

THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title

Sticks, carrots and great expectations: Human rights conditionality and Turkey's path towards membership of the European Union

The aim of the present thesis is to capture the identity, dynamic, and the shortcomings, of 'human rights conditionality' in the relationship between the European Union and Turkey and to prove that the power of such conditionality – along with the commitment to reform on the part of the conditionality recipient (Turkey) – depends to a large degree on the extent to which the conditionality actor (the Union) is willing to offer real, substantial, and precisely defined incentives and rewards for convergence.

Sources used for research on the issue at hand include, for the most part: books and articles on conditionality theory, human rights EU-Turkey relations, and European foreign policy; official documents and reports published by Union institutions, NGOs, and the Turkish government; press excerpts; the author's travel through the Turkish Southeast; and finally, interviews held with officials from the Commission, Turkish journalists and diplomats stationed in Ankara.

The present paper begins by citing the relevant theoretical framework for analysis of human rights conditionality, and goes on to: identify the Union's understanding of human rights; define the Turkey-EU relationship (primarily in the context of pre-accession and the Copenhagen criteria) in terms of so-called *ex post* human rights conditionality; provide an analysis of the importance attached by Turkey to the 'carrot' of enlargement; cite problems in assessing the effects of *ex ante* human rights conditionality; analyse – in depth – the deficiencies of the EU's human rights conditionality approach towards Turkey; before wrapping by with a general assessment of the role that such conditionality has played, and stands to play, in Turkey-EU relations.

The results of the research conducted point to the following conclusions: that when, within the EU-Turkey human rights conditionality relationship, incentives are imprecisely defined, when conditionality is characterized by a sense of ambiguity as to the endgame, when grounds for suspicion of double standards become evident, the conditionality actor (the EU) inevitably loses credibility and leverage with the conditionality recipient (Turkey). As a result, a major source of motivation for the conditionality recipient to uphold its commitment to human rights reform – along with its capacity to incur the political costs of such reform – is significantly reduced.