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## **EU-Turkey Relations: The Case For A Strategic Partnership**

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## Contents

Chapter 1- Introduction and Context.....	3
Overview .....	3
Approach and Outline.....	4
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Historical Context.....	9
Chapter 2- Current EU-Turkey Relations- Barriers to Accession.....	16
Cyprus .....	16
Governance and Human Rights .....	20
Economics .....	23
Chapter 3- Decision-making and Public Opinion .....	26
Decision-making in the Council.....	26
The Attitude of the European Parliament .....	26
Public Opinion in the EU .....	28
Public Opinion in Turkey .....	30
Chapter 4- The Strategic Partnership.....	32
Migration .....	32
Security .....	34
Energy .....	40
Chapter 5- The Difference made by a Strategic Partnership .....	43
Funding .....	43
Trust.....	44
Reduced conditionality .....	44
More cooperative EU veto players .....	45
A new conceptual approach .....	45
New ideas.....	46
Chapter 6- Prognosis and Conclusion .....	47
Prognosis.....	47
Conclusion.....	52
Bibliography: .....	54
Academic sources (books, journals and articles):.....	54
EU sources:.....	57
News reports:.....	61
Other:.....	62

## Chapter 1- Introduction and Context

### **Overview**

The European Union and Turkey are both major regional and to some extent even global powers which, like any actors, have a variety of interests and which grapple with a number of threats and vulnerabilities. As geographically close and historically connected neighbours, EU-Turkey relations are longstanding and multi-faceted, with the interactions between them reflecting their interests.

The relationship between the European Union and Turkey and their cooperation has for years and even decades primarily taken place within the context of Turkey's attempts to join the Union, currently in the form of an accession process which has formally been underway since 2005. Indeed, the perceived importance of this framework is such that a joint EU-Turkey statement from 2016 describes the accession negotiations as 'the cornerstone of EU-Turkey relations'.<sup>1</sup>

However, this accession narrative has faced and continues to face a number of existential obstacles that call the entire accession process into doubt, ranging from clashes over the Cyprus conflict to a sharp deterioration in the governance and human rights situation in Turkey, clashes of interests which take on still greater significance as barriers to accession when viewed through a neo-functionalist lens. Moreover, Turkish accession to the EU has faced substantial opposition among the European public, and increasingly among the Turkish public too, which viewed through the lens of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) only serves to compound the effect of the clash of interests. FPA further shows how the effects of divergent interests and oppositional public opinion are further amplified by the decision-making process in the EU, which makes accession even more unlikely.

Given the fact that accession is not realistic under the current, longstanding circumstances, and that the EU and Turkey would nevertheless benefit from cooperation in certain areas, a new framework for relations is needed. The two parties should instead pursue a 'Strategic Partnership' (a tool which Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira identify as increasingly important), similar to those the EU established with countries like Mexico and South Korea, in which the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Joint Statement Following the High-Level Political Dialogue Between the EU and Turkey'; European Commission; EU, 01.2016 [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_STATEMENT-16-156\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-16-156_en.htm) [accessed 15.06.19].

damaging fiction of accession is dropped for a more pragmatic and ultimately effective relationship which focuses on shared interests without cooperation being hindered by conflicting interests and FPA obstacles.<sup>2</sup> Such a model would be much more effective from a neo-functionalist standpoint, and could provide the foundation for a reset relationship between the EU and Turkey in which further cooperation can be pursued and relations improved, to the point where a fresh, better grounded attempt at accession would not be out of the question in future.

## **Approach and Outline**

This thesis will investigate EU-Turkey relations through the lens of neo-functionalism and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). The investigation will be guided by the research question ‘Should Turkish accession to the EU be replaced with a Strategic Partnership?’, the relevance of which is laid bare by the poor state of relations under the current accession framework and the need for both sides to nonetheless cooperate on a number of issues. This question will be answered by applying one or both of these theories to various fields of interaction between the EU and Turkey, showing the reasons for the failure of accession and why it should be replaced with a Strategic Partnership.

The structure of the thesis will be as follows. In Chapter 1, the theoretical approaches used to analyse EU-Turkey relations will be discussed in greater depth, and the historical context laid out. Chapter 2 will examine the fields in which conflict between the EU and Turkey prevents accession. The obstacles to Turkish membership of the EU will be further explored from an FPA perspective in Chapter 3, which will look at the role of decision-making in the EU and of public opinion. Chapter 4 will outline the areas in which the EU and Turkey could cooperate in the proposed Strategic Partnership. Chapter 5 will explore the advantages that a Strategic Partnership could bring that would make it a preferable alternative to accession. Finally, Chapter 6 will conclude following a prognosis of the likelihood of accession being replaced with a Strategic Partnership in practice.

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<sup>2</sup> L.C. Ferreira-Pereira, A.V.G. Vieira, ‘Introduction: The European Union’s Strategic Partnerships: conceptual approaches, debates and experiences’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* Vol 29 (1) (2016), 3, 4.

## Theoretical Framework

### *EU Actorness*

In order to examine the relationship between the EU and Turkey, a theoretical framework is needed to provide a lens through which to analyse it. Finding the most fitting framework calls for a quick qualification of the issue under investigation, and a categorisation of the two principle actors involved. The issue of EU-Turkey relations is, needless to say, a primarily bilateral subject which necessarily concerns the interactions between two actors (as is commonplace on the international stage). Considering that the actors are legally equal, that their relationship plays out on a primarily international level and that it is primarily dealt with by the foreign affairs organs of said actors, the relationship can be classified to some extent as a foreign policy issue. However, considering that this foreign policy issue is one which has taken place within the continuing narrative of Turkey's accession to the EU, and the extent of existing and potential cooperation (including instances which involve supranational structures, such as the Customs Union), there is also some justification for framing the EU-Turkey relationship as an integration issue. This complexity calls for an equally complex theoretical approach.

It is at this point that a little more must be said about the actors in question. Turkey is easy to categorise; it is (in IR terms) a typical state with full sovereignty (with one key exception; trade), a foreign policy directed by the central government, and various foreign policy tools at its disposal (including a military). The same cannot be said about the EU, whose *sui generis* status as an international actor is rather ambiguous. In their 1999 work on the subject, Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler conclude that the EU is indeed an actor, although in a special and limited sense.<sup>3</sup> However, much has changed since the late 90s, and the EU has expanded its foreign policy competences and activity to the point where the idea of the EU as an actor seems to be accepted in contemporary literature on the Union's foreign policy; Magnus Ekgren for example often comfortably referring to the EU as an 'actor'.<sup>4</sup> Overall, it can be concluded that the EU can, for the purposes of EU-Turkey relations, be considered as an international actor and agent which can formulate and execute its own foreign policy.

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<sup>3</sup> C. Bretherton, J. Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor* (London: Routledge, 1999), 44.

<sup>4</sup> M. Ekgren, *Explaining the European Union's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 4, 15.

With both parties established as actors, the following theoretical approaches can be safely applied.

### *Neo-functionalism*

Neo-functionalism is an approach to European integration which has its roots in ‘functionalism’.<sup>5</sup> Functionalism was pioneered by David Mitrany, who argued that international cooperation is most effective when concentrated on specific fields (functions), which would then necessitate the creation of institutions to aid this cooperation.<sup>6</sup> However, the overestimation on the part of functionalists of the willingness of states to surrender their sovereignty in meaningful ways to large international institutions created the impetus to create a revised theory known as ‘neo-functionalism’.<sup>7</sup>

Directly defining neo-functionalism is not straightforward, as different scholars, although all referring back to its pioneer Ernst Haas, view it in different ways and emphasise different aspects of it. For Heywood, neo-functionalism represents a change in perspective from functionalism, with a focus not on recognising any increasing international interdependence, but on ‘interplay between politics and economics’, and especially emphasises its close links with European integration.<sup>8</sup> Özen on the other hand sees neo-functionalism in what might be called a more “ambitious” way, describing it as a mixture of functionalism and federalism which seeks to ultimately create a supranational state or community through ‘step-by-step’ integration in certain fields (starting with economics) which then leads to integration in other fields (such as politics).<sup>9</sup> However, Bergmann and Niemann take almost the opposite approach, and take a more intergovernmental view of neo-functionalism. For them, the regional integration process takes place through the interactions (often on a supranational level) between actors with interests who build coalitions and learn from their experiences.<sup>10</sup> Case-by-case decision-making takes precedence over ‘grand designs’, with path dependency

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<sup>5</sup> A. Heywood, *Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 484-6; Ç. Özen, ‘Neo-functionalism and The Change in The Dynamics of EU-Turkey Relations’, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 3 (3) (1998), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Heywood, *Global Politics*, 486.

<sup>7</sup> Heywood, *Global Politics*, 486.

<sup>8</sup> Heywood, *Global Politics*, 486.

<sup>9</sup> Özen, ‘The Change in The Dynamics’, 2.

<sup>10</sup> J. Bergmann, A. Niemann, ‘Chapter 11: Theories of European Integration’, K.E. Jorgensen, A.K. Aarstad, E. Drieskens, K. Laatikainen, B. Tonra (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2015), 6.

(although not explicitly identified as such by the authors) creating unexpected results of a decision in the future.<sup>11</sup>

With these different perspectives on neo-functionalism discussed, an attempt must now be made to reconcile them to try and find a common definition of neo-functionalism so as to be able to apply it to EU-Turkey relations. A point on which all of the authors agree is in their recognition of the concept of ‘spillover’ as a key feature of neo-functionalism, whereby cooperation and integration in one field creates pressure to cooperate in another.<sup>12</sup> Concerning points on which the scholars do not directly agree, a closer inspection reveals a way to harmonise them to some extent. For example, Heywood’s emphasis on European integration does not preclude the possibility of its being applied to other cases (even though he points out that its model has not been followed outside of Europe to any significant extent) in theory.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Özen’s focus on an end goal of creating supranational structures and Bergmann and Niemann’s scepticism of consciously pursuing such ‘grand designs’ are two superficially opposed perspectives that can in fact be reconciled by recognising that such goals are subjective and can vary on a case-by-case basis; just because neo-functionalism might work as a method to promote supranationalism, does not mean it cannot also be applied to pursue less ambitious integration.

On the subject of ‘integration’, this concept should be more closely examined. All of these scholars use this term when discussing neo-functionalism, yet their different understandings on what neo-functionalism actually is suggest that the idea of ‘integration’ is flexible. Integration necessarily involves some degree of cooperation; after all, it is difficult to harmonise economic standards, coordinate policies or establish international structures (or however integration might manifest itself) without cooperation between the participants. This is where Bergmann and Niemann’s mention of self-interested actors becomes important, as these interests are what motivate cooperation and integration, which goes back to Mitrany’s functionalist idea that states performing functions together is more effective than them being performed individually. Thus, ‘integration’ can also be understood as ‘cooperation’, especially when the aims are less ambitious.

With the main differences between the scholars sufficiently reconciled, and the key concept of integration defined, it is now possible to create a definition of neo-functionalism which can

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<sup>11</sup> Bergmann, ‘Theories’, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Heywood, *Global Politics*, 486; Özen, ‘The Change in The Dynamics’, 2; Bergmann, ‘Theories’, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Heywood, *Global Politics*, 486.

be applied to EU-Turkey relations. Neo-functionalism can thus be defined as an incrementalist theory of cooperation between actors whose interaction takes place on the basis of shared interests. While the initial goal of this cooperation is primarily for the actors to perform functions more effectively through cooperation, the spillover effect can create incentives and pressures to cooperate in other fields and create supranational structures, whether intentionally or unintentionally. This is not to say that the creation of supranational institutions is inevitable; should spillover not occur to a sufficient extent, or should the goals of optimising function performance through integration not allow for the creation of supranational institutions (for example, in functions in which states do not wish to lose sovereignty), then these institutions will not be established.

The neo-functionalist theory of integration, though originally developed for and applied to European integration in terms of the development of the EU, is actually well suited to the study of EU-Turkey relations.<sup>14</sup> As with the actors playing a role in EU integration, the actors in the relationship between the EU and Turkey have interests which guide their interactions, sometimes in very clear ways (e.g. in the case of the EU-Turkey Statement, discussed later). Pursuing these interests and performing their functions (as actors) sometimes motivates the EU and Turkey to cooperate (cooperation which, given the flexibility of the term, can be seen as a form of loose integration), but with their failure to cooperate in other, contradictory interests helping to explain the lack of progress in the accession process. There are even some supranational structures in place, such as the Customs Union, adding to the legitimacy of taking a neo-functionalist approach. Moreover, the relevance of the neo-functionalist concept of spillover can be seen both in the failure of accession (due to a lack of spillover taking place, or even the occurrence of detrimental ‘negative spillover’) and the merits of a Strategic Partnership. Overall, analysing EU-Turkey relations through a neo-functionalist lens lays bare both the reasons for the current impossibility of accession, and helps to explain the advantages of replacing it with a Strategic Partnership.

### *FPA*

The concept of ‘Foreign Policy Analysis’ (FPA) is an approach which tries to go beyond the geopolitical map when examining foreign policy by bringing in additional levels of analysis

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<sup>14</sup> Özen, ‘The Change in The Dynamics’, 2; Bergmann, ‘Theories’, 6.

which include the goings-on within a state or other actor.<sup>15</sup> FPA focuses on the ‘factors’ which shape a foreign policy, ranging from the situation on the international scene, to the decision-making process of an actor, to public opinion.<sup>16</sup> It also addresses the phenomenon of ‘two-level games’; decision-makers making decisions in both a domestic and international context, with factors in one context having an effect on decisions taken in the other.<sup>17</sup> This can also be applied to the interactions between Turkey and the EU, with their actor-specific interests playing out in within the international level of their relations.

FPA is indeed well suited to an analysis of EU-Turkey relations. Not only is the relationship complex, but the multiplicity of factors which influence it demands a theory which directly deals with such factors. Moreover, as we shall see, these factors are by no means concentrated at the highest levels (i.e. of decision-making), but in fact play out at multiple levels. This is especially true for the EU, whose sovereignty (especially in terms of foreign policy) it shares to a substantial degree with its member states. The principle of conferral states that competences which are not specifically granted to the EU in its treaties remain under the control of member states, including most aspects of defence and foreign policy.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, where the EU does have a role in foreign policy (especially in questions like accession) the European Council/Council of the European Union will usually vote unanimously, effectively giving every member state a veto in these cases, and making both the internal situation of individual member states and their bilateral relations with Turkey potentially decisive factors in certain situations.<sup>19</sup> As such, FPA can be very useful as a supportive theory to use alongside the neo-functionalist approach, helping to explain how factors within the EU and Turkey impact the larger interactions between the two actors.

## Historical Context

In order to make an effective analysis of EU-Turkey relations, their historical context must be understood. This is not only because history is important from an FPA standpoint (helping to explain some of the factors which influence relations, such as anti-Turkish sentiment in

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<sup>15</sup> S.Keil, B. Stahl, *The Foreign Policies of the Post-Yugoslav States* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 8; C. Alden, A. Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis- New Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Keil, *Post-Yugoslav States*, 7-9.

<sup>17</sup> Alden, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 9-10.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Division of competences within the European Union’, Eur-Lex (2016) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:ai0020> [accessed 13.06.19], 1.

<sup>19</sup> ‘The Enlargement of the Union’; André De Munter, European Parliament; EU, 10.2018 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU\\_5.5.1.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_5.5.1.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 2.

certain member states, Turkish impatience with what is seen as a decades-long journey to accession etc.), but also because looking at what has happened previously can help to provide some hints as to what the relationship may look like in future (if done correctly).

Turkey's relationship with the EU has longstanding and complicated roots. Historically, Turkey (or rather, the Ottoman Empire) was an aggressive enemy of several current EU member peoples, such as the Austrians, Hungarians, and especially the Greeks, conflicts which in some cases still leave scars to this day. Modern EU-Turkey relations can be traced back first to the onset of the Cold War (which put both sides in the same camp against the Soviet Union), and then to the 1963 Ankara Agreement.<sup>20 21</sup> The deal established a plan for the eventual accession of Turkey to what was then the EEC over the course of three stages, acknowledging Turkey as a geographically eligible candidate for membership, and acknowledging said membership as the end goal.<sup>22</sup> However, since this agreement, EU-Turkey relations have been marked by instability, with any given decade often seeing moments of coldness and tension, and then cooperation and progress. For example, the EEC froze relations with Turkey in 1980 following a military coup, and then restored relations in 1983 with the restoration of democracy.<sup>23</sup> Turkey applied for membership in 1987, only to be rejected on the grounds of a recent enlargement, preparation for the single market, and the outstanding Cyprus issue.<sup>24</sup>

This was a key moment, as it represents a turning point in two ways. Firstly, it was around this time that the Cold War was coming to an end. Thus far, the entirety of EU-Turkey relations had been played out with the context of the Cold War in the background, a context which placed both sides in the same camp and allowed both to construct themselves as 'Western' (as opposed to 'Communist'). With the end of the Cold War, major questions were being asked about what identities the two sides should embrace.<sup>25</sup> Now that they were no longer just 'Western', what did it mean to be European or Turkish? Was Turkey part of Europe or not? Secondly, the end of the Cold War paved the way for the accession of many of the ex-members of the Eastern Bloc in Eastern Europe, states which were able to accede

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<sup>20</sup> E. Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', H. Işıksal, O. Örmeci (eds.), *Turkish Foreign Policy in the New Millennium*; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015), 244.

<sup>21</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 243.

<sup>22</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 243-4.

<sup>23</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 244.

<sup>24</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 244.

<sup>25</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 244-5.

much faster than Turkey.<sup>26</sup> This was partly due to a different construction of European identity; these countries were seen as a natural, inevitable part of Europe in a way that Turkey was not. This ‘fast-tracking’ of the Eastern Bloc countries was seen as the application of a double standard in the eyes of many Turks (for example, these countries being given a clear roadmap of accession, which Turkey was not), creating a feeling of impatience and having been treated unfairly towards the EU.<sup>27</sup>

Against this background, there was a rise in Islamist politics in Turkey, culminating in the accession to power of an Islamist government in 1996.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, EU-Turkey relations were again inconsistent. Although a Customs Union agreement was signed in 1995, a coup in 1997 created enough domestic instability for the European Council to reject Turkish candidacy the same year, creating a Eurosceptic backlash among the very elites who had previously been very pro-European.<sup>29</sup> However, following domestic political changes in some EU countries, and improved relations between Turkey and Greece, Turkish candidacy was again recognised in 1999 by the Council, and created the impetus to begin the slow process of Europeanising Turkish foreign and domestic policy.<sup>30</sup> This process was kept slow by the vagueness of the process of Turkey’s accession, and by fears among some sections of Turkish society that EU values would allow the ‘rise of ethnic nationalism and political Islam’.<sup>31</sup>

Despite these obstacles, Turkey’s Europeanisation did in fact continue. Significant pressure from pro-EU pressure groups in Turkey led to significant domestic reforms, although not enough progress was made in areas such as the influence of the military on the civilian government, while problems such as the Cyprus issue remained.<sup>32</sup> In light of this mixed progress, it was decided during the 2002 Council that membership negotiations would begin in 2004 if Turkey had made enough further progress towards meeting the Copenhagen political criteria.<sup>33</sup> That same year, the victory of the AKP party in the national elections, whose leading figures had used very hostile rhetoric towards the EU in the past, seemed to potentially pose a threat to Turkey’s Europeanisation.<sup>34</sup> In fact, the reverse happened, and the

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<sup>26</sup> Gülseven, ‘EU-Turkey Relations’, 245.

<sup>27</sup> Gülseven, ‘EU-Turkey Relations’, 245.

<sup>28</sup> Gülseven, ‘EU-Turkey Relations’, 246.

<sup>29</sup> Gülseven, ‘EU-Turkey Relations’, 246.

<sup>30</sup> Gülseven, ‘EU-Turkey Relations’, 246-7.

<sup>31</sup> Gülseven, ‘EU-Turkey Relations’, 247.

<sup>32</sup> Gülseven, ‘EU-Turkey Relations’, 248.

<sup>33</sup> Gülseven, ‘EU-Turkey Relations’, 248.

<sup>34</sup> Gülseven, ‘EU-Turkey Relations’, 248.

party committed itself to supporting the accession process.<sup>35</sup> Driven by the pro-EU stance of its Islamist base (which enjoyed the economic advantages of Europeanisation and saw European values as a protection against oppressive secularism), the AKP oversaw significant reforms in 2003 and 2004.<sup>36</sup>

This was enough to formally initiate the accession talks in 2005.<sup>37</sup> The accession process involves (somewhat misnamed) negotiations over how the *acquis communautaire* (i.e. the full body of EU legislation) will be implemented, with the *acquis* divided into 35 negotiating chapters which are opened individually by the unanimous decision of the Council.<sup>38</sup> Once all chapters are successfully closed, the Council decides whether to accept the candidate as a member. This is where something of a catch to Turkey's accession negotiations comes in; the talks, while aimed at accession, were 'open-ended', with no guarantee that accession would happen.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the tone of the political discourse of EU member states (especially France) on the subject was sceptical, while the EU made additional demands, such as a unilateral recognition on the part of Turkey of the Greek Cypriot government.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, in 2005, the year the accession talks began, there were changes in leadership in both France and Germany, with Angela Merkel coming to power in Germany and Nicolas Sarkozy in France.<sup>41</sup> Both of them were much more sceptical than their predecessors towards Turkish accession, Merkel proposing a 'privileged partnership' and Sarkozy rejecting Turkish EU membership outright.<sup>42</sup> This seemingly-reluctant attitude of the EU caused frustration among many Turks, and undermined the creditability of the government.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the period 2010-13 saw continued progress, with legal reforms being followed by France removing its veto over one of the chapters.<sup>44</sup> However, the crackdown which followed the Gezi Park protests raised questions over the state of Turkey's democracy.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, an inconsistent (i.e. not always Western-aligned) Turkish foreign policy, and rising social conservatism,

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<sup>35</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 248.

<sup>36</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 249.

<sup>37</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 249.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Enlargement of the Union'; André De Munter, European Parliament; EU, 10.2018, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 249.

<sup>40</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 250.

<sup>41</sup> 'A Very Special Relationship: Why Turkey's EU Accession Process Will Continue', European Stability Initiative (2010), 2.

<sup>42</sup> O. Leiße, 'The Permanent Candidate: Turkey's Europeanization under the AKP Government', A. Freyberg-Inan, M. Bardakçi, O. Leiße (eds.), *Growing Together, Growing Apart- Turkey and the European Union Today* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016), 39-40.

<sup>43</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 249-50.

<sup>44</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 250-1.

<sup>45</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 251.

alongside scepticism among some European politicians over whether or not Turkey was even a European country, further slowed the accession process.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Turkey's relationship with the EU was already starting to go somewhat sour before the coup attempt in 2016.

Overall, the process of Turkey's accession to the EU has been longer and more difficult than perhaps any other candidate country. Arguably, it is a process that has been in the making since the 1963 Ankara Agreement, which laid out a plan for Turkey to join what was then the European Economic Community. Since then the process has been marked by delay and slow progress, Turkey's application being rejected in 1987 and again in 1997, its candidacy taking until 1999 to be recognised by the Council, and negotiations only starting in 2005. Although chapters were being opened at a steady pace in the initial years of negotiations, the rate at which this takes place has slowed to the point where no chapters have been opened since 2016.<sup>47</sup> Only 16 out of 35 chapters have been opened for negotiation, and only 1 provisionally closed.<sup>48</sup> Fifty-six years after the signing of the Ankara Agreement, the process is still a very long way from being complete.

The most recent reports on Turkey by the European Parliament lay bare the steady crumbling of the accession process since 2016, and a comparison between the Parliament's responses to the 2016 and 2018 country reports (by the Commission) gives a good indication of the rate of this deterioration. The Parliament's response to the 2016 Turkey Report highlights the alarming human rights situation in the country, particularly in the wake of the 2016 coup attempt. Talk on reinstating the death penalty, post-coup emergency measures which 'severely violated basic rights and freedoms' and the measures taken to arrest MPs were among the main concerns.<sup>49</sup> Backsliding in several accession areas (such as the judicial system and freedom of expression) was reported, while a lack of progress on corruption was another factor working against accession progress.<sup>50</sup> Apparently of greatest concern as regards the accession process was the raft of changes to the constitution supported by the 2017 referendum, with the report calling for the accession talks to be formally suspended if

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<sup>46</sup> Gülseven, 'EU-Turkey Relations', 250.

<sup>47</sup> 'Turkey Accession Chapters'; European Commission; EU, 01.2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190528-negotiations-status-turkey.pdf> [accessed 14.06.19].

<sup>48</sup> 'Turkey Accession Chapters'; European Commission; EU, 01.2018.

<sup>49</sup> '2016 Report on Turkey'; Velina Lilyanova, European Parliament; EU, 07.2017 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2017/607284/EPRS\\_ATA\(2017\)607284\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2017/607284/EPRS_ATA(2017)607284_EN.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 1.

<sup>50</sup> '2016 Report on Turkey'; Lilyanova, EU, 1.

they are permanently enacted.<sup>51</sup> However, some positive aspects were mentioned, such as some (apparently contradictory) positive developments in human rights legislation, cooperation on migration management through the EU-Turkey Statement and a prospective modernisation of the longstanding Customs Union.<sup>52</sup> The report also took care to highlight the material importance of good relations and cooperation.<sup>53</sup> Overall, the report comes across as increasingly concerned about Turkey, but also as keeping the positive (albeit threatened) aspects of the relationship in view.

The same cannot be said for the Parliament briefing on the ‘Turkey: 2018 country report’, which is much more damning. A worsened human rights situation, serious backsliding in several accession chapters, concerns over mayoral elections being under threat and the detention of opposition figures are all highlighted as cause for serious concern.<sup>54</sup> Alongside these problems, some progress is described in limited chapters, as well as migration cooperation with the EU being mentioned.<sup>55</sup> The conclusion to the report differs from that of the 2016 report in several key ways. For one thing, it recommends that Turkish civil society be the focus of pre-accession funds, suggesting a new level of displeasure with the Turkish government (through which the funds had previously gone).<sup>56 57</sup> Also, although remaining open to modernising the Customs Union, the report recommends that any such undertaking be conditional on improvements on ‘democratic reforms’, which in practice makes any progress in the near future very unlikely (considering the report’s view of Turkey’s trajectory).<sup>58</sup> Most importantly, while the 2016 report merely proposed the suspension of the accession talks as a possible response to the changes to the constitution, the 2018 report calls for the talks to in fact be formally suspended forthwith.<sup>59</sup> Overall, the tone of the latter report is much more negative, and points to the potentially-terminal damage to the accession process and substantial worsening of relations occurring within just the last two years.

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<sup>51</sup> ‘2016 Report on Turkey’; Lilyanova, EU, 1.

<sup>52</sup> ‘2016 Report on Turkey’; Lilyanova, EU, 1.

<sup>53</sup> ‘2016 Report on Turkey’; Lilyanova, EU, 1.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Turkey- 2018 Country Report’; Philippe Perchoc; European Parliament; EU, 03.2019, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/635551/EPRS\\_ATA\(2019\)635551\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/635551/EPRS_ATA(2019)635551_EN.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 1.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Turkey- 2018 Country Report’, Perchoc, EU, 1.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Turkey- 2018 Country Report’, Perchoc, EU, 1.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Commission Implementing Decision of 5.12.2018- adopting an Annual Action Programme for Turkey for the year 2018’, European Commission, EU, 05.2018 [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/aap\\_2.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/aap_2.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 3.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Turkey- 2018 Country Report’, Perchoc, EU, 1.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Turkey- 2018 Country Report’, Perchoc, EU, 1.

In summary, it is clear that the history of EU-Turkey relations is characterised by instability and a constant cycle of swings between short periods of good relations and progress towards Europeanisation and better relations, and short periods of crisis and poor relations resulting in Europeanisation stalling and the prospects of accession declining. Moreover, it is characterised by missteps and mistakes on both sides, although on the EU's part its ill-received actions are usually a reaction to the less than ideal situation in Turkey. However, the recent history of relations has been characterised by an arguably unprecedented worsening of relations which substantially lowers the possibility of Turkish accession, the latest EU reports either describing the process as effectively frozen, or calling for accession to be terminated entirely. To add to all of this, the historical instability of EU-Turkish relations and the frustratingly slow accession process has damaged the trust in the EU among Turks and the Turkish government (as will be discussed later), further degrading relations. With this in mind, it can be safely concluded that the history of EU-Turkey relations shows that the presence of disruptive and antagonising factors such as a poor governmental and human rights situation in Turkey or unfriendly member states in the EU could, did and still can undermine and cripple Turkish accession to the EU.

## Chapter 2- Current EU-Turkey Relations- Barriers to Accession

Given the historical role in EU-Turkey relations of disruptive factors in preventing Turkish accession, a closer examination of these factors and their current capability to continue playing this obstructive role is in order. Although there are tensions in many fields, the ones which are most significantly negative are the Cyprus issue, Turkey's governance and human rights status, and Turkey's economic situation.

### **Cyprus**

A key aspect of EU-Turkey relations is that they play out against the backdrop of a longstanding territorial occupation. Whenever the two sides interact, the Turkish occupation of the northern part of the Republic of Cyprus is always in the background, a mostly-disruptive dynamic which can have a profound impact.

The Cypriot territorial dispute began in 1974, although its origins go back a good deal further. The presence of Turks on what was a predominantly-Greek island can be traced back to the Ottoman conquest of 1570, with Cyprus being under Ottoman control until it was taken over by the British in 1878.<sup>60</sup> The end of British rule in 1960 resulted in a form of independence which, according to James Ker-Lindsay, satisfied neither the Greek Cypriots nor the Turkish ones.<sup>61</sup> The creation of a united, independent Cypriot state went against the wishes of the hard-fought goal among Greek Cypriots of *enosis* ('union') with Greece, while the Turkish Cypriots had hoped for a partition of the island between Greece and Turkey.<sup>62</sup> Given this tension, Turkey, Greece and Britain (all allies who had a stake in maintaining a united front during the Cold War) acted as guarantors of the Cypriot state, with a right to unilateral military intervention to keep the state intact if necessary.<sup>63</sup>

An intricate power-sharing mechanism was instituted on Cyprus that sought to keep the peace between the two dominant communities (alongside some small minorities), including veto

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<sup>60</sup> J.S. Bowman, H.W. Goult, D.W.S. Hunt, 'Cyprus: History', Encyclopædia Britannica (2019) <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cyprus> [accessed 13.06.2019].

<sup>61</sup> J. Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', H.F. Carey (ed.), *The Challenges of European Governance in the Age of Economic Stagnation, Immigration, and Refugees* (London: Lexington Books, 2017), 379.

<sup>62</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 379.

<sup>63</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 379.

powers, quotas in the government and some separate institutions.<sup>64</sup> However, a lack of investment in this unwelcome system, and tensions over how to implement it practice, led to a dysfunctional situation which boiled over in 1963 when violence broke out between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots, followed by the establishment of a British and then UN peace-keeping force.<sup>65</sup> The fighting resulted in the effective exclusion of the Turkish Cypriots from the government, which (having lost one of its two major component peoples) could now no longer function.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, continuous UN-sponsored attempts to find a solution failed.<sup>67</sup>

The situation came to a head in 1974 when the military junta in charge of Greece attempted a coup against the Cypriot president.<sup>68</sup> In response, Turkey launched a military invasion of the island which succeeded in taking control of 36 percent of the country, and which also led to the displacement of c.160,000 Greek Cypriots and tens of thousands of Turkish Cypriots.<sup>69</sup> The Turkish occupation continues up to the present day, and attempts in the 1970s to find a bizonal, federal solution to the conflict suffered a serious blow when Turkish Cypriot leaders unilaterally declared independence in 1983 in an act condemned by the UN and all international actors but Turkey.<sup>70</sup>

The following years saw little progress in resolving the conflict, neither side being particularly interested in finding a solution.<sup>71</sup> However, Cyprus' application to join the EU in 1990 brought the conflict back into focus, drawing the furious ire of both Turkish Cyprus and Turkey.<sup>72</sup> Despite some reservations from the EU, concerns over the ramifications of letting the conflict influence Cyprus' accession prospects meant that the accession process went ahead, boosted by the country's strong democratic and economic credentials.<sup>73</sup> Despite (occasionally interrupted) opposition from the Turkish Cypriot leadership, the EU and key member states like Greece were determined that Cypriot accession go ahead regardless of whether the conflict was settled, contributing to a change in government in Turkish Cyprus in 2003 which opened the way to attempting to find a solution.<sup>74 75</sup> UN-sponsored discussions

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<sup>64</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 379-80.

<sup>65</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 380.

<sup>66</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 380-1.

<sup>67</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 381.

<sup>68</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 381.

<sup>69</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 381.

<sup>70</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 381.

<sup>71</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 381-2.

<sup>72</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 382.

<sup>73</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 383.

<sup>74</sup> Ker-Lindsay, 'The EU and Democratization in Cyprus', 384, 385.

began in February of that year, producing the ‘Annan Plan’ of 2004.<sup>76</sup> This plan was put to Greek and Turkish Cypriots in referenda in April, but although the Turkish Cypriots supported it, the rejection of the plan by three-quarters of Greek Cypriots meant that it ultimately failed.<sup>77</sup> Greek Cypriot opposition can partly be explained by the fact that many thought that EU membership (already guaranteed) would allow them to get a better deal, and Ker-Lindsay argues that membership has led to this attitude becoming entrenched among parts of that community.<sup>78</sup> Turkish Cypriots have also been affected by the failure of the plan and the country’s membership of the EU, becoming somewhat embittered towards the Union (despite some indirect positive effects of Cypriot membership) in the wake of Cyprus vetoing measures aimed at helping Turkish Cypriots, a feeling compounded by the continued absence of a solution.<sup>79</sup>

At present, meaningful progress in solving the Cyprus dispute seems unlikely, and relations have deteriorated in recent years. According to a 2018 FEUTURE paper, most of the parties concerned are content with status quo, facing more important domestic and/or external issues and challenges, and are completely unwilling to invest in solving the problem.<sup>80</sup> This is especially true given how difficult it is to find a solution even when an effort is made, the last serious attempt (the Annan Plan) having failed fifteen years ago.<sup>81</sup> As such, the dispute seems likely to persist, a frozen Turko-Cypriot conflict possibly marked by occasional cooperation when convenient for both parties.<sup>82</sup>

The fact that Cyprus is an EU member state has made the festering conflict a thorn in the side of EU-Turkey relations, at times having direct effects on decisions made on other fields which influence the relationship. The main field affected has been accession; according to a European Parliament report, Turkey’s failure to apply the ‘Additional Protocol to the Ankara Association Agreement’ to Cyprus has meant that eight specific accession chapters are blocked and no further chapters can be closed, which has been the case since 2006.<sup>83</sup> The

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<sup>75</sup> Ker-Lindsay, ‘The EU and Democratization in Cyprus’, 385.

<sup>76</sup> Ker-Lindsay, ‘The EU and Democratization in Cyprus’, 385.

<sup>77</sup> Ker-Lindsay, ‘The EU and Democratization in Cyprus’, 385.

<sup>78</sup> Ker-Lindsay, ‘The EU and Democratization in Cyprus’, 386.

<sup>79</sup> Ker-Lindsay, ‘The EU and Democratization in Cyprus’, 387.

<sup>80</sup> T. Dokos, N. Tocci, A. Palm, C. Kasapoğlu, ‘Greco-Turkish Relations and the Cyprus Dispute- Impact on Turkey-EU Scenarios’, *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2018), i.

<sup>81</sup> Dokos, ‘Greco-Turkish Relations’, i.

<sup>82</sup> Dokos, ‘Greco-Turkish Relations’, i.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Turkey 2016 Report’; European Commission; EU, 11.2016 [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2016/20161109\\_report\\_turkey.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_turkey.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 7.

Commission's 2019 Turkey Report describes several other unfriendly actions by Turkey towards Cyprus, including visa discrimination, a lack of normalisation of relations, vetoing Cyprus' membership of international organisations and restricting trade and transport with Cyprus.<sup>84</sup> Quite apart from directly freezing key aspects of the accession process, Turkey's behaviour towards Cyprus hardly engenders the kind of support it needs from the country if it wishes to avoid having its eventual accession (or indeed, opening of new chapters) vetoed by it. With this in mind, another Parliament report's statement that Turkish accession without a solution to the Cyprus issue would be 'hard to imagine' seems justified.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the pessimistic outlook for the situation as a whole, there is an area in which some cooperation could have taken place, from which positive spillover into the general situation was not out of the question. However, it is also an area which also had the potential to drive further conflict, and current dynamics seem to suggest that that is the direction in which this area is headed. The recent regional interest in offshore gas reserves in the waters around Cyprus is playing a growing role in the dynamics of the Turko-Cypriot (and by extension, Turko-European) relationship. According to a 2018 FEUTURE paper on the subject, there are several factors increasing the significance of the gas factor, including gas prices, the size of the gas reserves, Turkey-Israel and Turkey-Egypt relations, cooperation between Cyprus, Egypt and Israel and Turkish economic growth.<sup>86</sup> However, these factors only show that gas will be a major factor in changing the situation; what they do not do is suggest how specifically the situation might be changed, with conflict, convergence or cooperation all being possible as a result of the offshore gas catalyst. While the paper argues that cooperation in the exploitation of these gas reserves could be beneficial to all parties, the general Cypriot dispute is always present, both acting upon and shaping the factor of gas extraction and being influenced in turn by it.<sup>87</sup>

Initial signs for what effects the presence of gas in the dispute will have are not positive; in May 2019 the competition over Cypriot gas led to escalating tensions, giving credence to the point made by the authors of the FEUTURE paper that the regional context must always be

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<sup>84</sup> 'Turkey 2019 Report'; European Commission; EU, 05.2019 <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-turkey-report.pdf> [accessed 15.06.19], 8, 60-1.

<sup>85</sup> 'Future EU-Turkey Relations'; Philippe Perchoc, European Parliament; EU, 10.2018 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628290/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)628290\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628290/EPRS_BRI(2018)628290_EN.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 6.

<sup>86</sup> T. Tsakiris, S. Ulgen, A.K. Han, 'Gas Developments in the Eastern Mediterranean- Trigger or Obstacle for EU-Turkey Cooperation', *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2018), i.

<sup>87</sup> Tsakis, 'Gas Developments', i.

kept in consideration.<sup>88 89</sup> It might also provide a perfect example of the vicious cycle that the current poor state of EU-Turkey relations can engender, a dynamic fuelled by domestic factors. While the Turkish government could theoretically have opted to try and pursue a more collaborative framework for energy exploitation, faltering public support for the ruling party and economic pressure seem to have motivated a more belligerent approach.

Another reason for Ankara's more antagonistic manner is one which helps to explain Turkey's apparent unwillingness to cooperate in finding a solution to the Cyprus problem more generally, namely a lack of trust in the EU. Having undergone many reforms in the past in the expectation that these would lead to EU membership, the lack of meaningful progress in the accession process means that Turkey is simply quite unwilling to give concessions or make changes to longstanding policies now that it seems clear to them that these will not be rewarded with steps towards accession, helping to explain why positive spillover 'into' the Cyprus issue from other areas of integration has not happened.

This latest conflict would seem to only confirm the intransigence of the Cyprus issue and its malignant influence on the accession process; not only is the conflict in a vicious cycle of poor Turko-Cypriot relations begetting further confrontation, it is also sabotaging an instance of potential EU-Turkey cooperation. From a neo-functionalist standpoint, this could be an instance of what might be called 'relative negative spillover', by which the failure of the EU and Turkey to cooperate in this particular case not only demonstrates the poor state of EU-Turkey relations, it could fuel further mistrust and hostility on the EU's part which would make decisions by EU leaders to progress with accession even less likely.

## **Governance and Human Rights**

Discussions around EU-Turkey relations, and particularly around accession, often come back to domestic issues on which a great deal of difference exists between the EU and Turkey, especially in the fields of governance, values and identity. The importance of these fields has been growing in recent years, as has the gulf between the parties in these fields, representing a dividing component in the EU-Turkey relationship that makes conflict more likely and good relations more difficult.

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<sup>88</sup> Z. Atilgan, 'Tensions mount over Turkey's drilling off Cyprus', Euractiv, 13.05.2019  
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/tensions-mount-over-turkeys-drilling-off-cyprus/>  
[accessed 13.06.19].

<sup>89</sup> Tsakis, 'Gas Developments', i.

Turkey's situation vis-à-vis its governance and human rights is one which has been a source of tension more than once in the history of EU-Turkey relations, and at present Turkey's shortcomings in this area are one of the elements acting to create tensions between the EU and Turkey. Turkey is not a young democracy, having been a republic since 1923, (but with only one party until 1946), and the military coups of 1961, 1971 and 1980 show democratic institutions were far from secure in the following decades.<sup>90 91</sup> The harsh crackdown on the Gezi Park protests of 2013 pointed towards a renewed decline in the country's civil rights situation, a problem which grew significantly worse in 2016 with the failed coup attempt and the Turkish government's response to it, which included the purging of 134,000 public sector workers (17,000 of whom were arrested by August 2016), emergency decree laws and arrests of journalists.<sup>92 93</sup> EU documents from the period immediately following the incident clearly show the alarm with which it viewed these measures, with the 2016 report on Turkey describing 'serious backsliding' on freedom of expression, and a European Parliament resolution from November 2016 stating that the Parliament 'strongly condemns' what it sees as 'disproportionate repressive measures'.<sup>94 95</sup> The potential for this displeasure with Turkey's actions to affect policy was immediately made clear by Paragraph 1 of the same Parliament resolution, in which Parliament called for a 'temporary freeze' of the accession negotiations.<sup>96</sup>

For the most part, the governance and human rights situation in Turkey has continued to deteriorate since 2016. Freedom House's 2017 'Freedom in the World' report determined that Turkey has fallen by 15 points on its 100-point freedom score system in 2016, citing the state of emergency and mass arrests, but was still classified as 'partly free'.<sup>97</sup> However, its 2018 report saw it fall by another 6 points to be classified as 'not free' due to continuing arrests of

<sup>90</sup> 'EASO Country of Origin Information Report- Turkey- County Focus'; European Asylum Support Office; EU, 11.2016 [https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/COI%20Turkey\\_15nov%202016.pdf](https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/COI%20Turkey_15nov%202016.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 22.

<sup>91</sup> 'EASO Country of Origin'; European Asylum Support Office, 36.

<sup>92</sup> 'EASO Country of Origin'; European Asylum Support Office, 30.

<sup>93</sup> 'Turkey Since the Failed July 2016 Coup'; Philippe Perchoc; European Parliament; EU, 09.2016 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/589776/EPRS\\_BRI\(2016\)589776\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/589776/EPRS_BRI(2016)589776_EN.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 6; 'Turkey 2016 Report'; European Commission; EU, 11.2016, 7, 8-9.

<sup>94</sup> 'Turkey 2016 Report'; European Commission; EU, 11.2016, 7, 72.

<sup>95</sup> 'Texts Adopted- EU-Turkey Relations- European Parliament Resolution of 24 November 2016 on EU-Turkey Relations'; European Parliament; EU, 11.2016 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0450\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0450_EN.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 2.

<sup>96</sup> 'Texts Adopted- EU-Turkey Relations- European Parliament Resolution of 24 November'; European Parliament; EU, 11.2016, 2.

<sup>97</sup> A. Puddington, T. Roylance (eds.), 'Freedom in the World 2017' (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2017), 6, 19.

journalists and political opponents and the institution of a presidential system which lacked sufficient checks and balances.<sup>98</sup> The state of emergency continued until July 2018, long after the coup, and its powers, according to a 2019 Commission report, were ‘disproportionately applied’.<sup>99</sup> 50,000 people arrested on ‘terrorism-related’ charges remain in detention, and many of the decrees passed as part of the state of emergency have permanently become law.<sup>100</sup> <sup>101</sup> Electoral shortcomings remain a problem in 2019, the March 2019 municipal elections being marked by unequal competition.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, even after the main municipal elections, the decision to re-run the Istanbul mayoral election and cases of candidates who failed to win being given some mayorships in other regions was considered by the Commission to be a source of ‘serious concern’.<sup>103</sup> Concerns also remain about the concentrated power of the presidential system, rule of law and restrictions of civil society.<sup>104</sup>

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As in the case of Cyprus, it seems prudent to ask why the Turkish government has pursued a course in this field that goes completely against its stated goal of accession, preventing the positive spillover that neo-functionalism would normally predict, and which it mandates happen before integration can reach the stage at which joining the EU is possible. Part of the explanation again lies in the aforementioned issue of trust, the governing party seeing no benefit in making an effort to improve human rights and civil liberties when there is no guarantee that doing so will lead to progress on accession. More importantly, domestic political interests play the primary role in motivating the decline in Turkey’s apparent course towards authoritarianism. In recent years, the ruling party has been losing political support, suffering an electoral reverse in 2015 which saw it lose its absolute majority.<sup>107</sup> This has apparently continued, the results from the 2019 municipal elections showing the opposition CHP party take back many municipalities from the AKP (including the capital, Ankara), partly as a result of the struggling economy.<sup>108</sup> Arguably the most important result from that election was the initial victory of the CHP candidate in the Istanbul mayoral contest which

<sup>98</sup> M. J. Abramowitz (ed.), ‘Freedom in the World 2018’ (Washington, DC: Freedom House, 2018), 6, 7.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Turkey 2019 Report’; European Commission; EU, 05.2019, 9.

<sup>100</sup> ‘Turkey 2019 Report’; European Commission; EU, 05.2019, 9.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Turkey 2019 Report’; European Commission; EU, 05.2019, 10.

<sup>102</sup> ‘Turkey 2019 Report’; European Commission; EU, 05.2019, 10-11.

<sup>103</sup> ‘Turkey 2019 Report’; European Commission; EU, 05.2019, 10-11.

<sup>104</sup> ‘Turkey 2019 Report’; European Commission; EU, 05.2019, 12-14.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Turkey 2019 Report’; European Commission; EU, 05.2019, 14, 21-22.

<sup>106</sup> ‘Turkey 2019 Report’; European Commission; EU, 05.2019, 15.

<sup>107</sup> S. Genc, ‘Türkische Kehrtwende’, *Internationale Politik* Vol 73 (1) (2018), 71.

<sup>108</sup> ‘Turkey 2019 Report’; European Commission; EU, 05.2019, 11.



benefits to the European economy overall, further supporting the initial economic case for Turkish accession.<sup>115</sup>

However, there are a number of characteristics of the Turkish economy which make its addition to the EU economy problematic. The most immediate problem is that Turkey is currently experiencing serious economic difficulties, including high unemployment, unchecked inflation and declining GDP.<sup>116</sup> These problems are arguably transitory and the short-term results of short-term circumstances (such as political uncertainty), but they serve as a disincentive to accession in the medium-term, and create doubts over the long-term health of the economy. Furthermore, Turkey's economic shortcomings go far beyond such transitory problems. For one thing, the country's GDP per capita is much lower than that of EU countries, at \$10,500 in 2017 compared with the EU's average of \$33,800 (according to the World Bank).<sup>117</sup> Among other things, this means that as a member it would be entitled to massive amounts of EU cohesion funds.<sup>118</sup> To add to this, Turkey has a substantial agricultural sector, meaning that large amounts of CAP funds (which made up 41% of the EU budget in 2016) would have to be appropriated for it.<sup>119</sup> <sup>120</sup> Turkey's lack of economic development also means that it is likely that many of the country's citizens could move to the EU for work, especially given that many Turks have already emigrated to countries like Germany and the Netherlands for work. Objectively speaking this is not necessarily a negative outcome, but the political and societal tension arising from the 'Big Bang' enlargement of 2004 suggests that a large influx of poorer and culturally different immigrants could result in similar strains, all the more so considering the extent of these economic and cultural differences.

The lack of spillover in this field is relatively straightforward to explain, as an economy as large and populous as that of Turkey is not easily transformed to the point where it is no

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<sup>115</sup> R. Gardener, 'EU Enlargement Model: Problems and Challenges', H.F. Carey (ed.), *The Challenges of European Governance in the Age of Economic Stagnation, Immigration, and Refugees* (London: Lexington Books, 2017), 41, 42-3.

<sup>116</sup> 'Turkey', OECD Economic Outlook Vol 2019 (1) (2019) <http://www.oecd.org/economy/turkey-economic-snapshot/> [accessed 13.06.2019], 218.

<sup>117</sup> 'GDP per capita (current US\$)', World Bank, 2019 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=EU-TR> [accessed 11.06.19], 1.

<sup>118</sup> Gardener, 'EU Enlargement Model', 41; 'Cohesion fund', European Commission, EU [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/funding/cohesion-fund/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/cohesion-fund/) [accessed 13.06.19], 1.

<sup>119</sup> Gardener, 'EU Enlargement Model', 41.

<sup>120</sup> 'CAP Expenditure in the Total EU Expenditure', European Commission; EU, 04.2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/cap-post-2013/graphs/graph1\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/cap-post-2013/graphs/graph1_en.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 1.

longer a barrier to accession. However, this is not to say that Turkey's economic situation is unrelated to the kind of political concerns that have affected spillover in fields such as Cyprus and human rights, and indeed the economic situation both affects these fields and is affected by them. The impact of economics has already been seen in the effects that economic pressures have on contributing to confrontational policies in terms of the Cyprus issue and governance and human rights in Turkey, but these areas also influence economics in turn through negative spillover. This can be seen most clearly in the human rights conditionality attached by the European Parliament to negotiations on an upgrade of the Customs Union; such an upgrade would be mutually beneficial, and a substantial boost to the flagging Turkish economy, but is being held back by the country's worsening governance and human rights situation.<sup>121 122</sup> The effects of the Cyprus issue are smaller but still noteworthy, with a lack of trade between Turkey and Cyprus (due to the Turkish closure of its ports to Cypriot shipping) being the most direct economic consequence of the conflict. Overall, positive spillover towards integration in an economic sense has not taken place due to both longstanding structural barriers and negative spillover from other areas where EU and Turkish interests clash.

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<sup>121</sup> 'Texts Adopted- 2018 Report on Turkey- European Parliament Resolution of 13 March 2019 on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey'; European Parliament; EU, 03.2019, 9.

<sup>122</sup> E. Alessandri, I. Lesser, K. Tastan , 'EU-Turkey Relations- Steering in Stormy Seas', *Turkey, Europe, and Global Issues* (31) (Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund, 2018), 11-12; Binder, 'Reinvigorating EU-Turkey Bilateral Trade', 10.

## Chapter 3- Decision-making and Public Opinion

### **Decision-making in the Council**

The impact of the factors hindering the accession process is amplified by the decision-making process of the Council. In cases where ‘sensitive’ matters are dealt with, such as foreign policy and especially accession, the Council votes unanimously, giving every member state an effective veto.<sup>123</sup> This means that poor bilateral relations with any given member state, or unfavourable domestic circumstances within a member state can and do prevent progress on accession being made. A perfect example of this is the Cypriot issue; even if the EU were to lift the restriction on opening certain chapters and closing any until Turkey applies the ‘Additional Protocol to the Ankara Association Agreement’ to Cyprus, the fact that Turkish relations with that country are so bad means that it would most likely still veto progress in the accession talks, to say nothing of final accession itself. This problem goes beyond just Cyprus; Austria is a vocal opponent of accession, and France has gone so far as to unilaterally block certain chapters.<sup>124 125</sup>

### **The Attitude of the European Parliament**

The decision-making process of the EU means that the Council is not the only barrier to accession; the European Parliament also has the potential to obstruct it. Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union states that the Parliament must vote on and approve the accession of a new member state to the EU.<sup>126</sup> In and of itself that is not a particularly problematic requirement, but the demonstrated attitude of the Parliament means that it could become a major barrier if accession ever got that far. So far, the Parliament has been very sceptical of Turkey, going so far as to effectively prevent an upgrade to the Customs Union by attaching human rights conditionality to it.<sup>127</sup> More importantly, it voted in 2019 to call for the formal suspension of the accession negotiations, citing the poor human rights situation in Turkey.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> ‘Voting System- Unanimity’, European Council/Council of the EU, EU, 2017

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/voting-system/unanimity/> [accessed 11.06.19], 1.

<sup>124</sup> M. Gavenda , ‘FEUTURE EU 28 Country Report- Austria’, *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2017), 4, 5.

<sup>125</sup> W. Chislet ‘Turkey’s 10 Years of EU Accession Negotiations- No End in Sight’ (Madrid: Elcano Royal Institute, 2015), 2.

<sup>126</sup> ‘The Enlargement of the Union’; André De Munter, European Parliament; EU, 10.2018, 2.

<sup>127</sup> ‘Texts Adopted- 2018 Report on Turkey’; European Parliament; EU, 03.2019, 9.

<sup>128</sup> ‘Texts Adopted- 2018 Report on Turkey’; European Parliament; EU, 03.2019, 9.

As well as being another reflection of the dire state of the accession process, this decision is significant because of what it suggests about Turkey's ability to pass all of the bureaucratic accession hurdles. The fact that the Council has not adopted a similar attitude (i.e. it has so far not recommended an end to negotiations) suggests that the Parliament may hold Turkey to stricter standards than the Council does, meaning that it could be possible that even if Turkish accession were approved by the Council, the Parliament blocks it due to a stricter criteria. This might not just happen as a result of any moral superiority on the Parliament's part; different actor-specific interests may well be responsible. The Council is made up of representatives of member state governments, which thus have national interests (alongside political ones) to consider when making decisions about accession.<sup>129</sup> This gives intergovernmental diplomacy and intergovernmental deals between member states and Turkey the potential to theoretically see Turkey through the stages of accession controlled by the Council. However, MEPs are politicians which represent people, not governments, and as such are much more swayed by all manner of political concerns, which Turkey may or may not be able to address to have its accession greenlit by the Parliament.<sup>130</sup> The latest parliamentary elections have created a Parliament in which this would be even more difficult, with populist parties that are against enlargement (especially towards a large Muslim country like Turkey) and parties which are particularly concerned about human rights (such as the Liberals and the Greens) gaining a substantial number of seats.<sup>131</sup> Considering the previous, more moderate Parliament's unfriendly attitude towards Turkey, it is not difficult to imagine this somewhat more radical Parliament opposing Turkish accession even more vociferously.

In fact, the latest parliamentary elections are significant for the Parliament's obstructive role in accession in another way. For the first time since elections began in 1979, the turnout increased, and reached a 20-year high of over 50%.<sup>132</sup> This shows that there is growing public engagement with the elections (and suggests increased engagement with the EU more generally), amplifying the Parliament's role as a representative of EU citizens in the decision-

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<sup>129</sup> 'The Council of the European Union'; Eeva Pavy; European Parliament; EU, 05.2019 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU\\_1.3.7.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_1.3.7.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 3.

<sup>130</sup> 'The European Parliament- Electoral Procedures'; Udo Bux; European Parliament; EU, 10.2018 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU\\_1.3.4.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_1.3.4.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 1.

<sup>131</sup> '2019 European election results', European Parliament, 11.06.2019 <https://election-results.eu/> [accessed 13.06.19]; D. Dunford, P. Kirby, P. Sargeant, C. Guibourg, E. Lowther, J. Walton and I. de la Torre Arenas, 'European Election 2019: Results in maps and charts', BBC, 27.05.2019 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48417191> [accessed 13.06.2019].

<sup>132</sup> 'Elections 2019: highest turnout in 20 years', European Parliament, EU, 2019 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/priorities/eu-elections-2019/20190523STO52402/elections-2019-highest-turnout-in-20-years> [accessed 11.06.19], 1.

making process. This in turn gives public opinion a greater role in that process, including the decision-making process related to accession, amplifying its capacity to be a potential obstacle to Turkey's joining the Union, as discussed below.

## Public Opinion in the EU

The idea that Turkish accession is unrealistic is backed up to a significant degree by European (i.e. among the public of EU member states) public opinion data. In 2005, the year accession negotiations began, a Eurobarometer survey found 52% of EU citizens against Turkish accession.<sup>133</sup> In fact, Turkey was the most “unpopular” potential enlargement country, scoring lower than countries like Romania (with 41% opposition), Bulgaria (36%) and Norway (12%), and in 2008 another survey found that opposition remained high, with 48% of respondents against Turkish accession.<sup>134 135</sup> By 2009 a Transatlantic Trends Survey of a cross section of 11 EU member states found that only 20% of respondents thought that Turkey joining the EU was ‘a good thing’.<sup>136</sup> Having analysed a number of different polls, a 2018 FEUTURE paper found opposition to Turkish accession to be as high as 76% in 2016, with only 7% of Europeans in favour.<sup>137</sup> This opposition is present in almost all EU countries, with even member states whose governments have been supportive of the accession process having overwhelming majorities against Turkish EU membership, something which may make the continuous support of these governments unsustainable in the future.<sup>138</sup>

In addition to strong public opposition to Turkish membership of the EU specifically, Turkey's accession prospects face opposition to both enlargement more generally and foreign immigration. Support for general enlargement in 2005 was 50%, with 38% against.<sup>139</sup> In 2007, support for enlargement had declined slightly to 49% (with 39% opposed), and by 2016 support was down to 37%, with a majority of 52% now opposed.<sup>140 141</sup> Meanwhile, a 2018

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<sup>133</sup> ‘Eurobarometer 63’; European Commission; EU, 07.2005  
[http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63.4\\_en\\_first.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb63/eb63.4_en_first.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 29.

<sup>134</sup> ‘Eurobarometer 63’; European Commission; EU, 07.2005, 29.

<sup>135</sup> Leiße, ‘The Permanent Candidate’, 39.

<sup>136</sup> Ö. Şenyuva, ‘Turkish Public Opinion and the EU Membership- Between Support and Mistrust’, *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2018), 9.

<sup>137</sup> J. Lindgaard, ‘EU Public Opinion on Turkish EU Membership- Trends and Drivers’, *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2018), 1.

<sup>138</sup> Lindgaard, ‘EU Public Opinion’, 4-5.

<sup>139</sup> ‘Eurobarometer 63’; European Commission; EU, 07.2005, 26.

<sup>140</sup> ‘Eurobarometer 67’; European Commission; EU, 06.2007

[http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb67/eb67\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb67/eb67_en.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 30.

Eurobarometer survey found that only 48% of EU citizens thought that immigrants ‘contributed a lot’ to their country, with some individual member states (which, it must be kept in mind, have veto power when the Council makes decisions by unanimity) having a positive response among respondents as low as 10%.<sup>142</sup> Although at first glance not appearing directly relevant to Turkey, this information is consequential in the sense that it suggests that there is a reluctance among a large part of the EU’s population (perhaps a majority) to accept noticeable numbers of immigrants (and by extension, foreigners in general) into their communities. This is however something which would become more likely with a successful Turkish accession (considering the latter’s large population, comparatively low economic development etc.), making accession more unappealing to this section of the European public. Moreover, this data has implications going beyond accession; visa liberalisation, for example, despite not including any right to work in the EU, could be perceived among Europeans as a step towards greater Turkish immigration, and could thus also prove unpopular. This may explain why, three years after the conclusion of the EU-Turkey Statement, the EU has still not greenlit visa liberalisation.

Overall, European public opinion is clearly squarely against Turkish accession, the importance of which manifests itself in two ways. Firstly, public opinion has an impact on the decisions of policy-makers at a national and a European level, with elected politicians needing to take it into account to some degree to gain and hold onto power. Secondly, public opinion has additional significance in the case of Turkish accession due to the potential for referenda to be held in France (which specifically provides for accession referenda in its constitution) and Austria (and possibly other members states), giving opposition among the public the opportunity to veto accession even if the EU and its member states were to agree to it.<sup>143</sup>

This unfriendly attitude towards Turkish accession is mirrored in the discourse of political elites, with Turkey being increasingly used as a scapegoat in domestic European politics. According to a 2018 FEUTURE paper, supposed ‘enlargement fatigue’ in the EU may

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<sup>141</sup> ‘Standard Eurobarometer 85- Spring 2016’; European Commission; EU, 05.2016  
<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/75905>  
[accessed 15.06.19], 26.

<sup>142</sup> ‘Standard Eurobarometer 89- Spring 2018’; European Commission; EU, 03.2018  
<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/83548>  
[accessed 15.06.19], 76.

<sup>143</sup> V. Miller, ‘Referendums on the European Union’, Library of the House of Commons, 2012, 9-10.

actually be largely down to ‘Turkey fatigue’ specifically.<sup>144</sup> It argues that Turkey has been increasingly politicised in European political debates, to the point where Turkish accession featured prominently (and negatively) in the Dutch and German elections in 2017.<sup>145</sup> This current trajectory, it is claimed, is not compatible with any potential improvement in relations, showing the damage caused by allowing the festering, stagnant accession process to continue.<sup>146</sup>

## Public Opinion in Turkey

Public opinion in Turkey on accession is different from public opinion in the EU in a number of ways, although it should be pointed out that evidence for Turkish public opinion is somewhat lacking (a view shared by Turkish public opinion specialist Özgehan Şenyuva, who is unfortunately one of the only authorities in this under-researched field).<sup>147</sup> The clearest difference is that for much of the last two decades it has been broadly in favour of EU membership. According to Şenyuva, surveys generally showed Turkish public support for EU membership in the early 2000s (before 2005) being above 50%.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, unlike EU public opinion, Turkish public opinion is much more volatile and responsive to political circumstances, especially in regards to the accession process.<sup>149</sup> Şenyuva points to data from the Transatlantic Survey, which recorded Turkish public support for EU membership as being 73% in 2004, 38% in 2010 and 53% in 2014.<sup>150</sup> However, despite this changeability, public opinion in Turkey is similar to public opinion in the EU in that it is also becoming more sceptical of Turkish accession. This is well demonstrated by data from the Eurobarometer, which shows a fluctuating but ultimately steady trend downwards from 71% support in 2004 to 28% support in 2016.<sup>151</sup> There is a small anomaly in the recovery to 47% in 2017, but this is probably a reaction to the instability caused by the 2016 coup attempt (an interpretation

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<sup>144</sup>E. Soler i Lecha, F. Tekin, M. J. Sökmen, ‘It Takes Two to Tango- Political Changes in Europe and Their Impact on Turkey’s EU Bid’, *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2018), 1.

<sup>145</sup>Soler i Lecha, ‘It Takes Two to Tango’, 1.

<sup>146</sup>Soler i Lecha, ‘It Takes Two to Tango’, 1.

<sup>147</sup>Şenyuva, ‘Turkish Public Opinion’, 3.

<sup>148</sup>Şenyuva, ‘Turkish Public Opinion’, 3-5.

<sup>149</sup>Şenyuva, ‘Turkish Public Opinion’, i, 2, 3.

<sup>150</sup>Şenyuva, ‘Turkish Public Opinion’, 3.

<sup>151</sup>Şenyuva, ‘Turkish Public Opinion’, 5.

largely shared by Şenyuva), and given the volatility of Turkish public opinion, support can be expected to decline again in keeping with the overall trend.<sup>152</sup>

Turkish scepticism is also evident from data on trust. From the beginning of the accession negotiations in 2005, there has been a reluctance in the EU as a whole, and especially in certain member states, to invest too much political capital in Turkey's membership, and the recognition of this attitude is well reflected in the decline in trust in the EU among the Turkish public. Figures from the Eurobarometer show that Turkish net trust in the EU was consistently positive before the accession process began, but that as early as 2006 it declined into negative figures.<sup>153</sup> In fact, aside from a single instance in 2015, Turkish net trust has remained consistently negative since 2006, reaching an all-time low of -49 in 2015 (albeit temporarily), all of which Şenyuva describes as showing a 'clear trend of decline in trust' in the EU.<sup>154</sup> Perhaps as a result of this lack of trust, a decline in the belief that accession will actually happen is also observed. There was already a noticeable lack of faith only four years after the accession process began, a 2009 Transatlantic Trends Survey finding that 65% of Turkish respondents thought that accession was 'not likely to happen'.<sup>155</sup> By 2017, the results of a Kadir Has University survey show 81% of those polled answering that they thought accession would 'never' become a reality.<sup>156</sup>

Interesting enough, other results show that the Turkish public, despite this fall in favour, trust and expectation, still wants to continue the process and would seem to be against replacing accession with a Strategic Partnership, with 70% of respondents opposed to 'any form of relationship outside membership', a potential obstacle to implementing the Strategic Partnership that will be discussed in Chapter 6.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Şenyuva, 'Turkish Public Opinion', 5, 6-7.

<sup>153</sup> Şenyuva, 'Turkish Public Opinion', 8.

<sup>154</sup> Şenyuva, 'Turkish Public Opinion', 8, 7.

<sup>155</sup> Şenyuva, 'Turkish Public Opinion', 9.

<sup>156</sup> Şenyuva, 'Turkish Public Opinion', 9.

<sup>157</sup> Şenyuva, 'Turkish Public Opinion', 10.

## Chapter 4- The Strategic Partnership

### **Migration**

The 2015 migrant crisis, which almost overnight created a huge pressure on the EU's borders and societies, brought the issue of migration to the top of the European political agenda and directly fuelled the growth of populist parties across the Union. This not only made migration an important domestic political issue, but also turned it into a key issue for the EU's foreign policy, through which part of a solution to the problem had to be found. As the main land route into Europe (as opposed to crossing the Mediterranean), Turkey was the focus of both the migration problem and its solution.

In response to the high volume of migrant traffic running through Turkey into Europe, the EU and Turkey began to make bilateral arrangements to handle irregular migration. The first of these was the 'EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan' agreed in October 2015, which attempted to address the problem by trying to address the pressures driving Syrians out of their home country, supporting Syrians in Turkey and strengthening EU-Turkey cooperation on stemming the flow of illegal migration to the EU.<sup>158</sup> Some of the measures to be taken include extra funds for Turkey to help it accommodate its Syrian migrant population, facilitate the access of Syrians in Turkey to government services and the labour market, and strengthened cooperation and capacity in terms of border controls and coast guard operations.<sup>159</sup>

Following the Joint Action Plan, the EU and Turkey concluded a deal in March 2016 known as the 'EU-Turkey Statement' which sought to find a final resolution to the issue and 'end the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU'.<sup>160</sup> The two parties agreed that all irregular migrants arriving in the Greek islands from Turkey would be returned, and in exchange for each Syrian migrant thus returned, another Syrian would be resettled from Turkey into the EU.<sup>161</sup> Other measures were also to be enacted, such as Turkish efforts to prevent the opening

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<sup>158</sup> 'EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan'; European Commission; EU, 10.2015 [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-15-5860\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-5860_en.htm) [accessed 15.06.19], 1.

<sup>159</sup> 'EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan'; European Commission; EU, 10.2015, 1-3.

<sup>160</sup> EU-Turkey Statement, 18 March 2016'; Council of the EU; EU, 03.2016, 1.

<sup>161</sup> 'EU-Turkey Statement'; Council of the EU 03.2016, 1.

of new routes into the EU and an acceleration of the disbursement of funds allocated to assist Turkey under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.<sup>162</sup>

While the EU-Turkey Statement has fulfilled its primary purpose of keeping migrant arrivals in Europe down (a Commission report from 2018 recording a 97% decrease in arrivals), it has added a new dynamic to EU-Turkey relations.<sup>163</sup> For the EU's part, something which is frequently reflected in documents and statements on Turkey, the country has become a vital asset in migration management, and in reports which heavily criticise Turkey this "redeeming feature" is presented as a nonetheless positive aspect (sometimes the only one).<sup>164</sup>

Its status as a vital migration management asset is important in the sense that, while Turkey has benefited from it financially, the EU-Turkey Statement provides a form of political leverage over the EU. Should relations deteriorate further, or should its vital interests be at risk, Turkey could threaten the EU with the prospect of its terminating the deal and reigniting Europe's migration crisis. Moreover, the deal contained a number of additional incentives for Turkey to agree to it. Perhaps the main incentive was the prospect of visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens entering the EU, with the aim of achieving this by June 2016 provided that certain conditions (called 'benchmarks' in the deal) had been fulfilled.<sup>165</sup> In addition, the two parties also committed to making progress on accession, starting with an agreement to open Chapter 33 'during the Netherlands presidency' (which ran for the first half of 2016).<sup>166</sup> Finally, the deal mentioned that the EU and Turkey 'welcomed' work on upgrading the Customs Union, suggesting that an informal understanding had been privately reached that such an upgrade might follow Turkey's cooperation with the deal.<sup>167</sup>

However, despite the EU-Turkey Statement's usefulness to the EU, Turkey might be justified in being disappointed in it, as not all of the incentives for Turkey mentioned earlier (accession progress etc.) have actually been realised in practice. Visa liberalisation remains to be implemented almost three years after the point at which implementation had been planned, the EU claiming that Turkey has not fulfilled all of the required conditions.<sup>168</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>162</sup> 'EU-Turkey Statement'; Council of the EU 03.2016, 1-2.

<sup>163</sup> 'EU-Turkey Statement- Two Years On'; European Commission; EU, 04.2018 [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20180314\\_eu-turkey-two-years-on\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20180314_eu-turkey-two-years-on_en.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 1.

<sup>164</sup> '2016 Report on Turkey'; Lilyanova, EU, 1; 'Turkey- 2018 Country Report', Perchoc, EU, 1.

<sup>165</sup> 'EU-Turkey Statement'; Council of the EU 03.2016, 2.

<sup>166</sup> 'EU-Turkey Statement'; Council of the EU 03.2016, 2.

<sup>167</sup> 'EU-Turkey Statement'; Council of the EU 03.2016, 2.

<sup>168</sup> 'Texts Adopted- 2018 Report on Turkey'; European Parliament; EU, 03.2019, 10.

although Chapter 33 was indeed opened in June 2016, overall progress with the accession process has been almost non-existent, especially since the July 2016 coup attempt; certainly not what was foreseen in the deal.<sup>169</sup> Finally, despite the European Commission asking the Council for permission to begin negotiations with Turkey to modernise the Customs Union in December 2016, the Council decided in June 2018 that ‘no further work towards the modernisation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union (was) foreseen’, and in 2019 the European Parliament called on the Commission to make any upgrade on the Customs Union conditional on human rights improvements in Turkey, all of which goes against the constructive sentiment of the deal (vis-à-vis Customs Union modernisation) and against whatever private understanding may have been reached on the subject.<sup>170 171 172</sup> These kind of failings create mistrust towards the EU in Turkey, and with the EU’s failure to deliver on this occasion in mind, Turkey might be wary of taking part in any future EU migration-handling initiatives under the current framework of relations.

## Security

The provision of security is one of the main responsibilities of any government, despite not being as pressing a concern as it has been for much of history. Broadly speaking, the security aspect to EU-Turkey cooperation can be divided into concerns over geopolitical strategic pressures, an ever-present terrorist threat and cost-efficient defence.

The EU’s strategic situation has arguably worsened in recent years, with threats ranging from state failure in Libya to state belligerence from Russia casting a shadow over Europe’s neighbourhood. Russia has been active in fuelling the war in the Donbass in Ukraine, which threatens the stability of one of the EU’s direct neighbours and is of great concern for the EU.<sup>173</sup> It also raises fears over the potential for EU member states, especially in the Baltic, to come under direct attack, and although unlikely at present, perceive faltering US commitment to NATO means that an attack is potentially possible in future if the EU does not have a

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<sup>169</sup> ‘Turkey Accession Chapters’; European Commission; EU, 01.2018, 1.

<sup>170</sup> ‘Trade Policy: Countries and regions: Turkey’, European Commission, 05.06.2019  
<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/turkey/> [accessed 13.06.2019].

<sup>171</sup> ‘Council Conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process’; Council of the European Union; EU, 06.2018, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35863/st10555-en18.pdf> [accessed 15.06.19], 13.

<sup>172</sup> ‘Texts Adopted- 2018 Report on Turkey’; European Parliament; EU, 03.2019, 9.

<sup>173</sup> ‘A Global Strategy for the European Union’; EEAS; EU, 06.2016  
[http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19],

33.

robust defence mechanism in place. Meanwhile, the Libyan Civil War has created a zone of instability directly on the EU's maritime border (not far from the member states of Malta and Italy) which not only acts a major *de facto* staging area for illegal migration into Europe, but which also provides fertile ground for terrorist organisations to operate in. Finally, the EU's crowning diplomatic achievement, the JCPOA, is currently collapsing following the US' withdrawal from the deal, re-opening the dangerous prospect of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons.

The EU has not been entirely passive on a strategic level, and has in recent decades tried to influence its local geopolitical environment through initiatives such as the European Neighbourhood Policy, which aims to foster both security and respect for EU values in neighbouring countries ranging from Morocco to Ukraine.<sup>174</sup> However, according to a 2018 Bertelsmann paper on the subject, the EU's options in its neighbourhood have been becoming increasingly restricted.<sup>175</sup> This is especially true for its Eastern flank, where a number of actors (including Russia and Turkey) are playing a progressively more important role.<sup>176</sup> These actors do not always have interests and objectives which are compatible with those of the EU, and in order for EU policy in the region to be successful, it must understand these actors and their aims.<sup>177</sup> In Libya, the EU officially supports the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord, but this support is undercut by a lack of unity among the members state, with France (one of the largest and most militarily powerful member states) standing accused of backing the opposing faction led by General Haftar.<sup>178 179</sup>

Turkey occupies a geographical position which comes with both valuable geostrategic assets and particular threats and challenges. Chief among these assets is geographic control over access to the Black Sea, the Turkish Straits not only being an important trade route but also the only means of access for the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Turkey also sits at the crossroads of many strategic theatres, such as the Middle East, Caucasus and Eastern Europe. However,

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<sup>174</sup> 'European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)'; EEAS; EU, 12.2016 [https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp/330/european-neighbourhood-policy-enp_en) [accessed 15.06.19], 1-2.

<sup>175</sup> M. Bauer, W. Jilge, C. Koch, S. Meister, A. Möller, A. Tabatabai, E. Yalcin, 'Antagonisms in the EU's neighbourhood: The EU, Russia, Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia struggle for influence in their common neighbourhood' (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018), 6.

<sup>176</sup> Bauer 'Antagonisms', 6.

<sup>177</sup> Bauer 'Antagonisms', 6.

<sup>178</sup> EU-Libya relations, EEAS, EU, 11.2018, 2.

<sup>179</sup> P. Taylor, 'France's double game in Libya', Politico, 17.04.2019 <https://www.politico.eu/article/frances-double-game-in-libya-nato-un-khalifa-haftar/> [accessed 13.06.19].

this position also places the country, as one EU report puts it, in the ‘eye of the storm’, and Turkey is indeed surrounded by many conflicts which could pose a threat to it.<sup>180</sup> The most active of these conflicts is right on its border in Syria, and together with instability in Iraq it has a direct connection to one of Turkey’s main security threats; Kurdish armed groups. Growing Kurdish autonomy in Northern Syria since 2015 and a referendum in Northern Iraq in 2017 have, as far as Turkey is concerned, created a significant danger right on Turkey’s borders, one which not only has the potential to fuel Kurdish separatism in Turkey, but is closely connected to fears over terrorism (discussed below).<sup>181</sup> Turkish concerns have only increased as international recognition of Kurdish militias has grown after the latter’s efforts to fight IS.<sup>182</sup> In response to this danger, Turkey has adopted a “containment” strategy to try and blunt the growth of Kurdish autonomy, including a full-scale offensive against the Kurds in Northern Syria in 2018.<sup>183</sup> Moreover, like many regional actors, Turkey is threatened by the potential Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons following the steady crumbling of the JCPOA.

However, Turkey’s foreign policy and strategic agenda is not entirely defensive, and in fact is quite proactive and ambitious in some respects. The country increasingly sees itself as a major power in the Middle East, an attitude fuelled by the neo-Ottoman ambitions of the ruling party and which represents a foreign policy direction which goes beyond simply reacting to threats.<sup>184</sup> For example, it quickly supported the revolts in North Africa during the Arab Spring, and is also increasing its attention on Africa while trying to close down ‘Gülenist’ schools there.<sup>185</sup> <sup>186</sup> Moreover, despite not being directly threatened by the chaos in Libya, Turkey has nonetheless chosen to involve itself, supporting the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord and allegedly delivering arms.<sup>187</sup> <sup>188</sup> Another part of this

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<sup>180</sup> ‘Turkey Since the Failed July 2016 Coup’; Philippe Perchoc; European Parliament; EU, 09.2016, 2.

<sup>181</sup> Bauer ‘Antagonisms’, 8.

<sup>182</sup> Bauer ‘Antagonisms’, 8.

<sup>183</sup> Bauer ‘Antagonisms’, 8.

<sup>184</sup> A. Akca, ‘Neo-Ottomanism- Turkey’s Foreign Policy Approach to Africa’ (Washington, DC: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2019), 1.

<sup>185</sup> D.D. Kirkpatrick, ‘Premier of Turkey Takes Role in Region’, The New York Times, 12.09.2011 <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/13/world/middleeast/13egypt.html> [accessed 14.06.19].

<sup>186</sup> Akca, ‘Neo-Ottomanism’, 1, 5-6.

<sup>187</sup> E. Sherwin, ‘Backing Haftar to the hilt?’, Qantara, 15.04.2019 <https://en.qantara.de/content/russian-involvement-in-libya-backing-haftar-to-the-hilt> [accessed 14.06.19].

<sup>188</sup> ‘Libya’s Tripoli militias boast of Turkish weapons shipment despite UN embargo’, The National, 19.05.2019 <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/libya-s-tripoli-militias-boast-of-turkish-weapons-shipment-despite-un-embargo-1.863229> [accessed 14.06.19].

more active strategy is the construction of overseas military bases in Qatar and in the Red Sea, increasing Turkey's ability to project military power and its influence abroad.<sup>189</sup>

In terms of counter-terrorism, the EU is under constant threat of terrorist attack, something highlighted by major attacks in Paris in 2015 and Nice in 2016, and smaller ones in Germany, the UK and Belgium.<sup>190</sup> The EU has taken a number of steps to fight against terrorism, including the establishment of the Europol European Counter Terrorism Centre in 2016.<sup>191</sup> A Council report from 2017 also emphasises the need to work with third countries on counter-terrorism, showing that the EU's strategy in dealing with the problem includes an international element.<sup>192</sup>

One of the oldest and most important internal security issues facing Turkey has been the Kurdish conflict, which has often involved terrorist attacks. Since 1984, Turkey has faced an armed insurgency led by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a struggle which persisted through much of the 1990s.<sup>193</sup> <sup>194</sup> Despite the temporary interruption of ceasefires in 1999-2004 and 2013-15, and several attempts at finding a peaceful solution to the conflict, attacks and crackdowns resulting in thousands of casualties yearly continue.<sup>195</sup> Terrorist attacks by the insurgents remain a threat, and while there is little realistic prospect of secession becoming a reality, this spectre is always in the mind of the Turkish leadership, and developments in recent years give the impression of a worsening situation.<sup>196</sup> The failure of the Turkish-Kurdish peace process in 2014 (with the setback for the AKP in the 2015 elections making, according to Savas Genc, the ruling party more hostile to the Kurds) made a negotiated solution increasingly unlikely, meaning that this issue will remain for the foreseeable future.<sup>197</sup> <sup>198</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Bauer 'Antagonisms', 8.

<sup>190</sup> 'TESAT: European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend', EUROPOL (The Hague: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 2018) <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2018-tesat-2018> [accessed 15.06.19], 4, 23.

<sup>191</sup> 'European Counter Terrorism Centre – ECTC'; Europol; EU, 05.2019 <https://www.europol.europa.eu/print/about-europol/european-counter-terrorism-centre-ectc> [accessed 15.06.19], 1.

<sup>192</sup> 'Council Conclusions on EU External Action on Counter-terrorism'; General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union; EU, 06.2017 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23999/st10384en17-conclusions-on-eu-external-action-on-counter-terrorism.pdf> [accessed 15.06.19], 11-12.

<sup>193</sup> 'Country Policy and Information Note Turkey: Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)', Home Office, 2018, 12.

<sup>194</sup> 'EASO County of Origin'; European Asylum Support Office, 50-1.

<sup>195</sup> 'EASO County of Origin'; European Asylum Support Office, 50.

<sup>196</sup> 'EASO County of Origin'; European Asylum Support Office, 50.

<sup>197</sup> Bauer 'Antagonisms', 8.

<sup>198</sup> Genc, 'Türkische Kehrtwende', 71.

The EU's military status is non-conventional in the sense that the EU does not have a unified army, its forces being divided among 28 separate militaries. In fact, the EU has very limited jurisdiction in this field, defence being a competence which (not having been conferred on the EU) is firmly in the hands of the member states. However, this is not to say that the EU plays no role or has no interest in defence matters, and indeed the Union's growing involvement in this field comes in several forms. For one thing, as part of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the EU (through the Council) runs several military and civilian missions and operations abroad whose mandates range from advising in security areas to peacekeeping.<sup>199</sup> More recently, there has been an increased effort within the EU to establish frameworks to deepen European defence integration, with the PESCO initiative standing out as a notable development.<sup>200</sup>

The Turkish military is one of the largest in Europe and the Middle East, and is the second largest in NATO after the US, with an impressive 2.2% of GDP being spent on it in 2018.<sup>201</sup> According to a 2017 PAX report, much of its military equipment was imported from abroad (mainly from the US, South Korea, Spain and Italy), although Turkey seems determined to change this through a determined effort to develop its own equipment.<sup>202</sup> The Turkish military is also currently in the process of being modernised.<sup>203</sup>

Having assessed the security situation of the EU and Turkey in multiple fields, the possibilities for collaboration can be explored. On a strategic level, there is much potential for cooperation, starting with coordination vis-à-vis Russia. Although there has been something of a rapprochement between Turkey and Russia in recent years, their increasingly contradictory interests in Syria and fears over growing Russian influence in the region more generally may lead to a deterioration of relations that will see Turkey look for allies against

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<sup>199</sup> 'EEAS- Military and Civilian Missions and Operations'; EEAS; EU, 03.2019

[https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/430/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/430/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations_en) [accessed 15.06.19], 1-2.

<sup>200</sup> B. Peternelj, P. Kurecic, G. Kozina, 'The Permanent Structured Cooperation Initiative (PESCO) as a Step towards the European Defense Union', M. Przygoda, L. L. Butkovic, E. Szymanska (eds.), *Economic and Social Development: 29th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings*, Varazdin Development and Entrepreneurship Agency (2018), 39.

<sup>201</sup> 'Military expenditure (% of GDP)', The World Bank (2019)

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=TR> [accessed 13.06.19].

<sup>202</sup> F. Slijper, S. Clark (ed.), 'Power Projection; Turkey's Military Build-up- Arms Transfers and an Emerging Military Industry', (Utrecht: PAX, 2017), 6-7.

<sup>203</sup> Bauer 'Antagonisms', 8.

it.<sup>204</sup> An end to the Turkey-Russia rapprochement seems more possible when one considers the historic enmity between the two, which as recently as 2015 saw Turkey shoot down a Russian jet fighter.<sup>205</sup> In such a scenario, the EU and Turkey would have much to offer one another. For the EU's part, it could make for a welcome alternative to the US (with which Turkey currently enjoys a frosty relationship) when looking for allies to balance Russian power, bringing both economic and (admittedly disjointed) military power (including nuclear weapons) to the table. As for Turkey, it can offer its strategically vital control of access to the Black Sea, as well as control of much of the airspace between Russia and the Middle East.

In Libya, EU and Turkish interests are aligned in their opposition to Haftar, and coordinated action between the two might achieve more meaningful results than the individual approaches have thus far. On Iran, despite both parties being threatened by the prospect of Iranian nuclear weapons, there is not that much that the two parties could achieve working together to save the JCPOA, as the main reason for its failure is the hostile attitude of the US. This is especially true for Turkey, which is not even a JCPOA signatory.<sup>206</sup> However, any future effort to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons, or indeed manage Tehran in general, could benefit from a coordinated combination of EU resources and Turkish expertise dealing with Iran. Moreover, given the observation that the EU is somewhat lacking in its ability to navigate Middle Eastern geopolitics, Turkey may prove to be a valuable diplomatic partner through whom (and in conjunction with) the EU could more effectively pursue its regional aims.

Cooperation in counter-terrorism is also a possibility. The presence of European citizens in the ranks of Islamic State's ranks and their attempts to return home via Turkey in the wake of that organisation's crumbling makes cooperation all the more urgent.<sup>207</sup> Intelligence sharing by both parties would be mutually beneficial, while greater EU support in dealing with the Kurdish insurgency (something which Turkey has long complained that the EU and US have not taken seriously) would be valuable to Turkey. There was an attempt by the European Commission to initiate greater police cooperation between Turkey and the EU to combat

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<sup>204</sup> D. Ala'Aldeen, K. Palani, G. Babunashvili, J. Balisdell, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests in the Caspian and Middle East Region', *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2018), 16.

<sup>205</sup> 'Turkey's downing of Russian warplane - what we know', BBC, 01.12.2015  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34912581> [accessed 13.06.19].

<sup>206</sup> 'Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action', Vienna, 14.07.2015  
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/122460/full-text-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal.pdf> [accessed 14.06.19],

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<sup>207</sup> M.Pierini, 'Options for the EU-Turkey Relationship', Carnegie Europe (2019), 5.

terrorism, and despite the European Parliament expressing great reservations in supporting it, the initiative was not rejected outright, a sign that cooperation, though difficult, is potentially possible.<sup>208</sup>

There is also potential for cooperation in terms of military procurement, especially considering that the modernisation of the Turkish army could create Turkish demand for newly developed equipment. The recent attempts to add a more substantial military element to the EU through the establishment of common procurement and coordination structures (particularly PESCO) represents an undertaking in which Turkey could potentially take part. According to a paper by IPC and IAI, it would be possible for third countries like Turkey to participate to some extent in PESCO on a general and a project-specific basis.<sup>209</sup> This is particularly important when one considers Turkey's S-400 deal with Russia, which has raised the ire of the US.<sup>210</sup> While this deal might on the surface seem to represent an instance of security divergence between the EU and Turkey that would hinder integration, the risk of such a divergence continuing is precisely why the EU should pursue greater cooperation with Turkey. Integrating Turkish defence procurement with that of the EU will help to align Turkish interests in this field more closely with that of the EU, as Turkey will have invested in some of the same projects, and will, having done so, not wish to risk its investments over controversial defence deals with actors hostile to the EU. Viewed through a neo-functionalist lens, this effect could be amplified through very specific spillovers in defence procurement, as successful Turkish participation in initial projects encourages further participation in additional projects, and as Turkish defence contractors create closer ties with European ones. Greater defence procurement cooperation will also help to address Turkish needs for strategic autonomy by giving them a European alternative to the US in terms of foreign (or in the case of PESCO projects it takes part in, partly foreign) sources of defence equipment, making them even less likely to buy from actors whose deals have strategic strings attached (such as Russia).

## Energy

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<sup>208</sup> 'Police Data Sharing- Texts Adopted'; European Parliament; EU, 07.2018

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0296\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0296_EN.pdf) [accessed 15.06.19], 4, 6.

<sup>209</sup> S. Aydın-Düzgit, A. Marrone, 'PESCO and Security Cooperation Between the EU and Turkey', *Global Turkey in Europe*, (Stiftung Mercator, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Istanbul Policy Centre), 2.

<sup>210</sup> M. Kibaroglu, 'On Turkey's Missile Defense Strategy- The Four Faces of The S-400 Deal Between Turkey and Russia', *SAM Papers* (16), Centre for Strategic Research (2019), 7-8.

Energy is an area which is of key concern to policy makers in most places, with the steady provision of energy being vital for the functioning of modern societies and economies. The EU and Turkey have many shared interests and opportunities in this field, especially in terms of their common reliance on foreign energy imports. Considering the significance of energy, it is a field which has the potential of driving greater cooperation between the two and improving relations if the opportunities to cooperate are seized.

The EU currently relies to a strategically unacceptably great extent on Russian gas for its energy provision, a reliance which undermines the Union's capability to respond to Russian's actions on the international stage.<sup>211</sup> This situation could well get worse if alternative sources are not found, as declining domestic production will increase the EU's reliance on imports.<sup>212</sup> Fortunately, there are substantial gas reserves in Central Asia and Iran which could act as such alternatives to Russian gas, provided an economically viable route is found to transport it to Europe.<sup>213</sup>

Turkey is also in a position where it has to import much of its energy, including as much as 99% of its gas.<sup>214</sup> Like the EU, it has a strategically unacceptably high dependence on Russian gas, and due to increasing demand will likewise need to increase its imports, and is thus seeking to diversify its sources.<sup>215</sup> The Turkish government is looking to play a leading role in regional energy matters by securing its own supply and becoming an 'energy trade hub', an ambition which is helped not only by its geographical location, but also its trade ties with Iran and (rather ironically) the Kurdish Regional Government in Northern Iraq.<sup>216 217</sup>

As it currently stands, there is already some notable cooperation which could provide the foundations for further progress in the future. Turkey and the EU have seen energy cooperation as a platform for closer ties since before the start of the accession negotiations, with Turkey playing a key role in the EU's Southern Gas Corridor initiative since 2003.<sup>218</sup> Turkey is also part of ENTSO-E, which facilitates its integration with the EU electricity

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<sup>211</sup> L. Colantoni, D. Korkmaz, N. Sartori, M. Schröder, S.D. Sever, S. Yilmaz, 'Energy and Climate Strategies, Interests and Priorities of the EU and Turkey', *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2017), 12-13.

<sup>212</sup> Ala'Aldeen, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests', 1.

<sup>213</sup> Ala'Aldeen, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests', 2, 6.

<sup>214</sup> Colantoni, 'Energy and Climate Strategies', 6.

<sup>215</sup> Colantoni, 'Energy and Climate Strategies', 39.

<sup>216</sup> Colantoni, 'Energy and Climate Strategies', 5.

<sup>217</sup> M. Schröder, W. Wessels, 'The Energy Geopolitics of Turkey – From Classical to Critical Reading', M. Schröder, M. O. Bettzüge, W. Wessels (eds.), *Turkey as an Energy Hub* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017), 35-6.

<sup>218</sup> Colantoni, 'Energy and Climate Strategies', 43.

market (a process which has seen significant progress in recent years), while its participation in MedReg and Med-TSO helps to foster a closer alignment of regulations.<sup>219 220</sup> More recently, the SGC is in the process of being extended with the construction of the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP), begun in 2015 and scheduled for completion in 2020.

Geography and energy economics both act as great incentives for cooperation. For the EU, Turkey is the perfect route through which to circumvent Russia and access the gas reserves of Central Asia and Iran.<sup>221</sup> On the Turkish side, its similar (although not as acute) reliance on Russia gives it an incentive to cooperate with the EU's plans for the construction of its pipelines, as they could also boost Turkey's access to gas from the Caspian and Middle East.<sup>222</sup> In practice, this would most likely involve an expansion of the TANAP pipeline to double or triple its capacity by 2026, and Turkish help in dealing with the Caspian country key to the success of efforts to access Caspian and Central Asian gas, Azerbaijan (with which Turkey has an excellent relationship).<sup>223</sup> Moreover, Turkey stands to gain economically through transit fees and better business opportunities through its greater integration with the European energy market.<sup>224</sup> In addition, instability in Iraq, from which both Turkey and the EU import significant amounts of oil, could act as another incentive for cooperation as both seek to maintain stability there.<sup>225</sup> Finally, closer cooperation with the EU would make it easier for the two parties to coordinate their approach to Russia, making it harder for the latter to exploit its gas dominance for political leverage over them.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Colantoni, 'Energy and Climate Strategies', 46.

<sup>220</sup> Colantoni, 'Energy and Climate Strategies', 50.

<sup>221</sup> Ala'Aldeen, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests', 2, 6.

<sup>222</sup> Ala'Aldeen, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests', 3.

<sup>223</sup> Ala'Aldeen, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests', 4, 5, 6.

<sup>224</sup> Ala'Aldeen, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests', 3.

<sup>225</sup> Ala'Aldeen, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests', 9-10.

<sup>226</sup> N. Mikhelidze, N. Sartori, O. F. Tanrisever, T. Tsakiris, 'The Moscow-Ankara Energy Axis and the Future of EU-Turkey Relations', *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2017), i.

## Chapter 5- The Difference made by a Strategic Partnership

Although Turkish accession to the EU is currently impossible, there is still the question as to what benefit a transition from accession to a Strategic Partnership would bring. Rhetorically, both parties still see the accession process as important, especially on the Turkish side. Moreover, the EU arguably benefits from the potential to use both the prospect of progress in accession and IPA funds as leverage when negotiating with Turkey to pursue its interests, as could be seen in the agreement of the EU-Turkey Statement. In addition, it could well be argued that strategic cooperation is already taking place regardless of the stalled accession process, the EU-Turkey Statement and cooperation in NATO being some examples. With all of this in mind, it seems prudent to ask what would change if the accession talks were to be terminated and EU-Turkey relations reconstructed in the form of a Strategic Partnership. Answering this question requires quite a bit of conjecture, as there is no precedent for a scenario like this, all previous “failed” accession proceedings having ended due to a unilateral termination by the candidate country (e.g. Norway). Nonetheless, despite a shortage of empirical evidence, the dynamics examined and theories used thus far can help to outline some of the theoretical changes and advantages that a formal Strategic Partnership could bring.

### **Funding**

One immediate change that a formal end to accession would bring is the end to Turkey’s entitlement to IPA funds, which for the period 2014-20 amounted to €4.45 billion (or around €740 million annually).<sup>227</sup> Assuming that the EU were willing to continue using financial pay-outs to facilitate its cooperation with Turkey, these could continue to be used as leverage to incentivise Turkey to cooperate with the new Strategic Partnership initiative, especially if they were framed in such a way as to act as a compensatory “consolation prize” to help Turkey to accept the end of accession talks. Alternatively (or, with an increase in funds, additionally), funds could be spent on Turkish NGOs. The European Parliament’s 2019 resolution has already called for the existing IPA funds to be redirected towards civil society in Turkey to promote human rights and civil liberties, something which could be

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<sup>227</sup> Perchoc , ‘Turkey- Economic Indicators’, European Parliament; EU, 06.2017, 2.

implemented in the Strategic Partnership as a way for the EU to promote its values while cooperating with what it sees as an increasingly authoritarian regime.<sup>228</sup>

## **Trust**

In the medium- to long-term, the initially diplomatically painful transformation of relations from accession to Strategic Partnership could actually increase trust between the EU and Turkey. At present, there is a Turkish exasperation with the stalled accession process that helps to feed a feeling of mistrust.<sup>229</sup> This is especially true when one considers the cases in which Turkey could well consider itself directly lied to. A good example of the stagnant accession process creating mistrust is the EU-Turkey statement, which promised to ‘re-energise’ the process, and was followed with very little progress. By contrast, discarding the unrealistic goal of accession will help to prevent agreements being made on the unsound basis of accession progress, helping to prevent incidents which damage the trust between the two parties. Moreover, abandoning the accession process, so long the principal framework for EU-Turkey relations, would be seen as a major turning point which could help to create a clean slate for EU-Turkey relations. Without the toxic element of accession (the EU’s reluctance to welcome Turkey into the Union having motivated its mistrust-generating behaviour) in play, the two parties would be making deals in areas where they have similar immediately practical incentives, encouraging both to honour the agreements and creating trust.

## **Reduced conditionality**

Decoupling EU-Turkey relations from accession could also open up new possibilities for cooperation that were not possible before specifically due to concerns over governance and human rights issues. The attachment of conditionality in these areas to negotiations over upgrading the Customs Union shows the extent to which these concerns can hinder cooperation with an active accession candidate, as this status means that they are held to high governance and human rights standards. With the accession process no longer in play, the EU can lower its standards to the point these concerns are no longer an obstacle. The potential for

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<sup>228</sup> ‘Turkey- 2018 Country Report’, Perchoc, EU, 1.

<sup>229</sup> Gülseven, ‘EU-Turkey Relations’, 250; B. Yabancı, ‘The Future of EU-Turkey Relations- Between Mutual Distrust and Interdependency’, *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2016), 30; Şenyuva, ‘Turkish Public Opinion’, 9.

this to be the case is demonstrated by the example of the EU's conclusion of a trade deal with Vietnam, a country which Freedom House gives an overall score of 20/100 in terms of human rights, governance etc.<sup>230</sup> By comparison, Turkey has a score of 31/100, so once Turkey is no longer an accession country the evidence suggests that pursuing economic cooperation by upgrading the Customs Union should not be a problem (at least in human rights terms).<sup>231</sup>

### **More cooperative EU veto players**

Formally removing the prospect of Turkish accession could also have an impact on the cooperation of EU decision-making actors. The prospect of Turkish accession has for years been an uncomfortable one for many in Europe. A 2009 Transatlantic Trends Survey of 11 EU countries showed that although only 20% of respondents were supportive of Turkish accession, 54% thought that it would happen, suggesting that accession was seen as both threatening and likely.<sup>232</sup> Closer to the present day, the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign by the pro-Brexit camp saw the spectre of Turkish accession feature prominently in its efforts to convince the public to vote against the EU.<sup>233</sup> Although this evidence is admittedly circumstantial and incomplete, it does suggest that there might be a deeper fear among actors in Europe over the prospect of Turkish accession that affects decision-making. With accession no longer a factor in EU-Turkey relations, member states and European Parliament parties which were opposed to Turkish accession could be more inclined to support initiatives that increase cooperation with Turkey, as these would no longer be seen as potential steps to accession.

### **A new conceptual approach**

Aside from the immediate practical ramifications of replacing accession with a Strategic Partnership, doing so would represent a fundamental change in the overall approach to EU-Turkey relations. This change is best conceptualised with reference to IR theories. Thus far, the accession process has represented an approach to EU-Turkey relations that could be

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<sup>230</sup> 'Vietnam', Freedom House, 2019 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/vietnam> [accessed 12.06.19].

<sup>231</sup> 'Turkey', Freedom House, 2019 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/turkey> [accessed 12.06.19].

<sup>232</sup> Şenyuva, 'Turkish Public Opinion', 9.

<sup>233</sup> J. Ker-Lindsay, 'Did the unfounded claim that Turkey was about to join the EU swing the Brexit referendum?', LSE, 15.02.2018 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/unfounded-claim-turkey-swing-brexit-referendum/> [accessed 13.06.19].

compared in principle to the federalist approach to European integration; trying to implement a major change by singular, ambitious action. In the original European context, this initially referred to the creation of a federal European state through relatively quick, top-down decision.<sup>234</sup> Turkish accession is arguably a similarly ambitious goal which has been pursued through a similar approach; trying to integrate a large, culturally and economically divergent country by dealing with all of the necessary aspects of this (i.e. the accession chapters) all at once and through a single formalised process that in most previous cases has taken less than a decade. Like the original European federal goal, the goal of Turkish accession has currently clearly failed. By contrast, abandoning the current accession process would represent a shift to something comparable to the neo-functionalist model; a step-by-step model of cooperation whose end result is open-ended and contingent on how well cooperation in specific areas takes place and spills over into other areas. Not only is this likely to be a more immediately effective approach, it paradoxically also means that the accession process might actually continue to take place in an informal, unintended way. Given the supranational end-result foreseen by neo-functionalism through spillover (this being made more likely by increased trust), it is entirely possible that a successful Strategic Partnership could end in accession after all.

## **New ideas**

There is a possibility that the change in perspective which a replacement of accession with Strategic Partnership would bring could lead to fresh ideas which aren't related to accession matters being brought to the fore. As an organisation which is involved with everything from agriculture to international treaties, the EU has only so much institutional and bureaucratic capacity to consider, process and implement policies. With the major matter of accession no longer occupying the EU's institutional capacity with accession chapter reports, political debates over Turkish membership etc., and shaping its perception of Turkey (i.e. as an accession county to a significant degree) there would be more capacity to devote to ideas of strategic cooperation, as well as the more pragmatic, interest-focused mindset to generate and promote these ideas. PESCO cooperation could be one such idea that in principle has nothing to do with accession, and may well have not been given consideration precisely because it was not on an issue on the accession agenda.

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<sup>234</sup> Bergmann, 'Theories', 5.

## Chapter 6- Prognosis and Conclusion

### **Prognosis**

Having made the academic case for the replacement of the accession process with a Strategic Partnership, it is worth reflecting if this is a realistic proposition. Several factors work in support of the likelihood of this plan, but there are some hurdles that would need to be overcome, starting with barriers to cooperation in the fields in which cooperation under a Strategic Partnership would be initially focused.

Cooperation in migration, despite its benefits, could be hampered by the fact that the presence of so many migrants in Turkey is causing significant economic and social tension in the country. This has become a growing problem in the last two years or so, as the patience of the Turkish public with their ‘guests’ (the Turkish government having described them as such as a way to both show off their benevolent hospitality and conceptualise the Syrians’ presence as temporary) has been pushed to the point where there is widespread resentment against them.<sup>235</sup> <sup>236</sup> This bubbling discontent is especially dangerous from the ruling party’s standpoint, as not only are its supporters worst affected, but the party has invested heavily in the ‘guest’ narrative, so backlash against the refugees may well be directed at it.<sup>237</sup> With all this in mind, Turkey’s cooperation with the EU may not only be contingent on the relations between the two, but also on Turkish public opinion; if the latter boils over, Turkey may be forced to terminate the EU-Turkey Statement and allow migrants to make their way into the EU even if the Turkish government seeks to cooperate. This dynamic also means that Turkey may be wary of taking part in any further cooperation that sees the number of migrants in the country rise. However, for the time being the EU-Turkey Statement is holding, and the growing possibility of the Syrian government soon winning the civil war could relieve some of the migration pressure on Turkey’s borders. Moreover, should a collapse of the deal due to internal pressure in Turkey be imminent, the EU could perhaps contribute further resources to help Turkey deal with the situation, either as part of a redirection of what where the IPA funds, or as part of a larger investment in the Strategic Partnership.

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<sup>235</sup> S. Y. Nielsen ‘Perceptions Between Syrian Refugees and Their Host Community’, *Turkish Policy Quarterly* Vol 15 (3) (2016), 100, 102; ‘Turkey’s Syrian Refugees: Defusing Metropolitan Tensions’, International Crisis Group (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2018), 8.

<sup>236</sup> Nielsen, ‘Perceptions’, 102-5; ‘Turkey’s Syrian Refugees’, i.

<sup>237</sup> ‘Turkey’s Syrian Refugees’, 8.

Cooperation in the field of energy also faces potential problems, mainly in the form of uncertainty. According to a 2017 FEUTURE paper on the subject, uncertainty over Turkey's position on enhancing cooperation and on alternatives to gas (nuclear, renewables etc.) make it difficult to judge how much political will there might be in Ankara to go forward with enhanced cooperation.<sup>238</sup> There are also problems on the EU side, with the Union's possible inability to balance supply security, sustainability and competitiveness calling into question its capability to participate in enhanced cooperation.<sup>239</sup> It is also unclear what growth both economies will see in the future, another uncertainty which could undermine cooperation.<sup>240</sup> Nevertheless, the progress on the TANAP pipeline is evidence for the steady cooperation already taking place in this field, and given the trends in energy demand and strategic aims of both parties, this uncertainty seems to be something that is unlikely to stand in the way of future projects.

There is also the important Russian element to consider as a hindrance to energy cooperation. Russia's significant presence and actions in the energy sector in the region serve to both impede and motivate greater EU-Turkey energy cooperation. On the one hand, energy links between Russia and Turkey are becoming increasingly close, a stable relationship (at least in energy terms) which it is in Turkey's interests to maintain.<sup>241</sup> On the other hand, according to a 2018 FEUTURE paper, Turkey is becoming increasingly concerned over Russia's growing influence in the Middle East, and is unlikely to want to increase its reliance on Russia for its energy needs.<sup>242</sup> Moreover, Russia is attempting to impede the implementations of projects such as the SGC which could weaken its energy dominance to the benefit of Turkey, adverse behaviour which may sour Turkey's attitude towards Russia.<sup>243</sup> Therefore, Turkey finds itself in a position whereby it needs to find a way to balance safeguarding its energy arrangements with Russia and keeping its wider energy options open. A 2017 FEUTURE paper suggests that this situation may prompt Turkey and the EU to coordinate their energy strategies towards Russia to strengthen their positions towards it.<sup>244</sup> In current circumstances, what with relations being so poor, this level of cooperation may be difficult to achieve (a 2018

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<sup>238</sup> Colantoni, 'Energy and Climate Strategies', 2.

<sup>239</sup> Colantoni, 'Energy and Climate Strategies', 2.

<sup>240</sup> Colantoni, 'Energy and Climate Strategies', 2.

<sup>241</sup> Mikhelidze, 'The Moscow-Ankara Energy Axis', i.

<sup>242</sup> Ala'Aldeen, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests', 16.

<sup>243</sup> Ala'Aldeen, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests', 16.

<sup>244</sup> Mikhelidze, 'The Moscow-Ankara Energy Axis', i.

FEUTURE paper outlining greater cooperation in other fields as a necessary prerequisite).<sup>245</sup> However, the Strategic Partnership would offer the opportunity for both the EU and Turkey to clearly commit to and focus on such a goal, helping to overcome this difficulty.

Russia could also be a hindrance to security cooperation, as procurement collaboration could be hampered if the conclusion of the S-400 deal leads to further contracts between it and Turkey. Much of the US' hostility to the deal is based on fears that the introduction of a Russian system to one of NATO's militaries could undermine the cybersecurity of the alliance's air defence system.<sup>246</sup> If further deals are made involving other types of equipment or weapons systems, then it could reduce the options for Turkish involvement in PESCO, for example. However, it is equally possible that growing strains in the Turko-Russian relationship will prevent further contracts, especially if the EU can position itself as an alternative supplier. Meanwhile, cooperation in counter-terrorism could be hampered by concerns over civil liberties in Turkey (as was seen in the European Parliament's decision on police cooperation) and by the potential for Ankara to try and use this cooperative framework to go after suspected Gülenists, whom the EU do not see as terrorists.<sup>247</sup> This is also a somewhat open-ended obstacle, as it is hard to say what kind of balance the EU will want to strike between supporting civil liberties and fighting terrorism. However, the issue of the Gülenists will probably not be an insurmountable obstacle, as any cooperation agreement could exclude them from its mandate and instead focus on shared threats like the PKK, which both Turkey and the EU recognise as a terrorist organisation.

Despite the potential difficulties, there are several factors which speak for the likelihood of accession being replaced with a Strategic Partnership. First, as has already been discussed, there is a growing movement within EU institutions, particularly the European Parliament, which is against the accession talks. Although at the moment this movement seems to be in favour of merely officially suspending negotiations (and is certainly against making any further progress on accession by opening new chapters etc.), this in itself represents a change from calls for a freeze in the talks called for only a relatively short time ago in 2016, an idea which itself had never been seriously considered before. As such, it seems reasonable to expect calls for a complete abandonment of the accession process in the coming years,

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<sup>245</sup> Ala'Aldeen, 'EU and Turkish Energy Interests', i.

<sup>246</sup> S. Egeli, 'Making Sense of Turkey's Air and Missile Defense Merry-go-round', *All Azimuth* Vol 8 (1) (2019), 76.

<sup>247</sup> J. Lindgaard, A. Dessì, F. Tassinari, S. Özel, 'The Impact of Global Drivers on the Future of EU-Turkey Security Relations', *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2018), 21.

especially if tensions in the conflicting interests continue (as the current trends suggest they are likely to), with the greater share of European Parliament seats under the control of parties opposed to enlargement making this even more likely.

The picture is somewhat less clear-cut among the member states, represented in the Council, although the trend is similar to that seen in the Parliament. At the moment, there is no unanimous position (required by the voting procedure for accession matters) to end Turkish accession; in fact, many member states (ranging from Spain to Croatia to Finland) remain supportive of the process.<sup>248 249 250</sup> However, while many member states are in favour of continuing the accession negotiations, this support is steadily declining, with countries like the Netherlands and the Czech Republic becoming increasingly sceptical of Turkish membership.<sup>251 252</sup> Although it is too early to speak of any broad governmental opposition among member states, the fact that it does not seem that any member states are becoming more favourable to accession, and the fact that divergence in fields such as Cyprus and human rights is only increasing, make it quite likely that this negative trend of waning member state support will continue. If the coalition of countries opposed to Turkish accession continues to grow, the supporters of accession may be persuaded by the other member states to back an end to the process. This would be all the more possible if overall relations between the EU and Turkey continue to worsen, the failure of the accession process to move forward or even to act as a tool of EU leverage over Turkey (the IPA funds seemingly having had no effect on the deteriorating human rights situation in the country, for example) becomes ever clearer, and the merits of a Strategic Partnership are recognised.

In contrast to the situation among decision-makers, EU public opinion is unequivocal in its opposition to Turkish accession. Having already been sceptical towards Turkish membership when the accession negotiations first began, public opposition to accession has firmly stiffened to the point where it is currently firmly opposed, a trend that seems likely to continue. This not only makes accession impossible under current circumstances (especially

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<sup>248</sup> M. J. Sökmen, E. Soler i Lecha, 'FEUTURE EU 28 Country Report- Spain', *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2017), 2.

<sup>249</sup> V. Samardžija, S.S. Šabić, 'FEUTURE EU 28 Country Report- Croatia', *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2017), 2.

<sup>250</sup> T. Alaranta, 'FEUTURE EU 28 Country Report- Finland', *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2017), 2, 4.

<sup>251</sup> J. M. Wiersma, 'FEUTURE EU 28 Country Report- The Netherlands', *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2017), 2-4.

<sup>252</sup> V. Beneš, K. Tamchynová, 'FEUTURE EU 28 Country Report- Czech Republic', *FEUTURE* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2017), 2.

considering the need for referenda on membership in some member states), but it also means that there is a clear public mandate to end accession, something which EU policy-makers may well capitalise on for political support.

On the Turkish side, the state of public opinion provides a somewhat mixed picture as to what role it could play in facilitating or preventing a Strategic Partnership. On the one hand, as was seen in Chapter 3, there is a growing scepticism towards the EU and the accession process that on the surface could be seen as something that would make Turkish cooperation with the establishment of a Strategic Partnership more likely. On the other hand, there seems to be clear opposition to any prospect of ending the accession process. While this could be perceived as an obstacle to establishing a Strategic Partnership, the observed volatility of Turkish public opinion and the trends of faltering support for the accession process suggest that opposition could be short-lived once the narrative of inevitable, deserved Turkish accession is dropped. Moreover, although public opinion matters, its importance is contingent on its ability to influence decision-making, and since an end to the accession talks could easily be presented by the Turkish government as a unilateral act by the EU (as it indeed might be), Turkish policymakers need not fear suffering from a public backlash for cooperating in establishing the Strategic Partnership. Interestingly, of those who were favourable to another form of cooperation, a majority favoured cooperation in economic and security matters, suggesting that these would be good starting points (or at least, those least unpopular) from a public opinion standpoint.<sup>253</sup>

In summary, the prospects for the accession process to be replaced by a Strategic Partnership seem good. While there are some challenges to overcome, and some uncertain factors that may act against it, none of these seem insurmountable. In addition, the clear trend of growing opposition to the accession process in the EU among the public and increasingly among EU decision-makers suggests that the process will indeed come to an end sooner or later. With the accession process terminated, the EU will still need to cooperate with Turkey to pursue its interests, giving it ample motivation to establish a Strategic Partnership with it.

It should be noted that this is not something that the Turkish government and people will necessarily welcome, given the narrative among elites and the public of ‘deserving’ to be in the EU. Yet the reality is that there would be little Turkey could do to stop a unilateral end to accession, and even if Ankara initially refused to join a Strategic Partnership in retaliation,

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<sup>253</sup> Şenyuva, ‘Turkish Public Opinion’, 10.

the continuing need for the EU and Turkey to cooperate means that a Strategic Partnership would be established in the end, especially given the weaknesses in Turkish public opinion's ability to act as a blocking factor.

Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that none of this is guaranteed, given the possibility of the variables developing differently than expected. The presence of stubborn veto players in the EU may be enough for the zombie-like accession process to drag on, while any persistence in the negative Turkish reaction to the end to accession could see it moving closer to alternative actors to the EU, such as Russia. However, these scenarios are relatively unlikely; barring significant changes in the areas holding accession back, the neo-functional consequences of conflicting interests will continue to play out, making an eventual end to the fruitless accession process likely. Meanwhile, from the Turkish standpoint, trying to replace the EU with actors like Russia and China has drawbacks that mean that such a realignment is improbable, meaning that Turkey will most likely be forced to cooperate with the EU to pursue its interests sooner or later, no matter how unhappy it may be with the end of the accession process. Overall, then, it seems that the replacement of the accession process with a Strategic Partnership is, for the most part, not a question of if, but when.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the relationship between the European Union and Turkey is in sore need of a transformative restart. Thus far EU-Turkey relations have revolved around the process of Turkish accession to the EU, yet progress on this process has all but ground to a halt. Viewed through the lens of neo-functionalism, it is clear that the serious barriers to accession in the form of clashes of interest and incompatibility in several fields (the Cyprus issue, governance and human rights shortcomings in Turkey, and Turkey's economic situation) render Turkish membership of the EU impossible under current circumstances. This is further confirmed by the obstacles to accession considered from a Foreign Policy Analysis standpoint, with public opinion (especially in the EU), low trust on the part of Turkey and the decision-making process in the EU all amplifying the effects of incompatible interests and making accession more difficult in their own right. In light of the visible futility of the accession process, and the continuing need for both parties to work together to pursue their interests, the EU and Turkey would do well to abandon the accession process and instead focus on establishing a

Strategic Partnership, which would allow them to cooperate more effectively. Although initial cooperation would probably be in the most promising and pressing fields (migration, security and energy), there a successful partnership could see cooperation and integration spillover into other fields, to the point where the neo-functionalist model suggests that accession may eventually take place after all. Thus, the question ‘Should Turkish accession to the EU be replaced with a Strategic Partnership?’ would seem to have been answered with a clear ‘yes’.

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