

Turkey, the EU, and Freedom in the World: An Examination of EU Accession through the Lens of Data on Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Sarah Repucci*

The debate over Turkey's preparedness for EU entry thus benefits from further assessment of its performance using available analytical tools. One such tool is Freedom House's annual Freedom in the World (FIW) survey. The evidence here indicates that Turkey is in a position different from all other candidates and that it could benefit from more active engagement than the EU is now offering. Turkey is a valuable ally to Europe and the West as a whole, and the EU should encourage positive trends in any way it can.

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INSIGHT
TURKEY

Introduction

Turkey's candidacy for the European Union is perhaps the most controversial and therefore well-analyzed of any in the history of the organization. The themes of the debate are familiar: human rights abuses, overly dominant military, and the role of Islam on the one hand, versus strategic partner, valid applicant, and the benefits of embracing a Muslim democracy on the other. The interplay among these factors will determine Turkey's progress toward membership over the next few years.

However, in theory the EU determines membership eligibility based on a set of objective criteria that do not take diplomatic concerns into account. Because Turkey has already been accepted as a part of Europe (as opposed to Morocco, whose application has been rejected on geographic grounds), it should be possible to evaluate its performance in comparison to these criteria and to the status of other EU candidates, past and present, at key stages in the accession process. Using other candidate countries as a frame of reference, we can assess whether Turkey's application is progressing on schedule, or whether it is moving along more slowly than one would expect.

This is a very sensitive issue, given charges of EU bias against Turkey as a predominantly Muslim state. If Turkey has in fact fulfilled all membership criteria, the notion that its religion is having a negative impact on its progress in the EU accession process

(*) Sarah Repucci is a researcher at Freedom House. She is the managing editor of Freedom House's *Countries at the Crossroads* survey and an analyst on Turkey.

would be more credible. However, if Turkey has not yet reached the same standard as other candidates in the core areas that determine European standards, the bias charge would be less compelling.

The debate over Turkey's preparedness for EU entry thus benefits from further assessment of its performance using available analytical tools. One such tool is Freedom House's annual *Freedom in the World* (FIW) survey. For more than 30 years, Freedom in the World has gathered data on political rights and civil liberties on countries worldwide. Although these data are not geared specifically for the EU, the similarities with EU criteria make the data a useful tool for comparisons across countries and across time. Moreover, these data can be used to determine thresholds for countries moving through the stages of the EU accession process.

Using Freedom in the World data, this article tracks the performance of candidates for EU membership as they progressed in the accession process, and compares the trends with data on Turkey. The evaluation suggests that while Turkey's progress is not out of line when compared with the experience of other candidates, a prompt start for negotiations would be of great benefit to both Turkey and the EU.

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Freedom House's Freedom in the World Survey

Freedom House is the oldest nonprofit nongovernmental organization in the United States dedicated to promoting and defending democracy and freedom worldwide. Since the mid-1950s, Freedom House has performed year-end reviews of freedom, which developed into the current annual *Freedom in the World* (FIW) survey. Today, FIW is an institutional effort by Freedom House to monitor the progress and decline of political rights and civil liberties in 192 countries and 18 related and disputed territories. Produced annually, FIW enjoys wide credibility in both the U.S. and international policy communities.

The FIW survey examines the state of freedom as experienced by individuals, evaluating a broad range of liberties in their political, civic, educational, cultural, ethnic, economic, and religious dimensions. Countries are evaluated based on a checklist of questions on political rights and civil liberties that are derived in large measure from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The categories are electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and functioning of government for political rights, and freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights for civil liberties. FIW considers the interplay of a variety of actors, both governmental and nongovernmental.

Freedom House uses a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 represents the *highest levels of freedom* and 7 represents the *most repressive practices*. Countries receive two separate

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scores, one for political rights and a second for civil liberties (in this article, these appear in the form x,y where x is the political rights score and y is the civil liberties score). Such scores have been assigned since the early 1970s, thus providing Freedom House with a wealth of global data. In a more general evaluation, the scores are used to determine a freedom category—free, partly free, or not free—which represents a broad assessment of the country’s level of liberty.

According to the FIW methodology, freedoms can be affected by state actions and also by non-state actors, including terrorist and other armed groups. Thus, the

survey examines the strength and vibrancy of civil society, as well as any efforts of states to restrict the civic sector. It factors in the courage and independence of media, as well as state efforts at censorship. It takes into account actions by national governments, as well as the effectiveness and strength of an independent judiciary or civic groups.

The 2004 survey (evaluating performance in 2003) designated 88 countries as free, 55 countries as partly free, and 49 countries as not free.

FIW in no way claims to have direct relevance to the European Union accession process. The EU’s “Copenhagen criteria” for membership include some areas similar to those covered in FIW, such as democratic institutions and rule of law, but are also much broader, extending to economics, legislation, and, implicitly, security. Even for those factors that are nominally the same, the methods used for evaluating them are different—FIW uses a transparent methodology with fewer than 30 questions, whereas the EU’s methods are much more involved. Therefore, a positive FIW score does not in and of itself mean that a country is ready for EU membership. On the other hand, given the EU’s concern with the topics covered in Freedom the World, it is logical to hypothesize that a country nearing accession would tend to receive stronger FIW scores. And given the substantial overlap between the Copenhagen criteria and the FIW methodology, it is certainly informative to think about FIW scores in the context of applications to the EU.

When considering FIW data, it is important to keep in mind that the survey is published in the year following the time period being evaluated. Therefore, the publication date is the year after the year of the data. In this article, the years mentioned are those covered by FIW, not the year of publication.

The Relationship between FIW Scores and EU Accession

Although FIW cannot be used to definitively predict whether a country is prepared for EU membership, there is nevertheless some value in considering the FIW scores of countries at the progressive stages of the accession process. To this end, Table 1 provides an overview of the 17 countries that have been EU candidates and/or members since Freedom House began recording political rights and civil liberties scores in 1973.

Table 1. FIW Scores at Key Landmarks in the EC/EU Accession Process

		formal application	negotiations begin	signature of accession treaty	formal accession
Southern Expansion					
Greece	date	Jun-75	Jul-76	May-79	Jan-81
	score	2,2	2,2	2,2	1,2
Portugal	date	Mar-77	Jun-78	Jun-85	Jan-86
	score	2,2	2,2	1,2	1,2
Spain	date	Jul-77	Feb-79	Jun-85	Jan-86
	score	2,3	2,2	1,2	1,2
1995 Expansion					
Austria	date	Jul-89	Feb-93	Jun-94	Jan-95
	score	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1
Finland	date	Mar-92	Feb-93	Jun-94	Jan-95
	score	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1
Sweden	date	Jul-91	Feb-93	Jun-94	Jan-95
	score	1,1	1,1	1,1	1,1
Eastern Expansion					
Cyprus	date	Jul-90	Mar-98	Apr-03	May-04 (Greek only)
	score	1,1	1,1	1,1	*
Greek	date				
	score	2,2	4,2	2,2	*
Turkish	date				
	score	2,2	4,2	2,2	*
Czech Republic	date	Jan-96	Mar-98	Apr-03	May-04
	score	1,2	1,2	1,2	*
Estonia	date	Nov-95	Mar-98	Apr-03	May-04
	score	2,2	1,2	1,2	*
Hungary	date	Mar-94	Mar-98	Apr-03	May-04
	score	1,2	1,2	1,2	*
Latvia	date	Oct-95	Jan-00	Apr-03	May-04
	score	2,2	1,2	1,2	*
Lithuania	date	Dec-95	Jan-00	Apr-03	May-04
	score	1,2	1,2	1,2	*
Malta	date	Jul-90	Jan-00	Apr-03	May-04
	score	1,1	1,1	1,1	*
Poland	date	Apr-94	Mar-98	Apr-03	May-04
	score	2,2	1,2	1,2	*
Slovakia	date	Jun-95	Jan-00	Apr-03	May-04
	score	2,3	1,2	1,2	*
Slovenia	date	Jun-96	Mar-98	Apr-03	May-04
	score	1,2	1,2	1,1	*
Current Candidates					
Bulgaria	date	Dec-95	Jan-00		
	score	2,2	2,3		
Croatia	date	Feb-03	Jun-04		
	score	2,2	*		
Romania	date	Jun-95	Jan-00		
	score	4,3	2,2		
Turkey	date	Apr-87			
	score	2,4			

Note: Countries that joined the EC before 1975 have not been included in this chart because Freedom House only began compiling data in 1973.

(*) Scores not yet recorded for 2004.

The expansion of the EU beyond the original 6 member states can be classified into four waves. The first wave included Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, which all joined in 1973. The second, southern expansion was comprised of Greece, Portugal, and Spain in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Third, Austria, Finland, and Sweden joined in 1995. Finally, the eastern expansion of May 2004 included Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Malta, and Slovenia.

The first group joined just as Freedom House began compiling scores; while this means that there is insufficient data available on these countries, it is nevertheless unlikely that their scores would have changed during the accession process given that they were well-established democracies. Similarly, the third expansion brought in three countries with solid democratic histories: all three have received the top score (1,1) for more than 15 years, far longer than they have been EU members. Thus, FIW scores have little to say about these expansions. The other two waves are more interesting to consider.

Southern Expansion

Greece, Portugal, and Spain all emerged from dictatorships in the 1970s. In Greece, the military junta collapsed in 1974, and elections soon followed. Portugal's authoritarian regime also ended in 1974, and a parliamentary democracy was firmly established in 1976. In Spain, General Francisco Franco died in 1975, and free elections were held in 1977. All on the southern fringes of what was then the European Community (EC) during the high tensions of the cold war, the governance of these countries was of great strategic importance to Western Europe and their changes of regime were closely watched. In the second half of the decade, Greece, Portugal, and Spain successively applied to join the EC.

In 1972 and 1973, each of these countries was designated not free by FIW. Spain and Portugal continued to rate partly free for a few years thereafter. However, all three of these countries rated free when they submitted formal applications to the EC, with Greece and Portugal scoring 2,2 and Spain at 2,3. In fact, the year Spain applied was the first year that it rated free, and Greece and Portugal had only rated free for

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one year prior. Moreover, Spain did not begin negotiations before it too scored 2,2, and in all three cases the scores increased to 1,2 before the countries' eventual dates of accession.

The correlation is not perfect. For example, both Spain and Portugal scored 1,2 for four years before the accession treaties were signed, whereas Greece still scored 2,2 at this stage. This likely reflects the differences in the determinative factors of the FIW methodology in contrast to EC membership criteria. At the same time, it supports the hypothesis that certain minimum FIW scores might be more likely among countries that have advanced in the EC/EU accession process.

To complete this line of reasoning, the southern enlargement suggests the following minimum thresholds: that a country should be rated free before it begins negotiations (and, more specifically, that it should score at least 2,2), and that it should score 1,2 before accession. With only three countries in the pool, however, no absolute determinations should yet be made.

Eastern Expansion

After the fall of communism across Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s, the fate of the new governments was of primary importance to their western neighbors. It was clear that the EU had to engage these countries as much as possible, but full membership for some of them was still some ways off, and intra-European differences as well as foreign policy were of concern. The EU therefore had to proceed cautiously while simultaneously keeping the prospect of membership open as incentive for institutional reform among these states. For their part, the new governments almost unanimously sought a place in this highly regarded Western club.

In May 2004, eight former communist countries joined the EU. Of these, four (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) had been Soviet satellites as part of the Warsaw pact, three (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) had been part of the Soviet Union itself, and one (Slovenia) had been part of Yugoslavia before its disintegration beginning in 1991. Like the rapid transformations seen in southern Europe in the 1970s, in most cases the FIW scores for central and eastern Europe improved significantly and immediately after shedding their communist systems. Czechoslovakia (as it was at the time) moved from not free to free within one year. The other countries had all been rated partly free in their final years of communism, but their scores also made significant improvements in both political rights and civil liberties from one year to the next. In 1991, all of these countries were rated free.

Some variations did occur in the next few years. However, by the time each of these countries submitted their formal applications they all were rated free in FIW. This implies a certain self-awareness of when an application is appropriate, and supports the idea that more democratic systems lead governments to look to the EU while authoritarian regimes have other priorities. That is, not only does the EU have democratic requirements for membership, but, at least in these cases, only countries that at least approach those requirements have a desire to submit formal applications. Moreover, all of these states were rated 1,2 when the EU began their negotiation processes, and none of these countries dropped below that score thereafter. This places them at the same score as the southern European countries upon their accession, thus reaffirming the conclusion that a score of 1,2 is a

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minimum for entry to the EU, and setting an even stronger score as a precedent for the start of negotiations.

Therefore, the countries that joined the EU in 2004 were as advanced in the state of their political rights and civil liberties as some of the most established democracies that have become EU members. Even though their authoritarian pasts were still relatively recent, their democratic reforms had taken root to the point that they did not reverse, even before the EU began formal negotiations.

The delay in advancing the accession process when some states' scores had already leveled off probably had a number of causes. Stringent EU requirements were certainly one, but undoubtedly not the only: Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia/Czech Republic achieved a score of 1,2 in 1993, and yet their negotiations did not begin until 1998. Political considerations were clearly

a factor, including the effect on relations with Russia that welcoming these states into the EU would have, as well as a desire to bring all of these countries in together even though their progress in reform was not uniform. Caution also most likely played a role: the EU does not want to admit a country that has only temporarily achieved a certain level of performance and may revert, especially if the reversal might occur after the country is a member. These reasons, added to the obvious differences between EU criteria and the FIW methodology, again explain why no FIW score can be taken as a tripwire for progressing to the next accession stage. Nevertheless, the minimum FIW ratings at different stages are strikingly consistent and can therefore be useful to consider.¹

Today's Eastern European Candidates: Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania

Today, four countries have been accepted as EU candidates: Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Turkey. The first three of these have some similarities with the bulk of the 2004 expansion: they were recently communist, the regimes in Bulgaria and Romania ended with the others in 1989, and Croatia, like Slovenia, was part of Yugoslavia. There are key differences, however, that explain their different courses toward EU membership.

Unlike every other former communist country in the 2004 expansion, Bulgaria and Romania received the most repressive FIW rating during their communist regimes: 7,7 not free. Moreover, as opposed to the most recent EU members, Bulgaria and Romania were not rated free immediately after the fall of communism. In 1990, Bulgaria was rated partly free, and achieved free status the following year. Romania continued to be rated not free in 1990, and then for five years was rated partly free. The conditions that these scores represent clearly contributed to the delay in their

EU accession processes. Both countries applied for membership in 1995, the same year as Slovakia and the three Baltic countries, but neither was invited to begin negotiations until 2000. Today, they have tentative admission dates of 2007.

Upon closer examination of the FIW scores, Bulgaria and Romania reveal other differences from the 2004 members as well. Whereas all of the latter had achieved a score of 2,2 or better when their application became official, Romania's score was just 4,3, thus making it the only former communist country to apply while categorized as partly free. Its rating was 2,2 when negotiations began, which is in line with the countries in the southern expansion, although weaker than the eastern expansion. Bulgaria, meanwhile, scored a typical 2,2 when it applied, but was rated just 2,3 when it began negotiations. This is the weakest FIW score of any country to begin EU negotiations. Its FIW scores have steadily improved since then.

The differences in the Bulgarian and Romania scores from those of other former communist states could be caused by a number of factors. It is possible that the EU relaxed its criteria for these two countries because their former co-members of the Warsaw Pact had been admitted. Formally each candidate must fulfill all of the Copenhagen criteria before full membership is possible, but there is some leeway in how they progress along the way. Another possibility is that the EU does not expect a country to achieve as high a standard as is reflected in the stronger FIW scores seen in the eastern and southern expansions, and that it is merely coincidence that all previous countries had received those scores. But regardless, Bulgaria and Romania do fit the more general finding that countries are rated free before they begin negotiations. They also do not contradict the precedent that countries have a score of 1,2 or better when they become members—neither Bulgaria nor Romania has reached that score, and both were turned down for admission in 2004.

Bulgaria also suggests another trend not apparent in the earlier expansions. After Bulgaria began negotiations with the EU at the start of 2000, its FIW score steadily improved over the next four years from 2,3 to 1,2. This supports the notion that through the process of EU accession, countries tend to make forward progress, improving in areas such as institutional performance and human rights practice. Other candidates' scores have not changed in either direction. But Bulgaria began negotiations at a weaker score than all other past candidates, suggesting that perhaps worse performers are more likely to be helped by the negotiation process. Notably, Bulgaria has completed its negotiation process whereas Romania has not, thus reinforcing

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ing the idea that Bulgaria, originally the weaker performer, excelled more than Romania during negotiations.

Croatia's progress has been much more compressed. After it declared independence from Yugoslavia it became embroiled in the ethnic fighting that dogged so much of the region while at the same time being ruled by an authoritarian regime. This only ended at the start of 2000. From that point, however, Croatia has followed a similar track to those of countries like Latvia and Estonia, only more quickly: it moved immediately to a rating of free after being rated partly free in the 1990s, and when it applied for EU membership its FIW score was 2,2. This was only last year. This June, the EU invited Croatia to begin negotiations. There are not yet FIW scores for that time, but it appears that Croatia's scores are more similar to those of the eastern expansion than to those of Bulgaria and Romania.

Thus, the current candidates demonstrate a variation in the correlation between FIW scores and EU accession, but they nevertheless support the finding that countries are rated free in FIW before they begin negotiations.

Turkey as an EU Candidate

All of these findings have interesting implications for Turkey's EU candidacy. Turkey first applied to join what was then the European Economic Community in 1959, but settled for an association agreement due to its economic conditions. It reapplied in 1987, and since then has been on track for membership, albeit very slowly. The EC first advised that Turkey complete its Customs Union before pursuing full membership. After the Customs Union was adopted in January 1996, the now EU expressed concerns about economic instability and human rights in Turkey. In 1997 the EU designated 12 countries as candidates but bypassed Turkey. In 1999, the EU did accept Turkey as an official candidate. But since then it has delayed the start of negotiations. There is some talk of these beginning in December 2004, but it is in no way certain that this will occur.

There is clearly a mix of reasons behind the EU's approach toward Turkey. Turkey epitomizes many of the EU's greatest fears about enlargement more generally: a large, poor population that might flood Western job markets; a substantial minority (the Kurds) whose rights are suppressed by the central government; recurrent human rights violations against other groups, including journalists; and borders with difficult neighbors such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Turkey has taken many positive steps to improve some of its deficiencies in recent years, particularly with respect to Kurdish rights and other civil liberties, but some problems in these areas remain. There are also more specific concerns about what Turkish membership would mean for the functioning of the EU: economically, Turkey may be too volatile for the full integration that membership entails; and politically, its population—second only to Germany among current members—would mean that it would have considerable voting weight in an expanded EU, while its interests might diverge widely from current members. The latter reflects Turkey's pro-American tendencies, which are out of favor with some mem-

bers, but even more controversially, Turkey is predominantly Muslim, whereas the current members are primarily Christian. Some of these concerns are valid reasons for delay and others are irrational and/or unfair. They are not necessarily all held by all people, but in combination they influence the accession process.

However, if the EU is to avoid alienating Turkey and undermining its own image of negotiating in good faith, it can only continue to defer if Turkey is in fact unprepared for EU membership based on the Copenhagen criteria. Regrettably, Turkey is currently in a gray zone, since it has not yet begun negotiations. Since there are no official criteria for when such negotiations should begin, there is no objective way of determining whether the delay is justified. Yet it is still informative to compare its progress thus far to other that of countries that have been through the process. As before, FIW scores can be illustrative.

Most strikingly, Turkey has been rated partly free in FIW consistently since 1980. This contrasts with every other EU member and candidate. More specifically, Turkey's FIW score has fluctuated between 2,4 and 5,5 since it submitted its application in 1987 (see Table 2). The scores have only improved since Turkey and the EU adopted a joint customs union in January 1996, notably just after that date and again after Turkey was officially accepted as a candidate in December 1999. But Turkey has never shown enough progress to bump it up to a rating of free.

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Table 2: Turkey's FIW Scores Beginning One Year before EC Application

Year	Score	
	Political Rights	Civil Liberties
1986	3	4
1987	2	4
1988	2	4
1989	3	3
1990	2	4
1991	2	4
1992	2	4
1993	4	4
1994	5	5
1995	5	5
1996	4	5
1997	4	5
1998	4	5
1999	4	5
2000	4	5
2001	4	5
2002	3	4
2003	3	4

Turkey's FIW scores, based on the experience of previous EU candidates, would appear to support the EU's claims that Turkey is not yet ready for membership. If Turkey has not achieved the levels of political rights and civil liberties required for top scores from FIW, it is unlikely that it has fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria calling for stable democratic institutions, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and protection of minorities. FIW addresses many of these points in its narrative on Turkey. Extensive reform legislation has been passed that has made noticeable improvements in many areas, but it remains to be seen whether they will be thoroughly implemented in order to bring Turkey in line with other European states.

But Turkey is not asking to be let in today. What EU critics find unreasonable is the delay in the start of negotiations, especially combined with more or less audible grumblings that Turkey is not fit for EU membership at all. The most prominent of these of late have come from the French ruling party, whose electoral program states that "Turkey has no business in the European Union." Although this sentiment has not been supported by the rhetoric of President Jacques Chirac, it still indicates that, in contrast to past candidates, the EU is not in complete agreement that offering Turkey candidate status means that it is fully on track for membership.

It is understandable that the EU might be cautious about welcoming Turkey as a member. Setting aside the more self-serving concerns, the EU needs to be careful that it does not incorporate a country that might become politically unstable or whose economic problems might drag down the single market. In addition, its sheer size in terms of population—and the expected trajectory of its population growth—is daunting for many in the current EU. And politically, Turkey is unique among EU candidates. It does not have a long history of stable democracy, nor did it have a rapid emergence after a definitive change of regime. It is undeniably a democracy of sorts, but there are constantly fears that that democracy might deteriorate due to military intervention on the one hand or Islamic fundamentalism on the other. Turkey's years as a partly free state in FIW and its vacillating scores are one of many manifestations of its political distinction from most of Europe.

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The cases of the Czech Republic and Hungary, among others, show that the EU has stalled the membership process in the past with no loss of legitimacy. But the false starts of Romania and Bulgaria after the end of communism are evidence that a slower transition can delay EU accession without putting it off indefinitely. Turkey may be a more extreme case, but it should not be treated as a complete outlier.

Just like the countries of southern, central, and eastern Europe, Turkey is seeking EU membership in part to validate its own democratic credentials. And as in these other cases, the EU should want to encourage Turkey's membership for Europe's own self-interest. Turkey has a skilled labor force, a large market for European goods, and a valuable position as a Muslim de-

mocracy that can be an example for the rest of the Muslim world. But even more importantly, the failure of Turkish democracy could create significant instability on Europe's border, potentially resulting in mass emigration or a breeding ground for Islamic extremism. The EU was founded on the concept of bringing stability to the continent, and it should maintain its tradition of embracing struggling countries and helping to foster stronger policies and institutions.

The fact that all other countries have begun their negotiation processes when they were rated free in FIW could be an indication that Turkey is not yet prepared for this step. But since FIW is not the definitive indicator of EU readiness, and no explicit criteria for the start of negotiations exist, there is no evidence that this is the case. Furthermore, it may be worthwhile to begin negotiations with Turkey regardless, for several reasons.

First, Turkey recently has been dedicated to passing reform legislation to align itself with EU standards, including abolishing the death penalty, curbing the power of the military in political affairs, and increasing some rights for the Kurdish minority. While all of the pieces are not yet in place, Turkey has shown that it is serious about reform and that it has started a process of incremental change that should be encouraged.

Second, Turkey's long record of middle performance suggests that it could benefit from external impetus for improvement. The momentum of rapid change seen in southern and eastern Europe is missing in this case, and Turkey may show great results from the vote of confidence negotiations would signal. Turkey's stronger FIW scores after the customs union was formed and again when it became an official candidate lend support to this idea.

Third, if the EU does not give Turkey greater assurance that its candidacy is genuine, the Turkish people and their government may soon turn away. This may mean that reforms stall, or that Turkey might look to other, less European-friendly neighbors for partnership. This would be a loss for both the EU and Turkey.

Turkey's situation is very difficult to judge, given all of the different factors that must be taken into account. FIW looks at only one piece of these. However, the data strongly suggest that Turkey's position should be considered carefully to determine whether further delay is truly the best option for the EU. They also show that fiery rhetoric glazes over the subtleties that are at play in this unique country.

Conclusion

Turkey's EU membership application is fraught with more difficulties than that of any other country to apply. The EU has been unwilling to rule Turkey out, but at the same time it has not fully committed to accepting Turkey as a member. At this point

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there is no definitive way to determine whether the EU has dealt with Turkey as it would any other country with a similar human rights record but less controversy. It is only possible to evaluate what data exist and estimate where that should place Turkey in the accession process.

By looking at data from Freedom House's Freedom in the World survey of political rights and civil liberties, this article has suggested an alternative way of evaluating Turkey's position with respect to the EU. The evidence here suggests that Turkey is not yet as advanced in democratic reforms as other candidate countries have been, and therefore the EU cannot be blamed for its hesitance thus far. But it also indicates that Turkey is in a position different from all other candidates and that it could benefit from more active engagement than the EU is now offering.

Turkey is a valuable ally to Europe and the West as a whole, and the EU should encourage positive trends in any way it can.

Endnotes:

1. The EU expansion of May 2004 also included Cyprus and Malta. Malta is a similar case to the 1995 expansion: it is a long-established democracy that was rated free by FIW for more than 15 years before it joined the EU. Cyprus is a slightly more complicated case because it has been divided since 1974. But although the EU redoubled efforts to reunite the island after it applied for membership in 1990, ultimately membership was always guaranteed for the southern Republic of Cyprus while the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) would only be a member if reunification was completed. Thus, the EU only expected the southern government to fulfill the membership criteria. The Republic of Cyprus has been rated free by FIW since 1982, and has received the top score (1,1) since 1989. It therefore supports the above conclusions about minimum scores. The TRNC, which has been rated separately, has fluctuated between partly free and free and has a current score of 2,2 (free).