EU AND TURKISH NEIGHBORHOOD POLICIES: COMMON GOALS

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Abstract

Turkey and the European Union (EU) share the same neighborhood in the Mediterranean, Middle East, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus regions, with the same objectives of creating a ring of friends, minimizing threats to their social, political, economic, and energy interests, and ensuring stability. This paper aims to explain the relations of Turkey and the EU with the shared neighborhood countries; to analyze the compatibility of Turkish and EU neighborhood policies; and to demonstrate the need for these two actors to work together in order to achieve credible results in their neighborhood policies. I argue that coordinated Turkish and EU neighborhood policies may bring better results than individualistic approaches, bringing the credibility that the EU needs the most in these regions as well as opening channels of communication in a constructive manner. This relationship is believed to be mutually beneficial as long as Turkey and the EU both maximize their capabilities in these regions.

Keywords: *European Neighborhood Policy, Turkey, shared neighborhood, the Mediterranean, Middle East, the Black Sea and the Caucasus regions, Russia.*

Introduction

The EU aims to encourage regional cooperation, promote human rights, democracy, and good governance, prevent conflicts, and fight against international crime in its neighborhood. With these objectives the EU has been formulating new policies since the mid-1990s dealing with its neighbors in the southern Mediterranean and northern borders. As enlargement continued, the number of these policies and the regions the EU concentrated on increased, i.e. the Black Sea. Especially with the 2004 enlargement, the EU was hard-pressed to formulate an overhauling policy on its neighborhood to deeper relations with all the neighbors and develop tailor-made relations with each country.[1]

In 2003 the EU initiated the neighborhood policy (ENP) by publishing the Commission Communication Paper on Wider Europe and, in 2004, its first Strategy Paper on the European Neighborhood Policy. In the Communication Paper the objective of the EU has been framed as promoting "the regional and subregional cooperation and integration that are preconditions for

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[1] Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and ENP. See the European Commission's website on European Neighbourhood Policy at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm (accessed November 7, 2010).

political stability, economic development and the reduction of poverty and social divisions".[2] In 2004, the Strategy Paper presented the vision of the ENP as involving "a ring of countries, sharing the EU's fundamental values and objectives, drawn into an increasingly close relationship, going beyond co-operation to involve a significant measure of economic and political integration." [3] The ENP covers all the non-EU participants in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (with the exception of Turkey), Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia. Under the ENP, the European Commission (hereinafter referred to as "the Commission") prepared country reports for all of the countries involved in the ENP, and then the ENP Action Plans were developed which define short- and medium-term (3–5 years) priorities. All the reforms that are advised by the Commission are supported through EC-funded financial and technical assistance.

In 2006, the Commission published a new paper focusing on the weaknesses of the policy, economic and trade relations, migration, people-to-people contacts, financial, political, and regional cooperation, while building a thematic dimension to the ENP.[4] A year later, the Commission started to work on new strategies on the eastern neighbors and the Black Sea countries. Two main papers came out: the Black Sea Synergy Paper and the Eastern Partnership. The Black Sea Synergy expressed the need for regional cooperation in the Black Sea region, to achieve increased stability and prosperity. The EU's 2007 Black Sea Synergy was very broad, both in terms of the content and the geographical space it covers, which made it very difficult to implement. At this point, the EU started to search for new ways to work with the region, and thus the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched in 2008. Although the EaP is concerned with the same region as the Black Sea Synergy, the EaP is a more concentrated and compact initiative than the Black Sea Synergy, and is a more ambitious partnership which aims to emphasize the need for a differentiated approach.[5] The EaP proposed new measures regarding integration into the EU economy, energy security, economic and social development, and mobility.[6] Although the intentions of the proposed partnership were accepted by the EU, the regional countries[7] which have been left out of the EaP, such as Russia and Turkey, expressed their objections. It has been the general belief that the policies which will be effective and successful should include

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[2] Communication from the Commission to the Council and European Parliament, "Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A new Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours", Brussels, March 11, 2003, p. 3, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf (accessed September 29, 2010).
[3] Communication from the Commission, "European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper", Brussels, December 12, 2004, p. 5, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/strategy/strategy_paper_en.pdf (accessed September 29, 2010).
[4] Themes that are included in the ENP are human rights issues; diversified transport thematic cooperation through international conventions, regional initiatives and policy dialogues as well as along major transnational axes; longstanding energy cooperation resulting in ongoing regional and bilateral energy initiatives; several environment cooperation processes and multilateral agreements; ongoing bilateral and regional trade negotiations; venues for cooperation in higher education and scientific research; and regular bilateral dialogues on social development priorities, as well as cooperation on employment and gender equality within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. For more information see *Non-Paper Expanding on the Proposals contained in the communication to the European Parliament and the Council on "Strengthening the ENP"* – COM 2006 726 Final of 4 December 2006, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/non-paper_thematic-dimension_en.pdf (September 29, 2010).
[5] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, "Eastern Partnership", Brussels, December 3, 2008, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0823:FIN:EN:PDF (accessed September 29, 2010).
[6] Ibid.
[7] The countries included in this partnership are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Russia and Turkey in the region. The EaP, as part of the ENP, could not include Turkey structurally, since it is a candidate country; however, Turkey criticized the policy and asked the Union to include Turkey and Russia, not as neighbors but as partners.[8]

The ENP is designed to tie the neighboring countries to the EU without promising EU membership. Therefore Turkey, as a candidate country aiming to be a full member of the Union, is not eligible to take part in the ENP. However, Turkey and Russia have been the main littoral states which have shaped Black Sea politics historically. These two countries thus wish to continue with their strategic roles in the region, while Turkey also wants to be an EU member. But defining Turkey as a neighbor and including it in the ENP would jeopardize Turkey's candidacy. Within this framework, both Russia and Turkey requested to be included in the EaP as partners, to be able to influence EU policy towards the region while stressing their special positions in the region.

Turkey and the EU, since they share borders, find themselves in disagreement over their specific policies towards the countries in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus. This paper has three main objectives in this framework; to explain the relations of Turkey and the EU with the shared neighborhood countries in the regions mentioned above; to analyze the compatibility of Turkish and EU neighborhood policies; and demonstrate the need for these two actors to work together in order to achieve credible results in their neighborhood policies. It is argued that due to the candidacy status of Turkey the EU is a determining element in Turkish foreign policy-making, while Turkey itself is a crucial element in the EU's neighborhood due to the cultural, political, economic, and commercial ties of Turkey to the regional countries in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus.

The Mediterranean and the Middle East

Turkey has been prioritizing its relations with the Mediterranean and the Middle Eastern countries in the last decade while trying to solve its problems with its Middle Eastern neighbors and increase relations with southern Mediterranean countries such as Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt. In particular, relations with Syria were developed in the 2000s. In the 1990s, water and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) were the main problems between the two countries. The cause of disagreement between Syria and Turkey was the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Those two rivers originate within Turkish borders, but they flow down to Syria and Iraq. Thus, these two rivers are the most important water resources for all three countries. When Turkey wanted to build the Southeast Anatolian Project (SAP) on the Euphrates, it became a problem with Syria. The demands of Syria were that the Euphrates and Tigris rivers should be recognized as international waters and the level of water being given by Turkey to Syria should be increased. Thus, Syria sought to discuss this issue under the UN framework; however, due to Turkey's objections this issue was not debated under the UN umbrella.[9]

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[8] Çiğdem Üstün, "Turkey and the European Neighbourhood Policy: the Black Sea Region", in *Turkey and the EU: The Process of Change and Neighbourhood*, eds. Atila Eralp and Çiğdem Üstün, (Ankara: Zeplin İletişim, 2009), 132.
[9] Yavuz Gökalp Yıldız, *Oyun içinde Oyun Büyük Ortadoğu* [Game within a Game: Greater Middle East], (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2004), 268.

However, as long as Abdullah Öcalan, leader of PKK, resided in Damascus,[10] and the terrorist activities of the PKK continued to find support in Syria, the water problem was not solved between these two countries.[11] A new era in relations between Turkey and Syria was initiated and negotiations on water started only after Öcalan's expulsion from Damascus in 1999. In 2007 the two countries signed the *Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation between Turkey and Syria* concerning politics and security, economy, and energy and water and deepening of the cooperation between the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) and the Syrian Oil Company and progress in visits and opinion exchange in the field of water were agreed. In addition, Turkey designed a "Three-Staged Plan" based on the fact that the Euphrates and the Tigris make up a single transboundary river system. The Plan envisaged the preparation of common inventories of water and land resources for a final allocation of water between the riparian states. Finally, in 2009, Turkey and Syria signed an agreement on lifting the visa between the two countries and also signed a bilateral cooperation accord under which top ministers from the two countries would meet each year. Therefore, it can be argued that the end of the terrorist threat and the increase in economic and trade links at the border helped to create good-neighborly relations, which improved the prospects for cultural, social and political relations as well.

Over the last decade Turkey has been trying to improve its relations with its southern neighbors. In the 1980s and the 1990s the Middle Eastern neighbors were perceived as the troubled areas and Turkey tried to refrain itself from being engaged in the conflicts in the region. However in the 2000s through its cultural, economic and trade links Turkey has been working hard to create a friendly environment in the region. Within the same framework, Turkey increased its economic and cultural relations with the southern Mediterranean countries, which led to agreements on ending the visa requirements with Libya, Jordan, and Tunisia as well. Moreover, Turkey and Iran have a visa agreement which allows their citizens to travel freely between the two countries. Therefore, Turkey can be seen as a hub country in a region that the EU is also trying to promote regional cooperation and free trade area.

Since the mid-1990s the EU has been working to establish a credible policy towards the Mediterranean region and trying to play an active role in efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and contributing to the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) as a member of the so-called Middle East Quartet (the US, the EU, Russia and the UN). It is argued that it is in the EU's self-interest to invest in stability and cooperation around its neighborhood,[12] and especially in the Mediterranean region due to its strategically essential position. Within this framework, in 1995 the EU initiated the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), better known as the Barcelona Process, with its Mediterranean neighbors. This new partnership's main aim was to create the means for dialogue, cooperation, peace, and stability between the EU and its southern Mediterranean countries while strengthening north-south relations and "south-south" interaction.[13] However, after the Barcelona Process was initiated, the end of the 1990s saw an

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[10] "Syria's role in our fight is very powerful and permanent." Hasan Cemal, *Kürtler* [Kurds], (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2004), 41.

[11] Hasan Cemal, *Kürtler* [Kurds], (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2004), 107.

[12] William Wallace, "Looking After the Neighbourhood: Responsibilities for the EU-25", *Notre Europe Policy Paper*, No. 4, July 2003, 19.

[13] Stephen C. Calleya, "Is the Barcelona Process Working? EU Policy in the Mediterranean", *ZEI Discussion Paper*, C 75, 2000, 8.

increase in conflicting relations throughout the Mediterranean region, while fault lines along a north-south and south-south axis have become more apparent,[14] developments in North Africa and the Middle East to which the EU has failed to react. Since then the EU has been attempting to inject dynamism into the Barcelona Process. As the EU enlarged, though, it needed a new policy to export stability and welfare to neighboring countries. In 2004 the EU launched the ENP, which aimed and increase the possibilities of cooperation in political and economic spheres, taking on the model of the accession process in order to offer its neighbors a deeper involvement in EU policies.[15] Even though the ENP does not promise EU membership to the partner countries, it offered "everything but the institutions".[16]

However, it has been noted that the inadequacy in the financial disbursement,[17] asymmetrical trade liberalization, collapse of the MEPP, inadequate encouragement for political reforms, ambiguity of the action plans, and limited funding allocated for promotion of human rights[18] prevented the successful implementation of the policies towards the Mediterranean region. In 2007 a new policy under the name of the Mediterranean Union was introduced by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, which was criticized heavily by Turkey since it has been presented as an alternative to Turkey's potential EU membership. The other member-states' criticisms centered on the risk of reducing the effectiveness of the already established neighborhood policies in the Mediterranean region. Furthermore, the other actors such as the civil society organizations both in the EU member-states and southern Mediterranean countries which are involved in the Mediterranean policies of the EU for over a decade were drawing attention to the possibility of duplication of policies and initiatives[19] while undermining the work of Barcelona Process.[20]

As a result of the criticisms the Mediterranean Union has gone through modifications and launched under the Barcelona Process as Union for the Mediterranean. Turkey has participated in this process and emphasized its improved relations with the Mediterranean and the Middle Eastern countries and its importance as an asset in the development of the ENP and creation of ring of friends in the region.

Within this framework, Turkey also emphasized its role in the Middle East and the resolution of conflict between Israel and Palestine. In relations with Israel, Turkey's main concern has been the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the peace process. In the 1980s and 1990s , Turkey tried to

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[14] Ibid., 5.

[15] Richard Youngs, "Ten Years of the Barcelona Process: A Model for Supporting Arab Reform?", *FRIDE Working Paper*, No. 2, January 2005, 10.

[16] Romano Prodi, 'A Wider Europe - A Proximity Policy as the Key to Stability', Sixth ECSA-World Conference. Jean Monnet Project, Brussels, December 5/6, 2002, http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/02/619&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en (accessed September 29, 2010).

[17] William Wallace, "Looking After the Neighbourhood: Responsibilities for the EU-25", *Notre Europe Policy Paper*, No. 4, July 2003, 17.

[18] Richard Youngs, "Ten Years of the Barcelona Process: A Model for Supporting Arab Reform?", *FRIDE Working Paper*, No. 2, January 2005, 8.

[19] Timo Behr and Ruth H. Santini, "Comment: Sarkazoy's Mediterranean union plans should worry Brussels", *EU Observer,* November 12, 2007.

[20] Roberto Aliboni et al., "Putting the Mediterranean Union in Perspective", *EuroMesco Paper* No. 68, June 2008.

stay out of the conflict between Israel and PA as much as possible. However, after Turkey's candidacy to the EU was announced, and after the accession negotiations started, Turkey started to perceive the Palestine question as an area of responsibility and opportunity to play a constructive role in the region.[21] However, in the last decade it is clear that Turkey's foreign policy has moved more towards Palestine and some disputes with Israel have been observed in the political arena. But one should observe that although the political and diplomatic problems occupied the agenda the economic and trade relations as well as the military and security relations continued during the Turkey-Israel diplomatic struggles. In 2009 the extent of bilateral trade between Israel and Turkey was $2.5 billion[22] and Turkey is listed as one of the main trading partners of Israel both in imports and exports.[23]

Certainly, problems with some of the neighbors continue in the region, i.e. Iraq. Both in the Gulf and the Iraq Wars, Turkey has been determined that the military intervention in the region would disturb the balance of power in Iraq, and ethnic conflicts would increase the instability in the whole Middle East. Especially the Kurdish separatist groups in Northern Iraq worried Turkey, and territorial integrity has been the main priority of the Turkish government during and after the Iraq War. The possibility of the disintegration of Iraq and the formation of an independent Kurdish state is perceived as one of the biggest security threats by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Turkish Armed Forces in the region towards Turkey.[24] Still, this possibility shapes the relations between Iraq and Turkey as well as the USA. Turkey as a neighboring and a regional country, opposes to the idea of a federal system in Iraq, which may encourage the other Kurdish groups in the region for more autonomy. Within this framework, Turkey emphasizes the importance of territorial and political integrity of Iraq in negotiations with Iraq and the USA.

During the 2000s Turkey has shown an increasing ability to use its soft power while emphasizing the necessity of political and economic reform in the Islamic world, and the promotion of harmony between different cultures and civilizations. Turkey's approach to the Mediterranean and the Middle East demonstrated some resemblance to EU's policies in pursuing a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; promoting political and economic reform in the region; working toward peaceful stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq; and finding a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear crisis.[25] In this context, Turkey as a regional country which has close cultural ties with the societies in the Mediterranean and the Middle East is eager to work towards the main goals of the ENP, such as decreasing socio-economic problems, increasing regional cooperation in economic, social, and political spheres, and bringing stability to the region.

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[21] Bülent Aras and Rabia K. Polat, 'Turkey and the Middle East: frontiers of the new geographic imagination', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 61:4 (2007):478.

[22] Ora Coren, *Turkey hints at review of Israel trade, but no sign yet of boycott*, http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/business/turkey-hints-at-review-of-israel-trade-but-no-sign-yet-of-boycott-1.293659 (accessed September 29, 2010).

[23] DG Trade, *Israel – EU Bilateral Trade and Trade with the World*, http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113402.pdf (accessed September 29, 2010).

[24] Çiğdem Üstün, *Turkey and European Security Defence Policy: Compatibility and Security Cultures in a Globalised World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 107.

[25] Meliha Benli Altunışık, "Turkey-EU Relations: Creating New Synergies in the Middle East", in Atila Eralp, Michele Comelli, and Çiğdem Üstün (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy and the Southern Mediterranean: Drawing from the Lessons of Enlargement* (Ankara: METU Press, 2009), 151-52.

The Black Sea and the Caucasus

The Black Sea and the Caucasus were inaccessible to Turkey during the Cold War era. It was only possible for Turkey to establish relations with the countries in the region after the end of the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War, Turkey felt confused in its foreign affairs and initially, she tried to take the opportunity to establish relations with the Turkic-speaking nations in the region, in the Caucasus and the Central Asia such as Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, with which Turkey also has cultural, religious, and ethnic ties.[26] Turkey's main aim has been positioning itself in the centre of regional cooperation in the Black Sea region connecting the Middle East, Caucasus, the Balkans and Europe.[27] In the 1990s Turkey's main aim was to create a zone of influence to lead the regional countries while increasing the EU's relations with those countries and increase her influence in the region and beyond.[28]

Nevertheless, the international situation in the 1990s was not suitable for Turkey's aims in the region, which are characterized by a) the ethnic separatist movements by Chechens and Kurds, b) possible NATO bases in Georgia and Azerbaijan, c) change in the naval balance in the Black Sea, d) Russia's peacekeeper role in the CIS, e) natural gas and oil pipelines, and f) regime regarding the Straits created a mutual mistrust towards each other.

In the 2000s the relations in the region, especially with Russia, were improved, and the EU's increased attention to the region created better opportunities for cooperation for Turkey in the Black Sea and the Caucasus. In the Black Sea region the EU emphasizes gas and oil projects, electricity network interconnections, the Black Sea Ring Corridor, the Black Sea Pan European Transport Area,[29] TRACECA[30], linking Central Asia and the Caucasus, and projects on environmental protection. The Bucharest Convention and Black Sea Environmental Program attracted attention, leading to a Communication published by the Commission on the environment in the Danube and Black Sea Region.[31] In addition to energy, environment, and transport, the region is crucial to the EU's efforts in combating organized crime, illegal trafficking in drugs, people, and arms, corruption, and money laundering. Therefore, the EU's main interests in the region can be categorized as energy security, environmental issues, frozen conflicts, and cooperative measures in combating new security threats, including human security.

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[26] Necdet Pamir, "Energy and Pipeline Security in The Black Sea and Caspian Sea Regions: Challenges and Solutions", in *The Black Sea Region Cooperation and Security Building* , ed. Oleaksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze, East West Institute (NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2004), 142.

[27] Çiğdem Üstün, "Turkish Perception on the Black Sea Region: A Historical Analysis" *Valahian Journal of Historical Studies*, vol. 9 (2008): 67-83.

[28] Bülent Gokay, "The Politics of Oil in the Back Sea Area: Turkey and Regional power Rivalries", in *Politics of the Black Sea Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, ed. Tunç Aybak (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 18.

[29] It promotes a new link between East and West by facilitating the overland transport of goods from Europe to Asia and vice versa. Please see http://www.mt.gov.tr/eubak/projects/international for more information on transport projects in the Black Sea region.

[30] TRACECA program is an EU funded (partly) project on construction of a transport corridor between Europe, Caucasus and Asia.

[31] Communication from the Commission*, Environmental cooperation in the Danube – Black Sea region.* Brussels, 2001 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2001:0615:FIN:EN:PDF (accessed September 29, 2010).

Among all the EU-initiated projects, Turkey has been primarily interested in TRACECA and became a part of the program in 2002. Turkey places special emphasis on this program with a view to increasing its share and role in regional transport while decreasing the traffic at the Bosporus and Dardanelles.[32] Turkey believes that among all the projects and programs, the TRACECA is the most effectual one for Turkey to increase foreign direct investment, tourism, regional development, hard-currency income, and employment.[33] In addition, Turkey is a part of the Black Sea Cross Border initiative and some cities at the Black Sea coast, i.e. Istanbul, Tekirdağ, Kocaeli, Zonguldak, Kastamonu, Samsun and Trabzon, are covered by the Black Sea Basin Program.[34]

Within this framework, Turkey placed special importance on furthering cooperation in the Black Sea region while emphasizing the value of rule of law, democratic transition, and respect for human rights, and establishing closer relations with the West, especially the EU.[35] Turkey focused on energy agreements with the regional countries one of which has been the construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. Although Russia has objected to this pipeline due to the fact that it helps the regional countries to bypass Russia in their energy policies, Turkey insisted on this pipeline, believing that it would push Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey towards stabler relations in the long run.

Turkey's position on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict has been rather different than its balanced position towards Georgia. Although Turkey supports the importance of an international response to the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, it has been in close relations with Azerbaijan, which prevented its ability to act as a mediator in the OSCE Minsk Group, even though it wanted to in the early 1990s. Especially after the embargo on Armenia and the suspension of diplomatic relations with Armenia, Turkey became an actor rather than a mediator in this conflict.[36] In the 1990s Turkey perceived Armenian-Greek rapprochement as a threat to its security concerns.[37] However, in 2000 Turkey and Armenia took some steps towards normalizing relations, such as the establishment of the Turkish-Armenian Peace Commission. After the 2008 August war in Georgia, Turkey took further steps towards establishing a platform for the regional countries under the auspices of the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform to create positive relations between Armenia, Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Russia. It is argued that the normalization of relations between Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan and the resolution of the existing conflicts will bring economic prosperity to the region and increase the export-import

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[32] Mustafa Kaya, "TRACECA Dışında Kalamayız" [We cannot stay out of TRACECA], *UND'nin Sesi Dergisi* [Voice of UND], 2003, http://www.traceca. org.tr/und1.htm (accessed September 29, 2010).

[33] Bengi Pınar Aytaç, Fazıl Çelik, and Funda Türe, *Ülkemiz Ulaştırma Politikalarının Doğu Karadeniz Bölgesi'nin Kalkınması üzerindeki Etkileri* [The effect of our country's transport policies on the eastern Black Sea region's development], Paper presented at the 7th Transportation Conference by Civil Engineers, September 19, 2007, Istanbul, http://www.e-kutuphane.imo.org.tr/pdf/3097.pdf (accessed September 29, 2010).

[34] European Commission, *Cross-border cooperation programmes 2007–2013*, Brussels, 2007 http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/docs/cbc_russia_2007_en.pdf (accessed September 29, 2010).

[35] Çiğdem Üstün, "Europeanisation of foreign policy: The Case of Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Black Sea Region", *Journal of Southeast Europe and Black Sea Studies*, 10:2 (2010): 232.

[36] Ibid.

[37] S. Laçiner, *Türkler ve Ermeniler Bir Uluslararası İlişkiler Çalışması* [Turks and Armenians: An international relations reader], (Ankara: USAK Yayınları, 2005).

capabilities of these three countries, fostering trade in some important commodities, such as the export of gas from Azerbaijan to Armenia and of electricity from Armenia to Turkey.[38]

In the south Caucasus, Turkey aims to increase its economic and trade links, become a leading regional actor, and make itself invaluable to the EU in its relations with the Black Sea regional states. However, although the end of the Cold War brought new opportunities, opened new markets and created new allies, the region also means new risks, new conflict areas and new problems. Therefore, Turkey is making an effort to act together with the EU and spread the EU's policies and models of cooperation regarding economic, cultural, and social policies.

Russia

Russia is an important neighbor for Turkey and the EU, although it is not included in the ENP. Turkey's relations with Russia have increased, especially during the 1980s due to the Turkish enterprises' efforts to find an alternative to the western markets. In the 1990s, political relations with Russia have suffered due to Turkey's efforts to reconnect with the other Black Sea and the Caucasus countries. Russia perceived this as a threat to its own sphere of influence. The agreement on the BTC pipeline also had some negative effects on the relations such as political tension between Turkey and Russia. However, trade and economic links between Russia and Turkey continued to increase during the 1990s and continued into the 2000s. In 1997, exports to Russia totaled nearly 2.1 billion USD, and in 2009 this value increased to 3.2 billion. This growing trend is evident in imports as well: in 1997 imports were almost 2.2 billion USD and increased to 19.4 billion in 2009.[39]

In the 1990s Russia stated that it is one of the biggest powers in the world and needs to protect its interests in its neighborhood while at the same time strengthening its ties to the East and the West.[40] In this context, energy relations between Russia and the neighboring regions stood out. The energy trade between Russia and Turkey started in the 1980s and, in line with the EU's policies on securing energy flow from energy producing countries to energy consuming countries, continued to grow, including natural gas, LNG (liquefied natural gas), and petrol. The economic reconciliation and the increase in energy relations between Turkey and Russia helped these two countries to overcome the disagreements on Armenia, Kurdish and Chechen separatist groups, disputes over Turkish Straits. In 2010 the relations were furthered and in order to facilitate trade the visas have been lifted between Russian Federation and Turkish Republic.

The EU places special importance on its relations with Russia, since it is the EU's third biggest trading partner, with Russian supplies of oil and gas making up a large percentage of Russia's exports to Europe. EU bases its cooperation with Russia on four main areas economic issues and the environment; Freedom, Security and Justice; External Security; and Research and Education

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[38] Evgeny Palyakov, "Changing Trade Patterns after Conflict Resolution in South Caucasus", *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, No 2593, April 2001: 36.

[39] Turkish Institute of Statistics, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?tb_id=12&ust_id=4 (accessed September 29, 2010)

[40] Erhan Büyükakıncı, "Soğuk Savaştan Günümüze Türkiye-Rusya İlişkileri [Turkey – Russia Relations from Cold War till today], in *Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi* [Analysis of Turkish Foreign Policy], ed. Faruk Sönmezoğlu (Istanbul: Der Yayınları), 2004: 695.

under the "Common Spaces" title[41]. Relations between the EU and Russia affect the whole of Eastern Europe and the Black Sea regions, as well as the Caucasus. The EU and Russia established institutional joint structures, bilateral agreements, strategies, and policies. However EU could not still create a common policy towards Russia which allows the individual member-states to pursue their own independent policies towards Russia. Therefore, reconciliation between the EU and Russia could not be achieved yet which prevents free trade area to be established. Moreover, energy issues are still debated and EU could not agree on the reciprocity clause regarding the energy charter.[42] Energy is the main issue between the EU and Russia, since 50 per cent of the EU's energy is imported from Russia and 75 per cent of Russia's export revenue depends directly on the single European energy market. This interdependence assumed to create a partnership however, the mistrust towards Russia especially among the eastern bloc in the EU, issues rising due to the problems in implementation of human rights, democratic governance and rule of law in Russia prevents the EU to identify Russia as a partner and sign credible bilateral agreements.

Regarding its role in EU-Russia relations, Turkey puts its efforts to be the regional mediator power similar to the other regions, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus. In particular, Turkey is trying to take part in the energy relations between Europe and Russia, emphasizing its stable economic, commercial, political, and energy relations with Russia, and suggests that it would serve as a perfect hub by bypassing the eastern bloc countries which have difficult relations with Russia.

Conclusion

Both Turkey and the EU are aiming to have a "ring of friends" in their shared neighborhood so as to minimize the threats to social, political, economic, and energy interests, while ensuring stability factors in the Mediterranean, Middle East, Black Sea, and the Caucasus regions. It is argued here that in order to achieve their mutual objectives in the neighboring regions, there is a need for coordination between Turkey and the EU.

Turkey has been trying to encourage regional cooperation in its region since the end of the Cold War. However, due to the international and domestic adversities it had been difficult for Turkey to be engaged in intense relations with its neighbors. In the 2000s it has been more feasible for Turkey to increase political and economic relations with regional countries such as Syria, Egypt,
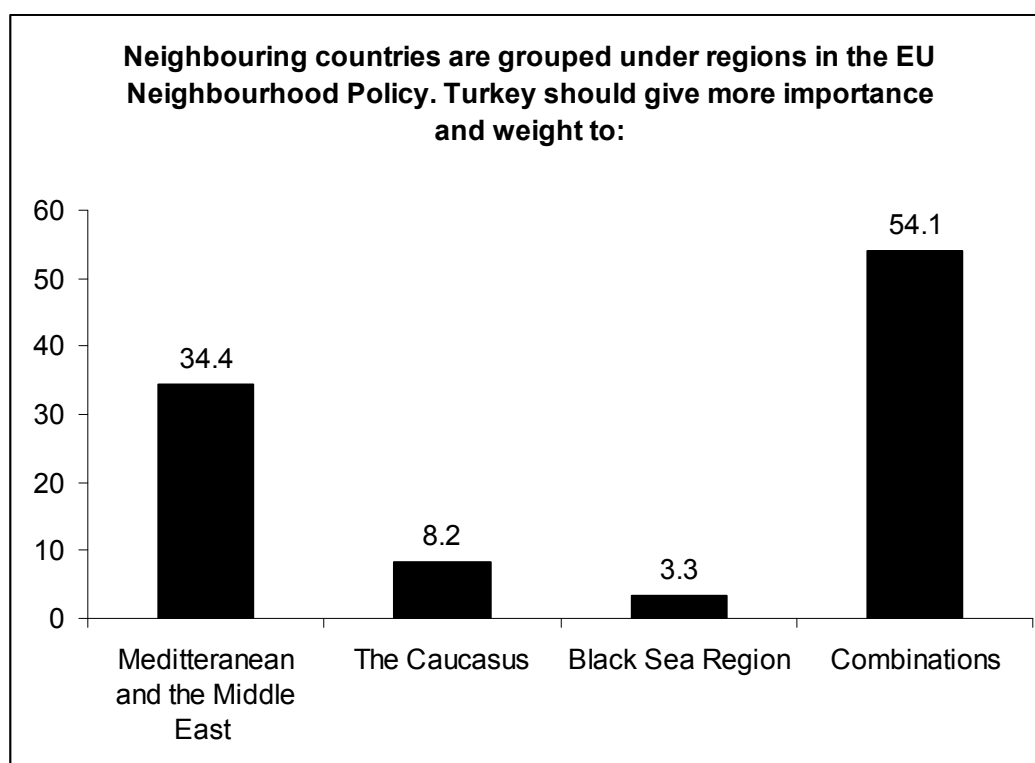
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[41] 15th EU-Russia Summit, Moscow, *Road Map on the Common Economic Space 2005*, http://www.russianmission.eu/userfiles/file/road_map_on_the_common_economic_space_2005_english.pdf, (accessed September 29, 2010); *Road Map on the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice 2005*, http://www.russianmission.eu/userfiles/file/road_map_on_the_common_space_of_freedom,_security_and_justice_2005_english.pdf, (accessed September 29, 2010); *Road Map on the Common Space of External Security 2005*, http://www.russianmission.eu/userfiles/file/road_map_on_the_common_space_of_external_security_2005_english.pdf, (accessed September 29, 2010); and *Road Map on the Common Space of Research and Education, Including Cultural Aspects* 2005, http://www.russianmission.eu/userfiles/file/road_map_on_the_common_space_of_research_and_education_2005_english.pdf (accessed September 29, 2010).
[42] Thomas Gomart, 'EU-Russia Relations toward a Way out of Depression', July 2008, http://www.ifri.org/files/Russie/Gomart_EU_Russia.pdf (accessed September 29, 2010).

Lebanon, Georgia, and Russia. This has been possible, first, due to the changes in the international agenda; second, due to the involvement of the EU in these regions through the ENP; and, third, due to Turkey's EU candidacy, which created opportunities for Turkey in the regions where the ENP has been initiated.

Within this framework, Turkey as an EU candidate wants to use its geostrategic location. Turkey presents its cultural ties, economic and trade relations, and the potential to be the EU's energy hub as important assets to the ENP. In parallel, Turkish Elite Survey conducted in 2009 under the Strenthening and Integrating Academic Networks (SInAN) project, demonstrated that Turkish MPs[43] emphasize the importance of Turkey and believe that Turkey should intensify relations with the Mediterranean, Middle East, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus without any differentiation in order to increase its role as economic, energy and trade hub in the region.

Neighbouring countries are grouped under regions in the EU Neighbourhood Policy. Turkey should give more importance and weight to:

Source: Sait Aksit, Özgehan Şenyuva, and Çiğdem Üstün, MYTHS AND ELITES, Turkish Elite Survey 2009: Initial Findings, Centre for European Studies-Middle East Technical University: Ankara, 2009

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[43] The Turkish Elite Survey was conducted by the Center for European Studies in 2009 under the *SInAN - Strengthening and Integrating Academic Networks* project funded by the European Union under the "Promotion of Civil Society Dialogue between the EU and Turkey: Universities Grant Scheme." As part of the Turkish Elite Survey, a total of 62 Members of Parliament (MPs) – out of a total of 550 MPs in the TGNA – were interviewed in the period between June and December 2009. The interviews were done face-to-face, with a close-ended questionnaire. Each interview took, on average, 40 minutes. As for the 62 interviewed Turkish MPs, the sample was selected proportionate to the number of party seats. In other words, the number of MPs from different parties reflects the distribution of seats in the assembly among the parties.

The research showed that the policy makers in the TGNA believe in the necessity of multi-regional approach in conducting Turkish foreign policy. The general understanding is that Turkey should continue furthering its relations with the neighboring countries that Turkey as a strong regional mediating power would be an important asset for the Union to achieve its aim of creating a 'ring of friends' in its neighborhood. In this perspective I argue that Turkish and EU's shared neighborhood policies may bring better results than the individualistic approaches in these regions. However, this can be achieved only if Turkey sees a credible potential for itself to be a full member of the Union. The prolongation of Turkey's accession to the EU would decrease the enthusiasm of Turkey to align with the EU and its neighborhood policies, which may jeopardize the benefits that EU can get in its neighborhood through Turkey's cultural, political, social, economic and trade links with Turkey's neighbors. Turkish and EU close relationship in the neighborhood policies would bring the credibility that the EU needs the most in these regions, while opening the communication channels in a constructive manner. This relationship is believed to be mutually beneficial as long as both Turkey and the EU make the maximum of their potentials in these regions.