

# Temporality and interaction in the EU-Turkey relationship\*

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## Abstract

This article provides an assessment of the history of the EU-Turkey relationship in the context of temporality and interaction put forward by Atila Eralp in his research on EU-Turkey relations. It argues and demonstrates that the conceptual framework put forward by Eralp at the nexus of temporality, interaction and (de) Europeanisation does not only constitute an exploratory framework in understanding the trajectory of EU-Turkey relations before the opening of accession negotiations in 2005, but that it also sheds light on the period of detachment which characterises the relationship in the post-2005 era.

*Key words:* Turkey-EU relations, temporality, international order, Turkish foreign policy, (de) Europeanisation.

## 1. Introduction

Turkey has been an integral part of Europe's centuries-long history and has enjoyed structured relations with the European Union and its predecessor, the European Community, almost since its inception. Both Turkey and the EU have aimed at cultivating a closer relationship. The depth and breadth of the economic, societal, cultural and political connections that the two have been able to establish over the years clearly testify to this. Although both sides have always aimed at deepening relations, the precise interpretation of what this would entail has been

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highly contested. It is this odd mix between a shared commitment to each other and widely varying interpretations within (and between) both sides as to what this should mean that explains Turkey's tortuous path to Europe characterised by various ebbs and flows since the early decades of the Republic.

This article provides an assessment of the history of the EU-Turkey relationship in the context of temporality and interaction put forward by Eralp (2009). In his article, Eralp has argued that there is a close relationship between temporality, interaction and Europeanization in the EU-Turkey relationship. In other words, temporality and interaction (often extending beyond governmental actors) need to be aligned for Europeanisation to occur in Turkey. Eralp (2009: 150) defines temporality as "the levels of convergence and divergence between the dynamics of European integration and Turkish developments over time", whereby interaction refers to the "quality and intensity of the relationship among governmental and non-governmental actors in Europe and Turkey".

While his initial empirical analysis covered the period until the end of the first decade of the 2000s, this article argues and demonstrates that this conceptual framework is also explanatory in understanding the souring of the EU-Turkey relationship and the ensuing de-Europeanisation of Turkey in the second decade of the 2000s. The deterioration of the EU-Turkey relationship in the post-2005 period is well known and widely covered in the literature on EU-Turkey relations and Turkish foreign policy at large. Yet, Eralp's (2009) framework provides a unique integrated conceptual approach which connects various drivers of the downturn in the relations. In demonstrating how the dissonance between temporality and interaction contributes to de-Europeanisation in more recent years, the article also builds on Eralp's (2019) recent works on the changes in the international system increasingly from a unipolar to a multipolar order with a corresponding decline in multilateralism. By drawing mainly on secondary sources and the author's own works which employ primary data, the article will first present a brief history of the EU-Turkey relationship from a temporal and interactionist perspective, and then turn to a discussion of the role of temporality and interaction in the deterioration of the EU-Turkey relationship in the post-2005 era characterized by mostly conflictual relations and limited transactional cooperation which lasts up to the present day. This section will also focus on the factors explaining the tumultuous nature of the relationship, which lie both in Turkey and in the EU as well as in the interaction between the two sides. The chapter will conclude by discussing the current state of and the potential future scenarios for EU-Turkey relations.

## 2. A tumultuous history: Cyclical alternations in temporality and interaction in the EU-Turkey relationship

In the analysis that follows below, I will rely on the temporal categorisation adopted by Eralp (see, among others, 1992, 2009) in his large body of work on the EU-Turkey relationship over the years.

### *2.1. 1959-1970: Convergence and positive interaction*

Turkey applied for associate membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959. The application was mainly driven by Turkey's goal of Westernization, which entailed belonging to all Western institutions in the context of the Cold War, as well as specific political considerations, such as the Greek application to the EEC the same year, which raised Turkish concerns of receiving unequal treatment from the Community. To a lesser extent, economic factors such as the need for foreign economic aid in the face of declining assistance from the US also played a role. The Community welcomed the Turkish application on grounds of the country's strategic significance in Cold War conditions, the Community's competition with European Free Trade Association (EFTA) over new members, and its wish to treat Greece and Turkey on an equal footing. The six founding members of the Community already enjoyed close economic relations with both Greece and Turkey and wanted to ensure their long-term commitment to the Western alliance. It thus took into consideration Turkey's application as an associate of the EEC and official negotiations between the two started on September 29, 1959. The negotiations finally ended in 1963 with the signing of the EC-Turkey Association Agreement, better known as the Ankara Agreement which constitutes the first contractual relationship between the two sides. Hence as argued by Eralp (2009: 151), this was a period in which temporality and interaction worked in tandem to create the dynamics which brought Turkey closer to the EEC. The Cold War context played a key role in the convergence of interests between the two sides, where there was elite consensus among both parties on taking relations forward and the interaction between Turkey and the Community was also free from identity-based objections which were central to the debates in later periods.

The Ankara Agreement envisaged the establishment of a customs union and opened the door to full accession through its Article 28 which stated the following: "As soon as the operation of this Agreement has advanced far enough to justify envisaging full acceptance by Turkey of the obligations arising out of the Treaty establishing the Community, the Contracting Parties shall examine the possibility of the accession of Turkey to the Community" (Official Journal of the European Communities, 1977: 15). Hence, the agreement was very carefully worded in the

sense that it did not foresee full membership, but only the customs union as a definite outcome, while not wholly ruling out the possibility of full accession in the future.

The mechanics of the agreement consisted of a preparatory (five years), a transition (twelve years) and a final stage where a full customs union would be established. The agreement also established an Association Council where top-level official representatives of both sides would regularly meet, an Association Committee to assist the works of the Association Council and a Joint Parliamentary Committee through which Turkish parliamentarians and members of the European Parliament would meet. However, relations did not proceed as smoothly as it was envisaged on paper. The preparatory stage did not come to an end until 1970 due to Turkey's failure to adjust economically in the given period. Nevertheless, this was the least problematic phase of Turkey's association due to the fact that Turkey in this period began to receive economic support and extended trade access from the EU without having to assume heavy obligations.

Following the end of the preparatory stage of the Association Agreement, both sides signed the Additional Protocol on November 1970, which marked the beginning of the transition stage. The Additional Protocol established a program of trade liberalization that was meant to culminate in a customs union by the end of 1994, after which the Community would consider Turkey's full membership.

## *2.2. 1970-1999: Divergence and negative interaction*

Relations between the two sides largely deteriorated in the 1970s due to the political turmoil in Turkey, the 1973 oil crisis which crippled the Turkish economy and had an adverse effect on Turkey-EU relations, and Turkey's July 1974 intervention in Cyprus. Turkey's second offensive in August 1974 was met with severe criticism by EC member states. Furthermore, between the first and the second Turkish attacks, the Greek junta collapsed and the new premier Constantine Karamanlis immediately voiced the intention to apply for EC membership which he did in 1975. Despite the Commission's negative Opinion, the Council overruled the decision in February 1976 and in January 1981 Greece entered the Community. This can be considered as a turning point in the history of EU-Turkey relations since it introduced the much disputed 'Greek factor' into the relationship. The 1980 military coup in Turkey dealt another blow to the relationship, after which the EC maintained the freeze on political dialogue. In 1982, the European Parliament passed a resolution that suspended the joint European Community (EC)-Turkey Parliamentary Committee and the meeting of the Association Council until the country would hold general elections and convene a parliament. Hence by the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, the divergence between the sides began to significantly grow. Furthermore, interaction at the elite level acquired a contestatory

nature. The elite consensus which defined Turkey's attitude towards the Community in the first decade after its application began to dissipate, with political actors on both the far right and the far left as well as the Turkish business community questioning the value of accession (Eralp, 2009: 156).

Civilian rule was institutionally restored in 1983 and the new government took various steps towards economic and political liberalization. In April 1987, following the gradual political stabilization and economic liberalization after the 1980 military coup, Turkey, under Prime Minister Turgut Özal, submitted a formal request for full EC membership. This second application was mainly driven by the need to revitalize Turkey-EC relations at a time when the economic liberalization program of the Özal government necessitated foreign economic assistance for the much-needed structural reforms of the Turkish economy. Another reason for Turkey's application was the desire to compensate for the strategic disadvantage generated by Greece's membership of the Community, which weakened Turkey in its bilateral disputes with Greece as the Greek governments were constantly using the EC as a platform to pursue national interests and obstruct Turkey's relations with the EC.

Yet, there was now a temporality gap between the Turkey and the EU which led the two actors to diverge further in this period. The Union was now in a rapid period of transformation, which would only accelerate after the end of the Cold War. It committed itself to the establishment of the Single Market, and democracy and human rights became a much more prominent aspect of European identity with the enlargement to Southern Europe in the 1980s. While the Union was in the process of redefining its place in the changing international system, Turkey was struggling with the transition to democracy and the state of its economy. This divergence was reflected in the Community's response to Turkey's application to full membership in 1989, rejecting Turkey's application, while at the same time confirming its eligibility for membership.

With the end of the Cold War, the rift grew further. Turkey's role as western bulwark against Soviet expansionism ended, ushering the way to a new period of mounting instability in the Middle East and Eurasia. Turkey consequently underwent an intense period of soul-searching, assessing alternative geostrategic options such as pan-Turkism or regional leadership in the Middle East and Eurasia. In the meanwhile, Greece continued to obstruct Turkey's relations with the EU well into the 1990s. On top of this, it actively pushed for the Republic of Cyprus' membership of the EU, which could lead to a settlement on the island conducive to Greek interests and safeguard Greek Cypriot security by increasing the costs of Turkish expansionism. In 1993, the Commission recommended to the Council to start accession negotiations with the Republic of Cyprus. Although there was initial reluctance on the part of the member states to conduct accession negotiations with

the Republic of Cyprus without a political settlement on the island, the Greek governments were adamant in this policy, which they used to hold hostage both the Turkey-EU customs union agreement and later, the Eastern enlargement of the EU. Accession negotiations with the Republic of Cyprus were finally opened in 1998 and Cyprus became a member in 2004, which further complicated the dynamics of EU-Turkey relations in the future years.

Despite the problematic nature of the relations, Turkey continued to lobby for its inclusion in the EU customs union in the 1990s. Turkey's pressures were matched by the Clinton administration in the United States, which also pressed member states to deepen ties with Turkey. The Union yielded, and in 1996 the EU-Turkey customs union entered into force, marking the beginning of higher levels of economic integration. The customs union agreement went further than the abolition of tariff and quantitative barriers to trade between the parties, envisaging harmonization with EU policies in virtually every field relating to the internal market (Erdemli, 2003: 5-6). Yet, the positive atmosphere created by the conclusion of the customs union agreement deteriorated rapidly in 1997. Despite strong pressure from Ankara and Washington to upgrade EU-Turkey relations into the accession process, the 1997 European Council in Luxemburg underlined that Turkey did not meet the standards for candidacy and excluded Turkey from the list of prospective members which consisted of the states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEECs) together with Cyprus and Malta. It offered instead a "European strategy" based on the exploitation of the integration prospects foreseen under existing contractual relations – the Association Agreement. For the EU, central and eastern enlargement after the end of the Cold War was perceived as a geopolitical necessity of immediate urgency, excluding Turkey. Unlike 1989, this second rejection, together with the EU's finger pointing at Turkey's democratic deficiencies, was perceived in Ankara as a clear case of discrimination, given the problematic political and economic situation in the Eastern European candidate countries at the time. This was also the first time that opposition to Turkish accession on cultural and religious grounds began to be voiced in the EC. Hence the EU elites were now becomingly increasingly divided on the question of Turkey's EU accession, not just from an economic and human rights point of view, but also on grounds of culture and religion. In response, Turkey froze its political dialogue with the Union, and threatened to withdraw its membership application and integrate with the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (Tocci, 2004: 65-93).

### *2.3. 1999-2005: Virtuous cycle of convergence, positive interaction and europeanization*

The 1999-2005 period was a rare era in the long history of the EU-Turkey relationship in the sense that not only both sides converged in their interests and intensified not only elite but also societal interaction in the given period, but also that the combination of the two brought forth a considerable degree of Europeanisation in Turkey. Given the downturn in EU-Turkey relations in the 1997-1999 period, the member states acutely felt the need to move forward EU-Turkey relations, and there was a growing sense within the Union of the need not to lose Turkey given the large instability in Southeast Europe. Turkey's efforts in the Balkans have been appreciated as an important contribution to the stabilization of the European continent. They have lent credibility to the arguments of European stakeholders which highlight the assets that Turkey's security and defence capabilities would bring to bear on the fledging CSDP. Alongside and in relation to this, strong pressure was exerted by the Clinton administration to grant Turkey EU candidacy.

There were also significant political changes in the EU in those years, most notably in Germany where the Social Democrat and Green coalition supportive of Turkish accession replaced the Christian Democrats that were largely against Turkish membership. The most notable shift however happened in the case of Greece, which changed its position on Turkish accession in the late 1990s, from being a firm veto player to a more strategic actor who relies on EU conditionality for the solution of its bilateral disputes with Turkey but in principle accepts Turkey's full membership. This change was a result of the profound transformation that Greece underwent as an EU member state, and particularly the Greek socialist party PASOK as a governing party since the late 1990s, with the replacement of late Andreas Papandreou by Costas Simitis in 1996. The transformation of Greece's attitudes towards EU-Turkey relations was also linked to the Greek-Turkish rapprochement since August-September 1999. The seeds of rapprochement were sown during the spring of 1999. Foreign Minister Papandreou in particular increasingly felt the need to engage in constructive dialogue with arch enemy Turkey, following the period of rising brinkmanship in 1996-1999 over the disputed sovereignty over the uninhabited islets of Imia/Kardak, the incident over the Cypriot acquisition of Russian S-300 missiles, the Kosovo War and the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in the Greek embassy in Kenya. The earthquakes in Greece and Turkey in August-September 1999 and the reciprocal support between the two countries in the light of these humanitarian crises, provided the pretext or the trigger for a major policy shift which was ultimately reflected in Greece's support for Turkey's EU candidacy at the Helsinki European Council (Tocci, 2004: 127-128).

As a result, the December 1999 European Council in Helsinki recognized Turkey's candidacy, but stopped short of opening accession negotiations, arguing that the country first had to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria for membership. In turn, the Commission was given a mandate to monitor progress and to draft a first Accession Partnership for Turkey, recommending areas for Turkish domestic reform. The EU also adapted its financial assistance to Turkey, redirecting aid to provide more explicit support for Turkey's political, social, administrative and economic reforms. In line with the Helsinki decision, in November 2000, the European Commission adopted the first Accession Partnership document for Turkey. It outlined the short- and medium-term measures necessary to ensure that Turkey meet the criteria for membership. The Accession Partnership was followed by the preparation of the National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis* by the Turkish authorities in March 2001, setting out the political and economic reforms that Turkey was prepared to pursue. Immediately following the approval of the National Programme, the silence on political reform was broken in Turkey with 34 amendments made to Turkey's constitution in October 2001, to be followed by three "harmonization packages" adopted in the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit of 2002. The Greek-Turkish rapprochement also continued into the 2000s. Greece and Turkey had signed various bilateral agreements on 'low politics' issues and Joint Task Forces were established to explore how Greek know-how could help Turkey's harmonization with the *acquis*. Both sides had agreed to engage in talks on the continental shelf of the Aegean in March 2002. Greek support for Turkey's EU membership also facilitated the upgrade of EU-Turkey relations at the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002, which concluded that it would determine whether and when to open accession negotiations with Turkey, depending on whether Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria, in December 2004 (Müftüler-Baç, 2005; Verney and Ifantis, 2009). The EU also decided to increase the amount of financial and technical assistance to Turkey. The approaching green light for the opening of negotiations set the target and the timeline in the reform programme of the new Justice and Development Party (AKP) government elected in November 2002. Four subsequent democratic reform packages and two sets of constitutional amendments were adopted by the Turkish parliament in this period in addition to institutional efforts undertaken to implement the new regulations.

Turkey's progress in reforms under the first AKP government meant that the Commission's Annual Progress Report in 2004 and the December 2004 European Council concluded that Turkey "sufficiently" fulfilled the political criteria and that accession talks could begin in October 2005. Nonetheless, there were also worrying signs from the EU front as to how sustainable this process would be. The years 2004 and 2005 witnessed intense debates on the issue of Turkey's accession to the Union. Most of the debates centred on whether Turkey should, in principle, become an EU



member. The notions of cultural difference and identity were also a major theme in these heated discussions on Turkish membership. Up until the very last minute, the Austrian presidency stated that the goal of accession negotiations should not be full membership, even though the “possibility” of eventual membership could not be ruled out. A month before winning the German election, Angela Merkel sent a letter to conservative heads of government in the EU, underlining that accession negotiations with Turkey should not lead to membership but should instead lead to a ‘privileged partnership’ and be ‘open ended’. This was in line with the French attempt to introduce the recognition of Cyprus as a novel condition to begin accession negotiations prior to 3 October 2005, in a reversal of its previous stance and commitments. The Conservative and Christian-Democrat factions in the European Parliament lobbied intensively throughout the year to introduce a “privileged partnership” with Turkey, rather than full membership. These attitudes were finally reflected in the negotiating framework with Turkey, which invited reflection on alternative outcomes with Turkey and enabled the introduction of suggesting permanent derogations in the fields of free movement of persons, structural policies or agriculture were Turkey to eventually join the Union (European Council, 2005).

#### *2.4. 2005-2024: Divergence, distance and de-europeanisation*

Since the opening of accession talks, Turkey’s relations with the EU have been characterised by increasing divergence, both elite-based and public distance, and de-Europeanisation on the part of Turkey. Turkey’s accession negotiations have proceeded at a snail’s pace, with 16 (out of 35) chapters opened by November 2024 and only one chapter (science and research) provisionally closed. No new chapter has been opened since June 2016. While part of this has to do with the Cypriot vetoes to the opening of six negotiation chapters, the main technical blockage lies in the Union’s December 2006 decision to suspend the opening of negotiations with Turkey on eight chapters of the *acquis* and not to provisionally close any of the chapters until Turkey met its obligations towards Cyprus, on the grounds of Turkey’s non-implementation of the protocol amending the customs union agreement to allow Greek Cypriot-flagged flights and vessels into Turkish air and seaports. The updating of the customs union agreement which is sorely needed for Turkish economy also remains at a stalemate, with the member states refusing to give the mandate to the European Commission to negotiate a modernised agreement with Turkey, mainly due to the Cyprus problem.

This legal and institutional divergence between the two sides have also been accompanied by a deepening political rift between the EU and Turkey. The political reform momentum within Turkey had already began to wane after 2005. Even

reform initiatives which were applauded by EU actors, such as the 2009 “Kurdish Opening”, were initiated and pursued by Turkey largely independently of the EU accession process (Aydın Düzgit and Tocci, 2015). Especially after its second electoral victory in 2007, the AKP became much stronger both in society and also against the secularist establishment, and thus became less dependent on the EU and its democratization agenda (Noutcheva and Aydın Düzgit 2012). The deterioration of Turkish democracy took a rapid turn after the Gezi uprisings in June 2013 when the government harshly clamped down on demonstrators and reached its peak with the failed coup attempt in July 2016. As the transformative impact of the EU membership goal weakened, the process of Europeanization was replaced by a policy of de-Europeanization in Turkey (Aydın Düzgit and Kaliber, 2016). While Turkey’s move away from democracy towards a highly authoritarian, hierarchical and centralized regime consolidated the de facto frozen status of its accession negotiations, its waning accession prospects meant that the EU had little leverage left over the trajectory of Turkish democracy. This was coupled by an intensified reluctance to Turkish accession, often expressed through identity-based grounds as European politics began to turn increasingly to the right end of the political spectrum (Özbey, Hague and Eralp, 2022). Public support for Turkey’s accession also fell considerably on both sides. This also meant that Turkey-EU relations was now entering an era of interest-based transactional relations that was devoid of a rules-based accession agenda (Eralp, 2018, 2019). The move towards a more transactional relationship also implied that governments and their elites were now the primary interlocutors defining the nature and the tone of the relationship, with diminishing scope for the input of non-governmental actors such as civil society organisations.

This era of transactionalism was best signified in the EU-Turkey Migration deal agreed between the two sides on 18 March 2016. In the summer of 2015, close to one million Syrian refugees transited through Turkey and risked their lives crossing the Aegean Sea in hopes of seeking protection in Europe. The debate over the arrival of refugees in Europe was leading to a political crisis in the EU as no agreement could be reached on how/ where to distribute inflows of refugees within European territory to ease the burden on border countries. Therefore, efforts turned to addressing the issue with countries of transit and origin, most notably Turkey, as the country was facing a huge refugee influx. Formally referred to as the “EU-Turkey Statement”, the deal detailed cooperation in supporting Turkey in hosting this vast refugee population, curbing irregular migration flows to Europe, promoting legal channels for protection and resettlement in Europe, accelerating visa liberalization for Turkey, and re-energizing Turkey’s EU accession process (Aydın Düzgit, Keyman and Biehl, 2019: 4).

Progress on these different components of the agreement has varied significantly. On the one hand, the Statement had an immediate and rather drastic

impact in terms of reducing the volume of irregular migration flows across the Aegean, as well as the loss of migrant lives at sea (Aydın Düzgit, Keyman and Biehl, 2019: 8). On the matter of visa liberalization, however, progress has been stalled because of five (out of seventy-two) requirements listed in the roadmap that Turkey has been unable to fulfill. Out of this five, those that necessitated amendments to the Anti-Terror Law proved particularly contentious in an era of rising nationalism in Turkey.

Regarding bilateral relations, the migration deal has been heavily criticized for giving the Turkish government leverage for maintaining illiberal and undemocratic internal politics, particularly in the wake of the April 2017 constitutional referendum which abolished the parliamentary system and replaced it with a hyper-centralized presidential system with little regard for checks and balances (Okuy and Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016; Kfir, 2018). It can be argued that the migration deal also instilled a new source of mistrust into the bilateral relationship where mutual trust has already been low. The Turkish president and ministers have referred to “opening the gate if need be” on various occasions (Aydın Düzgit, Keyman and Biehl, 2019: 14) and briefly did so in February 2020, following the death of 33 Turkish soldiers in Syria.

The increasing conflictual nature of the relationship, despite limited transactional cooperation focused on migration, was also witnessed in the disputes concerning the Eastern Mediterranean. The power vacuum left by the United States by the first Trump administration in Turkey’s immediate neighborhood opened a wider space for maneuver for Turkey, along with other regional actors such as Russia. Coupled with rising nationalism at home and having also alienated potential allies in the Mediterranean such as Israel and Egypt—mostly due to domestic political reasons—and thus feeling isolated in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey increasingly resorted to unilateralism and a militarized foreign policy in its regional operations and actions, creating a deeper rift with the EU (Arisan-Eralp et. al., 2020). Its seismic exploration vessels off the coast of Cyprus and later Castellorizo led the EU to accuse Turkey of illegal actions that ran counter to international law and the sovereign rights of EU member states. Greece and Cyprus had formed closer ties with Egypt and Israel, leaving Turkey feeling increasingly cornered. France, which was on a collision course with Turkey over strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as the Libya conflict, supported Cypriot and Greek positions against Turkey, calling for harsh sanctions on Ankara. Germany, on the other hand, adopted a conciliatory position and acted as a facilitator and mediator to start dialogue and reconciliation between the parties. The divergent positions of the member states ultimately led to a compromise, where the EU decided to impose limited sanctions targeting certain individuals and companies involved in gas drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean in a European Council summit in

December 2020. In response to Turkey's withdrawal of the gas exploration vessels and its reconciliatory tone towards the EU, the Union refrained from adopting a more comprehensive sanctions regime towards Turkey in the consecutive Council summits and proposed potential areas of further cooperation consisting of a modernized customs union, a revised migration deal and enhanced people to people contacts. Yet, none of these have translated into concrete action thus far.

### 3. Conclusion: The path ahead for EU-Turkey relations

A historical survey of Turkey-EU relations since its inception in 1959 demonstrate the continuing relevance of Eralp's (2009) pronounced emphasis on temporality and interaction and how they relate to the process of Europeanisation. Where the two sides possessed convergent interests accompanied by positive interaction, Europeanisation occurred, albeit only for limited periods in the long relationship. At times when priorities and interests diverged, reflecting also in the intensity and nature of interaction over time, de-Europeanisation coupled with interest-based transactionalism have been the end result. Over the past two decades, Turkey's status in relation to the EU has gradually transformed from a candidate country on the path to full accession, to a neighbour, and, finally, to an adversary with pockets of transactional cooperation. Some scholars have referred to the current state of the relationship as a form of "conflictual cooperation", where the parties acknowledge the centrality of conflict to their relationship, yet they choose to cooperate in certain policy areas (Saatçioğlu et al., 2019).

While this may be the dominant mode of the relationship as of writing, history suggests that when a different constellation of actors and factors within the EU and Turkey interlocks and interacts, a virtuous dynamic may well be set in motion again. As Eralp has repeatedly demonstrated through his body of work (for a more recent articulation, see Eralp, 2019), changes in the international system have played a key role in conditioning the interests and identities of Turkey and the EU in their long trajectory. The international system is once again going through a major shift where the age of unipolarity is increasingly giving way to multipolarity, in a global context marred by regional conflicts and a climate crisis. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has sparked a new era in which European security and defense policy is being revamped to ensure European security without the guarantee of US support. The rise of protectionism, most notably in the US, and the intensifying US-China competition will undoubtedly have profound effects on Europe and its wider neighbourhood. These foster the potential for a deepened cooperation between Turkey and the EU in various policy fields including migration, customs union and the economy, digital society, green transformation, security and energy. Yet, as Eralp (2019) rightly highlights, whether this potential will be realised depends very

much on Turkey's domestic governance as well as the EU's willingness to be "more inclusive" by allowing for meaningful external differentiation of non-members.

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## Özet

### AB-Türkiye ilişkilerinde zamansallık ve etkileşim

Bu çalışma, AB-Türkiye ilişkilerinin tarihsel gelişimini Atila Eralp’ın Türkiye-AB ilişkileri literatürüne yaptığı katkılarda öne sürmüş olduğu zamansallık ve etkileşim çerçevesi kapsamında ele almaktadır. Makale, Eralp’ın zamansallık, etkileşim ve Avrupalılaşıma eksenli analitik perspektifinin AB-Türkiye ilişkilerinin 2005 yılı öncesindeki gelişimini açıkladığı gibi, 2005 sonrasında ilişkilerde yaşanan olumsuz seyri de anlamlandırmakta önemli bir yer tuttuğunu iddia etmektedir.

*Anahtar kelimeler:* Türkiye-AB ilişkileri, zamansallık, uluslararası düzen, Türk dış politikası, Avrupalılaşıma