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# Beyond the Institutional Logics: International Level Systemic Analysis of EU–Turkish Relations

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**ABSTRACT** *This article aims to explain the slowing down of European Union (EU)–Turkish relations since the start of the accession negotiations in 2005 with international level systemic analysis. For this purpose, it examines the current challenges the new rising powers pose to the US-led unipolar international order and it shows how both the EU’s and Turkey’s responses to these challenges influence their relative powers as well as the negotiation process. By focusing on international level systemic dynamics, the article differs from the institutional explanations that explain EU–Turkish relations either with the utility-based logic of consequentialism or the norms-based logic of appropriateness.*

## Introduction

Turkey has aspired to become a member of the European Union (EU) for more than five decades. Turkey’s will materialized in 2005, when Turkey started the accession negotiations. Despite the initial enthusiasm about the process; however, both the political elite and the public in Turkey have increasingly become disaffected from the EU enterprise. EU–Turkey relations have been recently strained.

The present study aims to unravel this difficult relationship and seeks to answer a major question: “Why has EU–Turkey relations gradually deteriorated since the start of the accession negotiations in 2005 until today?” This research subject is not unaccounted for in the literature. On the contrary, the main thrust of the recent research on the EU–Turkey relations focuses on this very issue. Studies in this strand, in general, resort to the pluralist school of international relations that relates domestic processes to foreign policy positions. Institutional explanations are frequently employed and various analyses compare and contrast the weight of the utility-based logic of

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consequentialism and the norms-based logic of appropriateness in respective positions of the EU and Turkey.

De Vreese et al., for instance, found identity-related variables such as anti-immigration attitudes and a strong national identity as stronger determinants of the public opposition against Turkey's EU membership than the utility-based economic considerations, although, the latter was also found as a significant determinant.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Müftüler-Baç contested the European perceptions about Turkey's European-ness and the material costs and benefits of Turkish accession to the EU. The author underlined the significance of both logics to determine the EU's internal dynamics and its absorption capacity, which influence the EU's position vis-à-vis Turkey.<sup>2</sup> Finally, Oğuzlu and Kibaroğlu stressed the institutional logics from the Turkish perspective and argued for the heavier weight of the logic of consequentialism for Turkey's recent distanced attitude toward the EU.<sup>3</sup>

The institutional analyses proved useful to count in detail the influence of domestic factors and processes on the positions of both the EU and Turkey. Yet because this line of research focuses closely on different logics at the domestic level, it runs the risk of delimiting the scope of the analysis either to the EU or Turkey, or both. The analyses, in turn, remain incomplete at best when factors other than these stemming from the EU and Turkey are not taken into account.

The institutional analyses, for instance, fall short to explain the growing self-confidence of Turkey vis-à-vis the EU compared to a decade ago. During his visit to Hungary, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan said, for instance: "Now Europe is in serious distress. This is why Turkish membership undoubtedly strengthens Europe, because Turkey comes to Europe to take on the burden. Turkish membership brings vision to Europe. Turkish membership is an antidote to racism."<sup>4</sup> Likewise, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu commented recently as: "During the 1990s Turkey missed the EU train. Today, alternatively, the EU misses the Turkish train."<sup>5</sup>

What has changed since the 1990s until today so that Davutoğlu urges the EU to hop on to the Turkish train? What are these factors that encourage the Turkish leadership to assume a more confident and assertive stance at a time when EU–Turkey relations are much worse than a decade ago? These questions underscore the importance of the international level systemic dynamics, which takes into account the changes in the international distribution of power, to explain the recent slow-down of the EU–Turkey relations. In this vein, it also seeks to contribute to the institutional research agenda by enlarging the scope of the analysis to include discussions about the changes in international political order. For this purpose, the first section presents the major changes in the international distribution of power in the last two decades. The second section attempts to evaluate EU–Turkey relations under the light of these international level dynamics. The extent to which the international order influences the positions of the EU and Turkey will be discussed in this section as well. The third section concludes the study by offering some expectations for the future.

### **Changes in the International Distribution of Power in the Last Two Decades**

The post-Cold War liberal euphoria of one global and cosmopolitan order lasted only a decade until September 11, 2001.<sup>6</sup> The US's rapid response to the terrorist attacks against Afghanistan and the wide-ranging international support it garnered from its Western allies along with China and Russia was indicative of a new era where traditional rigid alliance systems left their places to more flexible alliances of variable states.<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding the significance of increased channels for inter-state cooperations, however, the first decade of the twenty-first century also revealed the US's relative weight in international politics, which reached to its climax with its unilateral intervention in Iraq in 2003.

In the last decade, international relations scholars discussed the implications of the unipolar international order, which is dominated by the US's financial and military power. However, this power does not remain unchallenged. Layne, for instance, mentioned the rise of new great powers such as China; the US imperial overstretch which extends over areas from East Europe to Middle East and Central Asia; and the US's recent economic decline as the main contenders of the US unipolar moment.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively Cox argued for the likelihood of the US dominance in the decades to come by highlighting its huge economy, commanding high levels of competitiveness and innovation. Yet even his optimistic account for the US dominance acknowledged the increasing Asian weight in international politics, which undoubtedly challenges the unipolar order the USA has been commanding since the end of the Cold War.<sup>9</sup>

The aspiring great powers along with a declining USA makes power transitions probable, even indispensable, in the international order. A unique feature of unipolarity, however, prevents the rising states from an outright direct confrontation against the hegemon.<sup>10</sup> In unipolar orders, the efforts of the rising states to balance the dominant power are labeled as revisionism, whereas, in bipolar and multipolar orders, the balance among the great powers is the status quo. Hence in unipolar orders, the relative rise of any single state runs the risk of being labeled as an aggressor.<sup>11</sup> This situation explains the "peaceful rise" policy China adopted, which, at present, stands as the most prominent contender of the US's dominance. Art wrote:

if China's economy continues to grow for two more decades at anything close to the rate of the last two decades, then it will eventually rival and even surpass the US in the size of its gross domestic product (GDP), although not in per capita GDP.<sup>12</sup>

"Peaceful rise" policy relies on multilateralism and good neighborhood policies, which, ensures the multiplication of Chinese trade and diplomacy networks worldwide on the one hand, appeases the US's wariness about its rise by participating in the USA commanded liberal order on the other hand.<sup>13</sup> Along similar lines, Welch, Shevchenko, and Schevchenko underscored China's growing reliance on its soft power "by emphasizing the appeal of the Chinese developmental model, generous foreign assistance, and benign foreign policy in diplomatic forays into the

developing world.”<sup>14</sup> Finally, Schweller and Pu underscored Chinese multilateralism and pro-active agenda setting in international organizations as policies to resist the US-led current international order by sidelining a direct confrontation with the hegemon.<sup>15</sup> Hence, Chinese adoption of the current international liberal order does not necessarily imply its support for it. Yet China definitely takes advantage of the system to enhance its power and prestige on the one hand, to resist to the US hegemony on the other.

China is not the only country that challenges the USA at the international level. Brazil, Russia and India have also succeeded high growth rates in the last decades, which increased their relative standings. Indeed these four countries are generally referred as the BRICs and they are regarded as the great powers of the foreseeable future.<sup>16</sup> Similar to China, these powers seek status and prestige in the international system, and, for the time being, adapt to the liberal international order to the extent it multiplies their connections, both economic and diplomatic, and their influence. Scholars frequently mention their multilateral diplomatic overtures and pro-active involvement in the international organizations as viable strategies to boost their influence at the international level.<sup>17</sup>

The international order’s gradual move from a unipolar to a multipolar order is closely related to the growing power and influence of the BRICs, yet the emerging multipolarity is not limited to these powers alone. Scholars also underscore the recent increased visibility of South Africa, South Korea, Indonesia and Turkey in the international system.<sup>18</sup> All these countries display dynamic economies in the recent decades; however, their capabilities are limited in comparison with the BRICs. They may exert limited influence to the international system when they act alone, yet they possess the potential to mobilize support when they form alliances or coalitions either as separate states or within the international organizations.<sup>19</sup> Similar to the BRICs, these countries seek international power and prestige with more active involvement in international organizations. Yet given their limited power capabilities, they cultivate bilateral relations with developing countries and regional leadership opportunities through strategic alliances and good neighborhood policies.<sup>20</sup>

As the globalized world opens up new venues for engagements and partnerships, the rising states seem to take advantage of these opportunities to carve a solid stance for themselves in the international arena. Given the weight of the BRICs and the other middle powers, it is not unrealistic to discuss the multipolarity that is gradually replacing the US-led unipolarity that has been ascended since the end of the Cold War. The change in the international order, in turn, means the reshuffling of the power capabilities, which forces countries to re-position themselves in this new order so as to take advantage of the arising opportunities, if not to remain on the losing side.

EU–Turkey relations are not independent of the recent fundamental changes in the international order. How have both the EU and Turkey adapted to this order so far? How does the change in relative standings of EU and Turkey in the recent international order influence EU–Turkey relations? The next section focuses on these

questions and it evaluates the ways the international order has influenced the positions of the EU and Turkey.

### **EU–Turkey Relations from the International Systemic Perspective**

It should be noted that the world witnessed a series of major developments between 1999, when the EU accorded Turkey the candidateship status at the Helsinki Summit; and 2005, when the EU started accession negotiations with Turkey. The liberal euphoria ended for good with 9/11; the USA asserted its hegemony in Iraq in 2003; and the BRICs and especially China started contending US hegemony more forcefully after the US unilateralism in Iraq. Hence, Turkey made EU membership a foreign policy priority throughout the 1990s when the West was still seen as *the* political model for, then, the foreseeable future. Yet the unfolding breakthroughs proved short-sightedness of this forecast and, at present, the West neither projects a consistent liberal model when the USA and the EU follow different governance trajectories nor appeals to the rest of the world with its declining economic fortunes. The changes in the international order, have also transformed the nature of the relationship between the EU and Turkey, reflected in the recent slow-down in EU–Turkey relations.

#### *The Rift in Atlantic Alliance and the Blow of the Indivisible Liberal Myth*

It has only been two decades since Fukuyama declared the end of history: “that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”<sup>21</sup> The world is far from evolving into one indivisible liberal order that guides the actions of both the states and their political actors today. Indeed, “a world in which most countries most of the time follow rules that contribute to progressively more collective security, shared economic gains and individual human rights” is regarded as an aspiration for a mythical liberal order rather than the reality.<sup>22</sup> Given the international order’s transition from a unipolar to a multipolar moment, the rising states’ contestation of the liberal myth, propagated especially by the USA ever more strongly since the end of the Cold War, is not unexpected. Yet besides the resistance strategies of these states against the hegemon, the hegemon’s behaviors themselves equally contributed to the recent blow of the liberal myth into oblivion. The US’s growing unilateralism especially after September 11 not only challenged the liberal norms of multilateralism, respect for international law and cooperation through international organizations, but it also underwrote a rift with the European countries, which brought together a unique political order, the EU, on the basis of the liberal myth the USA once shared with its European allies.

Scholars have recently discussed the differences in policy-making styles of the USA and the EU, respectively, which project divergent participation trajectories in the current international order. Nielsen, for instance, asserted that the USA still lives in the modern world of power politics, whereas the EU opts for a post-

modern world of peaceful and rule-based cooperation.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, Fabbrini and Sicurelli wrote that after the Cold War, the USA mainly focused on security issues and it projected its power mainly through the military means. Alternatively, the EU focused on developmental issues and it relied on the civilian power to buttress its international standing.<sup>24</sup> Finally, Calleo underscored the European difference than the USA as:

The European approach is mutual appeasement, organized through constitutionalist structures. The strategy is to bind up neighbors in an expanding multi-lateral network of mutually beneficial rules and bargains. American critics fault this European approach for basing security on the wiles of Venus rather than the strength of Mars.<sup>25</sup>

Differences in policy-making styles of the USA and the EU became particularly pronounced during the first term of Bush administration. Influenced largely by the neo-conservative thinking, the administration sought for the global US hegemony through pre-emptive/preventive war and it did not refrain from alienating its allies with an assertive nationalism.<sup>26</sup> Though the USA began to follow a less interventionist and more cooperative foreign policy under the Obama administration, the US's hegemonic aspirations, its reliance on military supremacy and its sustained confidence in American exceptionalism are far from being off the US's policy agenda.<sup>27</sup> This situation, in turn, results in European wariness about the US's intentions and its resort to soft balancing against the USA.<sup>28</sup>

Layne, for instance, wrote that the US military presence in Europe as well as the sustenance of NATO even after the Cold War were examples for the USA's desire to assert its influence over the international order and to keep Europe under control. He wrote:

The conventional wisdom, of course, is that NATO was created to "keep the Russians out, the Germans down, and the Americans in." In truth, however, the Alliance's *raison d'être* was, from Washington's standpoint, somewhat different: to keep America in—and on top—so that the Germans could be kept down, the Europeans could be kept from being at each other's throats militarily, and the Europeans kept from uniting politically and constituting themselves as a "third force" geopolitically. The reason NATO still is in business today is because it advances long-standing American objectives that existed independently of the Cold War and that have survived the Soviet Union's collapse.<sup>29</sup>

Fabbrini and Sicurelli also supported this view and they claimed that in the twenty-first century the USA signed up for the Westphalian system of sovereignty as a main foreign policy premise, which justified its unilateral policy initiatives that are shaped on the basis of the US national interests.<sup>30</sup> The US foot-dragging about the EU's will to bring about an independent security structure besides the NATO is a case in point; because:

there is no US seat when the EU makes decisions. For Americans who relish Washington's dominance in transatlantic affairs, that absence of an official US role is troubling enough on important economic issues. They deem such a development on security issues even more worrisome.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, Oswald argued that the European initiative for a common security policy attempted at balancing the US weight in the Continent is reminiscent of its economic integration for the same purpose.<sup>32</sup> The EU's total income has become equal to the USA and twice as much of Japan in 2000; hence the EU's economic integration proved effective to undo the unbalanced economic relationship between Europe and the USA since the end of the Second World War.<sup>33</sup> The EU applied a similar logic to security issues especially when the Europeans recognized the limits of their geopolitical power in the crises in former-Yugoslavia and Kosova during the 1990s.<sup>34</sup>

The European will to bring about an autonomous and independent security structure accelerated in 1998/99 when the EU adopted European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) as a result of Anglo-French initiative.<sup>35</sup> However, the decision to create a European Rapid Reaction Force of 60,000 men was opposed by the USA for its potential to undermine the NATO's power.<sup>36</sup> The US position was also backed up by a series of Central European countries pioneered by Poland and followed by Hungary and Czech Republic, which, as of 1999, were the EU candidate countries on the one hand, new NATO members on the other hand.<sup>37</sup>

The inter-European collaboration for a common security policy was challenged further during the Iraq War in 2003, when Britain, Poland, Italy and Spain, among others, supported the USA despite the French and the German opposition. This brought along discussions about a possible European divide between the "old Europe" and the "new Europe," an impediment for the EU integration.<sup>38</sup> The French and the Dutch opposition to the EU constitution two years later in 2005 posed further challenge to the formation of a common EU foreign and security policy by keeping this policy domain strictly intergovernmental.<sup>39</sup> Despite the hurdles associated with EU foreign and security policy, Fabbri and Sicurelli underlined the EU's commitment to multilateral inter-state cooperation for security issues, which projected a post-Westphalian approach to international politics. In this vein, it not only differed from the US's sovereignty-based unilateralism, but it also helped to ease the historical fears among the European neighbors. As a result, the new EU member states are more likely to support an independent EU security structure now than their suspicious stance a decade ago.<sup>40</sup>

The repercussions of the Atlantic rift and the ensuing blow of the indivisible liberal myth are substantial for EU–Turkey relations. In 1999, when Turkey was accorded the candidacy status at the Helsinki Summit, the EU was projecting an enviable example of a post-modern multilateral policy-making structure that relied on the member states' pooling of their powers through shared sovereignty across the key issues. It would not be wrong to label the EU as the symbol of the liberal international order, which at least at the rhetorical level, was propagated by the Atlantic allies since



the end of the Second World War, and in stronger tones since the end of the Cold War. Yet in the last decade, the USA proved to be an unreliable partner by free riding in the liberal international order it once helped to institutionalize, which in turn decreased the EU's appeal as an alternative political system.

EU–Turkey relations since 1999 until today reflect the EU's relative prestige loss as well. In 1999, the then Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, for instance, underlined Turkish candidacy to the EU as “a testimony to the interaction between Europe and Asia and the confluence of Christianity, Islam and Judaism.” After outlining a series of legislative reforms enacted in line with the EU, he further mentioned, “the propensity and the quest of the Turkish people to change and modernization” as a significant drive for the reform process.<sup>41</sup> Hence in 1999, Turkey regarded the EU as a multicultural and multi-religious civilizational project to which Turkey was a historical partner and Turkish people willingly embraced its transformative forces. However, in 2013, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said:

We continue [the negotiations] with patience, but at one point most probably we also put a period [to the process]... Is the EU a *sine qua non* for Turkey? No. It is not the end of the world if they do not admit us in the EU.<sup>42</sup>

As these remarks reveal, EU membership is no longer a civilizational project for Turkey. Moreover, arguments that emphasize Turkey's geographic and historical partnership with Europe gradually wane, whereas Turkey's association with the EU is now more on strategic terms. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's remarks to Russian leader Vladimir Putin for the admittance of Turkey to Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a case in point for the changing political stance in Turkey regarding the EU. When the Prime Minister was asked whether the SCO and the EU were alternatives, he replied: “Shanghai Five is better, much stronger.”<sup>43</sup>

The vanishing EU appeal as a liberal ideal is accelerated further with increased emphasis both the USA and the rising new powers put on state sovereignty. The previous section underlined the multilateral activisms of the new poles in the current international order as a strategy to boost their power and influence. This multilateralism, however, is different than the one the EU propagates because it is envious about state sovereignty as opposed to the EU system of pooled sovereignty. Roberts, for instance, labeled Russia, India and China as “sovereignty hawks” due to their insistence on the preservation of sovereignty in order to “govern large, diverse societies and manage the distributional costs of globalization without losing control or their power.”<sup>44</sup> Likewise, Welch, Shevchenko, and Schevchenko underlined Chinese “no strings attached” policy for foreign assistance which prioritized the principle of non-intervention in other states' internal affairs.<sup>45</sup>

The dilution of the liberal concepts of multilateralism and pooled sovereignty with varying practices of the USA as well as the rising states challenges the power of the EU conditionality, the strongest policy instrument for democratic reform in the candidate countries during the latest wave of the EU enlargement. It is worth reminding

once again that in his official statement after the Helsinki summit in 1999, the then Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit underlined the legislative reforms enacted along the EU lines as a sign of Turkey's dedication to the EU process. Indeed scholars underlined the 1995, 2001 and 2004 constitutional changes as the most comprehensive reforms in terms of civil liberties and democratic institutionalization in Turkey, which also paved the way toward the start of the EU accession negotiations in 2005.<sup>46</sup> However, with the second term of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* AKP), which started in 2007, the reform process has slowed simultaneously with the increasingly more pronounced criticisms the government voiced against the EU generated Progress Reports, which assess the progress the candidate country makes toward the adoption of the EU laws and regulations.

Burhan Kuzu, who is both an AKP deputy and the head of the Constitutional Committee of Turkish Grand National Assembly, for instance, threw the EU Progress Report of 2012 to the ground in a live broadcast, who also remarked that he would throw it to the garbage if there were any around.<sup>47</sup> Reflecting the discontent of the AKP about the Report, the Ministry of the EU Affairs prepared an alternative Turkish version with the instruction of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as a response to the EU's infamous 2012 Report.<sup>48</sup> As of 2013, the EU hardly projects an image of an anchor of reform, which is a completely new circumstance compared to the EU induced sweeping changes in Turkey between 1999 and 2005.

It is not only the new international order that challenges the EU type post-Westphalian multilateralism either. As the numbers of the EU members increased from 12 in 1990 to 27 in 2007, finding a consensual common ground across various policy domains has become increasingly difficult. The above mentioned lack of a common EU stance against the USA during its intervention in Iraq; difficulties surmounting the coming off a common EU defense and foreign policy, and the French and Dutch rejection of the EU Constitution are examples for the reoccurring fault lines the EU deals with for the sake of its supranational political design. The sustainability of this design, then, is of utmost importance for the EU.

Müftüler-Baç underlined the EU absorption capacity as one of the significant determinants of the EU's cost/benefit analysis about Turkey's EU accession. Given Turkey's high population, it is not a secret that Turkey's accession to the EU will alter the policy-making dynamics in the EU, where Turkey would become one of the most powerful countries in the voting system.<sup>49</sup> Along similar lines, Oğuzlu and Kibaroglu pointed out the growing ideational and societal differences across the EU with the addition of the new members, which raises the public suspicions about Turkey "as a potential 'other' of the EU, rather than as a candidate country destined to join the EU."<sup>50</sup> This situation also underscores the mounting public disaffection from the EU integration process that challenges the EU-type multilateralism from within. It influences the public image of Turkey negatively as well, which increases the difference between the EU and Turkey further.

In sum, the rift in the Atlantic alliance and the growing US unilateralism not only challenge the appeal of the liberal international order at the ideational level, but it also undermines the weight of the EU as an alternative liberal post-Westphalian political

design. Moreover, the EU so far proved less than able to institutionally absorb its new members, which further destabilizes the multilateral order the EU aims at instituting. The repercussion of these processes for the EU–Turkey relations is EU’s gradual, yet continuous prestige loss in Turkey, which discounts the desirability of becoming an EU member state on the one hand and weakens the EU’s role as an anchor of democratic reform in Turkey on the other hand.

The changes in the international order widen the distance between the EU and Turkey. This distance becomes clearer in case the analysis also counts on the change in the relative standings of both the EU and Turkey in the recent international order. Next section specifically focuses on this topic.

### *Relative Standings of the EU and Turkey in the Recent International Order*

According to 2009 figures, the EU area commands an economic volume of 14,739 billion USD, the largest GDP in the world. Its population is also ranked the third after China and India.<sup>51</sup> These traditional power holdings, however, do not undo the fact that the EU lacks hard power capabilities. Unlike China, Brazil, Russia, India and the USA, the EU lacks a central government that controls diplomacy, security and defense issues.<sup>52</sup> Though the separate EU member states are no different in these competencies than the rising powers and the USA, they are well aware that their separate powers are well behind their collective potential.<sup>53</sup> The EU’s reliance on multilateral policy-making, then, is a necessity for collective policy-making in crucial issues, which are indispensable for the EU’s contestation of the super power status. Yet, as it is also mentioned in the previous section, the EU-type multilateralism is seriously challenged by the new rising powers.

The BRICs challenge the EU-type multilateralism through several channels. One channel lies in their efforts to initiate regional cooperative organizations that reflect the BRICs’ economic interests. SCO, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are such examples. These organizations, in turn, diffuse political values as well which underline state sovereignty and non-interference as political principles for international and regional cooperation. These differ from the EU-type multilateralism that rests on either the pooled sovereignty or conditionality. A second channel BRICs employ is to downplay the EU as a significant economic and political actor. China and India, for instance, oppose the EU leadership in issues related to climate change. They not only criticize the EU for contributing too little to reduce the global carbon emissions, but especially China also invests heavily in alternative energy sources which competes with the total EU budget spared for this cause. A last channel, the BRICs use against the EU is their increasing levels of foot-dragging within the UN, which is the most significant international organization despite its shortcomings. An analysis that focuses on common positions of the EU and the BRICs for the 550 UN resolutions between 2001 and 2008 showed that the congruence between the EU and the BRICs decreased during this time period, whereas the coordination among the BRICs increased.<sup>54</sup>

The alternative rationales the BRICs bring into the new international order for inter-state cooperation and development challenge the EU's normative power which, given the under-institutionalized status of the EU common defense and security policy, is the EU's strongest asset for its international power and prestige. This means a substantial erosion of the EU's international power. Moreover, the EU also proves slow at best to develop bilateral relations with the BRICs. Renard wrote:

With regard to China, Europe's approach is divided and lacks a clear strategy, which results in a weakened position vis-à-vis Beijing. The relation with Russia is essentially centered on energy issues and Europe displays even more fundamental divisions than in the case of China. As for India, the EU can just not convince New Delhi that it is more than a mere economic market. The list could go on. In short, Europe's relations with other powers have been characterized either by asymmetry, division, or near irrelevance.<sup>55</sup>

Worse still are the cases when the EU policies contradict with the separate EU member state initiatives, which further jeopardize the prospect of developing working relations between the EU and the BRICs.<sup>56</sup> This situation, in turn, is related to the EU's incomplete institutional framework, which impedes the development of a coherent approach and an integrated strategy toward the third parties.<sup>57</sup> Yet the EU's political integration is not likely to deepen anytime soon. To the contrary, especially after the 2008 financial crisis, the EU member states have increasingly resorted to policy prescriptions written in their capitals rather than in Brussels.<sup>58</sup> The loosening of both the political and the economic ties across the EU member states put the viability of the EU project further at risk. Scholars now discuss about the multi-tier EU where the separation between the euro members and non-members is likely to be the clearest tier. Yet separation of tiers along foreign policy and immigration issues are also probable.<sup>59</sup>

The problems about the EU's political and the economic integration accelerate the erosion of the EU's power in the new international order. This process, in turn, brings the main powers within the EU such as the UK, Germany and France to the fore; because, their positions in certain key issues such as security and economy are likely to influence the future of the whole EU. The UK does not seem to be the remedy for the EU, however. On December 2012, the UK Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron mentioned about a possible British exit from the EU for "a looser trade-based relationship with Brussels."<sup>60</sup> Alternatively, both Germany and France seem more eager to play central roles in the EU;<sup>61</sup> however, they not only represent different positions with regard to the EU financial crisis, but the public opinion in these respective countries are also among the most hostile toward further deepening and widening of the EU.<sup>62</sup>

In sum, the EU as a whole commands substantial economic influence and its normative power, which rested on its *sui generis* alternative policy design, has proven exemplary. Yet as the previous sections revealed, the international order is under transformation at least for the last two decades, and the EU seems falling behind

this transformation. The new rising states, particularly the BRICs, challenge the EU's normative power. Its economic fortunes are declining as well by leaving behind surmounting questions about the future of the EU economic integration. The political integration is also becoming more risky not least because the EU has enlarged rapidly in the last decade so its institutional capacity is put in jeopardy, but also because solidarity among the EU members is rapidly waning at the face of mounting political and economic uncertainty. Moreover, neither the French nor the German politicians are in positions to assume the EU leadership due to their constituencies' increased levels of Euro-skepticism. Hence, it is not unsafe to suggest EU's relative power loss in the new international order.

The situation is just the reverse for Turkey. As it is mentioned in the first section, Turkey is among the rising middle powers, which command more restricted capabilities than the BRICs, yet which seek for international power and prestige through their dynamic economies and foreign policy activism. Fontaine and Kliman, for instance, noted the steady increase of GDP in the last decade,<sup>63</sup> which makes Turkey the seventeenth largest economy in the world.<sup>64</sup> Like other middle powers such as South Africa, South Korea and Indonesia, Turkey also pursues multilateral activism in the international arena especially since Ahmet Davutoğlu became the Foreign Minister in 2009.

Being once a university professor of international relations, Davutoğlu is the architect of the AKP's "strategic depth" approach to foreign relations which aims at mobilizing Turkey's soft power capabilities through cultivating its historical and geographic affinities across the Afro-Eurasian landmass.<sup>65</sup> "Zero problems with neighbors" and "the rhythmic diplomacy" are instruments of this approach: the former aims at establishing good relations with the neighboring countries, and the latter is about multilateralism and activism in international organizations in order to fulfill Turkey's key national interests.<sup>66</sup>

Turkey's reach has gone well beyond Europe as a result of these policies, while its role in international organizations has also increased. Indeed, Davutoğlu underlined Turkey's central geographic position as being:

both an Asian and European country and is also close to Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean . . . It should be seen neither as a bridge country which only connects two points, nor a frontier country, nor indeed as an ordinary country, which sits at the edge of the Muslim world or the West.<sup>67</sup>

In line with this approach, scholars now write about increased Turkish involvement in the Balkans, the Middle East, Caucasia, Africa and Central Asia.<sup>68</sup>

Turkey has also chased for more active involvement in international organizations in the last decade. Besides its EU candidanship, Turkey has also become more active in Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), it was elected to UN Security Council for the 2009–11 period, it was accorded an observer status in the African Union and it hosted a series of international summits such as the World Economic Forum in 2006, the African Summit in 2008, the IMF/World Bank Summit in 2009 and UN Least Developed Countries Summit in 2011.<sup>69</sup>

Turkey's increased foreign policy activism does not only boost its international visibility, but also allows for new economic opportunities as well as novel transnational encounters, which contribute to Turkey's soft power. Kirişçi, for instance, noted that Turkey's trade with the neighboring countries increased by 17 times between the 1991 and 2010 period, whereas trade with the EU increased only seven fold. Also the numbers of people who came to Turkey from these countries increased from 15 to 38 percent between the 1980 and 2010 period.<sup>70</sup> Turkey also proves active in developmental assistance through the state-sponsored Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı* TİKA), which orchestrates both the public and the private funds for development purposes. TİKA funds go well beyond Turkey's neighbors and it reaches to distant geographies such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Myanmar and distressed African states.<sup>71</sup>

In sum, one can suggest that Turkey takes advantage of its economic dynamism in the last decade and it uses this dynamism as an asset to boost its soft power capabilities. It should be noted that the channels Turkey pursues to establish its soft power are well known to other rising powers. Chinese "peaceful rise" policy also rests on good neighborhood policies and activism in international organizations. Russia and South Africa cultivate regional leadership opportunities for more pronounced international recognition. Finally, South Korea pursues an activist stance in developmental assistance, which contributes to its international visibility.

Besides the channels Turkey employs for a more activist foreign policy, its attempts to initiate changes both in its region and internationally in line with its own policy preferences are also reminiscent of the BRICs' as well as the other middle powers' efforts to command change in international politics. Öniş, for instance, underlined the hardening Turkish stance against Israel since its War on Gaza in 2009 and Turkey–Brazil initiative of mediating the dispute between Iran and the Western alliance over the Iranian nuclear program as examples of a more independent Turkish foreign policy stance from the Western preferences.<sup>72</sup> Also, in a 2011 interview, Prime Minister Erdoğan demanded the reform of the UN Security Council so as to end leaving the fate of the whole world in the hands of a few states.<sup>73</sup>

However, parallels between Turkey's and other rising powers' foreign policy activisms do not necessarily indicate a clear rupture from both the EU and the USA. Indeed, Turkey's EU membership prospect improves its image in the Middle East, whereas its support for democratic reforms across these countries reflects the influence of the EU policy processes on Turkish foreign policy.<sup>74</sup> On the US front, though the relations underwent difficult times after the US intervention in Iraq, they have improved rapidly once the Arab Spring fundamentally changed the political landscape of the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>75</sup> In 2011, Turkey decided to take part in NATO's missile shield plan by hosting a missile defense system on its territory. The same year, it supported NATO-led operation against Libya despite its initial opposition to such operation. Recently, the EU, the USA and Turkey work closely against Asad's regime in Syria.<sup>76</sup>

Turkey tries to take advantage of the recent changes in the international order by entering into variable and flexible coalitions both at the regional and the international levels. These coalitions' rapid turnover rates, however, are not without risks. Turkey's quick and forceful response against the Assad regime in Syria is a case in point. Despite the expectations of Assad's quick fall from power, the Syrian regime stayed in power for the last two years together with an ever-growing spiral of violence inflicting the country and its people. Turkey assumed a center position for itself in this conflict, yet it "has found itself with the worst of both worlds: pushed forward by its western allies to make the running, but without the support necessary to make such a posture in any way meaningful."<sup>77</sup>

Notwithstanding the associated risks, the point is the growing self-confidence of Turkish foreign policy and Turkey's attainment of a stock of autonomous power, which allows it to test the limits of its capacity to pursue independent course of action at the international level. This self-confidence strengthens Turkey's hand vis-à-vis EU as well. When the analysis focuses on the relative powers of both the EU and Turkey, what emerges is the relative decline of the EU at a time of the Turkish rise. Given both the institutional and the economic hardships the EU is currently dealing with, Redmond rightly asked: "EU membership is not only now an expanding concept but also a variable or flexible one, and so the critical question becomes: what precise form of membership will be on offer to Turkey?"<sup>78</sup> Pointing out the EU's relative decline, in his *TIME* interview Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also said: "Turkey is getting stronger as time goes by, and the situation of many European states is quite obvious."<sup>79</sup> The EU's decreasing appeal in Turkey is also evident in the opinion polls. In 2002, when the AKP assumed power, the percentage of the EU support was 65 percent, whereas in 2012, this percentage fell to 37 percent.<sup>80</sup> This decline, in turn, means that the AKP's hands are no longer tied by the constituency, strongly favoring the EU membership.

The ideational prestige loss of the Western liberalism, the relative decline of the EU in the new international order and the relative rise of Turkey in this order explain why Turkish Prime Minister repeatedly says that the EU is not a *sine qua non* for Turkey. This does not mean that Turkey gives up its EU candidateship. Yet, as Turkey's loosening attitude toward the democratic reform process since 2007 onward signals, Turkey gradually becomes more indifferent about both the direction and the pace of the EU accession negotiations. This situation, in turn, may well jeopardize Turkey's ambition to institutionalize its democracy because Turkey's growing self-confidence in the new international order has the potential to disillusion the AKP leadership about the limits and capabilities of democratic institutions in Turkey. The recent widespread civil demonstrations in Turkey, which first erupted in Istanbul Gezi Park and spilled all over the country in a few days,<sup>81</sup> set a relevant example that growing international power and influence do not readily translate into more democratic institutions at home.

The EU, in the meantime, does not do more than publishing its yearly Progress Reports as it is now inward-looking and Turkey only gives further headaches to the EU members. The result is a stalemate in the EU–Turkey relations that has become increasingly visible since the start of the accession negotiations in 2005 until today.



## Conclusion

Present analysis aims to explain the recent slow-down of the EU–Turkey relations from a systemic perspective. In this vein, it differs from the analyses that focus on the institutional logics that are shaped by the preferences of the domestic actors to explain changes in foreign policy. The focus on the international order shows that the cards are reshuffled at the international level as the new rising states increasingly challenge the US unipolarity that was ascended since the end of the Cold War. The new great powers such as China, Russia, Brazil and India accompanied with the middle powers such as South Korea, South Africa, Indonesia and Turkey strive for more power, prestige and recognition in the international order. Rather than directly challenging the hegemon, they initiate new versions of multilateralism and activism which revitalize the nation-state by emphasizing state sovereignty on the one hand, push for regional leadership roles and institutional reforms in international organizations to resist US hegemony on the other hand. In sum, the rules of the international politics are changing, and the process of change influences the EU and Turkey in different ways.

The EU was once an ambitious project for transcending the strict borders of the nation-state system. Its multi-level governance structure and shared sovereignty principle are exemplary of the liberal international order both the USA and the European powers strived for since the end of the Second World War. This model became more relevant once the Cold War was over. Yet the US unilateralism after September 11, 2001 not only undermined its viability, but the US policies also justified a return to the Westphalian model of international relations. Besides the EU's loss of prestige at the ideational level, the difficulties it dealt with in relation to the latest wave of enlargement resulted in EU's relative loss of power as well. Worse still is the rapid increase in the numbers of the contending powers, which makes the EU's resort back to its power increasingly difficult.

Turkey, on the other hand, has proven successful to take advantage of the new international order. By also relying on its economic dynamism, it adopted the foreign policy principles of the other rising powers such as good neighborhood policies, regional leadership roles and activism in international organizations and development assistance. These policy tools are strengthened further by its EU membership prospect as the EU's appeal also rested primarily on its soft power capabilities. As a result, Turkey is now cited among the middle powers and its reach has gone beyond the neighboring countries.

The new international order influences Turkey–EU relations substantially. The emphasis of the USA and the rising powers on state sovereignty decreases the EU's appeal as an alternative liberal political system. This situation, in turn, influences the EU conditionality negatively. The slow-down of democratic reforms in Turkey seems closely related to decreasing EU weight in international politics. Also, the EU proves slower to adapt to the new international order while it simultaneously deals with the hurdles of the latest wave of enlargement and the financial crisis. An EU, which projects more problems than stability and prosperity, signals



Turkey that it could do as well without the EU, if it does not do better. Turkey's growing visibility and assertiveness in the new international order also strengthen this perception.

Turkey's EU accession process is not any brighter from the EU side as well. As has been noted, the EU's political system has become more vulnerable with the power shifts in the international order on the one hand, with the EU's internal problems on the other. These internal problems, in turn, are largely caused by the EU's grand enlargement project in the last two decades. It is not unrealistic to expect that Turkey's EU accession will add to these problems. Hence the EU is likely to await Turkey's EU membership with a series of delaying tactics such as the German and the French insistence for a privileged position for Turkey rather than full membership or delaying the opening of the accession chapters.

In sum, the changes in the international order in the last decade help us understand the stalemate between Turkey and the EU since the opening of the accession negotiations in 2005 until today. Turkey now sees the EU only in instrumental terms and its EU membership prospect is an asset to the extent it adds to Turkey's soft power capabilities. Yet this vision may result in a series of setbacks for Turkish democracy, which is the very basis of Turkey's soft power.

Likewise, the EU also evaluates Turkey's EU membership in instrumental terms. Yet its cost/benefit analysis is too myopic. The focus on the new international order shows that at a time when the EU's normative power is under question with the "sovereignty hawk" rising states, the deliberate delay of Turkey's EU accession process also adds to its deteriorating international image. This is indeed a serious cost for the EU, which is not counted by the institutional analysis.

Another cost to the EU's deliberate slow course of action toward Turkey's EU membership relates to its identity. As the EU's relative power declines, the European public becomes increasingly disaffected from the EU project. The economic hardships and the institutional stalemate at the EU level contribute to increasing waves of nationalism and xenophobia across the EU member states. This, in turn, inflates the negative perceptions about Turkey's EU membership.

Hence, the new international order pulls Turkey and the EU apart. A closer look to this order provides insights about the cost and benefit analysis that informs logic of consequentialism on the one hand, the identity and norms related policy considerations, which inform logic of appropriateness on the other hand. The slow-down of the EU–Turkey relations since the opening of the accession negotiations in 2005 until today seems related to changes in the international order which influence the domestic actors' calculations and considerations about Turkey's future in the EU and the EU's future with Turkey as a member state.

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26. Kennet, "A New US Approach to Europe," 348–63.
27. Ibid. Also Nielsen, "Continued Drift But Without the Acrimony."
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30. Fabbri and Sicurelli, "Bringing Policy-Making Structure Back In."
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continue in Gezi Park. The police sometimes clash with the demonstrators elsewhere. For more information, see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-22780773>, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/timeline-of-gezi-park-protests-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=48321&NewsCatID=341>.

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