

# Turkey and the European Union

## A Journey in the Unknown

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**T**urkey has always been, is, and will likely remain one of the most important countries for the European Union. In terms of its significance for the EU, Turkey stands on par with Russia in the neighborhood, and a step down after the United States and China on the global scene. The importance of Turkey for Europe is rooted in the historic ties between the two sides, dating back to Ottoman times. Be it through war, diplomacy, commerce, art, cuisine, or intermarriage, Turkey has always been an integral part of Europe's history. Over centuries, relations between the two were characterized by cooperation and convergence—for instance, the deep economic, cultural, artistic, and societal exchanges between the Ottoman Empire and European powers and city-states in the fifteenth through to the seventeenth centuries. At the same time, conflict and competition were rampant, notably the Ottoman-Habsburg wars, until the “European balance of power” in the eighteenth century. But even in times of war, a code of honour existed between the warring parties, in a sign of recognition and legitimization of one another.<sup>1</sup> By the mid nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had been admitted into the Concert of Europe and quickly became party to the evolving rudimentary international law at the time.<sup>2</sup>

This contrasting mix of conflict and cooperation has rested at the heart of the contested identity construction of both Turkey and Europe from the very outset. On the one hand, the early Turkish Republican project was adamant in asserting its European credentials at all costs, even if this meant playing up the inherited nineteenth century slogan of the ailing Ottoman Empire as the “sick man of Europe”.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Turkey stood on the frontiers of the early ideas of European unification in the inter-war years. For pragmatic and strategic reasons, Turkey was ultimately included in Aristide Briand’s Commission of Enquiry for European Union within the framework of the League of Nations, while it was excluded from the more idealistic pan-Europe proposal sponsored by Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi.<sup>4</sup>

True to history, Turkey’s relations with the European integration project have been dense, contested, and tortuous since the outset.<sup>5</sup> Despite their intensity and duration over the decades, the end point of the relationship remains unknown to this day. In light of this, this paper briefly recounts the evolution of the EU-Turkey relationship and outlines three possible scenarios for the future. It concludes by discussing the implications of these scenarios for the United States.

## TURKEY AND THE EU: TOWARDS AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The prospect of full membership was embedded in the 1963 Association Agreement between Turkey and the European Economic Community (EEC). In 1987, Turkey submitted a formal request for full membership, which was rejected by the European Commission in 1989 on the grounds that Turkey manifested grave democratic deficiencies. Notwithstanding, the door to Turkey's EU entry was not shut. The Commission's Opinion on Turkey's membership application in 1989 confirmed that Turkey, unlike Morocco, which also applied for membership in 1987, was eligible for full EU membership.<sup>6</sup> The prospects for Turkey's EU membership brightened in 1996, when Turkey entered the EU customs union, marking the beginning of higher levels of economic integration and, in Ankara's eyes, the prelude to full EU membership.<sup>7</sup> The accession process was not to begin immediately, however, as in 1997 the European Council in Luxembourg underlined that Turkey, while eligible, still did not meet the standards for EU candidacy.<sup>8</sup>

The watershed came in December 1999, when the European Council in Helsinki granted Turkey its long-sought candidacy,<sup>9</sup> albeit not opening accession negotiations as was done for all the other enlargement countries at the time (the Central and Eastern European countries, Cyprus, and Malta). The argument was that in order to open accession talks, Turkey had to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria for membership and make progress towards resolving the Cyprus problem as well as bilateral conflicts with Greece.<sup>10</sup> In turn, the Commission was given a mandate to monitor progress in Turkey's domestic performance and to draft an Accession Partnership document for Turkey, recommending areas for Turkish reform. The EU

also upgraded and adapted its financial assistance to Turkey, redirecting aid to provide more explicit support for Turkey's reforms.

The acceleration of Turkey's reform momentum particularly after late 2001, defined by many as a "silent revolution" in the country,<sup>11</sup> spilled into Turkey's EU accession process, especially when the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002 concluded that it would determine whether and when to open accession talks with Turkey in December 2004. The approaching green light for the opening of negotiations set a target and a timeline in the reform programme of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government elected in November 2002. Turkey's progress in reforms spurred the December 2004 European Council to conclude that Turkey "sufficiently" fulfilled the political criteria and that accession talks could begin in October 2005.<sup>12</sup>

Paradoxically, after the opening of accession negotiations in 2005, the momentum in Turkey's accession process was lost. Turkey's accession negotiations proceeded at a snail's pace in their early years and stalled altogether between 2010 and 2013. By mid-2014, a mere 14 out of 35 chapters had been opened and only one chapter (science and research) provisionally closed. Multiple vetoes by the European Council, France, and the Republic of Cyprus have meant that most chapters of the *acquis communautaire* up for negotiation are frozen and that no chapter can be provisionally closed.<sup>13</sup>

Since the turn of the century, Turkey has thus been part of the EU's accession process. Although the accession process formally began after decades of contractual ties between Turkey and the European integration project, the process has been in a comatose state for the best part of the last decade.<sup>14</sup>

For all candidates before Turkey, the accession process has always culminated in full membership. Yet in Turkey's case, the path to membership has been fraught with roadblocks and hurdles, making the final destination uncertain at best.

The singularity of Turkey emerges vividly from a cursory glance at the accession timelines of other candidate countries before (and contemporaneous to) it (See Table 1). Turkey represents the only case of an accession process that has lasted over a decade. Spain's accession process was protracted, particularly considering that at the time the European Community was far less developed in terms of its laws, rules, and procedures than it is today. Poland's accession, alongside other Central and Eastern member states, also lasted almost a decade. In the case of Poland and Croatia, accession was complicated by the fact that the EU is far more developed today than during previous enlargement rounds. Notwithstanding, Turkey clearly stands in a league of its own. Having applied for European Community membership in 1987, Turkey has been in the accession process for almost three decades. Unlike any other candidate before it, its membership is nowhere in sight. Despite all the complications of the enlargement process to the Western Balkans,<sup>15</sup> few question these countries will eventually enter the Union. Such certainty does not manifest in debates about EU enlargement to include Turkey. Notable in this respect

is the programme which Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker presented to the European Parliament in July 2014: "under my Presidency of the Commission, ongoing negotiations will continue, and notably the Western Balkans will need to keep a European perspective, but no further enlargement will take place over the next five years".<sup>16</sup> On Turkey, the Commission President did not utter one word.

Furthermore, EU itself is in a profound state of transformation since the eruption of the eurozone crisis in 2010. The crisis has represented the Union's quintessential existential moment. This, coupled with the ensuing deep socio-political cleavages bedeviling the EU, brought the integration project to a brink. Either the monetary union would collapse, bringing along with it the entire European edifice, or the EU would ultimately exit the crisis as a profoundly transformed deeper Union.<sup>17</sup> Since European Central Bank President Mario Draghi's assured he would do "whatever it takes" to save the single currency in 2013, the spectre of complete fragmentation has—for the time being—been shelved. And yet, the contours of a post-crisis EU are still not clearly delineated. Instead, what is clear instead is that if the EU successfully concludes its banking union, proceeds towards a fiscal union, bolsters its democratic legitimacy, and tackles crucial policy challenges spanning across defence, energy, migration, and infrastructure matters, it will

**Table 1: Stages in the EU Accession Process - Turkey in Comparative Perspective**

	Spain	Austria	Poland	Turkey	Croatia
Application submitted	1977	1989	1997	1987	2003
Commission Opinion	1978	1989	1997	1989	2004
Candidate status	1978	1989	1997	1999	2004
Accession talks start	1978	1993	1998	2005	2005
Accession talks end	1985	1994	2003	-	2013
Accession	1986	1995	2004	-	2013

be a profoundly different union from the one we know today.<sup>18</sup>

Surprisingly, the tumultuous developments in the EU over the last four years have not had a visible impact on the content of the enlargement policy. When compared to the heydays of the eastern enlargement in the early 2000s, there has been a clear reduction of the political priority attached to enlargement. The Western Balkans and Turkey have both been victims of this scaling down of European attention. However, the actual content of the accession process has remained untouched. While the EU as a whole may evolve into a federal entity, through concentric circles, hub-and-spokes or multiple clusters in the years ahead, so far, none of these possibilities have been factored into the enlargement policy. Enlargement proceeds in slow-motion, as if the world stood still. And yet at some point, when the dust settles and the future EU's contours are revealed, the enlargement process will necessarily have to catch up with reality. Whether this will facilitate or hamper EU enlargement remains to be seen.

For Turkey, the eurozone crisis at a time when the Turkish economy continued to perform well led the

government to take an increasingly skeptical view of EU membership. Strikingly, then-Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, when addressing the AKP Congress in 2012, did not include EU membership in his vision speech for 2023.<sup>19</sup> His minister responsible for relations with the European Union in Turkey, Egemen Bağış argued that Turkey would probably never become a member of the Union because of the prejudices of some of its members.<sup>20</sup> As the Independent Commission on Turkey also noted, support for EU membership once at 73 percent in 2004, “dropped dramatically after 2007, hovering between 34 percent and 48 percent over the last seven years.”<sup>21</sup> This loss of enthusiasm was partly driven by a growing conviction in Turkey that the country faced double standards with respect to the accession criteria. The vocal (albeit tautological and thus unnecessary) insistence that negotiations would be “open-ended”, followed by growing calls from German Chancellor Angela Merkel for a “privileged partnership,” which was backed by the then French President Nicolas Sarkozy’s Turkey-scepticism, only hardened Ankara’s views further.<sup>22</sup>

## THREE SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE

This brief excursion into the evolution of the EU-Turkey relationship reveals its profound uncertainty. A pessimistic snapshot of the relationship today points towards a future of progressive estrangement, competition, if not outright conflict between Turkey and the EU. At the same time, a longer-term and more dynamic assessment of the relationship would caution against excessive pessimism, pointing to the depth and longevity of the relationship and its cyclical ups and downs over the decades. With this background in mind, this paper will attempt to map the trajectory of EU-Turkey ties and their possible evolution in the future. In order to guide this endeavour, this paper sets forth three scenarios for the future of the EU-Turkey relationship. It deliberately constructs the three scenarios as ideal types that oversimplify reality, while acknowledging that in reality not all their elements may be mutually exclusive. Thus, their purpose is not descriptive but analytical and their content regulative rather than constitutive. These scenarios are not meant to be accurate predictions of the future. Rather, they are meant to be terms of reference for an assessment of the future trajectory of the relationship, and an assessment of whether Turkey and the EU are likely to tend more towards convergence or conflict. In what follows, the paper briefly outlines what these three stylized scenarios might look like.

### ***Competition***

A first scenario is that of a growing *competition* and conflict between Turkey and the EU. The EU would continue to pretend it is negotiating membership with Turkey. But even Turkey's supporters in the EU would lose faith in the process. Of these supporters some—Italy, Spain, Portugal—would

continue to be primarily concerned with their recovery from the economic crisis. Others, such as the UK, would be preoccupied with their own relationship with the EU and the prospect of Britain's exit ahead of the 2017 referendum.<sup>23</sup> The Eastern European members would devote all their foreign policy efforts to confronting a resurgent Russia in the near abroad. After the 2014 European Parliament elections, with the formidable rise of populism and the radical right notably in France, the anti-Turkey constituency at EU level would grow.<sup>24</sup> With the 2014 turnover of the EU leadership, enlargement policy would be seriously downgraded in the Juncker Commission. The Council would not reach a unanimous decision to abandon the accession process. Although Turkey's EU membership does not garner an EU-wide consensus, a unanimous decision to rescind Turkey's enlargement perspective is even less likely.<sup>25</sup>

However, observing these dynamics, the decision to abandon the process would be taken by Turkey itself. Having won both the presidency in 2014 and secured a fourth electoral victory at the 2015 parliamentary elections, Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AKP would formally abandon the accession process with much fanfare. With its domestic hold on power consolidated and populism on the rise in Turkey too, the AKP would begin to see the EU as more of a liability than an asset. The assets from the accession process would be considered as no longer politically feasible. For too long, negotiation chapters were either opened at a snail's pace or not opened at all. The prospects for full membership had been pushed so far down the line, they were no longer credible. Furthermore, as the unchallenged political force in the country with the ability to push singlehandedly for reforms, the Turkish leadership would openly declare it saw no value added in joining the EU. It would no longer need the EU

for its domestic political project. The Turkish government would continue pushing for reforms it saw fit—notably on the Kurdish question—but the authoritarian and populist bent that has characterized Turkish leadership in recent years, such as the backsliding on fundamental freedoms and the erosion of checks and balances would significantly deepen.<sup>26</sup> Thus, a solution to the Kurdish question would be partial and unsustainable at best. For Turkey, the EU accession process would represent a liability: an annoying reminder of the country's democratic deficits. In the government's eyes, time would have come to put an end to the hypocrisy.

In this scenario, Turkey would not necessarily head towards economic crisis. As a country lacking natural resources whose development hinges on integration in the global economy, Turkey would continue reaching out to regional and global markets as a trading state.<sup>27</sup> There would also be an effort to maintain a degree of discipline in its macroeconomic policies. Turkey's openness would also include the EU, which would remain its greatest economic partner. However, the contractual basis for the EU-Turkey economic relationship would be scaled down from a customs union to a free trade agreement.<sup>28</sup> Given the absence of a membership perspective, the downsides of the customs union—notably the fact that Turkey must automatically comply with the terms of free trade agreements the EU signs with third countries without the latter having an obligation to conclude free trade agreements with Turkey—would simply be too high. The political class in Turkey would agree on the desirability of scaling down the economic relationship with the EU, freeing its hands to pursue a pro-active and reciprocal external trade policy. Thus, Turkey would sign free trade agreements with a wide range of countries and regional groupings. The EU would be one among many that was

no longer a privileged partner. This would allow the export-oriented Turkish economy to continue growing. However, political interference in markets would grow, structural reforms would remain incomplete, and the government would increasingly reverse hallmark regulatory reforms of the early 2000s.<sup>29</sup> As a consequence, Turkey would sustain only a 2-3 percent average growth rate that would not be sufficient to jump into the high-income country category.

In security terms, Turkey would increasingly behave like a “lone wolf,” acting unilaterally, bilaterally, or multilaterally with European and non-European partners alike on a transactional basis depending on the issue at stake. Ankara would be increasingly drawn into the turmoil bedeviling the Middle East and Eurasia pursuing policies marked by distinctive sectarian undertones. Be it in Syria, Libya, Egypt, or Palestine, Turkey would automatically side with Sunni Muslims, above all those representing Islamist (and in particular Muslim Brotherhood) politics.<sup>30</sup> Its policies in the Middle East would be viewed in Europe with scepticism and concern. Furthermore, the unsolved Cyprus conflict would continue to block a constructive relationship between the EU and NATO.<sup>31</sup> Occasional dialogue and cooperation with the EU would take place, but as a whole both Turkey and the EU would watch one another with circumspection and no longer see each other as partners of choice.

In terms of energy, Turkey would continue to act as an important partner for the EU, but Ankara would not adopt the EU energy *acquis* given the suspension of the accession process. In addition, it would not accede to the Energy Community and it would continue to depend heavily on Russian gas. Azerbaijan's control over the Turkish gas network would hamper Turkey's poten-

tial to allow other energy sources—namely from the Eastern Mediterranean and Iraq—to reach Europe through Turkey. Furthermore, the persistence of the Cyprus conflict and the continuing tensions in Israeli-Turkish relations would translate into Eastern Mediterranean gas being liquefied and sold to Asian markets rather than becoming a valuable additional resource in the EU's energy security equation. Neither Cyprus nor Israel would feel comfortable exporting gas to or through Turkey.<sup>32</sup>

In regards to migration and mobility, Turkey's migration transition would remain incomplete. Its level of economic development would be such that alongside growing immigration from Africa, Eurasia, and the Middle East, Turks would continue immigrating into Europe, albeit at the reduced levels witnessed over the last decade.<sup>33</sup> With deepening turmoil in the southern neighbourhood, irregular transit migration from Turkey into the EU would persist as a thorn in the side of the relationship,<sup>34</sup> while Turkey's open visa policy towards its neighbours would continue to raise eyebrows in Brussels. The double deal reached in December 2013 on a re-admission agreement and visa liberalization roadmap would break down, as a Turkey estranged from the EU would fail to garner the necessary qualified majority in the Council of the EU on visa liberalization. In turn, Ankara would step back from its commitments on readmission.

Growing political, economic, security, and societal estrangement would finally impact upon the ideational relationship between Turkey and the EU. Both Turks and Europeans would end up agreeing Turkey is not a European country, which would noticeably complicate the integration of Turkish migrant communities into the EU, who would become increasingly susceptible to the diaspora policies of

the Turkish government aimed at leveraging Euro-Turks for the purposes of self-aggrandisement.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Cooperation***

A second scenario would see the EU and Turkey reaching a new framework for cooperation based on respective complementarities.<sup>36</sup> In this scenario, both sides would abandon the accession process, but like an engaged couple that consensually acknowledges they were never meant for one another, the EU and Turkey would abandon their wedding plans, and instead remain good friends. Turkey's domestic political development would unfold independently of the EU. Turkey's government would develop into an increasingly centralized presidential or semi-presidential system<sup>37</sup> with autonomy granted to the Kurdish community. Despite failing to achieve a new civilian constitution under the presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey would resolve its decades-old Kurdish question on the basis of amnesty to PKK militants and some form of territorial autonomy for the south-east. At the same time, Turkey would witness an increasingly centralized system of power, in which checks and balances rule of law weakens and civic rights and freedoms are curtailed. The EU would continue to express praise for steps like the Kurdish peace process and criticism for setbacks like the erosion of separation of powers and rule of law, but its sway over Turkey's political dynamics would be on a par with that of the United States, creating ripples without lasting impact.

Turkey would conclude that it is in its national interests to maintain a multi-vectored foreign policy, which does not accord exclusive privileges to any one partner. After much soul-searching, it would admit that it sees no place for itself in the tightly integrated Union that would rise from the ashes of

the eurozone crisis. These feelings would intensify if sovereignist member states such as the UK exit or redefine their relationship with the EU. At the same time, Turkey would openly admit that partnering with the EU on a functional basis would be in its best interest. The formerly taboo concept of a “privileged partnership”, originally coined by Angela Merkel, would become championed by Turkey itself, albeit worded differently. The EU, for its part, would sigh in relief. Particularly for opponents of Turkey’s EU membership in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, Ankara’s gracious abandonment of the process without any slamming of doors would be seen as the best of possible worlds.

In this scenario, the EU-Turkey customs union would persist and be upgraded to cover services, public procurement, and possibly agricultural products as suggested by the World Bank.<sup>38</sup> Such a development may also be driven by the prospect of negotiations between the EU and the U.S. on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) being concluded. In order to hedge against the trade diversion risk stemming from TTIP, Turkey would either succeed (alongside NAFTA and EFTA countries) to “dock” itself to TTIP, or pursue a twofold strategy of seeking a free trade agreement with the U.S. alongside an expansion of the customs union with the EU to all policy areas covered by TTIP.<sup>39</sup> In this scenario, it would be in the EU’s interest to ensure that Turkey is given a chance to “dock” as long as TTIP is indeed concluded with provisions that allows for its enlargement.<sup>40</sup>

Cooperation on security matters would also deepen. Since 2010, foreign policy cooperation between the EU and Turkey has expanded. The Turkish Foreign Minister has occasionally participated in the EU’s informal foreign ministers meetings (known as Gymnich meetings) and has attended meet-

ings with the EU’s Foreign Affairs Council, both individually and with Foreign Ministers of other EU candidate countries. These fora for high-level dialogue would be institutionalized and regularized. They would also be complemented with regular meetings at director and working group levels.<sup>41</sup> Institutionalized foreign policy dialogue would not automatically lead to cooperation. In fact, Turkish and European foreign policies would only converge on specific topics and occasions. But institutionalized dialogue would serve to gauge respective foreign policy positions and strategies, seeking concrete cooperation avenues if and when both sides saw fit. Foreseeably, there could be useful cooperation on some dossiers, notably the Balkans, while positions on Middle Eastern and Eurasian questions would only partially and occasionally overlap.<sup>42</sup> One only needs to think about the partial convergence of views between Turkey and the EU on issues such as the Ukraine crisis, the ISIS threat or the conflict in Gaza to appreciate the limits of foreign and security policy cooperation in this scenario.

Additionally, there would be functional cooperation on asylum, immigration, and visa policies. Turkey would obtain visa free entry into the EU after much lobbying with EU member states.<sup>43</sup> Its solid cooperation on readmission, the tightening of its borders, and upgrading of its migration governance would all contribute to the successful conclusion of a visa liberalization roadmap.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, EU member states would agree on the need to eliminate the visa restriction on Turkey, which for years has caused tension in the relationship. Particularly, in view of the faded prospect of EU membership, EU member states would agree on the need to grant Turkish nationals visa free entry to the EU as a consolation prize.

On energy policy, the Azerbaijan-Turkey-EU linkage through TANAP and TAP would persist, but this would only represent a partial response to the EU's energy security puzzle. The Southern Corridor would not be fully realized as a corridor of multiple routes transporting multiple energy sources, while Turkey would fail to develop into an energy hub for Europe. This is because Turkey would not implement the EU's energy *acquis*, and its close relationship with Azerbaijan coupled with troubled relations with Iraq, Israel and Iran would prevent it from becoming a reliable hub for multiple sources of energy for Europe.

Lastly, there would probably not be a resolution of the Cyprus conflict. Nonetheless Turkey would implement the Additional Protocol to the customs union agreement vis-à-vis Cyprus. While this would be inconsequential as far as accession negotiations are concerned, given their formal interruption in this scenario, the implementation of the Additional Protocol would greatly improve the climate of relations between Turkey, Cyprus and the EU and possibly facilitate Turkish-Cypriot participation in the EU's internal market.

### ***Convergence***

The final scenario illustrates Turkey's convergence with the EU through full membership. This scenario foresees the European Union exiting its current crisis and refocusing on the enlargement process towards both the Balkans and Turkey and possibly other Eastern neighbours. A post-crisis EU would feature a more integrated core consisting of the eurozone—which would complete its monetary union through a functioning banking union in addition to accelerated steps towards fiscal union. But deeper integration would also spill into other policy domains, notably in areas of security, energy

and migration policy.<sup>45</sup> In these areas, geographic “cores” of the EU may be limited to the inner core of eurozone member states, but could also extend to comprise all EU members. Deeper EU integration coupled with a revamped enlargement agenda through differentiated integration would allow new members such as Turkey to enter the EU, but not necessarily its most federal elements.<sup>46</sup> The success and sustainability of this model would hinge on the United Kingdom's enduring, yet remodeled, membership in the EU's “outer circle”.<sup>47</sup> Within this new governance model for the EU, enlargement in general and enlargement to include Turkey in particular, would become significantly less divisive. Turkey would opt to remain in the outer circle, so long as it were in the company of other “heavyweight” member states such as the U.K. and its EU membership would become less contested by “inner core” members such as France and Germany.

Turkey's full membership in the EU—but not in the eurozone—would provide sufficient support for the country to complete its transition to a mature liberal democracy. This could include a definitive and comprehensive resolution of the Kurdish question through a new civilian constitution enshrining an inclusive definition of citizenship and the full extension and consolidation of rights and freedoms. This transition would experience ups and downs, but the general trend would be uphill.

Turkey's economic development would go hand in hand with its political transition. Turkey would continue opening up to regional and global markets, but economic anchoring to the EU would deepen in terms of the share and quality of trade and investment. Interestingly, 2013 has already marked a turning point in Turkey's external trade. While previous years saw a progressive reduction

of the EU's share of Turkey's exports, that percentage is rising again, while Turkey's share of exports to Russia, Iran, Iraq and China is falling. Although Turkey's overall increase in exports for the first 7 months of 2013 to 2014 was 6 percent, its share of exports to the EU was more than double that figure.<sup>48</sup> Through such anchoring, Turkey would also tackle its major structural economic deficiencies: it would achieve a higher savings rate, cure its chronic current account imbalances, reach a healthier energy mix, invest in education and R&D, and assure a complete separation between politics and economic markets. These are adjustments and reforms that Turkey needs to carry out if it is going to avoid the "middle income trap."<sup>49</sup>

Given Turkey's full membership would entail a resolution of the long-standing Cyprus question, this scenario would also see strides forward in the security and energy realms: NATO and the EU would establish a harmonious functioning relationship, possibly with Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) becoming de facto a European caucus in NATO.<sup>50</sup> Following years of progressive de-alignment<sup>51</sup> Turkey would align itself with CFSP statements and positions, greatly enhancing the EU's foreign policy projection, particularly in the troubled neighbourhood.

With the resolution of the Cyprus question and the consolidation of a Turkish-Israeli political rapprochement, Cypriot and Israeli gas, alongside Azeri (and Iraqi) gas would flow through Turkish networks to Europe, strengthening both the EU's

and Turkey's energy security. Turkey would also fully adopt and implement the energy *acquis* and enter the Energy Community, becoming a veritable energy hub for Europe and the lynchpin in a multiple pipeline southern energy corridor.<sup>52</sup>

In regards to migration and mobility, Turkey would complete its transition from an emigration to an immigration country. Due to economic development and reaching of a demographic plateau, Turkish immigration to Europe, notwithstanding a full liberalization of the four EU freedoms, would be contained.<sup>53</sup> Turkey would adopt a more restrictive visa policy towards its neighbours, while at the same time acting as a liberalizing member state in the Council of the EU. As an EU member, Turkey would also be fully cooperative and more capable in dealing with irregular migration, while at the same time allying with southern member states like Italy and Greece to push for more equitable intra-EU burden-sharing on asylum and irregular migration.

Finally, majorities both in Turkey and the EU would converge on an inclusive definition of identity. Turkey would not be exclusively European, but its European-ness would be the *primus inter pares* component of its identity. Likewise, the attachment of most Europeans to their local and national identities would persist, but with the accomplishment of a post-crisis EU that is more united, effective and politically legitimate, their attachment to civic values enshrined in tomorrow's Union, inclusive of Turkey, would also grow incommensurably.

## TRANSATLANTIC IMPLICATIONS OF TURKEY'S UNCERTAIN EUROPEAN FUTURE

Turkey's European future remains highly uncertain. This paper has outlined the range of possible destinations, which while hypothetical and stylized, highlight the diametrically opposite trajectories EU-Turkey relations could take. Next, the paper turns to the repercussions these scenarios may have for the United States.

Today in Washington, there are few who still believe in Turkey's EU membership. Whereas the United States had been a(n excessively) vocal advocate of Turkey's European integration throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Turkey's EU accession is rarely talked about within the Beltway these days. Partly due to the more low-key approach of the Obama administration towards Western European affairs and due largely to the objective slowdown of the accession process, Americans have by and large given up on Turkey's EU membership.<sup>54</sup>

The scenarios outlined above unambiguously point to the fact that EU-Turkey convergence remains a critical U.S. interest. In the event of an EU-Turkey competitive scenario, the U.S.-Turkey relationship would probably suffer, adding unpredictability and unreliability to the turbulence in the Middle East, where the U.S. would remain immersed much to its chagrin. With the rise of extremist ideologies, undermining of state borders, and unprecedented levels of violence and deepening socio-economic malaise, ensuring Turkey is safely embedded in the Euro-Atlantic community is crucial. In a scenario of complementarity, with which many toy with on both sides of the Atlantic, the detachment of Turkey from the Atlantic community would be attenuated and slow down, particularly if a formula is

found to include Turkey in TTIP.<sup>55</sup> This point was actually made by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu when he argued that TTIP would help to anchor Turkey in the West in an article.<sup>56</sup>

It is crucial to recognize that a complementarity scenario that falls short of EU membership would fail to benefit the United States in a comprehensive manner. Here it is worth recalling the main reason why Washington adamantly insisted on Turkey's European integration back in the 1990s. It did so partly to rally credit in Ankara and to seek greater strategic cohesion within the Atlantic community. But the main reason why the U.S. vocally supported Turkey's EU membership was because it appreciated that only through a mixed domestic-foreign policy project such as European integration, could Turkey's domestic transformation be truly encouraged. There are clear limits to how much an external actor, even one as powerful and close as the U.S., can do to sustain a comprehensive domestic reform process in Turkey. In this respect, the EU has transformative power the U.S. lacks. Only a fully democratic and prosperous Turkey can represent the "model partner" Barack Obama boasted it was in the early days of his presidency.

What can the United States actually do to put the EU-Turkey relationship on healthier footing in today's context? American officials should continue to support Turkey's EU membership. Europeans instinctively point out that the United States cannot persuade the Union to include Turkey into its fold. This is true, but it is equally true that if the United States were to abandon the goal of Turkey's European integration, Turkey's EU vocation would not be well served. In the 1990s the United States played a pivotal role in triggering closer ties between Turkey and the European project.<sup>57</sup> If played

quietly behind closed doors, this role continues to be important, particularly so at a time when European introspection has been triggered by the euro-zone crisis.

Lastly and most importantly, the U.S. is the only external actor that can contribute to removing the major obstacle in the side of the EU-Turkey relationship: the Cyprus conflict. Peace talks in Cyprus were revived in February of this year, but after a hopeful start, they soon ran into the quicksand of pessimism and mutual recrimination so abundant on the island. No matter what the potential bounties of reconciliation may be—bounties which are increasingly apparent today in view of Eastern Mediterranean gas finds—if left to themselves, Cypriots are unlikely to reach a solution to the conflict. The perceived risks in taking a step into unknown

territory is simply too great when measured against the certainty of the present, which is anything but dire when compared to the rest of the war-ravaged region. And yet, a relatively peaceful present is Cyprus's biggest curse, which not only reduces the parties' incentive to reach a comprehensive settlement, but also distracts international attention away from the conflict, particularly at a time when the wider region is ablaze. Vice-President Biden's visit to Cyprus in May this year could have marked the beginning of renewed U.S. attention to the conflict. A U.S. political investment in the Cyprus peace process could concomitantly spur cooperation on Eastern Mediterranean gas, open the way to EU-NATO cooperation whose urgency is highlighted by the Ukraine crisis, and re-dynamize the EU-Turkey relationship, warding off the spectre of conflictuality in the U.S.-EU-Turkey triangle.

## CONCLUSION

**D**rawing from the complex history of Turkey's relationship with Europe, the trajectory of Turkey's European future is at once predictable and highly uncertain. What can be safely predicted is that this close and complex relationship will last in future, in both its collaborative and conflictual elements. Much like the centuries-long history between the two was marked by cyclical moments of cooperation and conflict, the depth of current economic, political, security, societal and cultural ties is such that it is difficult to imagine a clean break in Turkey's relationship with the EU. The very

identities of Turkey and Europe are inextricably tied to one another and 'when your identity crisis has lasted for some 200 years it is no longer a crisis. It is your identity'<sup>58</sup> At the same time, the future trajectory of the EU-Turkey relationship remains highly uncertain. In outlining three scenarios for the future, this paper has extrapolated elements from current reality that demonstrate that at the current juncture all three scenarios, or combinations therein, remain distinct possibilities. While both Turkey and the EU are in the same metaphorical boat, the boat is on a journey whose destination is unknown.

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