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The “New Turkey” in the Making: What Should the EU’s Strategy Be?

Karol Wasilewski

Turkey’s presidential system referendum constituted another step in Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s consolidation of power. The indications are that it will open the next phase of the Turkish state’s remodelling. Although after a long and polarising campaign Turkish authorities may intend to decrease tensions both at home and abroad—especially in Turkey’s relations with its Western allies—the process could have adverse effects. Thus, the EU Member States may need a new strategy towards Turkey. While it ought to focus on common European-Turkish interests, it also should be aimed at working out a model of relations that would tie Turkey closer to the EU.

A Turkish-Style Presidential System

On 16 April 2017, 51.4% of Turkish voters supported a constitutional change to replace the current parliamentary system with a presidential one. Hence, after the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK) evaluated vote protests and claims of fraud,¹ Turkey has officially entered a transition period. Its aim is to prepare the country for a presidential system in legal and institutional terms. It is estimated that by November 2019, when the new system will become fully operational, the Turkish parliament will have to pass more than 2,000 laws and amendments to adjust the country’s legislation to the new system.²

It should not be surprising the immense amount of work facing the Turkish legislature in the years to come. Since the recent constitutional changes put the cart before the horse when it comes to the three branches of government (in particular the executive), many adjustments of laws will be indispensable to ensure the proper functioning of the Turkish state. That the reform has a rather endemic character does not make the task any easier. In fact, a presidential system introduced as a result of a constitutional referendum is so unique that many observers, including Turkey’s leading politicians, call it “a Turkish-style presidential system.”³ Undeniably it will make the Turkish head of state one of the most powerful figures compared to other existing presidential systems, even the American one.

¹ For a summary of the claims against the referendum’s legitimacy, see: “Turkey, Constitutional Referendum, 16 April 2017: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions,” Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 17 April 2017, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/311721>.

² N. Mert, “The terror of ambivalence,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 1 May 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-terror-of-ambivalence.aspx?pageID=449&nID=112588&NewsCatID=406>.

³ “Erdoğan insists on Turkish-style presidential system,” *YeniSafak*, 27 February 2015, <http://www.yenisafak.com/en/news/erdogan-insists-on-turkish-style-presidential-system-2089945>.

According to the new constitutional provisions, the president will be not only the chief executive but also the head of the ruling party.⁴ The head of state would be elected through general elections to a maximum of two five-year terms.⁵ Presidential and parliamentary elections will be held concurrently, which, supposedly, ensures voters will vote for the same political option.⁶ However, either the president or parliament, by a three-fifths majority, can force early, simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections.

Under other amendments, the president will gain vast powers, ranging from presenting a budget to having a leading role in shaping security policy. The head of state will appoint ministers and vice presidents. Moreover, the president will be endowed with the prerogative to issue decrees, though this will be limited, for example, to issues “clearly defined in law” and may be voided by parliament. The legislature’s oversight of the executive will be altered as well. The vote of confidence will disappear and other instruments of parliamentary oversight, such as investigations or questions, will be limited to vice presidents and ministers. The president’s criminal liability will be increased, as the head of state will be open to prosecution not only for treason but also any other crimes. Still, initiating a criminal procedure against a president would require an absolute majority of parliament and a few more steps.⁷ In case of an indictment, a president would be tried before a Constitutional Tribunal acting as a State Court (*Yüce Divan*), although most of the judges will have been appointed by the president. In general, the constitutional amendments mean all the most important judges in Turkey will be appointed by politicians and nearly 70% of them by the head of state.⁸ At the same time, the constitution will now include a phrase requiring the judiciary to act impartially.

Erdoğan and other officials from the Justice and Development Party (AKP) claim the constitutional changes will improve the quality of Turkey’s democracy by ensuring the “national will” (*milli irade*) will be better reflected in the state’s functioning.⁹ Yet, it is hard to argue that the amendments—at least in their current form—not only strengthen the presidential post but also impair parliament’s role and weaken the judiciary’s independence.¹⁰ Also, the conditions surrounding the referendum, especially the voting process in the parliament that led to the referendum when some AKP MP’s disregarded an existing constitutional requirement to use a secret ballot and the YSK’s decision on the day of the referendum to count the votes left unstamped by its officials as valid, has raised doubts as to whether Turkey is still a country governed by the rule of law. Seen in this light, the constitutional referendum may be perceived as another step in the long process of Erdoğan’s consolidation of power. The referendum legalised changes the president has been pushing for since his election to the post in 2014. At the same time, by empowering him even further, it has opened a road for Erdoğan to remodel Turkey according to his vision.

⁴ The provisions are available in detail on the Turkish parliament’s website (in Turkish): <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/sirasayi/donem26/yil01/ss447.pdf>.

⁵ However, the amendments also state that if parliament decides to call early elections during a president’s second term, the head of state will gain another opportunity to stand as a candidate.

⁶ As for now, it is not known how Turkish authorities aim to ensure that. One may expect that it will become a subject of further legislation in the field of electoral law.

⁷ Critics of the constitutional changes argue that the long procedure gives a president the chance to dissolve the parliament trying to oust him.

⁸ A key reform is the group of modifications to the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors, which is responsible for personnel policy and disciplinary action in the judiciary. After the changes, the board will be reduced from 22 to 13 members and appointed by the president and parliament. The change revokes the right granted to the judiciary in 2010 to appoint 11 of the board’s members.

⁹ See, e.g.: “New system aims to move Turkey to a more democratic, liberal, prosperous way,” *Daily Sabah*, 24 March 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/legislation/2017/03/25/new-system-aims-to-move-turkey-to-a-more-democratic-liberal-prosperous-way>.

¹⁰ The Venice Commission summed up its doubts, writing: “The Commission notes that by removing necessary checks and balances, the amendments would not follow the model of a democratic presidential system based on the separation of powers, and instead would risk degeneration into an authoritarian presidential system.” See: “110th PLENARY—Turkey—Proposed constitutional amendments ‘dangerous step backwards’ for democracy,” Venice Commission, 10 March 2017, <http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/events/?id=2369>.

On the Highway to the “New Turkey”?

The adjustment of laws will not be the only changes awaiting Turkey. Immediately after re-joining the AKP and re-assuming its chairmanship in May 2017, Erdoğan voiced his intent to work towards having Turkey “avoid falling in both the middle-income trap and the middle-democracy trap.”¹¹ He ordered ministers to prepare a six-month roadmap for the next elections. Erdoğan also reshaped the AKP’s Central Decision and Executive Board, bringing down the average age of its members to 47. He justified this by claiming that the “ability to constantly rejuvenate itself” is the secret to the party’s rule.¹² The young team’s primary duty is to help the president prepare Turkey to fulfil AKP’s “2023 goals.”¹³ This ambitious project aims, for example, to develop the Turkish economy into one of 10 biggest economies in the world, and is a pillar of Erdoğan’s vision of a “New Turkey.”

The president’s recent activities suggest that after the long and divisive campaign, he aims to decrease the tensions in internal politics that have grown immensely in the last few years.¹⁴ It would be a rational move since both the referendum campaign and the result did not leave Erdoğan unharmed. The new system’s legitimacy remains weak because of a relative lack of support for such a huge constitutional change as well as serious claims of vote fraud. It also must be especially thought-provoking for the president that supporters of the strong-presidential system were outnumbered by opponents in Turkey’s biggest cities.¹⁵ These factors may influence his political calculations, notably those before the November 2019 elections. An open secret in Ankara is that Erdoğan was disappointed in his nationalist supporters for their lower-than-expected vote. Thus, some even suggest that in the future he might reconsider a new peace initiative with the Kurds.¹⁶ That seems more like political fiction than reality, but the president’s past proves he is ready to change alliances whenever his interests require it.

However, other processes ongoing in Turkey linked also to the country’s changes cast a shadow on Erdoğan’s supposed plan to decrease tensions in domestic politics. One of the first decisions by Turkish authorities after the referendum was to extend the state of emergency for another three months.¹⁷ What is more, the president recently announced that it would continue until the peace in Turkey is fully restored.¹⁸ That signals that the purges related to last year’s failed coup will continue.¹⁹ This, in turn, may affect the country in two ways. First, the purges might contribute to deepening political polarisation, especially if they expand to the wider opposition.²⁰ Second, it would increase the already substantial vacuum in Turkey’s state institutions, ranging from civil service to the army and police,

¹¹ “Erdoğan asks ministers to prepare 6-month road map for 2019 elections,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 24 May 2017, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/erdogan-asks-ministers-to-prepare-6-month-road-map-for-2019-elections.aspx?pageID=238&nID=113502&NewsCatID=338>.

¹² “We Will Meet Our Nation’s Expectations through New Reforms in Democracy and Economy,” TCCB, 29 May 2017, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/77395/milletimizin-karsisina-ilk-etapta-180-gunluk-eylem-plani-ile-cikacagiz.html>.

¹³ “Our Goals for 2023 Mark a Critical Threshold That Will Elevate Us above the Level of Contemporary Civilizations,” TCCB, 28 May 2017, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/77384/2023-hedeflerimiz-bizi-muasir-medeniyet-seviyesinin-uzerine-tasiyacak-onemli-bir-esiktir.html>. 2023 is the centennial year of establishing the Republic of Turkey.

¹⁴ This may also be signalled by Erdoğan’s words that the country has become “very tired during the last three years” (actually four, since he meant the period starting with the Gezi Park protests in 2013). See: “Milletimizin Karşısına İlk Etapta 180 Günlük Eylem Planı ile Çıkacağız,” TCCB, 29 May 2017, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/77390/milletimizin-karsisina-ilk-etapta-180-gunluk-eylem-plani-ile-cikacagiz.html>.

¹⁵ Most commentators agree that the presidential system’s opponents win in Erdoğan’s beloved Istanbul was a kind of personal defeat for the president.

¹⁶ D. Jones, “Turkish Referendum Result Sparks Peace Process Speculation,” *Voice of America* <http://www.voanews.com/a/turkish-referendum-kurds/3823390.html>.

¹⁷ The state of emergency was introduced after the failed coup attempt in July 2016.

¹⁸ “State of emergency will continue until peace fully implemented: Erdoğan,” *Daily Sabah*, 18 May 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2017/05/18/state-of-emergency-will-continue-until-peace-fully-implemented-erdogan>.

¹⁹ For a current account, see: “More than 154,000 faced legal probe over Gülen links since coup attempt,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 29 May 2017, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/more-than-154000-faced-legal-probe-over-gulen-links-since-coup-attempt.aspx?pageID=238&nID=113663&NewsCatID=509>; A. Bayramoğlu, “No end in sight for Erdogan’s purges after referendum,” *Al-Monitor*, 4 May 2017, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/05/turkey-referendum-emboldened-new-purges-bans.html#ixzz4ikMkHSE9>.

²⁰ The purges have already affected not only the supposed Gülen movement members who are accused by the government of staging the coup attempt but also Kurds, leftists and Kemalists. For more on the process and Turkey’s state of emergency in general, see: P. Kingsley, “State of Emergency,” *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/series/state-of-emergency>.

which all have posts that need to be filled. In this area, the tensions may increase if there are signs of favouritism, which seems likely both because of the AKP's dominance in the state sector and its feeling of insecurity since the failed coup.²¹ Even if the ruling party manages to avoid this trap, the wide institutional remodelling envisioned carries a risk of instability. It also indirectly empowers the AKP and President Erdoğan, which, in the light of the extreme "personalisation"²² of Turkish politics may face even more objections from parts of the Turkish public in the future.

Finally, tensions in Turkey may continue to rise precisely because—at least for now—there is little evidence President Erdoğan intends to modify his desire to change Turkey according to his vision. Moreover, his comments of late that the young people who took to the streets during the coup attempt "were not the youth of Gezi Park" suggest that he still feels threatened by segments in society that do not share his worldview. Thus, one should not be surprised if he continues to divide the electorate along lines of secular/leftists vs. conservatives, as when he spoke about a rising "pious generation,"²³ which contributes to political polarisation. The consistently growing use of Islam by Turkish leaders to mobilise their constituency, which results in charges that Turkey is diverging from the principle of secularism, may also add to that. Finally, the divisions in society may be widened by shifts that go much deeper than everyday political activities or discourse but touch on the essence of Erdoğan's "New Turkey," namely that the source of legitimacy for the Turkish president is "national will," which, in his understanding, consists only of his voters. If Erdoğan cannot find a way to include the remainder of Turkish society in his vision, he cannot count on the stability he seeks in the long term.

Calming the Storm with Its Allies?

The constitutional referendum contributed to a sharp deterioration in relations between Turkey and its allies in Western Europe. In particular, Turkish-German and Turkish-Dutch relations were hit hard because of serious diplomatic spats surrounding the lack of agreement to Turkish politicians' political activities on the European countries' territories. The anti-Western rhetoric used extensively by Erdoğan during the campaign added fuel to the fire.²⁴ All in all, these tensions, along with the Venice Commission's critical report on the constitutional changes,²⁵ have made many believe that after the "yes" vote in the presidential system referendum, accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU are over.²⁶ This was also suggested by the Turkish president, who declared his intent to review "all political and administrative ties" to the EU after the referendum.²⁷

Yet, after the voting, Turkish politicians toned down their anti-EU rhetoric. President Erdoğan, before coming to Brussels for a NATO meeting on 25 May, said Turkey did not want to "break away from the EU."²⁸ This positive attitude towards the EU reportedly accompanied him during his meetings with European leaders.²⁹ This may be a hint that Turkish politicians are interested in decreasing tensions

²¹ The opposition press claims that there are already some examples of these phenomena: "Harbiye'ye AKP referanslı subay," *Aydinlik*, 4 May 2017, <https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/turkiye/2017-mayis/harbiye-ye-akp-referansli-subay>.

²² Since at least the Gezi Park protests, Erdoğan has worked really hard to present any elections—be they local, parliamentary or presidential—as plebiscites on his power.

²³ O.K. Cengiz, "Erdoğan's reforms meant to educate 'pious generation'," *Al-Monitor*, 26 June 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/06/cengiz-produce-religious-generations-erdogan-akp-islamist.html>.

²⁴ See, e.g.: "Erdoğan accuses Germany of 'Nazi practices' over blocked political rallies," *The Guardian*, 5 March 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/05/erdogan-accuses-germany-of-nazi-practices-over-blocked-election-rallies>.

²⁵ For a full text of the report, see: [http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=cdl-ad\(2017\)005-e](http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=cdl-ad(2017)005-e).

²⁶ A. Smale, "Turkey Vote Could Mean the End of a Courtship to Join the E.U.," *New York Times*, 17 April 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/17/world/europe/turkey-eu-referendum.html?_r=0.

²⁷ "Turkey to review its political relations with EU: Erdoğan," *Daily Sabah*, 23 March 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/03/23/turkey-to-review-its-political-relations-with-eu-erdogan>.

²⁸ S. Erkuş, "EU cannot treat Turkey like a beggar: President Erdoğan," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 24 May 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/eu-cannot-treat-turkey-like-a-beggar-president-erdogan.aspx?pageID=238&nID=113506&NewsCatID=510>.

²⁹ F. Bila, "Turkey, EU agree on 12-month calendar in accession bid," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 27 May 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-eu-agree-on-12-month-calendar-in-accession-bid.aspx?pageID=238&nID=113592&NewsCatID=510>.

with the EU, though there may be a few other reasons as well. First, better relations with European countries may be instrumental in overcoming the problems with the referendum's legitimacy.³⁰ Second, despite the Turkish president's many claims to the contrary, it seems he is fully aware that Turkey cannot afford to break ties with the EU. The Union is Turkey's biggest economic partner and source of around 80% of foreign direct investment in Turkey, so any far-reaching deterioration in relations would prove too costly, especially with elections in November 2019. Third, it is also possible that the Turkish president is aiming at better relations with the EU because of Turkey's foreign policy situation. Many of the foreign policy choices made by Turkish authorities in the last few years have not worked out and Turkey remains alone on many issues in the international arena.³¹ Better relations with the EU may help stop this trend, particularly important now in view of the growing gap in Turkey-U.S. ties triggered by the decision of the Trump administration to arm Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) fighting Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL) in Syria.

Nonetheless, mending and maintaining EU-Turkey relations at a satisfactory level will not be an easy task. Further tensions complicating the relationship may arise. Much disagreement may stem from Turkish decision-makers' perception that they cannot count on their allies in the ongoing fight against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a declared terrorist group, and the Gülen movement,³² blamed for the failed coup. Furthermore, the atmosphere surrounding EU-Turkey relations may be influenced by the severe strain in Turkey's bilateral relations with some Member States, including Germany, the Netherlands, and France.³³ However, the most serious risks to EU-Turkey relations are linked to the changes in Turkey. There are three main dangers in them. The first pertains to new elites replacing older ones in Turkey's core institutions. If media reports prove to be true that some of these elites—particularly within the military—hold an anti-Western outlook, that may constitute a challenge for Turkey's relations with its allies.³⁴ The second risk is related to the quality of Turkish democracy and the rule of law. If Erdoğan is able to further consolidate his power—and the new system seems tailor-made for the incumbent president to do just that—it may draw Turkey further away from Copenhagen criteria on democracy and the rule of law. Continuing EU accession negotiations in these circumstances may be increasingly difficult and could mean a huge change in EU-Turkey relations. Also, in the longer-term perspective, the AKP's "2023 Vision" might be another factor that pulls Turkey away from the EU, since its aims require the country to undergo a gargantuan economic transformation. The potential for a lack of EU support for these changes may force Turkish decision-makers to seek other partners to reach the party's goals.

The EU's New Strategy towards a Changing Turkey

Turkey is a crucial partner with the EU and its strategic importance is hard to overestimate. It is a vital NATO ally and a key component of the Alliance's deterrence policy towards Russia in the Black Sea Basin and, in general, on the Southern Flank. It is contributing to Europe's security through a 2016 deal on mass-migration that has allowed EU Member States to better prepare themselves for challenges stemming from the Middle East. What is more, Turkey may play a huge role in EU energy security by contributing to supply diversification projects as well as ensuring stability and security in the Eastern Mediterranean.³⁵ Moreover, if the EU ever decides to take a more active stance on Middle Eastern

³⁰ Erdoğan's call to the EU to "leave behind what happened during the referendum process" may be a sign that he understands that well.

³¹ İbrahim Kalın, the current spokesman for the president, used the idea of "precious loneliness" to describe this state in Turkish foreign policy.

³² For more on the Turkey-PKK fight, see: K. Wasilewski, "Turkey's New Anti-PKK Strategy: Consequences and Feasibility," *PISM Bulletin*, No. 81 (931), 1 December 2016.

³³ Recent tensions between Turkey and Germany surrounding German parliamentarians' visit to Incirlik air base may serve as an example. For further reading on that subject, see: "German visit to NATO base in Konya, not Incirlik, is possible: Turkish FM," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 05 June 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/german-visit-to-nato-base-in-konya-not-incirlik-is-possible-turkish-fm.aspx?pageID=238&nID=113933&NewsCatID=510>.

³⁴ For more on that, see: K. Wasilewski, "Turkey after the Failed 15 July Coup: A Challenge for the EU and the U.S.," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 69 (919), 27 October 2016; B. Yinanç, "The return of Ergenekon as ultranationalists replace FETÖ," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 25 May 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-return-of-ergenekon-as-ultranationalists-replace-feto.aspx?pageID=449&nID=113487&NewsCatID=412>.

³⁵ For more, see: K. Wasilewski, "Cyprus Reunification Talks: Conclusions for the EU," *PISM Bulletin*, No. 42 (982), 28 April 2017.

affairs, again it will be Turkey that may be helpful in achieving the goals, especially stability. All in all—though this next argument has been neglected with the EU focused mainly on its internal transformation—if in the future the Union opts to be a global superpower, one able to meet the challenges of a changing world and actively shape the security environment, keeping Turkey close may be useful.

Of particular importance is that all the above-mentioned factors constitute pillars of EU-Turkey shared interests. Even though Turkish decision-makers recently have been cosyng up to Russia, it is hard to argue that both Russia's annexation of Crimea and its expansionist aims in the Eastern Mediterranean or the Middle East go against Turkey's own interests. Further, it seeks to reduce its energy dependence on Russia and to become a hub for natural resources from the Middle East to Europe. If Turkish politicians really dream of their country being not only a regional but also a global power, they need the EU's support. The best proof of that may be that Turkish influence in the Middle East was at its highest in the modern era when the country was praised for its so-called "Turkish model," portrayed as an efficient combination of democracy and Islamic rules, and when the country was able to maintain the difficult balance in its relations with both its Arab and European partners.³⁶

Recognising the depth of the EU's and Turkey's shared interests allows for a better understanding of the complicated relationship between the two. It helps one grasp why in the last few years EU-Turkey relations have resembled a game of chicken, with the two sides constantly threatening to break off cooperation but failing to do so in fact because of the fear of the consequences. It also explains why even after the Turkish referendum, despite serious tensions and many critical opinions from the EU about the changes, neither the Union nor Turkey has opted for outright ending the accession negotiations. The understanding of shared interests also may be instrumental in advising the EU on how it should continue its relations in the future with a changing Turkey.

The EU's very first next step towards Turkey should be to enhance the political dialogue, for example, through EU-Turkey summits as well as on a lower, more technical level. Though it constitutes the basics of diplomacy, the relationship lately between the EU and Turkey has been characterised by a lack of sound communication. This has resulted in much misunderstanding and created a strained atmosphere between the partners.³⁷ This basic move would allow the EU and Turkey to share their perspective on the relationship and on their interests. For example, Turkey would be able to pass along to its Western allies its message regarding its needs to fight terrorism and means of doing that while European leaders could point out to their Turkish counterparts that the developments in their country—especially those seen as harming democracy and the rule of law—increase the political costs of Western leaders to press for closer cooperation with Turkey or President Erdoğan. Enhancing the dialogue also might be beneficial for overcoming the crisis of confidence regarding engagement in NATO.³⁸

When it comes to the essence of EU-Turkey relations, the accession negotiations still seem to be the most plausible solution for the Union. This stems from the fact that within its framework, Turkey is obliged to meet criteria that tie it closely to the EU. Hence, the bloc may consider opening Chapters 23 and 24 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights; Justice, Freedom and Security) of the accession negotiations. This would help develop a more constructive dialogue between Turkey and the EU in where the latter has concerns. However, the EU should not open them at any cost, especially when it risks its credibility. It will require Turkey to meet benchmarks for opening the chapters.³⁹ Even more important, Turkey will have to not only opt for continuing the accession negotiations but also demonstrate its willingness by making real progress in terms of Copenhagen criteria. The EU could use economic instruments such as European funds or Custom Union renegotiations to encourage Turkey to proceed in this area and to remind Turkish politicians of the partners' shared interests.

³⁶ For more about the "Turkish model," see: S. Ülgen, M. Muasher, T. de Waal, T. Carothers, "Can the Turkish Model Gain Traction in the New Middle East?," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 19 December 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/12/19/can-turkish-model-gain-traction-in-new-middle-east>.

³⁷ For more on the impasse in relations between Turkey and its Western allies, see: K. Wasilewski, "Turkey after the Failed 15 July Coup ...," *op. cit.*

³⁸ While Turkey feels abandoned by its allies due to a perceived lack of support for its actions and plans in Syria, some European countries have been having doubts about Turkey's role in NATO because of its stance on the sanctions on Russia after its annexation of Crimea.

³⁹ This would also require lifting a veto by the Republic of Cyprus that has been blocking a few chapters due to unresolved issues related to the island.

However, with the many challenges stemming from Turkey's latest transformation, the EU should have a backup plan ready in case the situation in Turkey leads to the end of accession negotiations. For some time now, various analysts have sought an equivalent tool, often landing on the so-called "transactional model" of relations, citing as an example the mass-migration deal.⁴⁰ While it indeed may be a part of the solution, the problem is that in its narrow definition it does not guarantee a deep and stable relationship corresponding to Turkey's strategic importance to the EU. Hence, the EU's new strategy towards Turkey should focus rather on common European-Turkish interests and be aimed at working out a model of relations that would tie Turkey closer to the EU. It should be devised to cover multi-level cooperation and enforced through various EU instruments still in stock. Most of all, the strategy should be based on a longer time horizon and be enforced consistently.

Apart from supporting an enhanced dialogue, the EU Member States could increase their influence on Turkey by showing it more support in its fight with terrorism, particularly by acting against the PKK on European territory. This would contribute to improving the EU's image among Turks, since many support that fight.⁴¹ At the same time, European leaders should clearly state to their Turkish counterparts that any actions aimed at terrorist networks in Europe will be based on clear evidence and conducted according to the rule of law.⁴² Simultaneously encouraging Turkish leaders to take up a new peace initiative on the Kurdish front also may be beneficial for the EU, since it would benefit from diminished tensions, not only in its relations with Turkey but also between members of the Turkish and Kurdish diasporas in Europe.

Another element that may increase cooperation is visa-free travel. The EU should grant the right to Turkish citizens but only after a compromise is agreed on benchmarks. Of course, a key instrument of EU influence is its economy, especially important ahead of the November 2019 elections and given the need for funds to meet the AKP's "2023 goals." Updating the Customs Union between the EU and Turkey would bring huge benefits to the Turkish economy, the EU should use it to deepen its relations with Turkey.⁴³ The EU should also act at a more local level and make use of various European projects directed towards Turkey's citizens. Finally, to tie the country even closer to the EU, it should be integrated into European energy diversification projects. Such strategic cooperation would constitute a much more stable and lasting framework for future EU-Turkey relations. Hence, the EU should reconsider its rather limited engagement on the Cyprus issue so as to facilitate the island's reunification, which would contribute to developing energy projects in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁴⁴

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The dynamic changes that have taken place in Turkey in the last few years have made the future of EU-Turkey relations uncertain. Although Turkish politicians assure their European counterparts that EU membership is still Turkey's strategic goal, their actions within the country have moved away from Copenhagen criteria and made continuation of accession negotiations difficult to continue.⁴⁵ However, within certain limits, the EU can regain some of its influence on Turkey. First, despite the many differences and potential for increased tensions, the EU should hold a long-term strategic perspective and keep Turkey close for its own interests. Second, while evaluating other steps in EU-Turkey

⁴⁰ M. Chudziak, "Further tensions between Turkey and the EU," Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), 30 November 2016, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2016-11-30/further-tensions-between-turkey-and-eu>.

⁴¹ A survey published by the staunchly pro-government *Daily Sabah* showed that support for the anti-PKK fight in Turkey's southeast is at 60%. For more, see: "Survey finds support for anti-PKK fight, cross-border operation in Syria," *Daily Sabah*, 17 February 2016, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2016/02/18/survey-finds-support-for-anti-pkk-fight-cross-border-operation-in-syria>.

⁴² Obviously, the same rule could be applied to another problem in EU-Turkey relations, namely the Gülen movement. If Turkish authorities are able to show in a way that would not raise much doubt and ensures a just process for Gülen members charged with wrongdoings, EU countries could consider extraditing them.

⁴³ For more on the importance of this measure to Turkey, see: K. Kirişçi, S. Ekim, "Why an EU-Turkey Customs Union Upgrade is Good for Turkey," German Marshall Fund, 29 May 2015, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/why-eu-turkey-customs-union-upgrade-good-turkey>.

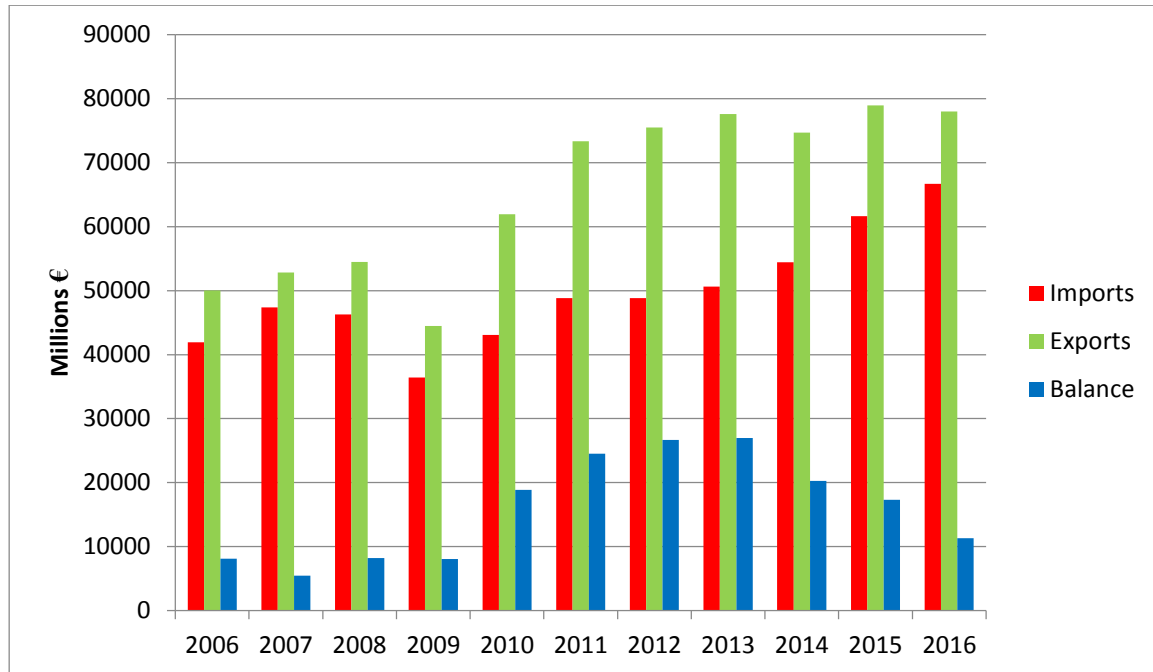
⁴⁴ For more on the EU's potential role in the reunification talks, see: K. Wasilewski, "Cyprus Reunification Talks ...," *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ The most recent Turkish politician to mention that joining the EU is Turkey's strategic goal was EU Minister Ömer Çelik. For more, see: T. Yılmaz, "Turkey's EU process a necessity of politics, not romanticism," *Hurriyet Daily News*, 1 June 2017, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/turkeys-eu-process-a-necessity-of-politics-not-romanticism.aspx?pageID=238&nID=113766&NewsCatID=510>.

relations, European leaders should acknowledge that the EU is at least equally important for Turkey as it is for Europe. Third, the EU should have a comprehensive and well-executed strategy towards Turkey so Turkish politicians will be fully aware of the potential benefits of close cooperation with the Union, as well as the potential costs of breaking off ties.⁴⁶ Fourth, European politicians should remember that Erdoğan is still an excellent gambler, and not risk-averse. While he knows when to push the stakes, he can easily change his actions when they are not paying off. Finally, it would be beneficial for the EU to note that despite Erdoğan's continuing consolidation of power, Turkey remains a politically polarised country. This, in turn, may mean that mechanisms inherent in the Copenhagen criteria, democracy and rule of law may eventually be needed in Turkey, even if only in the longer term. A mix actions will allow the partners to make full use of the huge potential found in their shared interests, which is extremely important in times of growing uncertainty regarding the shape of the global order.

⁴⁶ The huge significance of the strategy's actual execution is symbolized by the mass-migration deal. Turkish politicians have repeatedly threatened to break it off, but for now at least they have not. A potential explanation of this phenomenon may be that they probably realize that such a decision would meet with a response from all the EU Member States, thus making the cost to Turkey very high.

Figure 1. EU trade in goods with Turkey



Source: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113456.pdf.

Table 1. Turkey's system of government, current vs. strong president (new). The most important changes to the constitution

	Current System	Strong President System
Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament elected every four years • President elected every five years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simultaneous elections every five years
The Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Minister (PM) is head of the executive • PM appointed by president but obliged to get a vote of confidence from parliament • PM picks ministers, but president can veto candidates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President is head of state and of the executive • Appoints all ministers and vice presidents • Vice presidents are not elected together with the president • Ministers cannot be members of parliament, if a parliamentarian is appointed minister, he/she must relinquish the mandate

Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single chamber consisting of 550 MPs • 5 instruments of oversight over the executive: general debate, parliamentary investigation, parliamentary inquiry, censure, questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single chamber consisting of 600 MPs • Censure motion abolished, remaining instruments of oversight limited to ministers and vice presidents • Can call an investigation against the president for any crime, initiating the procedure requires an absolute majority
Judiciary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors consists of 22 members • The judiciary appoints 11 members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now, the Board of Judges and Prosecutors, consisting of 13 members • Appointed by parliament and president

Table 2. History of EU-Turkey relations

Date	Description
31 July 1959	Turkey's application for associate membership of the European Economic Community
12 September 1963	Signing of the Association Agreement (Ankara Agreement)
14 April 1987	Turkey's formal membership application to join the European Community
18 December 1989	European Commission refuses start of accession negotiations
6 March 1995	Signing of the EU-Turkey Customs Union
12 December 1999	Turkey recognised as a Member State candidate by the European Council
12 December 2002	European Council decides to open negotiations with Turkey "without delay" if it fulfils the Copenhagen criteria
17 December 2004	EU decides to start the negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005
3 October 2005	EU-Turkey accession negotiations started (till now only one chapter, Science and Research, has been closed)