

## 11 TAKE-AWAYS FROM AND FOR FEUTURE

Compiled by **FUNDA TEKIN**  
Project Director, University of Cologne

### ANALYSIS

#### 1. On narratives of and identity in a contested f(e)uture

In terms of identity representation, EU-Turkey relations are fluctuating and changes can materialize very quickly in response to political events. However, there are also certain long-term drivers determining the relationship in the identity dimensions – such as mutual constitution of identity in relation to difference where Turkey is discursively constructed as a significant “Other” for Europe and vice versa or growing political and cultural intimacy. In the past years, the (perceived) lack of Europe’s support to Turkey against security threats is a driver away from cooperation. Additionally, the rise of anti-European/Western nationalism fueled by the governing party in Turkey and the growing nationalism in Europe reinforced anti-immigrant politics and Euroscepticism and have fed into a conflictual relationship with mutual escalation trends.

In terms of narratives, it is crucial to understand how mental maps are framed and shape policies on EU-Turkey relations. The two sides do not share the same narratives of their past or future. Thus, there are several competing narratives in the EU and Turkey. Therefore, the room for maneuver is limited: narratives in Turkey and the EU can represent either constraints or opportunities for present and future political action. The dominance of the goal of full membership in Turkish narratives coupled with an increasing unresponsiveness of European actors to this goal represents one of the main stumbling stones for framing the relationship in the near future.

#### 2. On the scenario(s) – different f(e)utures ahead

During the past three years EU-Turkey relations have reached an all-time low for various reasons, including the process of de-democratisation in Turkey, rise of nationalism and populism in the EU and Turkey, bilateral conflicts between Turkey and (key) EU member states such as Germany, prevailing conflict with Cyprus (with the peace process failing in 2017). At the same time, the relationship is constantly in motion and from a historical perspective ups and downs can be identified. Additionally, it is multifaceted including multiple dimensions, which means that

conflicts in certain dimensions such as politics or security need to be assessed in view of demands and interests for cooperation in other dimensions such as economics, migration or energy.

As we are looking at a fluctuating relationship and not a static steady state, we should not aim for a definite endpoint of the relationship. We are facing co-existing scenarios of conflict, cooperation and convergence and this situation is there to stay by 2023 and beyond – which we term a scenario of “conflictual cooperation”.

### 3. On the drivers – “it takes two to tango” in the f(e)uture

Recent developments in Turkey estranging the country from the EU and its political criteria for accession (see annual Turkey Reports from the Commission) should not blind us to the drivers in the EU that affect the EU-Turkey relationship just as much. FEUTURE identifies a ‘Turkey fatigue’ rather than a general ‘enlargement fatigue’. This causes a general feeling of mistrust and lack of confidence in the relationship both in public opinion and government relations. Many in the EU associate Turkey with authoritarianism, while Turkish narratives accuse the EU of double standards and a lack of interest in pulling Turkey into the fold. This has fed into a vicious circle of positions. The high degree of domestic politicisation of the EU-Turkey relationship on both sides has played an important role and fuelled this mutually reinforcing escalation ladder. In terms of the future relationship the next generation of leaders on both sides can play a crucial role. In 2019 a new European Parliament has been elected with an increased share of populist with a nation-first agenda among MEPs. Additionally, leadership of the European Commission and the European Council has changed. In Turkey, it is highly unlikely that the newly constitutionalised executive Presidentialism will have changed by 2023.

## ASSESSMENT

### 4. On the way out – into a differentiated f(e)uture

FEUTURE’s analysis has confirmed the conventional wisdom that an accession procedure is not on the political agenda anymore. At the same time, findings also show that the probability of formally ending this procedure is rather low. Nevertheless, it is time for thinking “out of the accession box”. For conceptualizing such a framework, differentiated integration becomes key because it makes the separation line between membership and non-membership thinner.

If differentiated integration becomes the ‘new normal’ of European integration, the scope, nature and form of membership as such will transform, too. Forms of partial membership might hence become the rule rather than the exception and thus might not represent some sort of second-class membership – as feared by Turkey. Although this evolution is less likely to have fully materialized by 2023, this trend has a high potential for framing and shaping the EU-Turkey relationship into a productive, multifaceted dynamic.

## 5. On dynamic association – how to make the f(e)uture work

The findings of the FEUTURE project lead us to conclude that the EU-Turkey relationship is too complex and volatile to be captured by any single model of differentiated integration or association initiated so far between the EU and third countries – although there were some political claims that Brexit could represent a blueprint. Multidimensional EU-Turkey ties have historically proven resilient amidst oscillations between conflict and convergence. We argue that the EU and Turkey will have to continue to engage with each other creating and using an innovative institutional relationship, which we term a “dynamic association”. Its main aim is the mitigation of conflictual dynamics while fostering cooperation – and potentially, trends towards convergence – through a rule-based framework.

The principal rationale guiding the idea of dynamic association is that we should not do away with the accession framework despite the current impasse in the negotiations and the low likelihood of Turkish membership in the foreseeable future. At the same time, EU-Turkey functional cooperation would be promoted based on mutual interests, that is, particularly in the economic sphere, where convergent trends can be maximized. But this could also be realized in the realms of migration and mobility, energy and security, where ties could be left to advance on a more sector-specific and ad hoc basis. What this means in practice is that the dynamic association relationship would initially be established in parallel, rather than as an alternative to Turkey’s EU accession. The aim is to preserve the EU’s democratic anchor for Turkey as such and prevent the relations from becoming purely transactional into and beyond the 2023 timeframe.

## 6. On areas of possible cooperation – the many faces of the f(e)uture

In spite of dominant conflictual trends in the political dimension FEUTURE has highlighted the potential for cooperation in the other thematic dimensions being aware that in each dimension there are also conflictual trends to different degrees (ranging from economics with the least conflict potential to security with the highest):

- Security: in the homeland security dimension of terrorism (intelligence, law enforcement, border security, etc.; cooperation against transnational terrorist networks or lone-wolf attackers), addressing root causes of terrorism and instability (such as development assistance, post-conflict reconstruction, conflict prevention, peacebuilding), cooperation against an aggressive Russia and other third parties on issues of shared interest, and potentially on Cyprus if there is political will for changing the reality for the island.
- Migration: in the dimension of irregular transit migration through the EU-Turkey statement on migration and in terms of the issue of visa liberalization that would help forge closer people-to-people contacts and even expand economic activity.
- Energy: given the common energy security challenges and the sides’ geographical proximity there is potential for pragmatic collaboration. In a context of serious decarbonization commitments and policies at the global level, the EU-Turkey partnership could be revitalized. As of today, energy cooperation retains a value per se, though not anymore as a driver towards deeper relations.
- Economics: the fluctuating, albeit uninterrupted, flow of goods, services and finance as well as the mutual dependences consequently generated, through thick and thin of a long, often turbulent history, have allowed the relationship to break through the upper-

threshold of cooperation and creep into the realm of convergence, wherein collaboration continues and even becomes strengthened through institutional backing.

## ADVICE

### 7. On upgrading the Customs Union – the f(e)uture’s backbone

The Customs Union and therefore the evolution of the trade relationship between the EU and Turkey remain the centrepiece of dialogue as the accession talks are at an impasse due to the volatile nature of their political relationship. Based on FEUTURE’s findings we perceive the modernization/upgrade of the Customs Union to be the key to the creation of a dynamic association framework. This is for economic, political and strategical reasons. Economically modernization would expand the Customs Union to include services. This would require Turkey to liberalize its services, professional services in particular, which would serve as a new source of productivity gain for the whole economy and could revitalize the stagnating level of Foreign Direct Investment into Turkey. Economic gains for the EU are less evident but could be large if the market for public procurement would be opened. Politically, the EU would not have to deal with the membership option for the time being and could avoid the political tensions that come with it. Thus, upgrading the Customs Union would preserve hints of Europe’s “transformative power” at times when the EU’s conditionality based on the *acquis* is crippled in a frozen accession procedure. The upgrade would require some key economic governance reforms in Turkey for example in the procurement sector. Strategically, it prepares Turkey for “docking-in” to any future free trade agreement. This is crucial for Turkey. For the relationship between the EU and Turkey, this approach would detach functional negotiations on practical matters from broader political issues that have brought the accession process to death’s doors.

### 8. On stumbling blocks – delaying the f(e)uture

FEUTURE has to consider a number of challenges for establishing a dynamic association framework. Turkey’s ongoing democratic backsliding which has institutionally stabilized around a one-man-rule following the entry into force of the executive presidency in June 2018, now firmly contradicts the political conditionality attached not only to the accession process but also to the Customs Union negotiations. On the EU’s side, it is very unlikely that this stance on conditionality will soften in the near future as it is supported both by Turkoskeptic voices from the far right as well as from the left based on human rights claims. This has also influenced the campaigning for the European elections in May 2019, that raised the levels of domestic politicization of EU-Turkey relations.

Another political obstacle for the Customs Union upgrade but also other forms of institutional cooperation that would integrate Turkey more closely into the EU (e.g. PESCO) is the likely position of Cyprus. This is inevitably linked to the unresolved Cyprus dispute. A settlement of the conflict represents a key precondition for any dynamic in the EU-Turkey relationship.

There are also some institutional challenges to consider on a more practical level. It is not clear whether Ankara would agree to differentially integrate into an association which would deny it a formal say in EU decision-making. And vice versa, in the current political context (i.e. given the Brexit drama and the EU elections of May), Brussels itself may not be so enthusiastic about investing in developing a new institutional framework with Turkey.

## 9. On the importance of international dynamics – the global context of the f(e)uture

FEUTURE research has not limited itself to the analysis of drivers in the EU and in Turkey but has also considered the importance of dynamics in the neighbourhood and on the global scene. In terms of international dynamics, Turkey now lacks the active support of a crucial ally, the United States (US), for making progress in its relations with the EU. The Trump administration's ongoing retreat from the liberal international order, and its insistence that the US play a less active role in propping up its related institutional mechanisms, has harmed the relationship in the security, economic, energy and migration dimension. In the security dimension international dynamics play out particularly. FEUTURE identified certain drivers that might question the importance of the West for Turkey and vice versa: threat perceptions differ in terms of the EU often neglecting Turkish security concerns especially in the Kurdish and Syrian case while Turkey not taking the same position towards Russia as the US and the EU do (e.g. purchase of weapons from Russia). Therefore, considerations of the future of the EU-Turkey relationship demand more reflection about the fundamental trends in international politics and the roles the EU and EU member states as well as Turkey could play. In addition to considerations of the EU's and Turkey's relations with the US, China and Russia this would include the debate about the search for a regional balance in Syria, Iraq, Iran and the Gulf. Last but not least, EU-Turkey relations will always have to be considered in view of the geopolitical context. The aim would be the stabilization in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. This would demand a greater geopolitically oriented focus from the EU and in institutional terms the permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) might provide a starting point for cooperation.

## 10. Be aware of the unknown unknowns in the f(e)uture

The FEUTURE project has witnessed the speed of developments unfolding with the EU-Turkey relationship between 2015 and 2019: from aiming for the revitalization of accession negotiations in 2015 to the demand for suspending the accession procedure (latest vote in the EP on 13 March 2019); from high chances to solving the Cyprus dispute at the end of 2016 to closing the door on it for the time being in 2017; from acknowledging the mutual need for energy cooperation to rifts over energy drillings off the coast of Cyprus in 2018 – just to name a few. This in itself represents a challenge to researching EU-Turkey relations, because they represent a 'moving target'. Additionally, realities might not only change fast but also in extremes. This means that so-called wild cards (unknown unknowns; improbable but deeply disruptive events) can materialize and mix-up the entire f(e)uture. Research can do its best to facture wild cards into the equation but there are limits to it. Therefore, f(e)uture needs constant observation in terms of analysis, assessment and advice including the elaboration of scenarios that seem far-fetched but still might elucidate key elements of the relationship.

## 11. On the future after f(e)uture

Three years ago the FEUTURE consortium set out to “map dynamics and test scenarios of EU-Turkey relations”. At the end of the project lifetime we have gained substantial and comprehensive insights into this relationship. But as the research topic is a moving target our assignment does not end with the end of the project. It will remain highly important to continue research and cooperation among researchers from the EU and Turkey with the aim to continue an enriching dialogue and exchange of thoughts. Building on FEUTURE’s research findings there are certain areas and issues that deserve further detailed analysis such as on global drivers including the ‘Russian factor’, questions of multilateralism and geopolitics; on the Cyprus issue; in the political dimension on the rise of populism on both sides; on establishing a balance sheet for the costs of non-integration and cooperation; on politicization of EU-Turkey relations and how the issue is framed in national debates; on member state positions towards EU-Turkey relations and on the question of Turkey’s liberal market economy – to name only a few.

Contributions by:



**Istanbul  
Bilgi University**

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**THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO**  
الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة

**Sabancı  
Universitesi**



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# ABOUT FEUTURE

FEUTURE sets out to explore fully different options for further EU-Turkey cooperation in the next decade, including analysis of the challenges and opportunities connected with further integration of Turkey with the EU.

To do so, FEUTURE applies a comprehensive research approach with the following three main objectives:

1. Mapping the dynamics of the EU-Turkey relationship in terms of their underlying historical narratives and thematic key drivers.
2. Testing and substantiating the most likely scenario(s) for the future and assessing the implications (challenges and opportunities) these may have on the EU and Turkey, as well as the neighbourhood and the global scene.
3. Drawing policy recommendations for the EU and Turkey on the basis of a strong evidence-based foundation in the future trajectory of EU-Turkey relations.

FEUTURE is coordinated by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Wessels, Director of the Centre for Turkey and European Union Studies at the University of Cologne and Dr. Nathalie Tocci, Director of Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome.

The FEUTURE consortium consists of 15 renowned universities and think tanks from the EU, Turkey and the neighbourhood.


*Coordination Office at University of Cologne:*

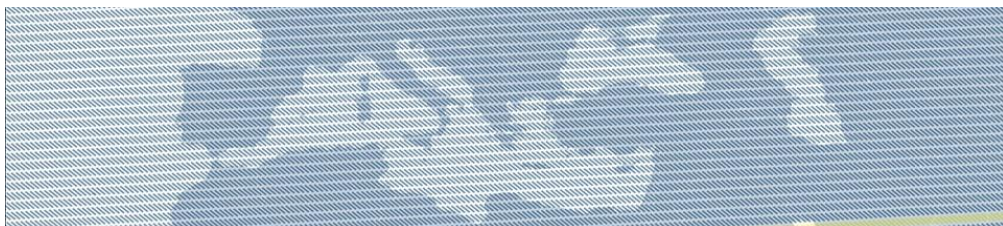
Project Director: Dr. Funda Tekin  
Project- and Financial Manager: Hanna Lisa Hauge / Darius Ribbe  
Email: wessels@uni-koeln.de

Website: [www.feuture.eu](http://www.feuture.eu)

 [facebook.com/feuture.eu](https://facebook.com/feuture.eu)

 [@FEUTURE\\_EU](https://twitter.com/FEUTURE_EU)

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