TURKEY AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

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3. TURKEY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION: A SECURITY PERSPECTIVE

Suhnaz Yılmaz

1. The role of Turkey in Euro-mediterranean Security

The drastic changes that marked the end of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union dramatically altered the strategic calculus of the Western security system. Moreover, the developments in the global scene in the post-September 11 context have further defined the security perceptions of the main actors in the international arena. Thus, the radical change in the source and nature of threats gave way to the emergence of a new European Security architecture and NATO’s search for a new role, strategy, and organization compatible with the realities of this new era. While the European Union countries have been successful in achieving a “security community” within Europe, extending this zone of peace and cooperation to the conflict-laden neighboring areas such as the Balkans and the Middle East presents itself as an extremely challenging, if not an impossible task. Since Europe is not immune to the adverse effects of conflicts and deep socio-economic and political problems in the neighboring areas, promoting Euro-Mediterranean security becomes very important for both hard and soft security issues.

Within this context, this study aims to assess the role of Turkey in Euro-Mediterranean security. This analysis needs to be made at two levels. Hence, in this study, (i) more generally Turkey’s perceptions of the security threats in the Mediterranean region and (ii) more specifically Turkey’s approach to the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) will be critically analyzed.

2. Turkish Perceptions of the Security Threats in the Mediterranean Region

Turkey’s perceptions of the Mediterranean have been for a long time dominated by the Cold War mentality. Consequently, in parallel with the US strategic thinking, the Mediterranean was approached in the context of the East-West confrontation and the Middle East conflict. With the emerging gap between the American and European perceptions of the Mediterranean in the post-Cold war era, Turkish concerns shaped by the “hard-security” issues viewing the Mediterranean on an east-west axis rather than a north-south one, has been much closer to the American side. For instance, the Mediterranean is under the surveillance of different regional departments in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Separate divisions focusing on Europe, the Middle East and the Balkans deal with various issues related with this region. Thus, while the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation mainly focuses on the North-South interaction in the Mediterranean, Turkey’s strategic thinking has been dominated by the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In this context, the issues that affect Turkey’s vital national interests and shape its threat perceptions in this region can be categorized under three groups:

1) High Priority Issues for Turkey vital for its Strategic Interests:
   - Future of Iraq
   - Cyprus issue
   - Aegean problems

2) Issues of medium-term Interest with Broader Regional and Global Implications:
   - International terrorism
   - Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region
   - Arab-Israeli conflict
3) Issues of Medium and Long-term interest with low-levels of Threat Perception:
- Narcotics and human trafficking
- Energy Politics
- Water Problems

In this respect, the first group, which constitutes the high priority issues vital for Turkey’s strategic interests need special emphasis and further elaboration. On the issue of the future of Iraq, regardless of the merits of the disagreement among Turkey, the US, and a number of EU countries concerning the war in Iraq, in its aftermath ensuring a peaceful and stable Iraq is in the interest of all parties concerned. Post-conflict nation-building is an extremely complicated and complex process. While the US succeeded in achieving a swift military victory through its unilateralist approach, winning the peace and creating long-lasting stability will be the real challenge and it requires a multilateralist perspective. As the almost daily attacks on the coalition forces and the wave of terrorist acts indicate, the post-war restructuring of Iraq will indeed be a very difficult task. In tackling this challenge, in addition to genuinely and substantially involving Iraqis themselves in the governing process, a multilateralist approach is essential. Within this context, enhancing collaboration in all dimensions of the Turkey-US-EU triangle will be particularly helpful.

In the current stage, particularly after the bombing of one of the most revered sites of Shiite Islam, the gold-domed Askariya shrine in Samarra, the already existing tensions between the Sunnites and Shiites have been rapidly escalating and turning into violent sectarian confrontation with a death-toll of at least 138 people within the first few days of the bombing in reprisal attacks and counter-attacks. These developments, which significantly curtails the fragile attempts to create a national unity government that could lead Iraq to democratic stability has two critical implications. First, the rapidly escalating sectarian violence sends alarming signals for the possibility of a civil war along sectarian and ethnic lines, which could lead to enormous bloodshed and eventual failure of a united Iraq at the worst case and will certainly

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make the already arduous task of achieving a democratic, unified and stable Iraq extremely difficult at best. Second, the Shiite-Sunnite confron-
tation in Iraq would also have a destabilizing effect in an already volatile region, particularly in countries like Lebanon and Syria. Moreover, as a result of this confrontation if the Sunnites are marginal-
ized, it would lead to their further radicalization and as an indirect impact it would also further empower the Shiite Iran. Turkey, as a cou-
try bordering Iraq sees the developments in Iraq as a vital security con-
cern and tries to get actively involved in the diplomatic arena to recon-
cile the demands of different groups. Particularly due to Turkey’s prox-
imity and its own substantial Kurdish population, possible destabilizing impacts of a civil war in a neighboring country, as well as the possibili-
ty of the emergence of an independent Kurdish republic, is viewed with significant concern in Turkey. Hence, Turkey is extremely interested in preserving the stability and the unity of Iraq. In this respect, before developments spiral further in the wrong direction, it is essential that responsible Iraqi leaders from all religious groups try to exert a calming influence. In addition, a multilateral and pro-active diplomatic maneuvering involving not only the US, but the EU and especially regional powers such as Turkey and Egypt would be particularly useful.

Cyprus is another issue of high priority for Turkey, since tackling it is essential towards achieving its goal of EU membership. Yet, at the same time, it is also a highly sensitive domestic issue. Consequently, Turkey needs to pursue a pro-active policy in tackling the Cyprus dispute along the lines of a revived Annan plan. While it had its shortcomings and was not entirely satisfying for both sides, the Annan Plan presented a serious opportunity for the long-lasting Cyprus dispute to be resolved within the European context. Due to the rejection of the plan by the Greek Cypriot side, however, as stated by Alvaro de Soto, “A unique and historic chance to resolve the Cyprus problem has been missed.”

Greek-Cypriots, nevertheless, hold a strong trump card as a member of the EU. As clearly indicated by the Accession Partnership Report of November 2005, during the course of 2006 the Greek Cypriot pressure on Turkey increased. By offering asymmetric incentives and by admitting the Greek half of Cyprus as a fully fledged member state, despite its rejec-

tion of the unification plan, the EU found itself importing an old conflict. To the dismay of Brussels, the fortified Green Line dividing the two parts of Cyprus has now become an external EU border. In the difficult path towards reaching a sustainable solution to the Cyprus problem within the EU context, the UN and the US also has a critical role to play as a balancing factor.

Moreover, the long lasting tensions in the Aegean among Turkey and Greece on bilateral disputes regarding territorial waters, continental-shelf, airspace, militarization of the eastern Greek islands, flight information region, and the presence of highly contended "grey areas" due to lack of clear demarcation, further complicate the picture. In order to become a full-member of the EU, Turkey also needs to resolve these bilateral problems with Greece, in addition to the Cyprus problem. So, while currently there is no imminent threat of military confrontation neither with the Greek Cypriots, nor with Greeks, the significance of the above-mentioned issues for Turkey's EU membership, enhances the priority of the resolution of these problems for Turkey.

The issues in the second and third categories also have significant importance for Turkey, as well as having broader regional and global implications, especially in the medium and long-term. In addition to the threat from transnational and domestic terrorist networks, the Iranian attempts towards acquiring nuclear technology to develop weapons of mass destruction are particularly troublesome for Turkey. For instance, these concerns gave impetus to a recent initiative by the Turkish military to procure anti-ballistic missiles.

As for the Turkish perception of regional initiatives, while Turkey was an affiliate of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), it was a rather reluctant partner from the very beginning. The Turkish stance has been primarily due to its anxiety over the fact that Turkey would be confined to the position of a peripheral southern country inside the EMP. Turkish leaders emphasized that EMP could not be an alternative to Turkey as a

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critical actor for Euro-Mediterranean security. While Turkey has a rather limited engagement within the EMP framework, it also strongly favors cooperation on soft security issues, particularly on combating international terrorism and illegal immigration and drug trafficking. Moreover, with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, Turkey’s significance regarding energy politics as a critical transit route has been enhanced and due to its upstream position in the Euphrates and Tigris basin Turkey is already an influential player in the water politics of the region. As indicated by its response to the Iraqi crisis and the previous conflicts in the Balkans and to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Turkey also promotes a multilateral approach in dealing with regional conflicts.

3. Turkish Approach to the ESDP

After achieving considerable economic and political strength through the European integration within the framework of the European Union, NATO’s European allies are trying to reduce their dependence on the United States for their security and defense. This goal was manifested in the European Union’s efforts to create a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) that targets the emergence of an EU military capability complementary to, but autonomous from, NATO. European countries are aiming to achieve greater political authority and operational control, which would lead to a more equitable sharing of power and responsibilities. In describing the European perspective, a German diplomat said, “We are not asking for a free lunch. We will help pay for the lunch. However, we also intend to have more say in ordering the lunch.”

France has taken the lead in this attempt to end American hegemony over the security affairs of Europe, and it vehemently expresses the need to counterbalance US primacy in a unipolar world. France was joined in its demands first by Germany and then by Britain. In 1998, the British took an unprecedented step in support of its EU partners arguing that its essential for Europe to develop its own military capability. The United States has been rather suspicious of this process and remains reluctant to diminish its influence in transatlantic security arrangements and decision making. The major U.S. concern is over the development of an independent European Security system, as envisioned by France,

which could undermine NATO. Moreover, given the constraints on the
defense budgets of European countries, the United States remains
doubtful whether the European defense capabilities would be able to
match NATO and EU military goals of deployability, sustainability,
interoperability, flexibility, survivability, and lethality. The new
European security architecture would require larger national defense
budgets, as well as more collaborative European investment in defense.
One important issue, which affects the future of the Euro-
Mediterranean security, has been the Turkish approach to ESDP. In the
finalization process of the ESDP, Turkey has been very reluctant to give
up the rights that it has acquired within the WEU framework. The goal
of providing a security and defense mechanism for Europe resulted in
the creation of the Western European Union (WEU) in 1948. However,
with the establishment of NATO, it was sidelined and the United States
became the dominant actor shaping the transatlantic security relations
in the Cold War. In the post-Cold War era, the WEU, which was revived
in 1984, gave impetus to its efforts to forge a “European identity” for
security and defense. Since the mid-1990s the WEU has gone through
a significant institutional growth. With the inclusion of Greece in 1995,
its membership grew to ten. In addition to these full members of the
WEU, which were also members of NATO and the EU, the WEU had
six associate members: Turkey, Norway, Iceland, Czech Republic,
Poland, and Hungary. These countries were members of NATO, but
were not a part of the European Union. The WEU also had five
“observers” (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, and Sweden) that are
EU members, which for political reasons have preferred a limited
engagement. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw
Pact, ten more Eastern European and Baltic countries became affiliated
with the WEU as “associate partners” in 1994.
The WEU’s goal of achieving collective defense and security through
collaboration with NATO was complemented by the so-called
Petersberg tasks. According to a 1992 EU decision, these crucial tasks
included humanitarian and rescue missions, crisis management, peace-
keeping, and peace enforcement in areas endangering European securi-
ty. The major weakness of the WEU was that, due to its very limited
political power and operational capabilities, it was heavily dependent on
US decisions and military assets to conduct large-scale operations.
Particularly in terms of secure communications, data transfer technolo-
gies, precision all-weather capabilities, logistical and intelligence expert-
ise, the United States has a superiority over its allies. The war in Kosovo,
during which the United States had to conduct the two-thirds of the high precision operations by itself, was a clear indicator of European weaknesses at the strategic operational level. In 1999, when the EU decided to take over the WEU, it also set an ambitious goal of constituting a rapid reaction force of up to 60,000 troops by 2003. These forces would be available for deployment within sixty days and would remain in the crisis areas for at least one year in order to implement the Petersberg tasks. After assessing its force requirements through close interaction with NATO during the EU meeting in November 2000, the start up plans for the EU force were determined. Accordingly, the EU decided to create a pool of 100,000 troops, 400 aircraft, and 100 ships to be used for the rapid reaction force. One of the most controversial and sensitive issues for Turkey during this process was the redefinition of the future role of the non-EU members of NATO within the new ESDP framework.

During the Cold War strategic confrontation, Turkey served as a pivotal actor in NATO’s Southeastern flank. Turkey retains its strong interest in European Security arrangements and in ensuring itself a continuing preeminent role in NATO as a Southern Region country. Unlike the other EU member countries of this region (namely Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece), Turkey had a high stake in maintaining the institutional status quo, especially since the ESDP excludes Turkey from its decision-making mechanisms.

In strategic terms, an important implication of ESDP is that the EU member countries of the Southern Region, despite the recent differences over Iraq, try to converge their positions with the European mainstream in general. Hence, they are more reluctant to take positions which would be at variance with the other European countries. This might lead to further divergence on defense cooperation issues with the United States. On the other hand, due to its isolation regarding European security and defense issues, Turkey seeks closer cooperation with the US and Israel. This dilemma actually put Turkey into a rather difficult position during the Iraq war, since its stance was more closely aligned with the core European one as propagated by France and Germany.

As an associate member of the WEU, Turkey enjoyed participation in important WEU activities including participation in the bi-weekly meet-

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8 Hasan Köni, “Avrupa Savunması, ABD, ve Türkiye” Savunma ve Havacılık, vol.14, no.82, June 2000, p. 73.
ings of twenty-eight ambassadors, having five officers on duty in the
defense planning cell, and representation by the Turkish parliamentarians
during the bi-annual meetings of the WEU Assembly. Although Turkey
was excluded from decision-making in the WEU Council and from col-
lective defense close of the WEU treaty, a compromise was reached for
the activities of the Combined Jointed Task Forces (CJTFs). When the
utilization of NATO assets were required by the CJTFs, Turkey would
have the right to fully participate in the WEU decision-making. Moreover, the problem of the status of the WEU during a possible mili-
tary conflict between Turkey and Greece was resolved by the decision
that the collective defense clause would not be applicable in conflicts
between NATO members.

During the Washington NATO Summit in April 1999, the Strategic
Concept (defining NATO goals and strategies) was updated in order to
"equip the alliance for the security challenges and opportunities of the
21st century and to guide its future political and military develop-
ment." Within this context, Turkey reiterated the necessity of its agree-
ment for any decision of the NATO Council regarding the use of alliance
assets for European purposes. Consequently, the Turks enforced a revi-
sion in the formulation of NATO’s New Strategic Concept, in which this
right is implicitly expressed by reference to a case-by-case basis for
alliance decisions. Accordingly, “arrangements for the release, monitor-
ing, and return or recall of NATO assets and capabilities” were to be
“made available, on a case-by-case basis to support WEU-led opera-
tions.” Moreover, NATO-EU relations were to be structured around
already existing mechanisms between NATO and the WEU.

During the December 2000 Nice Summit of the EU, the changes in EU
decisions vis-a-vis the Washington Summit of 1999 caused a major dis-
appointment for Ankara. Not only were there no references to shaping
the new security and defense strategies according to the previous mech-
anisms of the WEU, but also the non-EU members of NATO had been
totally excluded from the decision-making structures. In 1995, the WEU
Council of Ministers had decided that in case of a complete integration
of the WEU into the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), “the

10 Heinz Kramer, A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States,
12 Ibid.
participation of associate members in the further development of the ESDP would have to be maintained and even improved vis-à-vis their present status through appropriate arrangements to ensure their involvement and association with the CFSP."13 However, due to the Union's categorical refusal to allow the non-members to participate in its decision-making process, even on a partial basis, how such a goal could be achieved is unclear. Consequently, Ankara argued that non-EU members of NATO should not automatically be expected to comply with political decisions that have been taken without their participation.

Among the WEU associate member countries, Turkey has been the country most adversely affected by this restructuring process. Turkey is located in a very volatile area. According to the reports of the French Defense Institute and the International Strategy Institute in Switzerland, Turkey is surrounded by thirteen of the sixteen “hot spots” (i.e. Kosovo, Syria, Cyprus, Chechnya), which are prone to the outbreak of conflicts that could affect European security.14 Being quite distant to the hot spots, Norway agreed to participate just in the decision-shaping mechanisms. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic also went along with the EU decision since they were to acquire their full-membership status in the EU in the near future. The fact that these former Warsaw pact countries were granted European Union membership before Turkey and would get more influence in European security affairs than a long-standing NATO ally, has been also rather exasperating for the Turks. In the end, Ankara's adamant insistence “led to a collapse of the NATO consensus on command sharing and planning arrangements with the EU in December 2000.”15

Turkish concerns were expressed by Admiral Nahit Senogul as “(1) danger of the recent EU initiative to undermine the impact of NATO and the Transatlantic link and to erode NATO’s deterrence power; and (2) the possibility of EU-initiated operations and other activities to adversely affect Turkey’s security.”16 Within this framework, Turkey was particularly concerned over the possibility that in case of escalating tensions in the Aegean or in Cyprus, intense pressure from Greece may result in a

confrontation between the European Rapid Reaction Force and Turkey. Consequently, to achieve a viable compromise, Turkey had to be assured that such a scenario would be avoided. Turks argued that as the EU defense policy takes its final shape, giving non-EU NATO countries “an opportunity to clarify and to decide on a case-by-case basis how they interpret the collective defense implications of the NATO treaty for EU-led security operations” became essential.

The long-lasting deadlock between Turkey and Greece served as a stumbling block for the ESDP. This deadlock was finally resolved through a compromise during the Copenhagen Summit in December 2002. The Council decided that “the ‘Berlin plus’ agreements and the implementation thereof will apply only to those EU member states which are also either NATO members or parties to the ‘Partnership for Peace,’ and which have consequently concluded bilateral security arrangements with NATO.” Thus, by excluding Cyprus and Malta from EU military operations conducted using NATO assets, a breakthrough was achieved in providing EU access to NATO capacities and assets. The Union will now be permitted to utilize NATO logistics and have access to the NATO planning base SHAPE. NATO secretary General Lord Robertson underlined the importance of this breakthrough by stating, “This is a milestone in the history of relations between NATO and the EU.”

This development serves as a critical turning point for ESDP, which will enable the Union to have a stronger capacity for crisis management and will also contribute significantly to the enhancement of cooperation regarding Euro-Mediterranean security. In this respect, Turkey has already played an active role in all EU led peace-keeping operations since 2003, with the exception of Congo. Thus, Turkey has significantly contributed to the multinational efforts of peacekeeping in the Balkans, Somalia, and most recently in Afghanistan. For instance, in 1995 Turkey has joined UNPROFOR with 1450 troops. Moreover, it participated to the NATO's IFOR and SFOR with 1200 troops and also contributes to police operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. In addition to these, in June 2002 Turkey has assumed the command of NATO forces in Afghanistan, namely ISAF (International Security and Assistance Force), for nine months and resumed their command once again in 2005.

Turkey has a critical role to play for the enhancement of peace and sta-

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bility in its volatile region as a pivotal regional power with substantial military capabilities. However, it can play a more constructive and effective role, as a benign rather than a coercive power, if it successfully fulfills four challenging tasks by (1) consolidating its democracy; (2) maintaining good neighborly relations; (3) achieving a balance in its troublesome EU-Turkey-US triangle and (4) operating within a European framework. Turkey’s role in the Euro-Mediterranean security is clearly defined by its long-lasting relations within the Transatlantic context and its goal of EU membership. On both fronts, Turkey has a challenging period ahead, during which it needs to overcome numerous domestic and international obstacles.

4. Concluding Remarks

In the post-Cold war period, there a number of emerging security and cooperation mechanisms in the Mediterranean particularly within the NATO and the EU framework. It is crucial that there is a high degree of coordination and complementarity among them, which is currently lacking. Moreover, for a security arrangement that would enhance Western security without causing major fault-lines in the NATO alliance, EU operational objectives and strategic goals also need to take into account the aims, contributions, and strategic significance of the non-EU participants. Turkey has clearly indicated through its contributions during the conflicts in the Balkans and in Afghanistan that it has a great potential to contribute to the military and non-military missions. In that respect, Turkish membership to the EU could serve as a great asset for the ESDP framework. For instance, in a volatile area like the Balkans (where Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia have become hot spots) Turkey plays a significant role in peacemaking and peacekeeping operations. Within this framework, in the future a Turkish-Greek-Italian collaborative effort supported by the ESDP and NATO might serve as the driving force for the establishment of a long-lasting peace in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean.

As for more specific policy recommendations relating to Turkey:
1) There has to been an early start and significant investment on technical cooperation on bringing Turkey up to Schengen standards in border controls. Since Turkey has quite porous and long borders adjacent to
conflict zones, securing these borders will also significantly curtail illegal migration and narcotics trafficking.

2) There can be enhanced collaboration with Turkey on further peacekeeping and police training missions in the Balkans.

3) Turkey, which traditionally relies more heavily on the US and Israeli for its armaments procurements, could more actively cooperate with the leading countries of the EU in the field of armaments collaboration.

4) On important diplomatic issues concerning neighboring regions, such as Iraq and the Caucasus, Turkey and the EU countries can align their positions more closely. Moreover, on culturally and religiously sensitive issues concerning the Muslim world, such as the most recent cartoon controversy more specifically, but regarding the status of Euro-Muslims and Christian-Muslim dialogue in general, Turkey could play an active role in facilitating the channels of dialogue.

5) While the issues of high security, such as Arab-Israeli conflict and developments in Iraq, dominate the Euro-Mediterranean agenda, economic development and human development through education are essential for achieving a more peaceful region, as well as for preventing important problems such as illegal immigration, which ranks high on the European agenda. So far, the Barcelona process, while facilitating bi-lateral links between the EU and individual countries with varying degrees of success, have falled short of achieving regional networks of cooperation and dialogue through establishing stronger ties and deeper understanding among regional powers. This is one area that needs further attention. In this respect, there can be an intensified track-two diplomacy among regional actors and the EU, increased civil society interaction, and regular (and sometimes emergency meetings) among regional leaders and the EU representatives assessing critical issues concerning high and low security issues in the Euro-Med region. In this context, Turkey, Italy and Greece has the potential to act as pivotal countries facilitating channels of dialogue and cooperation initiatives among different parties.

6) Finally, there can be an accelerated process of Second Pillar integration for Turkey within the framework of Common Foreign and Security Policy. However, it should be made very clear to all parties that this would not lead to any kind of a privileged partnership status for Turkey and would in no way endanger its full-membership prospects. On the contrary, it can serve as a critical stepping stone highlighting the common interests and critical collaboration areas for both parties.
The developments concerning Turkey’s integration to the Union have also important repercussions for the Cyprus issue and Turkish-Greek disputes over the Aegean, as well as Turkey’s role in the Euro-Mediterranean security. European powers require a politically and economically stable neighborhood to supplement their security architecture. By excluding Turkey they would be missing a major pillar in building this edifice, thus dooming it to collapse. For the enhancement of European security, Mediterranean cooperation, and bilateral relations between Turkey and Greece, Turkey’s integration to the Union play a critical role. However, despite the initiation of the accession negotiation process on October 3, 2005, the prospects of Turkish membership and the path ahead still seem ambiguous and complicated. Moreover, the deepening transatlantic rift in the aftermath of the Iraq war places Turkey in an even more difficult situation. Hence, both the transatlantic and the EU fault-lines constitute a major challenge for Turkey.

The *European Security Strategy* concludes that, “This is a world of new dangers but also of new opportunities. The European Union has the potential to make a major contribution, both in dealing with the threats and in helping realize opportunities. An active and capable European Union would make an impact on a global scale. In doing so, it would contribute to an effective multilateral system leading to a fairer, safer and more united world.”19 However, the recent developments, marked by the uncertain future of the European constitution, coupled by the dynamics of latest wave of enlargement, signal an alarming halt to the momentum towards an “ever loser Union.” These factors will also make the consensus towards a common foreign and security policy more difficult. Consequently, the EU needs a serious introspection as to how to shape the future of the Europe Union and the result of this pain-staking process will not only determine the future of Turkey-EU relations and the Mediterranean security, but also the very success of the European project.

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