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FEUTURE Synthesis Paper

The Future of EU-Turkey Relations: A Dynamic Association Framework amidst Conflictual Cooperation

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ABSTRACT

The FEUTURE final synthesis paper accomplishes two principal aims. First, it synthesizes FEUTURE's research findings that study EU-Turkey relations in the six thematic areas of politics, identity, economy, security, energy and migration, focusing on how their respective drivers generate different degrees of conflict and cooperation in the relationship. Based on this synthesis, it argues that the scenario of "conflictual cooperation" – where cooperation is likely to endure despite the prevalence of conflictual dynamics mostly emanating from politics – is set to define EU-Turkey relations in the foreseeable future. Second, it develops an institutional design for the future relationship which, given the fact that Turkey's EU accession process has now become dormant, accepts conflict as an endemic feature of the relations but tries to mitigate it by deepening cooperation. Upon assessing differentiated integration models the EU follows with member- and non-member countries, the paper concludes that, as a result of geopolitical proximity as well as deepened, multifarious interactions over several centuries, the EU-Turkey relationship has become too complex and dynamic to be captured by any single such model. It thus suggests a new institutional framework, termed a "dynamic association", that would be complementary to Turkey's albeit stalled accession process. While being centered around a rules-based component represented by an upgraded EU-Turkey Customs Union agreement as a starting point, the association also includes more transactional dimensions of cooperation such as migration, security and energy. The paper concludes that conceptualized as such, the dynamic association promises to foster not only cooperative but also convergent trends between the EU and Turkey into and beyond the 2023 timeframe.

ÖZET

FEUTURE Son Sentez Çalışması iki başlıca amacı gerçekleştirmektedir. İlk olarak, politika, kimlik, ekonomi, güvenlik, enerji ve göç tematik alanlarındaki AB-Türkiye ilişkilerine ilişkin FEUTURE araştırma bulgularını, öne sürdükleri faktörlerin ilişkide nasıl farklı çatışma ve işbirliği dereceleri yarattığına odaklanmak suretiyle sentezlemektedir. Çalışma, bu senteze dayalı olarak, çoklukla politikadan kaynaklanan çatışma dinamiklerinin egemenliğine rağmen işbirliğinin devamının kuvvetle muhtemel olduğu "çatışmalı işbirliği" senaryosunun öngörülebilir gelecekte AB-Türkiye ilişkilerini belirleyeceğini öne sürmektedir. İkinci olarak, ilişkinin geleceği için, Türkiye'nin AB'ye katılım sürecinin artık durağan olduğu gerçeğini gözönüne alarak, çatışmayı ilişkilerin yaygın bir özelliği olarak kabul eden ama aynı zamanda işbirliğini derinleştirerek bunu hafifletmeye çalışan bir kurumsal model geliştirmektedir. Çalışma, AB'nin üye ve üye olmayan ülkelerle izlediği farklılaştırılmış bütünleşme modellerini değerlendirdikten sonra, jeopolitik yakınlığın ve aynı zamanda yüzyıllara yayılan derinleşmiş, muhtelif etkileşimlerin sonucunda AB-Türkiye ilişkisinin herhangi bir modele hapsedilemeyecek kadar karmaşık ve dinamik olduğu sonucuna varmıştır. Dolayısıyla, - her ne kadar durmuş da olsa - Türkiye'nin katılım sürecini tamamlayacak, "dinamik ortaklık" olarak tanımlanan, yeni bir kurumsal çerçeve önermektedir. Ortaklık, başlangıç noktası olarak, güncellenmiş AB-Türkiye Gümrük Birliği anlaşması tarafından temsil edilen, kurallara dayalı bir bileşen çevresinde gelişmekle beraber, göç, güvenlik ve enerji gibi daha tranzaksyonel işbirliği boyutlarını da içermektedir. Çalışma, bu itibarla kavramsallaştırılan dinamik ortaklığın, 2023 zaman diliminin öncesinde ve ötesinde, AB ile Türkiye arasında sadece işbirliği değil yakınlaşma eğilimlerini de beslemeyi vaat ettiği sonucuna varmaktadır.

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Introduction: Reflecting on 20 Years of EU-Turkey Relations¹

20 years after Turkey was nominated as an official candidate for membership into the European Union (EU), the EU-Turkey relationship is in a parlous state. In fact, the relationship has seen more spats than harmony in these past two decades. The only faint glimmer of hope for revitalizing the relations (Müftüler-Baç, 2015) has been the Joint EU-Turkey Statement of 29 November 2015 and the “EU-Turkey Statement on Migration” of 18 March 2016, which committed Ankara and Brussels to cooperate on managing the refugee flows into Europe, while promising to “re-energize the accession process”² as well as accelerate Turkey’s visa liberalization roadmap so as to lift the visa requirements for Turkish nationals travelling to Europe (European Council, 2016). Yet, it soon proved vapid: Ankara now receives 3 (+3) billion Euros in exchange for preventing irregular migrants from crossing into Europe and hosting them in Turkey, but any hopes of progress on the remaining issues have withered.

Indeed, sides have grown further apart over the last decade. As widely documented and criticized by the EU since the Gezi Park protests in 2013, and especially since the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016, the crackdown on freedoms of expression and media, as well as intensified political control over the judiciary have suggested that Turkey has distanced itself from Europe’s core values and principles (European Commission 2018). The new system of executive presidency – approved in a constitutional referendum in April 2017 and entered into effect after the Turkish elections in June 2018 – has also raised alarm-bells across the EU, suggesting that Turkey was locked in its slide into illiberal democracy. Consequently, the EU’s June 2018 General Affairs Council (GAC) decided: “Turkey has been moving further away from the European Union. Turkey’s accession negotiations have therefore effectively come to a standstill and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing” (European Council, 2018: 13). In the meantime, these negative developments have also triggered what analysts are calling a “brain-drain” out of Turkey. An unprecedented number of Turks have left the country in the past two years – including students, academics, businesspeople and high-net worth individuals (HNWI), – representing a significant, not to mention alarming, exodus of capital, wealth and talent.³ Furthermore, Turkey’s actions in northern Syria and the diplomatic emphasis it lends to developing closer relations with Moscow have all been interpreted as a sign of disinterest on Ankara’s behalf in belonging to this community.

¹ This paper synthesizes the research findings of the H2020 Project FEUTURE., which was a joint consortium exercise. It has immensely benefitted from repeated rounds of discussions throughout the final year of the project lifetime. Therefore, the authors thank the researchers from the FEUTURE consortium, the members of the FEUTURE Scientific and Policy Advisory Board and the participants to the High Level Expert workshop in Bodrum in October 2018.

² Relatedly, two chapters were opened to negotiation in December 2015 (Chapter 17 – “Economic and Monetary Policy”) and June 2016 (Chapter 33 – “Financial and Budgetary Provisions”), as part of EU efforts to motivate Ankara’s cooperation at the height of the refugee crisis.

³ This trend has led to an increase in the number of Turkish nationals applying for investor citizenship (or “golden passports”) or investor passport (“golden visas”) programs, whereby investors are granted citizenship or residency rights to an EU-country that facilitates investment-based migration with low requirement for physical presence when compared against naturalization schemes (Transparency International and Global Witness, 2018), as well as in the number of asylum applications in EU+ countries lodged by Turkish nationals. See also, Carlotta Gall, “Spurning Erdoğan’s Vision, Turks Leave in Droves, Draining



The EU has changed, too. It is now beset by myriad external and internal challenges, including massive political and public attention paid to migrants fleeing the disorder in the Middle East and seeking asylum in Europe; and in return, the governance crisis this has produced in migration and asylum policy; the rising threat of jihadi terrorism in the neighborhood; as well as an assertive and aggressive Russia. Added to these are the need to contain the fall-out from the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom (UK) and curb the rise of populist leaders who are elected on nation-first agendas and are hostile to the European project.

The rest of the world looks troubled, too. The international liberal order, designed and largely kept in place since the end of World War II through U.S. leadership, had ensured Europe’s safety and protection. It now faces a new world which questions its very purpose. Furthermore, the rise of China as an assertive political and economic power is causing a fundamental shift in geopolitics. Old alliances are weakening, and even stand dangerously close to destruction (Morillas et al. 2017).

Against this backdrop, the EU-Turkey relationship will continue to face new hurdles. Given the intensifying anti-Westernism on the Turkish side and the increasingly hostile security environment in and around Europe – not to mention the persisting “Turkey fatigue”, demonstrated by some member states who are intent on vetoing any progress on Turkey’s EU-membership (Soler i Lecha et al., 2018) – the accession process is already in slow motion, coming short of a complete stop. As the world heads into more turbulent times, the political and institutional bandwidth and willingness to follow through on Turkish accession will be in shorter supply.

Even now, the relationship is stuck in a state of limbo. EU-Turkey relations have left the path of the accession procedure, resembling what German politicians had framed as “privileged partnership” (zu Guttenberg 2004). At the same time, it falls short of this vision, with the Customs Union track suspended for political reasons. Although a genuine movement towards further enlargement does not seem to be in the cards, EU policymakers are also reluctant to have Turkey fully disengage from Europe.⁴ The perception of Turkey as an important (geostrategic) partner has been dominant in the EU’s discourse ever since the beginning of the relationship (Hauge et.al. 2016),⁵ and there is still substantial support in Europe for pursuing and deepening engagement with Turkey (Gilbreath and Selçuki, 2019). The feeling is mutual, as evident in Turkish support for a partnership with Europe (Şenyuva, 2018). This support should be folded into efforts to contain the damage, and strengthen – and if necessary, even reform – the partnership. The problem is, however, there is no agreement on what form such an enhanced partnership should take.

Money and Talent,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/02/world/europe/turkey-emigration-erdogan.html>.

⁴ For a comprehensive survey on this, see Aydıntaşbaş (2018).

⁵ Even the latest report on Turkey by the European Commission opens with the sentence: “Turkey remains a key partner for the European Union” (European Commission 2018: 3).



Then, the challenge is to chart a new way forward – and design a new framework of cooperation that will make the EU-Turkey relationship relevant for both sides in a changing geopolitical environment. The aim of this paper is exactly this. It puts forward – or rather, sketches the outlines of – a more strategic and pragmatic approach to EU-Turkey relations that will move the relationship out of the strict confines of the accession process without discarding it entirely, while still recognizing the “uniqueness” of Turkey’s ties to Europe. Evaluating the developments within Turkey through the prism of the fatigued enlargement process is actually diminishing the sides’ potential for cooperation. Every step along the way becomes identified as either progress towards or setback from full-fledged integration into European institutions. The EU and Turkey should rather keep open multiple channels of communication, through which they can intensify dialogue on key subjects and deepen their existing ties, without massaging every conversation into a discussion on how to revive membership negotiations.

This paper synthesizes the research and scenarios building exercise conducted within the H2020 research project “The Future of EU-Turkey Relations: Mapping Dynamics and Testing Scenarios” (FEUTURE) drawing from more than 30 research papers and an elite survey.⁶ It aims to put forward suggestions on how the policymakers in Brussels and Ankara could accomplish this. It will first look at six thematic dimensions that prop up and drive this relationship forward (politics, economy, security, energy, migration, identity). In view of the FEUTURE research on the ideational and material, structural and agency-related factors that can either accelerate or decelerate Turkey’s integration into the EU – what we term as “drivers of the relationship” (Tocci, 2016) – this paper will project on and unpack the features of the scenario that will most likely characterize EU-Turkey relations in the coming years – which we identify to be one of “conflictual cooperation”. After setting the stage accordingly, the paper will look at several different forms of external differentiation the EU has so far followed with non-member states, and will analyze why, how and to what extent these pre-existing forms can present viable models for the future of EU-Turkey relations. It will finally introduce, and discuss the institutional reference frame of, the “dynamic association” model as an institutional format that, we propose, will best address the concerns and fit the needs of both sides vis-à-vis this decades-long relationship.

1. Perspective on F(e)uture: Towards a Scenario of Conflictual Cooperation

1.1 The Limits of Convergence

The conceptual framework adopted here for the f(e)uture of the EU-Turkey relationship into 2023 and beyond identifies three ideal type scenarios, which could define the overall relationship or its more specific, thematic dimensions. First such scenario is convergence: it entails a fundamental improvement in the existing relationship, i.e. harmony between Turkey’s and the EU’s strategies

⁶ For further details see FEUTURE Online Paper series <https://www.feuture.uni-koeln.de/de/publications/feuture-online-paper-series/>.



and institutions, as well as the existence of mechanisms that can sustain this sort of collaboration. In short, convergence is institutionalized cooperation, which may or may not result in Turkey’s membership into the EU. By contrast, the cooperation scenario refers to situations wherein the sides collaborate towards a common goal, albeit without the institutional integration that would accompany the convergence scenario. In a way, this scenario would see the continuation of the same *modus operandi* that currently defines the relationship, but would require even closer cooperation in a greater number of issue-areas that nonetheless falls short of convergence. In turn, the conflict scenario is the most negative and limited of all three. It unfolds when Ankara and Brussels clash over issues of common concern – i.e. adopt incompatible stances and try to accomplish mutually exclusive, divergent goals – and may even exhibit estrangement towards one another (see *ibid.*).

The EU-Turkey story is a complicated one, evidenced foremost by the fact that, despite crises that seem to constantly drive the sides towards what seems like an unavoidable ending, the story is still not over. There are multiple dimensions to this relationship, established as a result of geopolitical proximity and further entrenched through numerous, multifarious interactions over several centuries (Aydın-Düzgüt and Tocci, 2015). This actually keeps the relationship going, if not always drives it forward. While a number of drivers push the relationship towards a precipice, others pull it away – but still keep it balanced at the very edge of that precipice.

One of the core findings of FEUTURE’s research, examining the main drivers in the EU-Turkey relationship since 1999, is that there are two thematic dimensions whose drivers determine the ‘upper-most limits’ of this relationship – i.e.: whether it will go down the precipice or travel a safe distance away from it. One of them is politics: the constellations that dominate the political landscape on both sides, their norms, values and modes of interaction. The other is identity constructions, defined as cultural and social perceptions that have been formed as a result of these political encounters, both shaping and being shaped by what transpires within the political space.

This suggests that the nature of political relations between Turkey and the EU, reinforced by identity constructions, define the tone of the overall relationship. Or in other words, convergence in the overall relationship can only be possible if a) there is political convergence (i.e. integration of political institutions, systems of governments, and common political values and principles, in line with Article 2 of Treaty on European Union (TEU)) and b) the prevailing attitude on both sides is one that encourages a closer union (although the membership narrative has been used more consistently by the Turkish than by the EU side (Şenyuva, 2018 and Hauge et. al., 2016), which leads to a joint identity construction that eventually does away with the labeling of one another as binary opposites.

In light of a) the current political situation, FEUTURE research demonstrates that political drivers in the EU and Turkey have a mostly negative impact on the relationship (Soler i Lecha et. al., 2018).



While Turkey’s slide towards “illiberal democracy” (Eralp et al., 2017) and the new system of presidentialism (Kirişçi and Toygür, 2019) make Turkey a less palatable partner, the rise of far-right movements and extreme nationalism in Europe, demonstrated through the recent electoral victories of populist parties, makes political convergence unlikely (see also Kaya 2018). Further, in recent years the EU has been facing the dilemma that “its foundations are under attack from the inside” (Grabbe and Lehne, 2017: 1). This means that Hungary and Poland do not sufficiently comply with the EU’s constitutive political values anymore, in particular, rule of law standards. In turn, this weakens the EU’s transformative potential via harming its normative legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the Turkish government. Also importantly, the “Turkey fatigue” across EU member states and the continuous state of internal crises in recent years have decreased the appetite for following up on Turkey’s accession procedure. In return, this has undermined the “principle of conditionality” (Tekin and Deniz, 2019) – in a way, affirming the conviction of the Eurosceptic members within Turkey’s ruling circles that the EU would never welcome Turkey into the fold, no matter what. In spite of these negative drivers, it is important to keep in mind that both sides place a large premium on maintaining a cooperative attitude, mainly in areas of common interest such as energy, migration, security and fight against terrorism.

In light of b) mutual identity constructions, the way Turkey and the EU perceive one another has been continuously shifting over the years, resulting in alternations between the conflict, cooperation and convergence scenarios in response to specific drivers. Yet, since 2013, conflict has dominated the EU-Turkey relationship in the area of identity since political developments on both sides have encouraged mutually exclusive identity constructions rooted in purported civilizational differences.

To continue the analogy above, recent evolutions in political relations and contemporary identity constructions are urging the relationship towards a brink for the 2023 timeframe. Still, a number of drivers in other thematic/more functional dimensions of the relationship constitute a so-called safety net by forging an intimate environment and preventing the bilateral bonds, although stretched, from snapping. In other words, they shift the gear of current political and identity drivers in reverse and back the relationship away from the precipice. FEUTURE identified four additional such dimensions: security, migration, energy, and economy. The nature of EU-Turkey interactions within these domains set the minimum threshold below which the relationship does not fall, despite the presence of conflict-inducing drivers. To be sure, this cooperation is often out of obligation and necessity (and even convenience) – but it is also inevitable, given the inter-dependency between the operations that fall within these thematic dimensions. Such interdependence motivates both sides to maintain a modicum of cooperation at least in order to prevent any sort of escalation of tensions from snowballing into a fatalistic confrontation. In this sense, these thematic dimensions will determine the content and substance, the so-called nuts and bolts, of the “conflictual cooperation” scenario, and in return, the framework for the “dynamic association” format that should guide EU-Turkey relations into the future.



1.2 Unpacking the Thematic Dimensions: The Persistence of Cooperation

The three scenarios introduced above are ideal type scenarios, describing distinct, easily identifiable situations that espouse a “black-and-white” and, in this case, a somewhat unrealistic view of the relationship. There cannot be convergence across the board, nor will outright conflict characterize the sides’ mode of interaction within every thematic dimension. Cooperation does not hit too wide off the mark, but given the conflictual elements at play, describing the relationship as one that is based on cooperation presents an oversimplified view of the dynamic. This is also corroborated by the findings of the historical analysis of “narratives” – which puts forward that the relationship is currently characterized by a combination of conflictual elements as well as arguments in favor of closer cooperation. FEUTURE’s analysis makes this case by examining the narratives that have come to the fore on both sides over the years, and points out that, although not one single narrative has dominated on either side, they have increasingly diverged from one another over the years: while the goal of acquiring EU membership has been a constant element on the Turkish side, the EU has instead underlined the importance of ongoing collaboration, shying away from whole-heartedly endorsing Turkey’s EU-bid. Despite the diverging narratives and the political tensions – that, as discussed throughout this paper, have risen to unprecedented heights – both sides are fully aware of their strategic importance to one another, however. This is why the research findings assert that the narratives on both sides will likely continue to stress their commitment to ongoing cooperation (Hauge et al., 2019). Accordingly, FEUTURE also puts forward “conflictual cooperation” as the scenario that will define the EU-Turkey relationship by 2023.

In the security realm, the EU and Turkey will cooperate out of necessity and interdependence, and continue to benefit from existing arrangements, yet will shy away from converging due to several factors with the potential to erupt in conflict. To be sure, there is potential for collaboration: For instance, the increasingly unstable security environment and the diminishing U.S. role in NATO could push the EU and Turkey to cooperate through specific projects within the framework of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) agreement that are open to third country participation. Or without establishing a common security mechanism, Ankara and Brussels could act together to tackle drivers of radicalization in the Caucasus and the Middle East, fight against proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), clamp down on smuggling networks that operate in the Balkans and North Africa, support initiatives for good governance in the Eastern Neighborhood, and help post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Syria and Iraq, providing humanitarian assistance and supporting peacekeeping missions. Indeed, if both sides agree on the nature of a common threat, cooperation has been possible in the past. However, in terms of the current security threats, the EU and Turkey either do not agree on the nature of the threat, or a certain development that one side identifies as an immediate threat does not assume the same level of urgency on the other’s agenda. This sort of disagreement on what should be prioritized inevitably leads to a disagreement on the type of response that should be issued (Ergün et al., 2018). For example,



The EU and Turkey may be pursuing similar goals in Syria and Iraq insofar as they are fighting the Islamic State (IS). However, the fact that Turkey is pursuing an agenda centered on minimizing Kurdish presence along its border with Syria and the worry that this may peel away from the effectiveness of the efforts to fight extremism in the region or that Ankara may decide to purchase defense procurement from Russia may convince the EU that an institutional cooperation with Turkey is not in its best interest. As long as outlooks, threats perceptions and policy priorities are out of sync, the security relationship is then unlikely to evolve into a partnership that bodes towards convergence. It should also be noted that European security has traditionally been dealt with within the NATO framework, and there has been therefore little appetite to establish a separate EU-Turkey security mechanism or to expand security cooperation beyond the auspices of NATO. This yields the “conflictual cooperation” scenario: in this case, Turkey will continue to contribute ad hoc to some European projects when interests and policies align, such as intelligence sharing against extremist organizations and strengthening border controls to disrupt the transit of foreign fighters, but will not be absorbed into institutions tasked with the appropriate charge, i.e. Frontex.

The modus operandi vis-à-vis migration will also fall below the threshold of harmonious and institutional cooperation but will not cross into the realm of full-blown conflict. In terms of bilateral migration issues, mobility will be encouraged, but not facilitated through institutional channels. Since 2015, when the migration crisis erupted with full strength, EU policymakers have realized how massive flows of migration, if not managed properly (with corresponding integration politics that are also acutely sensitive to the public mood), could trigger political crises. The March 2016 “EU-Turkey Statement” (also referred to as the “refugee deal”) has helped Europe contain the crisis in terms of refugee numbers. Even when the current numbers have subsided⁷, member states will continue to watch this space carefully, tracking the European public’s reactions to the settlement and integration of new residents, foremost to prevent their presence from becoming politicized in favor of anti-European, populist agendas. The deal will therefore remain in place, with Turkey continuing to host an ever-growing number of Syrian refugees in exchange for the financial support it receives from the EU for this purpose. The sides may revisit the terms and could potentially increase Turkey’s funding. There may also be low- to mid-level cooperation between institutions and agencies, such as meetings between Frontex liaison officers and their Turkish counterparts, but there will not be any institutional integration. As FEUTURE’s research on migration puts forward, the EU takes an “operational approach” to this issue-area, while Turkey seeks to transform this operational relationship into political engagement” (Dimitriadi et al., 2018, 3). This, in return, implies that convergence would entail steps that neither side would be willing to take. The issue of visa liberalization presents a prime example. As discussed above, the EU has promised the prospect of visa liberalization to Turkish nationals as part of the refugee deal “provided that all benchmarks are met”. There is a total of 72 benchmarks, six of which Turkey has still not fulfilled, including and primarily, the revision of its anti-terrorism law. On the other hand, there

⁷ For an overview on numbers of migration visit the website of the European Asylum Support Office: <https://www.easo.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends>.



is enough reason to believe that additional political hurdles will impede visa liberalization in practice, given, among other issues, the European Parliament’s July 2018 report which stated that visa liberalization should also be made contingent on Ankara’s recognition of the Republic of Cyprus. The political position of some member states is also contributing to a hardened European stance on lifting the visa requirements. The German government, for example, seems intent on linking visa liberalization to preconditions extending towards democratization and related political reforms in Turkey.⁸ There are some efforts underway to make the EU more self-reliant in this respect; however, for the time being – and in fact, even in coming years – the EU will not be able to mitigate its dependency on Turkey. All of this suggests that cooperation will characterize the relationship moving forward. To give another example, a convergence scenario would also require Turkey to discard the “geographical limitation” to its ratification of the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, which means that only persons originating from Europe are given the refugee status. This would, furthermore, task Turkey with monitoring the EU’s external borders. The “Europeanization” of Turkey’s asylum policies, within the greater umbrella of migration-related issues and *acquis* compliance, would represent a similar case of convergence (Kale et al., 2018). Yet, the signing of the Readmission Agreement (EURA) could mean that Turkey ends up hosting a significant number of irregular migrants from Asia and Africa – certainly a development Turkey would prefer to avoid. Moreover, Turkey’s liberal visa regime with a number of Middle Eastern and Gulf countries, who face visa restrictions upon entry into Europe, would make convergence unlikely.

In the domain of energy, given the structure of energy mixes, the sides’ geographical proximity as well as the current and projected patterns of energy trends, there is potential for collaboration. Energy cooperation has been considered instrumental (in particular by Turkey) to strengthen the bilateral relations between Brussels and Ankara, and in particular, to advance the EU’s accession process. Even so, a number of drivers undermines this potential and bodes the relations towards conflict; as a result, energy cooperation retains a value *per se*, though not as a driver towards deeper relations. For example, the EU promotes a greater dependence on renewables and is trying to phase out the use of coal, while Turkey is stocking up on the latter and maintains a mixed attitude towards decarbonization. Also, Ankara opposes the continuation of exploration activities off the coast of Cyprus, and is wary of Cyprus’ attempt to cooperate with Israel and Egypt in this regard (Tsakiris et.al., 2018). There are furthermore questions over the future of Turkey’s energy relations with Russia, which may even strengthen when the construction of the Turk Stream gas pipeline and Akkuyu power plant is completed (Mikhelidze et.al., 2017). Still, these conflict-inducing drivers will likely be offset by the need to diversify sources of gas and to diminish the depend-

⁸ As stated in the text of the CDU-CSU-SPD coalition agreement in February 2018: “The state of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in Turkey has been worsening for a long period ... Visa liberalization or an expansion of the customs union will only be possible once Turkey fulfills the necessary preconditions” (Cited in Szabo, 2018: 13).



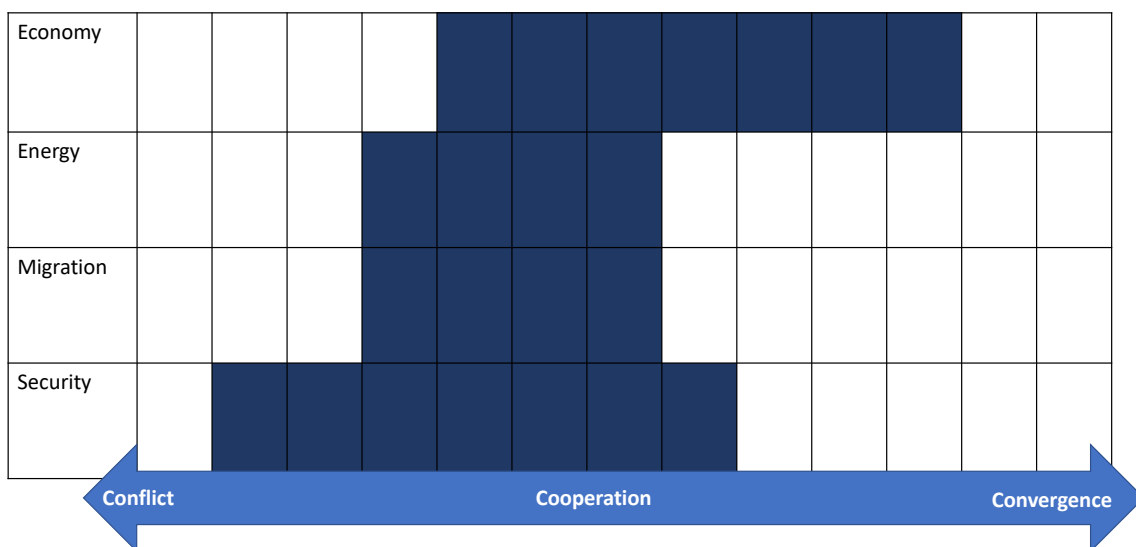
ency on Russia, encouraging Ankara and Brussels to join forces and push back against any disruptions by Russia, and even move to strengthen the Southern Gas Corridor, or launch operations to explore new sources of gas in Azerbaijan.

In terms of economic relations, the future scenario contains the least conflict potential. In stark contrast to the prevailing patterns in other thematic dimensions, there is a greater driving potential towards convergence. In fact, economy constitutes the core of EU-Turkey relations, stretching back to the Ankara Agreement of 1963, which set in motion the process towards creating a Customs Union (CU) that would help secure Turkey’s inclusion into what then was called the European Economic Community (EEC). And the fluctuating, albeit uninterrupted, flow of goods, services and finance as well as the mutual dependences consequently generated, through thick and thin of a long, often turbulent history, have allowed the relationship to break through the upper-threshold of cooperation and creep into the realm of convergence, wherein collaboration continues and even becomes strengthened through institutional backing. This is a positive, upward trend that we do not observe in other thematic dimensions. If economic developments in the EU and Turkey allowed for these converging trends to persist and to take full force, the coming years might then see Turkey eventually receiving access to the institutions set up by the EU framework in addition to preserving, and ideally, deepening the EU-Turkey CU (which the paper discusses more in detail in the third section). Although a complete rupture of economic ties is unlikely, there are still factors that could peel away from this potential for convergence, especially after the June 2018 GAC decision which stated that “no further work towards the modernization of the EU-Turkey Customs Union is foreseen” until Ankara comes forward with reforms aimed at improving the rule of law and democratic governance (European Council, 2018, 13). This may throw a major obstacle towards strengthening economic ties. But nevertheless, it is not likely to lead to conflict in the sense that FEUTURE describes this scenario and understands its implications (see Tocci, 2016). Turkey still represents a huge market potential for Europe, and Europe remains the top destination for Turkish exports. More importantly, economic relations have hitherto continued unscathed, despite the boundless frustration that has at times characterized the EU-Turkey relationship.

In conclusion, on a diagram of ideal-type scenarios (see Graph 1) the most-likely scenarios in these four thematic dimensions, security, migration, energy and economics, center around “cooperation”. Security covers a wide space around “cooperation” but leaning strongly towards “conflict”. Similar trends can be observed for the migration dimension – however covering less space towards both “conflict” and “convergence”. The most likely scenario in the energy dimension is the most centered on “cooperation” with only a slight tilt towards “conflict”. The economic dimension is the only dimension in which the most likely scenario is leaning heavily towards “convergence” and in contrast vis-à-vis the other thematic dimensions, without any nudge towards conflict.

Graph 1: Dimensions of Conflictual Cooperation in EU-Turkey Relations





Source: Own compilation.

Of course, these thematic dimensions will exert different political weight on the relationship, depending on specific circumstances on both sides, the developments in the neighborhood as well as at the global level. Certain predictions could be made based on the current state of play.

First, as long as there is no change in the current state of the crises in Turkey’s and the EU’s neighborhood, security will keep, if not improve, its salience in the relationship. The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, has repeatedly called for a more assertive EU that could, on its own, defend multilateralism against Trump’s protectionism. The French President Emmanuel Macron also stated in late August 2018 at the annual conference of French ambassadors that Europe should boost its defense capability in response to the shifting balance of power, as the U.S. has turned its back on the liberal international order and the multi-polar world it brought into being, adding that “we must guarantee our own security and sovereignty” instead of relying on the U.S. as Europe had done since 1945 (Young, 2018). Proposals to overhaul and redesign the EU’s defense and security architectures, in addition to changes that are currently underway (as discussed above) are likely to remain on the agenda, and it would not be unrealistic to expect further developments on this matter and in this direction. As an important security partner, whom the EU will continue to depend on for counter-terrorism work, intelligence sharing and collaboration on migration, Turkey will likely be folded into these efforts. Granted, it is unrealistic to assert that Turkey will have a role in shaping what could result in a new, EU-led post-pax-Americana regional order. It will, however, be likely pulled into specific projects, geared towards tackling national and regional threats on an ad hoc basis.



Second, migration will likely increase in salience, especially when the EU leaders are discussing the Union’s internal policies, because of the rise of far-right parties and movements that push forward anti-immigrant agendas. This trend has already intensified a civilizational discourse, pitting Europeans against the migrant “other” that is most often than not Middle Eastern and Muslim. This civilizational prism – which is gaining ground in Europe with an alarming speed – will give fodder to Turkey’s perception as a country that cannot fit into the European fold and will likely impede convergence. Furthermore, the “brain-drain” out of Turkey – which, as mentioned above, has already resulted in an unprecedented number of Turkish nationals lodging asylum applications in Europe – will likely continue, increasing the number of Turkish asylum-seekers in Europe. Given that those asylum-seekers represent, more often than not, the educated and wealthier sections of Turkish society, their presence in Europe may not necessarily paint a more negative picture of “the Turk” in Europe. In fact, “highly skilled migration stands out as an area of mutual benefit” which may even drive EU-Turkey relations towards convergence in 2023 (Sanchez-Montijano *et al.*, 2018). Yet, it is also likely that populist and nationalist leaders will frame this development as some sort of “Turkish invasion,” reminiscent of the arguments that dominated the British press before the Brexit vote in June 2016.

Third, Turkey and the EU will have to keep cooperating on energy-related matters, as long as gas remains a key component of the European energy mix. As things stand, Europe will benefit from the diversified supply that the Turkish-engineered Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline will provide – which will render Europe less susceptible to Russia’s use of energy as a tool of political pressure. However, if sensitivities over climate change, bolstered by technological advancements, unleash a stronger push for a greater reliance on renewable sources of energy, Ankara and the EU may have fewer reasons to collaborate.

Last but not least, as discussed in detail above, economy is the “good news” to come out of this narrative. More importantly, in this case, is that a robust economy and a nationwide improvement in welfare standards have been hallmarks of Erdoğan’s time at the helm of Turkish politics. The premium he still places on the economy’s strong performance will force the sides to maintain, if not further strengthen, the economic ties in place. However, 2018 was a particularly turbulent year for the Turkish economy, with the lira losing over 40% of its value at one point. Even though the lira has slightly recovered its value towards the end of the year, due in part to the easing of tensions with the U.S. that had pushed the economy over the edge in the first place, the Turkish economy is still ailing due to ongoing structural problems. Economists have been clamoring for the introduction of a list of structural reforms to “cool down” the overheated economy, rein in government spending, tame inflation and restore the independence of the central bank (see e.g. Acemoğlu, 2018). Thus far, Ankara has not been forthcoming in heeding this advice – which, as analysts have warned, have pushed the economy further into “junk territory” (Dye and Pitel, 2018), and may transform the country’s currency crisis into a banking crisis (O’Brien, 2018).



Granted, Europe’s economy is performing better, but the precarious state of the transatlantic relationship with the USA – and Trump’s readiness to slap economic sanctions against Washington’s traditional allies on claims that such punitive measures are necessary for defending national security – is worrying. For instance, although Trump and the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker have agreed on a trade deal that will protect the European economy for the time being, the whims of the U.S. President mean that a tariff war will not recede beyond the realm of the realizable. Despite these recent developments, the EU and Turkey have taken steps to maintain a healthy economic relationship – which, again, strengthens our hypothesis regarding the future of economic ties. Following the imposition of American tariffs on Turkey, for instance, both Merkel and the French President Emmanuel Macron phoned Erdoğan, stating that Turkey’s stability was in the interest of their respective countries – which has sent a welcome message, implying that Europe was ready to come to an important ally’s aid at a time of distress. In fact, 2018 has changed the dynamics between the EU and Turkey, somewhat. Particularly the leaders’ diplomatic intervention into the showdown with the U.S. demonstrated that the EU would not only allow Turkey to plunge into a crisis, but also that it was not ready to break ties with its partner. This is a strong testament to the strength of the bonds that hold this relationship together – which, as our hypothesis puts forward, remain unbreakable, regardless of the number of elements that chip away at it.

2. From Conflictual Cooperation to Dynamic Association: Revisiting Differentiated Integration

With political and identity drivers producing conflict and making convergence unlikely, and the other thematic dimensions generating conflictual cooperation at best, the question logically becomes: Where do we go from here, institutionally speaking? What would be the future institutional relationship format that would be most compatible with this scenario while, at the same time, contributing to minimizing conflict and maximizing cooperation in the EU-Turkey relationship? Can the EU’s relations with some other third countries offer relevant models in this context?

Clearly, given the current circumstances, there is the need for thinking “out of the accession box” (Turhan, 2017; see also Müftüler-Baç, 2017). For conceptualizing such a framework, differentiation becomes key because it makes the separation line between membership and non-membership thinner. The EU’s differentiation has an internal and an external dimension (Leuffen et. al., 2015) and both are relevant for EU-Turkey relations. There is a broad literature on the EU’s internal differentiation or differentiated integration, which basically means that “one group of member states is not subjected to the same Union rules as others” (Tekin and Wessels, 2008). From the very early stages, European integration has featured different forms of differentiated integration in terms of transitory periods, different levels of implementation of secondary law or individual member states opting out of certain EU policies. In the past years, EU institutions have started to



officially acknowledge differentiated integration to represent an important tool for managing heterogeneity among the member states (see European Council 2014, 11). If differentiated integration becomes the ‘new normal’ of European integration, scope, nature and form of membership as such will transform, too. Forms of partial membership might hence become the rule rather than the exception and thus might not represent some sort of second-class membership – as feared by Turkey. Although this evolution is less likely to have fully materialized by 2023, this trend has a high potential for framing and shaping the EU-Turkey relationship centered around “conflictual cooperation” in the future.

This even more so as the UK’s decision to exit the EU seeking special and tailor-made association afterwards has changed the picture of European integration even further. In conceptual terms this represents rather differentiated disintegration than integration (Schimmelfennig, 2018) that might eventually threaten the overall coherence of European integration. In political terms, Brexit might change the ways in which the EU interacts with third countries (e.g. Gabriel, 2017). In addition to the accession procedure other forms of association and cooperation with third countries constitute this external differentiation of the EU, which “results if non-members that are unable to join because EU membership is highly politicized opt in selectively in highly interdependent but weakly politicized policy areas” (Leuffen et al., 2015, 765).

The general difference between internal and external differentiation is that third countries lack the right to fully participate in EU institutions including voting rights in the policies they are associated to/participate in whereas member states that have opted-out of certain policies preserve their voting rights in the policies they remain part of. In institutional terms strictly speaking there is no such thing as partial membership based on the current treaties. External differentiation hence represents an asymmetric relationship in which the EU is the decision-giver and the third country the decision-taker.

Differentiation – internal and external alike – hence, helps conceive the future of EU-Turkey relations and eventually structure the most likely scenario. Indeed, beyond the FEUTURE project, talk of an alternative EU-Turkey relationship has been gaining ground in recent years. The question increasingly comes up both in policy circles and academic as well as policy-oriented assessments of EU-Turkey relations (Müftüler-Baç, 2017 and 2018; Hürsoy, 2017; Aydın-Düzgit, 2017; Turhan, 2017; Böhler et al., 2012, Ülgen, 2012), specifically looking at options such as “privileged partnership” (zu Guttenberg, 2004), “associate membership” (Duff 2013) “graduated membership” (Karakas, 2013), virtual membership (Ülgen, 2012) or “realistic strategic partnership” (Hahn 2018). Hence, linking conflictual cooperation to its institutional dimension is not only an exercise necessitated by FEUTURE’s narrower findings, but it is also relevant and a timely contribution to ongoing discussions and developments providing the context of the future EU-Turkey relations.



Keeping in mind the insights provided by this broader literature and building on FEUTURE research by Soler i Lecha, Sökmen and Tekin (2018), we identify six existing models that can provide reference for the possible scenarios ranging from convergence to conflict including conflictual cooperation. They differ regarding their a) form of relations, b) focus on values and rules-based cooperation as well as c) the scope of involvement in EU institutions and their decision-making (see Table 1 below).⁹

⁹ Please note, that the models described here are only of exemplary nature. There are other models in between, that we did not include here. But the models listed provide sufficient information on the nature of the different forms of cooperation that are possible and conceivable.



Table 1: Models of EU’s relations with third countries

	Form of relations	Value / rules-based	Decision-making involvement	Differentiation	Scenario
Pre-Brexit-UK	Membership with opt-outs from EMU, Schengen, AFSJ, Charter of Fundamental Rights and derogations in secondary law measures About to exit the EU	Rules-based cooperation in full compliance with Art. 2 TEU	Full voting rights except for those policies from which the UK opted-out	internal	Patchwork convergence
Poland	Membership but no participation in eurozone	In principle value- and rules-based – but here currently in breach of Art. 2 TEU	Full voting rights as long as Art. 7 TEU-procedure is not in effect.	internal	Convergence with conflict
Norway	Associated through the European Economic Area, i.e. part of the internal market, and Schengen member state	Value- and rules-based association including the four freedoms of the single market	Right of participation in relevant EU institutions, bodies and agencies but no voting right.	external	Close value- and rules-based cooperation
Israel	European Neighbourhood Policy / European Neighbourhood Instrument	In principle, based on “the values of democracy, rule of law and respect of human rights”	No voting or participation rights in EU institutions or policies – but full representation in the Association Council; high-level dialogues; joint summits	external / association	Functional cooperation
Brazil	Strategic Partnership	Not values-based cooperation with key partners in a globalized world	No voting or participation rights in EU institutions or policies – but less relevant as less formalized cooperation and participation in joint agreements etc.	Strategic partnership	Loose cooperation
Russia	No formal relations (Partnership and Association Agreement on hold), sanctions	--	No voting or participation rights in EU institutions or policies	--	Full-fledged conflict



Full membership in the EU implies commitment to the values referred to in Article 2 TEU and their promotion (see Art. 49 TEU), which demands stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities. Additionally, it requires the member state to fully implement the *acquis communautaire*, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union, as well as to have a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU (see European Council, 1993).

In view of the political drivers in Turkey and the EU alike, it is currently highly challenging to conceive a convergence scenario that would imply models of full membership for the relationship. The model of a defiant EU member state, which we call the ‘*Poland model*’, where the respective member state experiences continuous, internal political crises as well as in relations with its fellow member states and eventually breaches Art. 2 TEU rules, is a highly unlikely model for EU-Turkey relations. The EU disposes of internal mechanisms to sanction a member state that is in breach of Art. 2 TEU and Poland is the first country against which the European Commission has triggered the Article 7 TEU procedure giving way to the so-called “Rule of Law Framework”. At the same time, this has increased the EU’s awareness of the importance of the political accession criteria for any future new member state. This means that the EU will be highly unlikely to accept Turkey as an additional defiant member state into its club as this would represent *convergence with conflict*.

Once Turkey fulfilled the accession criteria and fully complied with Art. 2 TEU this would still not grant full convergence. A more likely scenario would be the one of a *patchwork convergence* making full use of internal differentiated integration mechanisms and options. The ‘*Pre-Brexit-UK model*’ delivers the prime example for this cherry-picking approach to European integration. Throughout history the UK has been very successful in negotiating internal differentiation in form of its opt-outs from the common currency including all of the emergency mechanisms that were set up after the global financial crisis of 2008, the Schengen Area, the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. One has to acknowledge, however, that the UK is particular in view of its strong bargaining power that it had been able to build on within the EU. New member states are rather unlikely to have the same amount and/or level of bargaining power: 1) accession requires them to implement fully the *acquis communautaire*, and 2) new members to the club are not in a strong position to negotiate derogations (see also Schimmelfennig, 2018). Still, there are other cases where new member states have been denied (immediate) access to certain policy areas in form of long and/or permanent transitory periods; e.g. Romania and Bulgaria that have been kept at the doorsteps of the Schengen Area for a decade. In the case of Turkey, the combination of such a patchwork convergence scenario would most likely include more forced than deliberate opt-outs from certain policies.

The other extreme would be a ‘*full-fledged conflict*’ scenario in which the EU and the third country tend to perceive each other as a threat and actively work to undermine each other. The EU-Russia



relations, that had started to turn sour with Russia’s invasion of Georgia in 2008 and hit full rock bottom in the Ukraine crises with the annexation of Crimea in 2014/2015, represent the existing model for such a scenario. The former strategic partnership based on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) has been frozen and the EU has imposed sanctions directed at Russia’s actions in the Ukraine. The main aim of engaging with key partners in a globalized world is currently counteracted by Russian assertiveness in Europe and the fact that individual member states pursue selected bilateral policies with Russia. In case of the *Russia model* the idea of external differentiation in its loosest form of a strategic partnership has not worked out but turned into conflict.

In between the ‘Poland’ and ‘Russia’ models, we identify three forms of cooperation with different degrees of external differentiation. The *‘Norway’ Model* is the highly institutionalized association of a country consistent with the scenario of *close value- and rules-based cooperation without membership*. Norway is part of the internal market through the European Economic Area (EEA) and part of the Schengen Area through the Schengen Agreement. It participates in as much as 15 EU Agencies and is involved in internal and external security policies alike. The only drawback in this model is the fact that Norway has the right to attend relevant meetings of EU institutions, bodies and agencies but does not have formal voting rights.

If one removed the rules-based element entirely from the cooperation scenario, we would look at forms of transactional cooperation. As long as there are still some rules for cooperation that however are not necessarily values oriented we speak of *functional cooperation*. External differentiation takes the form of pure association without any participation or representation in EU institutions but in joint association councils, high-level-dialogues, joint summits or committees. The prime examples of this form of cooperation can be found within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), which was developed to establish relations with third countries eventually offering everything except full membership – for purposes of illustration, we call this the *‘Israel Model’*. Within the ENP Framework the degree of rules-based elements and scope of conditionality varies in practice. With the Ukraine, for example, the EU has signed an Association Agreement including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), which increases the degree of functional integration with the EU as well as the level of rules-based cooperation.

Finally, the EU has established strategic partnerships with nine countries¹⁰ that form the *loosest form of cooperation* with third countries in terms of external differentiation and in view of rules-based cooperation. Strategic partnerships are specifically conceptualized for the individual third country. In the case of the *‘Brazil Model’*, the strategic partnership aims at protecting multilateralism and democratic values, promoting international peace and security, expanding trade and removing trade barriers, creating jobs and fostering competitiveness and innovation.

¹⁰ Currently, there are nine such partners, namely, the USA, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Japan, South Korea, China, India, South Africa (Turhan, 2018, 109).



After 2019, there might be yet another model for external differentiation. The UK is currently negotiating its exit from the EU as well as the form and scope of its association with it afterwards. Assessing the current state of play involving the Art. 50 TEU procedure, it becomes clear that negotiating external differentiation with the EU is much more difficult than following a cherry-picking approach from the inside demanding internal differentiation. Schimmelfenning et al. speak of ‘asymmetric differentiation’ that make cherry picking from the outside rather difficult. At the time of writing, the model for the UK’s association with the EU has not yet been finalized. Certain elements are, however, clear: the UK will get full access to the internal market only if it accepts all four freedoms, a solution for the land border between the UK and Ireland is key, association in certain policies such as internal security is important, but the UK would get access as third country only. Hence, the “Brexit model” just like the ‘Norway Model’ would represent value- and rules-based cooperation without membership.

In academia and politics alike, some have expressed hope that Brexit might provide a blueprint for how the EU could structure its relations with third countries (e.g. Ülgen, 2017). Andrew Duff (2013) suggested to add Article 49a TEU on associate membership that would “require fidelity to the values and principles of the Union (Article 2 TEU) and to the principle of sincere cooperation (Article 4(3)). However, it would not require adherence to all the political objectives of the Union as laid down in Article 3 TEU, which include joining the euro. Nor would associate membership confer the duty to engage in all the activities of the EU” (Duff, 2013). This would basically imply rules-based association in form of limited membership.

However, there are certain challenges linked to such general considerations also in view of EU-Turkey relations. In general terms, anything that would require treaty changes is rather a long-term than a short-term scenario, as the Lisbon Treaty is here to stay for the time being. Additionally, Table 1 above clearly highlights that it will be highly difficult to find a one-size-fits all approach for the EU’s relations with third countries. Each third country shares a different history with the EU, different expectations regarding aims and objectives for the relationship and different already existing institutional links.

Looking at Turkey, this becomes even more relevant as Turkey will never be as influential as a pre-Brexit UK, as integrated as Poland, as close as Norway, as instrumental as Israel or as confrontational as Russia. Hence, no particular country’s relations with the EU would by themselves be sufficient for capturing the overall tone and evolution of EU-Turkey relations for the 2023 timeframe.

First, considering the aspiration or non-aspiration of EU membership, and hence which side is dictating how far the relationship should go, Turkey differs substantially from Norway, Iceland or the UK that do not want to be a member of the EU (anymore) based on national referenda decisions or even Ukraine that eventually aspires accession but is currently offered a DCFTA. With Turkey the EU has started accession negotiations although without any progress so far or valid accession



prospective in the short- or medium term. Thus, in the Turkish case neither the aspiration of full membership nor which side is dictating how far the relationship should go is entirely clear.

Turkey also differs in terms of willingness to comply with the *acquis* – Norway and Iceland are willing to comply with a great share of the *acquis* of the internal market or other policy areas of the EU. The UK is currently testing the limits of how much it could stretch the *acquis* to comply with its own interests. Turkey’s willingness to comply with the *acquis* seems rather low for two reasons: On the one hand, Turkey wants membership but without necessarily assuming the costs of compliance and thus falling into “de-Europeanization” (Aydın-Düzgüt and Kaliber, 2016), following a previously selective compliance trend with the Copenhagen political criteria (Saatcioğlu, 2014; Börzel, 2012). On the other hand, the EU’s conditionality *vis-à-vis* Turkey is weak in view of the credibility issues linked to the accession promise (see Tekin and Deniz, 2019).

Second, its persistent and multidimensional ties with the EU distinguish Turkey from ENP-countries. Notwithstanding the difficulties in Turkey’s EU compliance trajectory, cooperation between Turkey and the EU dates back to the 1950s and was institutionalized with the Ankara Agreement in 1963. Throughout the years, Turkey’s accession process has already generated a certain level of functional integration into the EU’s *acquis* in key areas such as the economy, justice and home affairs (including migration), foreign and security policies, and energy (Müftüler-Baç, 2017). Choosing any sort of ENP-Model or a formal strategic partnership would therefore represent a substantial setback in the relations. Furthermore, it would be tantamount to a de-integration process given that it would require the unraveling of the existing CU to be replaced by a Free Trade Agreement – regardless of how deep and comprehensive it might be (Berulava et al., 2019). We can also rule out a confrontational scenario such as the current relations with Russia in view of Turkey’s history of Westernization as well as the mutual strategic interdependence between Turkey and the EU that date back even further.

Last but not least, any existing relationship model excluding membership for Turkey (i.e., strategic partnership, the ENP, Turkey’s integration into the EEA which occurs in lieu of accession) would be far from feasible since it would surely be rejected by Ankara. As Turkey’s former Minister of European Union Affairs Ömer Çelik stated: “If we are proposed a ‘privileged partnership’, we will reject it without even considering it. Nobody has the right to propose a ‘second-class’ status in relations with the European Union to Turkey”.¹¹ Clearly, attempting to build any relationship which would annul Turkey’s EU candidacy would increase and intensify the conflictual dynamics in conflictual cooperation, and could even negatively affect the existing cooperation. More fundamentally, it would also defy the main premise of EU-Turkey ties going back to the 1960s, which granted Turkey formal eligibility to be considered for membership.¹²

¹¹ “Turkey Rejects Idea of ‘Privileged Partnership’ with European Union”. *Sputnik*, January 14, 2018.

¹² As stated in Article 28 of the 1963 Association Agreement between the EU and Turkey: “As soon as the operation of this Agreement has advanced far enough to justify envisaging full acceptance by Turkey of the obligations arising out of the Treaty



In short, the uniqueness of the EU-Turkey relations makes it imperative to develop an original relationship model which would borrow some elements from the models outlined above while not being confined to a single one of them.

3. The Context and Significance of Building a Dynamic Association between the EU and Turkey

As highlighted above, none of the existing relationship models (represented by the country examples described above) sufficiently reflects the EU-Turkey relationship. The findings of the FEUTURE project lead us to conclude that the latter is too complex and dynamic to be captured by any single model of differentiated integration or association so far initiated between the EU and third countries. In view of the multidimensional nature of EU-Turkey ties which have historically proven resilient amidst oscillations between conflict and convergence, we argue that the EU and Turkey will have to continue to engage with each other via designing an innovative institutional relationship, which we term a “dynamic association” (DA). Its main aim is the mitigation of conflictual dynamics while fostering cooperation – and potentially, trends towards convergence – through a rules-based framework.

In specific terms, there are three features that make our proposed association “dynamic”. The first is its multidimensional scope: While being centered on the upgraded EU-Turkey CU (as explained in detail below), the association is by no means limited to the economic aspect of EU-Turkey ties as it also extends to the other, functional areas of cooperation such as migration, security and energy, reflecting the relations’ practical and potential progress as summarized above. Second, owing to the rules-based nature of an upgraded CU agreement forming the DA’s backbone, the DA promises to serve as a platform which can foster interactions that would be, at least partially, norm-driven (as opposed to being purely transactional) despite the effectively frozen accession track. In turn, such relations can trigger convergent trends in the long run. Last and consequently, the association is comprehensive and flexible enough to feed both cooperative and convergent (understood as Turkey’s greater harmony with the EU within the context of the upgraded CU or elsewhere, if not full membership) dynamics in the EU-Turkey relationship.

3.1 The Case for a Dynamic Association Framework

Recent developments in EU-Turkey relations have engendered political debates on whether the time has come to start “talks about (accession) talks” and consequently, reconsider the relationship along the lines of a formal strategic partnership. Within the EU, Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, has taken the lead in arguing

establishing the Community, the Contracting Parties shall examine the possibility of the accession of Turkey to the Community”.



that the EU and Turkey should work on “a possible new format of cooperation” starting with upgrading the CU on the basis of mutual interests¹³ and do so outside of the accession framework.¹⁴ Among the member states, France has continued the debate, with Macron similarly suggesting that Brussels should put an end to the “hypocrisy” of continuing accession talks and work towards building a “strategic partnership” with Turkey instead.¹⁵ Expressing exasperation about the deadlocked accession process, Erdoğan himself has stated that Ankara may end up holding a referendum on Turkey’s long-stalled EU membership bid.¹⁶ Most recently, in March 2019, the European Parliament passed a resolution recommending the formal suspension of accession talks with Turkey, adopting as such the critical report and recommendation of its Committee for Foreign Affairs (European Parliament, 2019).¹⁷ Yet, the probability of an ultimate decision on the part of the member states to end the accession procedure still seems rather low. This is because the majority of the member states seems to hold a political preference in favor of maintaining the status quo (i.e., the effectively suspended state of the accession negotiations) rather than having to emerge as the side taking the initiative towards pulling the plug on the membership talks. Besides, given that the opening of new negotiation chapters is already ruled out by the EU Council, there is little political value for EU capitals in formally ending Turkey’s accession track.

Still, it should be highlighted that, if it were to happen, the formal suspension of the membership talks would heighten political conflict between the EU and Turkey. First, such a move would be tantamount to ending Turkey’s formal membership perspective (which Ankara officially rejects) due to the simple fact that a subsequent reactivation of the accession process would require member states’ unanimous approval. The latter is highly unlikely and therefore ending the membership negotiations would effectively close the EU’s door to Turkey, a step which would be politically irreversible. Second, terminating the accession process would additionally hollow out what is left of Turkey’s reform potential by eliminating the pre-accession assistance (IPA, which foresaw 4.45 billion euros for the 2014-2020 period), which would effectively mean lowered EU support for Turkey’s pro-EU, democratic civil society (Tocci, 2017). The move would also considerably strip the EU-Turkey relationship of its norm-based nature in favor of transactionalism, which would/could in turn embolden Turkey’s illiberal tendencies and further distancing away from Europe.

In view of these critical considerations, the principal rationale guiding the idea of *dynamic association* is that we should not do away with the accession framework notwithstanding the current impasse in the negotiations and the difficulty of Turkish membership. Instead, as conceptualized

¹³ “Hahn Says EU, Turkey Should Look Into ‘New Format of Cooperation.’” *RFE/RL*, April 24, 2017.

¹⁴ “EU Commissioner: We cannot Ignore Rule of Law Deficits in Turkey”, *Bianet*, February 22, 2018.

¹⁵ “‘You don’t understand’ Fury as Macron Brands Turkey Anti-European,” August 29, 2018. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1010174/emmanuel-macron-news-turkey-european-union-latest>.

¹⁶ “Erdoğan says he will consider referendum on Turkey’s EU bid”, *Euractiv*, October 5, 2018.

¹⁷ Indeed, this would follow the spirit of previous EP resolutions which have called for a “temporary freeze” (November 2016) and later, the “formal suspension” of Turkey’s accession negotiations (July 2017), citing Turkey’s emergency rule and the anti-democratic April 2017 constitutional package, respectively.



in detail below, the proposed EU-Turkey association would embed a partially norm-based institutional framework which would not exclude Turkey’s EU accession. At the same time, EU-Turkey functional cooperation would be promoted based on mutual interests, that is, particularly in the economic sphere, where convergent trends can be maximized, but also in migration, energy and security which could be left to advance on a more sector-specific and ad hoc basis.

Practically as well, the DA relationship would be established in parallel to Turkey’s – albeit stalled - EU accession track whose official termination by the EU does not seem likely in the foreseeable future. Still, the DA’s institutional endpoint may be viewed differently by Ankara, and EU capitals such as Berlin and Paris, with the former likely to perceive the DA as a complement to accession and the latter inclined towards interpreting it as a possible alternative to Turkey’s membership. So long as the EU refrains from formally weighing in on this question, however, these divergent interpretations would precisely allow for the kind of diplomatic ambiguity that may be needed to placate the two sides’ concerns about the DA’s ultimate meaning (i.e., in relation to accession) and consequently, keep them politically motivated towards establishing the DA framework.

Fed by this diplomatic ambiguity, our suggested context surrounding the DA would play out as follows. On the one hand, membership negotiations would remain formally open so as to preserve Turkey’s conditional membership perspective. This would not only help contain extra contestation and conflict by Ankara, which would surely be triggered by any alternative relationship offer reminiscent of privileged partnership (i.e., excluding the possibility of membership), but also anchor and encourage Turkey’s democratic forces – if empowered in the future - to comply with the Copenhagen political criteria in the long run. On the other hand, the EU and Turkey would keep working towards building an alternative, yet norm-driven relationship that would enable closer cooperation in areas where this is most likely, such as via upgrading the 1995 EU-Turkey CU agreement. In turn, this would modernize and expand CU’s scope, while contributing – at least partially – to Turkey’s potential integration in the European Economic Area (EEA) which could emerge as a logical next step. On the whole, while sector-specific EU-Turkey cooperation in the other functional areas would continue answering to mutual demands, – possibly even culminating in Turkey’s collaboration with the EU within different forms of security cooperation or continued migration framework as well as integration into the Energy Community –, these more norm-based aspects of the relationship could even move Turkey closer to membership under the leadership of a more democratically oriented government. Even if this did not happen, and if Turkey’s membership negotiations were to be formally suspended one day, the DA framework would still be maintained as a fallback option which would/could only then be accepted by Ankara as an alternative to membership (convergence). At the same time, it would also be welcome by critical EU capitals such as Berlin, Paris and Vienna as a legitimate substitute for Turkish accession.



In all likelihood, embedding the EU-Turkey relationship in a novel institutional framework represented by the DA is the constructive thing to do. Substantively, the sheer newness of this framework could by itself inject some dynamism and positivity into EU-Turkey ties long plagued by mutual mistrust (Yabancı, 2016). In turn, this would trigger enhanced cooperation which would already be deepened by a modernized CU and ongoing, more interest-based interactions in the other areas. In short, centered around the upgrading of the CU representing a starting point, the DA stands as the principal feasible alternative for revitalizing and deepening the EU-Turkey relationship.

3.2 The Components of the Dynamic Association

The DA is conceptualized as encompassing different pillars of cooperation and integration between the EU and Turkey. The upgraded CU constitutes the central component of this framework. If realized, the modernized CU would be the proof that the economy is the area that most captures convergent trends in the EU-Turkey relationship, as hypothesized by FEUTURE. As the DA’s most rules-based and institutional component, the upgraded arrangement would generate significant economic and functional value in EU-Turkey trade relations while undoubtedly necessitating rules-based cooperation and reforms on the part of Ankara geared towards ensuring CU’s smooth functioning and implementation.

First, substantively, the CU upgrade would extend the scope of the 1995 arrangement in industrial and manufactured agricultural goods to include the entire agricultural sector as well as services and public procurement. As predicted by the European Commission’s December 2016 Impact Assessment report (which accompanied its recommendation to the Council to open the negotiations for a CU upgrade with Ankara), the CU’s expansion would have a positive economic impact for both the EU and Turkey. In objective terms, the subsequent bilateral export gain is estimated to be 27.1 billion euros for the EU and 5 billion euros for Turkey. In turn, the real GDP and welfare gains would be higher for Turkey than the EU, calculated as an increase by 1.44% and 12.5 billion euros, respectively (as opposed to 0.04% and 5.4 billion for the EU) (European Commission, 2016: 29-30).¹⁸ In addition, increased trade due to removing more tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade would unleash competitive pressures and expand productivity growth as well as export sophistication for Turkish firms (Berulava et al., 2019). It is also expected that with the liberalization of services, European foreign direct investment to Turkey would be revitalized (Ibid.). Coupled with these potential economic gains, is the objective necessity to reform the 1995 CU agreement in view of the preferential free trade agreements (FTA) the EU has negotiated with third countries such as Japan and South Korea. These FTAs have created asymmetric consequences for Turkey since it had to accept the EU’s Common Commercial Policy as a result of its CU with the EU (Kirişçi and Bülbül, 2017).

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion on the expected economic benefits of an upgraded CU, see, Nas (2018) and Ülgen (2017).



Second, along the way, the modernization of the CU would require some key Turkish economic governance reforms in areas such as dispute settlement, public procurement, state aid and services regulation (Ülgen, 2017a). Undoubtedly, this would also necessitate the establishment of relevant institutional mechanisms to better manage the expanded economic relations (in lieu of the largely ineffective EU-Turkey Association Council) as well as enforce compliance on the part of Ankara. As such, if accomplished, the reformed CU would crucially bind Turkey to extend the rule of law and invest in legal regulatory frameworks free from undue governmental interference. Most importantly, at the current juncture of the EU-Turkey relationship where membership negotiations are deadlocked and the *acquis* conditionality is practically ineffective with backsliding observed in Turkish alignment with not only political but also some economic conditions (Nas, 2018, 56), the CU emerges as “more than a framework for advancing economic integration between Turkey and the EU” (Ülgen, 2017b, 12). Instead, it stands as “the only realistic rules-based framework that can underpin the EU’s future engagement with Turkey” (Ibid., 12). A key related expectation is that this could put in motion the EU’s “transformative power” over Ankara, “through which it could support the segment of Turkish society that increasingly attributes a normative role to the EU” (Arisan-Eralp, 2018).

Third, designed and implemented in a rules-based manner, the upgraded CU would also matter for serving as “the launching pad for Turkey’s progressive integration into the various facets of the single market” (Tocci, 2018). Consequently, this could even facilitate Turkey’s future membership into the EEA. Reversing this sequence would, however, be self-defeating and cause further conflict in the overall EU-Turkey relationship. For one thing, given that some 30 out of the 35 chapters of the *acquis* directly or indirectly concern the single market and membership negotiations are stalled, there is need for an alternative EU instrument to engage Turkey in its preparations for economic convergence with the EU. The rules-based mechanisms embedded in an upgraded CU would fill this gap. In addition, meeting the requirements of the single market *acquis* to obtain the mere carrot of EEA membership would simply be too costly for the Turkish government (Böhler et al., 2012, 17-18). In other words, the size of the promised carrot would be too small to compensate for the high domestic adjustment costs involved, thereby serving as a disincentive for Turkish compliance. Last but not least, at the current juncture, it is politically not feasible for Turkey to seek EEA membership even in the long run since this would first require Ankara’s EFTA membership and “there is little evidence to willingness of [Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway] to invite Turkey into their club” (Berulava et al., 2019: 7).

Beyond the upgraded CU, the dynamic association would also revitalize EU-Turkey relations in areas of mutual benefit. Thus, the institutional, rules-based core provided by the modernized CU is complemented by more pragmatically motivated and less rules-driven pillars where EU-Turkey cooperation in other areas (i.e., security, energy, migration) would advance on a more transactional basis, as comprehensively assessed above. Unlike the first, CU pillar, these additional pillars



would also be much less institutionalized in the sense that Turkey’s participation to EU-level decision-making in the policy areas concerned would either be very limited or non-existent, though not excluding the future possibility of convergence trends.

As far as security cooperation is concerned, even if Turkey’s full institutional integration in PESCO – as an example of security convergence – does not materialize due to a possible veto by Cyprus (the same way that Turkey’s membership in the European Defense Agency has already been rejected by this EU member state), there is significant potential and room for maneuver, enabling Turkey’s involvement in PESCO defense projects where it can bring “substantial added value” (Aydin-Düzgit, 2018). At the same time, EU-Turkey security cooperation would continue advancing outside of PESCO. After all, Turkey is one of the top participant countries to the EU’s military operations (within the context of the Common European Security and Defence Policy) particularly in the Balkans, ranking only below France, Germany and the UK in this endeavor (Müftüler-Baç, 2018, 13). Hence, these interdependencies, though arising on an ad hoc basis, are likely to sustain EU-Turkey cooperation in the security realm, constituting as such the more transactional elements of the DA.

EU-Turkey energy cooperation and even convergence would form another leg to the DA. For example, this could include Turkey’s integration into the European Energy Community, while necessitating Turkey’s adoption of “the relevant EU rules on energy, environment and competition” (Müftüler-Baç, 2017, 15), which would in turn depend on the opening of the Energy chapter of the acquis that is under Cyprus’ veto. Last but not least, closer cooperation in the area of migration would be another component of the DA. The principal angle here seems to be the sustainability of the 2016 EU-Turkey migration deal, which, as detailed above, remains high. To be sure, it could also be complemented by other dimensions including EU-Turkey cooperation towards visa liberalization for Turkish citizens traveling to the Schengen area (as well as, more specifically, facilitation of skilled migration from Turkey to Europe) and further Europeanization of Turkey’s asylum policy.

4. Challenges of Establishing a Dynamic Association

The multiple advantages of the EU-Turkey Dynamic Association aside, several factors impede or at least complicate its formation, in particular, with regards to the CU upgrade. First and foremost, among them is the political landscape both in Turkey and Europe. Turkey’s ongoing democratic backsliding which has institutionally stabilized around one-man-rule following the entry into force of executive presidency in June 2018, now broadly motivates the political conditionality attached to the CU negotiations.

Among the member states, Germany and Austria take the lead in officially supporting this conditionality. Yet, many other EU politicians and officials have also informally expressed reservations



regarding the upgrading of the CU given fears that this could be perceived as a “gift for Erdoğan” under the current circumstances.¹⁹ Furthermore, the existing opposition is likely to deepen if, as a result of the May 2019 European elections, the European Parliament further shifts to the right, empowering the Turkosceptic voices within the political groups with more populist/nationalistic leanings. In turn, this would effectively close the door to an upgraded CU since it would ultimately fail to receive the EP’s consent.

Another potential political obstacle in front of the CU upgrade is the political position of Cyprus, which is inevitably linked to the unresolved Cyprus dispute. It is likely that the Greek Cypriot administration will seek to use the upgrade negotiations as a source of political leverage against Ankara, based on the belief that it would be misplaced to modernize the CU when Turkey does not even apply the 1995 agreement in full, that is, refrains from extending the existing CU to the Republic of Cyprus, the only EU member state which it does not recognize (Alkan, 2017, 20). In fact, the Greek Cypriot Foreign Ministry has already expressed intent to this effect. Of course, if, to meet this longstanding Greek Cypriot and EU expectation, the Turkish government were to open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot planes and vessels, this could ease Nicosia’s reservations. It would also help lift the EU Council’s veto on eight accession negotiation chapters and Greek Cyprus’ blockage of another five chapters, effective since 2006 and 2009,²⁰ respectively. Yet, it is highly unlikely that the Turkish government will reverse course or change tack, at least not as long as EU measures to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot administration are not put in place.

Another challenge is how global actors like the USA would factor into the EU-Turkey relationship, in regards to the CU upgrade. Unlike it was the case during the 1990s and early 2000s,²¹ Turkey now lacks the active support of a crucial ally, the United States, for making progress in its relations with the EU. The Trump administration’s ongoing retreat from the liberal international order, and its insistence that the US play a less active role in propping up its related institutional mechanisms, clearly does not bode well for Ankara’s bid for a modernized CU.

Last but not least, there remain some institutional challenges on a more practical level, that is, directly impacting the “construction” phase of the DA. First, it is not clear whether Ankara would agree to differentially integrate into an association which would deny it a formal say in EU decision-making concerning the attendant issue areas. Given that Ankara has already suffered from a disadvantageous position throughout the years due to the asymmetrical nature of the 1995 CU

¹⁹ See, footnote 49 in Kirişçi and Toygür (2019, 12).

²⁰ The chapters that are suspended by the Council are (all relating to Turkey’s restrictions vis-à-vis Greek Cyprus): Free Movement of Goods, Right of Establishment and Freedom to Provide Services, Financial Services, Agriculture and Rural Development, Fisheries, Transport Policy, Customs Union, and External Relations. Cyprus-blocked chapters are: Freedom of Movement of Workers; Energy; Judiciary and Fundamental Rights; Justice, Freedom and Security; Foreign, Security and Defense Policy.

²¹ For a detailed discussion, see, Tocci (2012).



agreement (i.e., it had to accept the EU’s external commercial policy), it is highly likely that it will object to any similar arrangements. Therefore, the upgraded CU will need to be designed in a way to allow maximum voice to Ankara, at least when it comes to the EU’s decisions concerning the initiation and implementation of its free trade agreements (FTAs) with third countries. Second, in the current political context (i.e., given the Brexit debacle and focus on upcoming EU elections in May), Brussels itself may not be so enthusiastic about investing in developing a DA framework or engaging in any sort of institutional engineering effort as far as current relations with Turkey are concerned.

In short, several key challenges stand in the way of achieving a new institutional framework to embed the EU-Turkey relationship, particularly with respect to the upgraded CU. Foremost among them seems to be the conditionality associated with launching the negotiations for a reformed CU. Under Turkey’s current domestic circumstances, it is obvious that the EU Council will hold off on opening the CU agreement to negotiations. However, it will nonetheless be useful for the EU to formulate a priori benchmarks in order to objectify and define the substance of this political conditionality which has so far only generally been communicated in regards to big questions such as the rule of law and fundamental freedoms in Turkey. In so doing, Brussels can also rely (at least, partly) on the benchmarks that have previously been specified for the opening of Chapters 23 and 24 of the *acquis*, dealing with Judiciary and Fundamental Rights; and Justice, Freedom and Security, respectively. This sort of *ex ante* objectification of CU negotiations conditionality would serve to avoid the “moving target” problem that may arise in its absence, thereby eliminating, along the way, the risk of conditionality’s political manipulation at the hands of individual member states. In addition, Brussels would no longer be viewed as “offering a gift to Erdogan” since it would legitimately force Ankara to accept certain democratic reforms in order to reap the much needed trade and economic benefits of an upgraded CU.

The second critical challenge pertains to the negotiation phase of the CU, that is, the question of on what basis the negotiations would be conducted even if the initial political conditionality is met. EU capitals (notably, Berlin) may be hesitant to launch the negotiations fearing that the Turkish political leadership will instrumentalize the opening of CU negotiations for regaining the confidence of the international financial and investor community, but later renege on its commitments arising from a modernized CU. Hence, this would realize the EU’s apprehension about the CU serving as a gift to Erdoğan.

Yet, a creative approach to the CU negotiations may help assuage the EU’s fears and overcome the crisis of confidence vis-a-vis Ankara. This would consist of conducting “sequential negotiations”²² where the different components of the CU package would be negotiated incrementally as

²² We are indebted to Sinan Ülgen for developing the idea of sequential negotiations in regards to the CU upgrade. The following section largely relies on Ülgen’s original contribution to this question, developed in more length in FEUTURE Policy Recommendations.



well as conditionally. Accordingly, negotiations for a new topic would only begin after the parties have: a) reached agreement over the previous topic, b) implemented the agreed set of antecedent, mutual commitments. More specifically, once the sides decide over a CU item, they would close the negotiations on it by way of an Association Council decision which would at the same time give effect to the arising mutual commitments, albeit temporarily. The negotiated items and commitments would not become permanent unless a final agreement was reached over the full package within a period of three to four years after the start of the negotiations. If, by the end of this fixed deadline, there was no final agreement, the commitments would no longer be in force.

To be sure, under this framework, a critical issue will be the sequencing of the different negotiation items. The proposition here is that the parties would sequentially and alternately introduce a topic of priority to themselves. Hence, for instance, the EU may be interested in spearheading the talks with the dispute settlement regime. Once an agreement is reached over this item, the negotiations would move to Ankara’ priority issue of facilitating the conclusion of FTAs with third countries.

Table 2: Negotiations for the Customs Union Upgrade

Topic	Of priority interest to	Sequencing
Dispute Settlement Regime	EU	1
Facilitation of FTA negotiations with third countries	Turkey	2
Technical Barriers to Trade	EU	3
Road Transport Quotas	Turkey	4
State Aids Regime	EU	5
More Effective Consultations on EU Trade Policy	Turkey	6
Services Trade	Turkey + EU	7
Trade on Agricultural Products	Turkey + EU	8
Institutional Provisions (Dynamic Regulatory Alignment)	Turkey	9
Public Procurement	EU	10

Source: Own Compilation.

Ultimately, the envisaged sequential and conditional approach to negotiations and the resulting commitments would address the above-mentioned confidence issues on the EU’s side. At the same time, the prioritization of dispute settlement would help the EU deal with existing trade irritants at an early stage, since the subsequent progress of CU negotiations would be contingent on an initial agreement in this respect. On Ankara’s side, the mini deliverables introduced sequentially would help energize public interest in the EU, which seems to have understandably subsided due to the low credibility of Turkish accession. All in all, substantively speaking, both parties would remain committed to finalizing the negotiations upon realizing the incremental benefits of these deliverables, which would be reminiscent of the functionalist, spill-over logic that has historically motivated the process of European integration.



Conclusions

FEUTURE research has revealed that the multidimensional EU-Turkey relationship is remarkably resilient, despite the prevalence of conflict-inducing drivers notably in the mutually reinforcing areas of politics and identity as well as in the more functionally-driven sectors of security, energy and migration. With politics closing the door to Turkey’s EU membership in the foreseeable future, the most ideal scenario capturing EU-Turkey relations appears to be cooperation, falling short of convergence across all thematic dimensions with the exception of the economy where this potential seems relatively considerable pending Turkish political economy reforms. Yet, given the parallel persistence of conflict, FEUTURE concludes that “conflictual cooperation” will realistically define the relationship’s overall progress into the 2023 timeframe.

Against this backdrop, our synthesis of the FEUTURE research findings thus begs the question of what institutional form a conflictually cooperative relationship may eventually take. We have argued that an innovative relationship model – which we term a “dynamic association” – stands as the most feasible institutional option that promises to enhance cooperative and even convergent trends in EU-Turkey relations, focusing on the economy, but also including the three other functional areas of energy, migration and security. Negotiated in parallel to Turkey’s effectively stalled membership negotiations and thus allowing for diplomatic ambiguity regarding the endpoint of the proposed relationship, the DA arrangement promises to soothe political tension on both sides, which is much needed to initiate any sort of constructive engagement between the EU and Turkey at the current political juncture, but would not rule out other dimensions of functional cooperation.

Granted, energizing EU-Turkey relations as such is no easy task. Significant challenges prevail in terms of particularly upgrading the CU or achieving any sort of advancement in the relationship which will stretch beyond the realm of sheer transactionalism. Yet, considering the historically multifaceted and norm-driven nature of the relationship, it only makes sense for the parties to remain committed to this legacy. Brussels has been much criticized for putting values aside and effectively downgrading relations with Turkey to a strategic partnership following the 2015 refugee crisis (Saatçioğlu, 2019; Bechev and Tocci, 2015). Therefore, it may now be the time to rise to the challenge and invest in a functional, yet rules-based relationship with Ankara, in line with “principled pragmatism” guiding European foreign policy at large.



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ABOUT FEUTURE

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

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

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

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

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

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