

**THE RECENT UKRAINIAN CRISIS AND THE RE-ADVENT OF THE ESDP DEBATE: A
RETROSPECTIVE REGARD TO THE ESDP AND DETERMINANTS OF THE TURKISH FOREIGN
POLICY ON THE ISSUE BETWEEN 1990s-2000s***

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Makale Geliş Tarihi:04/07/2024

Makale Kabul Tarihi: 15/10/2024

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi

Atıf: Bedir, Ö. (2024). The Recent Ukrainian Crisis and the Re-Advent of the ESDP Debate: A Retrospective Regard to the ESDP and Determinants of the Turkish Foreign Policy on the Issue Between 1990s-2000s. *Hatay Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 21(54), s. 131-158

Abstract

The "European Security and Defense Identity" (ESDI) and the "European Security and Defense Policy" (ESDP) have been debated ardently since the early 90s. The ESDI/ESDP has been a topic that closely interested Türkiye. The formulation process of ESDI/ESDP was a source of tension among the countries which had different visions on the issue. The ESDI/ESDP was developing within NATO and simultaneously within the EU. As a result, two opposing tendencies have emerged: while the Atlanticist vision wanted to limit the ESDI/ESDP within NATO; the European vision sought to act more independently vis-à-vis NATO and the United States. Following the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022, discussions on establishing an operational European army, and developing a more efficient ESDP have been debated frequently by the European countries' political and military elites. Since its inception, the ESDI/ESDP has been viewed as a vital issue for the Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP), and full accession to the ESDP mechanisms constituted a significant objective for the Turkish diplomacy.

In this article, the historical evolution of the ESDI/ESDP will be discussed, and a classification will be made between the explicit and implicit reasons that shaped the TFP regarding the issue. In this context, Türkiye's proximity to conflict zones, the protection of its acquired rights within WEU, its problems with Greece, the prospective accession of the Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus to the EU, and the potential threats it posed to Türkiye's national security interests will be examined.

Keywords: *European Security and Defense Policy, EU, NATO, Turkish Foreign Policy, Western European Union.*

- In this study, all the rules specified in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed. None of the actions specified in the second section of the directive, "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", were carried out.

- No potential conflicts of interest are declared with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

UKRAYNA KRİZİ ve AGSP: AGSP KONUSUNA RETROSPEKTİF BİR BAKIŞ ve 1990-2000 YILLARI ARASINDA TÜRK DIŞ POLİTİKASININ BU KONUDAKİ BELİRLEYİCİLERİ

Öz

“Avrupa Güvenlik ve Savunma Kimliği” (AGSK) ile “Avrupa Güvenlik ve Savunma Politikası” (AGSP) kavramları 90’lı yılların başından itibaren BAB (Batı Avrupa Birliği) NATO, AB gibi uluslararası örgütlerin yanı sıra Türkiye’yi de yakından ilgilendiren güncel bir mesele olmuştur. AGSK/AGSP’nin inşası, konu hakkında farklı vizyonları olan ülkeler arasında hararetli tartışmalara sebebiyet vermiştir. AGSK/AGSP bir taraftan Atlantik İttifakı içinde, diğer taraftan eşzamanlı olarak Atlantik İttifakı dışında, diğer bir deyişle AB içerisinde de gelişme göstermiştir. Zaman içinde konuya ilişkin olarak iki karşıt eğilim ortaya çıkmıştır: Atlantikçi vizyon, AGSK/AGSP’yi NATO içinde sınırlandırmak isterken; Avrupalı vizyon ise askeri konularda NATO ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri karşısında daha müstakil hareket edebilme arayışı içerisine girmiştir. 2022 yılında başlayan Ukrayna krizinin ardından, operasyonel bir Avrupa ordusu kurulması ve etkin bir AGSP geliştirilmesine yönelik tartışmalar yeniden ve artan bir şekilde Avrupa ülkelerinin siyasi gündeminde yer bulmaya başlamıştır. AGSK/AGSP, ilk tartışılmaya başlandığı dönemden itibaren Türk dış politikası için hayati bir konu olarak görülmüş ve Türk diplomasisinin ulusal çıkarlarını korumaya yönelik uzun vadeli hedefleri arasında önemli bir yere sahip olmuştur.

Bu makalede, AGSK ve AGSP’nin tarihsel gelişimi incelenerek, retrospektif bir bakış açısıyla Türkiye’nin AGSK/AGSP politikasını şekillendiren gerekçeler ve stratejiler ele alınacaktır. Bu bağlamda Türk dış politikasını şekillendiren açık ve örtülü gerekçeler arasında bir sınıflandırma yapılarak, açık gerekçeler başlığı altında Türkiye’nin çatışma bölgelerine yakınlığı ve BAB içindeki kazanımlarının korunması konuları irdelenecektir. Örtülü gerekçeler başlığı altında ise, Yunanistan ve GKRY faktörleri değerlendirilerek, Türkiye’nin çıkarları için oluşturdukları tehditlere değinilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AB, Avrupa Güvenlik ve Savunma Politikası, Batı Avrupa Birliği, NATO, Türk Dış Politikası.

Introduction

Following the Russian military intervention against Ukraine in February 2022, the debates for a more unified and efficient ESDP (European Security and Defense Policy) have come to the fore more frequently on the EU's and its members' political agenda. The ESDP has constituted a significant topic for Turkish Foreign Policy as well since its inception in the 1990s. Türkiye considered that its security interests were closely intertwined with the EU and the ESDP.

States take measures and react when their national interests are at stake. These measures largely depend on the political and cultural context in which the foreign policy is formulated (Brailard, 1977, p. 91). Therefore, the Turkish foreign policy towards the ESDP should be assessed within the context of the Turkish-EU relations and Türkiye’s intention to become a full member of the EU.

Howorth, a prominent academic in European defense studies, notes that *“the story of the European integration began with defense”* (Howorth, 2014, p. 34). However, he questions why several attempts to ensure a common European defense have failed in the past. He argues that *“the contradiction between the respective positions of France and UK”* was the most significant factor, and he labels this as the *“Euro-Atlantic Security Dilemma”* (Howorth, 2014, p. 36). Although this is one of the factors, the reasons for the failure to achieve a real common European defense policy is much more complicated. EU lacks a solid political will for an efficient

ESDP due to the hesitant attitudes of some of its members. In addition to this, EU states are reluctant to allocate the necessary financial means to increase the defense expenditures. Moreover, many EU states desist from allocating the required military troops and equipment for EU-led operations. They mostly prefer to provide a symbolic number of troops and military equipment. The negative attitude of public opinions for the EU-led military operations plays also an important role against the development of an efficient ESDP. It is a well-known fact that EU public opinions are sensitive on casualties which might result with the loss of lives of EU military staff.

The international literature on ESDP has concentrated for a long time on its necessity for the EU and on its distinct aspect compared to other EU policies (Beltran and Parmentier, 2000; Cash, 2000; Gençalp, 2004; Pirozzi and Sandawi, 2008; Szymanski and Terlikowski 2010). However, after regional crises in Georgia and Crimea, the inefficiency and shortages of the ESDP were elaborated and the necessity to increase the EU defense expenditures to reinforce the ESDP was emphasized by many scholars (Akbaba, 2009; Goşu and Manea, 2015; Zandee and Stoetman, 2023; Mauro, 2023).

The recent Russian-Ukrainian crisis has once more triggered the debates on the soundness and efficiency of the ESDP. EU members and institutions were profoundly worried about the Russian expansionist policy, and since WWII they probably felt for the first time a looming menace to their security from a global actor like Russia. Moreover, the natural gas and energy dependence of European countries on Russia provoked novel fears about European energy security. Consequently, all these developments pushed US and EU members to unite against Russia. Moreover, traditionally neutral countries like Finland and Sweden sought to become NATO members to ensure their security under the umbrella of NATO's collective defense mechanisms. As Sakwa mentions, the Ukrainian crisis reflects "*the continuation in new forms of what used to be called East-West conflict*" (Sakwa, 2015, p. 3 and 233). Therefore, the Ukrainian crisis and the ensuing developments displayed the need for a more efficient ESDP.

In this article, firstly, the effects of the recent Ukrainian crisis on the ESDP debates, the historical background regarding the development of the ESDP and different concepts used to define the European security issues will be treated. Secondly, the evolution of the Turkish foreign policy towards ESDP will be discussed from a retrospective view. Thirdly, a classification will be made between the explicit and implicit issues that shaped the Turkish foreign policy on the subject. Under the sub-heading of explicit reasons, Türkiye's proximity to conflict zones and the preservation of its acquired rights within the Western European Union (WEU) will be examined. Under the sub-heading of implicit reasons, Turkish-Greek disputes, the prospective accession of the Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus to the EU along with the potential threats it posed to Türkiye's national security interests will be addressed. In conclusion, it will be underlined that the recent Ukrainian crisis has once more confirmed the shortcomings of the ESDP, and that it has demonstrated the lack of unanimity among EU members on defense issues. Lastly, propositions are put forth to overcome the EU-Türkiye disagreement for a sound cooperation in the field of ESDP, and the value of Türkiye's potential contribution to the ESDP via its military expertise is highlighted.

Method

Qualitative research methods are used in this paper. This research aims to be explanatory, evaluative, and comparative. In this regard, an extensive Turkish and foreign literature review on the ESDP is conducted. Both primary and secondary sources are used in the research. Primary sources are EU summit declarations, EU treaties, NATO documents, reports, and WEU minutes.

Secondary sources are books and articles drafted by Turkish and foreign academics. Besides this, discourse analyses are also used within the framework of the research. Discourses of Turkish and EU officials on the ESDP are assessed in this regard.

Quantitative data on EU defense expenditures are also used to display the decrease over time in the defense budgets. These data are retrieved from the World Bank and show the changes in EU defense expenditures between 1990 and 2022. In addition to these figures, the changes in the EU-Russian trade data since the beginning of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict in 2022 and the decrease in the EU's energy imports from Russia are analyzed with reference to Eurostat statistics. Besides these, the Eurobarometer figures concerning the support of the European public opinion for a common defense and security policy are also treated.

The evolution of the ESDP process is discussed from a retrospective view, and the effects of the current Ukrainian crisis on the ESDP debates are assessed in a comprehensive way. The position of the Turkish foreign policy makers towards the ESDP, the determinants of the Turkish foreign policy on the issue are scrutinized from historical and political points of view. The shortcomings of the ESDP are explored, and the exclusionist policies of the EU against Türkiye on the ESDP issue are questioned. In conclusion and discussion section, not only proposals are set forth to overcome the shortcomings of the ESDP but also Türkiye's crucial role in solving regional problems, its military expertise and its indispensable support to the European security and defense are underlined.

The Recent Ukrainian Crisis and the Re-Advent of the ESDP Debates

With his accession to the presidency of Russia in 2000, Putin adopted a policy to re-make Russia a superpower and conducted an aggressive foreign and defense policy. The rapprochement of ex-Soviet states with NATO and EU was not welcomed by the Russian establishment. This was assessed as a threat aiming to contain Russia. In this respect, the first Russian military reaction towards the rapprochement between the ex-Soviet countries and NATO/EU emerged in 2008. That year, Russia recognized the independence of Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia and conducted military operations against Georgia. However, NATO/EU did not efficiently respond to the Russia's aggressive policies and contended with protests and sanctions (Çalışkan, 2022, p. 38-39). The second military Russian defiance against NATO/EU came in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea, a Ukrainian territory. This was one of the most significant challenges to the international order established after the end of the Cold War and constituted a deliberate violation of international law and customs (Mauro, 2023, p. 2). In fact, the Russian aggression against Ukraine has proved once more the validity of the realist approach in international relations and displayed the importance of hard power, apart from soft power, for EU member states (Öztürk, 2023, p. 449-462). The Western sanctions which remained ineffective in refraining Russia from such expansionist policies paved the way for the second Russian military aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 (Aydemir and Güner, 2023, p. 202).

Since its independence in 1991, the integration efforts of Ukraine with the Western institutions have offended Russia, which considered the former its backyard. However, this Russian hegemonic approach was not welcomed by the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians and was deemed as a re-advent of the historical Russian tendency to interfere in Ukrainian internal affairs. Geographically, Russia views Ukraine as a natural buffer zone between itself and NATO/EU/West. In addition, Russian gas pipelines to the West traverse through Ukrainian lands and the Black Sea ports of Ukraine are equally valuable for Russian naval forces. Therefore, Ukraine bears strategic importance for Russia both economically and militarily (Çalışkan 2022,

p. 37). It is worth noting that the Russian authorities label Ukraine as the central element of Russia's 'near abroad' (Onuch, 2015, p. 37), a concept which attests the vital interest attached to Ukraine by the Russian establishment.

Zelensky who was sworn in as president of Ukraine in 2020 strived to accelerate his country's integration with NATO and other Western institutions. This attempt triggered the second Russian military offensive against Ukraine in less than a decade. Although Putin and his aides were expecting to invade Ukraine and change its government within a short period of time, they were not able to attain their objectives. However, despite the economic and military sanctions imposed by the EU/USA/NATO against Russia and the support extended by Western states to Ukraine (Zandee and Stoetman, 2023, p. 1), the war in the Ukrainian lands still lingers.

The recent Ukrainian-Russian war changed dramatically the political and military equilibrium set after the end of the Cold War. This armed conflict prompted Finland and Sweden, traditionally neutral states, to become NATO members, respectively in 2023 and 2024. EU finally decided to grant candidate status to Ukraine in June 2022 as a reaction to the Russian military intervention. Moreover, discussions for a more unified and efficient common ESDP have remarkably increased in EU countries and institutions (Davion, 2022; Zandee and Stoetman, 2023; Mauro, 2023; Aydemir and Güner, 2023). However, it is worth noting that similar discussions had taken place about the ESDI (European Security and Defense Identity)[†] and the ESDP almost 30 years ago, following the end of the Cold War.

Recently, the President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, in her address to the European Parliament on 18 July 2024 underlined that a common European defense was a must and an urgent priority for the EU. She stressed the importance of unanimity among EU members for defense issues and called for a *“European Defense Union”* in response to the latest Russian menace. She also underscored the need for a single market in defense matters and the necessity to increase the defense expenditures: *“...A choice which will shape our work for 5 years and define our place in the world for the next 50...Europe...can choose to invest in the security and defense of its own continent... We must also invest more in our security and defense. Russia is still on the offensive in East Ukraine. They are banking on a war of attrition, on making the next winter even harsher than the last. Russia is banking on Europe and the West going soft. And some, in Europe, are playing along. Two weeks ago, an EU Prime Minister went to Moscow. This so-called peace mission was nothing but an appeasement mission...For the first time in decades, our freedom is under threat...I believe now is therefore the time to build a true European Defense Union. Yes, I know there are some who are perhaps uncomfortable with the idea. But what we should be uncomfortable about are the threats to our security. Let us be clear: Member States will retain responsibility for their national security and their armies. And NATO will remain the pillar of our collective defense. But we all know very well that our spending on defense is too low and ineffective...We must therefore create a single market for defense. We must invest more in high-end defense capabilities...We need to invest together. And we must set up common European projects. For example, a comprehensive aerial defense system – a European Air Shield, not only to protect our airspace but as a strong symbol of European unity in defense matters... I believe we need Treaty change where it can improve our Union...”* (EU Commission, 2024).

[†]According to Davion, for a long time, the security and defense programs launched by the EU had more of an objective to challenge the United States on European interests than to build a real European defense. The historic turning point with the recent conflict in Ukraine awakened the desire of the 27 to build autonomously a European defense identity (Davion, 2022).

The call of the President of the EU Commission for a “European Defense Union” is meaningful and displays a common political will to advance in this direction. However, a European Defense Union will continue to bear serious shortcomings if the EU does not change its stance regarding the participation of non-EU NATO allies in the ESDP mechanisms. Türkiye, a non-EU NATO ally, can substantially contribute to the European defense and security via its military expertise and diplomatic initiatives. During the recent Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Türkiye has once more demonstrated its indispensable role in regional crises. Thanks to its good and friendly relations with both countries, Türkiye was one of the few countries that could mediate between Russia and Ukraine. Russian and Ukrainian officials gathered in March 2022 in Istanbul under the aegis of the Turkish authorities to talk cease-fire and exchange of war prisoners. Moreover, Türkiye played a vital role in “The Black Sea Grain Initiative” negotiated between Ukraine, Russia, Türkiye, and the UN. Türkiye strived to convince Russia to allow Ukrainian grain to be transported via Turkish straits to other countries. This initiative prevented a global food shortage which bore the risk of affecting millions of people. Moreover, following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian troops, Türkiye as a NATO member blocked for a long time the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO. However, Türkiye displayed its goodwill once more and contributed to the EU defense by allowing the accession of these two states to NATO. These latest developments confirm that Türkiye can extensively contribute to the EU in defense and security issues.

Historical Background of EU’s Pursuit for an Autonomous Military Capacity

Western Union (WU) was founded by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom as a European defense organization in 1948 with the Treaty of Brussels. Later, WU was transformed into WEU with the Modified Brussels Treaty concluded in Paris in 1954. With the conclusion of the Modified Brussels Treaty, West Germany and Italy were admitted to WEU. Due to the foundation of NATO in 1949, a defense organization for Europe and North America, WEU largely remained dormant until the early 1990s.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the European Economic Community (EEC) tried to add a security dimension to its European Political Cooperation (EPC) mechanism, the predecessor of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (WEU, 2000, p. 40). However, some members such as Denmark, Greece, and Ireland were not favorable to the inclusion of security and defense issues on the EEC agenda. To overcome this obstacle, WEU members of the EEC agreed to re-activate WEU, as an alternative body, by adopting the Rome Declaration in 1984. As of the early 1990s, WEU became more involved in EU defense matters. The Treaty on European Union, also called the Treaty of Maastricht, and the parallel WEU Maastricht Declaration would constitute the basis for WEU-EU relations during 1991-1997 (WEU, 2000, p. 20). With the *“Declaration on the Role of the Western European Union and its Relations with the European Union and with the Atlantic Alliance”* adopted on 10 December 1991 by the Council of Ministers of WEU in Maastricht, WEU members set as their objective *“to build up WEU in stages as the defense component of the European Union”* (Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997: Declaration relating to Western European Union, para. 4). In accordance with the aforementioned WEU declaration, the EU admitted WEU as *“an integral part of the development of the Union, to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defense implications”* (Treaty of Maastricht, 1992: art. J.4, para. 2).

Particularly after the end of the Cold War, WEU was further involved in EU military arrangements in cooperation with NATO. At the WEU Petersberg Summit held on 19 June 1992, WEU countries adopted the Petersberg Declaration which envisaged conducting humanitarian,

crisis management, peacekeeping, and peacemaking tasks, also known as Petersberg tasks (Lindley-French, 2007, p. 203). During the 1990s, WEU enhanced its capacities by admitting new participating states and establishing new bodies such as the Western European Armaments Group (WEAG) in 1993, the European Operational Rapid Force (EUROFOR) in 1995, Satellite Center in 1995 and Western European Armaments Organization (WEAO) in 1996 (WEU, 2000, p. 16, 34-36).

During this period, the EU had engaged in a process intending to assume more responsibility for the European security and defense while maintaining its transatlantic solidarity. The main goal was to establish an autonomous and efficient European military capability. The development of this capacity was planned within the framework of the command structure and military resources that were already available within the Atlantic Alliance. This approach responded at the same time to the concerns of Europeans who sought to conduct an autonomous ESDI/ESDP, and that of the United States which urged for a better division of tasks, redistribution of responsibilities and financial burden sharing within NATO.

The wars in the Balkans during the 1990s, more precisely in Bosnia (1992-1995) and Kosovo (1998-1999), were crucial turning points that reinforced the determination of the EU to possess autonomous military capabilities. These crises have demonstrated that, despite the end of the Cold War, novel and imminent conflicts that could endanger the stability of Europe were not distant. Moreover, these armed conflicts in the Balkans proved dramatically that, when its security interests were threatened, the EU did not have the necessary military means to intervene (Tan, 2013, p. 5). EU had comprehended that it should be more active on the international stage and equip itself with an operational and credible military capacity. In addition, the fact that NATO and American resources would only be made available to WEU/EU if the Americans and NATO members agreed had fueled the concerns of some EU members, and thus accelerated the EU's pursuit for autonomy in military and defense issues.

Main Concepts Developed on the European Security and Defense Issues in the 1990s: ESDI, ESDP, and CFSP

The ESDI was developed within NATO to facilitate the participation of EU members in defense issues in tandem with WEU and NATO capabilities. The ESDI was mentioned for the first time in the *"Declaration on Western European Union"* within the framework of the Treaty of Maastricht which was signed on 7 February 1992. Later, the ESDI was mentioned for the first time in a NATO document within the framework of the final communiqué of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) held in Oslo on 4 June 1992 (NATO-NAC, 1992: para. 7). In the 1990s, this concept regularly recurred in official documents and discourses, but its content was imprecise. Did the ESDI represent NATO itself or its EU members? Was it WEU in its 10, 16, 21, or 28 configurations? Who represented the ESDI and who took the decisions on its behalf? The features of the ESDI were quite vague and needed to be clarified (WEU, 1997, p. 5).

With the Treaty of Maastricht, the *"Common Foreign and Security Policy"* † (CFSP) was officially introduced and the intent for a *"common European defense policy"*, albeit weakly, was mentioned. With the Treaty of Amsterdam, apart from the CFSP, the intent for a common European defense policy was again mentioned, but this time more frequently and under the terms of *"common defense"*, *"common defense policy"* and *"Common European Defense Policy"*. These terms were used interchangeably in the said treaty. However, the absence of a common

† The CFSP was introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht under the title V *"Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy"* (Maastricht Treaty, 7 February 1992).

concept for a European defense policy was a significant indicator that EU member states lacked the political will to advance on defense issues. It is observed that although a consensus was reached to a certain extent among EU members for a CFSP, there were still hesitations and reluctance to conduct a common policy on defense matters. The ambiguity regarding the conceptualization of the EU's institutional security and defense policy was lingering during the 1990s.

At the EU Vienna summit held in December 1998, the *“continuation of reflection on the development of a European security and defense policy”* and the *“new impetus given to the debate on a common European policy on security and defense”* were welcome (EU Vienna Summit, 1998: Vienna Strategy for Europe and para. 76). Thus, the concept of the ESDP was introduced for the first time in an EU document. With the EU Cologne summit held in June 1999, the ESDP concept was developed (EU Cologne Summit, 1999: para. 55), and later its acronym “CESDP” (Common ESDP) was used for the first time in the Presidency Conclusions of the EU Helsinki Summit held in December 1999 (EU Helsinki Summit, 1999: Annex 1 to Annex IV). Accordingly, with the EU Cologne summit, the ESDP was defined as a component of the CFSP (Gençalp, 2004, p. 49). Thereafter, the ESDI was conceived as a concept within NATO whereas the ESDP referred to a concept within the EU (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2000).[§] Subsequently, the ESDI concept was less used by the EU and gradually replaced with the ESDP.**

Transformation Process of the ESDI to the ESDP

EU members first sought to develop the ESDI within WEU and NATO. Intending to achieve the ESDI within WEU/EU, some EU members insisted on the total autonomy of the EU in the decision-making process, whereas some advocated for closer cooperation within NATO and therefore less autonomy. Türkiye, a non-EU NATO country and associate member of WEU, strived to take part in the ESDI decision-making mechanisms. However, in the course of negotiations, the ESDI would leave its place to the ESDP, and WEU to the EU. This transformation process lasted for years and constituted a source of tension among the participating states.

At its Brussels summit held on 11 January 1994, NATO expressed its full support to the *“emerging European Security and Defence Identity”* which would constitute in the long-term the basis of a common defense policy within the EU as mentioned in the Maastricht Treaty. NATO underlined that NATO military authorities would work, in cooperation with WEU, on the provision of *“separable but not separate military capabilities that could be employed by NATO or the WEU”* and that, in this regard, it supported *“strengthening the European pillar of the Alliance through the Western European Union, which was being developed as the defense component of the EU”* (NATO, 1994: paras. 4-9).

NATO Foreign Ministers agreed to *“build a European Security and Defence Identity within the Alliance”* at the NATO-NAC meeting held in Berlin on 3 June 1996. The ESDI would be *“supported by appropriate military planning and...effective forces...and operate under the political control and strategic direction of the WEU”*. Moreover, *“NATO and the WEU would agree on arrangements for implementing plans. The NAC would approve the release of NATO assets and capabilities for WEU-led operations”* (NATO-NAC, 1996: paras. 2-7-8). These decisions would be the basis of NATO-WEU cooperation referred to as *“Berlin decisions”*. Thus, initially,

[§] The report drafted by Win Van Eekelen and submitted to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on 18 April 2000 was titled *“Building European Defence: NATO's ESDI and the European Union's ESDP”* (NATO, 2000).

** In this article, the concept “ESDI” is used for the period before 1999, and the concept “ESDP” for the period after 1999.

the ESDI was planned within NATO and under the aegis of WEU. As a NATO member and associate member of WEU, these arrangements were compatible with Türkiye's expectations on the development of the ESDI.

In the treaty of Amsterdam, it was stipulated that *“The Western European Union (WEU) is an integral part of the development of the Union...The Union shall accordingly foster closer institutional relations with the WEU with a view to the possibility of the integration of the WEU into the Union, should the European Council so decide”* (Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997: art. J.7 para. 1). Thus, a possible integration of WEU to EU was envisaged with this article. However, a possible integration of WEU into the EU posed the risk of excluding non-EU members, like Türkiye, from future EU mechanisms. Yet, WEU was still mentioned as *“an essential element of the development of the ESDI within the Atlantic Alliance in accordance with the Paris Declaration and with the decisions taken by NATO ministers in Berlin”* (Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997: Declaration relating to Western European Union, para. 1). Meanwhile, WEU's Petersberg tasks were also incorporated into EU with this treaty.

With the Franco-British summit held on 3 and 4 December 1998 at Saint Malo, it was decided to enhance the defense aspect of the EU, and to develop a *“common defense policy within the framework of CFSP”* (St Malo Declaration, 1998: para. 1). In fact, it was agreed to develop the ESDI particularly within the EU, in other words not within NATO or WEU (Beltran and Parmentier, 2000, p. 536). This summit, which constituted an important turning point for the prospective ESDP, marked the accentuation of Türkiye's concerns regarding the ESDI. Türkiye, which had always supported the ESDI within NATO, viewed itself as marginalized by the latest developments regarding the European defense.

At its Washington summit held on 24 April 1999, NATO announced that it *“completed the work on key elements of the Berlin Decisions on building the European Security and Defence Identity within the Alliance and decided to further enhance its effectiveness”* and that, based on the Berlin decisions, it would ensure the access of EU *“to the collective assets and capabilities of NATO, for operations in which the Alliance as a whole is not engaged militarily”*. With the decisions taken at this summit, "Berlin decisions" would be further developed and called thereafter "Berlin-Plus decisions" (NATO, 2004, p. 11). The summit also underlined *“the utmost importance of ensuring the fullest possible involvement of non-EU European Allies in EU-led crisis response operations, building on existing consultation arrangements within the WEU”* (NATO, 1999: paras. 4-8-9-10).

At the EU Cologne summit held in June 1999, the intent to build a separate ESDP was mentioned overtly (EU Cologne Summit, 1999: para. 55). This step was in contradiction with the previous arrangements to develop ESDI within WEU and NATO. Besides this, a distinction was brought whether the EU would lead operations with or without recourse to NATO assets and capabilities (EU Cologne Summit, 1999: Annex III, para. 4). In addition, the appointment of Mr. Javier Solana, previously NATO Secretary General between 1995-1999, at the EU Cologne summit as the Secretary-General of the EU Council and High Representative for the CFSP (EU Cologne Summit, 1999: para. 4) was another indicator of EU's intent to distant itself from the ESDI. Mr. Solana would be appointed at the same time as the Secretary General of WEU as of November 1999. He was mandated to coordinate the ESDP along with the CFSP. At the EU Cologne summit, it was also stated that *“In that event, the WEU as an organization would have completed its purpose”* (EU Cologne Summit, 1999: Annex III, para. 5). Thus, the EU was expressing its intent to dissolve WEU and incorporate its tasks and missions in the future. However, in such a case, Türkiye, an associate member of WEU, would face the risk of losing its vested rights within WEU.

At the EU Helsinki summit held in December 1999, it was agreed that “*new political and military bodies would be established within the Council to enable the Union to take decisions on EU-led Petersberg operations*”, and that “*EU-led crisis management operations could be carried out with or without recourse to NATO assets and capabilities*”. According to the headline goal set at the summit, EU members were invited to deploy by 2003 up to 50.000-60.000 persons to carry out the tasks defined in the Treaty of Amsterdam, namely Petersberg tasks. It was also underscored that “*Principles for cooperation with non-EU European NATO members and other European partners in EU-led military crisis management would be agreed, without prejudice to the Union's decision-making autonomy*” (EU Helsinki Summit, 1999: para. 27-28 and Annex 1 to Annex IV). With this summit, the EU's decision-making autonomy was further emphasized, and the possibility of carrying out operations without recourse to NATO assets was overtly underlined. Moreover, within the framework of the CFSP and including the CESDP, the establishment of new permanent political and military bodies, namely “*A standing Political and Security Committee (PSC)*”, “*The Military Committee (MC)*” and “*The Military Staff*” (MS), were decided. Until the permanent bodies would function, the establishment of interim bodies as of March 2000 was also envisaged (EU Helsinki Summit, 1999: Annex 1 to Annex IV). It should also be noted that Türkiye was recognized as a candidate country for EU membership at this summit.

At the EU Feira summit held in June 2000, the establishment of the interim political and military bodies as of 1 March 2000, as envisaged at the Helsinki summit, was confirmed (EU Feira Summit, 2000: Annex 1, para. B). Regarding the modalities of consultation with non-EU countries which would participate in the EU-led operations, intensified consultations were proposed during the “*Routine Phase*”, “*Pre-Operational Phase*” and “*Operational Phase*” of the operations. The non-EU countries “*deploying significant military forces*” would “*also have the same rights and obligations as the EU participating Member States in the day-to-day conduct of that operation*” (EU Feira Summit, 2000: Appendix 1, para. 7-20). The Feira European Council decided also to propose to NATO the establishment of “*ad hoc working groups*” in four fields, namely “*security issues; capability goals; modalities enabling EU access to NATO assets (Berlin and Washington agreements); definition of permanent arrangements*” (EU Feira Summit, 2000: Appendix 2, para. B-1-2).

At the Nice Summit held in December 2000, the EU reaffirmed its commitments regarding the ESDP since the Cologne, Helsinki and Feira summits but underlined that “*this did not involve the establishment of a European army*” (EU Nice Summit, 2000: Annex VI, Introduction). Establishment at the earliest possible of permanent political and military structures, more precisely “*the Political and Security Committee*”; “*the Military Committee of the European Union*”; “*the Military Staff of the European Union*” and achievement of the Headline Goal set at the Helsinki summit were envisaged (EU Nice Summit, 2000: Annex VI, Section II). Based on the Berlin-Plus decisions, “*permanent arrangements for EU-NATO consultation and cooperation*” were set (EU Nice Summit, 2000: Annex VI, Section IV). “*Arrangements concerning Non-EU European NATO members and other countries which are candidates for accession to the EU*” were proposed. According to these proposals, within the framework of the “*Permanent consultation arrangements during non-crisis periods*”, “*a minimum of two meetings in EU+15 format would be held during each Presidency on ESDP matters...with the six non-EU European NATO members (EU+6 format)*”. Besides this, “*One ministerial meeting bringing together the 15 and the 6 countries*”^{††} would be held during each Presidency”. Regarding the

^{††} The 6 non-EU member European allies were the Czech Republic, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Poland and Türkiye.

“Arrangements during crisis periods”, these consultations would be increased at the “Pre-operational phase” and “Operational phase”. In addition to these consultation mechanisms, a Committee of Contributors would also be established (EU Nice Summit, 2000: Annex VI to Annex VI). At this summit, the EU confirmed its intention to assume the crisis-management function of WEU and the *“establishment of a Satellite Centre and an Institute for Security Studies which would incorporate the relevant bodies of the existing parallel WEU structures”*. EU decided also to take over the WEU Police mission in Albania (EU Nice Summit, 2000: Annex VI, Section V).

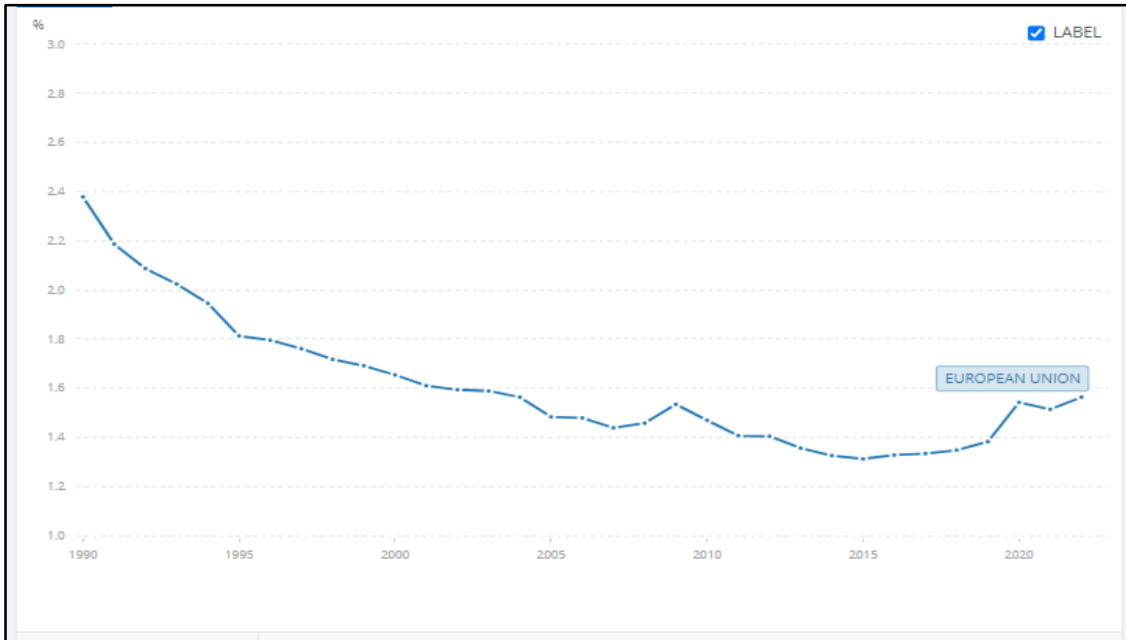
With the EU Nice Summit, enhanced consultation mechanisms were elaborated and proposed to the non-EU members within the ESDP. In fact, the exclusion of the non-EU NATO allies from the ESDP decision-making mechanisms was re-confirmed. Türkiye expressed its discontent and dissatisfaction against the Nice summit’s proposals at NATO meetings. At the NATO-NAC meeting held in Brussels on 14-15 December 2000, no agreement was reached on permanent arrangements between the EU and NATO due to Turkish objections (Lindley-French, 2007, p. 270). Türkiye continued to express its concerns regarding the ESDI/ESDP at NATO meetings and emphasized that it could resort to its veto right to thwart the EU's automatic access to NATO military assets and capabilities (Tan, 2013, p. 6).

With the Treaty of Nice signed on 26 February 2001, the EU reiterated its expectation for *“the ESDP to become operational as soon as possible in 2001 and no later than at its meeting in Laeken/Brussels”* (Treaty of Nice, 2001: Declaration 1). At the EU Laeken summit held in December 2001, it was underlined that thanks to the development of the ESDP, *“the EU is now able to conduct some crisis-management operations. The Union will be in a position to take on progressively more demanding operations, as the assets and capabilities at its disposal continue to develop”* (Laeken, 2001: para. 6 and Annex II, A). EU also expressed its intent to finalize *“the security arrangements with NATO and conclude the agreements on guaranteed access to the Alliance’s assets and capabilities”*. In the same vein, EU called for the *“full and complete implementation of the Nice summit arrangements with the 15 and the 6”*, the 6 referring to non-EU NATO members (Laeken, 2001: Annex II, C).

It is worth noting that despite all the EU summits and the political decisions taken at the highest level, the EU military expenditures remained below expectations. It is observed that the EU defense expenditures fell continuously between 1990 and 2020 (Table-1). The small increases during this period are negligible. EU defense expenditures fell from 1.6 % of GDP in 1995 to 1.3 % of GDP in 2022 (Eurostat, 2024-a). To achieve and implement a more efficient and stronger ESDP, EU members should agree to increase their defense expenditures and advance their cooperation in defense matters. In this regard, the recent Ukrainian crisis pushed, albeit slightly, EU states to invest more on defense industry and technology, and to increase their defense expenditures.

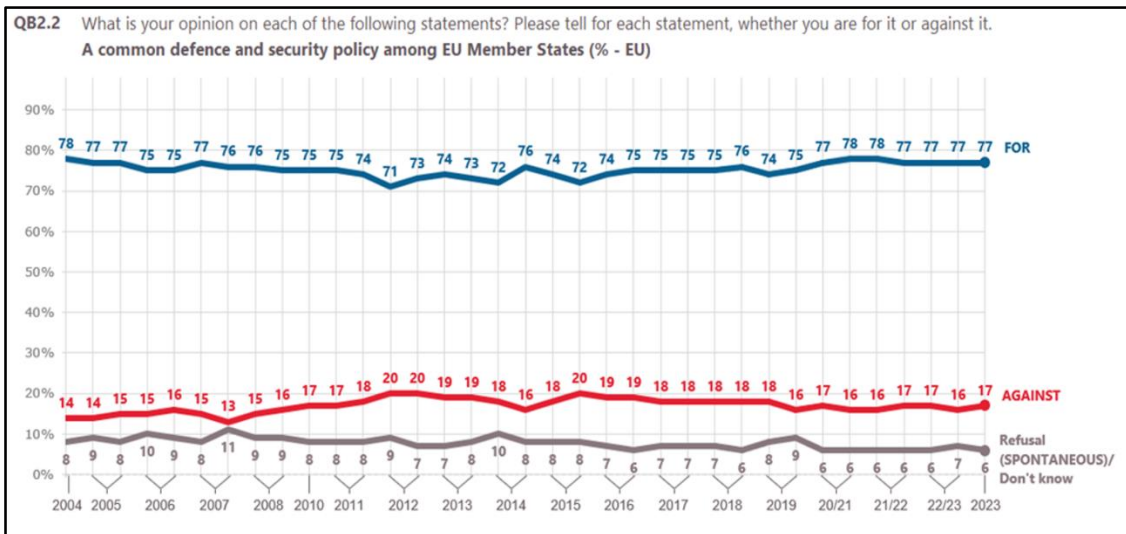
Besides the political and military elites’ support, EU public opinions’ support for a common defense and security policy is also crucial. According to the Eurobarometer 2023 survey, 77% of Europeans are in favor of a common defense and security policy. 80% of Europeans think that cooperation in defense matters at EU level should be increased (Eurobarometer, 2023). It is interesting to note that these Eurobarometer figures are at similar levels, an average of 75%, for the consecutive 20 years (Table-2). Despite such a high level of public opinion support for the ESDP, the low percentage of defense expenditures in GDP needs to be questioned.

Table 1: Military Expenditure (% of GDP)-European Union (1990-2022)



Source: World Bank, (2024).

Table 2: EU Public Opinion Support for a Common Defense and Security Policy (2004-2023)



Source: Eurobarometer, (2023).

Evolution of the Turkish Position Vis À Vis the ESDI/ESDP

Türkiye, in parallel with its first candidacy to the EEC in 1987, simultaneously applied for WEU membership, the European pillar of defense (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1989, p. 185; Lindley-French, 2007, p. 162). While Türkiye’s candidacy to the EEC was declined in 1989, it was invited to become an associate member to WEU through the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. With the said Treaty, EU member states were invited to become "members" of WEU in

accordance with Article XI of the Modified Brussels Treaty^{††} or to choose to become "observers". States which were members of NATO but not members of the EU were to become "associate members" (Treaty of Maastricht, 1992 in Official Journal of the European Communities: C191/107), a special status that gave them the right to participate in and contribute to the activities of WEU.

Table 3: WEU Participating States

	Members^{§§}	Associate Members^{***}	Observers^{†††}	Associate Partners^{†††}
1	Belgium	Czech Republic	Austria	Bulgaria
2	France	Hungary	Denmark	Estonia
3	Germany	Iceland	Finland	Latvia
4	Greece	Norway	Ireland	Lithuania
5	Italy	Poland	Sweden	Romania
6	Luxembourg	Türkiye		Slovakia
7	Netherlands			Slovenia
8	Portugal			
9	Spain			
10	United Kingdom			

Source: WEU, 2000, p. 27.

In April 1997, WEU decided that all European members of NATO which have not signed the Modified Brussels Treaty, namely Türkiye, Iceland, Norway as associate members and Denmark as observer, could participate fully in the decision-making process when WEU would lead operations with NATO military capabilities (WEU, 1997, p. 11; Tan, 2013, p. 9). Thus, through the *associate member* status, Türkiye obtained the right to be represented within the WEU decision-making mechanisms. In fact, the Modified Brussels Treaty which formed the basis of WEU did not stipulate such a status. The legal foundations relating to *associate members* and *observers* were so weak that this status could be easily contested (WEU, 1997, p. 7). The treaty of Maastricht envisaged that only EU members could become WEU members. Therefore, it was not possible for Türkiye, a non-EU NATO member, to become a full member of WEU. Türkiye, on several occasions, mentioned this gap in its associate member status and requested the elimination of the restrictions envisaged in the Maastricht Treaty to become *full member* to WEU.

In the Treaty of Amsterdam, if the European Council decides so, the integration of WEU into the EU was foreseen (Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997: art. J.7, para. 1). With the said treaty, the integration of WEU into the second pillar of the EU was already initiated. The joint declaration issued after the Franco-British summit in St. Malo was a sign of implicit consensus between two

^{††}Article XI: "The High Contracting Parties may, by agreement, invite any other State to accede to the present Treaty on conditions to be agreed between them and the State so invited." (Modified Brussels Treaty, 1954).

^{§§} These were both EU and NATO members and had full voting rights.

^{***} These were NATO members but not EU members.

^{†††} These were EU members but not NATO members, except for Denmark which was an EU and NATO member but not a WEU member.

^{†††} These were neither EU members nor NATO members in the 1990s.

major EU and NATO powers to accelerate the integration process of WEU into the EU. The change in the British position, which traditionally favored the ESDI within NATO, was crucial in this process (Efe, 2005, p. 11; Gençalp, 2004, p. 49). For Türkiye, the integration of WEU into the EU presented problems in relation to its political and legal *acquis* within the framework of its associate member status. On the other hand, Türkiye believed that as WEU moved closer to the EU, the role of *associate members* would be limited. There were also concerns about the creation of first and second-category states in security-related issues with the integration of WEU into the EU. Mr. İsmail Cem, minister of foreign affairs between 1997-2002, voiced the Turkish concerns on the matter as follows " *...the WEU acquis should be preserved and developed as much as possible. In this context, we must not lose sight of the fact that a security and defense policy could only be truly European if the non-EU member allies participated on an equal footing in its formulation and implementation. It must also be taken into account that the security of all allied countries is of equal importance. Putting in place different levels of security depending on whether the countries are or are not members of EU is not appropriate.*" (Cem, 2000, p. 20-21).

Türkiye was not in favor of the integration of WEU into the EU and preferred that WEU would remain an autonomous structure as the European pillar of NATO. However, Türkiye was also cognizant that she had not the possibility to reverse the integration process of WEU into the EU. To preserve its political and legal rights within WEU, Türkiye developed certain proposals regarding the transfer of competencies from WEU to EU. At the outset of the process, one of these proposals was the grant of full membership status to associate members of WEU. This proposal was undesirable for the EU which favored its autonomous decision-making mechanisms within the ESDP. Türkiye also proposed the integration of WEU into the EU under an innovative fourth pillar, which could keep all acquired rights of WEU participating states intact. In line with this, an optional clause for EU members who did not prefer to participate in WEU activities, as was the case with the Schengen agreements, was also proposed (Aybet, 2000, p. 56). However, EU members were rather in favor of incorporating WEU into the second pillar and developing the ESDP as much as possible in a community approach. A final proposal was the establishment of a similar status of *associate member* within the framework of the ESDP. The flexible nature of WEU had allowed the creation of different statuses such as associate member, observer, and associate partner. Ambassador Orhun, the then Director General for International Security Affairs at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, underlined that "*In fact, nobody denies the EU's, or for that matter, NATO's decision-making autonomy. The crux of the matter is to try to find sui generis solutions to a sui generis situation. For that, we do not need to look beyond the realm of European security, since such a sui generis solution - a workable and satisfactory model - has already been found in the Western European Union. Here it is advisable to remember that although the Modified Brussels Treaty does not legally or institutionally foresee an associate membership status, such a status was 'invented' through a political decision in 1992, since a necessity was felt in that respect*" (Orhun, 2000, p. 5).

Türkiye insisted on participating in all stages of EU-led operations, including crisis management, decision-making and operational planning. It attached great value to its inclusion in the ESDI/ESDP decision-making mechanisms and, in case of exclusion, reminded that it could resort to its veto right within NATO to prevent the EU's automatic access to NATO military capabilities. However, the EU was not in favor of admitting non-EU countries to the ESDI/ESDP decision-making mechanisms and proposed enhanced consultation mechanisms. Türkiye considered these proposals of *consultation mechanisms* to be disproportionate to its weight in European defense. Cash stressed that "*Specifically, as a NATO member outside of the EU, the ESDP will deny Türkiye its hitherto crucial role in European defense, despite it having the second*

largest army in NATO. In place of intimate involvement in European defense through NATO, Türkiye will be offered only a "special consultation initiative" - Euro-speak meaning "nothing at all" (Cash, 2000, p. 3).

Türkiye, which hoped that its concerns and proposals would be taken into account during the EU Feira summit, was disappointed with the Feira conclusions. Following this summit, Türkiye increased its criticism towards the EU regarding the ESDP. Turkish authorities reminded that *"EU's requests from NATO might be met only on a "case-by-case" basis; that Türkiye's contribution to the process would be proportional to its participation; and that Türkiye would evaluate CESDP in the light of her national interests, while bearing in mind her responsibilities as a candidate for accession to the EU"* (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 July 2000). Türkiye assessed that the EU was maintaining an exclusionist approach to the ESDP and did not take into account the NATO Washington summit's decisions which underscored *"the fullest possible involvement of non-EU European Allies in EU-led crisis response operations, building on existing consultation arrangements within the WEU"* (NATO, 1999: para. 9-d). Then the Turkish Foreign Minister, Mr. Cem, declared that *"...the results of the European summit held in Santa Maria de Feira in June are far from being satisfactory...Indeed, at Feira, the EU did not take into account important aspects of the decisions agreed by NATO at the Washington summit in April 1999...This could have negative repercussions for future relations between NATO and the EU. If this were to be the case, it would be out of question for Türkiye to accept the EU's automatic access to NATO capabilities. Türkiye's position is in line with NATO's decisions"* (Cem, 2000, p. 21).

Regarding the arrangements proposed by the EU at the Feira and Helsinki summits, Turkish ambassador Orhun highlighted that *"proposed EU arrangements limit the participation of non-EU European Allies only to the day-to-day conduct of operations through a so-called Ad Hoc Committee of Contributors. This is an arrangement that does not make sense politically or militarily since only a military commander can undertake the day-to-day conduct of an operation. What the non-EU European Allies should be involved in is the political control and strategic direction of an EU-led operation"* (Orhun, 2000, p. 4).

WEU Council of Ministers held a meeting on 13 November 2000 in Marseille and agreed that WEU would cease its main activities. WEU agencies and the Petersberg Tasks were assigned to the EU (Lindley-French, 2007, p. 269). With this decision, WEU was practically dissolved. However, WEU was officially dissolved on 30 June 2011. The cease of activities of WEU was a further step in the dissociation of Türkiye from the ESDP. In this process, apart from Greece, Germany and France were among the main opponents against Turkish participation in the ESDP mechanisms and against the preservation of Türkiye's vested rights within WEU. Türkiye notably questioned the objections of these two countries which did not step back from their rigid stance regarding Türkiye's participation in the decision-making mechanisms of prospective EU military operations. This approach of Germany and France was disappointing for the Turkish diplomatic circles. Turkish ambassador Orhun stated that *"Leading European powers, such as Germany and France, characterize their countries' relationship with Türkiye as a strategic partnership. They also seem to favor Türkiye's entry into the EU. If one is to follow this logic, then excluding Türkiye from European crisis management is all the more inexplicable"* (Orhun, 2000, p. 5).

Türkiye, whose expectations were not met by the EU, was still opposing to EU's access to NATO assets. On 2 December 2001, the UK, US and Türkiye agreed on the Ankara Compromise regarding the participation of non-EU European states in EU-led operations. Under this compromise, Türkiye would be given a consultative role in the decision-making process of the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF). The Compromise aimed to remove Türkiye's block before

the EU's access to NATO assets under the Berlin-Plus process (Lindley-French, 2007, p. 280). However, Greece objected at the Laeken summit to the Ankara Compromise which gave Türkiye the right to access the EU crisis management decision-making process. Therefore, the EU could not endorse this document at the Laeken summit (Lindley-French, 2007, p. 281; Efe, 2005, p. 230). At the joint NATO and EU foreign affairs ministers' meeting held on 14-15 May 2002 in Iceland, the EU's access to NATO capabilities and infrastructure under the Berlin-Plus mechanism was re-debated. Türkiye again rejected the proposal because its concerns were not sufficiently met, and underlined that many prospective EU operations would probably take place in the adjacent areas of Türkiye (Baykara, 2022, p. 5; Lindley-French, 2007, p. 286).

At the EU Brussels summit held in October 2002, the EU adopted the *"ESDP: Implementation of the Nice Provisions on the Involvement of the non-EU European Allies"*, also called the Nice Implementation Document. This document was a revised version of the Ankara compromise (Turkish MFA, 2022-a). The document, emphasizing the enhanced consultations in the 15+6 format, pledged that *"under no circumstances, nor in any crisis, will ESDP be used against an Ally, on the understanding, reciprocally, that NATO military crisis management will not undertake any action against the EU or its Member States"* (EU Brussels Summit, 2002: Annex II, para. 2). Thus, EU tried to alleviate Türkiye's security concerns regarding the potential use of the ESDP against Türkiye with the potential accession of Southern Cyprus to EU. In the document, in response to Türkiye's security concerns in its adjacent areas, the EU committed also itself, without citing Türkiye's name, that *"In a specific case when any of the non-EU European Allies raises its concerns that an envisaged autonomous EU operation will be conducted in the geographic proximity of a non-EU European Ally or may affect its national security interests, the Council will consult with that Ally and, taking into consideration the outcome of those consultations, decide on the participation of that Ally, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of the Treaty on European Union quoted above and the statement in paragraph 2 above"* (EU Brussels Summit, 2002: Annex II, para. 12). Finally, with the Nice Implementation Document, to a certain extent, Türkiye's security concerns were partially met. Thus, Türkiye removed its objections against EU-NATO cooperation within the framework of the ESDP. It should be noted that Türkiye's EU candidacy process and its will to initiate at the earliest possible accession negotiations with the EU played also a significant role in the softening of the Turkish obstruction (Baykara, 2022, p. 5). As a result, the EU Brussels Summit held in December 2004 agreed to initiate accession negotiations with Türkiye as of 3 October 2005. Thus, the accession negotiations between the EU and Türkiye would formally be opened on that date.

Following the adoption of the Nice Implementation Document, the *"EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP"* was signed on 16 December 2002 by NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson, and Secretary-General of the EU Council and High Representative for the CFSP Javier Solana. This declaration constituted the formal framework for NATO-EU cooperation and envisaged the *"fullest possible involvement of non-EU members of NATO within the ESDP"*. Thus, the Berlin-Plus permanent arrangements on the EU's access to NATO assets were finally achieved. In addition, on 14 March 2003, the *"NATO-EU Agreement on Security of Information"* which provided the exchange of classified information between the two parties was also signed. This was a further step in the implementation of the Berlin-Plus Agreement (Lindley-French, 2007, p. 301; NATO, 2004, p. 9). On 17 March 2003, *"A Comprehensive Framework for EU-NATO Permanent Arrangements"* which provided details on EU access to NATO resources through Berlin-Plus was finalized and adopted (Lindley-French, 2007, p. 301). On 31 March 2003, within the framework of the ESDP, the first EU military Operation, *Concordia*, took over the responsibilities of the NATO-led mission, Operation *Allied Harmony*, in the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia. *Concordia* lasted until 15 December 2003 and was replaced by the EU-led police mission, *Proxima* (Pirozzi and Sandawi, 2008, p. 2; NATO, 2004, p. 5).

The Issues Structuring the Turkish Position towards ESDI/ESDP

The issues that motivated Türkiye to participate in the ESDI/ESDP mechanisms were multiple. It is possible to make a distinction between the explicit and implicit issues that structured the Turkish policy on the ESDP. This classification is based on the documents and discourses of the Turkish authorities regarding the ESDP. The explicit issues were raised, from the outset, by Turkish representatives during the meetings with WEU, NATO and EU officials. In this respect, Türkiye's proximity to conflict zones and preservation of its vested rights within WEU constituted the explicit issues. When it comes to the implicit issues, the long-standing disputes with Greece and potential threats posed to Turkish security interests by Southern Cyprus' prospective accession to the EU were crucial. These concerns were raised at the outset in bilateral consultations with allies, but later, in the course of developments, were expressed more overtly. It should also be noted that all these issues interacted with Türkiye's strategic objective of joining the EU in the early 2000s.

Türkiye's Proximity to Conflict Zones

One of the main arguments set forth by Türkiye to justify its participation in the ESDP decision-making mechanisms was its proximity to the potential conflict zones. In the 1990s and 2000s, the main conflict zones that concerned NATO members were concentrated in the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Türkiye remained geographically in the middle of these four regions. During these decades, the *hot spots* in the Balkans were Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro; in the Caucasus, Chechnya, Abkhazia and South Ossetia; in the Middle East, Iran Iraq and Syria; in the Mediterranean, Cyprus. These crisis-prone zones were influential in shaping the security perceptions of NATO and bore the potential of a NATO intervention if the security of an ally was in peril. However, within the framework of the emerging ESDP, if NATO did not prefer to intervene in a conflict, in this case EU could take the lead to intervene. The Turkish authorities were of the opinion that, with the developing ESDP, the EU would most probably have to intervene in conflicts in the proximity of Türkiye. Therefore, Türkiye regularly drew the attention of its counterparts at WEU, NATO and EU circles to the proximity of these hot spots to its territories and the potential security implications for it.

EU authorities claimed that, within the ESDP, the EU would assume the responsibility of the Petersberg missions, in other terms the operations remaining out of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.^{§§§} This reasoning implied that the Petersberg tasks would only cover small-sized conflicts and would not pose a great risk to the Turkish security concerns. However, Türkiye was profoundly opposed to this approach. In response to such claims, Turkish ambassador Orhun asserted that *"From time to time, we come across ideas suggesting that the EU should take the lead in undertaking Petersberg-type non-Article 5 operations and leave NATO with responsibility*

^{§§§} Article 5: *"The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."* (North Atlantic Treaty, 1949).

for collective defense. In this connection, it is useful to remember that non-Article 5 operations are among the fundamental security tasks of the Alliance. Such a suggested division of labor would be arbitrary and contrary to the Alliance's Strategic Concept. Another important point we should not lose sight of is the fact that a non-Article 5 operation may eventually transform into an Article 5 contingency having direct implications for the security and defense of some Allied countries. This is one further reason that underlines the need to have an inclusive approach while developing the CESDP. Differentiated statuses to be created among Allies will also be detrimental to solidarity within the Alliance” (Orhun, 2000, p. 3).

The Turkish security interests should not be assessed in an exclusively military sense. The security aspect contains also economic, political and social dimensions which might have profound repercussions at the level of internal politics. Türkiye shares common borders with certain hot spots. The consequences of a conflict in these areas are naturally more direct for Türkiye. The hot spots with which Türkiye did not share a common border posed risks as well. In this respect, the conflicts in the 90s demonstrated Türkiye's vulnerability, regardless of whether sharing a common border (Gulf crisis) or not (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo crises). Economic losses and immigrant flows were typical examples of this vulnerability. For instance, the Gulf crisis in 1991 had non-negligible consequences for the Turkish economy. Türkiye suffered for many years from the decline in its trade with Iraq and endured severe economic losses. The estimates regarding the Turkish economic losses due to the Gulf crisis varied between 40 and 45 billion USD (Hürriyet, 25.09.2001). The immigrant flows triggered by the wars in Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo in the 90s were other sources of vulnerability for Türkiye. During these three separate conflicts, Türkiye received tens of thousands of refugees fleeing the war zones (Ağır, 2014, p. 469; Demirtaş Coşkun, 2010, p. 65). The arrival of immigrants accentuated certain social problems such as unemployment and urban security in Türkiye. Turkish officials frequently referred to these concrete examples at EU, NATO and WEU meetings with their counterparts to emphasize the significance of Türkiye's participation in the decision-making mechanisms of ESDP.

Preservation of Türkiye's Acquired Rights within the WEU

Associate members of WEU did not have full voting rights and could not block a decision. They did not benefit from the security guarantees under Article V of the Modified Brussels Treaty as well. **** However, they could express opinions, share documents, and participate fully in the WEU Council, WEU Parliamentary Assembly and other WEU bodies. Associate member status ensured Türkiye the opportunity to share and bring to the fore its views on political and military issues at European and international levels. Türkiye has benefitted from these rights within WEU since it became an associate member in 1992 (Szymanski and Terlikowski 2010, p. 1-2). With this status, Türkiye signed the WEU declaration on the Treaty of Amsterdam, which is significant in the direction of Türkiye's EU membership objective and in terms of belonging to the European structures. WEU bodies such as WEAG (Western European Armaments Group), EUROCOM which aimed interoperability between the tactical communication systems of the land forces, EUROLONGTERM which worked for the development of long-term military plans, and WELG (Western European Logistics Group) were mostly initiated within NATO and then transferred to WEU (WEU, 2000, p. 31-32). Türkiye was a full member of these WEU bodies. However, as

**** Article V: *“If any of the High Contracting Parties should be the object of an armed attack in Europe, the other High Contracting Parties will, in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, afford the Party so attacked all the military and other aid and assistance in their power.”* (Modified Brussels Treaty, 1954).

Türkiye was not a full member of WEU, the incorporation of the latter into the EU left Türkiye's gains within WEU bodies in limbo. Moreover, with the dissolution of WEU, Türkiye was deprived of an extra security umbrella regarding the European defense issues.

Türkiye was seeking to preserve its gains within WEU and to maintain its acquired rights under the WEU umbrella. Besides these, remaining outside the ESDP decision-making mechanisms bore the risk of downgrading Türkiye's role in the European defense. In the meantime, at the EU Helsinki summit held in December 1999, Türkiye was recognized as a candidate country. In line with its candidate status, Türkiye aspired to get involved more actively in the ESDP mechanisms. Turkish authorities believed that they could largely contribute to the ESDP thanks to the country's military capacities and its second-largest army in NATO. Türkiye also considered that its contributions to the ESDP and EU-led operations could eventually accelerate its accession process to the EU. The opposite case, in other terms the non-inclusion in the ESDP decision-making mechanisms, signified that Türkiye could participate in EU-led operations only upon invitation. There were no guarantees of invitation, and particularly in case of operations where NATO assets would not be used, the invitation was completely dependent on EU member states. Therefore, Türkiye regarded the enhanced consultation proposals with the non-EU NATO allies on ESDP as a secondary role which was not commensurate with its NATO membership and candidate status to the EU.

Given the above-mentioned aspects, the Turkish authorities developed some proposals to keep Türkiye's vested rights intact. In this regard, they proposed the recognition of full membership status to associate members of WEU, or integration of WEU into the EU under an innovative fourth pillar, or the establishment of a similar status to WEU associate member within the framework of ESDP (Aybet, 2000, p. 56; Orhun, 2000, p. 5). However, these proposals were disregarded by the EU which did not desire to include non-EU NATO countries in the decision-making mechanisms of ESDP.

Turkish-Greek Disputes

Türkiye and Greece, two neighboring NATO allies in the Balkans and the Aegean Sea, traditionally mistrusted each other. The long-standing disputes on Cyprus; the delimitation of the continental shelf and territorial waters in the Aegean Sea; air space-related problems; militarization of Eastern Aegean islands by Greece contrary to the provisions of international agreements; controversial sovereignty rights on islands, islets and rocks in the Aegean Sea⁺⁺⁺ (Turkish MFA, 2022-b) are sources of tension between these two countries.

Türkiye and Greece always sought to balance each other with their presence at international organizations. In this regard, Greece became a member of the Council of Europe on 9 August 1949 (Council of Europe, 2024-a) and Türkiye followed it on 13 April 1950 (Council of Europe, 2024-b). Both countries became members of NATO on the same date, on 18 February 1952 (NATO, 2024). When Greece applied to the EEC on 8 June 1959, just three weeks later Türkiye also applied to the EEC, on 31 July 1959. The association agreement between Greece and the EEC, the Athens agreement, was signed in June 1961. A similar agreement was signed between Türkiye and EEC, the Ankara Agreement, on 12 September 1963 (Erdoğan, 2008, p. 135-136). The balance between Türkiye and Greece in terms of membership to European organizations changed to the detriment of the former in 1981 with Greece's accession to the EC.

⁺⁺⁺ On 28 January 1996, Türkiye and Greece were on the brink of war due to the dispute on the sovereignty of Kardak rocks in the Aegean Sea. The crisis between the two NATO countries was appeased with the mediation of US authorities.

Türkiye which would normally follow Greece to apply to EC failed to do so due to the military coup which took place in 1980 and the ensuing military regime which lasted until 1983. Following the transition to civilian rule, Türkiye applied, in 1987, to the EC for membership. However, this application was declined in 1989. The imbalance between Türkiye and Greece at the level of representation in European institutions would continue to grow over time. While Türkiye had to content with WEU *associate member* status in 1992, Greece, thanks to its EU membership, became in 1995 the tenth full member of WEU (Lindley-French, 2007, p. 203). According to Türkiye, Greek WEU membership was a recurrence of the preferential treatment granted to Greece after its admission to the EC, and this time in a very sensitive area of security and defense.

Greece, as an EU member, was politically in a more advantageous position compared to Türkiye. Greece systematically took advantage of its position against Türkiye and constituted an obstacle before the development of Turkish-European relations. The Turkish authorities, aware of this reality, did not want to remain outside the decision-making mechanisms of an ESDP in which Greece took part. Given the disputes between the two countries, the ESDP issue became more crucial for the parties. With the evolution of the ESDI to the ESDP, Greece felt more comfortable since the issue was more an EU affair than a NATO one. Thereafter, Greece did not object only to the participation of Türkiye in the ESDP decision-making mechanisms but also to enhanced consultations with Türkiye. Greece which was against Turkish involvement in the ESDP asserted that the long consultation process with non-EU countries during a crisis would compromise the EU decision-making authority (Lindley-French, 2007, p. 280). An ESDP in which Greece took part, but Türkiye did not was a source of concern for Turkish military officials and diplomats. In case of a Turkish-Greek dispute, the Greek side could abuse its position in the ESDP against Türkiye and constitute a menace for Türkiye's national security interests. Moreover, such a situation could strain Turkish-EU relations if the EU sided with its member (Aybet, 2000, p. 48). In this case, Türkiye would have to dispute with the EU as an institution, and that could harm its long-term objective of accession to the EU.

The Prospective Accession of the Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus to the EU

Within the framework of the ESDP, the Cyprus issue was another source of concern for the Turkish authorities. Due to the inter-communal fights between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) with its resolution no. 186, dated 4 March 1964, decided to deploy the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) (UN, 2024). In 1974, the Greek military junta conducted a coup attempt in Cyprus to realize *Enosis*, which signifies the ideal of uniting Cyprus with the Greek mainland. Türkiye, based on its guarantor state status, had to intervene to prevent this coup and attacks against the Turkish community on the island. Since then, Turkish armed forces are stationed in the northern part of the island. The island is divided into North and South, and inter-communal skirmishes have ended. Two separate de facto states exist on the island: the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and the Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus (GASC), the Turkish appellation of the Southern party. TRNC is recognized only by Türkiye on the international stage while the GASC is not recognized by Türkiye.

Following the Turkish military intervention to Cyprus in 1974, Greece withdrew from the military wing of NATO but continued to remain in its civilian structure. By doing so, Greek authorities aimed to protest NATO and the US for not being able to prevent the Turkish intervention. Later, Greece applied to return to the NATO military wing, but this request was vetoed by the Turkish civilian governments. The withdrawal of Greece presented some

advantages for Türkiye in the European defense issues, and Turkish governments did not want to lose this advantage. However, the US sought to reintegrate Greece into NATO military structures. When a military coup took place in Türkiye in 1980, the US decided to make use of this opportunity and tasked US Army General Bernard Rogers to discuss the issue with the head of the military coup in Türkiye, General Kenan Evren. General Evren agreed to remove Türkiye's veto on condition of recognition of additional operational responsibility for Türkiye on the Aegean Sea (Washington Post, 21 October 1980). This condition was *verbally* accepted on behalf of Greece by the US General Rogers. Later, the Greek governments expressed that they were not liable for US General Rogers' words and refused to implement the compromise. Türkiye was cheated, and its good intentions were abused by its allies. After its return to NATO in 1980 and its accession to the EC in 1981, Greece followed a more hostile policy against Türkiye and abused its veto right within the EC/EU to obstruct Turkish-European relations.

Greece continued also to pursue its policy of Enosis, but this time indirectly. It tried to unite Cyprus with Greece by using the European institutions. As of 1987, Greece conducted a policy to ensure Cyprus' accession to the EC. In this vein, GASC submitted its application for EC membership in June 1990 (Greek MFA, 2024). The border dispute in Cyprus constituted an important obstacle before the EU membership. The European authorities have set the resolution of border disputes as one of the preconditions to the EU membership. In the case of Southern Cyprus, this required to reach a settlement with the Northern Turkish part. However, this rule was disregarded by the EU itself at the Helsinki summit which at the same time recognized Türkiye as a candidate country. In the Helsinki summit conclusions, it was mentioned that *“The European Council underlines that a political settlement will facilitate the accession of Cyprus to the European Union. If no settlement has been reached by the completion of accession negotiations, the Council's decision on accession will be made without the above being a precondition”* (EU Helsinki Summit, 1999: para. 9-b). This meant that the EU would accept a new member that had a border dispute, and consequently the EU also would have a border dispute. This exception was recognized to Southern Cyprus by EU authorities upon the Greek pressures.

The prospective accession of Southern Cyprus to the EU would further complicate for Türkiye not only the ESDP but also Turkish candidacy to the EU. The prospect of the EU's taking part in Turkish-Greek and Turkish-Southern Cyprus disputes could profoundly harm Turkish-EU relations. In addition to Greece, Southern Cyprus would constitute a new obstacle before the development of Turkish-EU relations. The scenarios that evoked the establishment of an EU force in Cyprus within the framework of the ESDP also disturbed the Turkish authorities. Given the above facts, taking part in the ESDP decision-making mechanisms was crucial for the Turkish authorities. Türkiye aimed to limit the room for maneuvering of Greece and Southern Cyprus, and to prevent them from abusing their positions vis-à-vis Türkiye.

Discussion/Conclusion

After the Ukrainian crisis, debates to establish a more unified and efficient ESDP have once again come forth more intensively on the political agenda of the European countries. It is worth noting that similar discussions took place almost 30 years ago, following the end of the Cold War. In the course of time, the ESDI evolved into the ESDP, and the EU finally adopted a policy on defense issues. With the Treaty of Lisbon signed on 13 December 2007, ESDP was renamed as *“Common Security and Defence Policy”* (CSDP). However, the term ESDP is still commonly used. Despite the different appellations, the EU still lags behind its objectives in defense and military issues. The recent Ukrainian crisis has once more confirmed the shortcomings of the ESDP and the lack of unanimity among the EU members on defense issues.

If the EU wants to possess its own military capabilities, it should be ready to deploy the necessary troops and allocate the required financial funds for this end. In addition, the EU should adopt a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to conduct the ESDP/CSDP with its non-EU NATO allies and candidate countries.

The Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict had serious political, economic and social consequences. Following the armed conflict which started in February 2022, it is estimated that more than 6 million civilians had to flee Ukraine. Out of these 6 million Ukrainians, more than 4,3 million were sheltered by EU member states under the temporary protection status (Eurostat, 2024-b). Unlike the Syrian refugees, Ukrainians were welcomed by European politicians and public opinion. The crisis influenced profoundly the EU-Russian trade and economic relations as well. Between 2021 and 2024, the value of EU imports from Russia fell by 85 % (Eurostat, 2024-c). This crisis also demonstrated the vulnerability of the EU member states in energy issues. Russia used energy as a weapon against the EU countries. Thereafter, EU countries were obliged to take measures to ensure their security energy vis à vis Russia. In this respect, they sought to diversify their energy suppliers and invest in new technologies. Gas imports of EU countries from Russia decreased from 40% in 2021 to 8% in 2023. This decrease was possible thanks to an increase in LNG import and an overall reduction of gas consumption in the EU. The United States and Norway were among the top gas suppliers. Norway alone provided around 30% of all gas imports after the crisis. Other principal suppliers were the UK, Qatar and North African countries (European Council, 2024). Consequently, EU achieved to decrease its energy dependency to Russia.

As a result, the Ukrainian crisis and its aftermath developments, such as Ukrainian migrant flow to EU countries, EU's energy over-dependency to Russia, awakened the EU authorities on the necessity of reinforcing the ESDP mechanisms. Many EU leaders, like Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the EU Commission, underscored the strategic importance of an autonomous European defense mechanism and called for a true "European Defense Union". EU leaders also underlined the need to resolve the internal disagreements on defense issues and proposed to increase the EU defense expenditures.

As mentioned previously, it is interesting to note that the Eurobarometer figures on public opinion support for the ESDP are at similar levels for the last 20 years. 77% of Europeans seem to be in favor of a common defense and security policy. Despite the high level of support from the EU political elites and the EU public opinions for the ESDP which is being developed for more than 30 years now, its current level of progress seems unsatisfactory. Therefore, the credibility and validity of these figures need to be questioned. If EU political elites' and public opinions' support for the ESDP is so high, how can the reluctance to increase the defense expenditures and the hesitant attitudes of some EU governments for the advancement of the ESDP be explained. The high level of support expressed in Eurobarometer surveys can be understood probably by the type of questions asked to survey respondents. The questions are simplistic and require responses such as "for or against". As a result, these types of simplistic questions generally do not provide sound and reliable results.

Türkiye's participation in the ESDP, in line with its EU accession process, is of paramount importance for Turkish foreign policy. EU membership was a main foreign policy goal for the Turkish authorities in the 1990s and 2000s. Türkiye's EC membership journey started in 1963 with the conclusion of the Ankara agreement. 36 years after the signing of the said agreement, Türkiye was officially recognized as a candidate country at the EU Helsinki summit held in December 1999. Türkiye viewed the ESDP as a means to further strengthen its relations with the

EU. Thanks to its geostrategic position and military capacities, Türkiye expected that its contributions to the ESDP could accelerate its accession process to the EU.

Apart from the accession goal to the EU, security concerns were also determinant in shaping Türkiye's foreign policy towards the ESDP. In this regard, proximity to conflict zones and the potential threats to its national security were set forth by the Turkish authorities to justify its participation in the ESDP mechanisms. In addition to this, the preservation of Türkiye's acquired rights within the WEU also played a substantial role in shaping Turkish foreign policy on the issue. The presence of Greece and the prospective accession of Southern Cyprus into the ESDP mechanisms were other sources of concern for Türkiye. The probability that Greece and Southern Cyprus could abuse their positions against Türkiye within the EU and within the ESDP pushed the latter to seek to partake in the ESDP decision-making mechanisms. Moreover, the probability of an EU intervention in the Turkish-Greek or Turkish-Southern Cyprus dispute further complicated the issue. To appease these concerns, the UE and NATO mutually pledged that neither the ESDP nor NATO would be used against their members. This commitment was attested by the Nice Implementation Document. Thereafter, Türkiye removed its veto against the EU's access to NATO assets.

Despite the agreed provisions of the Nice Implementation Document, the EU's treatment of the non-EU NATO allies in the context of the ESDP activities is still far from being satisfactory and the document has consistently been interpreted in a narrow manner (Turkish MFA, 2022-a). Moreover, since Southern Cyprus became an EU member in 2004, NATO-EU cooperation underwent through difficulties. Since 2004, the Southern Cyprus vetoes Türkiye's accession to the European Defense Agency, the successor of WEAG to which Türkiye was a full member through the WEU. In response, Türkiye vetoes since 2004 the accession of the Southern Cyprus to NATO's Partnership for Peace program and opposes to the sharing of classified information with the said party. This situation limits the EU's CSDP initiatives and deprives it of the valuable Turkish contribution to the EU-led operations. It should also be noted that the exploration of natural gas resources in the mid-2000s in the Eastern Mediterranean has further complicated not only the Cyprus issue but also NATO-EU cooperation.

The ESDP will continue to be an important topic for the EU and Türkiye in the years ahead. The recent Ukrainian-Russian armed conflict has triggered the debates regarding the ESDP and paved the way for new discussions on the "European Defense Union". If the EU wants to have a functioning and reliable ESDP, its members shall overcome their internal disagreements regarding the financing of the ESDP and be more cooperative for the participation of Türkiye to the ESDP mechanisms. Türkiye is not a foe for the EU or its members. On the contrary, as a candidate country, Türkiye aspires to partake in the ESDP mechanisms and contribute with its military expertise to the EU-led operations. Moreover, Türkiye has displayed once more its vital role in the recent Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict. Türkiye was one of the rare countries that had good relations with both countries. Türkiye successfully mediated cease-fire talks between Russia and Ukraine in Istanbul and played a crucial role in the Grain Deal. To overcome the political stalemate between Türkiye and the EU on the ESDP, the parties shall display good faith and common sense and take the advantage of diplomacy to surmount their obstacles.

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