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THE ONGOING STAGNATION IN EU-TURKEY RELATIONS

Abstract:

Since its inception in 1923, Turkey's foreign policy has been characterised by a number of divergent orientations. Western orientation however, especially following the Second World War, has been a primary foreign policy priority for Turkey. Particularly, European Union (then EEC) membership has been at the very core of this priority. Despite no major change in this attitude over the years, some concerns have been raised that Turkey has begun to change its foreign policy in the last decade. Turkey has been charged with "Axis Shift", which means that it has shifted its foreign policy towards the East from the West.

However, this might not be the case in the context of EU-Turkey relations. Both parts have strong political and economic ties with each other. Turkey has become a candidate country for EU membership at the Helsinki European Council in 1999. Throughout the early 2000s, many large-scale democratic reforms were launched to meet the requirements of the EU membership and the accession negotiations started in 2005. Nonetheless, today it has to be admitted that the pace of the accession talks has been slower than even expected. As of October 2014, just 14 (over 35) negotiation chapters have been opened so far in the accession process and only one of them was closed provisionally.

After making a brief evaluation of the current status of the negotiations, this study will try to examine the reasons behind the loss of motivation of both sides towards the Turkey's EU bid. The major changes on the parties' attitude, legal obstacles to Turkey's accession and some expectations for the future of the relations will also be discussed.

Keywords:

Turkey, European Union, EU membership, negotiations

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