

Europe in an Uncertain World: Values vs. Security Interests

by Sinan Ekim

GLOBAL TURKEY  IN EUROPE

STIFTUNG
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ABSTRACT

Launched in 2012, the Global Turkey in Europe (GTE) project established a platform to discuss and analyse the rapid transformation of Turkey in a European and global context. Now in its fifth year, the project takes a more comprehensive look at the different pillars of this dynamic, ranging from economy, energy, migration, and security to the role of civil society. The second GTE event, which took place in Berlin in May 2018, focused on the security arrangements between Ankara and Brussels, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the Union's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in a changing security environment, and whether it could extend a platform for the EU and Turkish defence establishments to cooperate.

*European Union | Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) |
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keywords

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Introduction

The Global Turkey in Europe (GTE) project established a platform to discuss and analyse the rapid transformation of Turkey in a European and global context. Launched in 2012 by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in collaboration with the Istanbul Policy Centre (IPC) and Stiftung Mercator, GTE has been focusing on specific aspects of EU–Turkey relations, covering migration, security, economics and energy. Now in its fifth cycle, the project takes a more comprehensive look at all pillars of this dynamic.

The first workshop of the fifth cycle convened in Paris in December 2017 and focused on the modernization of the customs union between Turkey and the EU. The second workshop, which took place in Berlin in May 2018, switched the focus to the security relations between Ankara and Brussels, discussing the possibility of cooperation between the two sides within the framework of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

Recent developments have significantly altered Europe's security environment. The European Union is now beset by myriad external and internal challenges, including intimidation by an assertive Russia, escalating fears of jihadi terrorism, massive waves of migration unleashed also by conflict in Africa and the Middle East, as well as the rise of populist, Euro-sceptic, anti-immigrant and ultra-nationalist political parties. It must also face the reality of a post-Brexit United Kingdom that will be disengaging from the EU's defence structures, and a new US administration that has promised to put America first.

PESCO is foremost a reaction to these shifts in global security arrangements. Concerned that they may soon be left to their own devices, the EU member-states have realized the need to enhance coordination on defence matters, to increase

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investment in the defence budget as well as to develop more robust military capabilities. In order to realize these goals, PESCO aims at further integrating member-states' armed forces within the EU framework, ramping up the EU's military operations, and thereby more effectively tackling the security challenges, conflicts and crises facing Europe.



Mia Forbes Pirie

From the perspective of this project, one important aspect of PESCO is its flexibility: although full participation will be limited to EU member-states, third parties may be invited to join specific projects. This forges a possible way, complementary to NATO, through which EU and Turkish defence and security establishments can collaborate. Of course, this will not be an effortless process. First, there are structural uncertainties over third-party participation in PESCO. Furthermore, cooperation with Turkey does not lend itself to an easy partnership. In recent years, the relations between Ankara and Brussels reached their lowest point, with European policymakers dismayed by the change in the country's foreign policy and its growingly authoritarian system of government. Yet, the crumbling international order means that Europe may have to move beyond evaluating the issue of collaborating with Turkey through a prism of principles, and recognize the importance of forging a partnership with one of the region's most capable security actors.

1. Security cooperation between Turkey and the EU

The workshop kicked off with a study visit to the German Federal Ministry of Defence, where the team had the opportunity to exchange views and ideas with **Benedikta Freiin von Seherr-Thoß**, head of the EU/Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) division, and with **Christian Becker**, desk officer for South/Southeast Europe and Turkey in the division responsible for security relations with Europe, America and Oceania. The discussion was held under the Chatham House Rule, and notes from these meetings are therefore not included in this report.

2. What is PESCO, and does Turkey stand to benefit from it?

Alessandro Marrone, head of the Defence Programme at IAI, kicked off the second part of the conference with a presentation on PESCO's strengths, weaknesses and future developments. As Marrone explains, what is foremost in setting the PESCO project apart from other EU defence mechanisms is that it activates a Lisbon Treaty clause; it is therefore an initiative that is already well-entrenched within

the fabric of the EU. This pulls other EU institutions into the fray. For instance, the EU High Representative will be responsible for reviewing reports on PESCO's cooperative efforts on an annual basis; and the European Defence Agency is tasked with producing accountability reports and handling the administrative needs. Such a high-level of institutional engagement, Marrone argues, is more likely to keep PESCO on the EU's political agenda, and not let it become a defence project that gradually fades into oblivion. Grounded in Protocol 10 of the Lisbon Treaty, furthermore, PESCO forms a binding commitment – which means that non-compliance with the terms of the agreement may result in removal from the whole agreement. This may add another layer of pressure for participating states to follow through on their obligations, and thereby ensure the success of the initiative.



Alessandro Marrone

On the other hand, one of the weaknesses that Marrone identifies is PESCO's "lack of ambition". Participating states have already agreed to realize 17 projects, but 12 of them do not lend any emphasis to enhancing military capabilities. They instead prioritize projects with such "low-profile" themes as education, training, medical command and developing cyber response teams – which, although important, do not represent a step change for European militaries. Furthermore, France and Germany, the two countries with the highest defence spending in an eventual post-Brexit EU, are absent from the five projects that are more strictly focused on developing defence capabilities. This shrinks further the pool of funding that is available for capacity development and raises questions concerning PESCO's effectiveness in reaching its objectives.

According to Marrone, this dearth of financial commitment is indicative of an element of distrust in PESCO. In fact, according to some member-states, the inherent inclusiveness of the project means that this mechanism will not be able to function effectively. For example, France has chosen instead to develop bilateral arrangements with other European countries – namely, the Sandhurst agreement with the United Kingdom and the European Intervention Initiative with nine other states. However, the existence of other "side agreements" does not have to work to PESCO's detriment: Marrone argues that these bilateral agreements could form the basis of collaborative projects and could then be expanded within the PESCO framework to include other participants. Nonetheless, he cautions, if this unwillingness to collaborate persists, the defence space could see the proliferation of initiatives at various levels and in different formats that largely overlap in scope and content and do not necessarily complement or supplement each other. As Marrone concludes, this would lead to a waste of time and resources.

This is why the future of PESCO depends on how it connects with the other, already existing defence projects: from 2021 onwards, it will be possible to allocate funds from the European Defence Fund, corresponding up to 30 per cent of the budget required to set PESCO projects in motion – which should be an incentive for participating states to collaborate. PESCO is also bound to link up with Coordinated Annual Review of Defence, tasked with assessing member-states' military planning at regular intervals. This linkage, as Marrone underlines, will pressure participating states to align their military plans, and therefore portends well for the future of the project.



Senem Aydın-Düzgit

Following Marrone's presentation, **Senem Aydın-Düzgit**, associate professor of international relations at Sabancı University and senior scholar and research and academic affairs coordinator at the IPC, delivered her paper, "Third Country Involvement in PESCO and Relations with Turkey", on the nuts and bolts of how PESCO could allow for third-party participation. As she also underlines, this is a very important clause at a time when Europe is facing a battery of security threats. Both the complexity of these threats as well as the vastness of the geography from which they originate means that the EU will need external assistance in tackling them.

Despite its importance, this area remains largely overlooked. In fact, the rules that will govern this procedure had still not been fully laid out at the time of the meeting. As a result, there are several aspects connected to this clause that need further clarification. For instance, while third parties may be invited to contribute to those projects "to which they could bring substantial added value", they will not have any decision-making rights. In the long run, this may create the impression that their inputs will be of lesser value than those of full members and may even discourage them from participating. Also, Aydın-Düzgit calls attention to how these third parties will not be able to join projects on defence capability. This will inhibit the Union from benefitting from the strengths of several of its key partners that, if permitted, could help develop the EU's defence infrastructure.

Turkey's inclusion in the PESCO framework as a third party, in line with its overall relationship with the EU, will be problematic. To start with, Turkey does not receive any mention in debates on PESCO and third-party involvement – due partly to the fact that they are largely focused on post-Brexit arrangements with the UK. Also, the progress reports on the state of EU-Turkey relations have not explored how PESCO could best be utilized to move the relationship forward. Furthermore, there are several points of conflict that are likely to derail any attempts at cooperating

with Turkey. For instance, Turkey's relations with Greece have taken a turn for the worse since 1 March, when Turkish authorities detained two Greek soldiers who had crossed into Turkish territory. As a member of PESCO, Cyprus will undoubtedly invoke its veto power against Turkish involvement. There is also some confusion over how PESCO will affect the EU's collaboration with NATO partners.



Aydın-Düzgüt suggests that, to break through this impasse, the European Council should put forward some guidelines on how non-EU NATO members could contribute to PESCO. One option is moving towards a more collaborative module, wherein NATO-member third countries help shape PESCO's future policy directions. Also, they should be allowed to join in PESCO's capability projects and help determine how these are implemented and carried out. To respect the concerns of those states that remark that "too much inclusiveness equals ineffectiveness", third parties' participation could be "performance-based" – hinging on their financial and qualitative contributions.

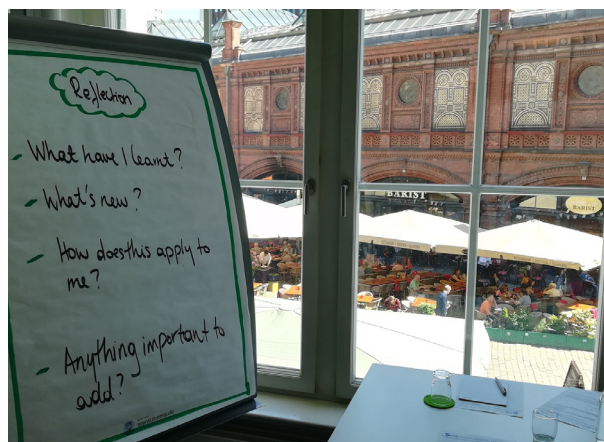
Of course, Greece and Cyprus may always veto a Turkish involvement, but Aydın-Düzgüt reminds that neither country has the military capability to serve in every defence-related operation. Since it will most probably fall within the purview of the participating states in a certain project to determine which third state or states should be invited to that project – and considering that Greece and Cyprus will not have the capabilities to participate in many of these projects – she argues that it may therefore be possible to surmount this problem. And clearing away these institutional obstacles would be to the EU's benefit: as Aydın-Düzgüt underlines, Turkey is the fourth largest contributor to CSDP missions after Germany, France and Britain, and serves actively in nine out of 30 of these missions.

3. PESCO: What now, and the way forward

Designed to make Europe more independent and self-reliant, PESCO indeed represents a striking policy shift from a bloc that, having accepted that it can no longer fully depend on its traditional partnerships for defence assistance, is affirming its will to take matters into its own hands. Yet, it is still unclear how.

In the discussion that followed the two presentations, some participants asked how PESCO could connect with the existing mechanisms of defence and supplement their missions, or whether it was supposed to carry a fundamentally different charge. Others took issue with the flexibility of the initiative, questioning whether member-states could fully adopt a more inclusive approach to the project.

Recalling the differences of opinion between Germany and France, the latter of which defended the benefits of a more exclusive framework, they expressed doubts about whether third parties would indeed be allowed to make substantial contributions. Others also remarked that a more inclusive framework could inhibit deeper cooperation, undermining the unity and cohesion of the union. Therefore, it could be more effective to keep PESCO as a strictly European initiative. As a remedy, however, some participants suggested that the European Council could introduce different categories of membership, such as “flexible country” or “observer” – which would create differentiated models of participation, making it possible for the EU to benefit from the resources of as many states as possible.



In any case, it is not clear how a more inclusive PESCO should be operationalized. Should there be a formal set of rules and regulations that govern third-party collaboration? Some remarked that the EU’s CSDP framework could form its basis. Others rebutted this point of view, putting forward that PESCO would carry different meanings for different countries – and that cooperation with different countries would entail different conditions. Taking an ad hoc approach and setting up different modalities as needed would therefore be the more realistic way forward.

As expected, facilitating Turkey’s inclusion will not be easy. To start with, some questioned whether Turkey would even seek inclusion. Of course, there is the perennial argument that it would render Turkey “more European” – which is still compelling to several factions within the Turkish establishment. Also, Turkey would benefit from having access to the EU’s defence market, especially its technical and operational know-how. Yet, others reminded the group that Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s leadership would only seek a way in if it served its interests. Otherwise, it could position itself as PESCO’s normative opposite, launching discursive assaults bent on discrediting Europe. This concern would lead some member-states to identify Turkey as an unreliable partner that could always arbitrarily scale back its obligations or abandon them entirely.

In this respect, one of the most heated discussions revolved around political conditionalities for participation. Should PESCO function as a club of values, to the extent that the EU does, or as a mere defence cooperation? If the treaty stipulates shared values, making a case for Turkey’s participation will become supremely difficult: there has been some significant backsliding in democratic norms, including an almost complete erosion of judicial independence, with serious limitations on freedom of speech, expression and the media. Yet, many will

agree that the world is heading towards turbulent times – and that Europe faces a level of insecurity unprecedented since the end of the Cold War. Against this volatile backdrop, there is value in maintaining PESCO as a military cooperation that, faced with an overarching question of survival, can be flexible on principles. The EU would then be able to accommodate a number of arguably non-democratic partners, who would help ensure the Union's security and protection.

This is why there are substantial benefits to pulling Turkey into PESCO. It has the capacity to keep its fluid, volatile south-eastern flank under control. It has by far the largest military in Europe – and the second in NATO after that of the US – and is geographically well-placed to act as a bridge into the Middle East and Central Asia vis-à-vis Russia. Simply put, the current geopolitical situation means that defence organizations cannot afford to function as engines of political transformation – or rather, cannot have principles occupying their existential core. PESCO could then be a way for Europe to engage with Turkey beyond the strict confines of the more values-based EU accession process, and thereby strengthen its defence mechanisms at a time when threats intensify almost on a daily basis. That said, the EU could still retain a modicum of control over what is happening within Turkey and thereby leverage these “ties that bind” – in a way that does not prohibit defence cooperation – towards keeping the country within a space of common principles.

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