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# **European Union Global Strategy and Turkey:** An Analysis of the Term 2016-2021

Avrupa Birliği Küresel Stratejisi ve Türkiye: 2016-2021 Dönemine Yönelik Bir İnceleme

#### **Abstract**

The European Union (EU) set out its aim to be a global power in 2003, with the announcement of the European Security Strategy, however, it was not until the 2016 EU Global Strategy that this goal was stressed more clearly and decisively. The comparison between these two strategies illustrates the change in the EU's rhetoric and foreign policy. With the 2016 Strategy, the EU embarked on an effort to shape its own geopolitics, this time, much freer from the US domination, focusing specifically on the migration crisis and the recent security threats in Europe. This paper aims to concentrate on the status of Turkey in EU foreign policy and elaborate on the intensification of the EU's focus on Turkey, in its foreign policy, in the period 2016 - 2021. The paper argues that the EU limited emphasis on the role of Turkey to areas, such as migration, counterterrorism, and energy. Therefore, it is argued that this limited approach damages the cooperative understanding between the parties, especially regarding the candidacy process.

**Keywords**: European Security Strategy, EU Global Strategy, EU Foreign Policy, Turkey.

#### Öz

Avrupa Birliği (AB), Avrupa Güvenlik Stratejisi'ni kamuoyuna duyurduğu 2003 yılında küresel bir güç olma hedefini ortaya koymuştur. Bununla birlikte bu hedef, 2016 AB Küresel Stratejisi'nde daha kararlı ve daha açık bir şekilde vurgulanmıştır. 2016 Stratejisi ile birlikte AB, göç krizini ve özellikle son dönemdeki diğer güvenlik tehditlerini göz önünde bulundururarak kendi jeopolitiğini bu defa ABD liderliğinden bağımsız olarak şekillendirmeye gayret etmektedir. Bu çalışma, AB dış politikasında Türkiye'nin konumuna

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odaklanmayı ve AB'nin 2016-2021 döneminde dış politikasında Türkiye'ye daha fazla yer vermesinin nedenlerini değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada Türkiye'nin rolünün AB tarafından göç, terörle mücadele ve enerji gibi alanlarla sınırlandırıldığı ifade edilmektedir. Sonuç olarak, AB'nin yaklaşımının taraflar arasındaki iş birliği anlayışına özellikle adaylık süreci bakımından zarar verdiği tartışılmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler**: Avrupa Güvenlik Stratejisi, AB Küresel Stratejisi, AB Dış Politikası, Türkiye.

#### Introduction

The European Union (EU) has become one of the strongest normative actors in promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in world affairs. The enlargement process and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) are the two mechanisms that provide harmonization with the EU acquis in the member states and the region. These mechanisms are aimed to protect cosmopolitan values inside and outside of the EU, and these have been adopted as security strategies since 2003. The European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2003 and EU Global Strategy in 2016 are the two significant outputs of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which aimed to identify the EU's foreign affairs priorities. The EU's role in global politics is a key study area in the literature. As a contribution to this literature, the comparison between ESS in 2003 and EU Global Strategy in 2016, and Turkey's status in these, will be valuable in illustrating changes in the EU's rhetoric and foreign policy.

Considering this, the paper aims to answer the following two questions: What were the changes in the EU's perception of the status of Turkey in its foreign policy strategy between 2003 and 2016? What was the extent of the influence of the EU's normative power in Turkey, and in the regional conflicts around Turkey, between 2016 and 2021? The paper aims to examine the efforts of the EU between 2016 and 2021 to promote democracy and protect human rights inside and outside the Union, taking into consideration the growing challenges, such as populist governments in some member states, deadlock in Turkey-EU relations, frozen relations with Syria, the ineffectiveness of ENP, Russia's role in the region and the reluctance of Arab states to share the burden of migration. The methodology of the paper consists of document analysis and content analysis on ESS in 2003, the EU Global Strategy in 2016, and the 2019 report evaluating three years of the EU Global Strategy, entitled "Three Years on EU Global Strategy". The analysis is based on

the prior concepts/words of 'Turkey, security, partnership, enlargement, candidacy, and resilience', in the strategies.

# **EU and Turkey as Foreign Policy Actors**

The EU has long been a normative power model for the world, especially since the 1990s, and has had a considerable role in Turkey's foreign policy since 1963, when the Ankara Agreement established an associational relationship between the parties. However, the westernization and modernization of Turkey's foreign policy orientation date to 1923. To enhance this modernization goal, Turkey became a Council of Europe member in 1949; a NATO member in 1952, and an associate state to the European Economic Community through the Ankara Agreement in 1963. In 1995, Turkey signed a Customs Union Agreement with the EU and was granted EU candidacy status at the 1999 Helsinki Summit.

Between 1999 and 2005, nine harmonization packages were adopted in Turkey, which brought reforms in many areas, such as civil society, fundamental rights, minority rights, and the rule of law. However, the relations between Turkey and the EU changed direction with the admission of South Cyprus. In 2006, Turkey refused to sign the Association Agreement with Cyprus or to become a party to the Customs Union Agreement with Cyprus on the grounds that this agreement would lead to the recognition of South Cyprus as the representative of the whole island. After this declaration, negotiations between Turkey and the EU were frozen on the initiative of several member states, particularly Greece, South Cyprus, and France. Even though 16 chapters have been opened, 8 are frozen, and no chapter will be closed (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2021).

Even though the relations over candidacy or future membership have slipped off the agenda, the EU and Turkey undeniably remain key actors in each other's foreign policies. Trade relations, security cooperation, and cultural and educational cooperation between the parties have not only connected the two sides' governments but also, their societies. In 2015, an important turning point in relations was reached, which changed the agenda of the EU policymakers. After the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, migration influx from Syria to Europe made Turkey a very significant transit point, leading to Turkey and the EU agreeing on a Readmission Deal on 18 March 2016. This Deal has regulated not only the influx, but also free visa negotiations, opening new chapters in the candidacy process, and revitalizing the Customs Union Agreement (European Commission, 2016). The key product of the Deal was the great reduction in deaths on the migration routes. The success of the Deal

increased the hopes of new membership talks, but recently emerging key difficulties in the relationship are the Eastern Mediterranean question since 2019, and political problems between Turkey and some European countries such as France, Austria, and Greece.

In the following part, relations between Turkey and the EU are examined in terms of the status of Turkey in the foreign policy of the Union. The research is limited to the strategies of the Union announced in 2003, and 2016, and the report published in 2019.

### **European Security Strategy in 2003**

The European integration process has witnessed initiatives to establish defense and security organizations at the supranational level. The Pleven Plan in 1950 was one of those initiatives designed to promote federalist ideas. The plan aimed to establish a European Defense Community with joint armed forces but was rejected by France. Subsequently, the Fouchet Plan proposed in 1961 aimed to create a Common Security Policy. However, despite the establishment of European Political Cooperation in the 1970s, there has been no significant change in the foreign policy actorness of the EU in global affairs.

The Maastricht Treaty, which established CFSP as a second pillar of the EU and Petersberg tasks, which were declared in 1992, has also been significant steps in the development of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) (Kaplanova, 2015, p. 51). Nevertheless, these policies have resulted in no successful projects. Amongst the most important reasons for failure were the EU policies over conflicts in Kosovo, and the crises in Yugoslavia. The EU had no role in ending the Balkan wars in the 1990s. Eventually, NATO intervened, and with the leadership of the US, Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995. The EU initiated ESDP in 1999 in order to avoid a repeat of the dramatic events of the Bosnian war. The EU evolved principles to empower its foreign policy, however, there was no change in practice until the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and the Iraq war in 2003. In order to prepare for the regional crises, the EU declared the European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2003 to protect human rights, and to secure the Union.

In ESS, the EU's first attempt at strategy as a global player, the Union focused on four areas: weapons of mass destruction, terrorist attacks, energy, and climate change (Kaplanova, 2015, p. 52). In the 16 pageslong Strategy document, the concept of 'security' occurred 33 times. After September 11 attacks and the Iraq war, key threats to the EU were

listed as "terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, and organized crime" (ESS, 2003). Especially during the Iraq war, European states were divided; some member states supported the US intervention and others totally rejected any armed intervention (Tocci, 2017, p. 488). ESS had three priorities: security threats, ensuring security in the EU's neighbouring region, and building "international order on an effective multilateralism" (Smith, 2017, p. 508). Through this method, the Union emphasized the role of norms and values in conflictresolution mechanisms. However, the EU's strategy was influenced by the 2008 economic crisis, and member states tended to prioritize their economic programs over EU foreign policy actions. The Strategy named the USA, Russia, China, Japan, Canada, and neighbour countries as "partner countries" of the EU, but not Turkey. In the following part, the status of Turkey in the ESS is evaluated, and there is a discussion of the EU's perception of the role of Turkey in EU foreign policy at the beginning of the 2000s.

# Turkey in European Security Strategy

In ESS, there were 4 references to Turkey: firstly, as a transit route of energy; secondly, as a special state in EU-Russia relations; thirdly, as a candidate country; and finally, as an important country for regional cooperation, in addition to Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

# Energy security and Russia: Turkey as a transit route

One of the significant concepts used in ESS was 'energy security'. To secure the energy routes, the EU aimed at closer cooperation with Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Africa. Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean under ENP were considered the tools of closer cooperation with those regions. Energy has also always been a key sector in relations with Russia, and thus the EU focused on the transit routes such as Turkey and Ukraine regarding energy relations. While the EU considered Turkey simply as one of the transit routes, it accorded China, India, Japan, and the US status as the "partners" in the production of renewable energy and low-carbon technologies (ESS, 2003, p. 14).

# The candidacy of Turkey and cooperation in the region

ESS prioritized stability in Europe after the September 11 attacks and the Iraq war. Stability in Europe could only be achieved through regional stability. Turkey was considered one of the significant countries in this regard. From that perspective, the Strategy stressed the candidacy process

of Turkey and underlined the negotiation process started in 2005. Other significant countries, which served the stability in Europe were Western Balkan states. Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, in particular, were crucial to a peaceful environment in the environs of the EU (ESS, 2003, p. 16).

The EU's special interest in conflict management in the neighbourhood meant that ESS discussed the conflicts in the Southern Caucasus, the Republic of Moldova, and Israel. In this policy, the EU stressed the important roles of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey. The Union put a special emphasis on Turkey's role as a contributor to the Alliance of Civilisations (ESS, 2003, p. 23).

# EU Global Strategy in 2016

EU Global Strategy was a response to the new developments in Europe and the world, was prepared during the term of the High Representative of the EU, Federica Mogherini, in 2015, and published the following year (Smith, 2017, p. 509). The years after 2010 witnessed so many diversifications in world affairs: the Russian annexation of Crimea, the Eurozone crisis, migration influx, Brexit, and populist governments in member states, which deeply influenced the European continent (Tocci, 2017, p. 490). This led to new priorities for the Union, focusing on the "security of the EU, state and societal resilience, an integrated approach to conflicts and crises, cooperative regional orders, and global governance for the 21st century". The Strategy has proven that many problems have originated in the region around the EU, inevitably involving the organization. In order to cope with these problems, the Union has stressed partnerships with regional powers. The concept of 'partnership' was used 11 times in ESS, increasing to 73 times in the EU Global Strategy, indicating the change in the views of the member states over the conflicts around the region, and the need for cooperation in response.

The 60 pages-long Strategy has a more pessimistic view of European security than the ESS (Smith, 2017, p. 509). This view can also be noticed in the increased use of the concept of 'security' from 33 times in ESS to 150 times in the EU Global Strategy. The security challenges emphasized in the Strategy are "energy security, irregular migration, climate change, and terrorism" (EU Global Strategy, 2016). In order to manage these challenges, the EU stressed that diplomacy was the policymakers' first tool. In place of unilateral acts seen in the US foreign policy, the EU prefers to follow multilateral approaches with partner countries. The EU has also witnessed the failure of peacekeeping forces in Balkan conflicts and has

learned lessons from the Bosnian war; consequently, the Union, as a single unit, took no measures to control or end the war. Therefore, in the Global Strategy, a peacebuilding approach has been adopted in order to prevent the re-emergence of conflict in the region. Through various activities, the EU supports projects of non-governmental organizations aimed at understanding and empowering the local actors.

The emergence of a new concept, "principled pragmatism", in the EU Global Strategy has also demonstrated the changed EU foreign policy approach. Stress on 'pragmatism' has emphasized the need for the use of armed/technological/economic power to shape any conflict in the region. This was an important turn for the EU foreign policy, showing that it had abandoned normative approaches, which had no sustainable influence over the conflicts. With the lessons from the Enlargement Policy, ENP, and relations with Russia, the EU was able to take on a renewed position in the world, based upon its principles, norms, and values, but at the same time, taking a cost and benefit analysis approach to relationships, namely pragmatism.

EU Global Strategy stressed the "resilience of states and societies" in Europe, Central Asia, and Central Africa. From the perspective of the EU policymakers, the concept of resilience has a different aim from partnerships with neighboring countries. With a special emphasis on the resilience of the Western Balkans and Turkey, EU Global Strategy was designed to promote economic, social, and climate/energy relations and migration policies (EU Global Strategy, 2016, p. 9). Furthermore, the Strategy has followed a different course from the Enlargement Policy, drawing attention to migration, energy security, terrorism, and organized crime as problematic areas in the relations between the EU, the Western Balkans, and Turkey. Therefore, the resilience of countries in regions close to the EU has been prioritized, not only in the interests of democracy but also in European security (EU Global Strategy, 2016, p. 25).

EU Global Strategy stressed firstly the conflicts in the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Africa, and has underlined the need for cooperation with regional organizations and civil societies to take action on migration, climate issues, non-proliferation, water and food security, and terrorism. Urgent cases for attention are the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Syrian and Libyan conflicts. Secondly, the Strategy stressed cooperation with Turkey in economic sectors, regional security, and migration.

In order to fight terrorism and radicalization, the EU aimed at cooperation

among member states and EU agencies. However, Europe underestimated the seriousness of this and therefore, member states were encouraged to engage more with North Africa, the Middle East, the Western Balkans, and Turkey (EU Global Strategy, 2016, p. 21).

# Turkey's Status in EU Global Strategy

Compared to ESS, EU Global Strategy took a different approach to Turkey. The Syrian civil war, migration influx, and the role of other regional powers such as Russia and Iran had a considerable negative impact on Turkey. The Strategy refers to Turkey 6 times. Firstly, there is an emphasis on "the resilience of Turkey". With this approach, the EU aimed to implement "strict and fair conditionality for candidate countries". The Strategy points to the key role of economic and societal issues, climate/energy fragility, and effective migration policies in the EU's relations with Turkey (EU Global Strategy, 2016, p. 9).

As a second reference, the Strategy puts emphasis on a counterterrorism partnership with Turkey (EU Global Strategy, 2016, p. 21). The third point in the Strategy has stressed "cooperation in education, energy, and transport" (EU Global Strategy, 2016, p. 35). The fourth reference relates to "Peace in the Middle East, Africa, and the Mediterranean". Sectoral cooperation with Turkey, especially the modernization of the Customs Union Agreement is cited as a motivation for improved relations. The remaining references were based on promoting democracy in Turkey, described as the "normalization of relations with Cyprus and fair accession conditionality" (EU Global Strategy, 2016, p. 35). EU Global Strategy indicated that the EU was aware of the Cyprus issue as one of the most serious obstacles to Turkey's EU membership process, and fair accession conditionality should only cover the Copenhagen criteria.

# 2019 - Three Years on - EU Global Strategy

In 2019, a new report analyzing the impact of the EU Global Strategy after three years was published by the High Representative of the EU, Federica Mogherini. The concept of 'security' was mentioned 87 times in the report, showing how much more the EU valued security after 2016 and indicating how the EU would shape its current and prospective policies.

Another important feature of the report concerned attitudes to Turkey. The report put emphasis on Turkey's "successful cooperation with the EU on preserving multilateralism and addressing common challenges in areas

such as migration, counterterrorism, energy, transport, economy, and trade". The report also welcomed the high-level political dialogue between the two sides. Through the dialogue, greater cooperation was expected in the relations with Syria, Iraq, Iraq, and Libya (EU Global Strategy, 2019, p. 17). The reference to Turkey in the report indicated that Turkey-EU relations are sufficiently stable to balance the regional powers and ease the escalation of conflicts in and around the EU. This approach can be described as 'everything but membership for Turkey', and there continues to be no place for membership negotiations in the EU foreign policy agenda.

### Turkey's Status in the EU Foreign Policy between 2019 and 2021

In 2019, accession negotiations were frozen, after Turkey distanced itself from the EU norms. Even though EU Global Strategy referred to the revitalization of the Customs Union Agreement, there was no agreement on the start of negotiations because of the political context. Failed coup initiative in 2016 brought strict measures by the Turkish government, and the EU was critical of the consequent political and social effects enforced by governmental policies in Turkey. EU's financial support to Turkey was limited for 2020, in addition to the limit placed on credits of the European Investment Bank to Turkey. Since 2019, the main dimension in relations has been the Eastern Mediterranean crisis. Turkey's policies related to its hydrocarbon search in the Eastern Mediterranean are disapproved of by Greece, South Cyprus, and the EU; therefore, high-level political dialogue has been suspended by the decision of the Council. Josep Borrell, the current High Representative of the EU, explained the situation: "EU relationship with Turkey has deep historical roots. However, the country's present direction of travel seems to take it further away from the EU" (The way ahead, 2020).

The tense relations between the parties improved slightly with European Council conclusions in March and June 2021. Reductions in sanctions and the start of a "positive agenda" for Turkey increased the hopes for the regeneration of relations; however, there is still no serious development in advancing political cooperation. Another notable point was the status of Turkey within the European Council conclusions. Relations with Turkey were evaluated in the June 2021 European Council conclusions, entitled "European Council conclusions on external relations". This documented the issues of cyber security, and also EU relations with Libya, Russia, Belarus, Sahel, Ethiopia, and Turkey (European Council Conclusions, 24 June 2021). This implies that Turkey was not regarded as a candidate

country and was not considered under the title of Enlargement Policy in the document. The conclusions for Turkey instead indicated plans for conditional cooperation between the parties. Accordingly, unless Turkey takes measures to de-escalate the Eastern Mediterranean crisis, no steps can be taken to revitalize the Customs Union Agreement.

It should also be emphasized that Turkey's approaches to the Copenhagen criteria and its harmonization efforts are being monitored by EU institutions. Therefore, Turkey needs to increase its efforts for democratization, seriously consider the European Commission's annual Turkey Reports, and protect the rule of law in the country. In addition to internal policies, the EU expects Turkey to act in a cooperative manner in the Cyprus issue. Turkey supports the reopening of Varosha, a militarised zone, in Cyprus, but many EU member states, predominantly Greece, do not, and currently are critical of Turkey's actions (Turkey says, 2021).

#### Conclusion

The EU's foreign policy strategies in 2003, 2016, and 2019 reports have indicated that Turkey's position in the eyes of the EU has shifted from candidate country status to an 'important neighbour country'. Security issues, migration influx, the democratic deficit in Turkey, the Cyprus issue, and the Eastern Mediterranean crisis have demonstrated that a multi-level approach is needed. The double standards of the EU leaders in membership conditionality need to be eliminated, allowing a new initiative to promote democracy in Turkey. The last 5 years have indicated that the EU and Turkey are primary actors in the protection of migrants' rights and the reduction of tension in the region. Currently, Turkey is not regarded as a candidate country and was not considered by the EU leaders and policymakers for inclusion in the Enlargement Policy. The recent EU documents concerning Turkey have indicated preferences for conditional cooperation between the parties, even though Turkey's clear goal of full membership since the 1999 Helsinki Summit. On the other hand, the EU made it clear that unless Turkey de-escalates the crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean, no steps will be taken for the revival of the Customs Union Agreement, and prospects of full membership will recede further. However, if the EU aims to maintain its motivational power for normative contribution to democratization in Turkey, cooperation and dialogue between the parties should extend beyond security, migration, and energy, to embrace Customs Union reformation efforts, free visa negotiations, negotiation chapters, candidacy process, and financial support.

This paper concludes that the re-establishment of an interactive relationship, dialogue, and cooperation between the EU and Turkey is important for the maintenance of a peaceful region. Equally, Turkey has the responsibility to harmonize with the EU acquis and put into effect the rules and norms required to promote its further democratization.

#### Declaration

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