

Turkey's Perspective on European Union's Mediterranean Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean

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RÉSUMÉ

D'un point de vue historique, la conception turque de la Méditerranée diffère considérablement de celle de l'Union Européenne (UE). La présidence française du Conseil de l'UE, qui a eu lieu du 1er juillet au 31 décembre 2008, a été un tournant important aussi bien en termes de restructuration de la politique Méditerranéenne de l'UE que de réexamen du rôle de la Turquie au sein de cette région spécifique dans le cadre de la Politique étrangère et de sécurité commune (PESC). Cet article a pour but d'analyser la perspective turque relative à la politique méditerranéenne de l'UE, en général, et plus particulièrement envers l'initiative française d'Union pour la Méditerranée (UPM). La dynamique des relations Turquie-UE, la crédibilité de l'adhésion de ce pays, des considérations géopolitiques et l'image de la Méditerranée, ainsi que les objectifs et l'efficacité du Processus de Barcelone sont des facteurs majeurs, qui ont influé sur la formation de la politique turque concernant la politique méditerranéenne de l'UE. Cet article analyse dans une perspective historique ces facteurs derrière les schémas de changement et de continuité dans l'approche de la Turquie portant sur les développements du Partenariat euro-méditerranéen (PEM) à l'UPM.

ABSTRACT

From a historical perspective, Turkey's conceptualization of the Mediterranean diverges considerably from that of the EU. Last year's French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which ran from July 1, to December 31, 2008, was an important turning point both in terms of restructuring the European Union's (EU) Mediterranean policy and rethinking Turkey's role within this specific area of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This paper aims to analyze Turkey's perspective on EU's Mediterranean policy in general and specifically on the French initiative UfM. Turkey-EU relations dynamics and the credibility of membership, geopolitical concerns and the image of the Mediterranean, the objectives and efficiency of the Barcelona

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Process are major factors influential in shaping Turkish perspective on the EU's Mediterranean policy. The paper discusses in historical perspective, these reasons behind patterns of change and continuity in Turkey's approach to the developments from the EMP to the UfM.

Introduction

Last year's French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which ran from July 1, to December 31, 2008, was an important turning point both in terms of restructuring the European Union's (EU) Mediterranean policy and rethinking the role of Turkey within this specific area of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Since 1995 Turkey is a member of the Barcelona Process and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) recently evolving into the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). However, Turkey is also a candidate for EU membership since December 1999 and started accession negotiations on October 3, 2005. According to European Council's decision "Turkey sufficiently fulfills the Copenhagen political criteria to open accession negotiations" on the condition that political reform process continues.¹ Therefore, the country's position in the "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean" is peculiar when compared to other member countries. Likewise, it can be argued that Turkey has a paradoxical approach to the EU's Mediterranean policy. On the one hand, the country's alignment with the common policies of the Union is going on within the framework of Europeanization. On the other hand, certain skepticism prevails among Turkish foreign policy makers on the possibility that belonging to the Barcelona Process could become an alternative for Turkey's EU membership in the future. This political stand was demonstrated during 2007 French Presidential election campaign when Nicolas Sarkozy presented the UfM as an alternative to Turkey's EU membership, the objectives of the recent French initiative were received with considerable uneasiness in Turkey. The Turkish government at first refused to take part in the project on the basis that it could become to be widely perceived by the EU member states as an alternative to the country's membership. In view of the country's ongoing accession talks and political reform process over a decade, Turkish public opinion and political elites find it hard to accept that in the image of France Turkey belonged to the Mediterranean rather than Europe.

The recent reaction of the Turkish government and public opinion debates on the French initiative can be explained through the lenses of Turkey's

perspective on the EU's Mediterranean policy, which over a decade is marked with a reserved attitude. There are several political and historical reasons why Turkey has kept itself distant from adopting a fully integrated Mediterranean policy in the model of its Southern European counterparts. In historical perspective, Turkey's conceptualization of the Mediterranean diverges considerably from that of the EU. Unlike its European counterparts Turkey's foreign policy has never been oriented towards imaging the Mediterranean region as a unity. Turkey agreed with EMP's aim to establish channels of political/economic cooperation and cultural dialogue among its members. Yet, it can be argued that the shortcomings of EU's policies in fulfilling EMP's foundational goals of promoting peace, development and stability in the region decreased its credibility in the eyes of Turkish authorities. On top of these diverging political views on the region, whether the Barcelona Process would be seen by the EU members as a suitable option to replace Turkey's European vocation has been a present concern among foreign policy makers. Although Turkey always participated in EU's Mediterranean policy initiatives, Turkish governments never really showed a strong commitment. It can only be observed in the post-Helsinki Turkey's EU candidacy period that the country became gradually more involved in the Barcelona Process and started to align with EU's Mediterranean policy. It is in this context that Sarkozy's launch of the UfM in 2007 was a breaking point, not only in terms of Turkey-France relations, but also in terms of reconsidering Turkey's role in the Mediterranean. The fact that France undertook the lead of reshaping the Euro-Mediterranean policy, a country where opposition to Turkey's membership is on the rise, revitalized Turkish skepticism with regard to the EU's policy.

This paper aims to analyze Turkey's perspective on EU's Mediterranean policy in general and specifically on the French initiative UfM. The main argument is that : (1) Turkey-EU relations dynamics and the credibility of membership, (2) Turkey's geopolitical concerns and its image of Mediterranean politics and policies, (3) the objectives and efficiency of the Barcelona Process are the major factors that are influential in shaping Turkish perspective on the EU's Mediterranean policy. Furthermore, in this paper it is observed that there are patterns of change and continuity in this perspective. The paper discusses in a historical perspective, the reasons behind these patterns of change and continuity in Turkey's approach to the developments from the EMP to the UfM. For this purpose, in its first section the paper covers the evolution of Turkey's attitude during the Barcelona Process and the EMP. The second section of the paper focuses on Turkey's responses to the

French initiative UfM. How Turkey conceives its role in the Mediterranean policy in the context of the evolving framework of the EU's common foreign, security and defense policies is one of the important axes of the analysis. Furthermore, in the concluding section the paper evaluates the prospects and challenges for further alignment with this specific area of CFSP.

Turkey and the Barcelona Process: From the EMP to the UfM

In the first five years of its inclusion in the intergovernmental structure of the Barcelona Process, Turkish governments adopted an attitude of indifference, skepticism or at best were criticizing shortcomings of EMP's cooperative mechanisms. The governments questioned whether belonging to the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation would either mediate Turkey's EU accession or help resolve Turkey's key national foreign policy concerns in the region, such as relations with Greece and the Cyprus conflict. One of the major reasons behind incertitude was Turkey's diverging political perspectives from the EU's Mediterranean policy.

Starting from the EU's development policy in the 1970s to the EMP and the Barcelona Process in the 1990s, the Mediterranean region gradually acquired a particular geopolitical significance for the EU. In the 1970s, the development of bilateral economic relations with the countries in the region was particularly important for France and to some extent Italy because of their colonial past in North Africa.² After the EU's Southern enlargement to Greece in 1981, Spain and Portugal in 1986, and the applications for membership of Malta, Turkey and Cyprus, the countries on the Southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea became the immediate neighbors of the EU. Therefore, the region acquired both strategic and economic importance for the EU as well. After the Southern enlargement, Spain, Greece and Portugal also took an active role in shaping a new policy for the Mediterranean.³ After series of Euro-Mediterranean conferences and negotiations, member states agreed on November 27-28, 1995 the Barcelona Process and the EMP. The main pillars of the Barcelona Process were defined at the Ministerial Conference which

*...laid the foundations of a process designed to build a multilateral framework for dialogue and cooperation between the EU and its Mediterranean partners ... in order to turn the Mediterranean into a common area of peace, stability and prosperity through the reinforcement of political dialogue and security, an economic and financial partnership and a social, cultural and human partnership.*⁴

The Barcelona Process and the EMP since its foundation provided a

platform for dialogue, regional cooperation and integration between Euro-Mediterranean countries through various EU instruments such as MEDA and regular Euro-Mediterranean conferences.⁵ The members are the EU Member States and the Mediterranean non-member countries (MNCs) that are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. The League of Arab States and the Arab Maghreb Union are invited in meetings and conferences, as is Mauritania.⁶

Unlike the comprehensive definition of the EU, Turkey has a fragmented image of the Mediterranean. The EMP was perceived as an instrument of economic cooperation and a gateway to Europe. Emanating from different geopolitical priorities, Turkey and the EU had different security threat perceptions in relation to the Mediterranean area. Thus, Turkey was reluctant to deepen the security and defense pillars of the Barcelona Process. Since the early 1990s NATO is responsible for the provision of security in the Mediterranean region and Turkey was not supporting the creation of an autonomous defense structure. According to Turkish foreign policy makers, "Turkey supports all forms of regional cooperation ... welcomes the initiative because it promotes economic development and aims to reduce internal and external political tensions in the region. But Turkey feels that the EMP is imperative for the security of the Union".⁷ Even though Turkey was willing to co-operate on economic matters with other Mediterranean countries, and to get involved in a project for promoting political and cultural dialogue, it was less enthusiastic on political and security issues.

Therefore, geopolitical factors play decisive role in determining Turkey's perspective towards the EU's Mediterranean policy. Given the multifaceted problems in its own neighborhood, extending from the Balkans to the Middle East and Caucasus regions, the Mediterranean has never really occupied a central place in national security policy agenda. Even though Ottoman legacy is present in the region, modern Turkey's image of the Mediterranean has its ambiguities.⁸ From Turkish foreign policy perspective the region is not defined comprehensively as an integrated whole. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs deals with the Mediterranean policy issues under different departments such as the Balkans, Middle East, Greece, Cyprus, North Africa, and Europe.⁹ Furthermore, Mediterranean policy was usually understood as "South Eastern Mediterranean" and within the framework of Turkey's bilateral relations with Israel and to a lesser extent the Middle Eastern dimension. Yet, this is also a reason for which Turkey never underestimated the strategic significance of the Mediterranean.

The Barcelona Process diversified the areas of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation with defined goals such as promoting democracy and socio-economic reforms so as to ensure political stability and economic development in the region. This was essentially seen as a method to ensure European security in the face of challenges emanating from political conflicts, social turmoil and economic problems in its Southern neighborhood.¹⁰ Among these perceived security threats were migration, regional disparities in terms of economic and social development levels and unemployment rates, the rise of religious fundamentalism in Islamic communities, the Arab-Israeli conflict and to some extent the Cyprus problem. The creation of a Euro-Mediterranean zone of security embedded a social, cultural and human dimension to overcome these economic and political challenges. Thus, overcoming these security challenges was partly dependent upon normative or civilian dimension of the cooperation with a political and socio-economic reform agenda.

However, the Barcelona Process remained very low profile in terms of the resolutions of major conflicts in the region and in terms of its contribution to the resolution of Turkey's immediate foreign policy objectives. From a national security perspective, conventional focus of Turkey's foreign and security policy has been on the resolution of the problems in its South Eastern Mediterranean shores that cover relations with Greece, the settlement of the Cyprus problem, uneasy relations with Syria and to some extent the Middle East Peace process. This differed from the priorities of EU member states that involved a wider North African dimension and the issue of migrant communities from the MNCs.¹¹ Furthermore, from the perspective of Turkey, EU's comprehensive approach with regard to the Mediterranean region rendered the solution of these long lasting problems even harder. Therefore, in spite of acknowledging that the Barcelona Process provided the tools for economic cooperation and aimed at promoting peace, security and development in the region, Turkey's attitude with regard the EU's Mediterranean policy was evolving rather critical in terms of political and security chapters.¹²

An additional factor that shaped Turkey's perspective on the EU's Mediterranean policy emanated from transformations of international environment in which Turkey-EU relations were evolving. Although Turkey had cultural, economic and political relations coming from a long history with the Mediterranean and geographically Mediterranean coasts, the country has never fully identified itself as being part of the Mediterranean region. Its membership in NATO, OSCE, OECD and the Council of Europe and associate membership of the EU and WEU reinforced this foreign policy stand.

Turkey clearly was the only country in the process of accession negotiations with a majority of Muslim population, a free market economy and secular democracy differentiating the country from other MNCs. In this context, a foremost factor is that since its official application for full membership on 14 April 1987, the political priority of Turkey's foreign policy is to become an EU member and to reassert its position in European foreign and security policy structures. It can be argued that although Turkey has always been an integral part of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework, Turkish political elites have opposed the idea that the Barcelona Process and the EMP could be an alternative to Turkish membership in the EC/EU. On the contrary, they viewed Turkey's participation as a strategy for Turkey's closer integration with the EU's foreign policy.¹³ Turkey's uneasiness was partly caused by the wider definition of the Mediterranean by EU member states. Furthermore, the EU's Southern enlargement to Spain, Portugal and Greece, and the candidacy of Cyprus and Malta in 1997 resulted in a feeling of exclusion in Turkey. The country became the only non-EU member Mediterranean country that has signed a customs union agreement with the EU. Turkey had already accepted EU trade agreements with third countries as a result of the Customs Union Agreement and made bilateral trade agreement in order to prevent the negative effects stemming from the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the EU and non-EU EMP members. In this context, tense bilateral relations with Greece constituted a main barrier for Turkey to receive financial aid under the Association and Customs Union agreements or profit from the MEDA funds. Therefore, the foreign economic benefits of the EMP were also called into question.¹⁴

This political attitude started to change with the December 1999 Helsinki Summit when Turkey was granted the status of candidate for EU membership. The post-1999 period is marked with more involvement of Turkey in the economic, political and socio/cultural spheres of the EU's Mediterranean Policy. Furthermore, Turkey's relations with Greece started to evolve from confrontation to cooperation in economic, cultural, even security areas. A major reason behind this transformation was that Turkey-EU relations evolved into a new phase, where the EU provided Turkey with a clear membership perspective. Furthermore, EU candidacy process has triggered significant domestic institutional reforms and policy alignment in Turkey with the aim of fulfilling the political conditionality for membership. It is fair to argue that Turkey's Europeanization process was becoming visible in its foreign policy perspective towards the Mediterranean region. In the period of the then foreign minister İsmail Cem, Turkey's foreign policy became more

multidimensional with the aim of improving its relations with the countries in its neighborhood.¹⁵ These new policy initiatives within the context of Turkey's EU candidacy continued to evolve during the Justice and Development (JDP) government that came to power in November 2002.

In 2005 it became more and more visible that the Barcelona Process and the EMP did not respond to the expectations of its members. Diverging interests of members, financial issues, geopolitical transformations with the EU's Eastern enlargement, frozen conflicts, the unresolved issue of integrating of migrant communities in their host countries, notably in EU member states, are among major factors that led to the questioning of the efficiency of the process.¹⁶ The necessity to go through a process of reforms was voiced by many of the Mediterranean countries. The problems were also originating from the EU's new CFSP initiative towards its new Eastern neighborhood, changing security policy agenda of the US administration after September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, increasing migration to the EU from the MNC's.¹⁷ In response to these international transformations, the EU revised its foreign and security policy strategy, which involved the initiation of a new neighborhood policy. The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), issued a year after the European Security Strategy, is based on the idea of strengthening political, economic and cultural ties with the EU's neighbors, and the promotion of EU's common norms and shared values without offering membership. The aim is to provide regional security and stability through the development of new incentives for regional cooperation and dialogue.¹⁸ According to the European Commission, the ESS and the ENP are complementary to the Barcelona Process, and have the potential to reinforce the cooperation mechanisms between the EU and its Mediterranean neighborhood.

However, in the wider Mediterranean context, the ENP has been received with criticisms on the basis that bringing the EMP and the Eastern neighborhood under a same umbrella would not provide sufficient policy tools to solve the long standing political and economic problems in the Mediterranean.¹⁹ Moreover, from a critical perspective the ENP could be interpreted as privileging the Eastern neighbors. These debates marked the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona process and paved the way for the foundation of the UfM, but eventually not without compromise. These developments also impacted Turkey's foreign policy making in general and its perspective on the EMP and the ENP since the country's accession negotiations was opened by the end of the year 2005.

The French Initiative UfM: Continuities and Changes in Turkey's Perspective on the EU's Mediterranean Policy

Throughout the years 1999-2007 Turkey started to view its role in the Barcelona Process and the EMP as an integral part of its EU membership process. Closer integration with EU's common policies, socio-economic interests, and geopolitical factors continued to shape Turkey's perspective on the Mediterranean region.²⁰ In the wake of the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Process in 2005, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) debates revolved around the need to adopt a reinforced policy strategy that would overcome hurdles caused by the weakening of its cooperative incentives.²¹ During the same year, the then Minister of Interior and president of France's governing party *Union Pour un Mouvement Populaire* (Union for a Popular Movement), Nicolas Sarkozy, in his official visits to Morocco voiced the idea of re-uniting countries in the Mediterranean region under a new framework for cooperation. Sarkozy's project of a Mediterranean Union became much more accentuated during French Presidential election campaigns in early 2007. The French initiative underlined the idea of creating a zone of solidarity that would eventually revitalize cooperation in environmental issues, economic growth, and security and reinforce political and cultural dialogue among the countries in the region.²² The effectiveness of cooperative mechanisms under the Barcelona Process and the possibilities for reforms were altogether called into question.

Sarkozy's discourse remained particularly focused on the central importance of the Mediterranean region and identity for Europe. Accordingly, despite the diversity of cultures in the region, a uniting project would mediate the establishment of platforms of dialogue between different religions and languages of those European, African and the Middle Eastern countries that fall within the geographical boundaries of the Mediterranean. After his election as the President of the Republic on 6 May 2007, the foundation of the UfM was already one of the most important pillars in France's foreign policy agenda. On 23 October 2007, in his first visit to Tanger after being elected as the President of the République, Sarkozy renewed his call for the foundation of a Mediterranean Union.²³ He invited all the Mediterranean countries and the EU for the establishment of UfM in the Paris Summit of July 2008. However, France's renewed Mediterranean initiative faced various objections. This new policy initiative addressed at the same time two controversial issues that became sources of debates in the EU, Turkey and the

MNCs. First, the Mediterranean Union was described as a project having its own internal political dynamics of integration that would operate outside the EU in which Portugal, Greece, Spain, Italy and Cyprus together with France were to take initiative. Second, Turkey would be a member of this newly emerging idea of a Union of the Mediterranean.

Some EU members led by Germany criticized the idea of founding a Mediterranean Union as an independent political entity.²⁴ The proposition was to reform the already existing cooperation mechanisms, notably the Barcelona Process or the EMP, so as to overcome their failure to initiate strong policies to cope with economic and political problems in the region. Other Southern European member states such as Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal, and Euro-Med partners such as Morocco supported the French policies.²⁵ Yet, a uniformity of opinion could not be reached at the Mediterranean level. Countries such as Algeria questioned the future of Arab-Israeli conflict and whether it was a viable solution to integrate the Middle East Peace process in a wider Mediterranean framework. There were also several reactions within the Arab league on the assumption that this project would serve to deepen divisions between Arab countries.²⁶ These developments were followed by Turkey's withdrawal of support for the French initiative on the ground that it was seen as a natural member of the UfM rather than the EU.

In response to these objections, the decisive period for UfM has been the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Even though the break of global financial crisis and the Georgian war preoccupied most of French Presidency's policy agenda, important resolutions on the UfM were achieved in two consecutive meetings held at governmental and ministerial levels. The UfM that brings a new approach to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation was set on March 13, 2008 European Council. The French initiative was translated into EU's Mediterranean policy framework under "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean," on July 13, 2008 Paris Summit of Heads of State and Government.²⁷ The Summit was followed by the foreign ministers conference held in Marseilles on 3-4 November which was a step further towards reinforcing the Barcelona Process through the introduction of a new framework of institutional and policy structures, with the co-presidency of Egypt and France.²⁸ Therefore, "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean" acquired an EU-dimension, articulated with the already existing institutional mechanisms of the EMP. It rather became a less ambitious framework for cooperation in areas of low politics, and platform for political and cultural dialogue among its members through development and implementation of a "plurality of projects."

Among the diversity of debates, the Turkish approach to the French policy initiative has been highly critical. Old skepticisms revitalized during these debates. Even though the idea of a “Union of the Mediterranean” embedded specific emphasis on the strategic importance of Turkey for its success, at the same time the country was identified belonging to a loosely defined Mediterranean identity. Sarkozy in his Toulon speech back in February 2007 stated:

It is in view of the Mediterranean Union that we must consider the relationship between Europe and Turkey. Because Europe cannot be extended indefinitely. Europe if it wants to have an identity must have borders and therefore limits. Europe if it wants to have a power cannot be watered constantly. Europe if it wants to work cannot grow without stopping. Turkey has no place in the European Union because it is not a European country. But Turkey is a Mediterranean country with which Europe Mediterranean can advance the unity of the Mediterranean. This is the great ambition that I want to offer to Turkey.²⁹

In the context of the country's ongoing accession negotiations, the French initiative was received with considerable reactions. Not surprisingly, Turkish political elite's attitude with regard to the French initiative has been very negative in view of the fact that the Toulon discourse went as further as to claim that Turkey “is not a European country.” The problematic of the Mediterranean Union was that it carried the risk of marginalizing the country's EU membership prospects. Additionally, Turkish public opinion's awareness of rising opposition in France with regard to the enlargement in general and specifically Turkey's accession make it even harder to think about other political and economic openings that the UfM could bring to the Mediterranean. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan communicated Turkey's expectations on accession talks referring to the French Presidency of the European Council agenda.³⁰

In response, the French government, acknowledging that Turkey is a major strategic and economic partner that could mediate the achievement of UfM aims, made considerable efforts to convince the Turkish government to participate in the Paris Summit. During July 13, meeting with the Prime Minister Erdogan, the French President said he “will not block progress in Turkey's EU accession negotiations, which were officially opened in 2005.”³¹ Meanwhile the EU also emphasized that Turkey was an important asset for the success of the EU's Mediterranean policy and that membership in the UfM

will not jeopardize Turkey's EU accession process. According to the European Commission Turkey's membership is dependent on the country's compliance with EU's economic and political conditionality. The final declaration addressed Turkey's concerns declaring that the UfM "will be independent from the EU enlargement policy, accession negotiations and the pre-accession process."³²

After a decade of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, a foremost factor that shape Turkey's perspective on the EU's Mediterranean policy is the challenges and prospects it could bring with regard Turkey's EU membership objectives. On the one hand, once it was understood that the UfM was not a substitute for EU membership the Turkish public opinion and media lost its interest. On the other hand, once it was no longer perceived as an obstacle to EU full membership, Turkish government decision to participate in the "Barcelona: Union for the Mediterranean" was highly motivated from an approach that views the UfM as policy area that would contribute reassert Turkey's importance in the CFSP.

A related factor through the lenses of which Turkey approaches the EU's new Mediterranean initiative is the country's geopolitical concerns. In this respect, Prime Minister Erdoğan states:

*Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean" essentially is a project aiming to develop cooperation in the Mediterranean. Definitely, it does not constitute an alternative to our country's EU membership process. These issues are highlighted several times by the European leaders ... Turkey is a Mediterranean country and the Mediterranean Sea in peace, of peace, prosperity is the greatest our ultimate desire. We also attribute a great importance to the development of cooperation among Mediterranean countries. Turkey has contributed actively to the development of the Barcelona process since 1995 ... Turkey has always supported the commitment of all countries to development of concrete projects that would strengthen regional cooperation ...*³³

Turkish government's perspective on the UfM shows two important changes when compared to 1995-2005 period. To begin with, there is an unprecedented emphasis on the compatibility of Turkey's foreign policy objectives with the EU's Mediterranean policy. When compared to the period from 1995 to 2005 Turkey's Europeanization process, or the impact of the EU on domestic politics, is particularly visible on the country's foreign policy agenda. In the European Commission's regular reports (2000-2008),

alignment with the EU's common foreign and security policies is the area in which Turkey's progress is relatively more positively evaluated.³⁴ One can argue that this was one of the factors leading to the opening of the accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005. ESS and ENP are two recent pillars of the CFSP. Mediterranean countries, the Southern Caucasian countries, Russia, Belarus are part of ENP. These countries and regions are in the immediate neighborhood, and are part of national foreign and security policy concerns of the Republic of Turkey. As a country in the process of accession negotiations with the EU, Turkey is expected to align its foreign and security policies with the ESS and the ENP. Yet, the success of the ENP in stabilizing, securitizing and democratizing the region has the potential to benefit Turkish foreign policy interests as long as Turkey takes an active part in the implementation of these policies. This is one important factor that mediates Turkey's active participation in the "Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean."

Second, the Turkish government recalls potential contribution of Turkey's active participation in the EU's Mediterranean policy for the success of the UfM's foundational goals.³⁵ Turkey's role as a mediator in the Middle East Peace process, its active participation in the Alliance of Civilizations, increases its strategic importance as a regional political actor. Additionally, the Turkish government often expresses will to cooperate in the Mediterranean region on fight against global terrorism and eliminate the sources of terror. Furthermore, the Turkish government underlines the strategic importance of Turkey as a country that could contribute to the diversification of energy and water resources in the region.³⁶ In the context of Turkey's ongoing accession talks, the foreign policy agenda of the JDP government plays a very decisive role in redefining Turkey's neighborhood policy. It is fair to argue that the present governments' foreign policy orientation towards the Mediterranean/Middle East is articulated with Turkey's post-Cold war strategy to play a more assertive role in the region.³⁷ In that period, one pillar of this foreign and security policy was the deepening of the bilateral relations with Israel. In the JDP government period the second pillar is strengthened, that is Turkey's relations with Palestinians, Jordan and Syria. Furthermore, the JDP government reasserted Turkey's commitment to contribute to the Middle East Peace Process. In this context, another contribution of Turkey that the JDP claims would benefit confidence building between the West and the Islamic world is the Alliance of Civilizations project initiative, which was launched with the cooperation of Spain. The Prime Minister Erdoğan, at the Opening Session of the First

Alliance of Civilizations Forum on January 15, 2008, stated:

*Turkey is a secular and democratic republic which has an overwhelmingly Muslim population and a dynamic market economy. Turkey is the only country which is a member of both the Organization for Islamic Conference and NATO and pursuing accession negotiations with the European Union. It is now generally accepted that, with these special characteristics, Turkey represents the best panacea against “clash of civilizations” theories.*³⁸

In the context of Turkey's increasing involvement in the Mediterranean/Middle East region, the Foreign Minister of Turkey Ahmet Davutoğlu describes Turkish foreign policy principles as “balance between freedom and security, zero problems with the neighbors, multi-dimensional diplomacy.”³⁹ Even though the results of these policies are to be seen, the discourse of the Turkish government demonstrates a certain degree of alignment with the idea of “soft power” Europe such as safeguarding regional peace and stability through the promotion of good governance principles, good neighborly relations, political and economic cooperation, and cultural dialogue, which have gained considerable weight within the CFSP strategies.⁴⁰ However, Turkey's defense capabilities are further assets while NATO is the primary security provider in the Mediterranean region. Finally, the JDP's government recent efforts to establish new channels of cooperation with the North African countries can also be evaluated in the context of Turkey's changing perspective on the Mediterranean.⁴¹

Conclusion

Over a decade after the establishment of the Barcelona Process and the EMP in 1995 it can be argued that Turkey's perspective on the EU's Mediterranean policy is shaped by three major political factors. The first one of these factors is the credibility of EU membership, and the prospects and the challenges that participation in the EU's Mediterranean policy brings for Turkey's membership in the EU. The second one is Turkey's geopolitical concerns and its definition of Mediterranean politics and policies. The third factor is related to the objectives and efficiency of the Barcelona Process. Through the lenses of these three factors, there are patterns of change and continuity in Turkey's perspective on the EU's Mediterranean Policy. The paper discussed in a historical perspective, the reasons behind these patterns of change and

continuity in Turkey's approach to the developments from the EMP to the UfM.

In historical perspective, Turkey and the EU's foreign and security policy approaches to the Mediterranean diverged considerably. Unlike its European counterparts Turkey has a fragmented image of the region. Given the multifaceted problems in its own neighborhood, the Mediterranean has never really occupied a central place in national security policy agenda, with the exception of Turkey's bilateral relations with Greece and the Cyprus issue. Even though Turkey made considerable efforts to take an active role in the achievement of Barcelona Process and the EMP's policy goals, during 1995-1999, it never really showed great commitment to fully align with the EU's Mediterranean policy. Furthermore, shortcomings of EU's policies in fulfilling the Barcelona Process foundational goals of promoting peace, development and stability in the region, decreased its credibility in Turkey. Additionally a foremost factor counting for Turkey's ambiguous approach to the Barcelona Process was the potential of the EMP to be viewed as a suitable option to replace Turkey's European vocation.

However, in the period that followed Turkey's EU candidacy, the EU provided a clear membership perspective to Turkey. Therefore, the country became gradually more integrated in the Barcelona Process and the EMP. National foreign and security policy started to align with CFSP objectives. Eventually, this process of foreign policy alignment embedded the EU's Mediterranean policy as well. In the context of the opening of accession negotiations, Turkey's alignment with the EU's Mediterranean policy became more accentuated during the JDP government. Despite initial objections of the Turkish government to the new French initiative, once the UfM was no longer seen as an obstacle to EU membership, Ankara agreed to take an active role in new Euro-Mediterranean cooperation projects. An influential factor increasing Turkey's willingness to take a more active role in the EU's Mediterranean policy was changing international circumstances. The post-Cold War era witnessed the reformulation of Turkish foreign and security policy aims on the way toward reasserting Turkey's role in European foreign and security structures.

Particularly from year 2002 onwards, the strategic importance of Turkey as a hard and soft security provider in the Mediterranean/Middle East region is underlined. One major development during Turkey's EU candidacy process manifests itself in the country's changing policy perspective towards the

countries and regions in its immediate neighborhood. The remarkable improvement of relations with Greece, and the participation in the initiation of the Alliance of Civilizations project are two major developments from a perspective of Europeanization of Turkey's neighborhood policy in the Mediterranean region. Furthermore, Turkey's active involvement in the Middle East Peace process as a mediator country is also one of the outcomes of this process. These transformations are both related with changes in international security environment as well as Turkey's alignment with the EMP. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in the post 2002 period JDP government's foreign policy orientation towards the Mediterranean/Middle East articulated with Turkey's post-Cold war strategy to play a more assertive role in the region.

Although it is demonstrated in this paper that over more a decade there are significant transformations in Turkey's perspective on the Mediterranean region, the findings of the paper also show that there are several limits to further alignment. First of all changes remain limited because of Turkey's geopolitical concerns and priorities. In this respect, political and economic investments in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Black Sea Economic Cooperation are more significant than the role Turkey plays in the Barcelona Process: UfM. Furthermore, it is hard to predict how the UfM will succeed to resolve long standing developmental and international conflicts in the region, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict or the Cyprus problem. On the one hand, the fact that the UfM is perceived as an instrument for a secure Europe, Turkey is not really convinced how this project would realize these objectives. On the other hand, Turkey does not identify substantially with the region, yet it gets engaged when it deems necessary for its national security interests. It can be argued that Turkey's perceptions of its role and belonging into the region is with reference to Turkey's European vocation.

Turkey sees its role in the Barcelona Process as an integral part of its relations with the EU. Acknowledging the strategic importance of the Mediterranean region for Europe, it opposes to the fact that the UfM becomes a political, cultural or economic alternative to Turkey's EU membership. This is the major limitation to the country's further alignment/integration with the EU's Mediterranean policy. Additionally, the low level of EU membership credibility is one of the reasons why the country is also developing a somehow autonomous neighborhood policy. It is true that a possible Turkish accession in the EU brings several challenges emanating from Turkey's geopolitical location. However, Turkey is part and parcel of the enlargement policy of the Union, and if Turkey's political reforms and foreign and security policy

alignment process succeed, this would contribute to the implementation of ENP, to the promotion of EU's democratic norms and values in the region. Furthermore, Turkey has the potential to enhance political and cultural dialogue and cooperation between the West and the Islamic world. Turkey's deeper integration with the EU's institutional and policy structures would increase the credibility of the Union in its external relations and help mediate the strengthening of EU's role in the Mediterranean.

NOTES

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16. Roberto Aliboni, "The Union for the Mediterranean A view from Southern Europe" IAI's contribution to EuroMeSCo research Project "Putting the Mediterranean Union in Perspective", pp. 3-4.
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20. Tobias Schumacher, "Turkey, EU Membership and the Future of the Barcelona Process", *op. cit.*, p. 159.
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