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MAPPING DYNAMICS AND TESTING SCENARIOS

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Politics and Turkey-EU Relations: Drivers from the Southern and Eastern Neighbourhoods

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Abstract

Since the early 2000s, major transformations in the Southern Mediterranean political landscape have undeniably tested the limits of the EU and Turkey's foreign policies. To a lesser extent, drivers from the eastern neighbourhood have strained, and in some instances, strengthened relations. Overall, drivers from the southern neighbourhood are likely to lead to pragmatic cooperation, while drivers from the eastern neighbourhood, although less influential, have the potential to lead to conflict as well as cooperation in areas of mutual interest. For the foreseeable future, convergence is clearly off the table, and no driver from the Eastern or Southern neighbourhood is likely to change this.

Özet

2000'li yılların başından bu yana, Güney Akdeniz'in siyasi manzarasındaki büyük dönüşümler AB ve Türkiye'nin dış politikala kapasitelerini inkar edilemez bir şekilde sınamıştır. Daha az ölçüde, doğuda kalan komşu ülkelerle ilişkiler, bazı durumlarda gerginleşirken, diğer bazı durumlarda ise güç kazanmıştır. Genel olarak, Güney Akdeniz ülkeleriyle olan ilişkiler daha pragmatik bir işbirliğine zemin hazırlarken, , doğudaki komşu ülkerle olan ilişkiler, daha az etkili olmakla birlikte, çatışmaya ve ortak ilgi alanlarında işbirliğine neden olma potansiyeline sahiptir. Yakın gelecekte bir yakınlaşma süreci olası değil gibi görünmekte iken, Doğu ve Güney Akdeniz ülkeleriyle olan ilişkiler bu durumda etki etmeyecektir.

Contents

1. Introduction

A number of events, movements, and trends in the eastern and southern neighbourhood either drive or have the potential to drive Turkey-EU relations. From the potential for liberal mass movements and conservative or populist counter-movements to Russian interventionism in the neighbourhood and the conflict in Syria, the EU and Turkey's relationship are sure to shift, and be pushed and pulled toward conflict and cooperation depending on how these trends develop.

The goal of this report is three-fold. Through providing historical background on the main issues in the region which have played a role in EU-Turkey relations, the paper provides background on trends likely to shape relations. Second, through discussing a number of unlikely events, wildcards, which nonetheless are within the realm of possibility, the paper provides a basis for policy makers to think about unlikely events which would have significant impacts on relations. Third, the paper makes a humble attempt to forecast the likely direction Turkey-EU relations will be pushed by the shared eastern and southern neighbourhoods. The paper considers three scenarios: cooperation, conflict, and convergence. While at project outset, convergence, defined as Turkey integrating into the EU, appeared to remain on the table, events that have taken place since preclude it from serious discussion. However, many drivers in the shared neighbourhood encourage cooperation. However, numerous drivers also have the potential for conflict.

Drivers in the southern neighbhorhood are generally more likely to lead to cooperation, given Turkey and the EU's shared interests. In the eastern neighbourhood in contrast, Turkey's smaller amount of skin in the game, particularly when compared with the EU, are more likely to lead to conflict. However, the drivers in this region are less clear cut, and generally also have some potential for cooperation. Hence, overall, the drivers in the shared neighbourhood are likely to lead to continued pragmatic cooperation, and to a lesser extent strain relations through conflict.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the first section, a historical account of drivers from the southern neighbhorhood are given in the context of the two events which have shaped development in recent years – the Iraq war and the Arab Uprisings – as well as a consideration of their aftermaths. In the subsequent section, a historical overview of drivers from the eastern neighbourhood are provided. The conclusion of each driver section contains a trend analysis i.e. a discussion of likely outcomes in the near term, together with a forecast of whether the driver is likely to lead to conflict or cooperation. The report concludes with a summary of scenarios.

2. Drivers in the Southern Neighbourhood

Since the early 2000s, major transformations in the Southern Mediterranean's political landscape have undeniably tested the limits of Brussels and Ankara's foreign policies and substantially affected their relations. While most drivers have put the EU and Turkey at loggerheads following the Arab uprisings, the security threats some engendered have made cooperation the most likely scenario.

2.1. The Iraq War and its aftermath

Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US-led invasion of Iraq that dislodged Saddam Hussein marked the beginning of a protracted conflict that has had immense political ramifications and challenged the regional *status quo*.

At the domestic level, the most immediate consequence of the war was a surge in sectarianism in an already communally fragmented country. The US-led regime change disempowered the *Sunni* ruling minority that had governed Iraq since its independence and allowed the *Shia* majority to dominate the country. By 2006, growing intra-sectarian violence turned the conflict into a civil war.

Another consequence of the Iraq war has been the increased prominence of the Kurds as political and paramilitary actors. The 2005 Constitution that established a federal system in Iraq provided the Northern Iraqi Kurds with a Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and formalized their *de facto* autonomy acquired as an unintended consequence of the First Gulf War (Noi, 2012: 22). Furthermore, Kurdish politicians have been elected as presidents of Iraq[1] for the first time in the country's history, and the Kurdish *Peshmerga*, who played a key role in the arrest of Saddam Hussein, were the only militia that was not banned by the interim Iraqi government in 2004 (Lundgren, 2007: 112).

The de-Ba'athification[2] process left Iraq with political and security vacuums and further contributed to weakening the state's central authority. The eventual re-formation of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in 2008 coincided with the first term of Shia leader Al-Maliki's Premiership, whose growingly exclusionary and nepotistic policies further polarized the country's politics (Parker, 2012). Al-Maliki's full control over a politicized military exacerbated political instability, and he has been held responsible for the 2014 military defeat of Mosul against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Gaub, 2016: 22). Together, these factors gradually led the country to the verge of collapse.

At the regional level, the conflict revived Iranian-Saudi rivalry – with Iran providing military aid to the *Shia* militias and Saudi Arabia allegedly supplying the *Sunni* insurgency with arms and money

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[1] Jalal Talabani, founder and leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) was President until 2014. PUK co-founder Fuad Masum replaced him.
[2] De-Ba'athification was a series of legal and administrative measures following the fall of Saddam Hussein that purged the public sector of those affiliated with the Ba'ath party.

(Olson, 2007: 79). The Iraq war polarized the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) – one of the least integrated regions in the world – and marked what observers have coined 'the New Arab Cold War' with the predominantly *Shia* Iranian-led 'Resistance bloc' including the *Alawi* regime in Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas opposing the pro-Western Saudi-led *Sunni* 'Moderate bloc' consisting of most Sunni Arab regimes (Valbjørn and Bank, 2012).

For Turkey, the Iraq War was an opportunity for the newly elected AKP to implement its 'strategic depth' doctrine and 'zero-problems with neighbors' approach, engineered by academic-turned-politician Ahmet Davutoğlu.[3] From the outset, the Turkish parliament's opposition to support the US-led coalition constituted, a major foreign policy shift as Turkey had traditionally aligned its position to its American NATO ally (Gözen, 2005: 74). While wary of the impact an autonomous Kurdistan could have on its own territorial integrity, Turkey also shifted its policy towards Northern Iraq from containment to engagement and recognized the legitimacy of the KRG (Grigoriadis, 2010: 7). According to the AKP's logic, this new relationship was essential to attract the KRG support in Turkey's fight against the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), which had unilaterally broken the ceasefire with Turkey (Cengiz, 2011: 71). With the political and security threats it generated, the Iraq War also marked Turkey's rapprochement with the Gulf Cooperation Council, which found itself in dire need of *Sunni* allies to counter the regional influence of the '*Shia* crescent' and perceived Ankara as a "valuable bulwark against Iran" (Harunoglu, 2016). As a result, the GCC and Turkey institutionalized their multilateral cooperation with the 2008 signing of a Memorandum of Understanding that elevated Turkey to the GCC's first strategic partner outside the Gulf (ibid).

Beyond the region, the Iraq War also polarized Europe between an 'Atlanticist bloc', spearheaded by the United Kingdom (UK) and comprising most of the new members and candidates from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) that supported the US intervention and a 'Gaullist bloc', led by France and Germany, who strongly opposed it (Crowe, 2003). Divisions among the 'Big three' – France, Germany, and the UK – made it impossible to reach a unified EU stance on the war and highlighted the Common Foreign and Security Policy's (CFSP) weaknesses. While Iraq represented one of the biggest foreign policy fallouts, it nevertheless had the merit of acting as a wake-up call for the EU to adopt a coherent vision on foreign policy matters, which resulted in the drafting of the first European Security Strategy (Everts and Keohane, 2003: 183).

In the context of EU-Turkey relations, Turkey's out-of-war position converged with Germany and France's positions. The war therefore triggered a positive rapprochement between Turkey and the EU with Chancellor Schröder and President Chirac subsequently making declarations in favor of Turkey's EU membership (Gözen, 2005: 87). Another political implication of the war was Turkey's move away from the US hard power approach to international relations toward the

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[3] For a thorough analysis of the AKP's 'strategic depth' doctrine, please see Murinson (2006)

'Europeanization' of its foreign policy and ensuing alignment to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) declarations (Kardas, 2011: 38).

2.2.   The Arab Uprisings

The 2010-2011 popular uprisings arguably represent one of the most important political transformations since the end of the Cold War. In Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, the presidents were ousted by their domestic constituencies whereas external intervention played a decisive role in the outcome of the upheavals in Libya, Bahrain and Syria.[4] Six years from the outbreak, only Tunisia seems to be moving toward democracy while a coup d'état reversed Egypt's transition from authoritarianism. Worse yet, Libya, Syria and Yemen have plunged into civil war, and currently face the risk of state collapse alongside Iraq.

For the EU, these events came as an embarrassment in light of its past policies toward the Mediterranean. With its normative emphasis on the EU's fundamental values, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in principle, conditioned EU assistance to its partners' commitment to governance reforms as a means to promote a ring of 'peaceful, stable and prosperous' neighbours. In practice, however, the ENP rewarded autocratic rulers for cooperation on migration and security matters, and arguably contributed to the governance issues that precipitated the Arab uprisings (Noutcheva, 2015; Hollis, 2012). Not particularly vocal at the outset of the protests, only after the fall of Mubarak did the EU recognize the shortsightedness of its Mediterranean policies.

While the uprisings presented the EU with an opportunity to adopt a more value-based approach and regain credibility as a democracy promoter, they took place at a time the EU was implementing its new diplomatic architecture which the Lisbon Treaty introduced (Pierini, 2017). Poorly equipped to respond to these bottom-up political transformations and without the capacity to act swiftly due to internal divisions, Brussels instead concentrated on refining policy instruments and undertook a review of the ENP, ultimately offering more attractive assistance packages to Arab partners engaging in 'deep democracy' (Balfour, 2012).

Unlike the EU, which adopted a low-profile, Turkey rapidly sought a central role in the democratic transitions of countries where it could promote its own experience and increase its influence (Ayata, 2015: 85). At the same time, it initially remained hesitant in supporting regime change when this could jeopardize Ankara's economic and political interests as was the case with Bahrain, Syria and Libya (Onis, 2012: 46). Turkish then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the first leader to call for Hosni Mubarak's resignation and one of the first foreign leaders to visit post-upheaval Egypt, Tunisia and Libya in September 2011 – despite his initial opposition to a military intervention

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[4] In Libya, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operations contributed to the fall of Colonel Gaddafi while the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) coalition silenced the Bahraini's unrest and Russia's 2015 military intervention in Syria possibly maintained the Assad regime in power (Schlumberger, 2016: 35).

against the Gaddafi regime (Gumuscu, 2016: 43). [5]

The Arab uprisings, unlike the Iraq War, marked Turkey's estrangement from the EU. While the events provided an opportunity to reinforce EU-Turkey relations, Brussels and Ankara have at best cooperated on an ad-hoc basis, pursuing parallel and sometimes conflicting policies. This lack of cooperation in the wake of the uprisings has in part resulted from the state of their relationship. Turkey has traditionally been reluctant to address foreign policy issues outside the EU summits and the accession framework out of fear it would comfort the Turkoskeptics in the idea that Turkey is a 'privileged partner' rather than a candidate country (Karacasulu and Karakir, 2014: 203).[6]

For its part, the EU has long recognized Turkey's strategic importance in the MENA but progressively excluded Ankara from participating in EU summits[7] as powerful member states, particularly France, perceived Turkey as a competitor in their spheres of influence (Wódka & Kuźmicz, 2013: 128). A telling example in this regard is the exacerbation of the clash between France and Turkey over the military intervention in Libya by Sarkozy's decision not to invite Erdoğan to the March 2011 Paris Summit (Ibid.). Furthermore, the EU bloc did not consult Ankara on the May 2011 ENP review since Turkey was "on a different page" as it maintained strong ties with Iran, Syria and Libya (Barysch, 2011). Therefore, EU-Turkey interactions at the beginning of the uprisings were generally conflictual.

The quest for regional hegemony in the Middle East

The Arab uprisings ultimately dealt a fatal blow to the regional balance of power maintained until recently by the so-called 'Camp David Order' and re-ignited Saudi-Iranian rivalry. Yet, the emergence of Turkey and Qatar as key contenders for regional leadership undermined Saudi Arabia's intent to maintain a Sunni coalition to counterbalance Iran's influence in some ways.

The successes of the AKP's proactive policy that led to major improvements in Turkey's relations with its neighbours. This is shown with the country's status as the GCC's first non-Arab strategic partner, the mediator role it played between Syria and Israel, Hamas and Fatah or the different Iraqi groups, and its stance against Israel after the *Mavi Marmara* incident. All this gave Turkey considerable political leverage to place itself as an order-setter in the region at a time it came to be considered the "biggest winner of the Arab Spring" (Kahraman, 2011: 705; Telhami, 2011).

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[5] The AKP's proactive policy led to major improvements in Turkey's relations with its Arab Neighbours particularly the country's status as the GCC's first non-Arab strategic partner, the mediator role it played between Syria and Israel or Hamas and Fatah and its stance against Israel after the *Mavi Marmara* incident (Kahraman, 2011: 705).

[6] In the past, the chairman of the European Parliament committee on Foreign Affairs suggested including Turkey in the Neighbourhood Policy as a 'privileged partner' and former French President Nicolas Sarkozy suggested the Union for the Mediterranean as an alternative to Turkey's EU bid (Servantie, 2015).

[7] "Until 2005, Turkish prime ministers used to attend EU summits on a regular basis, but in recent years Turkish politicians have been excluded from participating in EU bodies" (Wódka & Kuźmicz, 2013: 128)

Be it in Libya, Syria, Yemen or Iraq, Turkey and the three other regional powers logistically, financially or diplomatically supported local and transnational actors sharing the same political affinities, because they either perceived the political transformations as a threat to their own regime or as a means to expand their influence in the region. As events unfolded, Iran's ascendency over the region grew as diverging interests – as well as Turkey and Qatar's increasingly assertive foreign policies – fissured the shaky 'Sunni coalition'.[8] This power struggle has given rise to the current and most severe GCC-crisis since the first Gulf War, which has seen Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE sever diplomatic relations with Qatar. Caught in a power game that was not its own, Turkey, whose foreign policy positions have converged with Qatar's, has become isolated.

As evidenced by the sudden drop in Turkey's alignment to the EU's CFSP declarations from 74 to 48 percent between 2010 and 2011[9], Ankara's quest for regional hegemony at the beginning of the uprisings has undeniably been a prominent driver leading Turkey to move away from the EU's MENA policies, which the Turkish leadership considered "ineffective and ham-fisted" (Grabbe and Ülgen, 2010: 5).

The rise (and fall?) of the Islamists

Initially not at the forefront of the revolts, the Islamists emerged as the winners of the 'Arab Spring'. Salafi, Muslim Brotherhood (MB), and kindred parties all achieved unprecedented electoral success or became dominant opposition forces in countries that experienced transition or new political openings (Mandeville, 2013: 183).[10] The most significant victories were those of the Tunisian and Egyptian Islamists but their rise to power was as swift as their downfall.[11]

The Islamists' rise, particularly Mohamed Morsi's, was met with both enthusiasm and apprehension among regional players. For Qatar and Turkey, which had developed close relations with the MB and Hamas or shared strong ideological affinities with these movements, it was perceived as a golden opportunity to boost their regional status. Qatar became the largest aid donor to Morsi's Egypt and the second largest financial backer of the Syrian opposition (Saleh, 2013). During his 2011

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[8] For more on the fragility of regional alliances in the MENA see Soler I Lecha (2017)

[9] See European Commission (2010: 95; 2011: 106) Progress Reports on Turkey

[10] In Libya, both the MB and Salafi formed political parties and entered the 2012 parliamentary election. The Justice and Construction MB party came in second, but became the strongest bloc through strategic alliances (Glenn, 2016). In Yemen, the MB-affiliated Islah Party was seen as "the main hikacker of the revolution and primary beneficiary of the transitional process" (Bonnefoy, 2015). Through its position within the Syrian National Council, the Syrian MB has been a leading force in the Syrian opposition (Lefevre, 2015). In Morocco, a country that remained relatively unaffected by the uprisings, the Islamist Justice and Development party won the 2011 parliamentary election and its leader was appointed Prime Minister.

[11] Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi was deposed by a popularly-backed coup d'état in July 2013, orchestrated by then-Defense Minister Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. The MB organization was declared a 'terrorist group'. In January 2014, *Ennahda* Tunisian Prime Minister, Ali Laarayeh, resigned on behalf of his government several days after signing Tunisia's new constitution. Nevertheless, the party remains an important actor in Tunisian politics.

'Arab Spring tour', Erdoğan promoted the Turkish experience as a successful democratic transition to emulate, and provided financial assistance, technical expertise and civil society support to countries in transition (Bengio, 2012: 58). The foreign policy alignment of Turkey, Egypt and Qatar, referred to as 'the Muslim Brotherhood crescent' by the King of Jordan, increasingly troubled some of the Gulf monarchies that feared local Islamists would be emboldened and backed by the rising regional powers (Başkan, 2016: 140).

Unsurprisingly, Saudi Arabia and the UAE welcomed the July coup. The pair isolated Turkey and Qatar by downgrading their economic and diplomatic relations with the countries in retaliation for their patronage of the Islamist parties.[12] The coup therefore seriously compromised Turkey's zero-problems foreign policy. While the country had previously mastered mediation initiatives, it found itself an interested party rather than an honest broker after Egypt accused Turkey of interfering in its domestic affairs and later expelled the Turkish ambassador (Gumuscu, 2016: 46). Erdogan's relentless diatribes against the coup, the crackdown on the protests, the Gulf monarchies' support to el-Sisi and the West's inaction, further alienated Turkey's allies and ended the country's bid for regional leadership.

Prior to the uprisings, the EU selectively engaged with liberal actors, and was reticent to engage with Islamists (Tocci and Cassarino, 2011: 6). After the victory of *Ennhada* and Morsi, however, the EU opted for pragmatic engagement and normalized relations with the Islamists. However, following the military crackdown on pro-Morsi supporters, the EU was criticized for not taking steps against the regime. Some suggested that many European capitals were reassured that the military had seized power (Greenfield, Hawthorne and Balfour, 2013: 26).

The rise of the Islamists enabled Ankara to conduct an increasingly assertive foreign policy and indirectly drove the country further away from the EU. While the coup in Egypt did not engender outright conflict, it became a source of tension between Turkey and the EU. Erdoğan slammed the EU for its inaction and accused Brussels of applying double standards in reference to Brussels' strong reaction against Erdoğan's handling of the Gezi protests.[13]

Sectarianism and State Collapse

With the Arab Spring, sectarianism diffused from Iraq across the region at an unprecedented scale. In the most identity-fragmented countries (Libya, Syria, Yemen), intra-state sectarianism, stirred by the regional powers, morphed into civil wars and created weak or failed states (Hinnebusch, 2016).

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[12] Qatar paid a dear price for its criticism of Egypt's decision to outlaw the MB as it led Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) and Saudi Arabia (KSA) to temporarily recall their ambassadors from Doha on the grounds that Qatar was interfering in other countries' domestic affairs and supported terrorist groups (Başkan, 2016: 126). Both Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E froze Turkey out from regional diplomacy and annulled investments. The U.A.E withdrew its envoy from Ankara (Cook, 2017: 5).

[13] "The European Union disregarded its own values once again by not calling the army's coup a coup. I want them to read the EU acquis communautaire. Democracy does not accept double standards" (Hurriet Daily News, 2013).

In the contest for regional dominance, Syria has been the main battleground of the Iranian-Saudi proxy war, and Turkey's most serious foreign policy challenge.

Erdoğan did not immediately call for al-Assad to step down, instead encouraging him to undertake reforms. When this failed, Erdoğan increased support to the opposition, allowing both the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian National Council to organize in Turkey, and pursuing an open-border policy toward the refugees fleeing the conflict (Başkan, 2016: 91). Wrongly assuming al-Assad would fall and be replaced by a friendly regime, Erdoğan shifted to actively promoting regime change but underestimated the West's reluctance to intervene in another costly conflict and al-Assad's strong connections with his Russian and Iranian patrons (Öniş, 2014: 211).

At home, the opposition slammed the government's Syria policy, calling it sectarian and expansionist (Aras, 2017: 7). Furthermore, the ongoing inflow of Syrian refugees heightened tensions between Turkey's communities and indirectly contributed to sectarian violence against the *Alevi* minority (Tuğal, 2016: 184).[14]

At the regional level, Turkey progressively found itself involved in supporting Sunni movements across the MENA (Harunoglu, 2016). Ankara's increased interventionism not only in Syria but also in Iraq put the country on the brink of war with al-Assad and severely harmed relations with Russia, Iran, and al-Maliki's Iraq (Taşpınar, 2012). Meanwhile, Turkey only mended fences with Riyadh, offering its support to the Saudi-led coalition against the *Houthi* takeover in Yemen, being further engulfed into the Saudi-Iranian sectarian battle (Tuğal, 2016: 189).[15]

This post-upheaval sectarian surge has paved the way for the rise of terrorism and irregular migration flows, making it increasingly a source of concern for the EU. Failing to undertake a coherent approach, Brussels initially adopted a sanctions regime, but has remained on the sidelines of the core diplomatic talks on Syria – UN-sponsored peace talks and Astana meetings – as result of, again, internal divisions among the 'Big Three' and lack of engagement with other external and regional players (Pierini, 2014).

The deepening of sectarian strife and risks of state collapse in Iraq, Libya and Syria gave new impetus to EU-Turkey relations. Brussels's concern about the increased threats of terrorism and migration provided Turkey with considerable political leverage. During the February 2013 conference on Libya, France, under new leadership, announced it would unblock a new accession chapter. Davutoglu's comment that he had "discussed how Turkey's membership [would] contribute to the EU, regarding the developments in the Mediterranean dimension" with his French

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[14] Although both Alevism and Alawism are associated with *Shia* Islam, the *Alevi* minority is Turkey's second-largest religious community not to be confused with the *Alawi* religious community mostly located in Syria (see Karakaya-Stump, 2017).

[15] This rapprochement was short-lived and disrupted when the June 2017 Gulf crisis broke and Turkey sided with Qatar.

counterpart illustrates how Turkey conditioned closer cooperation with the EU (Idiz, 2013).

After a three and a half year impasse, accession talks resumed in December 2013 and, since then, three chapters were unblocked. The last chapter was unfrozen as part of the March 2016 EU-Turkey 'Migrant Deal' that committed Turkey to stem the irregular migrant flow to Europe in exchange for financial assistance, resettlement, and visa liberalization (Ülgen, 2017). Thence, the consequences of the failed transitions that resulted in massive waves of irregular migration and accelerated the diffusion of terrorism across the Middle East and Europe pushed the EU and Turkey toward cooperation.

The role of the Kurds in the region

The ongoing post-upheaval unrest has also empowered the Kurds. The KRG organized a referendum on self-determination that saw the 'yes vote' overwhelmingly endorsed, Syrian Kurds are *de facto* autonomous and the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic party (HDP) won unprecedented electoral victories in Turkey.[16]

Beyond Turkey's thriving relations with Syria, Erdoğan's initial stance vis-à-vis the Assad regime also aimed at averting the empowerment of the Syrian Kurds along the Turkish-Syrian border and the spillover effects it could have on Kurdish separatism at home (Aras, 2016). As Turkey's Syria policy shifted, al-Assad played the Kurdish card, allowing the Party of the Democratic Union (PYD) and its militia, the People's Protection Units (YPG), to gradually take control of the Kurdish enclaves along the border. This resulted in the *de facto* formation of an autonomous political entity named the Democratic Federation of Rojava – Northern Syria. [17]

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Ankara's foreign policy became increasingly predicated on the perception that the Syrian conflict had morphed into a Kurdish issue with dramatic consequences on Turkey's domestic politics. The turning point came in 2014 with the Battle of Kobane when Turkey denied assistance to the YPG in its fight against the Islamic State and temporarily blocked its borders to the Kurdish *peshmerga*. This triggered massive protests in the Kurdish provinces of Turkey's southeast and ultimately led to violent clashes between the police and the protesters (Gunes and Lowe, 2015). Arguably, Kobane may have contributed to the collapse of the historic Turkey-PKK peace process initiated in 2013 and to boosting the HDP's score in the June 2015 election that saw the AKP lose its parliamentary majority for the first time since 2002 (International Crisis Group, 2015: 7).

It is against this backdrop that Ankara further securitized its Syria policy, and once again, shifted from removing al-Assad at all costs to maintaining Syria's territorial integrity (Aydıntaşbaş and Kirişci, 2017: 10). Turkey remilitarized its border and launched the cross-border Operation

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[16] Following the failed 2016 coup in Turkey, many HDP members were jailed.
[17] Al-Assad first granted citizenship to Syrian Kurds then stopped sharing intelligence on the PKK with Turkey, later withdrawing troops from Kurdish regions (Tuğal, 2016: 185).

Euphrates Shield openly targeting not only ISIS, but also the Kurds now integrated into the mainly Kurdish YPG and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The recalibration of Turkey's Syria policy triggered a rapprochement with Russia and Iran, but has concurrently strained Ankara's relations with the United States, and to a lesser extent certain European countries like France that consider the Kurdish fighters a bulwark against IS; or Germany, which has seen some citizens fighting alongside Kurdish militias.[18] While the EU recognizes the PKK as a terrorist organization, it does not share Ankara's position on the Syrian Kurds even though Brussels insists on the importance of maintaining Syria's territorial integrity.

In fact, an increasing number of European countries have established diplomatic contacts with the PYD and sometimes enabled the opening of Rojava representation offices. Furthermore, Turkey's ongoing war against the PYD and the post-failed coup crackdown on HDP members have recently occasioned heated exchanges with some European capitals like Berlin condemning Ankara's heavy-handed approach and Erdoğan, in turn, accusing the EU of 'abetting terrorism' (Williams, 2016).

2.3.   Trend Analysis

The historical review has shown the strong interconnectedness of most of the structural forces that have re-shaped the Southern neighbourhood's political landscape. Among the drivers, the configuration of the regional hegemony, sectarianism and state collapse drivers – observed in the aftermath of the Iraq War and aggravated by the Arab uprisings – has been and will remain the main source of instability in the region. So long as regional powers can operate in weak states and instrumentalize sectarianism through patronage of local and transnational actors, the contest for regional influence will continue well beyond 2023 until a new order eventually emerges. Meanwhile, the risk of state collapse will increase.

Together, these three drivers will have the highest impact on EU-Turkey relations because of the terrorism and irregular migration threats they have occasioned. As both the EU and Turkey's priorities are geared toward security concerns and advocate territorial integrity, this configuration of drivers will most likely continue pushing Turkey and the EU toward cooperation despite Turkey's authoritarian turn.

In the 2015 ENP review, Brussels has indeed clearly indicated stabilization was its main political priority and implicitly recognized cooperation with the EU would not be conditioned on the partners' democratization as long as those partners could contribute to the stabilization of the

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[18] Erdoğan's political advisor threatened that if the Americans continued working with the Kurds, Turkey would not "be considering the fact that there are armored American vehicles...All of a sudden, by accident, a few rockets can hit them" (McLeary, 2017).

region.[19] Consequently, Brussels is likely to turn a blind eye to the authoritarian learning uptrend in the Mediterranean, including in Turkey. The EU may, at times, raise concerns about Turkey's democracy deficit but will not take measures that could undermine EU-Turkey cooperation on areas of mutual concern. While this driver completely discards convergence as a realistic option, it will not prevent EU-Turkey cooperation from continuing on a functional basis unless violence escalates in Turkey. For instance, in the event sectarianism intensifies and further polarizes Turkish domestic politics, Ankara could become a less reliable partner and EU-Turkey relations could move from cooperation to conflict. The move from one scenario to another would mainly depend on the Turkish leadership's reaction to the rise of intra-sectarianism and whether it would use the same repressive measures as its neighbors'.

The combination of Turkey's quest for regional hegemony and the rise of Islamists drivers contributed to Turkey's estrangement from the EU. However, Erdoğan's and the Islamists' heydays as the "winners of the Arab Spring" have come to an end. Neither considered a trusted ally nor honest broker among Sunni regimes that have cut diplomatic ties with Qatar, Turkey is now being purposefully sidelined from regional diplomacy even on issues it had been actively involved in previously. A visible instance is Egypt's rapprochement with Hamas, the latter being currently deprived of its Qatari patron as a consequence of the Gulf crisis. Egypt is currently brokering Hamas-Fatah reconciliation which aims in part at curtailing Turkey's involvement in Gaza (Middle East Eye 2017). In an apparent 'tit for tat' instrumentalization of the Islamists, Egypt appears to be retaliating for Turkey's meddling in its internal affairs.

Turkey's current isolation, which is facilitated by the waning influence of Islamist political parties and its indefectible support to Qatar, does not suggest the country will automatically tilt back toward the EU as attested by Ankara's rapprochement with Russia and Iran. Therefore, the diminishing prominence of these two drivers has a relatively low impact on fostering EU-Turkey cooperation. Should political Islam regain its appeal or in the unlikely event that the resolution of the Gulf crisis leads Sunni regimes to revamp and upgrade their cooperation with Ankara, Turkey could be once again disincentivized from seeking further rapprochement with the EU.

Of all the drivers above, the Kurdish issue is the most likely to lead to further tensions between the EU and Turkey. Kurdish actors are now key players in the Middle East's political landscape and will continue seeking further autonomy. Ankara's relations with its neigbhours and the external actors

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[19] "Differentiation and greater mutual ownership will be the hallmark of the new ENP, recognising that not all partners aspire to EU rules and standards, and reflecting the wishes of each country concerning the nature and focus of its partnership with the EU." (European Commission, 2015). The 2016 EU Global Strategy paper also underlines the EU's new approach: "principled pragmatism" (European Union, 2016), http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

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will be predicated on the Kurdish issue. The EU as a bloc has so far refused to officially recognize the autonomous Kurdish region in Northern Syria, and like Turkey, supports both Syria and Iraq's territorial integrity. Should the EU become actively involved in a future political settlement of the Syrian conflict and if Turkey maintains an aggressive policy towards the Syrian Kurds, tensions could increase. Further strain between Turkey and the European capitals recognizing the Rojava administration or training the Kurdish militias is expected, unless Turkey relaxes its policies towards the PYD.

Some wild cards have the potential to alter EU-Turkey relations as well. The fall of al-Assad could accelerate the disintegration of Syria and weaken the "axis of resistance". An immediate sectarian surge would likely ensue and increase the security threats on both Ankara and Brussels therefore incentivizing those actors to strengthen cooperation.

Further uprisings in the region cannot be discarded either, but their impact on EU-Turkey relations would largely depend on where such events arise and whether interests are aligned. Brussels would take a backseat and refrain from encouraging protests at an early stage. After the failed coup and Ankara's ongoing crackdown on the opposition, one can hardly imagine Turkey would support popular protests in the region. Yet, if Islamists had the potential to emerge as a dominant force, it could open an opportunity for Erdoğan to re-energize its constituency at home and potentially help improve his image in the region. If the uprisings take place in some of the EU member states' spheres of influence such as the Maghreb, tensions could also appear. Should a coup succeed, the Turkish leadership would oppose it after the traumatic experience of July 2016. Caught again in a democracy/stability dilemma, the EU would remain cautious, calling for restraint and moderation. Yet, in the short to medium term and given the highly volatile regional environment, the EU could see in a military takeover a 'guarantee of security and stability', which would in turn strain Brussels' relations with Ankara.

3. Drivers in the Eastern Neighbourhood

While a diversity of drivers in the southern neighbourhood have pushed and pulled the EU and Turkey towards cooperation and conflict, drivers in the eastern neighbourhood have had a lower impact on EU-Turkey relations. At the same time, they too have the potential to drive relations towards cooperation and conflict. This section provides an overview of the most salient drivers and their outlooks.

3.1. Liberal oriented, mass movement/mobilization in the Eastern Neighbourhood

During the early 2000s, several countries in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe witnessed pro-democracy movements referred to as "color revolutions". Several "color revolutions" occurred in Turkey's backyard: the 2000 "Bulldozer Revolution" in Yugoslavia, the 2003 "Rose Revolution" in

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Georgia, and the 2004 "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine (Tucker, 2007: 535-551). Alongside these successful movements, which brought liberal opposition parties to power, there were also unsuccessful mobilizations in Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Armenia and Macedonia.

Turkey's reactions were initially mixed. On one hand, the liberal governments that came to power in Georgia and Ukraine were especially interested in furthering their economic and political relationships with Turkey. On the other hand, Turkey remained suspicious of regional democratization efforts, fearing they could spill over into the "nightmare scenario" of an independent Kurdish state (Hill & Taspinar, 2006: 81-92). Outwardly, Turkey continued expanding relations with new liberal governments, while inwardly the government was concerned about liberal mass movements within their borders (Ibid).

When liberal mass movements occurred again in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe (e.g. protests against the Russian legislative elections, 2012-2013 and the Euromaidan in Ukraine), Turkey became reluctant to extend support to liberal movements (Reynolds, 2014: 290). The lack of response to these on Turkey's behalf was conditioned by two factors: the missteps in foreign policy during the Arab Spring and the wave of protests in Turkey in 2013 referred to as the Gezi Park protests (Önal, 2016: 16-40).

In the post-coup environment, it is unlikely that the AKP will take the risk of endorsing a liberal movement outside its borders. In contrast, the EU is likely to support liberal mobilizations, if policy makers suspect economic and security interests are not put at risk by the movement. Hence, if liberal mass mobilizations emerge in countries of strategic and competing interest to both countries, a liberal mass movement is likely to lead to conflict. Cooperation would only be likely if Turkey had a negative relationship with the incumbent regime, and a reason to believe the newly incoming regime would be friendlier to its interests. These conditions could countervail Turkey's interest to oppose the diffusion of either a movement against the AKP or an independence movement within its own borders. Hence, this driver is likely to lead to conflict.

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While this driver would most likely lead to conflict, the impact would be dependent on the country in which a mass mobilization took place and the degree of interest the EU and Turkey have in that country. The likelihood of the event, however, appears relatively low given that global tides appear to be moving towards conservative movements.

3.2. Conservative oriented, mass movement/mobilization

In response to a host of issues in the Eastern neighbourhood, conservative mass movements recently outnumbered liberal-oriented ones. These movements take many forms (e.g. nationalist, anti-immigration, Euroskeptic), however, they share similarities in their anger with liberalization projects in their home countries and support from illiberal governments (Werts et al, 2012: 183-205). Examples of these types of movements in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus include the

election of the pro-Moscow candidates Igor Dodon in Moldova and the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia entering parliament (Ágh, 2015: 23-48).

A majority of these movements are ambivalent to openly hostile about the role of the EU at home. They range from "soft Euroskeptics", who believe their countries should remain EU members or stay on the integration path while pursuing other options, to "hard Euroskeptics" who want to leave the process altogether (Brack & Startin, 2015: 239-249). While the EU is clearly opposed to these parties, they often cannot criticize their successes when they emerge from free and fair elections (ibid).

Turkey also faces a difficult decision regarding the rise of conservative movements. Some are not only anti-EU, but also anti-immigration, Islamophobic, and against the involvement of Turkey in international politics (Hinrichsen, 2012: 198-217). For example, the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia has very few discernible policy positions besides its opposition to Turkey's influence in Georgia (Kucera, 2016). In Russia, nationalism is increasingly common, Islamophobia is widespread, and anti-Turkish sentiment bubbled after Turkey shot down a Russian fighter jet (Shaun, 2015). Although, tensions have subsided, conservative movements could turn actively anti-Turkish in Russia.

Despite this, there does not appear to be any tension between Turkey and some conservative movements, including the Fidesz government in Hungary (Simonyi, 2014: 33-35). As Euroskeptic tendencies in Turkey's domestic arena are also on the rise, Turkey may find new opportunities to reach out to Euroskeptic political movements in its neighbourhood, provided that anti-Turkish sentiments are not a core element of the movement (Ibid).

Due to the rising frequency and success of conservative-populist movements worldwide, these types of mobilizations are increasingly likely. While this could represent a grave threat for the current EU, it is less problematic or even potentially a boon for Turkey. As with liberal movements, whether they lead to conflict or cooperation depends on location and interests. For example, if a conservative oriented mass movement were to take power in Georgia, this would likely be a sign of increased Russian influence and decreased EU influence. Turkey would likely be hurt by this type of conservative movement, given anti-Turkish sentiment among nationalists in Georgia. Ironically, such a movement would likely lead to cooperation if anything between the EU and Turkey due to equally damaged interests. Although exceptions exist, in many of the other cases where a conservative mobilization is possible (e.g. the Balkans, Ukraine), Turkey's interests would likely be unharmed and on occasion helped and the EU's harmed. Hence, the driver is most likely to lead to conflict. Although the likelihood of mobilizations is high, the impact is likely low unless the movements take place where the EU and Turkey have competing interests.

3.3.   Russian interventionism in Eastern Neighbourhood Countries

The Russian Federation's involvement in the domestic politics of its neighbors has steadily increased since Vladimir Putin took power in 2000 (Larrabee, 2010: 33-52). Besides outright military interventions, Russian interference in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus include openly or covertly supporting pro-Russian candidates and political parties, mis/dis-information campaigns, and support for separatist armed forces in regions of neighboring countries (Ibid). The most visible examples of this in the neighbourhood include the ongoing support and formal recognition of separatist governments in the occupied Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, and the Transinistria region of Moldova (Ibid).

From Turkey's standpoint, Russian involvement in neighboring countries has not been a major concern unless it crosses the threshold of supporting challenges to the country's territorial integrity. Even then, Turkey has been reluctant to take conclusive action beyond simple "statements of concern" when territorial integrity is violated (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2016: 71-95). For example, Turkey was ambivalent towards Russia's attempts to promote particular parties and politicians in the states of the Caucasus, but almost faced a diplomatic crisis with Russia after invading Georgia in 2008 (Ibid). Turkey immediately supported Georgia's territorial integrity after the war started, and refused to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states (Ibid). However, they did not escalate given the threat of restricted energy supplies. In 2014, when Russia intervened in the Crimean Peninsula, Turkey voiced concern for Ukraine's sovereignty and the rights of the Crimean Tatar population, albeit indecisively (Ibid).

For the EU, Russian interventionism is a far more pressing concern. Both Russia and the EU view their influence in the domestic politics of states in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus as mutually exclusive (Stoddard, 2015: 553-670). Pro-Russian parties in these states usually argue against accession and cooperation with the EU. The EU's response to Russian intervention has generally been regarded as representative of individual member states' differences in concern for the situations in Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova (Ibid).

While it appears Russia has faced little resistance in its meddling in the domestic affairs of other countries to date, its interventions in the affairs of larger powers have led to some resistance in the EU and eastern neighbourhood. For Turkey, however, this driver is unlikely to be of great relevance outside of two scenarios: 1) Russia begins to meddle in Turkish politics or 2) Russia intervenes in countries of strategic significance and in contravention to Turkey's interests. As with previous drivers, the overarching impact on Turkey-EU relations will depend on the country in question and the competition or coalescence of interests between the two.

Generally, however, the EU's interests are threatened by Russian interventionism, while the implications for Turkey are more scattered and generally of lower relevance. Hence, the level of impact on Turkey-EU relations is likely to be low due to the low level of competition in interests.

Whether the driver leads to conflict or cooperation will depend on the case at hand, but overall, the scenario most likely to result is cooperation instead of conflict since Turkey has relatively little incentive in most cases to conflict with Russia or the EU on these matters. At the same time, the extent of cooperation which can result from this driver is limited given Turkey's ever closer ties with Russia, increasingly conflictual ties to the EU, and limited skin in the game when it comes to this driver.

3.4.   Relations with Armenia

Turkey's lack of formal diplomatic relations with Armenia has, at times, been a hindrance to relations with the EU. As EU states must have open borders with all neighboring states, the closed border between Turkey and Armenia represents a roadblock to Turkey's chances of accession (Goshgarian, 2005: 4-5). At various points in time after Turkey became an official candidate for EU membership, its government attempted to extend olive branches to its neighbor. However, efforts have been mostly piecemeal, geared towards external actors, and often are disrupted by local politics on both sides of the border (Larrabee, 2011: 103-120). Unresolved issues include Turkey's non-recognition of the Armenian genocide, Turkey's involvement in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the 1993 closure of the Turkish-Armenian border (Ibid).

The 2008-2011 period represented a brief "thaw" in the Turkish-Armenian relationship. In a well-publicized event in 2008, Armenian president Serzh Sarkisyan invited Turkish president Abdullah Gul to watch a qualifying match for the World Cup between the countries (Aras & Özbay, 2008: 1-7). Gul became the first Turkish head of state to visit Armenia in the post-Cold War period. Subsequently, Turkey and Armenia entered negotiations to re-open the Turkish-Armenian border, and in 2009 both countries signed the Zurich Protocols, a formal roadmap towards normalizing Turkish-Armenian relations (Shiriyev & Davies, 2013: 185). However, talks dissipated due to public opposition in both countries. In Armenia, the nationalist Dashnaktstutiun party withdrew its deputies from parliament upon announcement of the protocols. In Turkey, the AKP formally requested the suspension of the ratification process after no deal was reached on Nagorno-Karabakh (Idiz, 2010: 11). With the Zurich Protocols ratified by neither side, normalization efforts fell apart (ibid). Since, Armenian and Armenian diaspora efforts pressuring Turkey and EU members on genocide recognition have negatively affected attempts to reestablish relations (ibid).

In recent years, there have been few formal efforts towards normalization, although second track diplomacy is ongoing (Hill et al, 2015: 127-138). The Turkish government's disinterest in the EU accession process and Armenia's growing ties with Russia have stalled momentum for ratification of the Zurich Protocols (ibid). However, in the unlikely case that normalization returns to the agenda, it could be a positive development for Turkey-EU relations. If recognition did take place, it would enable greater cooperation between Turkey and the EU. However, this driver is of limited import for both countries. Hence, it is unlikely to be highly significant to the relationship.

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3.5.   Putin loses power

Vladimir Putin gained national prominence as Prime Minister of Russia from 1999 to 2000, taking the presidency from 2000 to 2008, returning to the Prime Minister post in 2008, and then moving back to President in 2012 (Pavlovsky, 2016: 10). Putin has reinforced his hold on power by hand-picking federal and regional officials loyal to him, manipulating election laws and laws on political parties to advantage his United Russia party, and at times, silencing opposition figures. The result has been a formidable "power vertical", where Putin and his inner circle of federal officials create top-down policies for governing Russia (ibid).

In the incredibly unlikely case that Putin leaves his position or loses power in the near to medium term, the effect on EU-Turkey relations will mostly depend on Putin's replacement. In the short term, there are few individuals in the Russian political system who will be able to successfully fill the position, and the resulting transition could match the uncertainty of the fall of the Soviet Union. Despite the extreme degree of uncertainty surrounding the outcomes of such a situation, the most likely scenarios resemble those discussed above related to conservative and liberal oriented mass movements. While if Putin was replaced via a liberal oriented mass movement, it would be more likely to lead to cooperation between Turkey and the EU, if it was a conservative movement, it would be more likely to lead to conflict as the EU's interests would likely be harmed while Turkey's would not. However, Russia is a large regional power. Hence, the incentives to maintain or improve relations in the case of Turkey and to attempt a restart in the case of the EU would be strong whether the regime was conservative or liberal. This dynamic could support cooperation, yet the orientation of the regime would remain an important factor in determining the impact on Turkey-EU relations. While, the impact could be high or null for the Turkey-EU relationship depending on circumstances, a number of incentives do support cooperation in the case of Putin's departure.

3.6.   Coup d'états, state collapse in the Eastern neighbourhood

Although no coup d'états have occurred in the Eastern neighbourhood since 1999, there is a history of attempted military takeovers in the region. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Georgian president Zviad Gamsakhurdia was removed from office in a coup in 1991, there was a constitutional crisis in Russia in 1993, and Azerbaijani president Abulfaz Elchibey was overthrown in 1993 after failure in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. There were additional failed coup attempts in Azerbaijan in 1995, and in Turkey in 1993 and 1997. In the past 15 years, however, the region has been mostly free of coup attempts or state collapses, with the obvious exception of Turkey.

As in the southern neighbourhood, in the event of a military coup in the eastern neighbourhood, both Turkey and the EU are likely to support the incumbent government. How they choose to offer support and diplomatically handle coup attempts could affect their relationship. For example, if Turkey attempts to blame the EU or forces within the EU for organizing the coup, relations would deteriorate. However, if both Turkey and the EU criticize the coup while supporting the incumbent

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government without claiming that the other was externally involved, the result would likely be cooperation. The impact on the relationship would depend heavily on context, and whether the interests of Turkey and the EU are aligned or in conflict in the country.

3.7.   Increasing authoritarian learning in the neighbourhoods

"Authoritarian learning" refers to the process wherein authoritarian states cooperate to share experiences and possible solutions to activities against the regime, such as containing protest movements, controlling the press, and preventing revolts (Heydemann & Leenders, 2011: 647-653). Usually, authoritarian learning is the natural counter to a wave of protest activity: for example, if there are large-scale protests in authoritarian country A that the government successfully shuts down, authoritarian country B can learn from country A's strategies and tactics. At times, authoritarian regimes form intergovernmental organizations with one another, or use existing ones in part, to share "best practices" for responding to anti-authoritarianism (ibid). Lessons can also be garnered on what not to do from regimes which lose power. This process extended to Turkey, which also took approaches patented by Arab regimes during the Arab Spring to respond to the 2013 Gezi Park protests (Akder & Özdemir, 2015: 181-194).

In the EU and Turkey's shared neighbourood, two periods of authoritarian learning are especially important. First, after the "color revolutions", which replaced quasi-authoritarian states with fledgling liberal democracies, authoritarian states in those regions began cooperating further to ensure their own regime stability (Diamond et al, 2006: 215-222). For example, Russia extensively used its regional agreements with states like Belarus and Kazakhstan and soft power tools to disseminate counter-color revolution information to other states.

The second wave of authoritarian learning occurred after the uprisings of the Arab Spring, where authoritarian states that survived intact shared their knowledge with other regimes in the Middle East and beyond (Heydemann & Leenders, 2011: 647-653). Overall the Arab uprisings have not been conducive to democratic transitions but instead created more instability and opened new battlefronts. In the midst of the political turmoil, MENA countries have resisted transformations – or reversed the course of the transition – through the exchange of counter-revolutionary strategies and, in the process, became more authoritarian (ibid). Erdoğan's response to the Gezi protests was particularly reminiscent of the Gulf monarchies' counter-revolutionary strategies. The Turkish leadership played the sectarian card, pitting Sunni against Alevi, depicting the protesters as "terrorists", and heavily relying on anti-western and conspiracy rhetoric.[20] The event epitomizes Erdoğan's increasing instrumentalization of foreign policy for domestic political gains. The overlapping of the military coup in Egypt with the Gezi protests was a 'blessing in disguise' for the Turkish leadership and explains Erdoğan's overreaction to the coup in Egypt at the risk of

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[20] See Taspinar (2014) "the Turkish prime minister's reactions to the protests echoed the discourse of Middle Eastern autocracies." See also Akder & Özdemir (2015); Karakaya-Stump (2017).

antagonizing the Saudi-led "moderate bloc" and sacrificing Turkey's bid for regional leadership (Gumuscu, 2014: 48). Identifying himself and his supporters to the MB, Erdoğan used the coup to discredit the Gezi protesters who were portrayed as coup-plotters, and in the process reinforced its own constituency by appealing to the most religious segments of Turkish society.

The Turkish leadership's increased Islamization of the public discourse associated with its authoritarian drift – crystallized in the government's reaction to the Gezi protests –did not go unnoticed in Brussels. Turkey's EU accession talks scheduled to resume in June 2013 after a three-year stalemate were postponed at Germany's demand. Yet, talks resumed less than six months later and since, three new accession chapters opened. Security considerations have progressively overshadowed Brussels's early enthusiasm to bring about (democratic) change in the region. For instance, Egypt's authoritarian reversion has not prevented the EU from cooperating with the country.[21] As post-failed coup Turkey increasingly exhibits authoritarian patterns of the regimes in the region, accession talks have *de facto* stopped. While EU-Turkey cooperation on shared areas of concern continues, Ankara just fell into the trap it wanted to avoid: being considered a privileged partner rather than a serious candidate for accession.

The populist movements that have swept the globe provide ample opportunity for greater authoritarian learning moving forward. Greater authoritarian learning in the neighbourhood is highly relevant for Turkey as well as the EU. However, each party has conflicting interests regarding the driver. While the EU has an interest in clamping down on authoritarian learning, Turkey has an interest in both sharing its own recent experience with friendly states as well as taking in lessons learned from authoritarians in the neighbourhood.

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If authoritarian learning can help the AKP retain office, and potentially expand its influence in the region through strengthened and broadened partnerships, this will be to the detriment of the EU. The EU is a less than desirable partner for authoritarians given its human rights and democracy promotion efforts. If authoritarian support in general and Turkey's specifically can substitute for the EU's, then authoritarian regimes in the region are likely to favor it to EU support.

In sum, the environment is ripe for increased authoritarian learning, it is happening, and it is likely to lead to conflict in EU-Turkey relations, albeit indirectly since it will influence other drivers like the conservative mobilization driver rather than relations directly. Despite this, the EU is likely not to push full throttle against it, taking a more pragmatic stance. This is likely to abate the short-term impact on the relationship, but in the long term may harm relations, given many populations in the EU's reluctance to engage with authoritarians.

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[21] Ironically, after France had cancelled the sale of two warships to Russia in protest of its annexation of Crimea, it sold the same two warships to Egypt a year later.

4. Conclusion

Many drivers discussed above support a path towards cooperation. However, even those drivers that are likely to lead to cooperation in some circumstances have the potential for conflict, particularly when it comes to the eastern neighbourhood. Hence, Turkey and the EU are likely to pursue cooperation when possible. However, few of the drivers are likely to have a strong enough influence on Turkey-EU relations to lead towards convergence. Although less than a desirable situation, this set of drivers which relates to the common neighbourhood largely coincide with the wider picture which observers of Turkish-EU relations will be familiar with, i.e. although cooperation happens, conflict is the rule of the day. The drivers from the eastern neighbourhood support this dynamic, while drivers from the southern neighbourhood show some hope for cooperation, as the above analysis has shown.

The turbulent geopolitical environment of the Southern neighbourhood makes functional cooperation the most likely prospect for EU-Turkey relations but it will be a path full of pitfalls. While political drivers triggered Turkey's estrangement from the EU or have been the root causes of instability in the neighbourhood, the intervening migration and security drivers have gradually outweighed them. The downtrend in the 'Islamists' driver and the failure of Turkey's bid for regional leadership indicate that Ankara will become further isolated in the region as Ankara loses its political clout and credibility to act as an impartial mediator. Nevertheless, Turkish foreign policy will remain extremely erratic and reactive to any political change in the neighbourhood that could serve Erdoğan's personal agenda in view of the 2019 presidential election. In this context, Turkey may well pursue the brinkmanship game toward the EU and Brussels when it raises its voice against Turkey's authoritarian turn. Yet, the uptrend in the 'state collapse' and 'sectarianism' drivers will necessitate maintaining dialogue as both the EU and Turkey face the common threats of terrorism and migration. One opportunity to mend fences and enhance cooperation would be the future political settlement of the Syrian crisis. As the EU is the external actor that has been the most affected by the refugee crisis, Brussels will have an interest in stepping up to negotiate the settlement and coordinate a strategy with Turkey for the return of refugees. The fact that the EU has only had a spectator role in the previous peace talks – and therefore can act as a neutral moderator – could further play in Brussels's favor. If this succeeds, the Kurdish issue could however become a point of contention as the EU, in principle, advocates the inclusion of all stakeholders – including non-state actors – in its mediation initiatives as well as the protection of all minorities.

Russian power's re-assertion on the international stage, both in the immediate neighbourhood and farther afield, is the most significant driver of politics in the eastern neighbourhood. While the EU, as an institution, has a largely clear position – against Russia's rise –Turkey's relation to the rise is more ambivalent. How Turkey reacts will be critical to whether relations between the EU and Turkey move towards cooperation or conflict in the eastern neighbourhood. While if Turkey supports Russian actions in the neighbourhood, conflict is likely to emerge. At the same time, if

Turkey is threatened and opposes Russian interventionism and support for conservative movements, then cooperation between the EU and Turkey is more likely. When it comes to other drivers, their likely impact is low, although on the whole they contain the potential for cooperation.

Finally, convergence is highly unrealistic under the EU's current membership requirements and in the current state of affairs. Turkey's foreign policy on developments in the Southern Neighbourhood has in the past prompted EU member states to adopt a more positive attitude toward Ankara's EU bid, while its actions in the eastern neighbourhood have been less significant to the relationship. Yet, it is precisely because of Turkey's identity and geographical proximity to a turbulent and ever-changing Middle East that Turkey's membership will remain a pipe dream.

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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.

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