline deal with Turkey the most feasible option for energy cooperation.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Today's Zaman}, April 9, 2013.
\textsuperscript{68} European Commission, 2011.
Interesting to note is that this seems to be highly important for the EU as well. Former Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis has stated that the Cyprus dispute must be resolved so the EU can get access to these reserves,70 and the Finnish Prime Minister has also called upon opening more negotiation chapters, as the EU has a lot of interest in the matter.71

The EU’s normative power does not seem to be significant enough to persuade Turkey into complying with their demands, due to the relatively high domestic cost of national pride and identity, and also because the strategic placement of the island would mean that if Turkey was to concede its influence in the North and recognise the South as the sole legitimate government, Turkey’s access to the natural resources in the area would be severely limited, and lucrative energy deals would be hampered. The incentive of membership, therefore, is not strong enough to outweigh the costs of compliance, and as a consequence no actual progress on resolving the dispute has been observed. In fact, the membership prospect may be so dismal due to the lack of a positive outlook as regards the Cyprus dispute, that it is perceived as non-existing.72 However, Turkey often refers to the importance of ‘mutual respect’ and ‘peace’ in a normative sense, which does suggest a will to adopt to the EU’s set of values. So while the incentives in this particular case seems to be mainly material, Turkey reiterating its adherence to and recognition of the importance of ‘peace’ and ‘mutual respect’ underscores the existence of an ideational aspect as well. This indicates that EU norms diffusion has pervaded this issue indirectly rather than directly, and as such, the EU’s normative power cannot be excluded as a source of influence. In addition, the fact that the Turkish side frequently associates EU norms and accession negotiations with the dispute, suggests that a normative socialisation process is taking place. Furthermore, the amount of rational incentives for non-compliance indicates that as norms diffusion can be simultaneously identified, in this case, they co-exist independently of each other.

The Kurdish Question

The PKK was founded in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan as a reaction to the ban on the use of the Kurdish language that followed the military coup in 1980. Based on a mix of nationalism and communism, the organisation grew rapidly in size. Their first attack was carried out in 1984, and initiated its violent mission of an independent state of Kurdistan. The Turkish army was ill prepared

70 Hürriyet Daily News, April 11, 2013(a).
72 Interview E, Fatih, Istanbul, 24/4-2013 (see appendix).
for this style of combat and it was only in the 1990s that the Turkish forces had reached a sufficient level of training and equipment to deal with the insurgency. Backed by Israel and the USA they managed to force the extradition of Öcalan from Syria, and after being on the run for a short period of time, the PKK leader was captured in 1999.\textsuperscript{73} Since then, Öcalan has been held in captivity on Imralı, an island located outside of Istanbul, and until recently he was held in solitary confinement, being the only prisoner on the entire island. The PKK has remained active in his absence. When the current Justice and Development Party (AKP) government lead by Erdoğan was elected, the approach to the conflict changed, as the government came to the realisation that the issue is political rather than military and should be solved as such. The bans on the use of Turkish language has to a large extent been lifted, and although the initiative in the beginning was received very well in the Kurdish communities, progress was so slow that after a while frustration began to build again. As a result the government launched a ‘Kurdish Opening’ campaign in 2009, which was, however, too well received among the Kurds and sparked fury among ethnic Turks, who still held the view that the Kurdish community were no more than terrorists.\textsuperscript{74} All the violence that has followed from the mismanagement of the Kurdish question has increasingly captured the attention of the Turkish government and as efforts to solve the problem have intensified, a peace process involving negotiations between the government, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq, and imprisoned Öcalan himself have now begun.

This issue by far received the most coverage in Turkish mass media throughout April 2013. Not a single printed edition of either Today’s Zaman or Hürriyet Daily News had less than 3 pieces reporting some aspect of the issue, and judging by the fact that it made front page on nearly every edition of the main Turkish language newspapers, suggests that solving this issue is of great importance for the Turkish government.

Unlike the Cyprus dispute, the EU’s initial framework for accession negotiations with Turkey does not mention the Kurdish question, nor does it speak of any measures on security or domestic stability as part of the basic framework. The developments within these areas, however, are many and overall predominantly positive between 2006 and 2012, according to the Progress Reports. In 2006 a Kurdish association in Diyarbakır was ordered by court to close down after having attempted to conduct activities in Kurdish, the use of Kurdish language was banned in all aspects.

of political life and education, and there was little, if any, access to public services for non-Turkish speakers. Although permission was granted to three local broadcasters to air Kurdish language programmes, they were restricted in terms of time, content, as well as being required to be subtitled in Turkish, which made live broadcasts practically impossible.\(^75\) The following years, however, brought several improvements, and overall the Progress Reports are generally increasingly positive. The ban on Kurdish language in political life has been largely removed, several universities have opened departments teaching Kurdish language, elementary schools are now obliged to offer language courses if more than 10 students apply, access to public service for non-Turkish speakers has improved in most sectors, and broadcasting regulations have been removed to a large extent, although content remains under strict scrutiny.\(^76\) However, due to a significant increase in PKK terrorist attacks, journalists, academics and politicians are frequently appearing in court facing charges of terrorist-affiliation or propaganda, according to the TCC and the Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL). These laws are criticised for being easy to interpret and inconsistently enforced.\(^77\)

Solving the Kurdish question is seen as an important step in facilitating democratisation and securing full fundamental rights and freedoms of both expression and for ethnic minorities, which is therefore key to conditionality and compliance. The most recent events in Turkey regarding the Kurdish question strongly suggest that it is placed very high on the priorities list of the Turkish government as well as among civil society, with keywords such as ‘peace’, ‘democracy’ and ‘rights’ permeating almost every aspect of the current settlement process. Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek thus stated that

“if Turkey can solve the Kurdish issue by increasing fundamental rights and freedoms in the framework of advanced democracy then Turkey’s regional and global position would be strengthened and it would become a role model.”\(^78\)

Likewise, Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) co-chair Gültan Kışanak expressed her hopes for all parties to

“express themselves with an understanding of the democratic nation, with respect for each other’s identities and on the

\(^{75}\) European Commission, 2006.
\(^{76}\) European Commission, 2012.
\(^{78}\) Şimşek, quoted in \textit{Hürriyet Daily News}, April 1, 2013(c).
basis of equality and law... We hope they will assume such an approach.”

Her colleague Selahattin Demirtaş, a key figure in the communications with Öcalan, stressed that the “government should be more courageous in terms of using the language of peace”. The democracy aspect of the peace process is especially interesting. It is clear from media coverage that the domestic stakes are high, especially as elections are up coming in 2013-2015. Although all parties agree that the threat of PKK terrorism must be eliminated in order for Turkey to prosper, they heavily disagree on the means through which this goal is to be achieved. The ruling AKP and the Kurdish friendly BDP have been negotiating withdrawal of PKK forces from Turkish territory with Öcalan through a series of visits of BDP politicians to Imralı where the PKK leader is held prisoner, conveying letters and messages to and from the PKK in Kandil, Iran. On April 26th 2013 these negotiations had a major breakthrough as Öcalan and his associates in Iran agreed to pull out of Turkey on May 8th. Although this agreement is an enormous victory for Erdoğan, it has not been a smooth process. Opposition parties, in particular the Republican People’s Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), have viewed negotiating with terrorists as unforgivable, and have been reluctant to cooperate, as well as voiced concerns over the process being an international plot to interfere with Turkish sovereignty. However, while EU experts in conflict resolution have offered to share their experience and Turkey has accepted, it has been repeatedly stated that the Kurdish question differs significantly from past conflicts within the EU, and that it cannot be solved though the same means as, for instance, the conflict in Northern Ireland.

The Kurdish question is thus regarded as a domestic issue, and although the norms that the EU represents are playing an important part, its direct influence is denied. The European norms are often used as a tool for convincing the Turkish public of the government’s righteousness, which strongly suggests that what the EU advocates is indeed deemed appropriate, both in civil society and among senior politicians. Therefore, rather than being a result of EU pressure, it seems as though the recent developments are influenced by a battle over the support of the people, which is an indication of increasingly thriving democratisation. In particular, Erdoğan and the AKP have put great effort into gaining public support for the initiatives, stating early on, that “the government will

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79 Kışanak, quoted in Hürriyet Daily News, April 10, 2013(b).
80 Demirtaş, quoted in Hürriyet Daily News, April 10, 2013(c).
81 Today’s Zaman, April 26, 2013(a).
82 Hürriyet Daily News, April 1, 2013(a) & April 23, 2013.
83 Today’s Zaman, April 22, 2013.
not take any steps that have not been approved by the people […] We want this spring to be lasting. This spring should not turn into winter. “

Also, a list of so-called ‘wise people’ serving the purposes of being both a way of informing the public and increasing popular opinion on the matter was published, including academics, experts and celebrities. A peculiar combination that seems to have worked for Erdoğan, whose public image has improved after his polls had declined slightly in favour of the opposition.

The fact that no legal action has so far been taken against commentators criticising aspects of the governments action plan, suggests that freedom of expression is advancing beyond the Progress Reports so far, but as the 2013 report is yet to be released, it remains to be seen what the EU will make of this.

The normative aspects of the Kurdish question are many and various, and are in many cases intimately linked with rational incentives. First, peace is perhaps the main issue, as terrorism and government countermeasures have cost many human lives from both sides throughout the conflict. Second, human rights and respect for minorities are also central. The hard line of the government in their fight against PKK terrorism has lead to the Kurdish minority being stigmatised to the point of being ostracised, and their rights have suffered accordingly. For security reasons, the use of the Kurdish language was for a long time banned, and publicly claiming association with the Kurdish community was not without danger. Freedom of assembly and expression has been severely limited in the past and is still restricted due to these security concerns as well, which has not escaped the EU’s attention. Third, in terms of democracy, there are several implications. Stability has been an issue, and government accountability has suffered due to the lack of freedom of expression on the matter, which has hampered the democratisation process of Turkey significantly. Hence, the Kurdish question has been a major security issue, and in addition, fighting PKK terrorism is said to have cost Turkey around $300 billion in the last 30 years. Also, what none of the two mass media newspapers ever mentioned, is the energy aspects of this process. Regarding the Kurdish question, one interviewee pointed out that Turkey’s ambitions of becoming a secure energy hub makes it imperative to solve the issue.

Hence, material incentives are evident, as directing the costs of fighting terrorism towards, for

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85 Erdoğan, quoted in Hürriyet Daily News, April 1, 2013(a).
86 Hürriyet Daily News, April 4, 2013(b).
87 Hürriyet Daily News (Weekend Edition), April 6-7, 2013(d) & Today’s Zaman, April 22, 2013.
88 Interview D (see appendix).
89 Hürriyet Daily News (Weekend Edition), April 6-7, 2013(b).
90 Interview B, Kadıköy, Istanbul, 17/4-2013 (see appendix).
instance, infrastructure or public service in the future would be beneficial, and there is a strong rational argument within the potential for establishing an energy hub. So solving the Kurdish question definitely falls on fertile domestic ground. At the same time, however, it has not been without significant political risk for Erdoğan and the AKP to get so heavily involved in a process with Öcalan, as negotiating with the leader of an organisation appearing on the EU’s terror list, has not been welcomed by either the opposition or a significant amount of the population. Meanwhile, as the PKK in the end announced their withdrawal plans without the government having to make major concessions in the matter, Erdoğan seems to have regained, and the process has perhaps even made him more popular than ever. In addition, establishing an energy hub may also be said to have a normative quality to it, if one chooses to view it in terms of an image or a label, how Turkey wants to be perceived by others. It is important to stress, however, that as there seems to be a general consensus in Turkey that the EU does not influence the recent developments, directly exercised pressure or power of the EU is absent. This point of view was also the general consensus of the interviewees.91

While the recent measures do fall on fertile domestic grounds in terms of economy and security, embarking on the negotiations was arguably a rather risky move for the AKP, as the issue has, and continues to split the Turkish population. In what seems to be an attempt to consolidate power, Erdoğan has made extensive use of EU norms in his public communications to legitimise his move in the eyes of his voters, which, alongside the obvious rational incentives, suggests that EU norms diffusion is occurring, despite European attempts at pressuring the Turkish government are largely ignored.

**Domestic Political and Legal Reforms**

The current Constitution of the Republic of Turkey dates back to 1982. It was drafted by the military regime with the purpose of maintaining public order rather than protect the fundamental rights of the population. Nevertheless, it was approved by a public referendum, but due to the questionable democratic legitimacy of the time, several amendments have been made to fill the gaps in terms of democracy consolidation, fundamental civil and political rights, rule of law and democracy. The current version of the 1982 constitution thus guarantees, on paper, a wide range of aspects within democracy, rule of law, freedoms and rights relating to the electoral system,

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91 See appendix.
citizenship, equality, religion, expression, assembly and association. Torture and mistreatment is strictly forbidden. In addition, capital punishment was abolished in an amendment in 2004, and the controversial State Security Courts have been eliminated. In reality, however the current constitution has a number of legal loopholes, as both the TCC and the ATL, in which definitions are at times very vague, can be used to challenge the fundamental rights that the constitution claims to guarantee. Most notably, freedom of expression and assembly is often severely limited through the use of Article 301 in the TCC, in which insulting ‘Turkishness’ is criminalised.

New political and legal reforms are currently underway in Turkey, and the draft negotiations are the source of much frustration in the Turkish parliament. While the actual political negotiations are covered often in mainstream media with at least two separate articles a week, no attention is given to actual cases, other than those involving prominent personalities, where the articles are open to interpretation are allegedly used to abuse fundamental rights.

The negotiation framework does not mention any specific political or legal reforms that have to be implemented in order for Turkey to comply with EU conditionality. However, a broad framework calls for

“Turkey to sustain the process of reform and to work towards further improvement in the respect of the principles of liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including relevant European case law; to consolidate and broaden legislation and implementation measures specifically in relation to the zero tolerance policy in the fight against torture and ill-treatment and the implementation of provisions relating to freedom of expression, freedom of religion, women's rights, ILO standards including trade union rights, and minority rights.”

Unlike the Cyprus dispute and the Kurdish question, which refer to specific contemporary events, the legal and political reforms that are important to basic political conditionality and compliance, transcends almost all aspects of contemporary Turkish politics. Overall, it seems as though Turkey has been progressing steadily since 2006, implementing more and more aspects of fundamental rights, and improving in terms of rule of law and democracy. Elections since 2006 have been generally perceived as complying with European standards, and although the possibility to disband

93 Turkish Criminal Code, Section 13. Most prominently, perhaps, is the case of writer and Nobel Prize Winner Orhan Pamuk, who was sued under this article for his critical comments on the Turkish position towards the Armenian genocide and the Kurdish issue.
parties provided by the constitution is criticised, and a 10% election threshold remains, the
democratisation process is consistently commended.95 A major step forward came in 2010, when the constitution was amended to provide for a previously annulled Ombudsman Institution to be established, increasing government accountability significantly.96

The policies and laws consistently referred to as problematic in the Progress Reports, are the controversial Article 301 of the TCC and certain parts of the ATL, which, as stated earlier, are heavily criticised for being open to interpretation and abused for political reasons. Also, certain parts of the constitution are considered a barrier for decentralisation of power, democracy and the military’s influence on politics as well as groups attempting coup d’état such as the Ergenekon network and the Sledgehammer are also of great concern.97 Throughout the years a number of policies have been implemented and laws have been changed in these fields. Article 301 of the TCC was amended in 2009,98 and since then reports of prosecutions according to this article have been significantly reduced. Other articles of the TCC as well as the ATL remains problematic, and seems to have replaced Article 301 as a means to prosecute journalists and other individuals expressing non-violent criticisms.99 The Third Judicial Package adopted in 2012 was directed towards addressing some of these issues through, for instance, removing the possibility of banning publication, but it had little impact.100

Recent mass media attention has often been directed towards the reforms. The attempts by the AKP government to write an entirely new constitution replacing the current one from 1982, which was the result of a military coup, for instance, is extensively covered. From early April 2013 and onwards it became evident that this was not going to be an easy process.

In the beginning, a Parliamentary Constitution Reconciliation Commission was established, consisting of members from all four parties represented in Parliament, whose job was to draft a new constitution that would be approved by a broad representation in Parliament. However, this does not seem to be going very well. While they have managed to agree on certain articles, a few core issues continue to hamper the process. These include changing the wording of articles addressing subjects of citizenship, secularism, administrative systems and fundamental rights and freedoms. In addition, a proposed change of Article 4, preventing amendment of the so-called ‘Irrevocable Articles’ and

96 European Commission, 2010.
100 European Commission, 2012.
the Presidential System is dividing the four parties. The AKP and BDP share similar views on changing these parts, and are strongly opposed to the suggestion of the CHP and MHP that the constitution should include the “right to resist against those who have lost legitimacy”, citing the possibility of more coup d’état attempts following the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer plots.

Erdoğan has throughout expressed a desire to come to an agreement with all four parties, but the odds look slim, and he may have to present the AKP’s own draft, for which he could probably achieve a majority of votes with the BDP, and then put it up for popular referendum. It has been pointed out by the Constitutional Court President that a popular referendum should be held in any case in order to secure the influence of the public as much as possible. The AKP and BDP continue to call for completion of the constitutional draft stressing the importance of ‘democracy’, with both Erdoğan stating that

“We have grown up with [military] intervention constitutions but we and our Parliament owe giving a democratic, participatory and libertarian constitution which embraces everybody to our children […] But now, all of us owe giving a homeland – where they will live confidently, in fraternity and by embracing each other but not holding weapons against each other – to our children”,

and BDP co-leader Gültan Kışanak stressing the need for

“A democratic constitution based on an understanding of pluralism, must be the connector of all colors in the society. All political parties, institutions and citizens who have this historic responsibility, must join the construction of a democratic republic.”

The fact that the parties does not seem able to find a common solution hampers political efforts in general, and if they do not reach a conclusion before the next presidential election, Turkey may face serious issues within their political system, as the powers of the posts of the President and the Prime Minister may end up conflicting to a point where the decision-making process suffers.

Recent efforts in Turkey to launch and implement new reforms within the legal and political framework have been recognised by the EU. Maurice Ripert, the Ambassador of the EU to Turkey,

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102 Hürriyet Daily News (Weekend Edition), April 6-7, 2013(c).
103 Hürriyet Daily News, April 18, 2013(c).
104 Today’s Zaman, April 26, 2013(b).
105 Erdoğan, quoted in Hürriyet Daily News, April 26, 2013.
107 Hürriyet Daily News, April 1, 2013(b).
thus commended the progress citing the creation of an Ombudsman, a National Institute for Human Rights, the Third and Fourth Judicial Packages, laws on protecting women and foreigners and against financing terrorism, as the main steps in the right direction for democratisation, freedom and rights.\(^\text{108}\)

The normative aspect permeates all features of recent developments in Turkish reforms. Democracy, respect for minorities, freedom of expression and rule of law are all being heavily discussed, and Erdoğan and the AKP seems set on making amendments to the constitution in particular that will diminish the restrictions within these areas. The government – and sometimes the opposition – often stress normative concepts such as increased democratisation when quoted in mass media, which indicates that these norms should be viewed as something very positive, and that it is expected to have a positive ring to it among the population.

On the other hand, the domestic rational aspects are difficult to detect in this case. The government is in fact adopting policies that diminish their power over the people, if one disregards for a moment the suggestion regarding the presidential system, which will put future presidents in a more powerful position than they are now, where they will be much more executive and less ceremonial. The only aspect that may be regarded as rational is the possibility that the government is making these policy changes with special consideration for curbing popular protest and winning votes during the next election. But as nothing has pointed towards the AKP facing defeat in the next election at any point, this seems like a weak argument compared to the normative indications.

That the recent reforms have been aimed at aligning Turkish society with EU standards, is clearly the case. However, much like the circumstances surrounding the efforts towards a peaceful settlement with the PKK, the reform discussions seem to be highly influenced by domestic politics and attempts of consolidating power. Essentially what these reforms will do is decentralise power, which will cause the direct influence of the state to diminish, so in this case the most credible interpretation of rational and normative incentives seems to be that it is again a mix, but in this case they are particularly difficult to separate. On the one hand advocating EU norms when drafting a new constitution can be seen as beneficial in rational terms, as the decision-making process will otherwise be hampered. On the other hand, the AKP constitutional draft seems determined to open up for increased democratisation with certain reforms that will cause their level of power to decrease, which indicates a desire to belong to the normative majority. Nevertheless, there is no

\(^{108}\) *Hürriyet Daily News*, April 18, 2013(b).
evidence in the recent reform discussions that points towards either rational or normative incentives being absent. Thus, the combination of giving up and consolidating power through the use of a particular set of norms, suggests that rational and ideational aspects in this case do conflict, but are by no means mutually exclusive.

**Normative Power Europe?**

As the above sections demonstrate, there is to a large extent a correlation between the EU’s normative conditionality and Turkish compliance, which suggests that EU norms diffusion is taking place in Turkey, despite several of the compliance criteria missing in many areas. The membership prospect is weak, and more often than not, the EU seems focused on the remaining obstacles than those within which Turkey claims that progress or efforts at compliance have been made. Several interviewees, who expressed concern about European preconceived perceptions of Turkey’s abilities or efforts, reiterated this. One stated that “this EU thing became a complex in Turkey – They will never be able to, they will never do this and that.”

Thus, not only is the conditional offer of the membership prospect not very credible, but EU conditionality is generally perceived as lacking in normative consistency:

“For years and years Turkey has tried to prove to the world that we are as good as the developed world […] some people might have some reactions towards the EU, I think that stems from frustration. But if there is a change of heart in Europe in 6 months time, with us receiving positive messages […] that […] Turkey is such a great country, we would like to see Turkey in the EU, then the mood with the Turkish public would swing in a matter of seconds.”

Also, it seems that a shift has happened not only in terms of the Turkish perception of the membership prospect, but also in terms of Turkish self-confidence as a result of economic success. Therefore, bargaining dynamics have also changed significantly, as the decline of the European economic situation versus the boom that Turkey has experienced has definitely changed the situation, and ultimately the incentive to comply for the sake of membership prospect alone, as it is unlikely that a one party will agree to enter into negotiations if it perceives its position as significantly weaker than that of its opponent. This is evident in the case of Cyprus, as the Turkish side is willing to resume negotiations while Cyprus tries to delay it. However, this does not seem to

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109 Interview B (see appendix).
110 Interview C, Karaköy, Istanbul, 18/4-2013 (see appendix).
be the general case with negotiations with the EU. While it is difficult to deny that bargaining dynamics have changed in terms of economics, it seems as though Turkey still wants to continue the process, while certain member states in the EU are blocking it. According to the logic of the bargaining argument, Turkey must still want accession to happen more than the EU does. Mass media coverage in April 2013, support this assumption. While the EU is not used frequently as a reference when discussing normative change, willingness to continue working towards the EU and the norms it represents is often reiterated by top-level politicians. Also, all interviewed experts agreed that Turkey still wants accession to happen despite the lengthy process and current stalemate, although some were worried about continued efforts if the European position does not change:

“There will be a day when Turkey and Europe will sit and decide whether to take this process to a positive route or end it. Because you cannot keep it this way forever, you have to have a deadline […] there should be a light at the end of the tunnel, whether it is a green light or a red light.”

The picture that these statements in the context of the bargaining dynamics and the mass media attention paint, can be interpreted as an attempt by Turkey to increase its feeling of superiority, and due to the fact that (although these news reports are translated versions of Turkish media) both media outlets are in English and targeting Western expats, Turkey may be at a point where it is making attempts at ‘peacock’ the EU, which is possibly perceived as significantly weaker at the moment. According to one interviewee, the EU refuses to realise that its position is not as strong as it used to be. “I feel there is a more egalitarian flavour to the relationship, although our European friends are reluctant to recognize that the EU is not nearly as important as they think it is.”

Although this supports the argument that bargaining dynamics have shifted, it simultaneously underscores the importance of the normative aspect, as no indications of Turkey withdrawing from the negotiations anytime soon can be found anywhere in mainstream media or among the statements of the experts. Indeed, the continued importance attached to the EU despite changing bargaining dynamics is generally seen as an indication that Turkey is responding to the normative power of the EU: “the European Union, the Western alliance still represents the developed part of the world, and Turkish people aspire to be part of that developed world.”

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111 Interview E (see appendix).
112 Interview A, Beyoğlu, Istanbul, 9/4-2013 (see appendix).
113 Interview C (see appendix).
membership does not seem to be that credible anymore does not seem to have hampered Turkey’s motivation to keep working towards accession, which suggests that a major motivation is indeed to be found within non-material aspects. As one argues:

“It doesn’t mean anything to Turkey anymore as such what the EU says, but Turkey follows the correct path, which Europe opened for itself, and we take the same path. So we have more democratic rules for the press, although there are still problems, we have a more open economy. We have all these inputs, all these positive inputs of the EU. And we will not stop even though Europe doesn’t give us a date.”114

While the normative fingerprint on contemporary Turkish politics is clear in all three issues, so are to a wide extent the rational elements. Security concerns and economic ventures seem to have great importance attached to them as well:

“People want to be part of the EU because they think that it will help them pragmatically, it will help them improve their economy, they will have more income […]. It’s not about feeling European. In the first place, it is about the practical things.”115

Therefore, rational incentives do to some extent seem to play a large part in Turkish compliance with the EU’s normative conditionality. What all of the issues show is that the criteria of compliance having to fall on fertile domestic grounds, seems to hold. In all three issues, the more it would help domestic conditions, the more it seemed to motivate compliance. The exception confirming the rule is Cyprus. Almost no progress has been made here, and the domestic cost of fully complying is a barrier. Besides, the fact that Turkey is bringing something to the table now, is arguably only because their leverage has increased. Meanwhile, even in the case of the Kurdish peace process, where EU influence is perceived as non-existent among Turkish academics, politicians and journalists, data suggests that despite arguments of the opposite, norms diffusion can be identified alongside rational incentives, and does not seem to be particularly hindered by a lack of fertile conditions, as for instance Schimmelfennig would argue. Furthermore, recalling Diez’ argument, that Normative Power Europe needs an independently normative socialisation process in order to be justified, seems to be flawed as well in this respect. Rather than posing a problem or a dilemma, both incentives seem to complement each other, and that combination seems to be what fuels the motivation for Turkey’s continued work towards aligning with the EU. Some may argue

114 Interview B (see appendix).
115 Interview D (see appendix).
that the exception is, perhaps, the case of the domestic reforms, but even within this aspect the extent to which they conflict does not seem to eliminate their coexistence and the extent to which they even reinforce each other. The material incentives are not enough, as some areas would bring more problems than benefits, and the ideational benefits are not sufficient either, as the case of Cyprus clearly demonstrates.

However, the references made to EU norms, whether they are directly attributed to it or not, indicate that they do continuously play a part:

"Every culture has these norms, but it is much easier for people who want to govern to link them to a foreign pressure [...] nobody wants to give power away. We only give power away if we are under pressure. So maybe this pressure feeling of the West asking us something is much easier for the politicians [...] to make people digest it."116

The fact that it is assumed by Turkish senior politicians that EU norms are considered appropriate behaviour within civil society supports the argument that EU norms diffusion is still powerful, as Turkey would then be adhering to the normative aspects without thinking about it, and indicates that the ideational influence of the EU has been successful in the sense that it has become subliminal to the Turkish political elite and civil society alike. This is particularly the case in the Kurdish peace process and the domestic reforms, where it seems to be assumed by the government that the use of European norms will be seen as positive among the population and will cause their public support to increase.

Conclusion

In the above sections, Normative Power Europe, and political conditionality and compliance has been investigated in the context of three prominent issues and events that are deemed important to the Turkish accession process by the EU, and have recently received significant attention from the Turkish government and Turkish mass media. EU norms such as democracy, freedom, peace and equality were examined in order to illustrate and test the arguments of a theoretical debate. While the ideational branch of scholars argue for the importance of normative over material power, the rational branch argue the opposite. What seems to be the consensus among most of these scholars (Ian Manners excluded) is that if one exists, it is difficult to prove the existence of the other. In the beginning of this thesis it was proposed that rather that being mutually exclusive, rational and

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116 Interview B (see appendix).
ideational incentives can coexist, independently and intertwined, and are sometimes even reinforcing each other.

The developments relating to the correlation between EU political conditionality and Turkish compliance is generally quite positive, and in all three cases the rational incentives were obvious. Meanwhile, norms diffusion could also be found even within issues where compliance was low due to high domestic cost, or where the EU’s influence was low or non-existent. The fact that EU norms are often reiterated by the Turkish political and academic elites thus points towards Europe’s normative power being alive and well, albeit the most important norms vary from issue to issue. Rational and ideational incentives can thus both be said to influence the process of compliance, and the hypothesis seems to hold: EU norms diffusion can be observed, and while Turkey is perhaps not knocking on the European door to the extent it used to, it remains seated on the normative doorstep. Norms, such as peace, democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms are generally perceived as something positive and aligning with them is worth working for. National interest plays a part as well, of course, but the above study has shown that while one can definitely speak of ideational concerns as secondary to rational concerns, the opposite can also be the case, as can be seen from the recent developments in Turkish reforms. Although the idea of a nation state choosing to relinquish power is unrealistic, the incentive of aligning with a set of norms can make decentralising power and relaxing direct control a favourable option.

What the findings of this thesis suggest is that while the existing pool of research is deep and includes case studies such as the one conducted here, there is a gap in the field of International Relations and the study of enlargement, conditionality and compliance that needs to be filled in terms of bridging rational and ideational approaches. The Turkish accession process is a convincing case and represents, as argued earlier, the extreme, but Turkey is not the only country currently knocking on the European door, and the argument presented here requires further research in order to be fully developed and validated.
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Appendix: Interviews

(For clarity, linguistic hesitations etc. have been edited out.)

A: Iltar Turan

Political Science professor in International Relations at Bilgi University. Former president of Bilgi University and the Turkish Political Science Association.


AÖ: (Explaining the project)

A: This normative power is nothing new and there is no reason to attribute it to the European Union. What’s different about the European Union is that for those who want to become members it’s all about conditionality.

AÖ: Yes and that is exactly what I am looking at, which is why I am taking Turkey as a case. Because the enlargement has been going on for so long and the prospects remain open-ended. Meanwhile other countries have more successful enlargement processes, which is why Turkey is interesting, cause the conditions are unprecedented. There is no date given yet for Turkey. So what I am trying to find out is whether this so-called “normative” fingerprint that the EU is said to have can be found on Turkish politics?

A: Well, those who don’t give anything don’t get anything, so I think that’s where things stand obviously as… yeah, maybe in democratization one would like to think that the EU conditionality is not the exclusive force in the world that promotes democratization, and from that perspective maybe it’s not critical the EU connection is imprecise and open-ended, because there are some forces around the world, I mean, Turkish society that works for greater democratization of the society, but if the EU had any sort of soft power when Turkey was extended an initial invitation to commence with accession negotiations, that soft power is gone. I mean, there is no particular reason at the moment to take the European Union seriously, I think. No.

AÖ: So you can see that in the discourses of contemporary Turkish politics as well?

A: Well, you know, essentially I think while Turkey does not reject the idea of becoming a member and at least the EU bureaucracy promotes the notion that negotiations could continue, and maybe get to a stage where membership becomes a reality, so neither side, essentially denounces the eventual goal, but this neither side treats it, at the moment at least, as a serious possibility. So when that possibility is not very serious there is no reason to take the conditionality seriously.

AÖ: Can you see this within public opinion as well?

A: Well, increasingly, the EU is not talked about very much in public, so that in itself is an indication that it’s not a major force. In terms of public opinion support for EU membership, you know, in the early period when Turkey had been extended this invitation to commence with
accession negotiations, support was over 70%, it’s gone down to almost half of that, it may have gone up a little, but of course other things have happened in the meantime, at the moment whether the European Union is a surviving organization, whether it will survive, if it survives, whether it will be an important organization are all interesting questions to which we do not have any answers, for one thing, however, we can say that the EU is not a major actor of anything in the world at the moment. Members of the EU, maybe, there’s to say are in terms of security questions, obviously France and Britain are actors and they usually diverge in their foreign policies with Germany, so can we talk about EU foreign policy? Not really, I mean, there is an organization that presumably conducts EU foreign policy under Baroness Ashton, and there is an external action service, but its not really making much of a difference. So this is in matters of security, in matters of economics we are still unsure as to whether the crisis in the EU is over. Just as you think it has been taken, brought under control, another country emerges. So Greece was brought under control, Cyprus emerges, now we are here, Slovenia is next, there are always doubts about Italy, now apparently also about France, so when you think about these things, I mean, there is a very real question as to whether the European Union promises to be the prosperity zone that it was hoping to be. In terms of trade the customs union is working. Turkey and the EU countries both have reasonable access to each others markets, and that may be one of the reasons why parties are careful not to have a rupture in their relationship, but that relationship is also laid with problems, and the gist, the heart of the problem is this: that in a customs union Turkey is obliged to expand the facilities that it extends to the European Union member countries to any country that signs a free trade agreement with the European Union, but the country that signs that agreement with the European Union is not obligated legally to sign a similar or the same agreement with Turkey, now, so far we have managed the major case, Korea. We did manage to sign an agreement with Korea, we have now a potential American agreement coming now, and of course the other problem with this arrangement is that Turkey, while under obligation to extend the facilities to third parties that sign a free trade agreement with the European Union, is not involved in the process of negotiations, so there is no way of assuring that Turkey’s interests are observed, so some adjustment needs to be made here. These are basically so comprehensive you cannot make arrangements that countries can make without a deeper commitment to future membership. In terms of security there is a major issue between Turkey and the European Union, because the European Union members of NATO would like to develop a EU-NATO cooperation Turkey has not (…) disposed to this and this is fully involved in defence planning and unless non-military powers that are members of the European Union is kept out of this deal.

AÖ: There has been a lot of talk in the newspapers recently about the Kurdish issue and the negotiations with Öcalan...

A: The EU has nothing to do with this.

AÖ: What do you think is influencing it then?

A: This is a Turkish problem, and it is certainly not the EU that is influencing it, in fact the EU has been, for us, a major source of problems, many EU countries have extended support to terrorist activities, extortion, murders, some countries have extended facilities to train terrorists, so we don’t the EU anything in this. The EU is a problem rather than a contributor.

AÖ: Erdoğan went to Copenhagen recently to meet with the Danish PM, and she was criticized for
focusing only on trade and not on putting pressure on him on the Kurdish issue, and it seems like the EU is sometimes trying to take credit for the recent developments.

A: The EU likes to take credit and fancies itself to be important. This is not to be taken seriously by any serious observer of how much influence the EU wields, no. Some members of the EU may have been more instrumental, other countries also. But this is a Turkish problem and the initiative originated from the Turkish government, I don’t think the EU has had anything to do with this at all.

AÖ: So do you see a shift in dynamics in the relationship between Turkey and the EU?

A: I think there has been a sort of shift of mood in the sense that in the old days the EU was prosperous and Turkey was not really where it is now economically or politically, world politics were different, so the EU thought it would always have the luxury of Turkey would always be knocking on its door, and of course the situation has been changed now. I think Turkey’s position in the international system has improved. Some of the fears about Turkey’s membership that the European market would be flooded with Turkish workers etc. are no longer as meaningful. I feel there is a more egalitarian flavour to the relationship, although our European friends are reluctant to recognize that the EU is not nearly as important as they think it is. So I think the European Union has essentially lost a lot (…) as regards Turkey, and I think Turkey has also come to be at peace with the idea that the EU is there, we’ll have relations with it, we would like to become a member, conditions permitting, but you know, the world is also pretty good without membership in the EU, and in fact the way things have developed in the EU, maybe its not always a good idea to be a member of the EU anyway.

AÖ: But do you think that this open-ended prospect and the conditionality – there does not seem to be a carrot at the end of the stick for Turkey – do you think it makes a difference whether a date is set or not?

A: Well, I mean, if there was a date, or there was a serious prospective of becoming a member, I think Turkey would essentially have done more to become a member, yes. But since the European Union is not promising anything and some members are in fact promising no membership ever, then why? So obviously I think the EU conditionalities to the extent that they are based on in you meet the conditionality you become a member, would be meaningful only if in fact the reward promised by the conditionality was a realistic prospect. It doesn’t appear to be so at the moment.

AÖ: How do you see, then, the future of EU Turkish relations?

A: The question cannot be considered apart from the future of the EU itself. We don’t know where the EU will be going; there are still major economic problems. We are not sure it will be possible in the long run to sustain the EU, maybe Britain will drop out of the EU, so there are quite a number of questions with regards to the EU itself. Now, if history teachers wrote something, after the Napoleonic wars, a concept of Europe was installed, in the concept of Europe says it was a Christian thing as the European Union leaders sometimes claim it is. The Ottoman Empire was excluded. It took the leaders, the European leaders to understand that the European concept would not be possible without the Ottoman Empire 40 years. Then they said all right, in the Paris Treaty of 1856, the Turkish Empire is a part of the concept of Europe. But by this time, the concept of Europe had already become an empty shell, so my idea would be that maybe we are heading in the same
direction, that it will take some time for the European leaders, at least the French and the Germans, and the Austrians that are still not recovering from the fact that they once were an empire. By the time they have digested the fact that Turkey is important for Europe as a member, the European Union may well have become an empty shell, which is no more than fit for trading.

AÖ: If the EU manages to get out of the crisis, do you think prospects will be better?

A: Well, you know, it depends on, I mean, when we say the crisis, there is both the economic crisis, but there is also what you might call the political precision about the future of Europe, these two are at the same time. And if it recovers positively on both those areas, in the meantime, there is a good chance that Turkey will also be a much bigger actor. We will have some kind of relationship. But still, it may not be membership.

B: Erkut Emcioğlu

Lecturer of EU Law in Okan University, and Managing Editor of Turkish Policy Quarterly.

Kadıköy, Istanbul, 17/4-2013.

AÖ: Is norms diffusion visible in Turkish politics?

B: Everywhere, I mean, all the norms are being changed in Turkey according to the EU norms, by definition the norms setter is the EU and this process of accession compels Turkey to change all these legislations. I see it in the process of the making of the constitution itself, in competition law, in commercial law, in all kinds of different sectors of the law I see it. Since 2001 we changed all the legal codes in Turkey. All of them. Commercial codes have changed, obligations codes have changed, the penal code has changed, all of them changed. We had 11 reforms packages changed. So the normativity has changed, all the norms have been adopted according to the EU norms. And especially in the economics, I mean law relating to the economic sector. Not only there, but also in administrative law, for instance, so the presence of the EU in that sense is everywhere. So the government announce their programme for the coming years in the beginning of each term, they reference the EU in any case, what the EU accession report says about Turkey, what Turkey has to do, and they are implemented in the governmental policy papers, at the beginning of each term, they are announced by the Prime Minister and at the end they are being checked, are they done or not. So this national acquis, I am sure you know this bunch of documents, I mean, Turkey is under scrutiny of the EU in that sense the EU, and Turkey itself makes internal control through the EU ministry on the implementation of these reforms, of the plan, so the EU is changing Turkey, even though Turkey is not a member, or will not be a member – who cares – Turkey is changing according to the EU and, I mean, this can not be changed by any government in Turkey, I mean, AKP, or CHP or MHP, this is a “civilizational” thing. Islamist or non-Islamist, it doesn’t matter, it is about the identity. So they will go on with this normative change probably.

AÖ: But if there is no membership prospect, why do you think they change?

B: There is a membership prospect. This will not be taken off the table.

AÖ: I agree, but so far there is no date given for Turkey, a privileged partnership is being advocated by many member states, and negotiations have been going on for so long that it can be questioned whether Turkey will ever become a member of the EU, don’t you think that has some
kind of impact?

B: Take the historic approach. Since the arrival of the Turkish tribes to Anatolia 1000 years ago, Turkey has been trying to move towards the West, Turks are trying to move to the West. So 10 years, 40 years, 50 years, in this long period of time in history it means nothing. In our minds it means nothing. In my mind it means nothing. If Europe doesn’t give a date today or tomorrow they will give a date, it doesn’t make any pressure on Turkish society. It was before, in the 1980’s. We had Greece joining the EU, we had the Cypriot Problem burning next to us, we had the Armenian Issue coming on the table nonstop. Probably this EU thing became a complex in Turkey – They will never be able to, they will never this and that. Back then every word from the European side had a meaning. Today Turkey doesn’t have anymore of these complexes, because of the economic success, because of the great power position in the Middle East. There are many reasons why Turkey doesn’t have these complexes anymore. So it doesn’t mean anything to Turkey anymore as such what the EU says, but Turkey follows the correct path, which Europe opened for itself, and we take the same path. So we have more democratic rules for the press, although there are still problems, we have a more open economy. We have all these inputs, all these positive inputs of the EU. And we will not stop even though Europe doesn’t give us a date, Turkey is getting along with it. Nobody asks about the date. It lost its meaning. In fact I think this is where Europe lost meaning in Turkey, who cares about it now. Nobody cares about it now. But, you know, Europe is there and we are getting conformed to Europe.

AÖ: What about public opinion? A recent poll showed that the ruling AKP is experiencing a drop in public support while more nationalist parties are seeing an increase. Do you think that has anything to do with it?

B: I don’t agree with this scene, I mean, AKP as much as CHP, MHP has difficulties to accept some interventions of the European side. So they are not as European as they were before in 2002, they needed the support of Europe, of the States, of the West at that time to be able to govern in Turkey against the dominant powers in Turkey. So they needed this. But today they don’t need it, they have a large public opinion behind them, so this public opinion is nationalist. Turkey is a nationalist country. Each of us has this feeling, we have been brought up in that, it is educational, we learned it in that way. And it took me a very long time for myself, 12 years in France, 2 years in Britain to get rid of it. So it took a very long time, and it’s not the general situation. So we are nationalists, the AKP is also nationalist, CHP is nationalist, MHP is nationalist. But they have to be. Because this is also what they have been taught, Europe is the direction to go, so they are all European also in their minds, I mean, they want to be a part of this European Union. All of them. So I wouldn’t make a distinction between the AKP as more Europe friendly and others, cause they are all the same. One is more Islamic, the others have different opinions, but Europe is a consensus. Nationalism is also a consensus. This is the problem, how to deal with this nationalism against a supranational entity, which they defend, I don’t think they know what they defend. Maybe this is the main question that has to be asked in this country, we don’t know! I mean, I know, because I am teaching it, but my students, they did not know before they came to my class in third year of university what Europe really means. I mean, what is supranationality, supranational entity? What it means is that there is a government in Brussels that decides about some, lets say 70% of our daily life issues. They don’t know it! And when you tell them, the nationalist side of course takes over within my students and they say: “No! We have been independent since 1923 why to give this away?” It is the same discussion that you have in your countries. In France it is a big issue, LePen is using it all the time,
and other right wing parties in the UK it’s the same story. The same problem will be dealt with in the same way in Turkey if it is explained to the people, so it will be a kind of similar discussion to the one that you have in your countries. But we don’t have this discussion yet because there is a myth of Europe. And there is the myth of nationalism. Both are still alive. We don’t explain what these two mean to the people, so they think they can switch from one to the other, they can be European and they can be Nationalist. It doesn’t work. You have to give up some nationalism to become part of a supranational identity. I think this is a real issue that this is not explained. We are not informed in Turkey, we are not well-informed in Turkey about anything. Not only about the EU, also about the current peace process with the Kurds. Who knows what’s going on, nobody knows. In the university, even, we don’t know, students ask me, they don’t know. Why are there suddenly a group of Wise Men, who are they? What are they doing? What are they talking about? Nobody knows who is on both sides of the table. There is the government? Really? A part of the government? Are there some people who are against from the government? Against what? What kind of peace? What kind of new constitution will we have after this peace? A federal state? You see these are things that normally in a democratic state you speak about, you talk about. In television you have programmes, in university you have seminars, civil society gets involved, you know? There people understand. In Turkey – no. The same goes for Europe. Nobody knows about it. But we know that we are a candidate. And like every candidate we want to win. Unfortunately this is that simple.

AÖ: But do you think there is some kind of norms diffusion going on from anywhere else? It is assumed that these norms are of Western origin, but many of these norms are a big part of Islam as well, is it necessarily EU influence?

B: You are right, no. But the understanding is that we are having these notions of peace and freedom because Europe wants us to have them in order to join. Maybe this is totally wrong, this is the wrong feeling, but this has been sold in such a way, this is the situation for years in Turkey that we link all these kinds of progresses in the country to the European Union membership prospect of Western organisations of Turkey or NATO or Council of Europe, these kinds of Western bodies which tell us what to do. But many people say that in our proper own Oriental culture, we probably have these norms, or not probably, we HAVE these norms. Of course, every culture has these norms, but it is much easier for people who want to govern to link them to a foreign pressure than saying, you know, we… nobody wants to give power away. We only give power away if we are under pressure. So maybe this pressure feeling of the West asking us something is much easier for the politicians to swallow, to digest, to make people digest it.

AÖ: So in theory, then, the EU could just be a passive actor?

B: Possibly, yes. It can be. But it is not seen as such. We think that the EU is the actor. Not even the United States, the EU is the actor.

AÖ: What about the UN and NATO?

B: Well, yes. Turkey wants to be one of these nations in the Security Council, we are playing on that. In every discussion of Abdullah Gül or Tayyip Erdoğan, wherever they go they are asking for Turkey to be a permanent member of the Council (…) They are lobbying for it. And there is a right side in it. If there are five nations there and there is not one Muslim nation, there is something
wrong. Why Turkey, is a different matter, why not Iran or Indonesia, the biggest Muslim nation. But why? Because, I mean, if we talk about equality, there must be some elements of it in the Security Council. So this is one point about the United Nations. We care about it. We want to be a member of it. Then, the NATO issue. You cannot be out of it. We are in such a situation, in such a geography, that we had to belong somewhere before, and still today we have to belong somewhere, because we have difficult neighbours and we are difficult for them as well, I mean, not only does Turkey have Iran, Iran has Turkey as well, same difficulty for both sides. Same goes for Syria, same goes for Armenia, Greece, and NATO is important for that reason. To be secure. Just to be secure. To belong somewhere even if the states will not come to the help of Turkey, if Iran or Syria or Iraq does something, and Syria IS doing something at the border, I mean, and we have the Patriots coming from NATO which have settled in this region, we don’t have the command of these Patriots, the command is with the Dutch. Why did they not transfer the knowledge of the command of the Patriots, nobody knows. We do belong somewhere, but we are not in command of it. Like the Customs Union with the European Union. We are in the Customs Union, but we are not in the command of the Customs Union. The decisions are made by the European Union members and we apply them, same goes for NATO military issues, decisions are made by the big ones and we are applying them, but at least we are a member. On the other one, about the European Union we are at the gates, we are waiting. So there is always this feeling that we want to be a part of something, but you know that you will not be in command of anything. That’s the reason why the United Nations Security Council application is so important. For the first time they have grounds to defend the full membership of somewhere, where they will be in the command of something. So all these things are linked, the UN, the EU, NATO, they are all linked.

AÖ: But you mentioned now the Customs Union. Turkey already enjoys quite a lot of the benefits of being part of the EU and it is not going very well in the EU at the moment, several countries are close to bankruptcy, the UK is talking about leaving altogether, so do you not think that the incentive to actively work towards membership is gone?

B: This has an impact in Turkey. Definitely. Among Turkish decision makers, one of the first words used by Bağış or Erdoğan or Gül when they talk about the EU they mention that the EU is collapsing, first thing they say, they are happy about it also. They feel like… the pride is repaid in a way, the EU is collapsing, we are not. This is the first thing. But the EU is not collapsing. If the EU collapses the whole global economic system collapses. No, it won’t happen. And we know it. So therefore the goal does not change. The world changes, the goal does not change. This is an illusion that we are trying to give, probably. “Now you will come to us, you will ask us to join you”. I don’t believe it. But it is good for repairing our national pride. This is, just for national pride it is good, as I told you, we are all nationalists, that is why the AKP the CHP the MHP like it, cause they are repairing this national pride through the EU. That is my view.

AÖ: But if you take a guess, how do you see the future of the negotiation process, in which direction do you think it is going?

B: Like an escargot. Like a snail. Many issues have to be fixed. The Cyprus question for example. When we talk about EU accession this issue has to be resolved. I think it is like “you give me this, I give you that”, that’s the kind of process it will be. And it will take a long time. I personally link this process a lot not only to Cyprus and the political problems of Turkey with the neighbours. Economy is not the only thing. We only play on that now in Turkey, we talk a lot about it, we are
booming they are collapsing, but there are also rules, diplomatic rules, there are democratic principles. We refer to the EU as a civilization and since that civilization has principles you have to comply with that. So you change your penal code – that’s good. You change your civil code – that’s good. But while you changed your penal code you still keep an article about insulting Turkishness, for instance, which doesn’t have any counterpart in any other penal codes of the EU. So it doesn’t fit in this civilization. But, as I told you – snail. It will take time, but it will go away. This article as well. This is an example. This kind of issues will take time in Turkey to be digested. We will confess to our sins and this is something that we have to do if we want to be a part of this civilization. And this confession takes a lot of time. Cause it hurts the national pride. It hurts. I mean, how did Greece change? They were not that different from Turkey back then, even today they are not that different from Turkey in their mentality. But they had to change, they learned a different way of believing and governing. They collapsed for other reasons, but their culture, administrative culture, government culture changed. Our economic success blurs our vision. I wish we would not have so much economic success and we would see the real problems. Cause it is like a curtain that covers it.

AÖ: But then you have such a thing as the peace process with the Kurds that you mentioned earlier. This is covered quite extensively in European press at the moment. I think that many leaders in the EU believe that they have an impact on the recent dialogue. What do you think about that?

B: The current deal with the Kurds, the process with the Kurdish side would have begun, with or without Europe. Because of the geographical and political situation in the region. If you have a war, a civil war in Syria, civil war in Iraq, an atomic danger in Iran. All these regions are inhabited by Kurds, and you have your own Kurds you are dealing with, or trying to deal with since 30 years through war and arms, it would force you to deal with it. It is not the EU it is more the new shape, which is decided probably by the other bigger Western nations, like the United States, like the UK alone, like France alone, like Germany alone – not as the EU, I mean, Romania does not have a lot to say about this place unfortunately, but Germany has. So all of this geopolitical setup – not just for the south of Turkey, but also for the Caucasus, all these pipelines that are going through Turkey to Europe, all this gas that is being discovered in the South of Turkey and between Cyprus and Turkey and Egypt. This energy hub being promoted in a region in Turkey. You cannot have this burning question in your own country when you are trying to become an energy security hub, you cannot. It is not sustainable. So Turkey would deal with it anyway, with or without Europe’s pressure. Turkey would do it in any case for economic reasons, for its own economy. For its own selling, you know, Turkey sells itself as a secure energy hub. I think Europe’s input there is… neglectable. Too much to say maybe, but it is not important. So I think from now on the other possibility is to turn to Shanghai, which Erdoğan talks about, Russia, China, it is an option, NAFTA is an option as well. Is it feasible? That is why I mentioned civilisation; it depends on your civilizational perspective. China, Russia, India are all nations, but civilisation wise, Turkey’s eyes have always been turned to the West. It would be a huge change, an incredible change, a historical change in this conception if we have the eyes suddenly turned back to the East. It can be. It may happen, but it would be an incredible switch. Nobody could imagine it. It may happen, why not, but I seriously doubt it. I don’t think that the presence of the EU in our minds in the making of our norms, in our everyday lives, in our mind sets will ever disappear. No government would take this risk. This historical switch would be too much to carry on your shoulders if you have elections, if you have a democratic system you have to give account for it. How can you explain a sudden change to Shanghai. It is quite difficult to explain to the people. I mean, Erdoğan, he can be a god in the eyes of many people in Turkey, they
love him, they give him, I mean, 50% of the votes goes to Erdoğan, but even that 50% will question him is there is this shift in Turkey. It is too much. We are not prepared for it. Maybe the good part of being not informed, not well-informed is there – you cannot make big changes because we assume that everything goes on the way it was going on for years and years. We don’t know the changes, we don’t know, we are not informed about it, so a sudden change, you have to explain. And then people will wake up and ask questions. You cannot risk your election with this. But that is my opinion.

AÖ: So you think the general consensus among Turkish people and politicians is that they would rather identify themselves with the EU that with the Middle East?

B: Yes. My answer is yes. We have Middle Eastern connections, we are a Middle Eastern country. But we are also a Balkan country, a Caucasus country, a European country. These are the identity problems we have. It can be seen as a richness, but it can create an intracultural problem among these identities. I don’t know how we are dealing with it, personally, every Turk feels a different way. We belong to many identities. But many people refuse to say some identities. For instance, a Kurd, initially does not call himself a Turk or a Turkish citizen, or a member of the Turkish public. Sometimes I don’t even hear the word Türkiye that we are using now to cover all the ethnic groups in Turkey – citizen of Turkey, not Turkish citizen. So these kinds of identity clashes are dealt with in a different way by each individual. So the Kurd who does not see himself as part of this nation wouldn’t see himself as part of a Balkan entity or a Caucasus entity, or European entity, probably Middle Eastern entity, and Kurdish entity would be enough. I am not from the Southeast of Turkey, I am not Kurdish, My family is Chechen, so I call my self a part of this nation, but I also call myself Chechen, being a part of the Caucasus entity, I also feel Balkanic, also Middle Eastern and very European. And I am happy with this. I wouldn’t mind if I had Kurdish links, so this could be another addition to my identities. I wouldn’t try to eliminate any of these identities. This is how I also see the European civilization. A richness.

AÖ: So the incentive of belonging can then be said to outweigh the problems that would follow from joining the EU in terms of supranational influence that complicates domestic issues such as it has happened recently in Denmark with EU rules on university tuition conflicting with Danish rules?

B: You have to harmonise. But yes, I totally agree. Problem is, we are not talking about it now. Nobody knows about this reality of the EU, so it is like speaking in Chinese to people who do not understand Chinese. It’s that simple. So of course belonging to Europe means more than any practical problems that it can create. The day will come – maybe – when Turkey becomes a member. Then the problems will rise and then people will understand what it means. I hope before that day comes people will tell us about Europe, what it means in the sense of governing, of law making, and the rules we have to obey once we are in. We have to harmonise before getting in, which is good. But when you are in, you are directly linked to Brussels, the government in Brussels and it is a different situation. You mentioned the Danish example. I don’t know what the Turkish reaction to this would be if it happened in Turkey. I know that in many school systems the history books have been changed. That parts about the enemy has been erased in order to unify the feeling, the unanimous feeling of a European nationhood. I don’t know when it comes to Turkish books, whether they will be touched upon by the EU, erase this about the Greek, about the Armenians etc. I don’t know. It may be done with difficulty. If we don’t prepare people before, if we don’t tell them that Europe means this and that has to be changed. In fact, any vote on membership in Turkey
should happen after this explanation. I think the result would be no if that was the case. But it would be a healthy no. Or if they say yes it is a healthy yes. Yes without knowing is worse than a no. Cause then you have to deal with the problems every day, we have been cheated on, this feeling of being cheated on is horrible.

C

Journalist at Hürriyet
Karaköy, Istanbul, 18/4-2013.

AO: How do you as a journalist see the current situation between the EU and Turkey?

C: Right now the negotiations are a little bit stuck at top level, but to me that is not so important. I am a person who believes that Turkey’s orientation is towards the West, that our relationship is irreversible, and that for us – Turkey – the code of reference, the point of reference remains the European Union. Example: I just read in the newspaper that the spices will not be sold open in the market, because when you go to the market, you will see that all the spices will be sold in the open. There is a new rule and regulation that says that spices may not be sold in the open, they will be in the packages. Why? Is it because we want to adopt to the culture of the Arab League, ECO, Shanghai Five? No! It’s because, most probably, I mean, I haven’t inquired about it, why we are doing it, the example is Europe, most probably because the code is taken from Europe. And nobody in Turkey has raised a voice asking why, if we are not going to enter the European Union, why don’t we just keep the spices as they are? And the other day, again, there was anew regulation about sausages, where they said, you know, the sausages had to be sold this way. Again, most probably the reference was from the European Union. So, even though relations at the top, as far as negotiations are concerned, are blocked, are not going anywhere, I think the process is still there.

AO: But do you see this among the people or within society? Because there has been a lot of democratization in earlier days, but now you could argue that the incentive is perhaps gone a bit because of the economic crisis and some people have voiced concerns about the European Union being in the verge of collapse. Yet the process seems to continue?

C: Yes. Why? Because there are only a few people who are experts on the EU that will come up to you and say, you know, this is not such a good idea etc. etc. But when you talk to people on the streets, which will not provide you an empirical reason, I think deep down they will all want to be part of the European Union. Because I think for years this is about our past, our history. For years and years Turkey has tried to prove to the world that we are as good as the developed world. And I think, again, still for the people, I think becoming part of the European Union will rid them of a big complex of inferiority that comes from the Ottoman times. The Ottomans coming to the doors of Europe, being pushed back, so we still, as a society, think that Europe, that the West represents the developed world, and we aspire to become part of the developed world. Now, developed world does not mean it is at perfection, it doesn’t mean that it’s got the best economic formula, of course it doesn’t. But still, I think someone has said it, democracy may not be the best form of governance, but there is not any better so far. So we have to stick to that. So I think still the European Union, the Western alliance still represents the developed part of the world, and Turkish people aspire to be part of that developed world. That’s why, even though some people might have some reactions towards the EU, I think that stems from frustration. But if there is a change of heart in Europe in 6 months time, with us receiving positive messages. I mean, if the Turkish society hears the Spanish
Prime Minister, the French President, German Foreign Minister, and Portuguese Minister to say Turkey is such a great country, we would like to see Turkey in the EU, then the mood with the Turkish public would swing in a matter of seconds.

AÖ: So you think that Turkey would work harder towards reaching these goals if the EU attitude changed?

C: Yes, of course. It is an uphill battle for Turkey, it has always been uphill. Rod Stewart has a song, some guys have all the luck, some guys have all the pain, so we the Turks, we always have the pain part when it comes to the EU, others were lucky, we got the pain. It’s not that simple, of course. Look, Macedonia becomes a member, no one cares, or no one realises it is in. It is so tiny, it does not create an economic burden, it does not create a political burden. No one will care… Maybe with the exception of the Greeks who are obstinate and obsessed about name issues, no one will realize it. But the moment Turkey enters the EU, the EU will never be the way it was. Full stop. So in a way I understand the Europeans scepticism, because even more than Poland Turkey will leave its trace there. It will not just come and sit at the table and look at what Germany, Britain and France is doing and then arrange its position accordingly. No, Turkey would be one of the main players with something to have a say in. So as far as Europe is concerned, I can understand that. Because the new kids that you take, they are so junior that you know they are not going to raise their voice, so you are just going to continue to boss around, but if Turkey enters that is a big new kid, but a bossy kid that enters the neighbourhood, and you know that you will not always get along with this bossy kid, he might say wait a minute, until now you have been doing things this way, but why, I think this is wrong, maybe we should try it another way. Which means the whole game structure could be torpedoed by the newcomer, so I understand the hesitations in the EU in this matter.

AÖ: Do you think Turkish people in general see it this way as well in terms of power politics, or do you think there is a perception that it could be a cultural issue as well?

C: I think it is both. It is not only power issues there is also a mental blockade as well on the part of the Europeans. I think the Europeans first of all especially with the issue of the 9/11 all the terrorism, unfortunately the terror activities carried out by some Islamic fundamentalists has strengthened, I’m not saying given rise to, but strengthened the already existing prejudice that a Muslim country like Turkey can not be part of our family. I think its there. Its there with the Swedes, part of the Swedish people, part of the French people, part of the German people, part of the Portuguese people. They just cannot grasp that a Muslim society can transform itself and adopt the same values, not Christian, not European, but universal values and be part of the family. For them, a Macedonian with a Christian Orthodox background can adopt. They think Poland despite being atheist and 20 years of Communist past but with Christian values invade on it is part of Europe. There is no questioning. But Turkey for a lot of Europeans is the other, and for some reason they cannot visualize that Turkey despite being Muslim can be modern and share the same universal values with the other Europeans. The blockage mental is there. So for the people on the street in Europe it is cultural. They just cant imagine Turkey a part, 2 it is economic, they say these bloody Turks are just going to come and pick our jobs, 3 it is cultural, religious, they are going to come with their traditions and make cuts, during Ramadan they will have bloodshed everywhere. So for the people on the street it is cultural, sociological, religious. For the decision makers, the strategists it’s less cultural, more power politics. What the hell are we going to do with these Turks when they enter, they are so huge. Can we digest them economically, can we manage them politically, cause
they are not just going to sit down and do as we tell them.

AÖ: Turkey is making reforms, I understand, and there is a lot of talk in European media, or Scandinavian media about the population putting pressure on our leaders to push more reform in terms of human rights on Turkish leaders when they meet.

C: Oh, really? That is very good.

AÖ: And despite keeping focus on economics when they actually meet, the European leaders seem to like to take credit to some extent for what is going on in Turkey normatively speaking. It happened in Denmark recently when Erdoğan met the Danish PM, she was criticized for not putting pressure on him in terms of human rights...

C: Oh this is good news to me!

AÖ: But it seems that even though they never really speak of human rights but more about economics, the EU – people and leaders alike – seem to believe that normative change in Turkey is their doing. Do you agree?

C: Yeah, but I just cant say that its directly linked. It takes time at a time where there is less pressure from Europe on democratization, less pressure from the EU on go talk to the PKK or give them their rights. There is nothing like that, no pressure. So on the façade there is no direct linkage. But the fact that Turkey took democratization steps. First of all, to me, the fact that Turkey has started this dialogue this represents a sort of maturity, a degree of self-confidence. How do you get this self-confidence? First of all you get the self-confidence from economic and political stability. And one of the reasons why we have economic stability and we prosper is the Customs Union. We have exported a lot to Europe, and when negotiations started when we were declared candidate we started having foreign direct investment from Europe. With the experience we got from Europe, we started to sell abroad. So first of all the Customs Union has played an important role in Turkish economic development. When you start feeling good on your shoes economically, this also reflects on politics. Because the more you have welfare the more you want to strengthen that and the more you say I don’t want political problems to interfere with my economic development, so let me solve whatever problems I have, let me get rid of these problems so I can prosper even more. And so, with the AKP government, but even before that Turkish governments started to take democratic measures. Kurdish language, education in Kurdish language, Kurdish TV etc. Otherwise, when I started journalism 20 years ago there was tremendous pressure from the EU saying, come on, you cannot solve the Kurdish issue through military means only. What’s wrong with having Kurdish TV, what’s wrong with having a Kurdish paper, what’s wrong with saying I am a Kurd. At 20 years ago we were at this point where you could not even say Kurd. When you said yes Kurds have rights, you landed in prison, and there was tremendous pressure from Europe saying, guys, what are you doing, the person is just saying he is a Kurd, you can not put him in prison just because he says he is a Kurd, so yes. Indirectly, not directly now, cause the current pressure does not come directly from the EU now, but the fact that Turkey has been anchored to Europe and the fact that through economic relations and accession negotiations it felt the need to make those reforms. Cause if Turkey did not have the bid to enter the EU it would not have come up with those democratic reforms, the reason why Turkey came up with those democratic reforms was because at first Turkey wanted to become a candidate and next wanted to start negotiations. So all these reforms came like
AÖ: But do you not think that the EU has lost a bit of its legitimacy because it is not going very well in the EU.

C: Yes that is right, but that is what I think about Turkish EU-relations and the reasons for it. We should not do it because the EU has a stick or a carrot, we should do it for our own sake. But a carrot helps. And a stick helps too sometimes. There is no stick right now. The stick is if we deprive ourselves from democratic reforms, that is the real stick, which is a bad thing. But as I said we should do it for our own, we shouldn’t say we did it because of the EU. Yes, we did it because of the EU, I confess that, because it is the truth. But just because the EU has lost its legitimacy now does not mean that I should stop, because at the end of the day I shouldn’t have done it because of the EU. I should have done it because of me. But that is the whole story of the EU. If Portugal, Spain, Ireland became stronger democracies and better economies, why? It is because they became members of the EU. And they have done it because they became members of the EU. But at the end of the day they realized that it was for their own good. But all the countries in the EU have abided by rules and regulations it is because of Brussels. Because of Brussels, but deep down they know that it is for their own interest. But all the countries in the EU first suffer from the stick and carrot policy of the EU.

AÖ: So if there is no stick, what would you say the main carrot is?

C: The main carrot is to be anchored there and to know that the doors are not totally closed. And that today the doors may be half closed, but maybe five years later it will be fully open. No one expects Sarkozy and Merkel to rule for 20 years. Of course there could be a Merkel 2, someone with the same views, so I don’t exclude that, but so long that the doors are not totally shut, as I said the main carrot is that it is to our own good. That is why even though no one tells us how to sell our spice we do it, because at the end of the day, with or without the EU you have to do it, with or without the EU you have to have a rule of law, with or without the EU you have to have a hygienic code of conduct for food, with or without the EU you have to have a democratic fair justice system.

AÖ: So how do you see the future of these negotiations?

C: I think for some time it is going to be very slow. And plus, Turkey is entering an election system. So for 2-3 years I don’t see much of a progress. Maybe there will be some itsy-bitsy tiny progress; one chapter two chapters will be opened. That’s it. But what’s important are not these chapters, what’s important is the work that goes on below these big chapters, more Erasmus students coming in to Turkey, the more Turkey going there, the more Turkey is slowly adopting its bills and regulations. So for me that’s more important than the chapters being opened. But you never know, if there is some kind of breakthrough with Cyprus, things can pick up. But as long as Merkel is there it is very difficult for Turkey’s accession negotiations to pick up quickly, because Germany is a very important country and it is against Turkish membership right now. And many people are hiding behind it. So for 2-3 years I don’t expect much of a progress.

AÖ: But Turkey already has the Customs Union, and if they manage to get some kind of visa liberation agreement, then is there an incentive to keep working?
C: As I said earlier, the hard work is not for the EU it is for us.

AÖ: But within which areas would you say that benefits lie?

C: I’ll give you one example. The Turkish law that regulates the bids, what is a bid, the opening of bids, you go out and bid for big enterprises. How would you say that in English, I wonder how you would say that. For instance that law is very important for transparency. We have to have an authority that regulates those bids and how they are made. Because the bids are like, if you want to do a big bridge or project you go out for a bid. So we have to have a very transparent bid structure and it should be according to EU regulations. Right now we don’t have that kind of transparency and there are a lot of things that need to be done.

AÖ: But do you think that, all these things taken into consideration, there is such a thing as norms diffusion coming from the EU? Couldn’t it come from somewhere else as well?

C: From where? Do the Arabs have a European Court of HR? They don’t. So as a citizen when all the ways are exhausted internally, I’m sorry, I don’t go to Jeddah, if they had one I would. Look, I’m a European. I’m a very educated European. So I am very much on the extreme. So you wont hear a lot of people like me talking against the EU. The opponents of the EU don’t have any empirical evidence. They just won’t realize that it’s great. That it’s thanks to the Customs Union that the Turkish economy bloomed. And you can’t just get rid of the Customs Union. Why would we do that? This is the government that could be most anti-West because they are coming from a religious background, which is anti-imperialist. Even they are not daring to cut relations. Why? Because it’s beneficial. People are sending their kids to Europe, not the Middle East. If relations with Europe were not so important, why are they sending their kids to Europe or the US, why not Indonesia or Malaysia?

D

Journalist at Bianet.


AÖ: Can you tell me a bit about Bianet?

D: We basically cover human rights issues and human rights conditions in Turkey. So it is a lot about people who have been through some kind of rights abuse due to government policy or police violence, or just been fired from work because they wanted to be part of a union. We have several editorial positions. One for human rights, one for women, one for children, one for military issues and so on. So all these editors work within their field and try to find rights abuses that we then cover. So for example in the military there are a lot of soldiers who commit suicide, and these suicides are very controversial. Cause sometimes we find out that they are due to the harsh treatment they get when in service. So we try to cover these issues and include the point of view that you don’t see in the mainstream media, cause often their point of view is biased and don’t include the opinion of the oppressed or the subjects of abuses. So we try to do that in Bianet. I’m not specified with any of these topics but I cover most kinds of issues.

AÖ: How would you characterize the recent developments in human rights?
D: A lot of things happen in Turkey. As a child when we grow up we were accustomed to reading news and watching things about police violence and people who disappear in detention or people who have been randomly killed, and the Kurdish problem, their language and the fact that they couldn’t express themselves in their language, the ban. When I was a kid, the environment was that you couldn’t even play a Kurdish song on the streets, and whoever spoke Kurdish on the streets was doing something dangerous. It wasn’t safe to do these things. Even wearing the colours of the Kurdish movement, the traditional colours of the Kurdish people, red, yellow and green, you couldn’t even do that. I remember a lot of times people were criticized or ostracized because they were wearing these colours somewhere. Not only in the very, not only about famous people that the media covered, but you could not really easily wear these things and do these things. It wasn’t easy. You couldn’t talk about Abdullah Öcalan, you know the leader, you could not read his stuff or his books. People used to cover his books with jackets, with different jackets so that other people wouldn’t see his book and they could just read it. So it was those times. And then we had this process with the EU, our candidateship started and we became an official candidate for the European Union and the PKK leader was captured. Those were some of the big turnouts for the process of human rights situation. Things started improving because we had implemented these reforms that started around 1999, we abolished the death penalty and started working on the freedom of expression issues. It was like very very basic at that time, you could still be prosecuted for things relating to freedom of expression, you would publish an article and be sued and everything or be linked to a terrorist organization, even if you weren’t doing or promoting anything violent. So beginning around 1999, things started improving a little bit. Many things happen still, but I think its going in a positive direction. Even during that time where Hrant Dink the Armenian journalist was assassinated, and I don’t know how many other things happened during that period.

Turkey is really busy, the actuality in Turkey… But I believe every time something happened, a major incident, it lead to a positive evolution in some way. I regard it that way. So we came to 2013 right now. Major issues still remain, like the Saturday Mothers in Turkey, they have been protesting and demonstrating here since 1995, but had to stop in 1999 because of the police violence. But then they restarted their demonstrations again in 2006. Their demands are still very… their children are still… they can’t find their bodies or something, but at the same time there are so many prosecutions regarding these disappearances, so in a sense justice is slowly, slowly being made in Turkey. I’m not saying its there still, we have a way to go, but there is an on-going process, and it is going in the right direction, little by little.

AÖ: I think I have seen those people, they are the ones who sit outside the Galatasaray Lisesi every Saturday, right?

D: Yeah, it’s a reaction to the state policy to oppress the Kurdish insurgence and the Kurdish people to demand their rights. Because a lot of those people are of Kurdish origin. It started in the 1980’s and it was after the military coup. Also the time that the PKK was founded, it’s an important turning point in Turkey. So the state policy lead to disappearances of Kurdish dissidents in police detention, that happened a lot across Turkey, and then around 1995 it evolved to something else. So the disappearances transitioned to unclaimed killings in Turkey, so out on the streets people were killed, assassinated, mainly Kurdish people, all across the country. So these are two processes that really influenced Kurdish people. And then there was this PKK anyways, a lot of Kurdish people who rebelled and then went into the mountains and then clashed with Turkish army forces, they died as well. So since 1980 there is like an unofficially recognized killing of Kurdish people was going on in a sense. A lot of people, a lot of Kurdish men died.
AÖ: So you do see some improvement within human rights in the sense that it is not as bad as it used to be?

D: The clashes between the PKK and the army is a different process. We understand that they are fighting for their rights, but their movement, the PKK evolved in time as well. They had a lot of Marxist dynamics back in the 1980’s and they were claiming and looking for independence, but then with time it evolved to something else as well, so that movement changed as well. And now they are demanding rights. So in the beginning they were fighting for independence and separation on a Marxist foundation, but now they are demanding rights. So it’s different. And the Turkish state responded differently as well. But the way that the... so by the time the Turkish state is implementing new reforms, I think this is what happens, and the parallel, the Kurdish movement, is also responding in a different way, maybe like lowering its tone. At the moment, Kurdish people and the PKK don’t want conflict either, they want to settle these things through dialogue, through politics, so they want to be part of the parliament, and now we have Kurdish deputies, which couldn’t happen back in the 90’s. We always had a pro Kurdish party in Turkey, but a lot of times they couldn’t enter parliament because of the quotas that we have, but now they can even take part in Parliament. So it’s evolving in that sense. So their perspective is changing as well, and Turkish perspective evolves as well. Slow. It’s still not ideal, but better than what happened before. In the 1980’s there was this militarist Turkish state, campaigning for killing all these Kurds, the clashes and the assassinations, the disappearances, and then with time it is evolving into something where we see the clashes are ending and there is Kurdish representation in Parliament, there is the process of constitution drafting, where the Turkish citizenship, the definition of Turkish citizenship is changing, so in some way when we look at the 1980’s and when we look at 2013 there is a lot that changed in that sense. I see it that way. But it is still not ideal. These things should have happened…. I think Turkey going beyond all the movements in the world, like IRA in Ireland and other places. 20 years back these things should have happened at least 20 years ago. But we are still dealing with these things. That’s how I see it.

AÖ: The media that you work for, what is its purpose in this sense? Is it to try to improve these conditions directly or is it to provide Turkish people with an alternative source of information?

D: In some way Bianet wants to provide information for people and raise the voice of the people who couldn’t raise their voices. At the same time it brings the change. But it’s not directly. Bianet is not directly campaigning for change in human rights, but it’s doing true media and empowering people with information in their coverage. But I think that the main goal is to empower people through information with this coverage. But also, providing content that will help the peace process. We care a lot about peace journalism as well and try to more equal to sides and cover parties that need to be empowered and promote peace.

AÖ: It is a very interesting initiative, do you know if it exists in any other countries?

D: I don’t know, actually. I know that similar things exist in Africa, where it has been done through radio, because the radio helped the genocides in Rwanda, and so they provided an alternative radio to promote peace and bring parties together. So there are still other initiatives, but I think the Turkish context is unique.
AÖ: In many places a thing like Bianet would be almost impossible due to media censorship. You do have some censorship in Turkey as well, although it isn’t that much. Do you experience this?

D: Personally, I was never subjected to censorship. Never that my boss told me that we can’t publish this because the authorities will be so angry at us or something. But I see… Yeah, personally, I can’t say that I feel it, and I haven’t heard of cases. Yeah we can pretty much cover whatever we want. The thing is, that just because we are funded by SIDA and the EU… because the censorship a lot of times happens not through the Turkish state saying you can’t publish this, we are sending our army or the police or something. It doesn’t happen that way. It happens through money, through finance. So what’s happening in the mainstream print media in Turkey is that there are these guys, big bosses, tycoons, media tycoons, these guys own all the newspapers in Turkey, and these guys, these big bosses have relations with the Turkish government, and they have all their investments and everything, so they have a variety of investments in different sectors as well. So maybe one guy is a media tycoon, but he is also working in the energy field. So the government and them they have a relation, so what happens is that a lot of times when these newspapers, these guys’ newspapers try to publish something, it might be blocked by the government through these tycoons. So the government tells these bosses not to do certain coverage about this process or this event or this… You know it goes through that, so we a lot of times, what happens is that the censorship happens when your boss, the guy, the businessman tells the editor in chief not to do the coverage. But it’s not the state banning all this coverage. It’s even worse, cause then money is involved and it is not about… you don’t really know that it is happening. Because the media they can’t just say, oh they are… to the outside world, the state is oppressing us, cause it’s just their boss doing that. So, I don’t know whether you heard of it, but we had this journalist Hasan Cemal, who was working for Milliyet and then he wanted to write something, wanted to publish an article… he pitched an article about the peace process, I think it was a couple of months ago, might be January or February, you can look it up, and then his editor in chief told him that they can not publish this article, so he resigned after that. That was considered the death of print press in Turkey. A lot of journalists had the impression that they could not really publish anything on the print media now. So in that sense Bianet is important too, because first of all it’s independent and second it’s online. So we were not dependent to this type of big shot guys. So that’s what’s happening in the Turkish media too. These guys, this guy who resigned is actually writing for an online news agency now. This is what’s happening in terms of freedom of expression and press freedom in Turkey, so people who really want to express themselves who really want to cover real issues in Turkey, now they are doing it online and not through the print media. Because the print media is all pro-government right now.

(…)

D: Did you have a chance to follow Turkish politics? Right now, Erdoğan is trying to visit Palestine, and either Israel or Palestine wants him there. It’s all about internal politics, and the elections are coming and he knows that.

AÖ: I have seen that he is travelling a lot.

D: John Kerry is visiting a lot right now, so he is working quite hard on external relations. But in general, he seems to work towards trying to finish off everything that both Atatürk and the previous government didn’t manage to finish off, they started it, but never finished. So this is a big part of his image, being this hard-working guy who gets things done. But that’s how you gain trust from
people. He is very popular, cause back in the 80’s and 90’s we grew up seeing nothing getting done, nothing functioning properly in Turkey, so this guy gives the impression that things are getting done and things are working now. Busses are running on time, we have new transportation systems coming up, there are reforms in this and that, so this is why people are so fed up with slow and non-functional state system that a glimpse of it is helping people to vote for him. They don’t want to let go of it, because there is no other alternative. No other parties will provide these standards, and these guys have set up a standard right now, and it is hard to beat by the other parties. They can’t do it. They don’t have the vision. People are just very practical. So in that sense if this guy screws up something and things doesn’t function well, that will be the end of him and people are going to go vote for other people.

AÖ: Speaking of external relations, though, you are very much in contact with regular Turkish people through your work. The people that you speak to, have they ever mentioned anything about the EU, is it something that concerns people at all?

D: Again, Erdoğan is very practical, and so is the Turkish people. So the Turkish voters, they vote for Erdoğan because he gets things done and things function. It’s the same, I think in the sense of relations with the EU. People’s main… People want to be part of the EU because they think that it will help them pragmatically, it will help them improve their economy, they will have more income, you know, everything. It’s not about feeling European. In the first place, it is about the practical things. And for the people that I interview, or the people who have all these problems with human rights, they think pragmatically too. They want to enter the EU because first of all it is going to improve democracy in Turkey. That’s why they want it in the first place. So the Turkish government will be compelled to implement more laws and improve the freedom of expression and avoid all these human rights abuses and the police violence and all these terrible things. And it happened. Every time there is a new implementation, things are changing little by little. And that helps them. The EU is sort of a motivator for that, for Turkey’s modernization. But if you see the latest polls of support for the EU, they are less than 50% now, it is below 50%, so most Turkish people don’t want the EU right now, and it is again, and that is again because of the economic decline of the EU. When the EU was doing well, people wanted to be part of the EU. But now they don’t want it. It’s not helping for anything. But I think that if the EU gets better, then the support will increase as well. It’s sort of the way I feel as well with the EU. I don’t think that the EU will do much, if you ask me personally, I don’t think the EU would bring anything interesting to my life. I can already… I have my income. A lot of times people want the EU so they can travel through without restrictions and could work there, but other than that… For me, I don’t know.

AÖ: So the only reason for people is because the EU could help democratization and putting pressure on the Turkish government?

D: Yeah, the EU could help their living standards. It’s always about EU doing something for them, helping them with something. It’s not about oh, we naturally belong to Europe anyway, so we have to be a part of it. So it’s not about that. It’s all about the EU saving our lives or it will do this or that. It is a naïve argument that we just want to belong. Of course, Turkish people feel rejected towards the EU and they feel frustrated, but that’s the only emotional part I can say about Turkish people.

AÖ: So you could say in a sense that the Turkish people they like the process more than they like the prospect?
D: Because they, in the very beginning they were very excited about the prospect, but then they realized that its almost impossible. The discussions about the European Union in Turkey when you look from the European side, it is also about defining what Europe is for Europe, are we Christian or how much do we want to expand. And I think Turkish people did the same, they also asked themselves are we really European. But it is not good saying that you are against the EU, because then you say that you are against democratization and everything. Supporting democracy is similar to supporting the EU. I think its sort of changing now, I think it is something that people are going to figure out now. But yes you are right, it is the benefits of the process more than the outcome that people appreciate.

E

Professor, International Relations, Kadir Has University
Fatih, Istanbul, 24/4-2013.

AO: Can you tell me a little about what you see in terms of EU norms diffusion through your research?

E: Firstly, I am not sure whether EU has had a normative effect on Turkey. Because normative means change of culture. But in my research, I tend to believe that Turkey is doing something with those forces of accession. Something that has been done is not just because the EU is saying so or the effects of conditionality per se, but it’s mostly not cultural transformation, it’s the accession process, Turkey has to do something and the miracles of these reforms between 2002 and 2005 were because of getting a date for and starting negotiations. Turkey for instance banned death penalty, but it was not being applied already. So Turkey did something not touching the very sensitive issues, but when it came to the very sensitive points, Turkey could not do anything. So we are in a process of inertia, that’s what my findings are from 2005 and onwards because of lots of factors. Domestically and internationally, Turkey is in a process of inertia, not doing anything. So I cannot find any clues or evidence for a normative effect of the EU on Turkey. It’s more interest based, more accession based, and when it was believed that Turkey cannot do very good in terms of accession, then everything changed. So I am not that optimistic about Europe’s’ normative power can affect Turkey. Normatively, no, that’s not the case. That’s what I believe. It’s mostly because of domestic as well as EU accession interest. Because some things were already on the new government’s agenda, they coincided at the first instance, for instance, diminishing the role of the military. The EU said so, the government was keen on it, so it coincided and diminishing the role of the military was for both ways. But for the government it was interest based. For the EU accession process, it was interest-based, not anything normative and it was not believed that it is good for the society so we should change culturally and politically, for Turkish citizens interest, it was not such. It was in discourse it was good for citizens, for human beings, it was in discourse. In reality, I believe, it is domestic and international interest that were taken in consideration.

AO: Do you think you can see among Turkish people in general an impact of the mind set in terms of increased human rights, democratization, freedom, etc.?

E: You mean related to the EU process?
AÖ: No, not necessarily, just in general, if there seems to be a more conscious feeling about these issues?

E: Yeah, definitely. But it is a long-term process that does not happen all at once. For instance the Kurdish issue was a sensitive issue about 10 years ago, but now it is normalizing. We tend to talk about it as a national security concern, the most national security concern, as well as Islamic threat, but now there is a transformation, we tend to normalize and desecuritize those issues, because of the societal negotiations taking place. I believe that some things are being normalized and these normalisations, political or intersocietal, are also in the minds of the people and in the conscience of people. So it’s natural. When things are changing. If you had asked me 10 years ago about the most important security problem in Turkey, I would have said Kurdish issue, but now I would say something else, because we normalized it, it is not a top national security problem anymore. PKK yes, terrorism, yes. But the Kurdish issue was associated with it 10 years ago, but now they have been separated. Terrorism is one issue, Kurdish issue is another issue, a sort of minority issue, or the rights of marginalized groups. So basically yes. There is a change in the mind-set of people, Turkish people, in the case of the Kurdish issue, and they are negotiating with Turkey.

AÖ: But do you think that has anything to do with EU pressure or can it be attributed to other forces?

E: Both. In one of my articles I argue that it is not the EU per se, EU is an important actor, but it is not the EU per se. The other forces, like domestic forces, or the international forces, and so EU effect can not be seen in the short term, it has a long-term effect. EU has played the role of a catalyser and now with the other forces it can make the real effect. But the EU is an important actor, but it’s not the only actor, so this is one of the quotes I like: “The EU is not the only game in town”, there are lots of players, and the EU is an important player.

AÖ: Can you give any examples of other players?

E: Civil society.

AÖ: How?

E: First of all what. For instance, TÜSİAD or other civil society actors. The government also in terms of domestic politics, if the government is taking this as a priority, is doing something politically, so the governments interest can also play a role, and also, the public itself. Mostly affected by civil society actors, cause civil society actors are everywhere. They go to somewhere, they tell about the EU, the impact of the EU or how the rights could be enjoyed with the right of the EU, how the European people are living, so these are the other actors, not only the EU. But also, in context of EU accession, its not just the criteria, the governments of the EU should be in favour of Turkish EU accession. They should be not the feeling of double standards towards Turkey. The European public should be in favour. And nowadays all these factors I am not that positive about Turkey in the EU context and in Turkey’s context, and mostly I tend to say that EU is a non-issue in Turkey right now. I feel very enthusiastic when I am discussing it these days, because no one is discussing it. So the EU has impacts, yes, it triggered something, but the longer-term effects are coming with something else. Especially in terms of domestic politics, the government’s agenda, the oppositions agenda, interest groups, civil society, such as the public’s agenda, so it has to be
combined with other actors.

AÖ: Recent polls show that the current government is declining in public opinion while the opposition is winning. At the same time people’s support for the EU is declining as well. Yet they seem to want to keep the negotiation process going even though there is not much of a material incentive at the moment. Why do you think Turkey wants to keep the process going?

E: Because first of all Turkish foreign policy priorities. I am not sure I agree completely with you that the current government is trying to keep the EU process going. They want to stop it and it’s not their priority at the moment. But governments change and it is a long-term project. Officially, Europe is Turkey’s destination and foreign policy, and also culturally Turkey does not want to be called a Middle Eastern power but it should be called a European power, and there are lots of reasons why Turkey should be in the EU, but if you ask me whether we want to join right now, I would say no. Things can change.

AÖ: What about the people? Do you think what the process brings matters more than the goal of becoming a member that matters?

E: Yes, I agree. There are lots of groups in Turkey that would want such a thing. But if everything goes well on track, if the accession process ends with positive results, then Turkey would not have any option other than membership. You cannot keep this route forever. You can keep it for 10 years, but after 10 years you would turn back, come on, it is 2005 and we would be in 2020 and what happened, how long can the accession process last? There will be a day when Turkey and Europe will sit and decide whether to take this process to a positive route or end it. Because you cannot keep it this way forever, you have to have a deadline. That’s my personal view. But when I research the previous accession processes, Turkey is now the only exception about the longest run, but it can not take forever, there should be a light at the end of the tunnel, whether it is a green or a red light. There will be a day, I am waiting for it. Not in a short time, but in a medium term there will be such a day.

AÖ: Do you think there will be a red or green light?

E: I don’t know. It depends when you ask. If you had asked me in 2005-2006 before there was a decision to not opening ports relating to the Cyprus question, I would say yes, I see a green light. But after 2006 when I read that Cyprus was the stumbling block, I don’t know how that can be solved, and it is one of the most important stumbling blocks for Turkey. So as of today, I have my negative views. Tomorrow it may change, especially nowadays when the EU is in a crisis and would depend on the Turkish economy, then things will change. But I really have no guess, cause t has been quite a while since 1987. When you start the accession process with the application, it’s more than 20 years. 26 years now. I don’t know any other candidate country that have such a long accession experience. The longest were Spain, Portugal and Greece, and the Central and Eastern European countries, yes. Not that long still. Applied in 1993 and most of them became members in 2004. So that’s 11 years, I am talking 26 years. You can expect 10 more years of accession process, but that process should end with accession or no accession. So there will be a day when both sides will decide where to go. Fast track or take it to another route. We have an association agreement, I don’t like the term privileged membership, but lets take this to another route, a deepened relationship or something else. Let’s give Turkey some kind of free movement and deepen
association relations and so on, but there will be such a day.

**AÖ: What then if it is a red light, where do you think Turkey will go next?**

E: Nowhere. It would be in the middle of everywhere. Good relations with the EU even if there is no membership, maybe a mediator role. There are lots of explanations for this, soft power, the Middle East and Russia, Black Sea, Mediterranean, geopolitically gives Turkey this role. I don’t think that Turkey would be in need of finding another block. Turkey is a big country and does not need any other attachments. These are just fantasies or fancy ideas. It would be a childish idea, if they don’t take us then we will find other friends. It is not as simple as that, I don’t think Turkey would need such a new alternative route for its foreign policy. But we will see, I am just guessing. But I hope for a green light at the end of the tunnel, 2023 is an important year for Turkey, it is the anniversary for the establishment of the Republic, so let’s hope for that.

**AÖ: And you have the Olympic bid that may help the process somewhat.**

E: Yes.

**AÖ: But if Turkey manages to get a visa liberation agreement, how do you think that would shape the process? Cause then they have the customs union and the freedom of movement, and important material incentives will be gone.**

E: But there will be more privileges in being a member than being associated. Integration would have more benefits. You would belong to the EU with no exception. This would be an option, an exceptional option. Why would Turkey want to be a second-class member, Turkey wants to be a full member.

**AÖ: But could you not say then that despite the lack of benefits apart from belonging, the fact that Turkey still wants to be a full member indicates EU normative power?**

E: Good question. Yes, the representation of EU is very important for Turkey. Representation of democracy, representation of respect for human rights, minorities, fundamental freedoms. Yes it has an attraction. One reason is historical. Turkish Republic is funded on the idea of Westernisation on the idea of modernization and Europe is a symbol of all these concepts. Second it is, yes, you are right, the normative power or normative vision of Europe and the EU representing it with democratic ideas and all the representations that the EU carries. Third, why a second class membership rather than a first class membership with all the benefits of everything. I don’t want to compare any country. Malta is in it, Cyprus is in it, even they are geographically Europe, so why would Turkey be out? What else, at the moment I cannot think of anything else. But you have a point, and you are right.