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Turkey and the European Union: Europeanization Without Membership

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ABSTRACT *This article analyzes Turkey's relationship with the European Union (EU) against the background of the latest Turkish parliamentary elections in June 2011. The main argument is that Turkey's European transformation at home and abroad will continue under the third term of the Justice and Development Party rule, yet Turkish rulers will increasingly find it difficult to put EU membership issue at the center of this process. At present, it appears that neither is the EU eager and flexible as to offer Turkey credible membership prospects nor is Turkey's ruling party maintaining the same degree of commitment to the EU as it had during its first term in government. Rather than the dynamics of the accession process, the growing need to find a solution to the decade-long Kurdish dispute in a liberal-democratic fashion as well as Turkey's ability to deal with the rising foreign and security policy challenges in the context of the Arab Spring will shape Turkey's European transformation in years ahead.*

Introduction

The parliamentary elections of June 2001 are now past, and the future of Turkey's relationship with the European Union (EU) seems as uncertain as possible. It seems likely that the EU membership issue will not occupy the agenda to the degree it did during the first term of office of the Justice and Development Party (AKP, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*). The years ahead will likely see EU membership as one of, but not the primary, concerns in Turkey's domestic and foreign policies. The particular factors that have contributed to increasing Turkey-scepticism across Europe and Euro-scepticism in Turkey will likely remain in place. At present, neither is the EU developing the capability to digest/absorb Turkey nor is Turkey adamant to pay the costs of accession. However, this article argues that Turkey's ongoing European transformation at home and abroad will nonetheless continue. In this process, the dynamics of Turkey's internal politics, most notably the increasing need to resolve the Kurdish dispute, and the dynamics of Turkey's external politics, most notably the need to ensure a stable and peaceful regional security

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environment in the Middle East in the post-Arab spring, will be more decisive than the dynamics of the accession negotiations.

As Sinan Ulgen has already argued, calls for some sort of non-membership relationship for Turkey (“privileged partnership”) might be heard more loudly in the years to come.¹ However, this does not mean that Turkey and the EU will halt the ongoing accession process and redefine their relationship outside the membership framework. Yet, this is to suggest that they will spend more time and energy contemplating alternative models to help save what appears to have been left behind the current deadlock in the accession negotiations. At a time of great upheavals in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Mediterranean regions, the EU and Turkey should be well advised to explore some novel ways to cooperate. As of today, there are two issues of high importance: energy and foreign security policy cooperation. While Turkey is asking the EU to open accession talks on these issues, some EU members, such as France and Cyprus, continue to veto this. It appears that Turkish leaders do not want to discuss such issues with the EU outside of the accession framework out of fear that this might lead to institutionalization of non-membership alternatives.

Against this background, the first part of this article takes stock of the current state of bilateral relationship. The second part examines the reasons why the degree of “Turkey-scepticism” and “Euro-scepticism” appears to have increased in recent years in Europe and Turkey, respectively. The following section argues that Turkey’s European transformation in internal and external realms will continue in the years to come, despite the fact that the EU membership issue did not show up during the latest election campaigns at all. The main argument is that while the EU’s influence on Turkey’s Europeanization² process will likely decrease in the years to come, other factors will continue to drive this process. The growing need to find a solution to the decade-long Kurdish dispute in a liberal-democratic fashion and Turkey’s ability to deal with the rising foreign and security policy challenges in the context of the Arab Spring stand out here. The conclusion summarizes the main findings of research and offers some predictions as for the future.

The State of Relations Prior to Elections

Turkey’s accession negotiations with the EU started in October 2005. The screening process lasted nearly one year. So far negotiations on 13 chapters have been opened and only one has been concluded. Six chapters were suspended in December 2006 due to Turkey’s refusal to let ships and aircrafts from the Republic of Cyprus (“Greek” Cyprus) use Turkish ports and airports. In December 2009, the Greek Cypriot government announced that it would unilaterally veto some additional chapters if Turkey’s intransigent behavior on this issue continued. France also declared that it would not let negotiations on five particular chapters be opened as they directly concern the free circulation of goods and people.

There has also been some hesitancy toward the accession talks on the Turkish side. For example, in January 2009, Turkey finally appointed its Chief Negotiator to lead

the accession talks with the EU. This was a delayed action on the part of Turkey given that all other candidate countries, appointed their chief negotiators once the EU had declared them as candidate states. A year later, the Turkish government adopted “Turkey’s EU Strategy for the Accession Process,” a document whose main goal has been to prepare Turkish and European public opinion for Turkey’s future membership.³ In June 2011, just before the parliamentary elections, the AKP government announced its decision to elevate the status of the Chief Negotiator to the Minister Level. There is now a Minister of European Union Affairs in the cabinet. He, together with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, represents Turkey in official Association Council meetings with the EU representatives. Despite the oft-repeated argument that the Europeanization process at home has stalled since the initiation of the accession negotiations six years ago,⁴ the immediate years before the 2011 elections also witnessed many important reforms, most notably concerning civilian–military relations, the use of non-Turkish languages in broadcasting and education, changes in the judiciary, and discussion of expanded minority rights and a new constitution.

It would not be an overestimation to argue that elected civilians have now become the ultimate decision-makers concerning Turkish foreign and security policies. For example, in August 2011, the preferences of politicians took priority over those of the generals as regards the issue of high level of appointments within the military. Demonstrating the Europeanization of civilian–military relations, top brass of the Turkish Military decided to resign to show their displeasure with the choices of the government. The National Security Council now mainly acts as an advisory body, meets every two months, includes more civilian than military people, and has a civilian Secretary General. Military personal, irrespective of their rank, can now be tried in civilian courts in case they commit a non-military crime. The continuing trial of many high-level military figures, both active and retired, in civilian courts on the primary charge that they allegedly organized plots against the elected government is a case in point.

A very important reform concerns the use of Kurdish in broadcasting. Since January 2009, state-run Turkish Radio and Television has a Kurdish channel broadcasting 24 h a day. The status of minorities has also improved significantly after minority foundations have been allowed to reclaim their property that had been taken from them. The reforms made in the structure and composition of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors also reveal that Turkey has come closer to European practices in the realm of judiciary. The EU authorities, the European Commission being the most significant of all, expressed their satisfaction with the approval of the constitutional changes in the public referendum held in September 2010.⁵

Despite all such reforms undertaken during the reign of AKP governments since 2002, objections to Turkey’s prospective membership in the EU have also steadily increased. While Turkey has come closer to the EU institutionally, it has simultaneously become estranged from the EU mentally and psychologically. While nearly 75 percent of Turkish people viewed Turkey’s potential membership in the EU positively in 2004, this figure has dropped to 48 percent in 2011.⁶ Since 2005,

when accession negotiations formally began, the number of Turkish people who think that Turkey could one day join the EU has also declined. As opposed to this, the number of Turkish people who think that Turkey should develop closer and more cordial relations with the Middle Eastern countries has increased.⁷ Many opinion polls undertaken over the last six years reveal that the degree of Euro-scepticism in Turkey has been on the rise. The degree of European support to Turkey's prospective membership has taken a negative turn in recent years.⁸ Before explaining the causes of increasing "Euro-scepticism" in Turkey and "Turkey-scepticism" in Europe, a few words are needed on the attitude of the main political parties toward the EU membership issue.

Of all the political parties that were represented in the National Assembly before the latest elections, only the AKP and the Kurdish-dominated Peace and Democracy Party (BDP, *Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*) seem to have offered a meaningful support to the membership process. Despite the fact that AKP has lost a great amount of its vigor, excitement, and enthusiasm toward the EU since the beginning of the accession talks in 2005, it has nonetheless continued the reform process. However, although previously AKP showed strong support for EU membership, this has arguably changed to a more qualified support since 2005.⁹

Many observers share the view that the AKP adopted a highly pragmatic and instrumental approach toward the EU membership issue during its first term in government.¹⁰ Striving for membership in the EU helped lessen concerns over the degree of commitment of the AKP to Turkey's decade-long Westernization process and state's secular identity. In addition, it was argued that the reforms undertaken alongside the membership process would help create some opportunity spaces for the AKP supporters to express themselves more freely and confidently. The AKP would also be able to help curtail the political influence of its critics, most notably the Turkish military, in parallel to Turkey's democratization alongside the EU accession process. Finally, by this way the founders of the party would be able to prove that they have changed and are no longer political Islamists.

Faced with discouraging signals coming from the EU and continuing political turmoil at home, AKP leaders gradually began to argue that the continuation of the accession negotiations and Turkey's ability to digest the reforms were more important than the eventuality of Turkey's accession. Interestingly, the AKP began to justify the continuation of the transformation process in line with EU membership criteria on the basis of Turkey's needs and concerns. For example, Prime Minister Erdoğan said that even if the EU did not send more encouraging signals, Turkey would continue the transformation process by renaming the Copenhagen criteria as the Ankara criteria and the Maastricht criteria as the Istanbul criteria. The fact that the AKP did not decide to freeze the negotiation process when eight chapters were suspended in December 2006 speaks volumes. Unlike the reaction that then Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz gave when the EU Union decided to exclude Turkey from its enlargement plans in December 1997, the AKP leadership bit its tongue and decided to continue the accession reforms. This shows that the AKP leadership adopts a more

rational and instrumental approach to EU membership issue than a psychological and ideational one.

Since 2005, when the accession negotiations formally began, the two main opposition parties, the Republican People's Party (CHP, *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) and the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*), have adopted soft Euro-sceptic approaches.¹¹ While they have not disputed the legitimacy of the decade-long fixation of the idea of full membership, they have begun to argue openly against the present logic of accession negotiations by referring to their ambiguous character and slow pace. Both parties seem to believe that what matters is whether Turkey becomes a member of the EU or remains outside. Unless the accession process results in Turkey's membership, its ambiguous character should not (or no longer) be tolerated. In their view, Turkey should be simply either in or outside the Union.

Their critical interpretation of the accession negotiations seems to be fundamentally informed by their distaste of the AKP. Despite the fact that both parties, particularly the CHP, have in the past been in favor of Turkey's Westernization/Europeanization process and thought that this would be the most important guarantee of Turkey remaining as a secular state, they have gradually become more sceptical toward the West in general and EU in particular. However, it needs to be clarified that the main reason why these parties have turned away from the EU is linked to the fact that they did not like to see the AKP, coming from allegedly a political Islamist past, own the accession process. According to them, the AKP had only one concern in mind to support the reforms, namely to help curtail the political influence of AKP critics and to pave the way for Turkey's Islamization through its democratization.¹² A notable development in this context took place in 2010 when Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu became the head of the CHP replacing Deniz Baykal. With Kılıçdaroğlu at the helm, the party had begun to adopt a more pro-European discourse. The BDP, seen by many to be the main representative of the ethnic Kurdish separatism in the Turkish National Assembly, also supported the membership process in the hope that this would put pressure on the ruling party and the Turkish establishment alike to solve the Kurdish problem within the framework of liberal/pluralist democracy. However, their strong support has turned to qualified support when EU representatives praised the democratic opening of the ruling party in late 2009 and asked the BDP leadership to distance itself from Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK, *Partiya Kar-keren Kurdistan*) and its terrorist attacks.

Explaining Euro-scepticism and Turkey-scepticism

A number of factors appear to account for the rise of Euro-scepticism in Turkey. The first factor is that Europeans began to send mixed messages immediately after they agreed to begin accession talks. The EU's ambivalent approach toward Turkey is exemplified by growing discussion of a privileged partnership option for Turkey.

One could point to the Negotiation Framework Document to underline the point that the EU is not offering Turkey credible membership prospects.¹³ This document reads that the final outcome of negotiations cannot be known in advance and in case

Turkey fails to meet a substantial portion of membership criteria, the EU should then do its best to make sure that Turkey be anchored to the EU through the most solid bonds. The EU also added that even if Turkey acceded to the Union, it would reserve the right to keep Turkey outside of some policy domains and put long-term derogations on the free movement of Turkish people and goods.

May be the most important reason why the degree of Euro-scepticism has skyrocketed in Turkey is that Turkish elites and people alike feel disappointed by the EU's Cyprus policy following the accession of the island to the EU in May 2004. Neither the economic embargo put on the northern part of the island was lifted nor has the EU given the amount of money that it promised following the positive vote of the Turkish Cypriots in the referenda on Annan Plan held in April 2004. From Turkey's perspective, the EU has totally adopted a pro-Greek Cypriot position on the Cyprus dispute. In retrospect, the main reason why the AKP government supported the Annan Plan, despite the strong opposition by the Turkish armed forces and the former president of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Rauf Denктаş, was to make sure that Cyprus's membership would not be a stumbling block on Turkey's way to Brussels.

Another factor that appears to have fueled Euro-scepticism in Turkey is that the French and Austrian governments announced that they would put the question of Turkey's eventual membership in public referenda. The Austrians are the most ardent opponents to Turkey's possible membership.¹⁴ An overwhelming majority of French people is against Turkey's accession.¹⁵ It is important to underline that France and Austria represent the "logic of inherent identity" inside the EU that sees Turkey outside the European family of nations as Turkey does not share Europe's Christian past, Greco-Roman tradition, and Enlightenment process.¹⁶ In the eyes of Europeans who tend to define EU identity from this particular perspective, Turkey is not European by birth and, therefore, Turkey's achievements alongside the accession negotiations would not suffice for accession. Current French President Nicolas Sarkozy seems to be the most notable representative of this logic. The decision of the French Parliament that denying the so-called Armenian genocide would be a crime might have also caused consternation in Turkey. Despite the fact that the French Senate did not approve this decision, President Sarkozy recently said that Turkey would have to come to peace with its past if it wants to join the EU.¹⁷

The growing salience of the feeling of "enlargement fatigue" across European public opinion since the big-bang enlargement in 2004 have also left a bitter taste in both European and Turkish mouths. This feeling might partially explain why majorities of French and Dutch people voted against the European Constitution in May 2005. They might have feared that the approval of the constitution would likely pave way for Turkey's eventual membership. The specter of Turkish immigrants flooding European markets appears to have been more threatening than specter of Polish plumbers invading affluent members of the Union.¹⁸

European debates on merits of multicultural integration policies appear to have also fueled Turkey's scepticism toward Europe. Increasingly, Turkish people have begun to ask how it would be possible for Europeans to integrate Turkey into the

EU, as they have already failed to integrate a much smaller Turkish population into their own societies. For example, Turkish people were disappointed when the German Prime Minister Angela Merkel declared that multiculturalism was dead.¹⁹ This in turn contributed to Turks' frustration with the possibility of Turkey's membership in the EU.

The rise of rightist and anti-Islamist forces in European politics has also caused erosion in Turkey's determination to meet the accession criteria.²⁰ As right wing, anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish circles have become more powerful in recent years; the mainstream European politicians of both right and left of center have found the idea of supporting Turkey's eventual accession as a risky policy to pursue. The logic of electoral politics seems to have led mainstream politicians to adopt a low-profile attitude toward the question of Turkish accession.²¹ Concomitantly, those who embrace the "logic of cosmopolitan identity" have been in retreat across Europe. This is bad for Turkey because the adherents of this logic tend to support Turkey's membership provided that Turkey's fulfills the Copenhagen Criteria. In their eyes, Turkey's membership should be defined as an issue of *when* rather than *if*. Because they define EU's identity on the basis of universal values of secularism, multiculturalism, rule of law, constitutional rule, respect for minorities and democracy, they are more receptive of Turkey's eventual membership.²² As the position of Turkey's opponents in Europe has improved, the prospect of membership becomes increasingly remote; thus, undermining Turkish enthusiasm for the accession process.

Analysts should also underline the point that in the eyes of Turkish people anti-Americanism and Euro-scepticism have always gone hand in hand. Since the war in Iraq, Turks have evinced a high degree of scepticism toward the USA, mainly owing to American policies on the future of Iraq and Turkey's military struggle against the PKK's presence in northern Iraq. The feeling that Turkey has been under constant threat has fueled Euro-scepticism.²³ An increasing number of Turks have in recent years speculated about the costs to Turkey as it becomes potentially more decentralized, federalized, or even dismembered, as a consequence of pursuing a transformation process in accordance with the EU's post-modern norms and values. Similarly, it has been argued that the Europeans have now been trying to achieve what they could not back in 1920s with the Sevres Treaty.

The AKP leadership might have its own particular reasons to be frustrated with the EU. For example, the European Court of Human Rights, contrary to the position favored by the AKP, found it legal to ban the wearing of headscarves in universities in the name of secularism in 2005. Thus, the AKP turned more to rising Turkish nationalism during the most recent election. To put it bluntly, it would have been a risky strategy for the AKP government to argue openly for Turkey's EU membership when Turkish people found nationalism more appealing.

Equally important in this context is to understand why Turkey-scepticism has been on the rise across Europe. One important observation to make is that Turkey has continued to give the image of a transitional democratic country rather than a consolidated democracy. For example, political turmoil has continued at home unabated

with the major political parties and other state institutions engulfed in serious crises on the eve of the presidential elections held in August 2007. The EU noted with great concern that the ruling party, which overwhelmingly won the parliamentary elections held in July 2007, was sued by the Chief State Prosecutor in the Constitutional Court on the charge of anti-secular activities. Questions also arose on the *Ergenekon* trials when officials in the military, media, and state bureaucracy were accused of plotting a coup. Another European concern has been that Turkey has been moving toward a one-party state under the AKP rule. The intolerant approach of AKP toward internal opposition and press freedom has caused great consternation. For example, Katinka Barysch even suggested that the *Ergenekon* trials have become tools in the hands of AKP to punish AKP critics.²⁴ The long detention periods employed against the accused have been criticized both at home and abroad. The latest progress reports on Turkey issued by the European Commission reveal that the degree of dissatisfaction among EU officials concerning press freedom and judicial impartiality in Turkey has been on the rise.²⁵

Another factor fueling Turkey-scepticism across Europe has been the transformation of the Turkish foreign policy under the AKP. It is doubted to what extent the ruling Turkish government has been committed to EU-oriented foreign policy and is wondered if Turkey has been turning its face away from Europe and trying to resurrect the defunct Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. Turkey's active involvement in Middle Eastern affairs, Turkey's embrace of Hamas, Turkey's mediation role between the West and Iran, Turkey's veto of a United Nations Security Council resolution that would harden the economic sanctions on Tehran, Turkey's refusal to let the Greek Cypriot ships and aircraft use Turkish ports and airfields, and the deterioration of Turkey's relations with Israel have all been cited as demonstrating Turkey's estrangement from the West in general and the EU in particular.²⁶

The June 2011 Elections and Afterwards: Continuing Europeanization Without EU Membership

A noteworthy development prior to the elections held on June 12th was that none of the major parties devoted a great amount of their energy on EU-related issues. Membership in the EU did not have a significant place in the election campaigns of major parties because slow pace of accession negotiations seems to have produced a psychology of frustration and exhaustion on the part of government and opposition parties alike. On the other hand, the electoral victory of the AKP might indirectly suggest that quite a number of Turkish people did not have a problem with AKP's policy toward the EU.

The most significant consequence of the election results is that rather than the EU membership other dynamics will drive Turkey's Europeanization process in the years to come. In particular, the growing necessity of finding an urgent solution to the existing Kurdish/PKK problem within the framework of a new constitution,²⁷ and the growing need to re-define Turkey's foreign policy interests in the face of the

developments associated with the Arab Spring will become more decisive in Turkey's transformation at home and abroad.

Another important reason why the dynamics of the EU membership process will not play a decisive role in the continuation of Turkey's ongoing Europeanization is that the EU suffers from a credibility problem in the eyes of Turkish leaders. Three particular factors appear to have caused this. The first concerns the EU's failure to meet its promises with respect to the amelioration of the status of northern Cyprus in the wake of the Annan Plan. Turkish leaders feel disappointed and cheated by their European counterparts. The time period since 2004 reveals that the Cyprus dispute has already transformed into one of the most important hurdles on the smooth functioning of Turkey's relationship with the EU. Even though the two communities on the island have been engaged in an inter-communal negotiation process since 2008 when the leftist Dimitris Christofias was elected as the President of Greek Cypriot administration, the negotiations have not yielded a breakthrough yet.²⁸

Moreover, Turkish leaders are worried that the Greek Cypriot Administration will hold the EU presidency for a period of six months from June 2012 onwards. It is highly likely that Turkey will not have official meetings with the EU during the term of the Greek Cypriot presidency. The Greek Cypriots also might put additional pressure on Turkey unless a permanent solution has been reached by then. Previously, it had been a remarkable change on the part of Turkey when the AKP wholeheartedly supported the Annan Plan in late 2002. The AKP has taken great risks to help transform Turkey's Cyprus policy in a more Europe-friendly manner. Prior to the Annan Plan, Turkey's Cyprus policy had been based on the idea that Turkey–EU relations should be defined outside the dynamics of the Cyprus dispute. By supporting the Annan Plan, the AKP had broken up the monopoly of traditional security establishment on Turkey's Cyprus policy and brought a less-nationalistic/more-European outlook in this regard.²⁹

The second factor leading to the erosion of EU's credibility in Turkish eyes concerns the latest institutional and economic crisis sweeping through Europe. The internal suffering of the EU appears to have led the Turkish leaders to believe that Turkey would not be able to gain too much from membership.³⁰ The financial crisis within the Euro-zone and the gradual revival of nationalism among EU members does not help create a constructive environment for Turkey's eventual accession. It is notable that when the majority of EU members have had slow growth rates in recent years, Turkish economy performed well and Turkey has been an emerging economy to be least negatively affected by the global economic crisis.

Third, Turkish leaders appear to have reached the conclusion that Turkey's rising soft and hard power capabilities would enable Turkey to play an influential role in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions without prioritizing the EU membership issue in this context. The EU's performance during the Arab Spring, including the failure to adopt common positions, seems to have boosted Turkey's self-confidence. Turkish leaders assume that the EU has been a power in decline, whereas Turkey is on the rise. Stated somewhat differently, Turkey would no

longer need to become a member in order to become influential in these regions. It has also been noted by Turkish leaders that EU's regional polices tailored for the Middle East and North Africa have mainly strengthened the authoritarian and repressive regime across these regions let alone contributing to the acceleration of liberal-democratic transformations.

The gradual erosion of EU's attractiveness in Turkish eyes does not, however, suggest that Turkey's European transformation will halt. Some internal and external factors will continue to drive this process. Internally speaking, the need to get rid of structural problems at home, most notably the Kurdish dispute, through liberal-democratic steps will likely intensify. It appears that there is now a nation-wide consensus on the need to rewrite the constitution in line with liberal-democratic norms. This is now the most urgent task on the part of the ruling and opposition parties alike, given that PKK terrorist attacks have recently increased and put Turkey's democratization into jeopardy.³¹ Despite the growing appeal of the calls for the adoption of military-oriented security measures, in parallel to a steep rise in PKK attacks, it seems that Turkish circles of different stripes have already internalized the idea that a long-term solution to this problem could only be found within representative-plural-liberal democracy. For Turkey, the prime challenge is now to find a way to get rid of the Kurdish problem at a time when calls for democratization have increased in the Middle East. This will likely propel Turkish leaders to solve this problem within liberal-democracy which sounds after all very "European."

Externally speaking, Turkey's ability to deal with regional security problems will increase to the extent Turkey adopts a European foreign and security policy mentality and put the idea of liberal-democratic transformation of the Middle East at the center of its foreign policy. In fact, the "Europeanization" in Turkish foreign policy started much earlier. There is now Europeanization in Turkish foreign policy in terms of decision-making process, the tools and instruments employed, and particular choices adopted.³² The decision-making process concerning foreign policy issues has become more civilianized in recent years as elected civilians have begun to gain primacy over appointed bureaucrats in defining Turkey's policies on key issues, such as the Cyprus dispute, Turkey's policy toward northern Iraqi Kurdish groups, and the rapprochement with Armenia.

On the other hand, Turkey has begun to employ civilian and soft power tools abroad, such as diplomatic facilitation, economic interdependencies, visa-free agreements, and transnational interactions. Turkey has transformed into a trading state, leaving behind its traditional military state identity.³³ Turkey's preaching institutionalization of liberal-democratic norms in the region and adoption of a transformative foreign policy mentality have been "European" in essence. Despite the fact that Turkey's "zero problems with neighbors" policy has not resulted in long-term cooperative relations with neighbors to the east and south yet, it could be argued that this policy was in sync with the foreign policy mentality and norms of the EU. Moreover, the choices that Turkish decision-makers have adopted on some foreign policy issues very much resemble the choices of EU members. For example, many analysts now concur that there is a high degree of convergence between Turkey's choices and

those of the EU concerning the settlement of Israeli-Palestinian problem, incorporation of the Balkans and Caucasus into the institutional structures of the Western international community, enlargement of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and diversification of energy resources.³⁴

Turkey's response to the Arab Spring also suggests that Turkey has already internalized a European mentality in terms of defining its foreign policy interests and the tools it employs. Even though Turkey was caught unprepared when the revolts first erupted in Tunisia and Egypt and pursued a pragmatic course of action in the early stages of the developments, it began to put the promotion of liberal democracy at the center of its policies when the sparks spread to Syria. From the beginning of events in Syria, Turkish leaders have made it unequivocally clear that Ankara wanted to see Syrian President Bashar al-Assad meet the concerns and needs of demonstrators in a liberal-democratic fashion.³⁵ When it became clear that the Baathist regime in Damascus had not been eager and able to adopt such a course, Turkish leaders decided to join international calls for sanctions on Assad. Turkish President Abdullah Gül announced that Turkey had lost its confidence in Assad.³⁶ Turkey has not only departed from other emerging powers by giving a green light to international involvement in Syria's internal affairs, but also defined Syria's transformation into a representative democracy as a pre-condition for the continuation of relations with Turkey.

Similar to the EU's decade-long conditionality approach toward Turkey, Turkish leaders now send the message to their Syrian counterparts that if Syria wants to benefit from cooperation with Turkey, it would do well to adopt the kind of norms and principles that appear to have long been shaping Turkey's internal transformation process. This implicitly suggests that the years ahead will likely witness the rise of moral concerns in Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East. Turkey's liberal-democratic transformation at home will have an increasing influence on Turkey's interaction with Middle Eastern countries. The idea that the most important leverage Turkey has in the Middle East is its success in putting its house in order in line with liberal-democratic norms suggests that the soft power turn in Turkish foreign policy has already passed the point of no return. This is also what makes Turkey's approach to Middle Eastern issues in general and the events in Syria in particular so different from the approaches of Iran, Egypt, and Israel in the region and Russia and China outside the region. Preaching for liberal democracy in the region would also help increase Turkey's bargaining power particularly vis-à-vis Iran which seems to be at a more disadvantageous position in the long-term.³⁷

Conclusion

This article has argued that the results of the latest parliamentary elections held in June 2011 will not produce a radical impact on the nature of Turkey's relationship with the EU, which has been in a cooling-off period over the last years. Unless a radical breakthrough on the Cyprus dispute takes place, the Republic of Cyprus and other EU members that have adopted a pro-Greek Cypriot position will continue

to block negotiations on the aforementioned chapters. Similarly, if there is no change in French leadership in the upcoming presidential elections in 2012, Sarkozy's steadfast opposition to Turkey's potential membership will continue to color EU's ambiguous approach toward Turkey.

The risk here is that unless the Cyprus dispute gets resolved in a reasonable time period, the old Turkish approach might come back, putting Turkey's European-oriented transformation in foreign policy into jeopardy. One of the latest manifestations of Turkey's "re-nationalized" Cyprus policy has taken place in the context of Turkey's objections to Greek Cypriots' attempt at drilling the Eastern Mediterranean for oil and gas. The fact that the Turkish government seems to have embraced a hawkish discourse in this struggle suggests that unless given encouraging signals for membership, Turkey could easily slide into a unilateral and nationalistic foreign policy stance that will certainly be in contradiction with the EU's foreign policy mentality.

The institutional stalemate in Turkish–EU relations does not, however, mean that Turkey's internal and external transformations will stop. On the contrary, this process will continue, yet the EU's influence will decrease as the EU itself seems to suffer from a credibility crisis and Turkey now feels itself more self-confident. Internal dynamics, pointing to the need to resolve Turkey's structural problems in line with liberal-democratic norms, and external dynamics, meaning Turkey's ability to cope with the emerging security challenges in its neighborhood, will now offer the two most important drivers of Turkey's transformation in the years ahead.

The Arab Spring has already demonstrated that the liberal-democratic transformation of the entire Middle East will not only be in the common interests of the EU and Turkey, but also for this to happen the EU and Turkey would need to work more closely. Assuming that Turkish–EU cooperation on this issue, similar to energy cooperation, will not be likely within the framework of the accession negotiations, parties would be well advised to find some novel ways to ensure their cooperation. This seems to be the greatest challenge facing Turkey's relationship with the EU in the years to come. Provided that they have succeeded in coordinating their efforts in this regard, possibly by forming "strategic dialogue," this might potentially offer a boost to the "going nowhere" accession negotiations.

As a last point, Turkish decision-makers should be aware of the fact that Turkey's rising regional and international profile in recent years as well as its growing capability to find a lasting solution to the Kurdish problem within a liberal-democratic framework has been to a significant degree informed by the continuation of the accession process. It is very notable that majority of people across Middle Eastern countries have developed a positive image about Turkey due to many factors, of which Turkey's possible membership in the EU is one of the most important. Otherwise, a Turkey that turns its face away from the West in general and the EU in particular would be alarming for many states. The continuation of the accession process with the EU seems to have provided the context in which Turkey's growing regional profile in the Middle East has not resulted in anti-Turkish sentiments. The continuation of the accession negotiations, no matter how slowly they proceed, has so far

helped soften Turkey's claim to leadership in the Middle East in the eyes of the Middle Easterners.³⁸ From a similar perspective, it would not be wrong to underline that the continuation of Turkey's European transformation at home, most likely in the shape of re-writing the constitution in the image of liberal-democratic norms and values, will offer the least common denominator, or the most important glue, rallying Turkish people of different stripes around a common flag.

Notes

1. Sinan Ülgen, *How to Operationalize the Foreign Policy Dialogue Between Ankara and Brussels?* German Marshall Fund Center, Analysis, April 5, 2011.
2. Europeanization is defined here as Turkey's adoption of EU's norms in the areas of domestic and foreign policy areas. This article defines Europeanization as a dependent variable or, outcome, rather than Turkey's socialization to the EU norms alongside the EU accession process. Europeanization as an outcome might be informed by non-EU membership related factors as well.
3. This paper can be reached at http://www.abgs.gov.tr/files/strateji/2010_2011_eylem_plani.pdf.
4. See, for example, Diba Nigar Göksel, *Europe and Turkey: Back to the Future?* German Marshall Fund Center, Analysis, March 15, 2011.
5. For example, see the Progress Report on Turkey, Issued by the European Commission on November 2010.
6. On the ratio of Turkish people who supported EU membership in 2004 and the following years, one can consult on the Transatlantic Trends surveys of the German Marshall Fund Center. The figures used within this were first mentioned on these surveys.
7. For example, the latest Transatlantic Trends survey issued in 2011 reveals that 20 percent of Turkish people value cooperation with the Middle Eastern countries, whereas 19 percent with the EU and 8 percent with the USA.
8. For example, see Jürgen Gerhards and Silke Hans, "Why Not Turkey? Attitudes Towards Turkish Membership in the EU among Citizens in 27 European countries," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2011), pp. 741–766. They say that 34.4 percent of Europeans in 27 members support Turkey's membership.
9. For example, see Ziya Öniş, "Contesting for Turkey's Political 'Center': Domestic Politics, Identity Conflicts and the Controversy over EU Membership," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (September 2010), pp. 361–376, at p. 368.
10. See Gamze Avci, "The Justice and Development Party and the EU: Political Pragmatism in a Changing Environment," *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (September 2011), pp. 409–421.
11. Ödül Celep, "The Republican People's Party and Turkey's EU Membership," *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (September 2011), pp. 423–434, and Gamze Avci, "The Nationalist Movement Party's Euroskepticism: Party Ideology meets strategy," *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (September 2011), pp. 435–447.
12. Seckin Barış Gülmez, "The EU Policy of the Republican People's Party: An Inquiry on the Opposition Party and Euro-Skepticism in Turkey," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (September 2008), pp. 423–436.
13. This document can be found at <http://www.abgs.gov.tr/index.php?p=46229&l=1>.
14. Gerhard and Hans (2011), p. 746. Only five percent of Austrian people support Turkey's membership in the EU.
15. Gerhard and Hans (2011), p. 746. Only 24 percent of French people support Turkey's membership in the EU.
16. Catherine Macmillan, "Privileged Partnership, Open Ended Accession Negotiations and the Securitization of Turkey's EU Accession Process," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (December 2010), pp. 447–463, at pp. 454–457.

17. "Turkey rebuffs Sarkozy over Armenia 'genocide,'" October 7, 2011, available at <http://www.france24.com/en/20111007-turkey-rebuffs-sarkozy-over-armenia-genocide>.
18. Gerhard and Hans (2011), p. 751.
19. Ali Aslan, *New Approaches to Muslim Engagement: A View from Germany*, German Marshall Fund Center, Analysis, Policy Brief, February 2011.
20. For example, rightist parties performed well in the latest European Parliament elections held in 2009 as well as joined the coalition governments in their countries, such as Finland and Austria.
21. Rachid Azrouit, Joos van Spanje and Claes de Vreese, "Talking Turkey: Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Their Effect on Support for Turkish Membership for the EU," *European Union Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2011), pp. 3–19.
22. Macmillan (2010), pp. 452–454.
23. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Turkish Foreign Relations and Public Opinion*, The German Marshall Fund Center, Analysis, September 8, 2011.
24. Katinka Barysch, *Turkey and the EU: Can the Stalemate be Avoided?*, Center for European Reform Policy Brief, December 2010.
25. See the Progress Report of EU Commission Turkey issued on November 9, 2010, in which the Commission pointed out to the dangers of decreasing press freedom and lack of impartiality on the part of Turkish judiciary. This report is available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/tr_rapport_2010_en.pdf.
26. For example, see Emiliano Alessandri, *Beyond Enlargement? European Skepticism, Turkish Cynicism, and the Uncertain future of EU–Turkey Relations*, German Marshall Fund Center, Analysis, February 24, 2011.
27. See Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *Turkish Elections of June 12, 2011: Now What?* German Marshall Fund Center, Analysis, June 16, 2011.
28. On the details the latest round of negotiations on the island, see Vincent Morelli, *Cyprus: Reunification proving elusive*, Congressional Research Service, July 26, 2011.
29. Ayşe Aslıhan Çelenk, "The Restructuring of Turkey's Policy Towards Cyprus: The Justice and Development Party's Struggle for power," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (September 2007), pp. 349–363.
30. "Turkish Prime Minister Criticized debt ridden Eurozone", available at <http://easymovetoturkey.wordpress.com/2011/11/16/turkish-prime-minister-criticises-debt-ridden-eurozone/>.
31. See İltır Turan, *Critical Elections Behind, Critical Problems Ahead*, German Marshall Fund Center, Analysis, June 16, 2011.
32. See Tarık Oğuzlu, "Turkey and Europeanization of Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 125, No. 4 (2010–11), pp. 657–683.
33. Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey's 'Demonstrative Effect' and the Transformation of the Middle East," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2011), pp. 33–55.
34. Nathalie Tocci, *Turkey's Neighborhood Policy: A European Perspective*, German Marshall Fund Center, Analysis, April 5, 2011.
35. "Turkey will not Stand by the Wrongdoing in Syria," June 19, 2011, *Today's Zaman*, available at http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?load=detail&newsId=247815&link=247815.
36. TBMM Yeni Yaşam Yılı Başladı, October 1, 2011, available at <http://www.trt.net.tr/Haber/HaberDetay.aspx?HaberKodu=70654a5a-99d1-40fb-b5d9-3079fbb5f35a>.
37. Turkey's approach toward the Arab Spring in general has not been that much different from the positions adopted by the Western powers. In the case of Egypt and Tunisia, Turkey did not find it difficult to adopt a pro-demonstrators approach from the very beginning. In contrast, Turkey initially adopted a prudent "wait and see" approach when the uprisings spread to Libya and Syria. Because Turkey had strong economic and strategic interests vested in such countries, Turkish leaders found it challenging to immediately coerce their leaders to step aside. For example in Libya, Turkey first reacted against the calls for international military operations. However, once it became clear that Qaddafi had no intention to power and that he increased his effort to subdue the opposition forces through military instruments, Turkish leaders changed their mind and decided to support the deployment of NATO force in Libya, provided that this mission would mainly perform humanitarian tasks and oversee the economic and

military embargo from the air and sea. In both Libya and Syria, Turkey's adoption of a pro-democracy and pro-demonstrators approach became possible after Turkish leaders lost their hope that the incumbent regimes would initiate liberal-democratic reforms and shun forceful measures against protestors.

38. TESEV, a think-tank based in Istanbul, conducted a survey in key Middle Eastern countries which asked the people on the street how they view Turkey's EU membership as well as how they think Turkey's EU membership process affects Turkey's role and image in the Middle East. The responses given to both questions reveal that more than half of the respondents have positive feelings with respect to Turkey. The report can be accessed at http://www.tesev.org.tr/UD_OBJS/PDF/DPT/OD/YYN/Ortadogu_arastirma_2010.pdf.