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FEUTURE Background Paper

Turkey and the European Union: Scenarios for 2023

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Introduction

Turkey 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 a par with Russia in the neighbourhood, and, only a step down from powers such as the United States and China on the global scene. For good or bad, recent events – from the EU-Turkey refugee deal to the attempted military coup in Turkey and its aftermath – have reconfirmed Turkey’s strategic relevance for the Union all too well.

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, commerce, art, cuisine or intermarriage, Turkey has always been an integral part of Europe’s history. Over the centuries, relations between the two were characterized by cooperation – 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.¹

This contrasting mix of conflict and cooperation has rested at the heart of the contested relationship between Turkey and Europe from the very outset. On the one hand, the early Turkish Republican project was adamant in asserting at all costs its European credentials, even if this meant playing up the nineteenth century slogan of the ailing Ottoman Empire as the “sick man of *Europe*”. Even if “sick” Turkey was happy to be portrayed as European. On the other hand, Turkey stood on the hybrid frontiers of the early ideas of European unification in the inter-war years. For example Turkey was 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.² Whether Turkey belongs to Europe is not a new debate. It has been debated over the centuries.

True to history, Turkey’s relations with the European integration project have been contested and tortuous since the outset.³ Despite their intensity and duration over the decades, the end point of the relationship remains unknown to this day. Since 1999, Turkey has thus been part of the EU’s accession process, with its status as a candidate country to membership having been officially recognized by the European Council. But although the accession process formally began after decades of contractual ties between Turkey and the European integration project that explicitly foresaw the possibility of full membership,⁴ the process has been in a comatose state for the best part of the last decade. With accession negotiations formally started in 2005, by 2016 only 16 out of 35 chapters have been opened. For all candidates before Turkey, the accession process has always and only culminated in full membership. Yet in Turkey’s case, the path to membership has been fraught with

¹ Selim Deringil (2007) ‘The Turks and ‘Europe’: The Argument from History’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 5, pp.709-723.

² Although even Coudenhove-Kalergi included Turkey and the Balkans in his 1934 writings on political Europe. See Dilek Barlas and Serhat Guvenç (2009) ‘Turkey and the Idea of a European Union in the Inter-War Years, 1923-39’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp. 425-446.

³ Luigi Narbone and Nathalie Tocci (2007) ‘Running around in circles? The cyclical relationship between Turkey and the European Union’, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 233-245.

⁴ Turkey’s 1963 Association Agreement formally recognized the possibility of Turkey’s full membership in the then European Communities.

roadblocks and hurdles, in a process deliberately defined as open-ended. Turkey's destination in Europe is uncertain at best.

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 current juncture, the formal suspension of the accession process cannot be ruled out. 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. Whereas both Turkey and the European Union are bound to change quite significantly in the decade ahead, it is not inconceivable that deeper integration will be the upshot of these parallel and to some extent interlocking transformations.

The FEUTURE of EU-Turkey relations: Scenario building

In order to gauge the future, “FEUTURE” – Future of **EU-TUR**key **RE**lations – analyses the past, present and future drivers of the EU-Turkey relationship. Drivers are the material/ideational, structural/agency-related elements that determine a story's outcome. In the FEUTURE project, we select six thematic dimensions of the EU-Turkey relationship: politics, economics, security, energy, migration and identity. We address developments within these six dimensions at four levels of analysis: the EU, Turkey, the neighbourhood to the east and south and the global scene. In particular, we seek to uncover the drivers that are likely to determine the shape of the relationship in the coming years, including projections (knowns), uncertainties (known unknowns) and wild cards (unknown unknowns) within each thematic dimension examined across its four levels of analysis. We will do so in order to flesh out the most likely “Feuture”. This does not imply that reality will follow precisely such script, but rather that through it we will delineate the contours of the possible and the impossible, the likely and the unlikely, allowing all relevant stakeholders in the EU-Turkey relationship to prepare for what can be expected and what cannot be expected to happen.⁵

In order to navigate the possible future, a compass is necessary. Ours takes the form of a construction of three reference scenarios for EU-Turkey relations, as a tool to steer scholars and practitioners in a context of great uncertainty. Drawing from Schwartz, the aim of these scenarios is to construct different pathways that might exist in future, suggesting and informing appropriate scholarly analysis or policy decisions that may be taken along those possible paths.⁶ To clarify: our scenarios are not aimed at predicting futures: prediction – if any – will be the aim of the analysis of the thematic drivers over the course of the project. We rather seek to launch this work by imagining, delineating and systematizing three reference scenarios in order to organize subsequent research and eventually map out a most likely “feuture” in the present in order to be better equipped to face it if and when time comes.⁷ Scenarios thus look at hypothetical worlds from different angles. They sketch how drivers might plausibly behave, based on how those forces have performed in the past. The same set of drivers might behave in a variety of different ways, according to different possible plots. Scenarios explore several of those alternatives, based on the plots (or combination of plots) which are most worth considering.⁸ Ultimately, the goal of the project will be to flesh out one scenario – or variants

⁵ Peter Schwartz (1996) ‘The Art of the Long View: Paths to Strategic Insight for Yourself and Your Company’, Currency Doubleday, at p.203.

⁶ Peter Schwartz (1996) *ibid.* p.4.

⁷ Peter Schwartz (1996) p.38.

⁸ Peter Schwartz (1996) p.141.

thereof – over others: one future which we believe will take place; but to do so the basic reference points first need to be mapped out.

In what follows, we therefore construct the three scenarios as ideal types that oversimplify reality, while acknowledging that in reality not all their elements may be mutually exclusive and that in different dimensions of the EU-Turkey relationship, at different points in time, different scenarios may apply. The purpose of these scenarios is thus not descriptive but analytical, their content regulative rather than constitutive. These scenarios are meant to be terms of reference for an assessment of the future trajectory of the relationship over the next decade.

A key question regards the timeframe for such scenarios. In light of its symbolism (the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic and the 60th anniversary of the signature of the Association Agreement), we propose 2023 as an end date for our scenarios. Given the length and breadth of the EU-Turkey relationship we do not expect that by 2023 the relationship as a whole or even in any of its constitutive thematic dimensions will have necessarily reached a steady-state. However, 2023 provides a sufficiently long time frame for mid/long-term policy options, while also making scenario-building feasible in a context of profound flux and uncertainty, i.e., one in which wild cards abound both within the principal actors (the EU and Turkey) and the regional and global contexts.

Following Schwarz’s suggestion that possible futures often fall into three groups – worse; more of the same but better; and fundamental change for the better⁹ – we construct three scenarios for FEUTURE. The forward looking ideal type scenarios are determined by different logics and result in different structural forms of interaction between the EU and Turkey. In legal and institutional terms the future endpoint of EU-Turkey relations can take the form of:

- Worse: conflict and competition; keeping Turkey outside the EU with *no membership* perspective,
- A fundamental change for the better: convergence; Turkey’s *EU membership* in light of its compliance with the Copenhagen criteria and the *acquis* and the EU’s development through internal differentiation,
- More of the same but better: cooperation; linking Turkey to the EU through *functional forms of cooperation and integration*.

In what follows we sketch out what such scenarios might look like.

Conflict: Growing Clash and Competition between the EU and Turkey

In one direction, relations between the EU and Turkey risk being driven by growing estrangement, competition if not outright conflict. Several elements in past and present trends point towards a turn for the worse. At least since 2005 – i.e., since Turkey began accession negotiations – the EU has been all consumed by successive internal crises. Starting with the constitutional crisis after the Dutch and French rejection of the Constitutional Treaty, passing through the Eurozone crisis and the spectre of Grexit, followed by the so-called refugee crisis, the shock of Brexit, and the diffuse challenge of populism, racism and euroscepticism propagating across the Union and undermining liberal democracy in some Member States, the last decade has been dedicated to a drawn out battle for survival of the

⁹ Peter Schwartz (1996) p.30.

European project. Enlargement has been shelved for the time being. Indeed Commission President Juncker noted bluntly what was common knowledge to all: there would be no further enlargement of the EU in the five years of his tenure.¹⁰ The same view is espoused by other European observers, certainly not known for their skepticism of enlargement: the EU, the argument goes, should play in defence, concentrating on securing the Union and preventing violence and instability beyond its borders, leaving enlargement for better times to come.¹¹

On the Turkish side, the good days of Turkey’s silent democratic revolution are long gone, alongside those of Turkey’s economic miracle, its zero problems with neighbours and of Kurdish-Turkish peace. Today Turkey is galloping towards centralized authoritarian governance with power lying solely in the President’s hands, in which rights are progressively curtailed – the freedom of expression, the shrinking space for civil society, women rights – and civil war with the PKK is escalating and stretching into northern Syria. Most dramatically, in the summer of 2016 the wild card of an attempted military coup – which many thought unthinkable in 21st century Turkey – became a reality. The attempted coup has led to wide-ranging purges within and beyond state institutions notably against Fetullah Gülen’s movement, while also rekindling unity between Turkey’s democratic forces. Where this will take Turkey’s democracy remains unknown, but what can be safely said is that recent domestic developments in Turkey – and the EU’s reaction to them, concentrating predominantly on Erdoğan’s reaction rather than on the significance of the attempted coup itself – have further distanced the EU and Turkey.¹² Far from concentrating on the EU, the little attention devoted to foreign policy in Turkey is consumed by Syria, the PKK and ISIS. At this current juncture the EU and Turkey seem set on diverging paths, at best leading to estrangement and worst to conflict.

What could *conflict and competition* between Turkey and the EU look like across the six thematic dimensions of the relationship? *On the political front*, it is hard to tell whether there is still a Member State which genuinely supports Turkey’s membership today. There has been a hollowing out of the group of supporters of Turkey’s European future. Southern member states – notably Italy, Spain and Portugal – are and are likely to remain concerned with their recovery from the economic crisis for a number of years. The United Kingdom – in any event on its way out of the EU – displayed a remarkable volte-face during its referendum campaign in 2016. From being an adamant supporter of Turkey’s EU membership, Turkey became a hot topic in the campaign between the Leave camp’s scaremongering about the opening of the floodgates to Turkish migrants given Turkey’s imminent accession, and the Remain camp’s reassurance that Turkey would not join the EU before the year 3000.¹³ Northern Member States, and in particular Sweden and Finland, have watched aghast Turkey’s democratic backsliding, quietly dropping their former support for Turkey’s EU membership. While eastern Member States, all consumed by the anxieties of an assertive Russia, have read Turkey through the lens of the erratic ebbs and flows of the Turkish-Russian relationship. Added to this, all Member States, including traditional supporters and sceptics, have distanced themselves from Turkey as a

¹⁰ Ministry for EU Affairs (2014), Turkey’s New European Union Strategy’, <http://www.ab.gov.tr/index.php?p=49706&l=2>.

¹¹ Mark Leonard (2016) ‘Playing Defense in Europe’, Project Syndicate, 1 September, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/playing-defense-in-europe-by-mark-leonard-2016-09>.

¹² Ayse Yircali, Sabiha Senyucel (2016) ‘The West fails the ‘coup test’ in Turkey’, *Aljazeera*, 25 July, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/07/west-fails-coup-test-turkey-160724120008222.html>.

¹³ George Parker (2016) ‘Turkey unlikely to join EU ‘until the year 3000’, says Cameron’, *Financial Times*, 22 May, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/de1efd42-2001-11e6-aa98-db1e01fab0c0.html#axzz4JTIYStS3>.

result of the rise of right-wing populism across the EU, which has cemented the anti-Turkey constituency across the Union.¹⁴

Said this, the EU is unlikely to formally suspend the accession process. Doing so would require galvanizing the proactive support of all Member States.¹⁵ The only circumstance in which this would take place is if Turkey makes an extreme and deliberate step in contravention of the Copenhagen political criteria. The reinstatement of the death penalty is the most evident case in point. In the aftermath of the attempted coup, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hinted at this possibility, arguing that he would not block the move to put the death penalty to a referendum if supported by parliament. As in many other European countries, the death penalty is – alas – fairly popular amongst the public and would likely be accepted by Turkish voters. In a calculated move, Erdoğan could therefore construct a referendum on a constitutional reform package, which would include, *inter alia*, both a reinstatement of the death penalty and his true desiderata: a switch to a presidential system, which is far less popular amongst voters. In other words, the death penalty might opportunistically become a means towards the end of a presidential system.

At the moment the odds stand against such an outcome, but unlike the past, it is an outcome which cannot be dismissed today. Reinstating the death penalty – which could not be retroactive in any case – would not help the President in dealing with the aftermath of the attempted military coup and facing his internal enemies. It would also lead to the formal suspension of a process, which while hollow, nonetheless provides the overall political framework for a relationship which remains critical to Turkey, particularly in economic terms. Yet whereas the likelihood of the accession process being suspended was close to zero before 2016, it has emerged as a distinct possibility today. Some ardent supporters of the EU-Turkey relationship have even started advocating openly such a suspension on the grounds that the mutual pretence of the accession process is only exacerbating tensions in the relationship.¹⁶

The decision to abandon the process would be taken either directly by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) or indirectly by it through a reinstatement of the death penalty, forcing the decision upon the EU. While the suspension of the process would generate economic costs for Turkey, Erdoğan could calculate that these would be bearable, while on the upside Turkey would be free to pursue its independent journey towards an alternative political model – most notably Putin’s Russian “sovereign democracy”. The government would continue pushing for the reforms it saw fit. But the authoritarian bent that has characterized the Turkish leadership in recent years, the backsliding on fundamental freedoms, and the erosion of checks and balances would deepen. The conflict with the PKK would persist, and at the very best steps forward would be partial and unsustainable. For this new Turkey, the EU accession process would represent only an annoying reminder of the country’s deficits as a liberal democracy. In the government’s eyes, time would have come to put an end to the hypocrisy.

On the economic side, Turkey would not necessarily head towards economic crisis. As a country lacking hydrocarbon resources whose development hinges on integration in the global economy, Turkey would continue reaching out to regional and global markets and would maintain a degree of disci-

¹⁴ Eduard Soler I Lecha (2014) ‘Crises and Elections: What are the Consequences for Turkey’s EU Bid?’, *Global Turkey in Europe*, Policy Brief, IAI, <http://www.iai.it/content.asp?langid=1&contentid=1082>.

¹⁵ Gerald Knaus (2010) ‘A very special relationship. Why Turkey’s EU accession process will continue’, ESI, http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document_ID=118.

¹⁶ Sinan Ulgen (2016) Turkey Needs Reassurance of the West’s Friendship, *Financial Times*, 15 August, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/publications/?fa=64333>.

pline in its macroeconomic policies.¹⁷ More than ideology, economics underpins the AKP and President Erdoğan’s electoral base and in particular the rise of a new Turkish middle class which had hitherto lied at the periphery of Turkish politics.¹⁸ During the AKP’s rule in fact, per capita income in Turkey more than doubled between 2002 and 2015.¹⁹ Turkey’s openness would continue to include the EU, which would remain its first economic partner. However, the contractual basis for the EU-Turkey economic relationship would likely change. The suspension of the accession process would have an impact to EU-Turkey trade and investment. Currently over 80% of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Turkey comes from the EU. Were the accession process to be formally suspended, part of that investment would be redirected elsewhere. Even more importantly, the suspension of the accession process would lead to a scaling down of the current customs union between the EU and Turkey into a free trade agreement.²⁰ The 1996 customs union agreement made economic sense for Turkey precisely because of the prospect of full membership. Without such prospect, being in a customs union with the EU in which Turkey is obliged to implement the 54 free trade agreements the EU has signed and ratified, but has no guarantee that those 54 third states or regional organisations will sign a free trade agreement with Turkey, makes little sense. Priding itself on an assertive free trade policy, Turkey would wish to see its hands untied and pursue reciprocal external trade policy vis-à-vis emerging markets in Asia, Latin America and Africa. This would allow the export-oriented Turkish economy to continue growing. But loosening Turkey’s anchorage to the EU would also mean growing political interference in the markets and incomplete structural reforms. Furthermore European FDI in Turkey would decrease, and Turkey would struggle to raise the technological standards of its production. As a consequence, while Turkey would continue to grow at 3-4% per year, it would remain trapped into the middle-income category.

In *security* terms, Turkey would increasingly behave like a “lone wolf”, interacting with European and non-European partners in the Middle East, Eurasia or the BRICS on an erratic transactional basis. In the Middle East, Turkey would oscillate between pursuing policies that would be marked by distinctive sectarian undertones, in support of Sunni state and non-state actors,²¹ and pragmatically engaging with Russia and Iran so as to foster the Sykes-Picot order in the Middle East and above all preventing the establishment of a Kurdish state. Turkish foreign policy would be viewed in Europe with scepticism, both when it tilts ideologically towards the Sunni world and when it pragmatically warms up to Russia and Iran. The repercussions of the attempted military coup in Turkey, including the self-exile of Fetullah Gülen in Pennsylvania and the alleged role played by “NATOists” in support of Gülenists within the Turkish armed forces would lead to a further distancing of Turkey from the US as well as within NATO.²² On top, the unsolved Cyprus conflict would continue to block a constructive relationship between the EU and NATO to Russia’s satisfaction.²³ Occasional dialogue between the

¹⁷ Kemal Kirişçi (2009) ‘The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State’, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No. 40, pp. 29–57.

¹⁸ Şerif Mardin (1973) ‘Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?’, *Daedalus*, Vol. 102, No. 1, pp. 169-190.

¹⁹ In 2002 GDP per capita PPP stood at 8,780 USD, rising to 19,600 USD in 2015. Source: The World Bank: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=TR>.

²⁰ Sait Akman (2013) ‘The Turkey-EU Customs Union: From an asymmetric relationship to balanced trade’, *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/op-ed/3112/-the-turkey-eu-customs-union-from-an-asymmetric-relationship-to-balanced-trade.html>.

²¹ Selim Idiz (2013) ‘The ‘Sunnification’ of Turkish Foreign Policy’, *Turkey Pulse, Al-Monitor*, 1 March, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/akp-sunni-foreign-policy-turkey-sectarianism.html#>.

²² Cengiz Candar (2016) ‘Was Turkey’s coup attempt just an elaborate hoax by Erdogan?’, *Turkey Pulse, Al-Monitor*, 17 July, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/turkey-military-coup-attempt-more-questions-than-answers.html>.

²³ Mehmet Cebeci (2011) ‘NATO-EU Cooperation and Turkey’, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 93-103, [http://www.turkishpolicy.com/dosyalar/files/Munever%20Cebeci\(1\).pdf](http://www.turkishpolicy.com/dosyalar/files/Munever%20Cebeci(1).pdf).

EU and Turkey would take place, but on a whole the two would watch one another with circumspection and contempt.

In *energy* terms, Turkey would continue to be as an important country for the EU. But Ankara would not adopt the EU energy *acquis* and would not enter the Energy Community. Turkey would also depend increasingly on Russian gas, particularly after the cancellation of the South Stream project opened the way for “Turkish Stream”, a project whose realization became more likely after the Turkish-Russian rapprochement in the summer of 2016 patching up the row between the two following the Turkish downing of a Russian warplane in Syria. Furthermore, the persistence of the Cyprus conflict would mean that East Mediterranean gas would not be transported to Europe via Turkey but would rather be transported and liquefied in Egypt.²⁴ Finally, while the EU expects to strengthen its position as the global leader in climate action, Turkey would remain among the largest greenhouse gas emitters. Coal would continue to account for an important portion in Turkey’s energy mix, there would be no target to reduce emissions, and renewables’ objectives would not be met. Alongside, Turkey would distance itself from the EU by deepening energy cooperation with Russia in the nuclear field too.

As regards *migration and mobility*, Turkey’s migration transition would remain incomplete. Stuck in a middle-income trap, Turkey’s development would be such that alongside growing immigration from Africa, Eurasia and the Middle East, Turks would continue immigrating into Europe.²⁵ Given Turkey’s deepening authoritarianism, its purges of Gulenists or Gulen sympathizers and the persisting conflict with the PKK, an increasing number of Turkish citizens would apply for asylum in the EU. Connected to this, the EU-Turkey deal reached in the spring of 2016 and foreseeing €3bn EU assistance in support of Syrian refugees in Turkey, visa liberalization for Turkish citizens travelling to the Schengen area, and a 1:1 ratio between migrants returned to Turkey and Syrian asylum applicants to EU Member States accepted from Turkey, would break down.²⁶ The breakdown would take place because the EU would fail to live up to its commitment to liberalize visas to Turkish citizens. The scepticism across most Member States following the attempted coup, alongside the increase of asylum applications from Turkish citizens would lead to a flat rejection of the European Parliament of the visa liberalization agreement. Alongside, not only the EU aid promised to Turkey would remain largely undelivered, but the EU would also fail to move forward on accepting its promised number of Syrian asylum applicants from Turkey. In light of all this President Erdoğan would pull the plug on the EU-Turkey deal, no longer preventing migrants and refugees from making their way across the Aegean sea to Greece. Relations with the EU and in particular with Germany would hit rock bottom.

Growing estrangement would also be reflected in the *identity* relationship between Turkey and the EU. Both Turks and Europeans would end up agreeing that Turkey is not European, with large majorities in public opinion on both sides declaring their opposition to Turkey’s EU integration. This would

²⁴ Ayla Gürel and Fiona Mullen (2014) ‘Can Eastern Mediterranean Gas Discoveries Have a Positive Impact on Turkey-EU Relations?’, *Global Turkey in Europe*, Policy Brief, IAI, <http://www.iai.it/content.asp?langid=1&contentid=1080>.

²⁵ Ahmet İçduygu and A. B. Karaçay (2012) ‘Demography and Migration in Transition: Reflections on EU–Turkey Relations’, in Seçil Paçacı Elitok and Thomas Straubhaar (eds) *Turkey, Migration and the EU: Potentials, Challenges and Opportunities*, Hamburg: Hamburg University Press.

²⁶ Laura Batalla Adam (2016) ‘The Refugee Card in EU-Turkey Relations: A Necessary but Uncertain Deal’, *Global Turkey in Europe*, Policy Brief, IAI; Bianca Benvenuti (2016) ‘The Humanitarian Dimension of the Refugee Crisis in Turkey’, *Global Turkey in Europe*, Policy Brief, IAI, <http://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/humanitarian-dimension-refugee-crisis-turkey>; Ahmet İçduygu and Evin Millet (2016) ‘Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Insecure Lives in an Environment of Pseudo-Integration’, *Global Turkey in Europe*, Policy Brief, IAI, <http://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/syrian-refugees-turkey-insecure-lives-environment-pseudo-integration>.

complicate the integration of Turkish migrant communities in the EU.²⁷ A deepening crisis within Islam, the resurgence of a civilizational prism underpinning relations between the West and the Muslim world, and the crystallization of new dividing lines between liberal and “sovereign” democracies would reflect the conflictual relationship between Turkey and Europe.

Convergence: Turkey’s membership in a differentiated Union

And yet it need not be all doom and gloom. True to the cyclical nature of Turkey’s relationship with the EU, over the last year there has been a belated European awakening to Turkey’s strategic value. While foreign and security policy, energy and the economy all invariably point to Turkey’s strategic relevance for the Union, it has been migration, and in particular the so-called refugee crisis over the course of the last year, that has made the penny drop in Brussels and Berlin. In a Union in which the politics of fear sky rockets and the instincts of border-closure dominate, the image of Turkey as a buffer between peaceful and prosperous Europe and a war ravaged Middle East is just too tempting for many in the Union. Yet the Turkish government was never going to passively submit. For the AKP, snubbed by the EU over the last decade, payback time had come. Hence the request to reignite the accession process alongside demands for visa liberalization. Whereas former Prime Minister Davutoğlu was sincere in his wish to obtain visa liberalization, the request to reinvigorate the accession process was probably made more for the sake of political posturing than genuine commitment. And yet events can change the course of things. One key foreign policy event – Cyprus – could be just that: a game changer that would help transform a largely hypocritical EU and Turkish talk of accession into a more genuine talk. A non-solution in Cyprus is always the safest bet. And yet truth is that the island has seen a historically unprecedented alignment of the political stars. By the end of 2016 we will probably know if this will be another last chance missed or not. Were the Presidents Akinci and Anastasiades to prove sceptics wrong, then the artificial block to Turkey’s accession process would be removed. With the mask off, the two could either decide to call off the charade or recommit seriously to the process. It is unlikely that Turkey would become a member of the EU as we know it today by 2023. At the same time, the progressive integration of Turkey into a differentiated Union in 2023 is by no means unthinkable.²⁸ What would such convergence look like in FEUTURE?

In the political arena, this scenario foresees the EU overcoming the electoral cycles of 2017-2018 in a manner conducive to a relaunch of the EU integration project centered on the notion of differentiated integration. The elections particularly in France and Germany in 2017 and Italy in 2018 would see a (close) defeat of Eurosceptic forces. In many quarters of the EU, notably within the Visegrad countries in Central and Eastern Europe, euroscepticism instead would continue to dominate. Within such a Union, a core group of countries would decide to press for further integration in a differentiated way, with the precise shape of such differentiated integration seeing light of day by 2019.²⁹ Hence, the Eurozone would complete its journey towards a full banking union and would be backed up by a

²⁷ Can Unver (2013) ‘Changing Diaspora politics of Turkey and Public Diplomacy’, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No.1, pp. 181-189, http://www.turkishpolicy.com/dosyalar/files/vol_12-no_1-unver.pdf.

²⁸ Nathalie Tocci and Dimitar Bechev (2013) ‘Will Turkey Find its Place in Post-Crisis Europe?’ in Senem Aydın-Düzgit, Anne Duncker, Daniela Huber, E. Fuat Keyman and Nathalie Tocci (Eds) *Global Turkey in Europe: Political, Economic, and Foreign Policy Dimensions of Turkey’s Evolving Relationship with the EU*, IAI Research Papers, Edizione Nuova Cultura.

²⁹ Nathalie Tocci (2014) ‘Imagining Post-Crisis Europe’ *Imagining Europe*, Vol. 10, IAI, <http://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/imagining-post-crisis-europe>; Nicoletta Pirozzi and Pier Domenico Tortola (2016) ‘Negotiating the European Union’s Dilemmas: Proposals on Governing Europe’, Working Paper No. 16, IAI.

reasonable fiscal capacity. The Area of Freedom, Security and Justice would see the establishment of a genuine Common European Asylum System (CEAS) including only a subset of Member States in the current Schengen area. In the field of foreign and security policy, the EU would launch a permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) between a group of Member States. At the same time, the Brexit negotiations would be launched in 2017 and by 2019 the contours of a deal would start being visible, be this in the direction of a “single market minus” or an “free trade agreement plus” arrangement between the UK and the EU. Either way, the deal between the EU and the UK would be *sui generis* and represent a far more relevant point of reference for Turkey’s growing convergence with the Union, be it in economic, migration or foreign policy terms. Turkey, in other words, would progressively integrate in the EU, but without participating in its most federal elements such as the Eurozone, an eventual genuine European Common Asylum System or PESCO. This would allow for a revival of the enlargement agenda towards the Western Balkans and Turkey, and possibly also to the Eastern neighbours, which would be relaunched alongside a deepening of integration at the EU’s core.³⁰ Turkey’s full membership of the EU – but not of the Eurozone, of the migration core or of PESCO – would provide sufficient anchoring for the country to complete its transition to a mature liberal democracy, including a comprehensive resolution of the Kurdish question. Being within this outer circle, alongside other Member States with clout in European and world affairs, would not be viewed as a second class membership, less still a privileged partnership. It would represent a choice made by the Turkish government itself and not an imposition on it. The EU’s recommitment towards Turkey, and Turkey’s convergence with the EU would also enhance the Union’s outreach and clout in the eastern and southern neighbourhoods.

At the *economic* level, Turkey would continue opening up to regional and global markets, but its economic anchoring to the EU would deepen in terms of the share and quality of its trade and investment as well as the flows of human capital and knowledge. Indeed while past years had seen a reduction of the EU share of Turkey’s exports, that percentage has been rising again since 2013, while Turkey’s share of exports to Russia, Iran, Iraq and China is falling. Through its economic anchoring to the EU, Turkey would also achieve a higher savings rate, cure its chronic current account imbalances, reach a healthier energy mix, invest in education and R&D, and separate politics from the markets.

Given that Turkey’s membership would entail a resolution of the long-standing Cyprus question, this scenario would also see progress in the *security* and energy realms: NATO and the EU would establish a functioning partnership.³¹ Following the EU-NATO declaration after the publication of the EU Global Strategy and ahead of NATO’s Warsaw summit in July 2016, the resolution of the Cyprus conflict in 2017 would propel the relationship to new heights. Europeans, including Turkey, would take their security more seriously and Turkey’s progressive integration into the EU and the UK’s progressive disentangling from the EU and membership in NATO would cement a strong functioning partnership between the two. Following years of progressive divergence,³² Turkey would align itself with CFSP statements, enhancing the EU’s foreign policy projection in the neighbourhood. This would also lead to a more harmonious security relationship between Turkey and the US.

³⁰ Nathalie Tocci and Dimitar Bechev (2013) ‘Will Turkey Find its Place in Post-Crisis Europe?’, *Global Turkey in Europe*, Policy Brief, IAI, http://www.iai.it/pdf/GTE/GTE_PB_05.pdf.

³¹ Jolyon Howorth (2014) ‘European Security Post-Libya and Post-Ukraine: In Search of Core Leadership’, *Imagining Europe*, No. 8, IAI, http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/ImaginingEurope_08.pdf.

³² Independent Commission on Turkey (2014) *Turkey in the EU: The Imperative for Change*, Third Report, Open Society Institute, Istanbul, http://www.independentcommissiononturkey.org/report_2014.html.

In the *energy* realm, with the resolution of the Cyprus question, and the consolidation of the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement, Cypriot and Israeli gas, alongside Azeri, Iraqi and Iranian gas would flow through the Turkish network to Europe, strengthening EU and Turkish energy security. Turkey would also fully adopt and implement the energy *acquis*, and it would consolidate its institutional and regulatory frameworks, achieving a convergent path with the EU in terms of energy and climate policies. As a consequence, Turkey would become a true energy hub for Europe and the lynchpin of a multiple pipeline southern energy corridor.³³

As regards *migration and mobility*, Turkey would complete its migration transition from an emigration to an immigration country. In view of its economic development and reaching of a demographic plateau, Turkish immigration to Europe, notwithstanding a full liberalization of the four EU freedoms, would be contained.³⁴ With demographic growth reducing and economic growth increasing there would not be a pull factor to emigrate into the rest of the EU. Turkey would adopt a more restrictive visa policy towards its neighbours – while at the same time act as a liberalizing member state in the Council of the EU. Thus it would comply with the Schengen *acquis* but press to liberalise it through its role in decision-making.

Finally, majoritarian views amongst public opinions on both sides would converge on an inclusive definition of *identity*. Turkey would not be exclusively European, but its Europeanness 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 their commitment to the civic values enshrined in tomorrow’s Union, inclusive of Turkey, would grow. Both at the regional and global levels, Turkey’s convergence with Europe would reaffirm Europe’s reputation as a model of inclusivity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Functional Cooperation: Engagement without accession

Another set of trends and dynamics point in yet another direction, i.e., one in which Turkey and the EU would recognize one another as “significant others” without necessarily believing that Catholic marriage is their future. Like an engaged couple that consensually acknowledges they were never meant for one another, the EU and Turkey would abandon their wedding plans, but remain good friends. This would imply that the formerly taboo German concept of a “privileged partnership” or the concept of an “associate membership” the Commission’s “positive agenda” of a few years back, or the current High Level Dialogue between the EU and Turkey would become championed by Turkey itself as the dominant political-institutional framework for the relationship.

On its side, the EU would develop through a hard core of Member States pressing the integration accelerator on economic, migration and defence policy. The three largest Member States – France, Germany and Italy – would be part of such core which would in turn organize itself through a clear two-tier institutional structure. The periphery would be populated by small and medium sized states. The Brexit negotiations would turn sour, resulting in lengthy talks on an eventual free trade agreement which by 2023 would not have seen light of day. Observing this evolution and after much soul-

³³ David Koranyi and Nicolò Sartori (2013) ‘EU-Turkish Energy Relations in the Context of EU Accession Negotiations: Focus on Natural Gas’, *Global Turkey in Europe*, Policy Brief, IAI, <http://www.iai.it/content.asp?langid=1&contentid=1019>

³⁴ Refik Erzan, Umut Kuzubaş and Nilüfer Yıldız (2008) ‘Immigration Scenarios: Turkey–EU’, in Refik Erzan and Kemal Kirişçi (eds) *Turkish Immigrants in the European Union*, London: Routledge.

searching, Turkey would admit to itself and to its European partners that it saw no role for itself within such Union. Attached to its sovereign prerogatives, Turkey would neither want to be part of the federal core of the EU nor be accepted into it. But neither would it want to be part of an supranational/intergovernmental periphery alongside small European states lacking strategic relevance or autonomy. Hence, much like the UK, Turkey would want to craft its functional relationship with the EU, but unlike the EU-UK talks, the EU-Turkey relationship would be forged without the mutual acrimony generated by a messy divorce. This would be much appreciated on the side of the EU, relieved by the end of the pretence of the accession process, without bearing the consequences of open conflict or competition with Turkey, which will remain of strategic significance for the EU and its Member States across different policy dimensions. Scaling down an engagement into a friendship, both the EU and Turkey would rationally assess the mutual benefits of a functional partnership based on respective complementarities.³⁵ In the different dimensions of the relationship, what could such a scenario look like?

In the *political* arena, Turkey's domestic political development would unfold unanchored to the EU. Following the attempted military coup, President Erdoğan would succeed in progressively eradicating the presence of the Gulen movement from Turkish state structures. In doing so, the government would be backed by two opposition parties: the secularist Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) and the nationalist Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP). This newfound political unity within the country would paradoxically accelerate the constitutional moves towards a presidential system, alongside the deepening erosion of checks and balances in the country, the rule of law, and civic rights and freedoms. Up until when the goal of a presidential system would be unaccomplished, the conflict with the PKK would persist, concomitantly serving to galvanize right-wing support for the government while weakening the pro-Kurdish Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP). Once accomplished the presidential system, President Erdoğan could resume the peace process with the PKK. But Turkish-Kurdish peace would not be embedded within a new democratic civic constitution. Turkey would put the Kurdish question to rest on the basis of an amnesty to PKK militants and territorial autonomy for the south-east. The EU's sway over Turkey's political dynamics would be on a par with that of the United States, creating ripples without lasting impact.

The *economic* side of the relationship would deepen. The customs union would modernize, becoming instrumental in refocusing investor interest in Turkey by providing a reliable reform agenda. The upgrade of the customs union could come upon impulse of a revamped EU trade negotiation agenda, including negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), as well as trade talks with Japan, Mercosur and ASEAN amongst others.³⁶ In particular, the EU-Turkey customs union would be expanded to cover services, agriculture and public procurement, and it would provide Turkey with a stronger voice in the EU's Common Commercial Policy. In return, Turkey would be granted an informal seat on the EU side of the trade negotiation table, notably, but not exclusively, as regards TTIP.

³⁵ Sinan Ulgen (2012) 'Avoiding a Divorce: A Virtual EU Membership for Turkey', *Carnegie Europe*, 5 December, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2012/12/05/avoiding-divorce-virtual-eu-membership-for-turkey>

³⁶ Kemal Kirişçi (2014) 'Turkey and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership', *Turkey Project Policy Paper*, No. 2, Brookings Institution, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2013/09/turkey-transatlantic-trade-and-investment-partnership-kirischi>; Ulgen, S. (2014) 'Locked In or Left Out? Transatlantic Trade Beyond Brussels and Washington', *Carnegie Europe*, 3 June, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/2014/06/03/locked-in-or-left-out-transatlantic-trade-beyond-brussels-and-washington/hcf1>.

Cooperation would also deepen on *security* matters. Since 2010 foreign policy cooperation between the EU and Turkey has deepened.³⁷ Such cooperation would become institutionalized, gauging respective foreign policy positions, and seeking cooperation when both sides would see fit. Foreseeably, there could be useful cooperation on some dossiers, notably the Balkans, while positions on Middle Eastern and Eurasian questions would only partially overlap. At the same time, the threat posed by ungoverned spaces and non-state actors in the south would encourage Turkey and the EU to seek cooperation also on the complex Middle Eastern terrain.

On *energy* policy, Turkey would remain a strategic country for Europe. The Azerbaijan-Turkey-EU linkage through TANAP and TAP would be realized, but this would only represent a partial response to the EU's energy security puzzle. With the completion of a Russian-Turkish gas pipeline, Russian gas would eventually reach Italian shores, increasing the EU's dependence on Russian gas (via Turkey). At the same time, Turkey would not fully implement the EU's energy *acquis*, and its close relationship with Azerbaijan and Russia alongside its troubled relations with Cyprus, Israel, Iraq and Iran would prevent it from becoming a reliable energy hub. Turkey's partial compliance with the EU *acquis* would also slow down the harmonization of its renewables and energy efficiency legislation.

There would also be functional cooperation on *asylum, immigration and visa policies* with the EU-Turkey deal surviving and developing into the first step of a more structured cooperation. Specifically, Turkey would obtain visa free entry into the EU.³⁸ Its solid cooperation on readmission, the tightening of its border policy, cooperation over counter-terrorism, and the upgrade of its migration governance would contribute to the conclusion of the visa liberalization roadmap in 2017.³⁹ In view of the faded prospect of EU membership, member states would grant Turks visa free entry into Schengen as a consolation prize. At the same time, Turkey would remain the host country of missions of Syrian refugees who would gradually transition from the phases of admission and settlement to those of integration and naturalization.⁴⁰ The EU would support this transition notably redirecting the significant sums of money currently dedicated to the accession process largely to this delicate, complex and costly transition process.

In this scenario, the *identity* question underpinning EU-Turkey relations would linger on. Turkey's hybrid identity and the EU's undefined one would permit the two to interact without bounding themselves to one another. The identity crisis in EU-Turkey relations would persist. But 'when your identity crisis has lasted for some 200 years it is no longer a crisis. It is your identity'.⁴¹

³⁷ Nathalie Tocci (2012) 'A Trilateral EU-US-Turkey Strategy for the Neighbourhood: The Urgency of Now', Working Paper, IAI, <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iaiwp1208.pdf>.

³⁸ Gerald Knaus (2014) 'EU-Turkey Relations: A Visa Breakthrough?', *Global Turkey in Europe*, Policy Brief, IAI, <http://www.iai.it/content.asp?langid=1&contentid=1079>.

³⁹ Juliette Tolay (2014) 'The EU and Turkey's Asylum Policy in Light of the Syrian Crisis', *Global Turkey in Europe*, Policy Brief, IAI, <http://www.iai.it/content.asp?langid=1&contentid=1040>.

⁴⁰ Ahmet İçduygu and Evin Millet (2016) 'Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Insecure Lives in an Environment of Pseudo-Integration', *Global Turkey in Europe*, Policy Brief, IAI, <http://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/syrian-refugees-turkey-insecure-lives-environment-pseudo-integration>.

⁴¹ Selim Deringil (2007) 'The Turks and 'Europe': The Argument from History', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 5, pp.709-723, at pp. 721.

Table 1 FEUTURE ideal type scenarios in glance

		Conflict and competition – no membership	Cooperation – engagement without accession	Convergence – full membership in a differentiated EU
Empirical Features	Political	Suspension of accession process either directly by Turkey or indirectly by violating the Copenhagen criteria – e.g. reinstatement of death penalty; Turkey backsliding into authoritarianism; EU dominated by crises (euroscepticism, BREXIT, migration etc.)	Functional relationship between Turkey-EU; Turkey moving to presidential system, partial solution to Kurdish problem; EU establishes functional partnerships with several close non-EU members including post Brexit UK and Turkey	EU develops into a two-level Union with deeper integration at the core through the Euro-zone, migration policy and permanent structured cooperation in security and defence; Turkey is a full member but not member of the federal core
	Security	Increasing distanced Turkey-Western world; Turkey drawn into turmoil in the Middle East and Eurasia; regarding the US/NATO and the EU, allowing only occasion dialogue	Institutionalized foreign policy dialogue	Functioning NATO-Turkey partnership; Turkey aligns with CFSP; EU projects itself more effectively in neighbourhood
	Economic	Less economic cooperation downscaling from customs union to FTA; decreased EU FDI in Turkey; Turkey middle-income trap	Deepening of the economic relationship; Customs Union persist with possible upgrade and extension	Deepening of economic anchoring; Turkey-EU interdependence grows; Turkey becomes high income economy and fulfils the Copenhagen economic criteria
	Energy / Climate	Turkey does not develop into an energy hub for Europe	Turkey as limited energy hub for Europe	Turkey becomes an energy hub for Europe and adopts the energy <i>acquis</i>
	Migration / Mobility	Failure of EU-Turkey deal; Turkey abandons the EU-Turkey refugee deal as the EU rejects visa liberalization	Solid cooperation on migration; EU-Turkey deal survives and develops into further cooperation (EU assistance to refugees and readmission); Visa liberalization	Turkey as liberalization promoter in the EU's policies on migration; Turkey completes its migration transition from emigration to immigration country; restricts visa policy in neighbourhood but pushes for liberalization inside the EU
	Identity	Growing ideational estrangement	Interaction without convergence; Identity crisis in EU-Turkey relations persists	Inclusive definition of identity

Alternative Feutures?

At first sight these three scenarios point to alternative feutures. Conflict, convergence and cooperation have distinctly different implications for the institutional, political, security, economic, energy, societal and ideational structures and dynamics governing the EU-Turkey relationship. And yet the ‘feuture’ may have something else in store. This paper began by reminiscing about a century old cyclical relationship, in which ambiguity and hybridity have been the norm, not the exception, not for years but rather centuries. Why then imagine that the next 5, 6 or even 10 years – a long term prospect for policy makers but a tiny drop in the ocean of history – would crystallize into anything like steady state? Some drivers will push more towards one scenario, others towards another. Some drivers will weigh more than others, and their weight may change over time depending on domestic, European, regional or global circumstances. But perhaps the beauty and in some respects the tragedy of this relationship is precisely its protracted, perhaps perennial ambiguity. Perhaps the ‘Feuture’ of EU-Turkey relationship is even one in which elements of all three scenarios will continue to uneasily coexist in an unending unsteady state of attraction and repulsion.