

Will Turkey Find its Place in Post-Crisis Europe?

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Executive Summary

On the face of it, the Eurocrisis has infused yet more alienation into the already detached relations between the EU and Turkey, formally still involved in accession talks. Many Turks look at the trouble-stricken and enfeebled Union with an overt sense of *Schadenfreude*. And they relish at their own robust growth, which has kept apace irrespective of the stalled accession negotiations. Turkey feels empowered: no longer on the European periphery, but at the centre of its own world spanning from North Africa and the Middle East all the way to the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The Arab Awakening seemingly vindicates this vision, though turmoil in Syria has exposed the limits of Ankara's influence. But crises present opportunities too. It is precisely from the depths of the Union's ongoing drama that a "post-hubris" Turkey could rise from its ashes if and as it is brought organically into the conversation on the future shape of the European integration experiment.

Turkey, Europe and the Writing on the Wall

In the early years of the 21st century, the magic of EU-Turkey relations had mutually reinforcing policy and political dimensions. At the policy level, the EU represented the external anchor for Turkey's domestic reform, inspiring a set of constitutional, legislative and administrative reforms to harmonize Turkey's polity and economy with those of the EU. At the political level, the EU acted as the glue between a disparate set of actors in Turkey, ranging from the conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) to factions in the secularist Republican People's Party (CHP), passing through democratic Kemalists, Kurdish nationalists, industrialists and urbane liberals of all shapes and forms. These intertwined political and policy processes led to what many had defined as a "silent revolution". Today this magic is gone.

The truth of the matter is that the government, while remaining rhetorically committed to the accession process, has in practice attached far less importance to it since its second term in office in 2007 (less still its third). Ominous sign of this is the absence of any reference to the EU in Prime Minister Erdoğan's 2023 vision speech at the 2012 AKP congress. The opposition CHP, an uneasy coalition between hardened Kemalists and Europhile social democrats, has also failed to genuinely put the EU back on the domestic political agenda. Underpinning this lukewarm neglect at elite level is the Turkish public's turn away from

the EU, a trend particularly striking amongst the youth. In 2004, a high 73 percent favoured Turkey's EU membership. This figure has dropped dramatically since 2007, hovering between 38 percent and 48 percent over the last four years.¹ The Eurozone crisis is reducing further the appeal of the EU in Turkish eyes. A self-confident Turkey, which for the time being remains economically strong and politically stable, no longer views the European Union as its only magnet and source of inspiration but increasingly buys into "the lonely wolf" fallacy: that it can prosper on its own.

The stalling of the accession process and the waning appeal of the EU amongst the Turkish public has also implied a reduced willingness of authorities in Ankara to pursue those reforms repeatedly called for by the Union. As a consequence, Turkey has witnessed at times a reform inertia and at other times a visible backsliding on democratization. Setting aside the areas where reforms remain insufficient, there are at least three areas in which there has been a visible step back on democratization.²

First on the Kurdish question, there has been an intensification of arrests of Kurdish activists involving alleged members of the Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK). Thousands of people, including politicians, mayors, journalists, publishers, writers and academics were arrested, despite the lack of evidence of their involvement in acts of violence. The security situation has also aggravated, with over 700 deaths in the last year, the highest number of casualties since the PKK's ceasefire in 1999. Making matters worse is the conflict in Syria, where the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) has taken control of an area bordering Turkey, emboldening the PKK and fueling Ankara's false belief that military force could be solution, with no political process to go along.³ Ankara's regional activism has backfired: from zero-problems with neighbours we see neighbours' problems spilling over into Turkey at an alarming rate. It is not surprising, therefore, that Ankara is reinvesting in its long-standing links with the US and NATO, an indispensable insurance policy in tough times. Sadly, a similar U-turn has not happened in relations with the EU and the blame, in large part, is at the Union's door.

Second, there has been a visible worsening of the freedom of expression, linked – inter alia – to the excessively broad definition of

1 GMF, *Transatlantic Trends 2011*, <http://trends.gmfus.org/archives/transatlantic-trends/transatlantic-trends-2011>.

2 Senem Aydin-Düzgüt and E. Fuat Keyman, "EU-Turkey Relations and the Stagnation of Turkish Democracy", *Global Turkey in Europe. GTE Working Paper*, No. 2, December 2012, http://www.iai.it/pdf/GTE/GTE_WP_02.pdf.

3 Piotr Zalewski, "Turkey, Syria and the Kurds: There Goes the Neighborhood", *Global Turkey in Europe. GTE Commentary*, No. 6, November 2012, http://www.iai.it/pdf/GTE/GTE_C_06.pdf.

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terrorism that has allowed for the pre-trial detention of hundreds of individuals against whom there is hardly any evidence of support for or involvement in acts of political violence. In recent years there has also been a serious deterioration of media freedom in Turkey. Today there are more journalists – close to 100 – in jail than in any other country in the world, and over 4,000 lawsuits against members of the press, again mostly on suspicion of ties to the outlawed PKK.

Third, problems related to the Turkish judiciary have worsened. In the past, the judiciary had been a bastion of the secular establishment, acting as a political – and politicized – force against all non-establishment forces including the ruling AKP. Since the 2010 constitutional referendum the risk has become that of replacing one set of politicized prosecutors and judges with another, instead of creating a truly independent, effective and impartial judiciary. This risk is emerging in full light in the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases.⁴ Added to this, Turkish law allows for abnormally long pretrial detention periods, and indictments are often made on the basis of flimsy evidence as well as evidence obtained through opaque and at times unlawful means.

The effects of the faded magic of enlargement are felt not only in policy-making but in Turkish domestic politics too. The EU no longer represents the umbrella under which diverse political animals find joint refuge. Even Kurdish activists, formerly the most ardent supporters of Brussels, are disappointed. They see political conditionality as too feeble an anchor as Europe has no common standards on issues they hold dear such as cultural rights and linguistic autonomy. As a consequence, Turkey is living through times of acute political polarization. Nowhere is this clearer than in the search for a new constitution. The new constitution is currently being discussed by a Constitutional Conciliation Commission including three members from each of the four political parties represented in parliament. They are supposed to agree on a draft by consensus. But in view of the current climate of polarization, the prospects of reaching an agreement are close to nil. Neither is it likely that the four parties will reach agreement by consensus, nor is it reasonable to expect that two parties – the AKP and the CHP – will agree on a text to be put to referendum.⁵

Turkish reformers still remember vividly that it was under the EU's impulse that Turkey engaged in the most radical and at the same time consensual reform of its political system, including, among others, the abolishment of the death penalty, the eradication of torture, the expansion of the freedoms of expression and association, and the legalization of the use, broadcasting, and private education in Kurdish. Liberal reformers watch Turkey's political evolution with concern, fearing that the culminating moment of Turkey's democratization – the new civilian constitution – will end up in a flop. While recognizing that the principal impulse in Turkey's political reform process is domestic, many yearn for the long-lost EU political anchor.

For its part the EU, at least institutionally, remains committed to the process, if not the goal, of enlargement to Turkey. Members that oppose Turkey's membership are in minority; for every sceptic in the Council there's a pro-Turkish country. And with Hollande's election last May, France has moved from being the staunchest of opponents, to a neutral position. The problem is that opposition is firmly rooted in broad-based public scepticism. Since the launch of Turkey's accession process, many Europeans have raised concerns about Turkey's EU membership in relation to a wide range of issues, from immigration, budget and agriculture, to institutions, borders and identity. Hence, the worries that Turkey's membership would give way to a new influx of Turkish immigrants into the EU, would strain the EU budget and agricultural policy, and would alter beyond recognition the EU's institutional balance, borders and identity. Lately, sceptics have



pointed at Turkey's lackluster democratic performance, conveniently forgetting the fact that the EU might be complicit in this story. Many, including ourselves, have contested these arguments, believing that Turkey's membership could strengthen the EU economically, strategically as well as politically and ideationally. But the persisting diffuse scepticism of Turkey's EU membership goes far in explaining why the majority of EU member states that officially support Turkey's EU membership have been less active than the vociferous minority against it.

Making matters worse, opposition to Turkey's EU membership risks aggravating as crisis-ridden Europe is cast into the throes of populism, nationalism and euroscepticism. Currently, the Turkey question has dropped off the public agenda. With the stalling of the accession process and the EU absorbed in its internal battle for survival, Turkey is rarely discussed in the context of enlargement. These days pundits talk of Turkey in relation to its Middle East neighborhood, with Syria's civil war topping the list and Iran occasionally making rounds, not EU accession. As the Eurozone crisis gives way to a period of political uncertainty in which mainstream parties are weakened – and at times swept away – by political extremes, were Turkey's accession process to regain momentum, it could easily fall prey to a reenergized tide of populist opposition. More generally, a crisis-stricken Europe has an even lower appetite for enlargement.

A European Turkey Rises From Its Ashes

Yet this is all yesterday's news. Truth is that both Turkey and the EU might in fact be entering a whole new phase. Scratching beneath the surface, the Eurozone crisis could present a unique opportunity to revitalize the moribund EU-Turkey relationship. The crisis has brought about an unprecedented acceleration in European integration, which would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. While lagging behind the curve, a long list of stabilization measures – the European semester, the six-pack, two-pack, fiscal compact and the European Stability Mechanism Treaty – all aim at curing the vices of the monetary union, ensuring that no crisis of today's magnitude will hit the European continent again. The Union is left struggling with the current crisis. To exit from it, it is now bargaining about a banking union which is an important step towards sharing liabilities and therefore merging political authority. Yet all parties involved seem well aware that this must lead also to a genuine fiscal union, that is the issuance of common debt and the eventual establishment of an EU treasury, with the ability – however limited – to tax and spend. One step further, German Chancellor Merkel tirelessly reminds that a banking and fiscal union, lying at the very heart of democratic government – can only be possible with the construction of a political union.⁶ Moving towards joint decision-making on issues lying at the core of sovereign democracies presupposes that EU institutions become genuinely legitimate, accountable and participatory. In short, the Eurozone, with all the stops and starts endemic to EU politics, is slowly moving towards a federal union or at the very least an increased federalization

⁴ The former being an alleged clandestine ultranationalist group that aims to overthrow the AKP government, and the latter a military-inspired coup plot against the government.

⁵ The two parties would have a sufficient number of parliamentary seats to put a draft constitution to referendum and could conceivably also agree on a joint text. But the climate of distrust and polarization in Turkey is such that this is generally viewed as highly unlikely.

⁶ Sebastian Dullien and José Ignacio Torreblanca, "What is a Political Union?", *ECFR Policy Brief*, No. 70, December 2012, http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/what_is_political_union.

of its policies. If the Union is to exit the crisis, it can only do so in a federalist direction.

The snag is that not all are onboard the federalist bandwagon. Question marks hang over Sweden and the Czech Republic. Most seriously, it is the United Kingdom that represents the major fly in the ointment of a Union that monolithically moves towards a federal endpoint. It is in fact next to impossible to imagine Great Britain entering a banking, fiscal and political union in the foreseeable future. Alas, far more likely, is the UK's withdrawal from the European Union altogether, despite Prime Minister David Cameron's intention to keep the country in but wrestle back a range of concessions from Brussels. The "Catch 22" posed by the unavoidable move towards a federal Eurozone, alongside the lack of EU-wide consensus over precisely that end point and the desirability of keeping the naysayers in the EU club, opens a long, complex but quintessentially necessary debate on the future of the Union. That debate has only just begun and can be reasonably expected to last for the best part of the decade to come.

That very debate and the future European Union that will emerge from it will have critical implications not only for current members, but for those on the membership queue, including Turkey.⁷ Unlike the case of the Western Balkans, the Turkish question in Europe is one of whether, not of when Turkey will accede. As such, the future shape of the EU may end up tilting the balance one way or another. The future Union may become more accommodating of Turkey in its fold.⁸ The prospects of a post-crisis Europe may offer that glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel of Turkey's beleaguered accession process. Below we outline some of the major variables that will determine whether and how the future Union could become a more hospitable home for Turkey.

The model: concentric circles, daisies and spaghetti bowls

One key variable is what kind of model the future EU will follow. Three stylized alternatives are a concentric circle, daisy-shaped or spaghetti bowl EU. A first and most frequently discussed model is that of concentric circles. The idea is not new, but has been revived and given concrete meaning by the Eurozone crisis. In this scenario, while the Eurozone moves in a federalist direction, the outer circle of non-Eurozone members would continue to participate in the single market. Taken to its natural conclusion, the federal core would integrate not only in the economic realm, but also in other areas, namely, justice and home affairs and possibly foreign and security policy (though, in all fairness, it will be a weakened version thereof in Britain's absence). Ideally all members of the Eurozone would also be members of Schengen, and the same group would federalize their foreign and security policies along the lines proposed by eleven member state foreign ministers in September 2012.⁹

In this scenario, enlargement to Turkey, whereby Turkey would participate in the Union's outer circle in the company of current members such as the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Poland and Sweden, as well as future members from the Western Balkans may become easier. Insofar as today's opponents of Turkey's accession would most likely fall predominantly within tomorrow's core, opposition to Turkey's membership of the outer rim would likely reduce significantly. However, this scenario also risks meeting severe resistance both from other members of the outer circle and from Turkey itself. Fellow outer circle members, from Poland through Romania and Bulgaria all the way to the Western Balkans, may consider Turkey as deadweight in

the club, permanently relegating them to the outer rim and curbing their aspirations to converge with the prosperous and well-governed countries in the core. Not to mention Poland's ambition to be in the first-class carriage and even be equal to senior stakeholders as France and Germany. Turkey, for its part, while more comfortable in retaining many of its sovereign prerogatives in the outer circle, may also resent not sitting at the top table. The day Turkey discovers that it is handed down decisions on, say, the Single Market taken by the Eurozone it may well regret the bargain it opted for. The fact that top EU posts, in fact, would most likely be reserved to members of the core won't make things better. Membership of the outer rim may be viewed as the realization of the much despised "privileged partnership". Pro-reform constituencies in Turkey (or in the Western Balkans, for that matter) might be equally let down: semi-detached membership could mean that Brussels institutions' transformative power is diluted.

A second option is that of a Union developing as an integrated core with hub-and-spoke relationships with a number of countries on the periphery: a daisy-shaped EU. Designed as a parking place to keep the ever-drifting United Kingdom linked to the Union, MEP Andrew Duff has recently put forward the concept of associate membership.¹⁰ The proposal is that at the next general revision of the EU treaties a clause would be inserted to current Article 49 on accession. Article 49a would foresee associate membership, which in turn would imply full compliance with the norms and values of the EU (Article 2) but not full adherence to its policy objectives, activities and institutions. Participation in institutions would reflect the actual policy areas in which the associate member would buy into. Hence, for instance, participation in EU trade policies and the single market would come with representation in the European Court of Justice but not necessarily in the Commission or the European Parliament, where instead national-EU level regular dialogues would be institutionalized. Within this category of associate members, Duff foresees, alongside the United Kingdom, countries such as Norway and Switzerland, and, unsurprisingly, Turkey. A related idea is that of "virtual membership", a notion proposed in the 1990s for the Western Balkans,¹¹ revived, but never realized, in the early discussions over the European Neighbourhood Policy,¹² and recently put forth as a means of avoiding a hard landing in EU-Turkey relations.¹³ As per an associate member, a virtual member would adopt only part of the *acquis*. In other areas of the single market there would be a process of *acquis* approximation, whereas on external and internal security policies, intergovernmental cooperation would prevail. Mirroring this arrangement, a virtual member, while participating in a number of EU programmes and agencies, would be granted only observer status in most EU institutions.

A daisy-shaped Europe featuring an integrated core alongside a number of associate or virtual members may end up being a more accurate description of the concentric-circle model described above. Members of the outer rim, precisely in view of their looser integration and more jealously guarded sovereignty, would probably not form a cohesive bloc. Much like the UK is currently attempting to do through its somewhat fanciful 'balance of competences', each member of the outer rim would strive to pick and choose (and then of course negotiate with the core) which elements of the EU they would partake in. Depending on their different contexts, demands and bargaining powers, their relationship with the EU would differ. Even more so than the model of a concentric circle Europe, an associate or virtual Turkish membership would in all likelihood eliminate any source of Turco-scepticism within the Union. Turkey's associate membership

7 Dimitar Bechev, "The Periphery of the Periphery: The Western Balkans and the Euro Crisis", *ECFR Policy Brief*, No. 60, August 2012, http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/the_periphery_of_the_periphery_the_western_balkans_and_the_euro_crisis.

8 Kemal Derviş, "Turkey and Europe, a New Perspective", *Global Turkey in Europe. GTE Policy Brief*, No. 3, November 2012, http://www.iai.it/pdf/GTE/GTE_PB_03.pdf. For a similar argument see Cengiz Aktar, "Turkey's Place in a Multi-speed Europe", *Today's Zaman*, 31 October 2012, <http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist-296748-turkeys-place-in-a-multi-speed-europe.html>; and Joost Lagendijk, "Which EU to Join?", *Today's Zaman*, 6 November 2012, <http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist-297324-which-eu-to-join.html>.

9 Andrew Rettman, "Ministers call for stronger EU foreign policy chief", *EUobserver*, 18 September 2012, <http://euobserver.com/institutional/117581>.

10 Andrew Duff, *On Governing Europe*, London, Policy Network, September 2012, pp. 68-70, <http://www.policy-network.net/publications/4257/On-Governing-Europe>.

11 Michael Emerson and Daniel Gros (eds.), "The CEPS Plan for the Balkans", *CEPS Paperbacks*, July 1999, <http://www.ceps.be/book/ceps-plan-balkans>.

12 Speech by Romano Prodi President of the European Commission to the European Institute, Washington (SPEECH/99/220), 27 October 1999, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-99-220_en.htm.

13 Sinan Ülgen, *Avoiding a Divorce. A Virtual EU Membership for Turkey*, Brussels, Carnegie Europe, December 2012, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2012/12/05/avoiding-divorce-virtual-eu-membership-for-turkey/eqcm>.

would become infinitely easier institutionally, economically, socially and above all politically.

The snag is that even more than membership of an EU outer-rim, an associate or virtual membership would in effect give content to the “privileged partnership”, an idea whose merits could have been hypothetically discussed were it not for the fact that it is completely tainted politically by now. Precisely for this reason, the idea of associate membership has recently been rejected by the European Parliament plenary. Another disadvantage would be that associate membership would probably not suffice for the EU anchoring Turkey so badly needs. True, an associate member would be called upon to fully espouse the norms and values of the Union, and thus to comply with the Copenhagen political criteria. True also, in the Turkish case, full anchorage today may no longer be an option calling for second best instead. But the very fact that the associate member would adopt only a specific portion of the *acquis* could end up meaning that also its adherence with the EU’s underlying values would be partial. Pick-and-choose rather than full anchorage with the end result of Turkey’s reform process possibly remaining largely off-track.

A third stylized model is that of a multiple cluster “spaghetti bowl” EU. As recently argued by Timothy Garton Ash,¹⁴ it is unrealistic to imagine a neat single core EU. Echoing the world of IT, he pushed forward a dual-core concept: the Eurozone as the first core would proceed along federalist lines while the second core consisting of foreign and security policy. In this second core, Garton Ash, a rare Europhile in today’s British commentariat, sees a role for the United Kingdom and not, for instance, necessarily one for Germany. Following the same reasoning as applied to the UK, Turkey too, while not entering the federal Eurozone, could participate as a valued member of the foreign and security policy core. Extrapolating this dual core model one step further one could picture an EU of multiple and only partly overlapping clusters of which the Eurozone, the Schengen area and the foreign policy core would be the three prime ones.

From a Turkish perspective, this model is probably preferable than the alternatives delineated above. The absence of a single core from which Turkey would be excluded would dissipate any suspicion that Ankara is being relegated to a second-class membership. At the same time, Turkey, which would stay clear of the federal core, would revel in retaining many of its sovereign competences. Yet at the current juncture, this model appears least likely. For a start, it would represent the most complex solution to the future of Europe. Particularly thorny would be the settlement of institutional questions. In this scenario, ideally member states would have a voice and a vote in those communities and areas of EU policy in which they belong. But precisely which core/s would be represented in which EU institutions? If all member states were represented, would they have a voice and a vote also on EU policies in which they do not participate? If not, who would participate and on what basis? Furthermore, regardless of the logic of having the United Kingdom and Turkey in the foreign policy core, it is by no means self-evident that this would be the case. If the Eurozone core federalizes into an economic and political union, it would seem logical that such a political union would also integrate further in the foreign policy realm. Indeed nine of the eleven foreign ministers calling for such deeper integration are currently in the Eurozone, with only Denmark and Poland falling outside. Conspicuously, the United Kingdom refrained from signing the September 2012 Foreign Ministers’ letter.¹⁵ And if indeed the United Kingdom were to be excluded from the foreign policy cluster, wouldn’t its intrinsic value dramatically reduce? Last but not least, the Union’s prime asset in foreign policy is the enormity of its Single Market with many third countries, lately the almighty US too, coveting privileged access. Decoupling economic governance (Core 1) from foreign policy (Core 2) is good in theory but makes little sense for “civilian power Europe”.

The membership: contingency and value

The future model of the European Union will emerge as a result of a complex, protracted and highly contested debate. Many of the answers will be determined by contingency and the actual shape the Union will go about taking in the period ahead. Pivotal in this respect is the question of membership. Depending on which member states will participate where, the EU is more likely to edge towards one model or another. If, for instance, Poland eventually enters the Eurozone in the next couple of years, following the example of Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia and perhaps Latvia too, then the likelihood of a concentric circle Europe would probably increase.

The way in which member states will relate to the Eurozone in the years ahead will also determine the actual value of various models for future members, *in primis*, Turkey. If, for instance, Poland, the Czech Republic and Sweden were to eventually enter the Eurozone, then the outer circle would be left with the United Kingdom as the only country of significant weight. Would membership of an outer-rim in which there would be only two major states – the United Kingdom and Turkey – be an appealing prospect for Turkey? And what if the United Kingdom were to leave the European Union altogether, a prospect which, irrational as it may seem in a twenty-first century multipolar world, risks becoming reality were the UK to proceed with a referendum on the outcome of the next constitutional convention? Membership or associate membership of an outer rim that excludes the United Kingdom would most likely be snubbed by Turkey reinforcing the parallelism between associate membership/outer-rim and privileged partnership.

The method: choice or imposition?

A final variable regards the method through which the EU would develop into one model or another. The key question here is whether membership of the outer-rim, associate membership or membership of particular clusters (and not others) would be the result of choice or of imposition. Who would determine in which precise configuration any particular member state would belong? In the case of a multiple cluster Union, member state choice rather than other members’ imposition is likely to prevail. Given the absence of a single centre, it would be up to each individual member state to choose to belong to a given slice of the EU, and their membership would be result of successful negotiations over accession to that chosen slice.

Were instead the EU to develop into a concentric circle or daisy-shaped Union, would the core have ultimate say over who’s in and who’s out? Were an integrated core the final arbiter over future enlargements (of the core itself) which would keep Turkey out regardless of the latter’s willingness and ability to enter, then membership of anything but the core would be snubbed by Turkey as yet another instance of EU discrimination. If instead membership of the core were genuinely open to all EU members able and willing to accept, adopt and implement the core’s norms and rules, then Ankara, jealously guarding its sovereignty, would probably opt out, even if this were to mean abdicating on sitting at the top tables.

A third option lying in between choice and imposition is that of dynamic negotiation between core and periphery, associate members or clusters as may be. Indeed such a dynamic process would capture what in all likelihood would not be fixed models set in stone. A virtual or associate member could hypothetically move into a cluster and perhaps even into the core. As and when it does, the overall shape of the Union could change as a consequence. If the method is one of dynamic negotiation, models would be permeable, with countries such as the United Kingdom or Turkey shifting from one category to another.

14 Timothy Garton Ash, “Britain is standing on a ledge, while Europe screams, ‘Don’t do it!’”, *The Guardian*, 21 November 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/nov/21/budget-summit-dual-core-europe>.

15 Andrew Rettman, “Ministers call for stronger EU foreign policy chief”, cit.

Making it Happen

All this talk about EU variable geometries and their implications for Turkey may appear fanciful at best. At the end of the day, while the most acute phase of the Eurozone crisis is (hopefully) over, exiting the crisis altogether and doing so with a wholesale new Union is the project of the next decade. And no Turkey-watcher believes that the current stalemate in EU-Turkey relations can linger for the next ten years without risking a bitter divorce. Many in and out of the Turkish government now openly say that we have no more than a three-to-four year horizon before Turkey walks out on the Union, unless something dramatic happens in the meantime. The "positive agenda" launched by the Commission last year is simply not thick enough to alter the cost-benefit calculus at the heart of Turkish domestic and foreign policy making. Some even say that opening one or two accession chapters, while crucially important, will no longer do the trick to reenergize Turkey's membership bid.

Is there simply an unbridgeable time gap? A post crisis Europe may end up being a more hospitable place for Turkey, but will it come about too late? We believe not. What Turkey needs today is a European vision. An organic and active participation in the European-wide conversation over the future of the Union can provide just that. As outlined above, different models, memberships and methods of the future EU will have different implications for Turkey, some of which would be preferable to others from Ankara's vantage point. In view of this, it is in Turkey's interest to participate actively in this debate now that it's in the offing, rather than sulking passively at the margins. As Kemal Derviş suggested in a recent meeting, the symbolic impact of

the Turkish government inviting its British and Swedish counterparts to Istanbul to discuss the future of Europe would be infinitely higher than the opening of a single accession chapter.¹⁶ Important as the latter may be, it simply does not grab headlines anymore. For Turkish elites to take the initiative and in so doing being actively part of the European family is of the essence. True, it is unlikely that the government will take up the initiative as it would view this as a step backwards from the position that full membership on the basis of equal treatment and a fair accession process is the only politically acceptable goal. Rightly so. But it is up to think tanks, academics, civil society, and public intellectuals to pay much closer attention to the EU's internal transformation and try to work out implications for Turkey. The intellectual debate in Turkey on the EU has become sclerotic with the waning of the accession perspective and public priorities shifting elsewhere. It is time for the pendulum to swing back, through rethinking afresh opportunities and threats arising from what the EU is going through at the moment.

It is equally important is for the EU, meaning not just political elites and formal institutions but also all diverse constituencies who have a stake in the transformation, to bring in Turkey fully into the debate were this to be institutionalized in the coming years through a new constitutional convention ultimately leading to treaty changes and ratifications. Doing so would create a genuinely political process and contribute to a pan-European public space, which the accession process – less still the "positive agenda" – so badly lacks. Above all, engaging Turkey in the conversation on the future of Europe could provide a vision to reignite momentum in Turkish-European ties and re-anchor Turkey to the Union.

¹⁶ *Global Turkey in Europe Conference*, Brussels, 5 December 2012, organised by Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Istanbul Policy Center (IPC), Mercator Foundation and German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF).