

**Analysis of attitudes of Turkish citizens towards the effect of European Union membership
on the economic, political, and cultural environment**

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Abstract

Previous studies on Turkey's possible accession to the European Union have mostly focused on the level of support for membership as expressed by Turkish citizens. The purpose of this paper is to shed some light on the specific expectations and perceptions of the Turks about the EU membership process, focusing on economic development, democratic progress, economic and political stability, and cultural influence. In both the focus group studies and the final survey, the authors targeted people who have some knowledge about the EU accession process and EU membership, namely, academics and business people.

Introduction

The European Union launched membership talks with Turkey on October 3, 2005, amid controversy. Despite the progress made in the formal path of accession, past and recent polls suggest in no ambiguous terms that sections of European public opinion hold strong reservations about the inclusion of this large country—with a population of 71 million, eight million more than France and only 10 million fewer than Germany—on a number of grounds, ranging from voting weight and cultural compatibility to relative levels of economic development. These reservations were largely reflected in the marathon dispute over the terms of the negotiation framework and are expected to influence the negotiation process, which is projected to take no less than a decade. During this process, should a new EU constitution be accepted, its form may render some of these questions moot. In order gain insight into these issues, this study provides an empirical specification of unofficial Turkish expectations and perceptions about EU membership. The findings are based on a survey. The questionnaire used addressed implications of prospective EU membership on a range of issues spanning from economics to cultural fit. Although the study took place in 2002, it represents a sincere attempt to benchmark and provide a background understanding of the ongoing situation.

This investigation is important for a number of reasons. First, judgments about the pertinent issues are based more on speculation and stereotyping and less on sound knowledge about the Turkish context, political and social dynamics, and capacity. It is argued that an intimate look at the perceptions and expectations of Turkish citizens for EU membership may be useful in limiting speculative assessments about Turkey's ability to reach EU standards on economic and political grounds as envisioned in the accession framework. Second, it is interesting to evaluate the Turkish perceptions in reference to the perceptions of the citizens of other countries prior to their entry.¹ To this end, a two-stage investigation was staged.

The first focus group was instrumental in developing the survey instrument used. Central issues were gathered from the discussion and incorporated into the questionnaire. The questionnaire includes items demanding feedback on the impact of EU accession on democracy, legal infrastructure, political stability, economy, and culture. While the inquiry is expected to shed light on the perceptions of Turks on all of these issues, of particular interest is the perceived impact on the business environment. Since the implications on the economy, legal infrastructure,

and political stability have direct bearings on the Turkish business environment, the survey results allow the evaluation of the perceived changes expected to occur in the business environment in the case of EU accession.

The findings reveal that Turks are generally optimistic about the accession's outcome for economic development, investments, and technological infusions. While respondents expect a fundamental transformation in political institutions, the democratic process, and rule of law, they do not find the EU process to be a politically stabilizing force. The results suggest some differences in perceptions across genders and age groups. While younger respondents and females are more optimistic about the impact of EU membership on democracy, older respondents are cautiously optimistic. Finally, the findings point to Turks' fear of loss of traditional values and potential assimilation.

The study proceeds as follows: the first section puts the work in perspective and provides a relatively detailed account of Turkish-EU relations. The second section analyzes potential implications of the accession process and EU membership on the Turkish political and economic environment. The third section briefly outlines the methodology, and the fourth section summarizes the survey findings. Finally, the fifth section concludes the study.

Background

The designation of Turkey as a candidate state for full membership in the European Union at the Helsinki Summit in 1999 intensified the debate about Turkey's European identity and that country's place in Europe. This debate has focused on European perceptions about Turkey rather than on Turkish perceptions of the EU. Indeed, there is little known about the unofficial posture of Turks regarding their government's relentless pursuit of EU membership and its implications for Turkey. This study intends to fill this void by providing some insights on unofficial Turkish expectations and perceptions regarding EU membership through a survey. The survey addressed the implications of prospective EU membership on a range of issues spanning from economics to culture.

Turkish intuition about the EU is nothing less than the culmination of a very intense interaction deepened by geography and a history spanning hundreds of years. Therefore, it makes sense to place the Turkish-EU relationship within this long historical context. This relationship, although overwhelmingly characterized as adversarial, also includes long cycles of collaboration

and cordial diplomacy in a never-ending geostrategic chess game. The case in point is the inclusion of the Ottoman Empire in the 1856 Concert of Europe as a counterbalance to Russia.²

While the Ottoman-European relationship is often viewed as adversarial, primarily due to seventeenth century wars and a large territorial loss for the Ottomans by the end of that century, the efforts of the Ottomans to institute Westernization projects in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are largely ignored. The historical roots of Turkish modernization and Westernization projects that were rigorously pursued since the formation of the Republic of Turkey have been largely influenced by the legacy of the Ottoman efforts at Westernization.³ The founders of the new republic worked hard to establish that Turkey's Westernization, and more specifically, its path to becoming European in the post-1923 modernization project was a continuation of an incomplete historical process whose failure had brought down the Ottoman Empire.⁴

The leaders of modern Turkey embarked on a rigorous nationbuilding project with strong Western credentials by adopting the Swiss civil code, the Latin alphabet, and a host of other reforms aimed at delinking the new republic from its predominantly oriental-imperial heritage. They were given encouragement in their thinking that Turkey was European (or on its way to becoming European) when Turkey was admitted to several exclusively European and Western organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1948, the Council of Europe in 1949, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952. In other words, there was significant reassurance that Turkey should continue on its stated path of becoming part of the community of Europe. Ironically, the strongly rooted heritage of this doctrine, which put Turkey vehemently onto a path of Westernization, is now criticized by Europeans as "alien to Western liberal democracy." Furthermore, Europeans claim that Turkey engenders domestic political practices in conflict with core European democratic norms.⁵

The quest for external validation of its European credentials and its desire to participate in a community of Europeans eventually led Turkey's leaders to apply for membership to the European Economic Community in 1959.⁶ After the signing of the association agreement (the Ankara Agreement) in 1963, which included a promise of full membership to the European Community at a later date, Walter Hallstein, president of the European Commission, declared that Turkey was part of Europe.⁷ The Ankara Agreement envisioned a three-phase integration process through which both sides would make mutual trade concessions and Turkey would adapt its external tariffs to match those of the EC. The terms of the Ankara Agreement were modified

in 1970 by an additional protocol that diluted the ultimate goal of membership to a customs union by the end of 1995.

The process set forth in the Ankara Agreement could have potentially culminated in full membership by the 1970s, when Greece made its application for full membership, as argued by Ziya Öniş.⁸ However, defensive posture and the reluctance of the Turkish political elite, who thought that acceleration of the integration process would expose Turkish industry to premature competition from Europe, resulted in the eventual self-exclusion of Turkey from the membership process. By late 1970s, the possibility of the early accession of Greece to the European Community, coupled with serious consideration of the inclusion of Spain and Portugal, led to increased concerns in Turkey, and the idea of applying for full membership gained increasing support. Amid growing domestic economic and political upheaval and opposition by the Islamist National Salvation Party, the application process was delayed, to the detriment of Turkish membership ambitions. In hindsight, it is plausible to argue that the Turkish political elite's miscalculation of the potential implications of Greece's full membership played a significant role, and Turkey missed a major opportunity by not applying for full membership at the same time as Greece.

The 1980s represent a significant shift in the EU-Turkish relationship and mark a very different set of dynamics than those of the 1970s, due to a number of factors. First, the military intervention on September 11, 1980, interrupted an already fragile democracy in Turkey, and the Turkish-EU relationship entered an official standstill until the election of a civil government in 1983. Although a gradual democratization process started with the 1983 elections, it was subject to substantial restrictions. The bans on political parties and prominent politicians, oppression of civil and political rights under the newly drafted constitution, and the lack of civilian control over the military undermined Turkey's democratic credentials. During the post-1983 period, the resurrected but fragile Turkish democracy faced two fundamental challenges, in the form of Kurdish separatism and political Islam. On the economic front, Turkey abandoned its import substitution development efforts and opted for an open, outward-oriented export promotion development model by implementing far-reaching reforms with financial and technical assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The economy's response to reforms was positive. The most remarkable change in the Turkish economy was seen in its external sectors. Turkey's manufacturing exports grew 51 percent in 1981 and doubled by 1985 in real terms.⁹

This shift in the Turkish economy also changed Turkish attitudes toward the European Community. With a more open economy and a substantially stronger industrial base, Turkey no longer displayed a defensive and timid attitude toward the EC, which had characterized its approach to integration opportunities in the 1960s and 1970s. In spite of the rising tensions between Turkey and the EU because of Turkey's democratic deficit, their relationship in the post-1983 period improved markedly. Prime Minister Turgut Özal perceived this momentum to be an opportunity and applied for full membership despite discouraging signals from his European counterparts.

During this period, Europe was also going through a significant transformation. On the economic front, the lack of progress in the integration process prompted a comprehensive review of the state of union, which culminated in the Single European Act of 1987. The depth of the integration was pronounced far stronger than in earlier periods, and a massive economic policy coordination effort was undertaken by the members. On the political front, attention shifted from recognition of nominal democracy to an emphasis on the quality of democracy and human rights. Both the political and economic parameters of the EC in 1980s were dramatically different than in the 1970s, when Turkey had had its first encounter with the EC. During the post-1980 period, the EU tended to place much more emphasis on the political factors and shortcomings of Turkish democracy in contrast to earlier periods, when the primary emphasis was always the development gap and the weakness of the Turkish economy.

Another important factor that emerged as a significant influence on the EU-Turkish relationship in the 1980s was Greece's role as an insider of the EC with veto power. A striking example of this role was the blockage of a 1.5 billion euro financial package to support Turkish adjustment.

Öniş argues that the significance of the changes in the EU throughout the 1980s and the potential role of Greece as an insider was not fully comprehended or appreciated by Turkish politicians and public opinion.¹⁰ It appears that the Turkish application for EU membership in 1987 gave little consideration to these new dynamics.

The opinion presented by the European Commission in 1989 in response to the Turkish application was a decisive rejection on the grounds that Turkey met neither political nor economic criteria for membership.¹¹ Instead of considering Turkey for full membership, the

commission verified the eligibility of Turkey and suggested the activation of the Customs Union agreement.

Resurrection of the Customs Union agenda overlapped with significant political developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. According to some observers, the collapse of the Communist bloc and the end of the Cold War structures undermined Turkey's strategic importance and eroded the logic for Turkey's inclusion into the European order. An alternate view is that Turkey now had new geostrategic importance under the newly shaped conditions. At the New Atlantic Initiative (NAI) Congress held in Istanbul in early May 1998, the consensus view by Western diplomats was that with the emergence of Central Eurasia as a conceptual entity—one of the most volatile and energy-rich regions of the world—Turkey's strategic role had become more important than ever before.¹² It is argued that the steadfast embrace of the Central and Eastern European countries' bid for membership ahead of Turkey is living proof of the changing European attitudes towards Turkey.¹³

Although it was seen merely as an interim step toward full membership, the Customs Union agreement that became effective in January 1996 was an important step for Turkey. Despite the arguments that the terms of the Customs Union were not based on sound economic analysis, it served as a powerful external anchor in the implementation of some regulatory and structural reforms.¹⁴

Ironically, in the years following the implementation of the Customs Union, the Turkish-EU relationship evolved strenuously and resulted in the de facto isolation and exclusion of Turkey. As the EU pursued Eastern European enlargement under German influence and sponsorship, the view that the boundaries of the EU should end at Turkey's borders has gained weight within the Union. Although it was implicit in EU public opinion, the tendency to exclude Turkey from the EU as a country outside European Christian culture gained political ground, and this view has even been occasionally voiced by representatives of EU organs.¹⁵ During this period, Turkish public opinion's skepticism about EU membership clearly increased and dramatically weakened the political platforms supporting political and economic reforms in pursuit of EU membership. The perceptions of exclusion and isolation and the sense of frustration with European attitudes towards Turkey reached their climax with the Luxembourg Summit in December 1997. The Luxembourg Summit shaped the future enlargement of the EU and named the countries eligible for membership that would join the European Union in two

stages. Turkey, however, was excluded from the enlargement process at a time when Central and Eastern European countries emerged as official candidates for full membership.

The Luxembourg Summit came very close to permanently damaging the EU-Turkish relationship. The *Economist* concluded that the Luxemburg rebuff was ill-judged and should have been amended as quickly as possible to avoid a historical mistake.¹⁶ With a strong dose of American encouragement, both parties engaged in rounds of intense diplomacy to control the damage. A sign of hope emerged at the EU Summit in Cardiff on June 14, 1998. At the Cardiff Summit, the document entitled “European Strategy for Turkey,” which had been adopted by the European Commission on March 4, 1998, was renamed “Strategy for Preparing Turkey for Membership.”¹⁷ This was largely interpreted as a positive development by the Turkish government.¹⁸

Efforts to repair the relationship gained momentum as social democratic governments came to power in major EU countries. This change in the political structure of the EU has somewhat reduced the influence of the thesis of “cultural and religious differences,” which gained widespread support among European conservatives and Christian Democrats. At the same time, it has opened the way to introducing a concrete schedule for Turkish membership and the possibility of defining Turkey as among the countries of the second enlargement process. A shift in the European political environment, diplomatic efforts, and a striking change in the Greek attitude towards Turkey—encouraged by reciprocal aid in the wake of earthquake damage and Greece’s embarrassment in light of its role in sheltering Abdullah Öcalan¹⁹ after his ouster from Syria—culminated in a new lease of life for Turkey-EU relations at the Helsinki Summit of December 1999. At this critical juncture, the EU offered explicit candidate status to Turkey, which generated considerable optimism on the Turkish front. The immediate effects of the EU announcement of Turkish candidacy—closer relations with the EU and rapprochement with Greece—were very clear. These developments created a favorable environment for the implementation of a major stabilization program with structural components.

Announcement of Turkey’s candidacy represents a very significant turning point not only in the bitter relationship between Turkey and the EU but also in Turkish domestic politics. It placed the Copenhagen criteria²⁰ as an indisputable economic and political anchor before Turkey and clearly conditioned Turkish access to the fulfillment of these criteria. This external anchor has defined the Turkish governments’ domestic agendas since then and provided them with the

leverage to deal with political and bureaucratic resistance to change. The momentum gained in Helsinki transformed into a national program that set the path towards compliance with the Copenhagen criteria, consisting of revolutionary changes in otherwise recalcitrant Turkish politics and equally dramatic reforms in the economic environment. Although Turkey has a long way to go, Turkish performance attained toward fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria has been surprising. A series of reforms adopted by the two successive governments led Turkey to forcefully seek a date for accession negotiations by the end of 2003 at the Copenhagen Summit of 2002. The Turkish demand was rejected by the European Commission on the grounds that Turkey had still not fully met the Copenhagen criteria. However, intense negotiations during the course of the summit meeting culminated in a compromise decision to start accession talks with Turkey “without delay” if the European Council summit in December 2004 could reach a decision that Turkey met all the Copenhagen criteria.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) government in Turkey kept the prospect alive with a remarkable legislative agenda in 2003, which focused on the political criteria. Since the conclusion of the Copenhagen Summit in 2002, four legislative packages have been passed by the parliament, consisting of reforms addressing critical issues ranging from freedom of expression to restricting military control over the controversial National Security Council. The November 5, 2003 EU commission report emphasized the impressive strides Turkey has taken toward achieving compliance with the EU political criteria and praised the adoption of the last two reform packages; however, the report cautioned Turkey about implementation and the practical effects of the reforms.²¹ Turkish efforts to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria gained further momentum in 2004, and the Turkish parliament has passed highly controversial legislation bolstering democracy and human rights. The decision to start accession negotiations in December 2004 culminated with the official launch of the talks on October 3, 2005. As was outlined in the introduction of this essay, the accession process is expected to be long, rigorous, and arduous. While management of this process will be a delicate task that will require much sophistication with an amalgam of technical, political, and diplomatic skills, it is beyond the scope of this study to delve into these issues.

Potential Implications of EU Accession on the Turkish Environment

The Turkish political and economic environment has been evolving at its own pace for almost two decades. In the political sphere, Turkey has been struggling to establish its fragile democracy amid internal and external pressures for further and faster democratization. In the economic sphere, the momentum of the early 1980s was lost by the end of that decade, and imprudent macroeconomic policies implemented by numerous coalition governments did not bring the stable growth Turkey much needed. While macroeconomic instability clouded the vision of the investors, overwhelming inflation, unbearably high interest rates, mounting budget deficits, and spiraling government debt distracted policymakers' attention from strengthening the institutions of the market that Turkey had started to build as early as the 1980s. The need for sweeping structural change was not addressed until a crisis-driven attempt to overhaul the economy in 1999 in the context of a standby agreement with the IMF. This attempt also overlapped with the ratification of Turkey's candidate status for EU accession in December 1999. Although this initial reform effort was interrupted by a devastating financial crisis in February 2001, its main pillars were carried out with further reinforcements to date.

It is argued that the implications of Turkey's EU accession for its political and business environment go far beyond the typical "economic integration" case for a number of reasons. First, Turkey is already integrated into the EU through its trade and investment linkages.²² In other words, typical pre-integration barriers are already to a large extent removed in the EU-Turkey case, as Turkey has had a customs union with the EU since 1995. Second, as briefly summarized above, Turkey has been struggling to reform its political and economic environment for almost two decades, primarily through internal pressure, with the exception of reforms imposed by multilateral organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank. Even in cases where the pressure for reform has come from multilateral organizations, it has proven to be difficult to overcome the domestic resistance to change. The sounding evidence of this is the failure of the 17 stabilization programs on which Turkey embarked over the last two decades. All 17 of these programs were dismantled by the government under intense domestic pressure. A parallel case can be made for the political reform efforts in Turkey. Radical progressive democratization efforts were bogged down by the powerful establishment.

It is also argued that EU accession provides a strong external anchor to reform-minded politicians to pursue their reform agendas simply because their program offers a clear

endgame—EU membership. The impact of having unambiguous targets with an unambiguous endgame has brought significant momentum to Turkish reforms since 2000. When EU member states agreed with the Turkish government on an accession partnership in December 2000, the Turkish government launched a “National Program for the Adoption of the EU *Acquis*” in March 2001. In this context, Turkey achieved significant strides towards compliance with the Copenhagen criteria on political and economic grounds.

The focus group interviews confirm the authors’ projections that EU accession will bring decisive changes to the Turkish political and business environment. The respondents’ perceptions indicate that the impact of possible EU accession for Turkey will be profound for the business climate. Furthermore, the focus group interviewees anticipate unequivocal improvement in the democratic credentials of the country, political stability, significant reforms in the legal system, further embrace of the rule of law, an improvement in the education system, macroeconomic stability, technological progress, economic growth, and higher living standards.

The respondents also indicate that increasing stability, economic growth, and higher living standards coupled with regulatory changes and convergence to EU standards in democratic practice will increase the credibility of the country and encourage business to engage more robustly with Europe. Respondents’ perceptions suggest that accession to the EU will strengthen the market infrastructure, dramatically increase capital inflows to Turkey, and energize economic growth. A common perception among the respondents is the significance of legal reforms in the accession process, which will strengthen the frail legal infrastructure and provide a level playing field for business. A parallel argument suggests that corruption will be tainted by the establishment of a rule of law, which will improve resource allocation significantly.

Respondents indicate that they expect increasing competition and improvements in product and service quality. A clear beneficiary of this process is thought to be the exporting industries. Several respondents argue that EU-driven energy and agricultural policy changes will also have a positive impact on the economy. Another important point that is emphasized is the expected positive impact of accession on tourism and related service sectors. The impact of technological upgrades through foreign direct investments, defensive restructuring of local companies, joint ventures, and other forms of collaborations are emphasized in the discussion. An interesting point is the expected decline in military expenditures. Most respondents argue that

this would further increase the resources available to productive sectors and contribute to a renewed focus on business.

Methodology

The focus of this study is Turkey. As a first step, two separate focus group studies were conducted to identify the major issues to be included in a survey. For the focus groups, people familiar with EU-related issues regarding Turkey's potential membership were selected. The first group consisted of academics that have expertise in the subject matter, and the second group comprised business people who, again, were familiar with the issues. The topics list that guided the discussions is contained in the Appendix.

The focus group study of academics was conducted in July 2002 with a group of faculty and graduate students from the Center for Research and Application on the European Union (ATAUM) at Ankara University. A similar study was conducted in Istanbul in August 2002 with a group of business people familiar with EU-related issues. The discussions were taped and subsequently transcribed.

Analysis of the content of the discussion transcripts enabled the identification of some insights on issues of concern related to business, economic, political, social, and cultural matters. These were distilled into key dimensions that underpinned the design of a web-based research instrument. A sample of these issues is included in the Appendix. The research instrument reflects these preliminary insights. Through the Turkish associates at the Center for Research and Application on the European Union and at Antalya Akdeniz University, as well as business contacts in Turkey, a sizable sample (500+) drawn from the target groups of informed individuals was contacted: these included graduating classes of graduate and undergraduate economics and business students and business executives. The contact was made by authoritative figures connected with these institutions. The key parties agreed to cooperate. They contacted the target audience via email, urging the recipients to explore a hyperlink that would take them to the research instrument on the New York-based website. In this way, the data at the point of location were collected, and an analysis of the attitudes of electors was performed accordingly. The survey response rate was about 20 percent.

Parallel to this, an analysis of the literature was performed in order to obtain a genealogical appreciation of the issue and the key epochs and events that may influence attitudes. It is against this background that the interpretations of the attitude measures are made.

Survey Results

The findings of the survey represent an attempt to measure and record Turkish perceptions of membership to the EU at a specific moment in time. There were 93 responses to the online survey. As was stated previously, the target groups for this survey were primarily academics and business professionals (both in the public and private sectors). Well known standard statistical techniques were employed. Through factor analysis, each category (i.e. democracy, rule of law, political stability, international credibility, economic development, and culture) was reduced to a single factor or dimension to facilitate analysis and discussion. Several two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA, a method of comparison to see whether populations genuinely differ) tests were done using these factors (i.e. dependent variables). Characteristics such as “gender/age,” “income/job/education,” and “job sector/ industry/foreign trade involvement” were set as independent variables. In other words, two-way ANOVA analysis helps in assessing the effects of each factor (for example, age, gender, and so on) and the interaction between those factors on the issue that is being discussed (for example, rule of law, credibility, and so on). The following is a summary of the general characteristics of the respondents.

Respondents were asked to answer questions in six broadly defined categories, including the impact of possible accession to the EU on the development of the democratization process, the embrace of the rule of law, political stability, international credibility, economic development, and culture. Each category included three to eight specific questions exploring various aspects of the particular category.

Clearly, there is a perception that EU accession will have a positive impact upon the business environment. This is especially so insofar as respondents gauge that it will aid democratization, help improve transparency, and ingrain the rule of law.

Responses to statements related to democracy show that a large majority (62-90 percent) of the respondents either agrees or strongly agrees with the fact that EU accession will help improve the democratization process in Turkey. The only exception to this is the statement on

Table 1. General Characteristics of the Respondents

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- 81 percent are in the 25–45 age group
 - 66 percent are male, 33 percent female
 - 68 percent of the respondents' net annual income is between \$8,400 and \$42,000
 - 71 percent of the respondents have a bachelor's or master's degree
 - 72 percent of the respondents are employed in the private sector, 17 percent in the public sector, 6 percent are self-employed, and 3.2 percent are students
 - 84 percent of the respondents are employed in services sectors (banking, education, and other), 16 percent are employed in the manufacturing sectors
 - 62 percent of the respondents are midlevel managers and technical staff, 13 percent have administrative and executive roles
 - While 39 percent of the respondents are employed in firms and institutions with no direct involvement in exports and imports, 61 percent of the respondents are employed in firms with some involvement in international trade
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between the ages of 45 and 54 are less optimistic than the other groups. The differences in perception across age groups can perhaps be attributed to life experiences. It is possible that respondents between the ages of 45 and 54 are more familiar with the history of Turkey-EU relations; due to many setbacks and disappointments they might feel less optimistic about the road ahead. The gender differences in perceptions can partly be attributed to the support expected from the EU process toward the emancipation of women. It is possible that female respondents are associating the democratization process with rights for women. Future qualitative research into these questions might inform the issue further.

In contrast to expectations, the analysis suggests that the perceived optimism about the impact of EU accession on the democratization process declines as the education level of the respondents rises. This might reflect the shared pessimism of highly educated individuals about the effectiveness of a superimposed democratization process as opposed to grassroots movements or merely a widespread cynicism among these groups. The respondents employed in the education and manufacturing sectors, and in particular self-employed groups, have a less favorable perception of the possible democratization impact of EU accession. Interestingly, public sector employees are among the most optimistic about the democratization impact. This may be attributed to the prospects about much needed public sector reforms to be undertaken in the accession process targeting efficiency, higher standards of transparency, and government accountability.²³

Similarly, slightly higher percentages (70-88 percent) indicate that respondents agree or strongly agree that EU accession will help speed up the reforms in the legal system and help improve the rule of law in the country. The responses to the rule of law category exhibit similar patterns to the impact of democratization. While younger, better educated, and female respondents perceive that EU accession will strengthen rule of law, 45-54-year-old male respondents are less optimistic or moderately optimistic about the impact. Therefore, gender, age, and gender/age together (i.e. GENDER*AGE) play a salient role in the perception of the outcome. Results of the two-way ANOVA analysis given in Table 2 support this (that is, the values in the last two columns corresponding to the rows “GENDER,” “AGE,” and “GENDER*AGE” show that these factors are significant). The respondents with administrative responsibilities have a stronger perception that EU accession will enhance establishment of the rule of law.

Responses to statements on political stability are not as positive as the responses discussed above. Although about 80 percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that EU accession will minimize the potential for disruptions in democracy, and 73 percent agree that it will limit the role of the military in the political system, the impact of EU accession on other issues related to political stability is not seen as strong. For example, only 54.4 percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that EU accession will bring overall political stability to Turkey, and only 43 percent agree or strongly agree that EU accession will reduce polarization in

Table 2. Testing the Relationship between the Factor “Rule of Law” and Various Characteristics (Dependent Variable: Rule of Law Factor)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
Corrected Model	15.807 ¹	8	1.976	2.067	0.051	0.196
Intercept	2.332	1	2.332	2.440	0.123	0.035
GENDER	5.467	1	5.467	5.718	0.020	0.078
AGE	9.905	4	2.476	2.590	0.044	0.132
GENDER*AGE	8.853	3	2.951	3.087	0.033	0.120
Error	65.009	68	0.956			
Total	80.929	77				
Corrected Total	80.815	76				

¹R² = 0.196 (adjusted R² = 0.101).

Turkish politics and strengthen the center-right and center-left parties. This may reflect the inherent tension about the overall direction of the country.

While a considerable percentage of the population perceives Westernization and modernization as a threat to traditional values in a predominantly Muslim society, at least an equally large portion of society identifies these forces with economic and social progress. The EU accession process and possible membership will lend overwhelming support to the latter and will tip the balance in no ambiguous terms. This projected shift in social and economic dynamics is not expected to come without political ramifications. Emergence of a reactionary rather than a conciliatory political dynamic—regardless of the political anchor imposed by the EU accession process—is not a far-fetched possibility. The respondents' perceptions may just reflect possibilities of such internal confrontations in domestic politics. However, it should be emphasized that this process is not necessarily perceived to be politically destabilizing, as responses to a related question suggest.

While the younger and more educated respondents are more optimistic about the positive institutional impact of EU accession on the political system, they are less sanguine about its impact on ideological convergence or the depolarization of Turkish politics. As is observed in other categories, older respondents do not share the optimistic perceptions of the younger respondents that EU accession will improve political stability in Turkey. Additionally, executives, midlevel managers, and administrators have a more optimistic perception of the impact of EU accession on the political stability than other professional categories.

The low percentage of positive perceptions regarding the impact of EU accession on political stability is in line with the low percentage seen for the cultivation of a culture of tolerance, which is discussed above. On the other hand, a majority of the respondents does not see EU accession as a potential factor that will increase political instability in Turkey. (Only 39 percent of the respondents agree that it will increase political instability.) It is interesting to observe that even though EU accession is not viewed as a factor that will improve political stability, it is not viewed as a source of instability either.

With respect to the credibility issue, a majority agrees or strongly agrees that EU accession will improve Turkey's credibility both in the region and in the world (75-86 percent). However, there is one discrepancy: 82.6 percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that EU accession will enhance Turkey's credibility because of improved political and economic

Table 3. Testing the Relationship between the Factor “Credibility” and Various Characteristics (Dependent Variable: Credibility Factor)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
Corrected Model	15.580 ¹	7	2.226	2.411	0.028	0.192
Intercept	6.254	1	6.254	6.774	0.011	0.087
GENDER	0.832	1	0.832	0.901	0.346	0.013
AGE	12.270	3	4.090	4.431	0.007	0.158
GENDER*AGE	3.703	3	1.234	1.337	0.269	0.053
Error	65.544	71	0.923			
Total	81.237	79				
Corrected Total	81.124	78				

¹R² = 0.192 (adjusted R² = 0.112).

stability, even though, as is discussed above, a majority does not see EU accession as a source of political stability. A closer look at this paradox suggests that the perceived optimism about the impact of EU accession on the credibility factor is relatively lower among the middle-aged to older age (35-54) respondents. Table 3 indicates that age is a significant factor in the perception of credibility that Turkey would gain in the case of accession to EU. Also, self-employed people with a higher educational background are less optimistic about the impact of EU accession on the credibility factor. As observed before, the respondents from banking and other services were markedly optimistic about the impact. This might be related to the interpretation of the term “credibility.” While bankers may associate credibility with widely recognized indicators such as *Euromoney* or *Institutional Investor* country rankings or metrics such as sovereign spread, other professional groups may perceive credibility as international prestige or influence. It is widely expected that Turkey’s standing in terms of credibility measured by these metrics will increase as long as Turkey remains on course toward final accession. On the other hand, Turkey’s international economic and political influence, as well as prestige within and outside of the EU, is a relatively uncertain prospect. The mixed results observed may be attributed to this dichotomy.²⁴

With respect to economic issues, a majority thinks that EU accession will help Turkey achieve macroeconomic stability and growth (about 82 percent). It is interesting that an overwhelming majority (94.6 percent) agrees or strongly agrees that EU accession will cause large-scale corporate restructuring in response to EU competition. Although a majority agrees or

strongly agrees that the impact of EU accession on Turkish firms will vary depending on the size of the companies, there is almost an even split on whether small and midsize firms will experience a negative impact in the short to medium term. Expectations of a positive impact on the large firms, however, are supported by only 62 percent of the respondents. A similar result is also observed with respect to the agricultural sector; about 62 percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that EU accession might have a negative effect on the agricultural sector, at least in the short term, due to EU standards that member countries have to meet. With respect to the rate and intensity of technology acquisition, the responses are overwhelmingly positive; that is, a majority (81.5 percent) either agrees or strongly agrees that EU accession will help in this regard.

As in other categories, younger respondents are more optimistic about the impact of EU accession on economic growth than the other categories of respondents.

Somewhat surprisingly, regarding the economic sentiment factors, the older respondents are more optimistic towards EU accession. Further analysis into the economic growth factor indicates that self-employed respondents and respondents working in the education industry are less optimistic because they believe that EU accession will not contribute to economic growth. In contrast, respondents in midlevel administrative jobs are more optimistic in this regard. With respect to the economic sentiment, the more educated respondents believe that EU accession will bring a positive thrust to the Turkish economy. Table 4 supports this, indicating that the

Table 4. Testing the Relationship between the Factor “Economic Sentiment” and Various Characteristics (Dependent Variable: Economic Sentiment Factor)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
Corrected Model	41.671 ¹	33	1.263	1.477	0.111	0.520
Intercept	0.155	1	0.155	0.182	0.672	0.004
INCOME	5.144	5	1.029	1.204	0.323	0.118
EDUCATION	16.680	4	4.170	4.879	0.002	0.302
JOB LEVEL	6.824	4	1.706	1.996	0.111	0.151
INCOME*EDUCATION	5.205	5	1.041	1.218	0.316	0.119
INCOME*JOB LEVEL	3.826	4	0.957	1.119	0.359	0.090
EDUCATION*JOB LEVEL	3.548	5	0.710	0.830	0.535	0.084
INCOME*EDUCATION*JOB LEVEL	1.011	2	0.505	0.591	0.558	0.026
Error	38.460	45	0.855			
Total	80.916	79				
Corrected Total	80.132	78				

¹R² = 0.520 (adjusted R² = 0.168).

Table 5. Testing the Relationship between the Factor “Economic Growth” and Various Characteristics (Dependent Variable: Economic Growth Factor)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
Corrected Model	26.609 ¹	24	1.109	1.164	0.321	0.373
Intercept	0.126	1	0.126	0.132	0.718	0.003
JOB SEC	8.452	2	4.226	4.435	0.017	0.159
INDUSTRY	1.508	3	0.503	0.528	0.666	0.033
FT	0.560	4	0.140	0.147	0.963	0.012
JOB SEC*INDUSTRY	0.755	1	0.755	0.793	0.378	0.017
JOB SEC*FT	6.699	3	2.233	2.344	0.085	0.130
INDUSTRY*FT	3.767	7	0.538	0.565	0.781	0.078
JOB SEC*INDUSTRY*FT	0.000	0				0.000
Error	44.782	47	0.953			
Total	71.401	72				
Corrected Total	71.391	71				

¹R² = 0.373 (adjusted R² = 0.052).

education factor is significant. As seen before, the respondents with more international trade involvement are more optimistic towards the economic implications of EU accession. Results in Table 5, corresponding to factors of job security (JOBSEC) and job security together with foreign trade (FT) (i.e. the row for “JOBSEC*FT”), indicate that in the case of Turkey’s accession to the EU, job security and job security together with foreign trade will have a significant impact on economic growth.

In a 2005 interview, the then French president Jacques Chirac demanded that Turkey go through a cultural transformation to become an EU member. While the fabric of this comment is not entirely clear, it is an indication of the projected cultural implications of the EU accession process on Turks and Turkish culture. While Chirac might have alluded to a shift in mindset, cultural ramifications of Turkish integration are by no means insignificant. Culture here refers to the sum of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought, together with the predominant attitudes and behavior that characterize the functioning of a group—in this case, Turks. Responses received on the culture-bound questions are mere reflections of the magnitude and complexity of the issue and suggest serious concerns on the Turkish end. For example, only about 58 percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that Turkish culture will not be negatively affected due to EU

membership. “Negative” in this context implies cultural intrusion or domination of EU values over traditional Turkish values. More specifically, it implies some form of assimilation and loss of distinct cultural identity. While this might be comforting for Europeans, some Turks are deeply concerned about it. Interestingly, Turks are optimistic about European attitudes towards Turkish culture. Two-thirds of the respondents view acceptance of Turkish cultural differences by the EU to be likely. Fusion of Turkish cultural mores with European values is expected. Further in-depth analysis revealed that the “45 to 54” age group had the most pessimistic view with respect to cultural impact, as they believe that Turkish culture will be negatively affected by the consequences of EU membership. Executives, midlevel managers, and technical staff, as well as those with more than a 75 percent involvement rate in foreign trade, were less concerned about the cultural intrusion threat; they believed that the EU accession would not dilute Turkish culture.

Conclusion

The survey employed indicates that the respondents generally confirm the belief that EU membership will transform the Turkish economic, political, legal, and sociocultural structures. However, respondents see this as a gradual process that is likely to take place over a long timeframe. Generally, respondents are optimistic about the impact of the process on economic development and expect that EU membership will improve economic activity and living standards through investments and technological infusions. While respondents expect fundamental changes in political institutions and an improvement in democracy and rule of law, they do not find the EU process to be a politically stabilizing force. Respondents are in agreement on the impact of the EU process in further instilling the rule of law and in improving the legal infrastructure. The results of the survey suggest some differences in perceptions across genders and age groups. While younger respondents and females are more optimistic about the impact of EU membership on democracy, older respondents are cautiously optimistic. Finally, the respondents are somewhat concerned with the cultural implications of EU membership. There is a fear of loss of traditional values and potential assimilation.

Turkey’s EU membership will continue to be a challenging agenda item both in EU member countries and in Turkey. The merits of Turkey’s membership will also be debated both in Turkey and in the EU. Recent studies evaluating the inclusive stance set convincing arguments

yet to be heard and digested by EU politicians, public opinion leaders, and the general public.²⁵ European concerns about Turkish membership will remain based on Turkey's capacity to develop high standards in the practice of democracy, establish the rule of law in economic and social life, and foster sustained economic development that will afford Turkey the ability to close the vast income gap with the EU. Europeans are also concerned about political instability in Turkey and its neighborhood and fear that the EU will be drawn into inherent regional conflicts around the eastern and southeastern borders of Turkey. Given the polar views over the accretion, understanding the public perceptions and concerns is paramount for successful management of the process.

Notes

1. EU public support for enlargement was strong at 60 percent or more, according to a Gallup poll. Even in enlargement-skeptic countries such as Finland, Sweden, and Britain, the pros outweighed the antis by two to one. Again, in contrast to the Turkish case, it was the candidate governments that had to persuade their voters. In Malta and the three Baltic candidates, April 2002 figures showed the pros at 50 percent or less. That is still well ahead of the antis.
2. L.M. McLaren, "Turkey's Eventual Membership of the EU: Turkish Elite Perspectives on the Issue," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.38, No.1 (2000), p.117.
3. S. Sözen and I. Shaw, "Turkey and the European Union: Modernizing a Traditional State?" *Social Policy and Administration*, Vol.37, No.2 (2003), pp.108-20.
4. See McLaren, "Turkey's Eventual Membership of the EU"; and J. Redmond, *The Next Mediterranean Enlargement of European Community: Turkey, Cyprus and Malta?* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1993).
5. F. Schimmelfennig, E. Stefan and K. Heiko, "Costs, Commitment and Compliance: The Impact of EU Democratic Conditionality on Latvia, Slovakia and Turkey," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.41, No.3 (2003), p.495.
6. Some ardent commentators on Turkey suggest that this move was primarily motivated by a desire to match the Greek application at the time and was not an integral part of a long-haul strategic political and economic vision.

7. See McLaren, "Turkey's Eventual Membership of the EU"; and Redmond, *The Next Mediterranean Enlargement of European Community*.
8. Ziya Öniş, "An Awkward Partnership: Turkey's Relations with EU in Comparative Historical Perspective," unpublished manuscript.
9. H.S. Esfahani, "Fatal Attraction: Turkey's Troubled Relationship with the European Union," *Quarterly Review of Economics & Finance*, Vol.43, No.5 (2003), p.807.
10. Öniş , "An Awkward Partnership."
11. M. Muftuler-Bac, "The Never-Ending Story: Turkey and the European Union," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.34, No.4 (1998), p.240.
12. Turkish Daily News, May 26, 1998.
13. Muftuler-Bac, "The Never-Ending Story."
14. See M. Eder, "Becoming Western: Turkey and the EU," in J. Grugel and W. Hunt (eds.), *Regionalism Across the North-South Divide: State Strategies and Globalization* (London: Routledge, 1999); and Öniş, "An Awkward Partnership."
15. F. Sen, "Turkey and the European Union: Modernizing a Traditional State?" *Turkish Daily News*, December 22 1998.
16. "Unsafe at Many Speeds?" *Economist*, Vol.345, No.8048 (1997), p.73.
17. Sen, "Turkey and the European Union."
18. The interpretation by Foreign Minister İsmail Cem is revealing. His interpretation was that Turkey was considered a candidate among the 12 countries with the UK formula presented in Cardiff. See Sen, "Turkey and the European Union."
19. Abdullah Öcalan was the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) until he was captured in Kenya in February 1999. Portrayed as a Marxist-Leninist organization by its leadership, the PKK has launched an armed struggle for an independent Kurdish state in the southeast of the country since 1984.
20. The Copenhagen criteria specifies fulfillment of three conditions: first, stable institutions to guarantee democracy, rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities (political criterion); second, a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU's internal market (economic criterion); and lastly, the ability to take on all the obligations of membership, i.e. the entire body of EU

law and policy known as the *acquis communautaire*, and adherence to the aims of political, economic, and monetary union (acquis criterion).

21. EU Commission Press Room, November 5, 2003.
22. Turkey's success in coping with a customs union that lifted the last restrictions on industrial and processed agricultural products with the EU in 1996 shows how the country has been able to rise to the European challenge. Turkey has even narrowed its trade deficit with Europe, with exports covering four-fifths of imports, compared with two-thirds in 2002.
23. Ironically, these are issues that are often at the center of criticism directed to the overly bureaucratic EU and its current members.
24. A case in point is the Cyprus conflict. There are scores of politicians and public opinion leaders arguing that the EU prospect limits Turkey's diplomatic options and forces it to submit to an EU-dictated solution.
25. Two such recent studies are notable. See: K. Barysch, S. Everts and H. Grabbe, "Why Europe Should Embrace Turkey?" Center for European Reform (CER), London, 2005; and K. Hughes, "Turkey and the European Union: Just Another Enlargement?" Friends of Europe, Working Paper, June 2004.

Appendix A. Focus Group Discussion Topics

Impact on the Political Sphere

- Democratization and strengthening of civil society organizations
- Resolution of representation problems (e.g. ethnic groups)
- Debate on the role of the military and possibly emergence of a redefined role
- Associations with EU organizations
- Direct representation in EU governance bodies
- Foreign policy/subordination to EU-level policies
 - Dealing with and resolving foreign issues (e.g. would have to follow the EU decisions—advantages vs. disadvantages)
- Turkey's role in its region as an EU member
 - Increasing power of radical right-wing parties within EU countries
 - Future structure of EU is still not certain

Business and Economic Sphere

Macro

- Macroeconomic stability enforced by EU-level fiscal and monetary rules
- Development support from EU
- Foreign direct investment
- Economy-wide productivity improvements
 - Turkey, as a member of the EU, will help the EU expand its economic market beyond Europe (e.g. ex-Soviet Turkic Republics, Middle East)

Micro

- Corporate restructuring/strategic response
- Impact on large firms (short-term vs. long-term)
- Impact on medium and small firms (short-term vs. long-term)
- Wages and employment
- Technological upgrade

Legal Structure

Reform in the dysfunctional and corrupt legal system

Deepening of rule of law

Assertion of property rights, effective resolution of economic and civil conflicts through courts, further development and enforcement of contract law

Further development of regulatory law

More disciplined society (i.e. rules of law will dominate politics, economy, etc.)

Social Sphere

Overall increase in living standards

Reduced/increased ethnic tension

Resolution or sharpening of tension between pro-Western and Islamic-oriented political and social groups will have mirror affect on the political sphere

Income distribution

Corruption

Articulation, increased awareness, and assertion of citizenship rights (civil rights)

Lack of desire of the society as a whole to learn more about the EU

What it means to be a member of EU

Cultural Sphere

Increased interaction with EU countries through intensified political, educational, and economic linkages

Revisions and innovations in the education system—a more positive exposure to the EU

Positive feedback from similar efforts in the EU

Testing historically claimed “tolerance”

The impact of EU’s capability to embrace Turkey

European identity as an upper-level (umbrella type) identity

Cross-cultural influence between the EU and Turkey

How receptive would the EU be toward Turkish culture?