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It Takes Two: A Crisis of Identity and Turkey's Rejection of the European Union

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ABSTRACT

It Takes Two: A Crisis of Identity and Turkey's Rejection of the European Union explores Turkish-European Union (EU) relations over time through the lens of accession. With the suspension of eight of the thirty-five chapters of Turkish accession in 2006-effectively hindering any semblance of productive negotiations, this thesis seeks to understand if, and how, Turkish sentiment shifted in relation to EU accession prior to and following this event. I conducted a textual analysis of primary and secondary sources and examined Turkish public opinion from the years 2000 to 2013. I found that there was a discernable process of "de-Europeanization" that occurred after the EU's rejection of Turkish accession. This result is then discussed through the lens of topics such as populism, neo-Ottomanism, conditionality, xenophobia, and crises of identity and legitimacy.

INTRODUCTION

Turkey is a country of middles. Geographically, it is a transcontinental state at the intersection of the Black Sea, Aegean Sea, and the Mediterranean. Culturally, Turkey's heritage departs from European Christianity yet leaves cultural traces around south-eastern Europe, northern Africa, and the broader Middle East. It is the product of an empire that dominated for centuries—and as a result, has been a place of geopolitical, cultural, and economic eminence. Due to its distinctive history and location, Turkey has been awarded the unique opportunity to create relationships with neighbors in both the East and the West. The European continent has been a hub of economic advancement since the early 1500s, while Asia has become the site of increased economic and political

power in recent decades. Turkey's geographic position facilitates the economic and political power of both while increasing its own by enabling energy transport between Europe and oil-rich countries, acting as a site for military bases in the cases of unrest, serving as a bridge for land migration, and acting as the outside bulwark of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

While this power has proven to be strategically, economically, and politically advantageous, there is something to be said about the difficulty of balancing the ideologies of two fundamentally different regions of the world. Turkey has been faced with the balancing act of holding its opposing identities in a congruous fashion out of interest of maintaining its favorable position in the global order. This task falls forcefully on Turkey's leaders, who are charged as either 'upholders of democracy and modernity' or 'harbingers of oppression and Islam.' This is the perception of the West and the European Union, who have asserted their ideologies as indisputably correct. Perspectives such as these are historically rooted as early as the Roman Empire and industrialization, but more topically in the former complex antagonistic relationship with the Ottoman Empire- known colloquially as "the sick man of Europe"- and by extension, Muslims, whose practices were said to be the antithesis to the idea of natural law and modernity as enshrined by Europe. Assertions of the Muslim as the 'other' helps to further define what Europe is not and, by extension, can elucidate aspects of its identity (Asad 2003). This perspective, however, aggravates an already combative relationship that cannot be easily disregarded due to the inevitable presence of Muslims in Europe.

For much of its history, Turkey has been a disrupter of the dominant European ideology regarding Muslims, much to the chagrin of the countries and international organizations that it has often sought to ally itself with. By seeking to straddle the line in an increasingly polarized global society, Turkey is bound to oscillate between both in accordance with the diverse, heterogenous nature of its citizens.

Recently, the existence of exclusive international organizations has resulted in power being increasingly consolidated in the hands of the few. Countries cling to this membership for material benefits, such as the free flows of goods and people, but also the intangible advantages, such as a sense of identity and legitimacy. Such is the case of the European Union, which offers a close-knit community dedicated to social, cultural, economic, and, to some extent, political integration—the sum of which equates to a formidable power. As an exclusive club that provides numerous benefits—especially for a small or destitute country—surrounding countries aspire to achieve the requirements for accession with varying degrees of success.

In the case of Turkey, membership to the European Union—and more broadly, the West—has been sought after since the EU's founding after World War II. For over fifty years, Turkey has made incremental reforms to establish a customs union with the ultimate aspiration of membership. In this way, Turkey believed that the West is to be equated with secularism and modernity, as espoused by leaders such as Turkish founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. However, with the election of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2002, the strong secular foundation of Turkey was upended by the pro-Western, Islamist party. Enjoying overwhelming support and a

mandate to rule, the AKP and Erdoğan saw a role for Turkey in the West irrespective of their religious affiliations.

Turkey's EU candidate status, which was awarded in 1999, finally provided a path towards stability and security for a country otherwise plagued by a history of military intervention, tumultuous coalition governments, tension with ethnic and religious minorities, and debilitating financial crises. However, in late 2006, tensions between the EU and Turkey over a long-standing dispute with Cyprus came to a head and the EU suspended eight of the thirty-five chapters, or changes to align with the EU, necessary for accession, effectively hindering negotiations between the two parties until Turkey took steps towards normalizing relations. Upon noticing this change, as well as Turkey's current hostile political climate, I became interested in the EU's role in Turkey's turn away from the West and what exactly that means for Turkish identity and legitimacy. Considering that the EU also struggles with their identity, especially in consolidating their geographical, political, and social identity amid a political climate that places increasing emphasis on sovereignty, I believe that the events of EU rejection and Turkish de-Europeanization reveal a lot about both actors.

My research question asks, "How did Turkish sentiment shift in relation to EU accession prior to and following the suspension of eight of the thirty-five-chapter negotiations in 2006?" To investigate this question, I conducted a textual analysis of Turkey's reforms between the periods of 2000 and 2013, analyzed Turkish public opinion over this time through the Eurobarometer, and utilized scholarly review. While my findings did not reveal one "tipping point" that caused Turkish sentiment to shift before and after late 2006, I noticed a gradual process of de-Europeanization from 2006 through

2013. Considering that the long-standing dispute between Turkey and Cyprus, which resulted in the suspension of the chapters, was occurring throughout all of 2006, it is possible that this event, while not causing the shift, catalyzed Turkey's de-Europeanization.

I go on to offer two explanations for Turkey's gradual de-Europeanization, which is supported by scholarly review. I argue that the EU's crisis of identity—specifically, how they define their borders and whether they are truly the 'Christian Club'—played out over the course of Turkish accession negotiations. This is seen especially by a disproportionate use of EU conditionality and the carrot-and-stick approach. An EU crisis of identity was further compounded by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's populist, neo-Ottoman rhetoric. His popular mandate to lead and belief in Turkish primacy in the region resulted in a decisive shift away from the West, who would otherwise relegate him and his country to second-class citizenship. However, Erdoğan found an opportunity for leadership in the Middle East, which would allow nationalist Turkey to achieve empire status once again.

This thesis speaks to a broader question of legitimacy in an increasingly identity-based global order, especially when a state is conceived from a diverse range of actors. It also encourages research on the balance between strict conditionality and inclusion in international organizations, which could prove useful in stemming human rights violations and other authoritarian tendencies.

BACKGROUND

An understanding of Turkey's political, historical, and social background as well as a broader perception of Europe's founding is required to conceptualize Turkey's accession and

subsequent move away from the West. I consider Turkey's founding, and the development of Turkish political parties through a historical and conceptual lens that is attentive to conceptions of populism, neo-Ottomanism, and the evolution of Islam in relation to the West. This provides a framework with which to understand accession to the EU.

Turkey's Founding and Populism

Turkey's beginnings, as a departure from the Ottoman Empire, are very much rooted in Western affiliations. After World War I, the remnants of the Ottoman Empire were occupied by Western Allied forces, and in 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed between major Western powers, forming the Turkish Republic.

The emulation of Western norms was put forward by the policies of the first president of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. As the leader until his death in 1938, Atatürk is often credited as the "father of Turkey" and entrenched his vision of Turkey, known as Kemalism, into all aspects of social, political, and religious life (Hughes 2013). Kemalism's relegation and application in politics has been contended with since its creation in the 1920s. One crucial part of Atatürk's conception of Kemalism was the relegation of religion to private spheres. As emphasized by Heper (2012), "the first and foremost goal was secularism, enabling people to use their own reasoning faculties rather than turning to the Qur'an and/or religious personages for guidance" (p. 144). Early iterations of Kemalism can be seen as through Ataturk's closing of *madreses* and *kuttabs* that taught religion, banning of the veil, and rejection of the Caliphate, who was considered to be the leader of Muslim society (Hughes 2013; Çağaptay 2017).

In addition to the relegation of religion, Kemalism also embodies a pivot from the Ottoman Empire's historical contention with the West to an embracing of the West's modernity and civilization. In doing so, Atatürk eventually designated the former Ottoman Empire as

'Orientalist' and backwards in nature, tasking himself with the mission of civilizing the masses by emphasizing science and education (Zeydanlioglu 2008). To do this, Atatürk adopted policies that took inspiration from the West. He established his own form of France's *laïcité* and took note of their nationalist model of governance. In addition, he adopted the Civil Code of Switzerland for legal procedures and created a completely secular Constitution that echoed Western ideas of sovereignty, independent judiciaries, as well as separation of church and state (Hughes 2013; Çağaptay 2017). He also mandated high levels of education regardless of location or family vocation so as to instill values of Turkish identity and modernity (Kim 2001).

To justify this shift from the Ottoman Empire to the West, the latter of whom many citizens still harbored resentment towards, Atatürk ascribed to early iterations of populism, specifically exclusionary populism rooted in nationalism. As Betz (2004) defines, exclusionary populism is "a restrictive notion of citizenship, which holds that genuine democracy is based on culturally, if not ethnically, homogenous community" (p. iii). Atatürk set out to improve the livelihood of the 'depraved masses,' who he believed needed a paternalistic, charismatic leader that knows their needs without asking (Roberts 1995; Weyland 2001; Mudde 2004). However, Atatürk also excluded those that were not Turkish or Turkified them. Ataturk's nationalist view was anathema to the existence of minorities in the country, such as Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds, all of which were considered a threat to the survival of the regime and were subsequently forced to assimilate and 'Turkify' their livelihoods.

As such, the Turkish Republic pivoted from the multi-ethnic mosaic of the Ottoman Empire to a strict, homogenous Turkish identity that prevailed at the expense of minorities in the state (Dinç 2012). Imposition of Turkish nationalist identity and secularist policy has persisted long after Ataturk's rule, including with the second president, Ismet Inonu, a pro-Western leader

that sapired to the democratic prowess of the West (Çağaptay 2017). As Heper & Toktas (2003) say, "the Turkish version of secularism has been a successful project. In time it led to a large number of people taking religion as a system of belief and morality rather than a prescriptive set of political rules" (pp. 158).

Legacies of the Ottoman Empire

The populist traits of the 'modern' Turkey is ironically similar to that of the Ottoman Empire just a few years prior. The center versus the periphery, a manifestation of the 'us versus them' sentiment, can be seen as early as the 1800s in the Ottoman Empire. Mardin (1973) tells of cleavages between the state and the periphery, established by economic control, nepotism, language, education, and religion. In an effort to modernize and thus maintain control over the region, the Empire attempted to bring those on the periphery—perhaps conceptualized as the the 'depraved masses'—into their integration project. This was successful, in part, by the notables, who pursued clientelist relationships and thus served as an intermediary between officials and the lower class (Mardin 1973). Minority groups were often tolerated but not awarded equality, which somewhat departs from the 'Turkification' that minorities experienced under Atatürk's nationalist project.

The Ottoman Empire is a source of nostalgia for many contemporary Turkish political and cultural sentiments. It also continues to represent the antithesis of Atatürk's strictly Western policies. The Ottoman Empire was a dominant power in the region for centuries and continually sought to maintain and perhaps expand their territory. European influence has thus historically been a direct threat to Ottoman primacy, especially in their development as a competing rising power, buoyed by the Industrial Revolution and World War I. With the dismantling of the

Ottoman Empire, Ataturk attempted to forget Ottoman memory by modernizing and secularizing the newly formed state.

However, those that support Ottomanism remember how the project of dominance and grandeur failed due to interference by Europe and imagines the idyllic creation of one unified state that bestowed equal rights and consideration on all citizens. Nostalgia, a fundamental facet of neo-Ottomanism, creates consensus among citizens and is considered a way "to overcome the identity and legitimacy rises facing the country today, thereby restoring its sense of self-confidence" (Yavuz 2020, 9). Reverence and retrotopia seek to restore the primacy of what was lost after the Empire fell, and modern Turks believe that this comes in the form of becoming an invaluable, Islamist player on the global stage (Yavuz 2020).

Today's conception of Ottoman nostalgia is known as neo-Ottomanism. David Blanchard, as sourced from Yavuz (2016) defines neo-Ottomanism as "a consciousness of the imperial Ottoman past," coupled with an active attempt to return to Ottoman primacy (pp. 443). Neo-Ottomanism holistically draws on central ethics, ideals, values, and norms, and shapes how Turkey views itself as a nation and on the global stage (Yavuz 2016, 442; Yavuz 2020, 4). Feelings of nostalgia, reverence, and retrotopia permeate Turkish thought and dictate an image of the future (Yavuz 2020).

The strategy to capitalize on neo-Ottomanism and anti-Western sentiment is derived from populism. Much of this strategy is predicated on amplifying the history of inflictions carried out by the secular, government elite in both Turkey and the West. The masses are mobilized under this 'us versus them' rhetoric and a sense of duty and morality. Under neo-Ottomanism, the Ottoman Empire- bundled with its identity, population, geographic area, and populist tendencies- is thus considered the future of Turkey.

A Continuation of Populism and the Reemergence of Islam

The Kemalist doctrine continued through the 1930s and 1940s and persisted in their project of homogenization as a factor of Turkish nationalism. The establishment of the 'Speak Turkish' campaign in the early 1930s sought to assimilate Jews, Kurds, Cretans, Arabs, and Syrians into the Turkish nationalist paradigm (Cagaptay 2004). There was potential for being Turkish even though they were not considered ethnically Turkish, thus creating a policy of inclusive assimilation. Thus, "ethnicity-through-language emerged as one of the primary planks of Turkishness throughout the 1930s" (Cagaptay 2004, 97-98). Uprisings by these groups in protest of this attempt at homogenization gave the military impetus to shut them down in the interest of nationalization. These policies have served as the cornerstone of Turkish nationalism and treatment of minorities for decades.

Turkish leaders with populist streaks continued even with the transition to multi-party elections in 1946 (Somer 2016). Democrat Party Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, who took office in 1950, was secular, center-right, pro-West, but echoed the commonfolk's distrust of military and government elite (Çağaptay 2017). While Menderes cannot be considered an Islamist, he represented the people that were more religious in nature. The Democrat Party's economic and political success, which reverberated around the state, continued up until 1960, when Menderes was put on trial for allegations of corruption and embezzlement. At this time, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) promptly orchestrated a coup that assassinated Menderes and developed a reformed 1961 Turkish Constitution (Çağaptay 2017). Much of the distrust surrounding the dominance of the Turkish military has its origins in this coup, as well as increased government involvement in the following years.

While there has been Islamist movements since Turkey's founding, they have largely operated covertly and practiced their faith in private. However, the reformation of the Turkish Constitution in 1961 established civil liberties that allowed for Islamist movements to operate in public view. The first Islamist party in mainstream Turkish politics was the National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi, MNP) in 1970 (Göle 1997). While the MNP party was subsequently shut down by the Constitutional Court in 1971, former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan was central to the rise of Islamist parties from the 1970s to the 1990s, eventually becoming Prime Minister of a newly created Islamist party, the Welfare Party (RP), in 1996. Erbakan's Islamist beliefs and affinity for populism nudged Turkish sentiment towards the eventual success of the Islamist parties in 2002.

Central to the Erbakan's theme was populism and the *Millî Görüs* ideology, which framed the West as corrupt and placed their norms in opposition to the hardworking and capable masses of Turkey. All of Turkey's problems were thus attributed to the West's inadequacy (Çağaptay 2017, 68). Erbakan's populism thus pushed an 'us versus them' rhetoric by touting an anti-elite rhetoric that sought to enhance Turkish nationalism while rejecting the West. *Millî Görüs* also emphasized many of the mainstream populist principles in that they supposedly represented destitute Muslims and understood themselves to be a targeted group, both domestically and internationally (Yilmaz & Bashirov 2018). This umbrella movement sourced their ways of life from Islam but sought to bring the country back to the Ottoman era of primacy (Heper and Toktas 2003). This ideology was frequently referenced, and Erbakan suggested that its Islamic principles were "a depiction of a just society that implied clear prescriptions for political action" (Çağaptay 2017, 47).

The 1970s marked the beginning of a long line of Erbakan-derived Islamist parties that would be penalized for inciting religious rhetoric. During the years of 1971, 1980, 1998, and 2001, the Turkish military and Constitutional Court shut down or took over these Islamist parties (Taşpınar 2012). However, this was to no avail, as parties would nearly immediately resurface in their place. As Çağaptay (2017) says, "The MSP's establishment marked the start of what would become a recurrent pattern for Turkish Islamist parties: each time the country's Constitutional Court shut down an Islamist faction, its leaders would find another" (pp. 40). This was seen especially in the banning of rising politicians that were Islamic or Islam-adjacent. For much of the 1970s and well into the 1980s, populist leaders such as Süleyman Demirel and Erbakan were all excluded from politics for a number of years (Çağaptay 2017). While Islamist parties were not necessarily popular at this time, the shutdowns of Islamist political organizations provided ammunition for populist leaders to develop the idea of the immoral military. This narrative, coupled with the economic collapse and political violence of the 1970s, increased the interest mobilizing under Islamist ideologies.

The 1980s saw a similar trend of the rise of Islamist parties and sentiments following the 1980 coup. However, the post-coup military responded to this political surge by developing the "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis," which began to reconcile the differences between Westernization and Islam by creating a new interpretation of Kemalism in which the centralized authority would be respected, yet the Muslim identity could develop under the sphere of public influence (Hale and Ozbudun 2009; Çağaptay 2017). Reminiscent of the power that Muslims maintained during the Ottoman Empire, the military held that the Muslim and Turkish identity could co-exist. This legacy still resonates today; as Çağaptay (2017) says, "Formerly secular Turkey gradually became informally Sunni Islamic under the generals. The injection of Islamic codes into

Turkey's body politic in the 1980s would culminate in the complete unraveling of secularism in Turkey in the first two decades of the 21ˢᵗ century under Erdoğan" (pp. 59).

Like the 1970s, the 1990s were tumultuous and marred by both internal and external conflicts. Over the course of the 1990s, the Turkish economy contracted by 4.7 percent, deviating from the development and advancement that took place in the 1980s (Bechev 2022). In addition, Turkey faced challenges both at home with the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the general Kurdish problem and abroad in Syria. However, Turkey's involvement- both in economic partnerships with the West and intervention in the Middle East- allowed for an oscillation between diplomacy and intervention that catered to both hemispheres and thus set the scene for the 2000s (Bechev 2022, 48).

Integral to this policy was Turgut Özal who was the Prime Minister of Turkey from 1983 to 1989 and President from 1989 to 1993 and led the center-right Motherland Party (ANAP). His combination of Western education and Muslim identity encouraged the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis both internationally and domestically. Through this doctrine, Özal created his "zero problems with neighbors" policy, which sought to be an asset for both the Middle East, Russia, and the West, especially amid the conclusion of the Cold War (Bechev 2022). As such, Özal liberalized the Turkish economy, privatized the media, deepened ties with both the West and Russia, and applied for European Economic Community (EEC) membership in the late 1980s (Bechev 2022). He also sought to provide assistance to developing countries through the newly created Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, extending Turkey's reach around the globe (Bechev 2022).

Özal's religious identity was also recognized during this time. He expanded the *Imam Hatip* religious schools for students in Turkey and tried to reverse the ruling that prohibited

headscarves for women and believed "Islam to be integral to Turkish identity, an asset rather than a burden" (Hale and Ozbudun 2009; Bechev 2022, 40). By hosting worldwide summits, investing in education and culture, and extending negotiations to minority groups such as the Kurds, Özal's legacy is one that combined seemingly divergent identities to foster discussion on the future of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (Hale & Ozbudun 2009).

The rise of the Welfare Party (RP) in the mid-1990s came with the maturation of religious nationalism and neo-Ottomanism, as well as the advancement of technology, which allowed for a computer database of voters and facilitated face-to-face connection between the masses and the party representatives (Çağaptay 2017). The RP centered much of its policy around re-unification of the *ummah,* or the community, that the Ottoman Empire once possessed. According to Erbakan, the current structure of the West and the world order was "repressing the Muslims"; thus, the Muslim countries needed to band together against the West (Dinç 2006). To do so, Erbakan suggested the creation of a D-8, similar to the G7, which was necessary for the advancement of Islamic societies, as was an Islamic security organization (Hale and Ozbudun 2009).

In response, the military- the "bastion of Kemalism"- felt threatened by the demonization of the secular elite and orchestrated a soft coup in 1997 to oust Erbakan (Bechev 2022, 16). Coding the RP and Erbakan as Islamists who endangered the principle of *laiklik* (the separation of state and religion), the RP was dismantled, and Erbakan and other leaders were banned from politics for five years (Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber 2016; Çağaptay 2017). Shutting down the RP was the end of the *Mille Gorus* movement, but it was just the start for the parties that emerged from its existence.

Erdoğan and the Rise of the AKP

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had many goals when coming into office, but perhaps the most salient was maintaining a steadfast and fond legacy that would continue for centuries. This preeminence would ideally rival the "father of Turkey," Kemal Mustafa Ataturk, who made massive political, social, and economic changes and established a strict secularist doctrine. In this regard, Erdoğan may have been successful; over the past twenty years, it is impossible to not compare the two in impactfulness. However, Erdoğan's time in office, identity, and beliefs differ substantially from Ataturk. This narrative is crucial to the foundation of understanding Turkey's movement away from the West.

Erdoğan's upbringing reflects his position among the masses. Born in 1954, he grew up in a conservative town before migrating to Istanbul (Çağaptay 2017). He was a pious Muslim and attended *Imam Hatip,* which allowed for religious education, but later switched to a public school so as to pursue higher education (Çağaptay 2017). Despite being disenchanted with both sides of the political spectrum, he participated in a wide variety of political movements and discourse as a teenager by joining the National Turkish Student Union and becoming president of Istanbul's youth branch of the Islamist National Salvation Party (MSP) (Biography n.d.). After school, he continued to work under Erbakan's party and rose through the ranks of the newly formed RP. Erdoğan first ran for office in the late 1980s and was immediately set apart from for his unique canvassing strategies, including going to brothels and places where they served alcohol to receive votes (Çağaptay 2017). While he ultimately lost the race, he set himself apart as an organizer and helped to rebrand the Islamist party in the face of modernization, which eventually made them the dominant party in Parliament in 1995 (JamesinTurkey 2014).

In 1994, Erdoğan ran for mayor of Istanbul under the RP and won. At the time, Istanbul suffered from a host of problems including lack of access to basic necessities and overcrowding. The previous leaders had faced numerous corruption scandals that rendered them ineffective. Over the course of his time in office, Erdoğan improved the lives of Istanbul residents while simultaneously arguing that his opponents were too self-absorbed and elitist to adequately focus on the people. This was felt especially after 1997, when the RP was shut down and Erdoğan was jailed for reading a religious poem, all of which contributed to a general anti-elite sentiment. His experiences over the 1990s was, in part, the catalyst that the Islamist movement needed to become more popular; finally, as he said, "the voice of the silent masses" was represented (Çağaptay 2017, 73).

The formation of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2001 differed from the previous Islamist parties. *Mille Gorus* had split into two branches, and Erdoğan, who founded the AKP, opted to go with the more modern, conservative democratic force- thus breaking with Erbakan's new party (Çağaptay 2017, 83). In 2002, the AKP dominated the elections, and only one other party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), crossed the 10% threshold (JamesInTurkey 2014). With only one year of experience, the AKP effectively controlled the political scene and Erdoğan was installed as Turkey's Prime Minister in 2003.

The success of the AKP in 2002 was in part due to the corruption and scandals that rendered competing parties, such as ANAP and DYP, ineffective. There was also a weak economic showing throughout the 1990s and early 2000s which was blamed on the fiscally irresponsible government elites. The structure of Parliament also benefited the AKP; because of the 10% threshold for party representation, the AKP, who received only

34% of the vote, obtained 67% of the seats in the Turkish Parliament (JamesInTurkey 2014; Bechev 2022).

The AKP continued to have dominant showings in the elections in 2007, 2011, and later. Erdoğan also remained in the Prime Minister position until 2014, when he was elected president by popular vote. Overall, between 2002 and 2017, the AKP has won five parliamentary elections, three nationwide elections, one presidential election, and two referenda (Çağaptay 2017). Despite these impressive showings, the AKP has never won a parliamentary election with over 50% of the vote, which might imply a majoritarian system (JamesInTurkey 2014).

Erdoğan and the AKP's Populist Traits

Both Erdoğan, and by extension, the AKP, have policy views that differ from previous Turkish Islamist parties. However, they do draw on numerous populist traits- not unlike Ataturk, Menderes, and Erbakan- to maintain public support domestically.

The AKP is a modern, Westernized version of the *Milli Gorus* Islamist movement. At the beginning of their term, the AKP "defined secularism as an orienting principle for the state but not for the individual, and thus referred to secularism as a means to freedom and social harmony" (Heper & Toktas 2003, 176). Islam would no longer be relegated to the private sphere; however, a level of secularism would be exercised in government to ensure equality for all minorities. Thus, Erdoğan believed that the existence of religion and the state would be two separate entities; as he says, "My reference is to Islam at a personal level. Politically speaking, my reference is the constitution and democratic principles (Heper & Toktas 2003, 170). Supporting religious minorities- such as the Kurds, Armenians, and Alevis- was integral to the AKP's policies, as was pluralist representation. Economically, the AKP supported free market

economics and collaboration with the West, and they were happy to align themselves as such, seen in their dubbed "Muslim Democrats" (Bechev 2022). Both the U.S. and the European Union were ecstatic; here was a country that successfully straddled a Western-oriented democracy and a Muslim-dominant population and would hopefully be a model for other Middle Eastern countries.

Türk (2018), as cited from De La Torre (2013), describes certain types of populism as a "romantic view of the purity of the people" (pp. 155). This certainly was the case with Erdoğan, as he maintained an intimate, face-to-face relationship with his supporters. He was one of them, united through humble upbringings and the problems of the common man. This sentiment continued to resonate with the masses through the rebranding of the RP in the 1990s and beyond. As a religiously oppressed victim himself, Erdoğan was the people's protector and leader and would shield them against the elite and the military (Aytaç and Elçi 2019). Seeing as he had also been admonished by them throughout his time in jail, Erdoğan used his experience as an opportunity to maintain his faith and move forward, undeterred by the threat of the establishment. Because of his successful elections, he had a mandate to rule, giving him the authority to dismantle much of Ataturk's secular system and express his religiosity in the name of improving lives. This populist sentiment also acknowledges previous leaders, such as Özal and Menderes, who faced similar plights in pursuit of equity. Erdoğan also placed emphasis on the will of the people at the expense of horizontal accountability in government. As said by Bechev (2022), "Democracy boiled down to the will of the nation (*mille irade*) expressed through the ballot box, and not to constitutional checks and balances protecting individual and minority rights" (Türk 2018; Bechev 2022, 54). This echoes Weyland (2001) the definition of

populism as defined by Weyland (2001), in which direct referenda from the citizens supersedes any checks and balances.

Neo-Ottomanism is perhaps classified under populism as a political strategy used in Turkey. An an increase in Ottoman nostalgia has a direct positive effect on populist attitudes (Elçi 2022). This strategy, however, played crucial role in Erdoğan's rhetoric, especially when reimagining Turkey's place in the world order. Recently, Erdoğan's quote on cultural legacy gives an idea to his perceived importance of the region:

> "For thousands of years, we have been the carriers of a unique civilization, history and heritage in which we have molded and collated different cultures, different civilizations, along with our own culture" (Wastnidge 2019, 10).

Perception of the primacy of the region is especially seen in this quote. In addition to this are Erdoğan's concerns about the threat of the establishment or the West to this hegemonic aspiration. He chooses to reframe a legacy of imperialism to a renewed idea of global centrality. As further mentioned by Yamuz (2020) in *Nostalgia for the Empire: The Politics of Neo-Ottomanism,* Erdoğan is "looking backward nostalgically to the Ottomans while simultaneously aiming to create a more powerful Turkey. Erdoğan is not just a sui generis gure. He represents the dominant political cultural mood in the country" (pp. 155). The need to protect Turkey from outsiders because of their immoral objectives is directly related to the populist sentiment of us versus them. As such, Erdoğan intimately links the two- neo-Ottomanism and populism- to convey a powerful sense of comradery with the Turkish people, united by what once was.

The desire conveyed by the AKP and Erdoğan to join the EU comes from one of membership to an elite organization that has been coveted since the early 1960s. However, more importantly, the AKP was receptive to the broad Turkish public support that EU accession received in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and it was thus crucial that the AKP and Erdoğan also

supported EU accession. Such is the sentiment of populism; by Erdoğan and the AKP resonating with the masses and supporting their charge, they were legitimized and could do what they wanted with their popular mandate when they won. Turkish voters also saw the support that the West and EU had for the AKP, which contributed to their success as well. The AKP also recognized that many of their religious reforms, such as lifting the ban on the headscarf, would be supported and legitimized by the EU, which would win them support among religious conservatives. Thus, much of the support for EU accession by the AKP was in the interest of vote-getting and winning in 2002.

Turkish-European Union Relationship Timeline

Historically linked together by a small patch of land, the Turkish-European Union relationship has significantly evolved in its nature, discussion, and identity since Turkey's first interaction with the European Economic Commission (EEC). An understanding of these intertwined histories is necessary to appreciate their current partnership.

Just a year after the EEC's founding by the Treaty of Rome in 1958, Turkey eagerly applied for membership under Adnan Menderes. The signing of the 1963 Ankara Agreement codified Turkey's EEC membership and established steps to take before entering a customs union (Hughes 2013). The customs union would allow for trade and other economic transactions to take place at a discounted rate in the interest of benefiting both countries.

Over the time that Turkey was attempting to enter into a customs union, membership grew to include twelve European states (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations 2019). This created some tension between the EEC and Turkey because of the inequity in accession processes; however, the EEC argued that different political and economic development puts countries at unique stages in the process.

While Turkey had not yet entered into the customs union, they applied for full membership to the EEC in 1987 (Bechev 2022). In late 1987, this was rejected due to political, economic, and geographical concerns. Of paramount concern was the Cyprus issue, a long-running dispute between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, which became particularly tense after Turkey's invasion of Northern Cyprus (Ulusoy 2008). Ultimately, the EEC said that Turkey did not yet "reach the level required in a democracy" (Hughes 2013, 27).

In 1995, Turkey was accepted into a customs union, allowing for free movement of goods, people, and services in an otherwise suffering Turkish economy. This breakthrough was major and "within a year of the agreement the EU became the main supplier of Turkey's imports whereas Turkey's combined exports and imports grew to US$74 billion" (Hughes 2013, 27). Critics, on the other hand, pointed out Turkey's increasing dependency without actually allowing for any political or social strides in the organization (Neyaptı, Taşkın and Üngör 2007; Hughes 2013).

With the end of the Cold War and the emergence of post-Soviet era states in dire of need of development, the EU opted to open negotiations with eleven of the twelve applicant countries in 1997, thereby excluding Turkey. While there was an implication that accession would be possible later, there were also some irreconcilable differences that the European Council noticed, such as explicit opposition to Turkish accession in the interest of maintaining Christian principles. In response, Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz "accused the EU of erecting 'a new, cultural Berlin Wall' to exclude Turkey and of discriminating against Turkey on religious grounds" (Müftüler-Bac 1998, 242). The EU-Turkish relationship was subsequently damaged, and in response, Turkey opted to suspend discussion with Europe and cease negotiations with Greece, which would have otherwise potentially improved the Cyprus issue (Hughes 2013).

While the EU opened negotiations with Turkey in 1999 after two years of discussion, there were a multitude of hurdles that Turkey had to overcome even prior to entering accession negotiations (Bechev 2022). For example, the principle of conditionality cited that membership would be given to Turkey only after making all necessary changes; however, the EU reserved the right to suspend or end negotiations with Turkey even if they had completed all the necessary reforms (Hughes 2013). The principle of conditionality was a real concern for Turkey, especially as some member states expressed hesitancy with its accession. For example, in 2004, Austria suggested that a "privileged partnership" would be better than a full membership to the EU (Redmond 2007).

Numerous improvements, issues, and negotiations would also need to occur before accession, including fulfilling the three requirements of the Copenhagen Criteria. The Copenhagen Criteria requires three significant steps before accession: political commitments of democratic norms, economic commitments to a free market, and an undertaking of *Acquis Communautaire,* or "*acquis*"*,* meaning that all laws in a state must complement or adhere to EU rules and regulations (Redmond 2007). In order to accede, all thirty-five chapters of accession (and thus all thirty-five areas of improvement) needed to be accepted by the EU unanimously (Redmond 2007).

Under these agreements, formal accession talks opened in October of 2005. Assuming that the process went as efficiently as possible, the earliest Turkey could accede would be 2014. However, "the pace negotiations will take is to depend on 'Turkey's progress in meeting the requirements for membership' with the Commission keeping Turkey's performance under regular review" (Hughes 2013, 33).

As discussed below, Turkey took the accession seriously and completed major liberalizing reforms in line with EU demands. However, over the period of 2005-2006, there was a significant push from the EU for Turkey to widen their customs union to all members of the EU, including Cyprus, an island that is currently divided between the internationally recognized Greek Cypriots and the northern Turkish Cypriots (Bennhold 2006). This is also alluded to in the 2006-2007 EU Commission Report, where they say there has been little progress made in the Turkey-Cyprus relationship and that it would be reviewed again over the course of 2006.

Ultimately, in December 2006, the EU made a "unanimous decision to make Turkey's compliance with the additional protocol an opening benchmark for eight chapters in the negotiations" (Bechev 2022, 86). Thus, these eight of thirty-five chapters in the negotiations would be suspended, preventing Turkey from getting these chapters approved and thus hindering the process of negotiations. These chapters included measures on free movement of goods, fisheries, transport policies, customs union, financial services, and agriculture and rural development, among others (Iktisadi Kalkinma Vakfi 2023). Public reasoning for this by the EU was primarily due to Turkey's inability to normalize their relationship with Cyprus and Greece, as well as certify protection of other minority rights domestically (Hughes 2013). This was a significant blow to any hope of EU accession in the near future.

There have been some attempts to restore negotiations; however, since the subsequent EU enlargement in 2007 and the continued block of Turkish EU dossiers by Greece in 2009, talks have been at a virtual standstill (Hughes 2013; Bechev 2022). Most recently in 2016, the EU voted to suspend all talks of Turkey accession, not just the eight chapters (Kanter 2016). Only sixteen chapters had been opened, indicating little progress on accession. This is the current

standing of the EU-Turkish relationship: bounded by a free trade agreement and a strip of land, but further apart than ever in their aspirations.

METHODS

My research question asks, "How did Turkish sentiment shift in relation to EU accession prior to and following the suspension of eight of the thirty-five-chapter negotiations in 2006?" To investigate this research question, I conducted a textual analysis of Turkey's reforms between the years of 2000 and 2013, analyzed public opinion over this time, and utilized scholarly review.

In terms of Turkey's reforms, I primarily examined primary sources with a small focus on secondary sources. I examined primary sources such as the direct wording of constitutional packages and the EU-produced "Regular Report from the Commission on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession," which provides an analysis of Turkey's progress annually from 2000 to 2013. The latter is sourced in the University of Pittsburgh Archive of European Integration, which features these reports from 1998 to 2013 (Archive of European Integration n.d.). The European Commission also publishes a general annual report of enlargement, known as the "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and Council," which I reviewed as well (Commission of the European Communities 2006). I reviewed these documents for the period between 2005, when the document was first produced, to 2013. The decision to utilize these reports was in part due to the difficulty of accessing consistent archival materials that originate from the Turkish perspective, as well as the language barrier in these the resources. However, using these sources also acts as a consistent report of progress made over the years; in the case that I utilized a collection of different primary sources, it would be difficult to see an

accurate picture of policies and improvements made. Another beneficial primary source would have been Erdoğan's speeches and statements; however, I was looking for an objective resource that could be compared over time as opposed to picking and choosing quotes that supported my argument. When necessary, I reviewed scholarly literature that also analyzes these periods to ensure that I am giving a holistic outlook of the changes in Turkish policy over time.

I also used the EU survey website Eurobarometer to gather an idea of how the Turkish public feels about EU accession from 2000-2013 (European Union n.d.). This bottom-up method took the form of public opinion and was chosen to complement the two other top-down methods. As a populist, Erdoğan derives much of his power from the support of the people; thus, public opinion must influence how he carries himself and what policies he chooses to champion.

FINDINGS: POLICIES AND PUBLIC OPINION
Policies from 2000-2013

In the first few years of the 2000s, there was a conscious attempt by Turkey to expand civil rights and liberties, liberalize the economy, limit military involvement in political affairs, and attempt to harmonize Turkish and EU laws. While there had been reforms occurring since 1995, legislation was boosted after the Helsinki Conference in 1999, where Turkey became an applicant for membership (European Parliament 2007).

Between 2001 and 2004 alone, nine constitutional packages, one Turkish penal code, and a new civil code were all passed (Bechev 2022). The first three packages focused on abolishing capital punishment, limiting torture to monetary fines, and revising

the anti-terror law (Müftüler Baç 2005). Notably, Turkey improved freedom of assembly by allowing protests without prior permission and broadened cultural rights for minorities by allowing broadcasts in languages other than Turkish (Hughes 2013). There was also substantial reform made to treatment of prisoners by allowing increased access to a lawyer and establishing the Human Rights Violations Investigation and Assessment Center (Hughes 2013). Turkey also implemented the *acquis* for the EU, ratifying both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (OHCHR n.d.).

In constitutional packages five through nine, Turkey allowed for the retrial of cases on parliamentarians that were jailed over previous years, gave freedom to the press, revised the Higher Education Board, and gave priority to international treaties ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly as opposed to the Constitutional Court, and limited military involvement in politics (Bechev 2022). The institutionalization of the military and Turkey's history of military juntas deeply concerned the EU. In response, the AKP severely curtailed the military scope of power by increasing the number of civilian members on the National Security Council, who are responsible for developing national security policy and deployment. The AKP also removed the National Security Council from their position on the censure board of broadcasting, which controlled state-sanctioned media (Müftüler Baç 2005). The requirements for holding the Secretary General position of the National Security Council also differed. Under new stipulations, civilians were now exclusively allowed to occupy this position as opposed to military generals (Müftüler Baç 2005).

The passage of these reforms occurred over the course of two governments: the

Ecevit coalition as well as Erdoğan's AKP, who took office in December 2002. Both the

AKP and the CHP supported EU accession, making it straightforward to proceed with

reforms. In fact, according to the European Commission (2004), between October 2003

and July 2004, "the Turkish Grand National Assembly adopted a total of 261 new laws,"

confirming that the Helsinki Summit in 1999 was an effective mechanism of

conditionality (pp. 20). Demonstrated reform in Turkey encouraged the EU to open

negotiations in late 2004 with the official Accession Partnership being adopted in 2005;

as European Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso says, "I genuinely believe this is an

offer that Turkey should be glad to accept. It shows clearly the end goal: The end goal is

membership" (CNN 2004).

Over the course of 2005 and 2006, the rapid pace of reforms slowed down; as

cited by the EU Commission Report for 2006-2007,

> "In 2006, Turkey has continued to make progress in reforms, notably with the
> recent adoption of some elements of the 9th reform package. Moreover, the
> number of reported cases of torture and ill-treatment is declining on the whole, in
> line with the zero-tolerance policy, even though the situation in the South-East
> gives rise to concerns in this respect. However, the pace of reforms has slowed
> down. In 2007, it will be important to undertake determined efforts to broaden the
> reform momentum throughout Turkey" (Commission of the European
> Communities 2006, 11).

Turkey has been specifically falling behind in topics such as the corruption,

minority rights, freedom of religion, trade unions rights, women's rights, and public

procurement, among a few others (CEC 2006). Regarding Cyprus, the EU states that

there was a "re-launching [of] a process leading to a comprehensive settlement under UN

auspices" but also maintains that there was no improvement in bilateral relations (CEC

2006, 10). However, Turkey has still been making strides in *acquis*—as mentioned in the same document—just not as quickly as before. Features such as a law establishing an Ombudsman, which is an investigative body for the institutions of the EU, more human right guarantees for military courts, a decrease in reports of torture, stronger roles for civil society, more open debate, and a successful market economy are a few of the reforms made (CEC 2006). Ultimately, while progress varies, the EU believes Turkey continues to "sufficiently fulfill the Copenhagen political criteria and has continued political reforms" (CEC 2006, 53).

From 2007 to 2011, the only reform packages were minor constitutional amendments and one constitutional referendum package. This constitutional reform package allowed for members of the Grand National Assembly from banned parties to serve and got rid of immunity for military chiefs (Bechev 2022). However, it also proposed increasing the number of justices on the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors, which was met with backlash by constitutional lawyers who argued that the judiciary would become weakened (Nas and Özer 2017). In response, a referendum was issued for the citizens, who approved it with 58% of the vote (Daily Sabah n.d.).

Similar sentiments to the 2006-2007 Report are echoed in the 2007-2008 EU Commission Report, but there is an additional assertion that the implementation of reforms has been uneven, and the momentum of reform needed to be revamped (CEC 2007, 8). Turkey is cited as falling behind on topics such as freedom of expression, military-civilian interactions, women's and children's rights, and trade union rights (CEC 2007, 56). This report says there were free and fair elections, progress in judiciary, and

the ratification of international human rights issues. However, there were concerns about freedom of expression and the increase in journalists, academics, and activists that were being prosecuted throughout 2007. There was also no progress on freedom of religion for non-Muslim religious communities and no adoption of a framework in line with the ECHR (CEC 2007). With regard to the Cyprus issue, the EU praises Turkey's wish to be a contributor to the the European Security and Defense Policy (EDSP). However, "Turkey objects to the inclusion of the Republic of Cyprus and Malta in EU-NATO cooperation" (CEC 2007, 61). They also implore that "the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities need to step up their efforts to relaunch negotiations on a comprehensive settlement under UN auspices" (CEC 2007, 3).

The EU Commission report from 2008-2009 commended the president for suggesting reforms; however, in practice, the EU criticized the gridlock in political parties which thus affected political reforms. There was a lack of progress made in human rights and the protection of minorities. In terms of freedom of expression, there were some positive amendments made in Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code, but the EU was waiting to see if these would be applied equally and consistently (CEC 2008). A legal framework for religious freedom through the ECHR had still yet to be developed, but there were some minor improvements for "property-related issues concerning non-Muslim communities" (CEC 2008, 61). The Grand National Assembly also allowed women to wear head coverings, which was previously banned under the secular institution (Bechev 2022). There were improvements in Turkey-Cyprus relations when both countries began negotiations on jurisdiction and control of Northern Cyprus (CEC 2008).

From 2009-2010's EU Commission report came some concerns about Ergenekon and its criminal network, an "alleged enigmatic ultra-nationalist organization," which led to the arrest of nearly a quarter of Turkey's generals (Çağaptay 2017; Aydın-Düzgit & Kaliber 2016). While there was an adoption of a national program to harmonize Turkish policies with the EU, the report emphasizes that "the lack of dialogue and spirit of compromise between political parties is detrimental to the pursuit of reforms" (CEC 2009, 66). In terms of human rights and the protection of minorities, there was some improvement in the implementation of international human rights laws, but the UN Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) and adjustments made to the ECtHR judgements have yet to be addressed (CEC 2009). Regarding freedom of expression, there were improvements in no longer using parts of Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code, but they have not yet been applied consistently in line with ECtHR (CEC 2009). Non-Muslims and Muslims alike have been acknowledged by the government in dialogue, but property-related issues persist, especially without implementation of the ECtHR (CEC 2009). While Turkey and Cyprus are in negotiations, the relations have not improved.

The EU Commission report from 2010-2011 cites no change in many of the issues expressed in the 2009-2010 report except for notable decline in freedom of expression. The Commission still expresses concern about Ergenekon and remains that it is an opportunity for reform. The assessment of Turkey's protection of human and minority rights was similar to the 2009-2010 report, which states that there was some progress but "significant efforts are still needed" (CEC 2010, 62). In terms of freedom of expression, there has been a considerable decline. The Commission reports that "Turkish law does not sufficiently guarantee freedom of expression in line with the ECHR and the ECtHR

case law. The high number of cases initiated against journalists is of concern. Undue political pressures on the media and legal uncertainties affect the exercise of freedom of the press in practice" (CEC 2010, 62). Religious minorities continue to practice freely and engage in dialogue with the government, but there has not yet been implementation of the ECtHR. The EU implores Turkey to make progress with Cyprus, as negotiations have still been moving slowly (CEC 2010, 22).

The 2011-2012 EU Commission report highlights that Turkey is an important candidate for EU accession. However, it also states that "Turkey has continued EU-relevant reforms, but significant further efforts are required, including on guaranteeing core fundamental rights. Regrettably, accession negotiations have not moved on for more than one year" (CEC 2011, 25). As the Ergenekon investigation winds down, the EU maintains that it is still an opportunity to enhance democracy; however, the EU cites notable concern with "the conduct of investigations, judicial proceedings and the application of criminal procedures, which put at risk the rights of the defence and affected the legitimacy of the cases" (CEC 2011, 72). Progress in human rights and protection of minorities has stalled and freedom of expression and religion continue to be a point of contention. There has been no implementation of the ECtHR in freedom of expression and current legislation does not offer significant protection for journalists, academics, and activists. Especially for topics that are contentious to Turkish society, "the right to freedom of expression is undermined by the large number of legal cases and investigations against journalists, writers, academics and human rights defenders" (CEC 2011, 73). Progress on freedom of religion has remained the same, as the government still engages in dialogue with religious minorities, and they are still free to worship. As for the

Cyprus issue, there has been recent tensions in negotiations between the two parties despite warnings to respect sovereignty and refrain from deteriorating relations.

The report for 2012-2013 again emphasizes Turkey's strategic importance to the EU and vice versa, saying that Turkey needs the EU to maintain political and economic reforms while the EU needs Turkey for their economic prowess. In May 2012, a "positive agenda" was released "to revive the accession process after a period of stagnation and EN 17 EN bring fresh dynamism to the EU-Turkey relations" (CEC 2012,16). There has been a lack of consultation in the process of creating a new constitution; however, the EC notes that the work for a new constitution is admirable. In terms of the respect for human rights, issues persist, especially in freedom of expression, where despite some minor reforms, "the increase in violations of freedom of expression raises serious concerns, and freedom of the media continued to be further restricted in practice. The legal framework, especially as regards organised crime and terrorism, and its interpretation by the courts, leads to abuses" (CEC 2012, 66). While discussion between religious minorities and the government continued, they are now further under threat by extremists in the region. The government has also not ratified the ECtHR to further protect religious minorities. Turkey has also opted to not attend EU meetings in which Cyprus is chairing the committee and has subsequently frozen relations.

For the EU Commission report for 2013-2014, the Commission reiterates the positive agenda and applauds the increasing democratic debates among political and non-political actors as well as Turkey's passage of a fourth judicial reform package that strengthens preservation of fundamental rights (CEC 2013). However, in practice, fundamental human rights were threatened during the Gezi Park Protests in May and June

2013, which was a gathering to protest an urban development project (CEC 2013). In response, police brutally cracked down and left more than 8,000 people injured (CEC 2013, 41). Furthermore, those in custody were often deprived of their rights and left with physical injuries (CEC 2013). LGBTQ+ individuals have also been discriminated against, and an ECtHR framework has still not yet been established. In terms of freedom of expression, journalists often feel threatened to report and have resigned for fear of being convicted for provocation or anti-Turkish sentiment. These media conglomerates are often run by those in the government, meaning that there are often restrictions on what can be published. There is not much mention of religious minorities other than ensuring respect for property rights. Since the previous report, relations between Turkey and Cyprus have improved, with both of them willing to talk to negotiators (CEC 2013, 43).

Public Opinion from 2000-2013

Overall, Turkish public opinion on EU accession has fallen from an initial 74 percent of Turkish citizens agreeing that EU membership would be beneficial in 2002 to 50 percent in 2006-2007 (Aydın-Düzgit & Kaliber 2016; Önis 2010, 364). A 2010 survey conducted among Turkish students, academics, and party members reported that 50% of those surveyed said that EU membership has become less important since negotiations have begun. Further results report that, of the survey, 30% disagree and 20% are undecided on the previously mentioned issue (Bürgin 2012, 573). As to why EU membership has become less important, many respondents attributed it to Turkey's "new diplomatic and economic strength," showing that "for a significant number of Turks, alienation from the EU is durable rather than transient, and cannot easily be reversed by

more positive signals from the EU as regards Turkey's EU accession" (Bürgin 2012, 578).

As for variation among respondents, those that believed the EU would pose a financial benefit to themselves and Turkey were more favorable towards accession (Çarkoğlu and Kentmen 2011). Religion nor ethnicity did not represent a strong bloc for or against accession (Çarkoğlu and Kentmen 2011). Furthermore, Carkoglu and Kentmen say that "national identity is negatively and satisfaction with democracy positively linked to Turkish public opinion in the EU" (pp. 375). There was a decline in support among most parties after the inception of negotiations, but it is to varying degrees (Önis 2010). The AKP has been more subdued about their support, while the CHP and MHP are continuously negative towards accession (Önis 2010). The CHP and MHP were ranked at "qualified support" and "Euro-skeptic" before negotiations began, but after, both were ranked to "Euro-skeptic" (Önis 2010, 368). The AKP declined from "strong support" to "qualified support," while the DTP/BDP coalition of Kurdish nationalist maintained "strong support" (Önis 2010, 368).

Numerous surveys within the Eurobarometer further emphasized the decline in Turkish support for EU accession. The question on the biannual Standard Barometer Survey asks whether Turkey's membership to the EU is considered a good thing, bad thing, or neutral; otherwise, later questions may have asked in positive, negative, or neutral terms. While there was some variation to the question year-to-year, positive perspectives on EU accession have declined from 2004 to 2013, as seen in Figure 1 (below). There is an increasingly negative view of Turkish accession, which passed positive views in 2012.
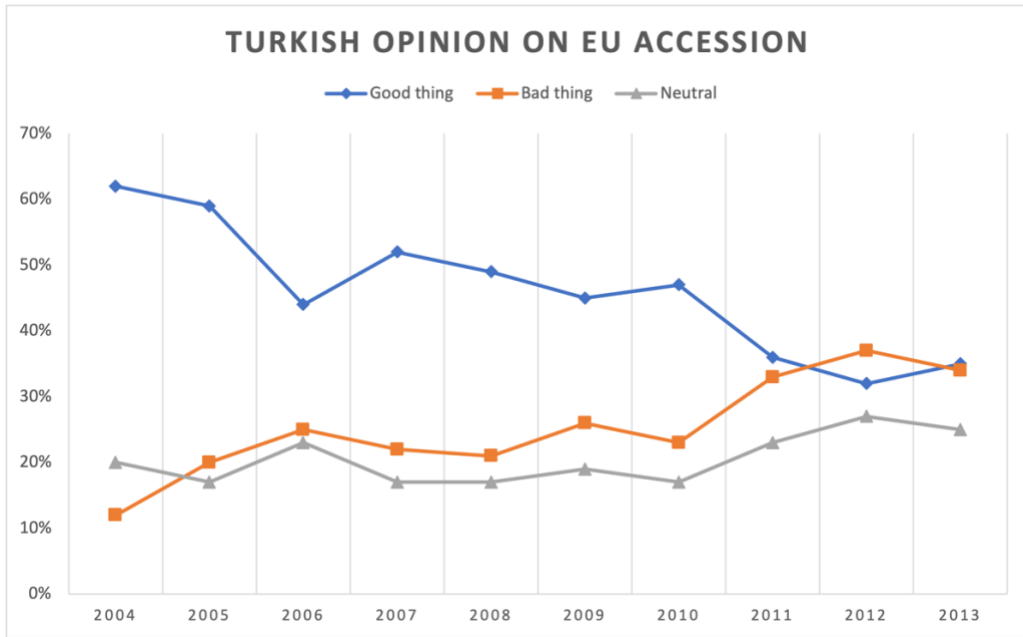
TURKISH OPINION ON EU ACCESSION

Figure 1

ANALYSIS

Europeanization and De-Europeanization

This thesis' questions seek to understand if, and how, Turkish sentiment has shifted in response to the suspension of eight of thirty-five chapters of EU accession negotiations in late 2006. My results were garnered from primary and secondary sources as well as public opinion polls. While this textual analysis did not reveal one "tipping point" that caused Turkish sentiment to shift, I discerned a gradual process of de-Europeanization throughout 2006. Considering that the Cyprus issue, which caused the suspension of the chapters, was occurring throughout the entire year of 2006, it is possible that this event still could have been a catalyst in Turkey's process of de-Europeanization.

Europeanization and de-Europeanization will be the terms that I will utilize to analyze the change in Turkish policy and public opinion. I acknowledge that there is a difference between Europeanization and EU-ization, as the latter focuses more on *acquis* and the technical aspects of acceding to the Union while the former is a broader understanding of the social, political, and economic norms associated with Europe (Aydin-Düzgit and Kaliber 2016). However, I understand both as being important to this analysis due to the Copenhagen Criteria expressing many of the "Europeanization" indicators.

I utilize Aydin-Düzgut and Alper Kaliber's definition of Europeanization, which is a "context or situation where European norms, policies and institutions are (re-) negotiated and constructed by different European societies and institutions and have an impact on them" (Düzgut and Kaliber 2016, 4). Similarly, I use Düzgut and Kaliber's definition of de-Europeanization, which is described as "the loss or weakening of the EU/Europe as a normative/political context and as a reference point in domestic settings and national public debates" (Düzgut and Kaliber 2016, 5). There are two primary manifestations of de-Europeanization; one is in "the weakening of the appeal and influential capacity of European institutions, policies, norms and values, leading to a retreat of EU/Europe as a normative/political context for Turkish society and politics," while the other refers to "growing skepticism and indifference in Turkish society towards the EU/Europe, risking the legitimacy of the EU/Europe as a reference point in cases even where reform is incurred" (Düzgut and Kaliber 2016, 5-6). This is the lens with which I will analyze my results.

Between the years of 2000 and 2013, I discerned a notable change in the material and number of Turkish policies passed through the Grand National Assembly that were geared towards EU accession. This shift seems to occur over the course of 2006 and 2007, which is around the time that the EU opted to suspend eight of the thirty-five chapters of Turkey-EU accession negotiations in December 2006.

From the years 2001 to 2004, nine constitutional packages were passed with a wide variety of liberalizing reforms, including expansion of rights for religious and ethnic minorities, civil and political rights, improved treatment of prisoners, further *acquis* implemented, and limitations on the military. Per the recommendations suggested by the EU, Turkey passed 261 new laws in the course of just a few months that would better align with EU values. Despite Turkey's rejection of membership in 1999, there was still open communication in tandem with rapid liberalizing reforms, confirming that the somewhat-open door for Turkish accession at the Helsinki Summit was an effective mechanism of conditionality. This progress encouraged the EU to open accession negotiations with Turkey in 2004-2005

I would consider this a process of Europeanization, as policies and institutions are being constructed and harmonized with the EU so as to accede, thus having a positive impact on both the EU and Turkey. While there are no norms that are being negotiated at this point- subverting the part of the definition that refers to European norms being negotiated and constructed- I would argue that the cultural, social, and political norms would come after integration, especially considering Turkey's unique history.

After accession negotiations began, the EU reported a slowing of the pace of reforms that they saw from 2001-2004. Only one constitutional reform package was

passed from 2007-2011, and this package was even met with skepticism by some who was concerned about the influence of the executive on the judiciary. However, in the 2006-2007 Commission Report, there were still movements, especially in *acquis* and human rights guarantees. An Ombudsman was adopted- a significant step in *acquis*- and there was a decline in instances of torture, but there are still causes for concern. In terms of freedom of expression and freedom of religion, there was little to no change due to a restrictive penal code and the lack of passage protecting minority rights.

Analysis of the 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014 EU Commission reports reveal a marked decline in liberalizing reforms over time. Rather than notable declines happening in specific years, the deterioration of liberalizing reforms were gradual and marked by not passing necessary laws or adopting *acquis*. Additionally, there was a continued stagnation of democracy, increased persecution of the press and ethnic and religious minorities as well as no progress on the Cyprus issue.

Evaluations of democracy had shifted, but only slightly, over the course of these documents. There were free and fair elections and judicial overhauls; however, as early as 2009-2010, there was concern about Ergenekon, its criminal network, and its resulting wave of arrests. Over the course of the documents, democracy is mentioned less and less, with the 2011-2012 report saying that events such as Ergenekon that subvert democracy provide an opportunity for democracy to be enhanced. By 2012-2013, the primary concern for the report is a lack of consultation in creating a new constitution as well as the implementation of a positive agenda, or a revival of reforms. In 2013-2014, the Commission reiterates the importance of a positive agenda. As such, I interpret these

evaluations of democracy as a weakening in the appeal of European norms and values, especially seen in the lack of consultation with the EU and the lack of movement on these reforms. That being said, this evaluation was more difficult due to the subjective nature of democracy and the lack of clarify on what democratic indicators are being measured.

As for human rights and protection of minorities, the reports discussed a stagnation and then a significant decline in 2013. In 2006, there was some progress made in the decline of reported cases of torture, but the Commission reiterates that there was no progress made until 2009. In 2009 and 2010, there was some improvement, but ultimately some of the *acquis* legislation, such as the ECtHR and OPCAT, still needed to be investigated. There was a rapid decline from late 2012 on, in which serious concerns were raised for human rights after the Gezi Park protests, which led to over 8,000 being injured. The report emphasizes that this needs to be "urgently tackled" (CEC 2013, 41). Stagnation of progress coupled with subsequent rapid decline is a clear violation of the norms and values—such as freedom of assembly—granted by European countries.

Freedom of expression has been of concern since 2006, and the report says much of the same thing each year. There were cases of self-censorship in 2006, especially with Article 301 of the Turkish Criminal Code, which made it illegal to insult Turkey. Prosecutions continued for journalists, academics, and activists, and while there were some amendments to Article 301 in 2008 and 2009, they were not *acquis* with the ECtHR and there were continuous issues of detained journalists. By 2010, there was a significant decline in freedom of expression due to potential prosecution, which was happening at increasing rates. As media conglomerates were run by members of the Turkish government, there were even more restrictions on what could be published. Freedom of

expression, as a whole, has become increasingly threatened and the lack of *acquis* with the ECtHR, as well as the use of Article 301, shows a clear weakening in appeal and influence by the EU.

Rights for religious minorities have been relatively stagnant but not as problematic as some of the other sections. There has been continuous freedom to worship, and religious minorities engage in dialogue with the government. However, property-related issues were mentioned in nearly all the reports and in 2013, religious minorities were increasingly under threat due to the presence of religious extremists. Overall, there was not necessarily a process of de-Europeanization in the rights of religious minorities because it was unchanging, but Turkey did not implement the ECtHR throughout this entire period, which could have otherwise improved the rights of religious minorities.

The Cyprus issue has varied in its progress, which has seen limited movement since even prior to 2006. Beginning negotiations in 2008, Turkey and Cyprus remained in a stalemate until 2011, when tension between the two countries increased. In the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 report, there were concerns about respecting sovereignty and refraining from antagonizing already fragile relations. There were also reports of Turkey not attending EU meetings when Cyprus was chairing them; however, the 2013-2014 EU Commission report notes that negotiations are potentially resuming between the two. While this is not a prime example of de-Europeanization, the lack of participation by Turkey and half-hearted attempts to normalize relations seems to subvert norms of diplomacy and cooperation.

Overall, there seems to be a general sense of de-Europeanization from the period of 2000 to 2013. While there is a slight decline in adherence to EU norms and policies in 2007, there is not enough of a consistent drop in relations to make the conclusion that the suspension of chapters by the EU immediately caused de-Europeanization in Turkey. However, the consistent, steady decline is of note. I offer two explanations for this turn away from Western influence: namely, fundamental issues in the identity of the European Union as well as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's populist and neo-Ottomanist rhetoric.

An Identity Crisis in the European Union

The European Union's decision to stall eight of the thirty-five chapters of accession came as a surprise to the international community, who had assumed the consequences of the Turkey-Cyprus skirmish would be minimal. The disproportionately awarded consequences implored scholars to look further into the reasoning for Turkish accession, as well as the explicit and implicit decision to suspend eight chapters, which effectively froze negotiations. In an attempt to explain my results and why Turkey turned away from the West, I posit that the EU's hedging- seen in the carrot-and-stick approach, a form of conditionality that features reward and punishment- and crisis of identity in its cultural and religious affiliation resulted in an unequal enlargement process in comparison with other acceding states. Thus, the EU is at least partially responsible for Turkey's gradual de-Europeanization.

Turkey's story of EU accession had European opponents from the get-go. Palatable explanations for not allowing Turkey's accession included the size of the country, poor economic performance, human rights issues- as seen in the Kurdish issue, occupation of Northern Cyprus, and a concern about Turkey's legislation fitting with the

EU. Leaders from France, the Netherlands, and Austria were concerned about the implication of allowing such a large, poor country into the folds of an exclusive membership (Richburg 2002). Other European states were either ambivalent or not willing to champion such a daunting cause (Schuster 2017). While other states were advocates for potential members, Turkey had Greece- a notable adversary that would surely block any attempt at accession until relations were normalized (Müftüler-Bac and McIaren 2003). Furthermore, if any country-wide referendum for Turkish accession was to be held in the EU, it would most likely not pass due to the lack of citizen support (Redmond 2007).

However, parallel to Turkey's negotiations that were stalled in 1999 due to human rights concerns, the accession of eleven other Central and Eastern states was pushed forward. As Bechev (2022) says, "Turkey was being leapfrogged by post-communist European countries with a much shorter record of multi-party politics and market economy and, in several cases, lower levels of wealth" (pp. 59). As scholars such as Müftüler-Bac and McIaren and (Hughes 2013) argue, Bulgaria and Romania had a similarly problematic track record of human rights. There is also the argument that if countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey accede, the EU can hold them further accountable for any violations through processes such as suspending certain rights or naming and shaming. This was the case in Spain, where they were allowed to join after Francisco Franco died so as to preserve democracy (Remond 2007).

Objections and concerns regarding accession negotiations were raised even before negotiations began in late 2005. For example, Turkey had to comply with a principle in the Negotiation Framework Document that "the negotiations are an open-ended process,

the outcome of which cannot be guaranteed beforehand…" (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations 2010, 95). This means that even if Turkey completed all the necessary reforms, the EU could still reject Turkey as a candidate. Furthermore, countries such as Austria and Germany were pushing for a 'privileged partnership' as opposed to a real membership (Grigoriadis 2006).

Accession negotiations were opened for Turkey in late 2005 only to be shut down a year later due to concerns over human rights issues and the Cyprus issue, in which Turkey refused to open its ports to Cyprus (Bilefsky 2006). By this point, Turkey had applied to EU membership in 1987 and had been conducting liberalizing reforms for nearly twenty years. Turkey viewed the suspension of negotiations as problematic especially considering the substantial number of reforms passed over the previous five years. Furthermore, they argued that the Copenhagen Criteria did not call for solving the Cyprus issue, a decades-old situation that does not fall under the Copenhagen requirements of *acquis*, economic liberalization, or democratic reform. As Turkey says, the Cyprus issue was "not an obligation in the context of our accession process" and that "at this juncture, the responsibility lies more on the EU than on Turkey" (L.A. Times Archives 2006).

The conditionality principle and carrot-and-stick approaches are frequently adopted by the EU in the cases of accession. Reminiscent of Pavlov's motivation theory, carrots encourage countries to complete a request- in this case, liberalizing reforms. However, sticks utilize punishment, such as shaming, to achieve the same objective (Akçay and Kanat 2018). In the case of an approach going too far, the balance may be too disproportionate, and one side may be disenchanted by the idea of giving more up.

Turkey would be an example of a state that saw a disproportionate balance in what they were giving up versus receiving, and thus took steps to distance themselves from the EU. As a result of this suspension, I believe that reform fatigue began to set in, with a 'retrograde trend' in human rights being documented beginning in 2007, just shortly after this suspension (Hughes 2013, 78). However, the EU still maintained in the years following this period that Turkey's partnership was incredibly valuable to them, as it holds "major strategic importance for the EU's own security and stability" (CEC 2007, 11).

Edel Hughes' book, *Turkey's Accession to the European Union: The politics of exclusion?* argues that while there were some credible issues with Turkey's membership, the ultimate reason for the EU rejecting Turkey comes from concerns about religion; namely, the seventy million Muslims that would have acceded to the EU. Hughes goes on to explain the history of the EU, which is deeply rooted in secular values. Privatization of religion has continued for generations, which has, according to Zucca (2012), allowed for diverse practices to flourish, provided that they are relegated to the home. The EU was founded on *laicité,* a French principle that emphasizes the strict secularism of government and its institutions (Invernizzi-Accetti 2018). Hughes goes on to say, "the exclusion of religious sentiment from the legal and political domain is, especially in the current Western context, seen as a prerequisite for the effective functioning of a modern democracy" (Hughes 2013, 16). Indeed, there is no reference to God within the EU's foundational documents.

There is an argument to be made that the EU simply did not know how to handle an acceding country that did not align with their values of secularism. If secularism is

equated to modernism, states that worship outside of the private sphere would be equated to a sense of backwardness, which goes to a larger question of the potential underlying discrimination in this accession. If this was a Christian country, however, would the same measures be taken? Hughes (2013) argues that "'outsider' religions such as Islam are held to more demanding standards of secularity than 'insider' religions such as mainstream Christianity" (Hughes 2013, 118). Historically, this struggle between who Europe and the EU is in relation to Islam has always been present. However, the way to remedy this tension is divisive. The right posits that Islam is fundamentally in opposition with the tenets of the EU, while the left decentralized Christianity yet still attacks Islam for their practices; both of these perspectives equally disregard that "Islam is integral to European culture, politics, and history. Only through recognition of this connectivity can one understand and improve the current relations of power among Muslims, Jews, and Christians in Europe and in the post colonies" (Özyürek 2005, 511).

The sentiment that Turkey's identity does not align with the EU's vision has been echoed in public discourse. In 2002, former French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing said that Turkey's presence in the EU would be "the end of the European Union" because they have "a different culture, a different approach, a different way of life" (Richburg 2002). German Chancellor Helmut Kohl also maintains that "the European Union is based on Christian principles and cannot accommodate countries that do not share this identity" (Müftüler-Bac 1998, 240). However, this argument is also not as salient due to the presence of Islamic communities that live in the EU (Redmond 2007). The Pope had even gone on to define Europe through the lens of religion. Thus, while certain Christians could not share these definitions publicly, "they also could not verbalize the unspoken

'cultural' requirements that make the integration of Turkey into Europe such a difficult issue" (Hughes 2013, 109).

There seems to be a fundamental tension between the European Union that is the exclusive "Christian Club" and the European Union that accepts democracies regardless of their religious or ethnic makeup. As Hughes (2013) says, "Turkey's path to accession can be viewed as reflecting the tensions inherent in a European public space which is grappling with issues of secularism and religious and legal pluralism, not the mention the perceived 'clash' between Islam and democracy" (Hughes 2013, 172). This would explain the carrot-and-stick approach that imposed unequal, harsh measures on Turkey, which resulted in reform fatigue and even a retrograde trend in human rights. It is hard to know what would have happened if the EU had more gradually exercised the principle of conditionality, but partial responsibility should be placed on the EU for Turkey's subsequent de-Europeanization. The events of 2005 and 2006 show that this clash has not been reconciled and neither has an understanding of European identity. This issue will surely continue to come up in further questions of accession in Turkey and beyond.

Erdoğan's Populist/Neo-Ottoman Rhetoric

Coupled with the EU's crisis of identity was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's populist, neo-Ottoman rhetoric. I argue that Turkey's turn from the West was partially due to Erdoğan's belief in the future dominance of Turkey and his response to declining support for EU accession. Thus, Erdoğan's logical turn was to the Middle East, where he attempted to establish himself as a leader in the region by engaging in financial trade agreements, political alliances, and intervening in other country's domestic issues. This

led to a fundamental reframing of Erdoğan's populist narrative to not only include the 'them' as the government elites and military, but also to include the West.

In the early 2000s, Erdoğan fully supported EU accession. The AKP embraced this policy and called themselves the 'Muslim Democrats'; when they were elected, the West was elated. In 2002, Erdoğan clarified a need for EU accession by saying "We aim for EU accession in order to increase the living standards of our people and to enhance democracy in Turkey" (Müftüler-Baç 2011, 285). He also rebuked those that do not live by this standard, imploring that "countries that fail to embrace 'the universality of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law will be driven into loneliness" (Hughes 2013, 59). As such, apprehension about Erdoğan's religious beliefs were quickly subdued as, Hughes (2013) conveys, "he has proved the most 'progressive' leader in this regard and has hastened the reform process while in office" (p. 79).

While Erdoğan fully supported the reforms that were carried out in the early 2000s, the intention behind this support is questionable. As Keyman and Aydin-Düzgit (2007) offers, "The AKP viewed EU accession and the necessary reform process as a tool to increase its legitimacy and to guarantee its political survival vis-à-vis the secular establishment in Turkey" (pp. 75). Keyman and Aydin-Düzgit (2007) implies that Western backing was helpful to maintain control over the government. However, given that the AKP was popular by a wide margin in the early 2000s, I believe that the AKP's desire to have EU support came partially from an aspiration for funding, which substantially increased with increased reform. In 2004, funding came to €250 million and increased to €500 million in 2006 to "help Turkey prepare to join the EU as quick as possible" (Keyman and Aydin-Düzgit 2007, 74). This funding could then improve the

lives of their constituents, who were crucial to the AKP's continued support. It also benefited Turkey that there was a massive expansion in the middle class and growing prosperity. In the first decade of the AKP, the GDP per capita went from $3600 to $12600 and exports quadrupled from 2000 to 2008 (Bechev 2022, 4 and 57). Furthermore, support by the EU legitimized Erdoğan's policies of lifting the headscarf ban in the name of religious freedom, thereby substantiating Erdoğan's changes. As such, the AKP dominated the elections again in both 2007 and 2011, allowing Erdoğan to maintain power.

As early as 2007, Erdoğan and the AKP began a gradual shift away from the West. As Çağaptay (2017) puts it,

> "During the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the conventional wisdom in Ankara was that Turkey should stop looking to Europe, which had continually snubbed it, and instead focus on the Middle East and other areas in order to regain the regional leadership role it had lost with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire" (pp. 160).

In Erdoğan's 2007 speech after winning reelection, he demonstrated a pivot towards the East by triumphantly saying, "Believe me, Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul, Beirut won as much as Izmir, Damascus won as much as Ankara, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, Jerusalem won as much as Diyarbakir," exalting in the win for all of the Middle East as a step forward for Islamic democracies (Bechev 2022, 75). Much of Erdoğan's neo-Ottomanism is also centered in history, and a common identity creates a sense of comradery for the future.

The perceived narrative among Erdoğan and the AKP was that the EU did not want to have Turkey as a member due to their Islamist government and religious ties. Their crisis of identity was being dealt with in real time, and to Erdoğan, seemed to

equate Islam with a backwards mentality that was devoid of Western norms. For Erdoğan, who capitalized on the duality between Western-based reform and Islam, this was a clear rebuke of his idyllic view of a modern, powerful Turkish hegemon that was allied with the West.

With the appointment of Ahmet Davutoglu to the foreign minister position in 2009 came the "zero problems with neighbors" policy, which suggested that Turkey could become a crucial part of the world order if they improved ties with neighbors that shared a similar background; Islam "was perhaps the key factor to cementing ties of trade diplomacy" (Çağaptay 2017, 101). Under his and Erdoğan's leadership, Turkey turned back to the long neglected Middle East, which Ataturk had equated with a lack of modernity and backward policies just eighty years prior. There was increased outreach and relations with Middle Eastern countries through soft power, which cultivated more economic and cultural ties (Çağaptay 2017). Ideations that Turkey could democratize and dominate the global order without the West manifested itself in the suggestion of the Ankara Criteria, democratic indicators that would replace the EU's Copenhagen Criteria (Bechev 2022).

Erdoğan continued to demonize the government elites and his party opponents, calling them a "coalition of the evil" that was preventing him from helping the masses (Bechev 2022, 119). Populist rhetoric began to shift, however, against the EU, which Erdoğan characterized as a meddler in what is Turkish sovereignty (Çağaptay 2017). In this way, Turkey began capitalizing on the EU's long, drawn out accession process. As time went by, public resentment was building for making Turkey wait for membership when they clearly had an expansive reach that went beyond the EU, thereby contributing

to increased interest in the Middle East (Remond 2007). Erdoğan capitalized on this and heavily relied on the people by giving public speeches and distributing a plebiscite that would give him jurisdiction to pass constitutional amendments, much to the chagrin of competing parties.

Arab Spring was the true test for Erdoğan and the AKP, who believed that the Middle East needed Turkey to be the model of Islamic democracy. Turkey threw their public support behind democratic protestors in Libya, Syria, Tunisia, and Egypt and funded groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamist parties that were not unlike the AKP. A quote from Erdoğan encapsulates his desire to have Middle Eastern states that emulate Turkey's political system: "The Turkish state is in its core a state of freedoms…Why should the Europeans and Americans be the only ones that live with dignity? Aren't Egyptians (…) also entitled to a life of dignity?" (Bechev 2022, 95). Erdoğan wanted states who were "willing to emulate Erdoğan's success in marrying 'formal democracy, free market capitalism and (toned down) conservative Islam'" (Bechev 2022, 95, as cited by Tugal 2016). His subtle insult towards the West was not unnoticed; as Kaliber and Kaliber (2019) interprets, this second period of thick populism following 2007 redefined Turkey as a direct opposer to the West. While the success of Arab Spring is questionable and led Turkey into the Syria quagmire, it was an overt attempt to achieve primacy over the region during a time where the Middle East needed a leader. Erdoğan's plight was largely successful, as he was widely popular among Arab countries, who believed that Turkey played a "constructive role" in Arab Spring (Çağaptay 2017, 161; Tziarras 2018; Kirişci & Sloat 2019).

Erdoğan's sustained attempt to play the role of paternal leader to the Middle East widely departs from his obsequiousness towards the EU prior to 2007. He emphasizes the common past so as to stay united on a future of a "new geopolitical imagination and new possibilities in the global political system" (Bechev 2022, 75). In this narrative was a fundamental push to make Turkey an indelible power "so that it does not meet the fate of the Ottoman Empire or Poland, once-powerful countries which were painfully dismembered by greater powers" (Çağaptay 2017, 11). Thus, Erdoğan's goal is to maintain alliances through a common past to strive towards a common future. Furthermore, Erdoğan's decisive shift away from the EU after they rejected him may come in part by an interest in maintaining relevance. It makes sense, then, that neighbors who have similar historical origins- and the potential to follow in Erdoğan's footsteps- would be the next focus. It would also explain Erdoğan's widespread support for the masses in countries that have not yet democratized; his populist rhetoric, which includes solidarity with the victims suffering, has spread in an attempt to garner support.

Overall, Erdoğan's shift in rhetoric over the period from 2000 to 2013, especially from 2007 on, occurs virtually in tandem with Turkey's overall turn from the West. This complementary trend would make sense, given Erdoğan's role as leader and arbiter of foreign policy. His new Middle Eastern foreign policy has its foundations in populism and neo-Ottomanism, which he will utilize to frame the West as the 'other' while empathizing with the masses in an effort to maintain legitimacy in an otherwise identity-based global order.

CONCLUSION

It takes two: the circumstances of Turkey pivoting away from the West and subsequent process of de-Europeanization can be ascribed to both the EU and Turkey. The EU's uneven negotiations and Turkey's populist, neo-Ottoman characteristics equally determined the outcome of Turkish accession. However, it also takes two to acknowledge the balancing act that both actors play in a world that is sculpted by the past yet looks towards the future. Turkey is a country of middles geographically, culturally, historically, and socially and holds position on a fragile balance beam between the East and the West. In a similar manner, the EU struggles to balance their history as well as the wishes of their current citizens with the future of the global order, which is increasingly diverse and multipolar.

This thesis questions how Turkish sentiment shifted in relation to EU accession prior to and following the suspension of eight of the thirty-five-chapter negotiations in 2006. I found that there was a general trend of de-Europeanization from 2005 onwards, and while I could not confirm that the suspension was the tipping point, I sought to understand why the disillusion with EU membership occurred. I referred to the compounding existence of the crisis of EU identity, which resulted to an uneven application of accession negotiations, as well as Erdoğan's populist and neo-Ottoman rhetoric, which facilitated a pivot to the East in hopes of regaining hegemon status.

From my studies on this thesis comes further research that would be beneficial to pursue. While the West often characterizes itself as a harbinger of liberal democracy, it is worth noting that the East and the West should not be generalized as such due to the inherent diversity of societies. Thus, the discussion throughout this thesis of

Europeanization and de-Europeanization does not extend to discussions of democracy or democratic decline. While scholars have noted considerable democratic decline since 2007, I hesitate to conflate a pivot to the Middle East with democratic erosion. Further research should be conducted to learn more about this relationship.

From an international studies perspective, while conditionality is already widely researched, the process of the carrot-and-stick approach could use further research, especially in the case volatile or semi-authoritarian regimes. It would also be worth looking at these processes in relation to disproportionate power dynamics or the bureaucratic structure of international organizations. Research such as this could provide an opportunity to protect human rights and other freedoms while respecting state sovereignty.

Does 'European' need to be redefined? While the EU can dictate what is not European, they have a difficult time choosing what is. This thesis provides an initial identification of this issue as seen in real time with Turkish accession. Identity crises and uneven negotiations that occur as a result of diverging opinions casts a shadow of doubt over the true legitimacy of an institution as established as the EU is. While diverse perspectives are inevitable, the EU should establish a criterion of membership, even if it does not include a definition of what is explicitly 'European.'

Evaluation of Turkey provides a unique set of circumstances in which the potential of EU accession also exists in tandem with a populist, neo-Ottoman leader. While there is a robust body of literature on populism and international organization conditionality, the relationship between these two have not yet been explored. More specific to Turkey, this thesis provides an interesting lens with which to look at neo-

Ottomanism, which will surely continue to shape foreign policy in the region. It will also

contribute to a historical analysis that marks a significant turning point in Turkish

identity. This new identity subverts Ataturk's secular, pro-Western ideal yet echoes his

populist sentiments through a new, similarly charismatic leader. This begs the question of

whether the next century will also be marked by an Erdoğan-inspired identity.

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