Competing Variables in Turkey's Multi-Vector Foreign Policy

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Abstract: *A certain shift in the Turkish foreign policy has been noticeable over the last decade, especially after the AKP (Justice and Development Party) came to power in 2002, which manifested in closer relations with its Arab neighbours and simultaneously a more aggressive stance towards Israel. These developments have led many researchers to say that Turkey's activism in the Middle East represents its return towards the East, at the expense of its Europeanisation aspirations. The current research paper aims to study the validity of this claim by looking at different sets of interactions between Turkey and its neighbours, through a constructivist lens of competing yet complementary variables.*

The ascending multilateralism manifested in Turkey's foreign policy discourse and initiatives has been interpreted by some (Reynolds 2012) as a consequence of the exhaustion of the Kemalist project, while others (vom Hau et al 2012) see it as the logical result of the complex internal and external interactions of modernisation and globalisation at the level of the Turkish society. The conceptual categories proposed for assessing Turkey's conduct in relation to other states open up perspectives for exploring further cooperation interactions between Turkey and the EU, on the one hand, and with countries in their shared neighbourhood as well.

Keywords: *multi-vector policy, identity, functionalist approach, opportunity seeking, regional actor, Arab Spring*

Introduction

The perspective of acquiring EU membership, opened up for Turkey in 1999, has considerably contributed to accelerating the internal reform and modernization processes of the Turkish society, though with recurring crises throughout time as regards ensuring multiculturalism and political pluralism. Lately, wariness has been growing inside part of the Turkish civil society and among its European partners about the lack of progress in continuing civic reforms or in some cases about the occurrence of serious drawbacks on the democratization path as regards free speech, rule of law and women's rights. More than before, these limitations and flaws are the main reasons for the increased attention paid both in the academic and policy-oriented milieu in relation to Turkey' rising profile as a regional actor.

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Through its geographic and strategic positioning and complex range of neighbours, Turkey is in a position to play a significant role in the economic and security context of the Eastern Mediterranean. In light of the latest turbulences in the EU's Southern neighbourhood, Turkey's role is seen as increasingly crucial, provided that Ankara knows how to manage its multi-vector policy, to which numerous Turkish and Western researchers have dedicated an impressive series of articles and analyses over the last years. Natalie Tocci (Tocci 2011) considers that the regime changes in North Africa and subsequently in the Middle East put higher pressure on Western countries to find constructive partners in the region to work with, Turkey being viewed as a contender which may exert significant regional influence in relation to its Arab neighbours, drawing upon their shared cultural and historic ties. Though Ankara is uniquely positioned to play an important role in its neighbourhood, it still has serious identity issues to deal with in order to fully establish itself as a credible partner both in relation to its Arab and Western counterparts.

Faced with serious domestic and external challenges, the Turkish establishment of the past decade has developed a multi-vector foreign policy discourse, driven by the desire to normalize and when possible, improve previously tensed relations with its Arab neighbours, as a prerequisite for domestic stability and progress. The identity transformation in Ankara's foreign policy comes in a moment when the West is faced with a critical reshaping of its own political construction and implicitly its vision as regards external relations, economic partnerships included. These simultaneous processes raise complex identity and commitment issues for the Turkish society just as much as for the Western communities. At the same time, major transformations on both sides side are very likely to shape mutual perceptions and responses as complex processes such as the Arab Spring or the economic and financial crisis in Europe continue to unfold and pose continuous challenges. Ankara's capacity to find common answers, alongside its partners, to these challenges will also have an impact on the course of Turkey's relations with the EU and with NATO.

This paper aims to search to what extent the multilateralism promoted by Ankara in relation to its Euro-Atlantic and regional partners represents a product of a world view *per se* or rather a response to a complex set of domestic and international dynamics, pushing Turkey apparently in sometimes contradictory directions. Turkish academia and decision-makers have been taking pride in creating an image of a self-established new Turkish foreign policy, called by some post - Ottomanism or Neo – Ottomanism, which presumably accommodates with success the country's historic legacy with the modernization and democratisation aspirations so much needed to ensure its rightful place as a regional leader (Davutoğlu, 2001).

In relation to the democratisation dimension, it is worth noting that the road towards state and society reforms has not been easy: Turkey managed to establish the necessary institutional set-up of modernity, in terms of multiparty democracy, market economy, juridical system, without eroding the Islamic traditions of its majority Muslim population. However, conflictual episodes have manifested ever since the 1980's, as regards the gradual transformation of its identity, the issue of the client-based state and populist ruling system, the Islamist resurgence, and the involvement of civil society in various public debates.

Previous research on Turkey's quest for self-identity and its reflection in the foreign policy discourse

As an almost logical consequence of the main thesis, this paper also aims to establish whether Ankara's recent sustained engagement with its Middle Eastern neighbours involves that Turkey is turning away from the West, as many authors have suggested, or that it is rather developing an interpretation of its own perceptions of the systemic transformations and of its role in its neighbourhood.

For the past decades, Turkey's democratisation and economic growth have generally gone hand in hand, usually complementing and supporting each other, in spite of several crises and drawbacks.

The coming into power of the AKP Party (Justice and Development Party) has raised concerns about the fact that its leaders may have a 'hidden' Islamisation[1] agenda, in spite of their elaborate speeches on liberalisation and European integration. The objective of European integration itself has created numerous divisions inside the Turkish society, although the political spectrum has constantly kept it among the top priorities of the public agenda. The political elites in Ankara seem to be divided over the objective of continued pursuit of EU membership, some of them openly questioning it or the EU's commitment to its relations with Turkey[2].

More than anything, the debate over the status of Turkey's EU membership bid has openly put on the table the identity issue for the Turkish society, with an emphasis on how to balance the Islamic tradition with the prerequisites for a democratic political system and modernization in general.

In a survey[3] conducted by TEPAV (Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey) on public attitudes towards Turkey's EU membership, results showed a slight drop in the support for this objective, to 61 percent in 2011 from 65 percent in 2008. It is interesting to note that the percentage of undecided respondents has not significantly altered in time.

Turkey has started to rediscover its Islamic roots before the 1980's, while simultaneously opening up towards the world, though the two processes may seem contradictory. According to Robins[4], the primordial element in the consolidation of Ankara's relations with its Arab neighbours has been the desire to expand its economic ties and partnerships.

The transformation of the Turkish foreign policy discourse has been gradual, with several key figures playing a particularly useful role in the simultaneous association and harmonisation of the Islamist heritage with the overall modernization objectives of the post-Ottoman Turkish state. Ismail Cem, the designer of normalized relations with Greece and at the same time initiator of reunions between the EU and the Organisation of Islamic Conference, has emphasised also the necessity to strengthen ties with Syria and Israel. Turgut Özal, founder of the Motherland party, has been instrumental in popularising the
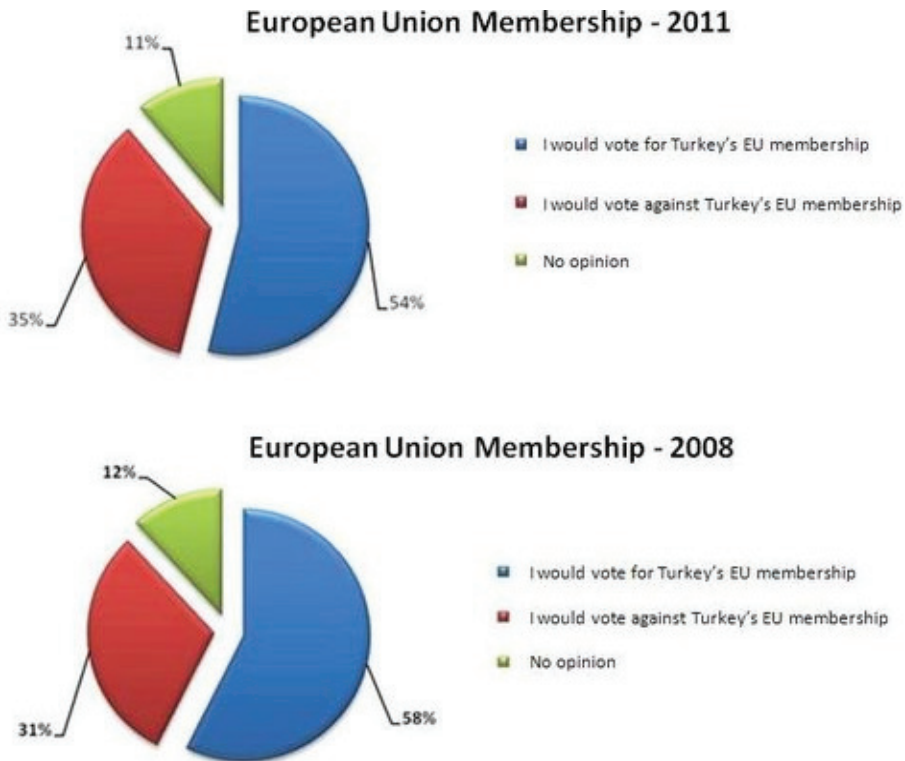
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[1] M. Hakan Yavuz, ed. *The Emergence of a New Turkey. Democracy and the AK Party*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006.

[2] Interview with Turkish officials, February 2011, Bucharest.

[3] *Support for the EU Drops by 4 points in 3 years*, TEPAV (Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey), http://www.tepav.org.tr/en/haberler/s/1991, accessed on July 4th 2012.

[4] Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War,* Hurst and Company, London, 2003, pp. 241 - 249.

European Union Membership - 2011

11%

■ I would vote for Turkey's EU membership

■ I would vote against Turkey's EU membership

■ No opinion

54%

35%

European Union Membership - 2008

12%

■ I would vote for Turkey's EU membership

■ I would vote against Turkey's EU membership

■ No opinion

31%

58%

Source: www.tepav.org.tr/en/haberler/s/1991

objective of Europeanisation and European integration at the level of the Turkish society while consolidating the perception of his country's regional leadership inside the Muslim community (Devrim, Schulz 2009).

For Reynolds (Reynolds 2012), Turkey's current outward-looking foreign policy marks a clear break with the discourse and practice of the last eight decades: a more permissive international context, the country's economic growth, and the rise of a political elite with a different world view are the main factors explaining the perceived change. More than that, the present vision of Turkish leaders represents a response to the exhaustion of Kemalism as a founding ideology of the Turkish Republic. More than before, Ankara's world perspective combines a focus on cultural and religious connections to the Muslim communities in its proximity with support for liberalising measures such as opening of borders to free movement of persons and goods.

Alessandri sees Turkey's transformed foreign policy identity as "the consequence of broad systemic changes and complex internal dynamics", requiring therefore a sincere review of Turkey - EU relations (Alessandri 2010).

Ahmet Davutoğlu, the current Foreign Affairs minister, defines Ankara's position as a crossroads for regions that are relevant from a geostrategic point of view (Walker 2007). The official foreign policy discourse pays equal attention to the novelty of the geopolitical

context in which Turkey finds itself currently, as well as to the necessity to elaborate new thinking paradigms (Aras 2009). It is very probable that the Turkish leadership discover, during this very self-search process, similarities between Turkey's path and that of the EU (Alessandri 2008). At the same time, this intricate process will most probably involve a mutual shaping of both parties' expectations.

As evoked by Turkish and European researchers, the main theses of the current foreign policy discourse developed by Ankara are subscribed to the capitalisation of economic opportunities and the pursuit of regional peace, both ranking among Europeans' top priorities. The immediate question would be whether this gradual transformation is enough for Turkey to become a hegemonic actor in the Mediterranean and, hence, what implications this would have for EU policies towards the region (Tocci, Altunişik, Kirişci, 2011). Altunişik (Tocci *et al* 2011) draws upon the argument that Ankara has never really developed a comprehensive policy for the Mediterranean, as without the end of Cold War, the Turkish political leadership would not have probably even understood its importance as a distinct region for the foreign policy.

Another characteristic of the recent Turkish foreign policy is the increasing desecuritisation in favour of an approach focused essentially on trade exchanges, facilitation of agreements leading to visa free circulation among countries in the region and overall policies aiming to gradually support good government. From this perspective, Altunişik (Tocci *et al* 2011) points to Ankara's preference for a *functionalist approach* as regards the complex economic, migration and security-related challenges in its neighbourhood, as opposed to the EU's emphasis on sanctions and barriers, which leave little room for alternative sources of regional cooperation.

Methodology

The indicators used to measure and assess Turkey's identity search and the way it addresses these transformations are related to the behaviour and interaction of the political, economic and social elites as well as the participation of civil society to the major policy debates taking place over the past decades. These elements, relevant for the multilateralism manifestations in the Turkish foreign policy are organized in four distinct analytic categories through which influence is exerted: *issue leading*, *opportunity seeking*, *region organising* and *region mobilising*. The first category refers to the elaboration and influencing of policies through international institutions or organizations to which the states are parties. In this format, states try to form coalitions and influence policy making or decision making through like-minded coalitions. As *issue leaders* tend to take action and exert influence at a global level, their behaviour usually includes a multilateralist approach, with prestige ensuing from the formation of coalitions (vom Hau, Scott and Hulme 2012).

Opportunity seeking is more centred on the establishment of strong bilateral relations or agreements, or, and in the field of economic relations, trade agreements targeting strategic investments in targeted locations.

Region organising is another form of international engagement, committing instruments to establish leadership inside organisations focused around a cultural or geographical specificity (vom Hau, Scott and Hulme 2012). This particular instrument of engagement is

specifically suited to understand and measure participation inside regional organisations such as those pertaining to the Middle East (e. g. Organisation of Islamic Conference). On the other hand, *region mobilising* deals with methods to ensure or facilitate economic integration in a specific geographical area, usually involving a 'bridging' function as a regional connector or transit point (vom Hau *et al* 2012).

These analytical categories of constructivist inspiration are fit to assess Turkey's identity-based behaviour and policy discourse. They are particularly suitable as Turkey's unique position and set of interactions with the neighbouring regions make it impossible to clearly position it inside a thinking paradigm other than constructivism.

The multi-vector policy has also quickly turned into a sort of Turkish-inspired model, which, through Ankara's ability to experience the coexistence of Islamism with democracy, should serve as inspiration for its troubled neighourhood.

Although these are the main factors behind Turkey's changing policy identity and attitude, both in its domestic and foreign policy, several others deserve equal attention. While the perspective of EU-membership in the late 1990's served the overall modernization objectives of the Turkish society, globalisation acted as an increasingly powerful tool in opening Turkish economy towards the world. However, as a recent report by the World Trade Organization reveals (Korzeniewicz 2012), the economic forecast for Turkey in 2013 is not as positive as in the previous years. Turkey's dependency on foreign markets for its exports and the impact of the economic crisis upon these markets seems to be taking its toll.

Simultaneously, domestic politics and the development of political economy, in relation to the availability/scarcity of natural resources, backed up by the consolidation of public-private partnerships also in the business sector and the participation of the civil society in public policy-related debates predispose a state towards adopting a certain method of international engagement. Turkey can also be categorized as a late developer, with large population and land surface, in which the state has been instrumental in creating and implementing macroeconomic development policies (Waldner, 1999; Amsden 2001).

Its *export-based economy* is in a permanent search for new markets adapted to its products and services, resulting mainly from the activity of small and medium sized enterprises which represent an important supporting segment of AKP's electorate. Thus, the need to identify, expand or even help stabilise relevant markets for Turkey's exports has been integrated in its foreign policy vision.

Testing the hypotheses. Turkey's modes of interaction as a regional actor

This section aims to put to test some of the analytical concepts explored above. As regards the *region organising* variable, Turkey has been actively pursuing this engagement method: over the last decade, it has sought to revitalise relations with several countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia. The initiative included the set-up of new diplomatic offices in previously neglected areas, the signing of trade agreements, implementation of cultural exchanges and, more importantly, the expansion of the overseas development aid to these locations. The region organising variable may entail leadership in a multilateral framework of negotiations, where one state has the opportunity to shape the organisation's

regional identity or even its ideological setting. In such formats, regional organizers may act as agenda-setters or mediators (vom Hau *et al* 2012).

Organisations in which Turkey has acted as a region organizer include the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) initiative (Baran 2008). As regards its performance as a region mobilizer, Turkey's advanced economy, by comparison to its Arab neighbours, has allowed it to serve as an entry point to the region for Western capital and investments. This feature accentuated as Ankara's reliance on international trade has grown stronger over the last decade.

It is relevant to look at Turkey's role in the region, with a particular focus on the *drivers of change* in Turkish foreign and security policy. These elements include Turkey's emerging profile as a "trade state", the de-securitization of its foreign policy, without forgetting that the risks of its disengagement from its immediate Southern neighbourhood are too high for Ankara to neglect this dimension.

As regards the internal dynamics of Turkish political economy and considerations of its resources, the necessity to have ready to use natural resources, capable of sustaining economic growth, has a significant impact on any state's capacity to project influence (Zweig and Jianhai 2005). Turkey has paid proper attention to this dimension, manifested by the region mobilising variable, by concluding economic and trade agreements with countries as distant as Sudan, Kenya or Tanzania (Apaydin 2012), especially since it lacks the necessary internal oil and gas resources to support its economic development.

Turkey's rising profile as a regional actor would not be possible without a consistent economic rise and vivid civil society, both attributes representing the country's key added value to the region and characteristics that make it unique in its immediate neighbourhood. Over the last twenty years, the country has enjoyed a constant sustained economic growth, allowing it to rank higher in the hierarchy of global incomes (Korzeniewicz, 2012). Ankara has also involved itself significantly in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in neighbouring states, and its foreign policy discourse has brought into light a series of topics of mutual interest for Middle East countries, such as demographics, consequences of migration and economic cooperation.

Turkey even gained an observer status in the African Union in 2005, being subsequently accepted as a non-regional member of the African Development Bank in 2008 (Apaydin 2012).

All these elements generate a significant impact on the configuration of the power relation in the region, Turkey being in a position to formulate answers, though sometimes incomplete, to complex questions related to the stability of its neighbourhood. Numerous Turkish researchers consider the multilateral approach in Ankara's foreign policy as an exemplification of the soft type of power that Turkey wants to project in relation to both its Western and regional partners. Kalin (Kalin, 2011) attributes this soft power rhetoric to the major changes undergone by the Turkish state ever since the 1950's, when the multi-party system was introduced. The continuous democratization, political stability as well as the necessity to sustain the country's economic development are generally the arguments most invoked by the academia as foundation for Ankara's outward-looking vision.

Turkey enjoys a unique position as member of NATO, candidate member in the EU and valued actor in the Middle East, benefiting from a "strategic depth", due to its geostrategic

location at the crossroads of three different continents. Expressing a consecrated American perspective, Nicholas Burns[5] considers that "Turkey is Europe's only rising power and its political influence in the Middle East is now greater than that of Germany, France or the United Kingdom." At the same time, serious drawbacks remain to be corrected, such as the fact that Ankara blocks deeper NATO collaboration with the EU and Israel, as well as the fact that the record of Erdogan's government in terms of democratic rights is largely perfectible.

It is exactly this kind of structural imperfections that make Ankara a more convenient partner for regimes such as those in Syria, Iran or Russia. Middle East countries feel they can better relate to states which have faced their exact problems or have undergone lengthy transition periods.

Do Common Challenges Guarantee According Common Perceptions?

After looking at factors which shape up the Turkish foreign policy discourse, it would be useful to put to test some of the conceptual categories explored above in the case of the Syrian crisis, which concerns Turkey, the EU and their shared neighbourhood as well. As the US seem to be drifting more and more from the turbulences associated to the Arab Spring in the Middle East, there is room left for the Europeans to engage more than have they done so far in the region, and find the right partners to cooperate with in their immediate neighbourhood. Why is this important to explore? The lack of unity among EU member states, obvious in the Libyan case, threatens to repeat itself in Syria, to even a greater degree.

Things seem quite different in the case of Syria. In Libya, Western states took military action to prevent further killings of the civilian population, which eventually resulted in the overthrow of the regime, while the more complex security challenges around Syria require increased commitment to finding the right coalition partners and arguments. As the United Nations Supervision Mission to Syria is fast nearing the 20 July deadline, the UN Security Council is expected to meet before this date to decide upon its future mandate. As it currently counts 300 unarmed military observers, the mission as it is, can do little to effectively lead to a ceasefire.

Edward Burke of the Centre for European Reform considers[6] that Western actors have already made a series of missteps in managing the Syrian crisis. Thus, they have decided to avoid an intervention aiming to oust the Assad regime, whilst most of them cut off diplomatic ties with Damascus. Furthermore, the West has surprisingly chosen not to supply arms to the Syrian opposition, which is not helping balance off the regime's offensive against the civilians.

In a regional context worsened by the existence of multiple and often colliding agendas, collective efforts of the Europeans have taken on rather a diffuse character, with a few prominent states such as France appearing more prepared to assume an active role in the negotiations on Syria. However, as Burke advises[7], Paris should first consult China,

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[5] Nicholas Burns, *Anchoring the Alliance*, Atlantic Council of United States report, 14 May 2012, http://www.acus.org/publication/anchoring-alliance.
[6] Edward Burke, "Time for France to take the lead on Syria", *Europe's World*, 29.05.2012.
[7] Ibid 6.

Russia and Iran to reach an initial agreement on what a transitional period would involve for Syria. Such an approach would not touch on the interests of the three countries, known for having aligned positions on similar topics, including during the UNSC vote on the no-fly zone over Libya. Yet, the approach proposed by Burke fails to see Turkey's positive record in its neighbourhood and the benefits the EU would gain from Ankara's sustained connections in the area. Though arguments against this proposal would naturally bring into discussion Turkey's bellicose stance towards Israel over the last years and the recent tensions over the Turkish airplane incident with Syria, Ankara's impressive spectrum of regional partners and openness towards controversial yet key actors such as Iran represent solid arguments in favour of a more sustained EU – Turkey dialogue on foreign policy issues, including crisis management, in the Middle East.

A fresh way for the EU to improve its crisis management strategy would have to include several instruments, such as an increased association of crisis management capabilities with well-calibrated economic incentives or, depending on the case, sanctions meant to induce a change of behaviour of the Syrian regime, in coordination with the US and Turkey. Whilst the violent toppling of the Assad regime remains an unlikely solution to be considered for ending the humanitarian crisis and the killings of civilians across the country, the EU and its Western partners need to find ways to alleviate the economic hardships faced by civilians.

The case of the present Syrian crisis presents an occasion to put to work one of the variables presented in the previous section: *opportunity seeking,* with the remark that a derived form is hereby introduced, namely that of *regional partner seeking.* By constructively and systematically engaging regional actors with a positive record in reaching out to troubled areas in the Middle East, such as Turkey, regional partner seeking may prove a useful strategy for the international community to pursue continued political dialogue and transition to a democratic regime. In the past, Ankara did a good job mediating between Syria and Israel, so as to avoid a potential conflict outbreak (Aras and Karakaya 2008). This mediation role can fall into the *region mobilising* variable mentioned previously.

A multi-level strategy, bringing together Turkey, the EU and other countries in the Middle East, alongside the Western actors represented in the UNSC, would be very much needed.

When looking at the political and military turmoil in Europe's Southern neighbourhood, marked by a surprising demand for deployment of force from the Arab League, the need for the EU to assume a more prominent role becomes even more pressing. This role may be facilitated by Turkey but this is no easy task for either party, which is why a multilateralist approach is again needed. Such a strategy should serve to go beyond the strategic relations or interests already pursued between the various countries in the region (Lesser, Alessandri, 2011).

The EU needs Turkey to better pursue its objectives in terms of improved crisis management in its Southern neighbourhood, just as much as Ankara needs Brussels as a dialogue partner in the region. Both the EU and Turkey face important challenges in constructively engaging one another in the Middle East, and relations with the United States also need to be part of the equation. Neither Turkey nor the EU acting individually

can deliver promising results in the Middle East, and after the Libyan episode this has become even more obvious. That is why Europe needs Ankara and the other way around.

So far, the EU has proven mostly incapable of looking beyond the issues arising from Turkey's EU membership application, with a view to building up a constructive dialogue on the Middle East with Ankara. As the United States are increasingly disengaging from the region, it is even more imperative that the EU and Turkey focus on the strategic dialogue between them, rather than on issues dividing them. Under such circumstances, Alessandri and Walker point out to the danger of leaving the Middle East area without Western support exactly when it most needs it, as they struggle to allow for the breakthrough of democratic movements[8].

The same risk exists for the Turkish – US relations, which have been plagued in time by many misunderstandings. The strategic dialogue between the US and Turkey risks being undermined by the tensions arising in their bilateral relations. According to Larrabee and Lesser (2003), it is up to the Turkish political elites to choose between continued and consolidated democratization and a more inward-looking perspective, also given the complex array of internal and external challenges. The answer found by the Turkish establishment seems to be multilateralism, in its relations with external partners, which however, has not proven deprived of risks.

Despite the positive record of regional cooperation already initiated by Ankara, and the results yielded by the conceptual designs presented above, serious arguments have been raised as to its inability to respond swiftly to the rapidly unfolding events in the region, especially in Syria's case.

Taking into consideration the latest developments in the Middle East, Turkey has increasingly become a country of immigration, attracting numerous refugees as well as workers from across neighbouring countries and from as far as the Balkans. Another important factor worth taking into consideration is the demographic one. The ageing of population is not a problem faced only by developed economies. Even Turkey is starting to display some signs of decreasing population growth, although at a slower pace than Europe (Lesser, Alessandri, 2011). On the contrary, populations in Northern Africa and the Middle East are mostly young, dynamic and motivated to seek work opportunities in more developed countries, including Turkey as well as in Southern EU states.

Under these conditions, a long-term crisis management strategy should be put in place between the EU, Turkey and Middle Eastern countries, so as to encourage bilateral or even multilateral agreements in which migratory flows and demographic disparities can be handled more efficiently.

Over time, the European and Turkish perspectives on migration are likely to converge, in spite of the persistence of the Europeans' perception of the large-scale Turkish migration to Europe. In this sense, it is important to establish which are the common elements in the EU's and Turkey's perceptions of security and directions in which they could evolve in the future (Alessandri 2011).

Turkey has been seeking to play a more dynamic role in the peace process for years, distinguishing itself in the past as a mediator between Israel and Syria, though relations

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[8] Emiliano Alessandri and Joshua W. Walker, *The Missing Transatlantic Link: Trilateral Cooperation in the Post-Ottoman Space*, On Turkey series, German Marshall Fund, 17 May 2012.

with the two have deteriorated dramatically in the recent period. Several analysts of the security environment of the Mediterranean region (Tocci, 2011) have thoroughly analyzed Ankara's potential both as a rising regional actor as well as an essential mediator between contrasting sides in the area.

It is useful to look at Turkey's increased value to EU missions in the field of crisis management cooperation, from the perspective of its revitalized relations with the Middle Eastern neighbours over the last decades, and capacity to step in and establish ties where European diplomacy does not succeed. The country's historical, cultural and religious ties to its Middle Eastern neighbours render Turkey a natural bridge between Western partners and the Middle East. On the other hand, tensions between the EU and Ankara with regard to its membership prospects cannot be overlooked, especially since no positive breakthrough can be expected to occur.

Moreover, Turkey's security concerns over improved crisis management in the Middle East seem to align with Europe's. Though Ankara is aware of the multiple regional identities and agendas overlapping in their shared neighbourhood, security is not viewed as a zero-sum game, where one country's safety may increase at the expense of another country's well-being. Apart from the foreign policy and security agenda, the economic interests are equally important for the EU and Turkey as the former is Ankara's most important trade partner. At the same time, Turkey is the non-EU country with the most significant contribution to CDSP operations.

There are many ways in which the EU and Turkey can work and support each other to fight and alleviate the negative consequences of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria. These instruments include concerted actions to absorb incoming Syrian refugees moving towards the Turkish border. At the same time, post-conflict reconstruction will need further cooperation from both Brussels and Ankara to provide the needed aid for development to Syria. It is not a coincidence that development assistance has become an important preoccupation for both Europeans and Turkey, as a foreign policy instrument.

EU's capability to exert its role in terms of peace and security enforcement in its neighbourhood depends not only on its resources but also on the manner in which it manages to control its sophisticated level of command structures. In spite of the numerous and diverse missions deployed under the CSDP, the EU still lacks military planning capabilities. EU-led operations are in dire need for the following elements to improve: capacity to anticipate, prevent and deter conflicts in Europe's neighbourhood. All of these also still depend heavily on the national priorities and long-term strategies of member states[9].

The implications of the Syrian civil conflict for the regional security environment are serious and should not be neglected either by Europe or by its regional partners in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Conclusion

The existence of an Europeanisation perspective has constituted a powerful engine for stimulating the modernisation of the Turkish society and state reform, which, coupled

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[9] Luk Van Langenhove, "What role for the EU in the field of peace and security?" 25.06. 2012, *Europe's World.*

with increased globalisation and urbanisation trends, have turned it into a unique social and political project design. While the initial references to the post-Ottomanism legacy as a way to explain Turkey's current foreign policy discourse may have left many European, American and even Middle East researchers or decision-makers questioning the genuine motives behind it, the constructivist variables used to assess Ankara's interaction instruments (*issue leading, opportunity seeking, region mobilising and region organising*) point out towards a complex system of internal and external factors which gradually moulded the country's vision of its role in the region and how it may best pursue its foreign policy objectives.

Turkey's present foreign policy discourse and vision of the world appear as the sum of both internal and external factors, with democratization and globalisation as main driving elements for the state's modernisation. The entrenchment of secular and modernity-inspired principles in Turkish administrative and political system have become landmarks of its regional identity as well as the main attributes differentiating it from the rest of the Muslim countries. Turkey's identity building and orientation towards secular modernity has so far proven to be worthy of attention, rendering it into a valuable lesson to be taken into account.

As shown in the previous chapters, the analytical categories used to investigate Turkey's modes of international engagement do not exclude each other, leaving room for further exploration and theoretical elaboration. Turkey's economic instruments of international engagement are particularly well-developed and influential, both in relation to its Arab neighbours and the EU. Turkish export-oriented development policy constitutes the necessary basis for supporting the country's quest for regional influence.

The potential of *opportunity seeking* as a variable is explored as part of a multilateral approach seeking to draw possible lessons for EU's relations with its Southern neighbourhood and not only. Turkey's functionalist approach and positive record as a region mobiliser and organiser may provide an inspiration for pursuing varied forms of cooperation in Europe's immediate neighbourhood, especially in order to prevent a spill-over of the Syrian crisis.

The Turkish leadership and their European counterparts face complex common challenges in their shared neighbourhood, such as migration and security- related concerns over potential spill-over of the Arab Spring events unfolding in countries such as Syria. Coordinated measures are yet to be developed. They should ideally range from common economic sanctions to shared instruments in the field of migration and humanitarian crisis management: organising post-conflict reconstruction and drawing up multi-level strategies of regional engagement. Turkey's performance as a regional hub and region mobiliser is rather positive, though perfectible.

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