Re-scaling and Globalizing EU-Turkey Bilateral Relations in the Changing Global Political Landscape

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ABSTRACT

By putting scale and (re)scaling at the center of its analysis, this paper aims to grasp the scalar process of EU-Turkey relations from historical, political and social perspectives. In doing so, this paper will first overview the existing theories on scale and re-scaling concerning their use in political geography and IR. The second task of this paper will be to examine the relevance of scale in EU relations from historical, political, and social perspectives. In the third part, as a first step, this paper investigates whether the EU and Turkey can redefine and reconstruct a new EU-Turkey space. As a second step, it assesses whether globalizing EU-Turkey relations is possible in new global policy areas such as climate change, sustainable development, and trade & economics.

Keywords: Scale, Scale Process, Climate change, Sustainable development, Trade & economics.

Introduction

Turkey's geostrategic location in the Middle East and Asia, combined with its shared border with Europe, position Turkey as a key and unrelinquishable partner of the European Union (EU). Indeed, despite the worsening of relations between the EU and Turkey due to their growing divergence on several issues, each side makes efforts not to allow their relations to deteriorate beyond a certain point, because what unites the two is much stronger than what divides them. It is undeniable that scale, broadly conceptualized as "the geographical structure of social interactions"[1] can provide a broader understanding of this mutual interdependence between Turkey and the EU and of their current and future interactions. Neil Brenner employs

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1   Neil Smith, "Geography, Difference and the Politics of Scale", Joe Doherty, Elspeth Graham and Mo Malek (eds.), *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences,* London, Macmillan, 1992, p. 73.

the concept of 'scale' for the assessment of global political interactions,[2] and proposes that geographical scales can provide a new framework to understand the social and material organizations of international politics, and the hybrid process of these interactions. Similarly, geographical scales are defined by Neil Smith as changeable historically, and he conceptualizes geographical scales as products of social activity which are historically mutable and where social forces compete and cooperate.[3] For Smith, scalar descriptions of global politics helpfully encompass both cultural and identity-relevant connotations.[4]

In the current state of the literature, few studies have used case studies to apply the scalar politics. There is also a void on this issue when it comes to EU-Turkey relations. In illustration, Ezgi Guner underscores that Turkey's pivot to taking an interest in Africa should be seen from the perspective of a multiscalar project, since the Turkish government with the active support of NGOs has constructed a legitimate space for Turkey's interactions with the African continent through the positive re-scaling of Turkey's national representation as a philanthropic Muslim donor and through the re(making) of a Turkish model of Islam and the construction of economic partnerships.[5] In his analysis of the process of cross-border reterritorialization in Europe from a multiscalar viewpoint, with a special focus on the establishment of the transborder region in the Romanian-Ukrainian-Moldovan borderlands, Gabriel Popescu argues that, although these spatial social interactions, produced through contentious bargaining between the regional, national and local scales, highlight the transnationalization of cross-border regions beyond the Westphalian state-centric territorial model, they remain largely modelled by territorial considerations.[6] Another interesting study analyzing China's Belt and Road Policy through the lens of scalar politics, argues that this initiative resulted in the territorial remodelling of the Chinese state and the geographical construction of new scales grounded in trade cooperation, flows of capital and international infrastructure construction;[7] and that it is leading to a re-territorialization of China's state power through the creation of new international organizations, and the re-scaling of the importance of certain large cities as agents of this project and the production of more interaction space for China.[8]

Given this background, by putting scale and (re)scaling at the centre of its analysis, this paper intends to fill the existing void on scalar politics in the literature and to grasp the scaling process of EU-Turkey relations from historical, political and social perspectives. It also seeks to reimagine the space of social interactions and networks between the EU and Turkey in ways that could help surpass their long-standing areas of contention and increase the focus on areas

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2   Neil Brenner, "Between Fixity and Motion: Accumulation, Territorial Organization and the Historical Geography of Spatial Scales", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Spac*e, Vol. 16, No 4, 1998, p. 459–481.

3   Neil Smith, "Remaking Scale: Competition and Cooperation in Pre-national and Post-national Europe", Neil Brenner et al. (Eds.), *State/Space: A Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2003, p. 228.

4   Smith, "Remaking Scale", p. 230.

5   Ezgi Güner, "The Scalar Politics of Turkey's Pivot to Africa", *POMEPS*, https://pomeps.org/the-scalar-politics-of-turkeys-pivot-to-africa

6   Gabriel Popescu, "Conflicting Logics of Cross-border Reterritorialization: Geopolitics of Euroregions in Eastern Europe", *Political Geography,* Vol. 27 ,2008, p.418-438.

7   Fenglong Wang et al. "Rescaling and Scalar Politics in the 'One Belt, One Road' Strategy", *Scientia Geographica Sinica*, Vol. 36, No 4, 2016, p. 502-511.

8   Wang et al. "Rescaling and Scalar Politics in the 'One Belt, One Road' Strategy", p. 502-511.

of cooperation and common interests between the two actors. It will also investigate in which issue areas the EU and Turkey can reproduce their new geographical scale and re-contextualize their relationship in an age of multiple, systematic uncertainties in global politics.

On the other hand, an assessment of EU-Turkey relations from a scalar perspective provides innovative critical ways to approach the connections and interactions between Turkey and the EU, beyond rigid and state-centric territorial boundaries and the stalled negotiation process. It provides new venues for examining how both the EU and Turkey construct and reconstruct their scalar interactions through social discourses, and how these discursive processes of perpetual scale remodelling led to the homogenization or differentiation of their identity, to cooperation or conflict, and to the harmonization or de-harmonization of their interests.

Similarly, the relevance of socially constructed scales in EU-Turkey relations is exemplified by the regular qualification of Turkey as a "buffer zone," a "bridge" between the West and the East[9] and a "transition country" that can contain migrants fleeing conflict-zone countries to reach Europe. In this regard, the 2016 EU-Turkey migration deal, aimed at containing migrants transiting Turkey, is an illustration of how scaling matters in the assessment of EU-Turkey relations, in both concrete and social terms. From this stance, this paper aims to provide an alternative critical reading and assessment of EU-Turkey bilateral relations through the lens of global (re)scaling, which can be defined as the spatial configuration of social and inter-state interactions.

In doing so, this paper will first overview the existing theories on scale and re-scaling with reference to their use in Political Geography and International Relations (IR). The second task of this paper will be to examine the relevance of scale in EU-Turkey relations from historical, political and social perspectives. In the third part, as a first step, this paper will investigate whether the EU and Turkey can redefine and reconstruct a new EU-Turkey space. As a second step, it will try to assess whether globalizing EU-Turkey relations by reinforcing cooperation in new issue areas is possible given the presence of new global policy areas such as climate change, sustainable development and changes in trade & economics.

Scale and Scaling of Global Politics in IR

While space and spatiality are specifically dealt with in the discipline of Geography, academics have also increasingly started to investigate the role of space in international politics.[10] IR as a discipline is particularly interested in inter-state relations, which denote the relations between geographically delimited states across the globe. Traditional IR has been generally criticized for its state-centric stance and extensive focus on territoriality, which leads to their omission

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9   Melek Saral, *Turkey's 'Self' and 'Other' Definitions in the Course of the EU Accession Process*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2017.

10   William H. Sewell. "Space in Contentious Politics", R. Aminzade, J. Goldstone, D. McAdam Doug, E. Perry, W. Sewell Jr., S. Tarrow and C. Tilly (eds.), *Silence and Voice in Contentious Politics,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 51–88.

of the characteristics of geographical organization in world politics.[11] Agnew conceptualizes space as the spatial setting where economic and political interactions occur[12] and 'spatiality' as the representation of the effects of space.[13] Lambach highlights the importance of space in understanding key dimensions or issues of global politics and international relations such as 'transborder migration, regional (dis)integration, the shift toward a multipolar world, capital mobility, pathogenic networks of contagion, or the US 'pivot to Asia',...".[14]

Scale is a form of spatiality that is implicated in and shapes contentious political and social interactions; it can be conceptualized as "the geographical structure of social interactions"[15] or as the spatial configuration of social and inter-state interactions. Neil Brenner employs the concept of 'scale' to aid in the assessment of global political interactions,[16] and advances the idea that geographical scale can provide a new framework to understand the physical and social structures of international politics, and the hybrid process of these interactions. He defines the term 'politics of scale'[17] from a singular perspective as "the production, reconfiguration or contestation of some aspect of socio-spatial organization within a relatively bounded geographical arena—usually labelled the local, the urban, the regional, the national and so forth",[18] and from a pluralist view as " not only the production of differentiated spatial units as such but also, more generally, their embeddedness and positionalities in relation to a multitude of smaller or larger spatial units within a multitier, hierarchically configured geographical scaffolding."[19] Politics of scale should be considered as relational, contested and power-struggle politics where actors interact with one another to 'legitimize or challenge existing power relations'.[20] Through these struggles and social interactions, new scales are created, recreated and even hierarchized, which is called a rescaling process.[21] Leitner argues that the manipulation of authority and power relations lies at the core of scaling politics and that the scalar process is not an uncontested one, but rather encompasses several struggles, negotiations and conflicts among various actors, with each trying to remodel the spatial

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11 Sibel Karadağ, "Extraterritoriality of European borders to Turkey: an Implementation Perspective of Counteractive Strategies", *Comparative Migration Studies*, Vol. 7, No 12, 2019, p.1-16.

12 John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory", *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 1, No 1, 1994, p. 55.

13 Agnew, "The Territorial Trap", p. 55

14 Daniel Lambach, *Space, Scale, and Global Politics: Towards a Critical Approach to Space in International Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021, p. 1.

15 Smith, "Geography, Difference and the Politics of Scale", p. 73.

16 Brenner, "Between Fixity and Motion", p. 459–481.

17 First coined by Neil Smith in "Afterword: The Beginning of Geography", Neil Smith (ed.), *Uneven Development*, 2nd edition, Cambridge, MA, Blackwell, 1990.

18 Neil Brenner, "The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration", *Progress in Human Geography,* Vol. 25, No 4, 2001, p. 599.

19 Brenner, "The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration", p. 600.

20 Helga Leitner, Eric Sheppard and Kristin M. Sziarto, "The Spatialities of Contentious Politics, Royal Geographical Society", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 33, No 2, 2008, p. 159.

21 Erik Swyngedouw, *Globalisation or 'Glocalisation'? Networks, Territories and Rescaling*, Oxford, University of Oxford, 2004.

authority and power.[22] The scalar process is sometimes referred to as the 'jumping of scales'[23] to connote the process of spatialization of politics through the active mobilization of political strategies of empowerment or disempowerment.[24]

The term 'scale' is sometimes considered as the geographical extension of political action and 'scalar relations' as the interactions between territorially connected entities on the globe at different levels.[25] Analyzing these interactions from a scalar standpoint is crucial to understanding the perpetual redefinition and re-planning of spaces,[26] as well as the complex interactions and changes taking place within several spaces.[27] The production and reproduction of spatial scales is not a fixed process, and rather occurs in a process of constant constitution, transformation, redefinition and contestation of specific scales,[28] whereby processes of cooperation and contest, heterogenization and homogenization, disempowerment and empowerment are subsequently negotiated.[29]

Reassessing the Scalar Process of EU-Turkey Relations in Global Politics

Geography and scale, conceptualized as "the geographical structure of social interactions,"[30] can provide a broader grasp of the mutual interdependence between the EU and Turkey, and of their current and future interactions. The geographical scale of Turkey has been constructed as a hybrid space lying between Europe and Asia. This spatial conceptualization of Turkey as a country belonging simultaneously to Europe and to Asia has added value to Turkey's association with the European Economic Community (EEC) through the 1963 Ankara Agreement and its related 1995 Customs Union, as well as the official approval of Turkey as an EU candidate in 1999 to confirm its geographically-based European identity. Turkey's geographical proximity to Europe has accounted for its membership of many European organizations such as the Council of Europe and, since the Republican era, Turkey has defended its European identity as part and parcel of its Western-oriented foreign policy stance. Besides affirmation of its European identity, Turkey also defends the necessity to avoid a totally European-centred foreign policy due to its hybrid identity, and this idea was put explicitly by former Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu contending that due to its geostrategic position as a bridge country between Asia and Europe, Turkey should value its Eurasian identity and shoulder a more global responsibility by conducting a multidimensional and proactive foreign policy.[31]

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22 Helga Leitner, "Reconfiguring the Spatiality of Power: The Construction of a Supranational Migration Framework for the European Union", *Political Geography*, Vol. 16, No 2, 1997, p. 125.

23 Neil Smith, *Uneven Development. Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1984.

24 Swyngedouw, "Globalisation or 'glocalisation'? Networks, territories and rescaling", p. 33.

25 Martin and Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics", p. 143–56.

26 Martin and Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics", p. 143–56

27 Andrew E. G Jonas, "Pro Scale: Further Reflections on the 'Scale Debate' in Human Geography", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 31, No 3, 2006, p. 400.

28 Swyngedouw, *"Globalisation or 'Glocalisation'?".*

29 Neil Smith, "Homeless/Global: Scaling Places", John Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam and Lisa Tickner (eds.), *Mapping the Futures—Local Cultures, Global Change*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 87–119.

30 Smith, "Geography, Difference and the Politics of Scale", p. 73.

31 Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*, İstanbul, Kure Yayınları, 2001.

These changing discourses over time about Turkey from the lens of identity reconsideration corroborates the idea that geographical scales are constructed and reconstructed through social interactions. In the context of EU-Turkey relations, both sides seem to be increasingly redefining Turkey's scalar identity as non-European, due to increasing cleavages over several normative issues.

It goes without saying that the concept of European (Union) identity is itself a contested and dynamic one. In this vein, this paper contends that European (Union) identity is constructed through geographical, historical and cultural factors, which results in the members of the European society sharing common ideas, norms and values in their interactions.[32] The notion of a European heritage attached to Europe's construction project, which makes reference to the sharing of common values and ideas inherited from the Greek and Roman civilizations, the French Revolution and the ideas of the Enlightenment,[33] contributes to accentuate the otherization of countries belonging geographically to Europe without sharing this 'European' cultural legacy.[34] Likewise, the EU's core values and norms which form the basis of what can be called a European political identity, have seen their importance highlighted in article 49 of the Treaty on the EU which stipulates that "any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union".[35] In other words, the membership criteria which encompass both geographical and normative elements (the so-called Copenhagen criteria referring to the upholding of the EU's core norms and values by the candidate countries[36]) are the most visible manifestation of the norm-based feature of European identity beyond territorial boundaries.

Religion also holds a non-negotiable place in the scalar construction of 'European identity', where Christianity plays a key role as both a religion and a civilizational idea. It is generally assumed that the values and norms promoted by the European integration project such as secularism are rooted in the Christianity inherited by Europe,[37] and this results in the otherization of European countries not sharing this common Christian heritage.[38]

The preponderant role played by cultural, normative and religious factors in the construction and re-construction of European scalar identity has had repercussions on the spatial interactions between the EU and Turkey and on their bilateral relations. To begin with,

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32 Thierry Chopin, "Europe and the Identity Challenge: Who Are 'We'?" *Fondation Robert Schuman European* Issue 466 , March 19, 2018, https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0466-europe-and-the-identity-challenge-who-are-we (Accessed on 15 July 2022).

33 Paul Blokker . "Europe 'United in Diversity' From a Central European Identity to Post-Nationality?", *European Journal of Social Theory,* Vol. 11, No 2, 2008, p.263.

34 Bo Stråth . "A European Identity: to the Historical Limits of a Concept", *European Journal of Social Theory,* Vol. 5, No 4, p. 388-397

35 European Union, "Treaty on European Union", February 07, 1992, Maastricht. https://europa.eu/europeanunion/ sites/europaeu/ files/docs/body/treaty_on_european_union_ en.pdf. (Accessed 12 May 2022).

36 Senem Aydın-Düzgit, "European Security and the Accession of Turkey: Identity and Foreign Policy in the European Commission", *Cooperation and Conflict,* Vol. 48, No 4, 2013 , p.525-526.

37 Hülya Ağcasulu and Ringo Ossewaarde, "Turkey's Otherness in the Identity Discourses of European Parliament", *Ege Academic Review*, Vol. 19, No 3, 2019, p. 359-372.

38 Hakan Yılmaz, "Turkish Identity on the Road to the EU: Basic Elements of French and German Oppositional Discourses", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans Online,* Vol. 9, No 3, 2007, p. 298-299.

since the announcement of Turkey's candidature to the EU in 1999, there has been a growing tendency in many European political and intellectual circles to re-scale the geographical space in EU-Turkey relations and to otherize Turkey as not belonging to the European 'self.' Due to this stance, debate over the compatibility of European identity with Turkish identity have become intense in Brussels, especially following the acceptance of Turkey's candidate status.[39] In this respect, it is sometimes argued that Turkey was not part of the construction of this common European heritage, and has a historical development (Ottoman Empire, Republican Era, etc…) which makes its identity incompatible with that of Europe.[40]

Second, and with respect to the religious factor, although sharing undeniable geographical borders with Europe and being formally a secular country, Turkey is nonetheless a Muslim-majority country, which according to some cannot effectively uphold European values and norms, since Islam has for long been considered a menace to European culture, including Christianity.[41] Thus, culture, religion and space have become increasingly intertwined in the scalar process of EU-Turkey relations. The otherization of Turkish identity as incompatible with the European one is further substantiated from the following discourse:

> 'When de Gaulle built Europe with the other Europeans, he said that Europe was determined by her geography, her Greco-Roman culture and the Christian religion. So now we are going to bring the Turks into Europe. That will be a crime for Europe. Do not commit it'.[42]

Third, the relevance of socially constructed and contested scales in EU-Turkey relations is also exemplified by the regular qualification of Turkey as a 'buffer zone" or 'bridge", and by the 2016 EU-Turkey migration deal. From a scalar landscape, the 2016 migration deal is important in EU-Turkey relations, because it enabled the EU "to acquire for itself an 'asylum space' outside the EU. The migration deal gave Turkey some superior bargaining leverage in its diplomatic relations with Europe, because of Turkey's positioning as a "gatekeeper" to Europe.[43]

Fourth, these scalar reconstructions of the EU-Turkey spatial interaction from a cultural/ normative perspective have resulted in a stalemate in Turkey's EU membership negotiations which started in 2005, a downgrading of EU-Turkey political relations, and an increasing shift of attention from the Turkish side toward the non-European world, especially toward Asia and Africa. The downgrading of Turkey's political reforms since 2014, combined with the politico-security developments in Turkey led to a worsening of its relations with the EU, and finally to a stalemate in its membership negotiations, due to which no new chapters have been opened since 2016. These developments resulted in the European Parliament's adoption of two resolutions

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39 Aydın-Düzgit, "European Security and the Accession of Turkey", p. 522.

40 Feyzi Baban and Fuat Keyman, "Turkey and Postnational Europe Challenges for the Cosmopolitan Political Community", *European Journal of Social Theory,* Vol. 11, 2008, p. 117.

41 Yılmaz, "Turkish Identity on the Road to the EU", p. 300.

42 Georgios Karatzaferis, "Turkey's Progress towards Accession", *European Parliament*, 2004, http://www.europarl.europa. eu. (Accessed June 05, 2022).

43 "Turkey Frowns at EU Refugee Aid Plan", *EurActiv*, October 8, 2015, https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/turkey-frowns-ateu-refugee-aid-plan/ (Accessed 10 December 2021).

in November 2016 and July 2017, with the last one recommending the formal and immediate suspension of the accession negotiations in case of non-amendment of Turkey's constitutional reform pack.[44] The official position of the EU regarding Turkey was succinctly outlined by Jean-Claude Juncker, the former Commission President, in September 2017, underlining the key role norms and values such as justice, democracy and the rule of law play in Turkey's accession process, and its high impact on Turkey's foreseeable future membership of the EU.[45]

These discourses have increased suspicion on the Turkish side that the stalemate in the membership application of Turkey is not based on objective facts, and that the EU does not treat all candidate countries fairly. In this vein, President Erdoğan, in a message issued on 9 May 2021 for Europe Day, stressed Turkey's determination to go beyond the existing obstacles and double standards by continuing to strive for EU membership as a strategic goal, while affirming the geographical and historical connection of Turkey with Europe.[46] In the recent Ukraine crisis combined with the speeding up of Ukraine's accession process to the EU, President Erdoğan decried what was perceived as another manifestation of the EU's double standards attitude and called on the EU to treat Turkey like it is treating Ukraine for EU membership.[47]

Last but not the least, in the context of growing criticisms coming from the EU side, especially about Turkey's increasing distancing from the European norms, and Turkey's loss of hope about its future EU membership, the Turkish side also started redefining its spatial interaction with the EU through a de-Europeanization scaling process. As a reminder, since the mid-2000s, Turkey has adopted a more pragmatic and proactive foreign policy stance, with increasing intervention of Islamic and Neo-Ottoman footprints. This has been demonstrated by the rewarming of its relations with culturally proximate countries, especially with Turkish speaking countries and those which were part of the Ottoman Empire in Asia, Central Europe and Africa. This new foreign policy has been accompanied by an affirmation of a new Turkish identity based extensively on historical, cultural and religious elements, and by an increasing criticism of the EU and the West in general, and growing competition with some EU countries in geostrategic countries in Africa and elsewhere. Indeed, the current Turkish foreign policy leaders seem to be increasingly pursuing domestic and foreign politics of de-Europeanization, which denote their re-definition of Turkey's geographical space in their interactions with the EU. These changes have taken place in conjunction with Turkey's waning hope and, in some circles, loss of interest in EU membership, as well as the growth of anti-Western feeling in Turkey, especially following the July 2016 failed *coup d'état,* whereby Turkey criticized the lack of support from its European partners.

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44 "Turkey: MEPs Raise the Alarm on EU Accession Talks", *European Parliament*, 6 July 2017, http://www.europarl. europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170629IPR78637/turkey-meps-raise-the-alarm-on-eu-accession-talks (Accessed 17 December 2021).

45 "Juncker: Turkey's EU Membership out of Question for Now," *EUobserver*, 13 September 2017, https://euobserver. com/tickers/138999 (Accessed 13 December 2021).

46 "Turkey Determined to Join EU Despite Obstacles: Erdoğan', *Hürriyet Daily News*, May 9, 2021,   https://www. hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-determined-to-join-eu-despite-obstacles-erdogan-164571 (Accessed 17 May 2022).

47 "Erdogan to EU: 'Treat Türkiye like Ukraine' for Bloc's Membership", *TRT World*, 1 March 2022, https://www. trtworld.com/turkey/erdogan-to-eu-treat-t%C3%BCrkiye-like-ukraine-for-bloc-s-membership-55195 (Accessed   20 July 2022).

All in all, notwithstanding the fact that the accession process remains the main formal basis for EU-Turkey connections,[48] over the past two decades, EU-Turkey relations have then been marked by increasing tensions. The latest cases in point include Turkey's unilateral move in Syria, its proactive intervention in the recent Libyan crisis and its posturing in the Eastern Mediterranean.[49] Taken together, these developments indicate that the nature of the social interactions between Turkish and European leaders and people affects both sides' perception of the other's scale-based identity. In other words, geographical scaling in EU-Turkey relations is modelled by the norms, ideas, values, discourses and developments both within Turkey and in Europe.

Nonetheless, although the newly constructed Turkish 'self' may lead to the 'otherization' of other identities, including European identity, and sharpen the demarcation of Turkish identity from that of Europe, the Turkish government never misses the opportunity to reaffirm its belonging to Europe and its willingness to become part of the EU sooner or later. In this respect, President Erdoğan's statement during a videoconference call with European Commission's president Ursula von der Leyen, on 9 January 2021, that the EU was still at the core of Turkey's agenda and that Turkey sees its future in Europe,[50] as well as its insistence that Turkey's membership of the EU is crucial for the block's future, underlined in a written message issued for Europe Day on 9 May 2022,[51] are discourses that stress significance in this respect.

Redefining the EU-Turkey Global/Social Relationship

Co-Constitution of the New EU-Turkey Scale: Social & Structural Elements

Both the EU and Turkey are under the continuous effects of the changing international system in both their institutional relations and their relations with third parties. The present state of EU-Turkey relations presents an image of being crisis-torn and stuck among multiple tensions around the accession process. The EU, itself, has already been engaged in reconstituting its strategic and geopolitical outlook vis-a-vis its members, neighbors, allies and third-party countries. In this vein, there is a vital need to go beyond the accession talks in EU-Turkey bilateral relationship, and to reconstruct the scalar interactions between the EU and Turkey. So, the re-scaling process of EU-Turkey relations which should end up in globalizing EU-

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48 Nilgün E. Arısan et al.,"EU-Turkey Relations after the Council Summit: A Chance for Re-Engagement or Facing Complete Breakdown?", *TEPAV Policy Note*, 13 November 2020,https://www.tepav.org.tr/en/haberler/s/10195. (Accessed 8 November 2021).

49 Asli Aydıntaşbaş and Susi Dennison, *"New Energies: '*How the European Green Deal can Bring Turkey and the EU Together', *European Council on Foreign Relations Policy Brief*, June 2021,https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/New-energies-How-the-European-Green-Deal-can-bring-Turkey-and-the-EU-together.pdf. (Accessed 10 November 2021).

50 Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, Directorate of Communications, "President Erdoğan holds videoconference with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen", 09 January 2021, https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/english/haberler/detay/president-erdogan-holds-videoconference-with-president-of-the-european-commission-ursula-von-der-leyen (Accessed 27 May 2022).

51 "Turkey's full membership must for EU's future: Erdoğan", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 9 May 2022, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-full-membership-must-for-eus-future-erdogan-173650 (Accessed 17 May 2022).

Turkey relations could cause a positive impact in new issue areas. This new scale of relations between Turkey and the EU also conforms to the reality of the less homogeneous nature of European culture as a conflation of diverse cultures.[52]

As mentioned in the previous section, as a result of the ongoing stalemate in EU-Turkey relations, culture, religion, identity and space have increasingly become interwoven and interconnected in the existing scalar process of EU-Turkey relations. In the face of the current geopolitical threats that the EU and Turkey have been envisaging, and the rapidly transforming security environment of Europe in recent years, a brand-new scalar approach combining both previous and new elements of the EU-Turkey social relationship seem to be indispensable for a co-constitution of their commonly shared geopolitical and social space. In short, a new EU-Turkey discourse consistently linked to the new realities on the ground can open up a new horizon for a stronger cooperation in their bilateral relationship.

Although the EU will not concede on its established norms, it will seek to collaborate with Turkey in other areas where a convergence of policies can be secured, such as climate change, economics and sustainable development, especially in a context where the EU has lost a key member, the United Kingdom (UK), and where transatlantic relations are seemingly in crisis. This means that both the EU and Turkey should accept and manage the differences between them, while at the same time seeking commonalities that will energize their strategic partnership. In such a newly constructed EU-Turkey space, there will be a clear-cut separation between areas of agreement and cooperation and areas of disagreement. In this vein, the newly created space will mark the beginning of a gradual rapprochement between the EU and Turkey, that will increase trust and confidence between both partners. The new EU-Turkey scale is first and foremost multi-layered, and covers an important number of sectors, state and non-state actors and sub-spaces. One of the central layers of this newly constructed EU-Turkey scale is civil society and CSOs. For instance, Turkish and EU business and economic groups can play a more active role in the (re)construction of this new EU-Turkey space, since the protection of their economic interests is strong when EU-Turkey relations are in good shape. In this vein, non-state economic actors in both Turkey and the EU can contribute enormously to the creation of this less contentious space, by putting more emphasis on what unites Turkey and the EU rather than what divides them.

The EU Council conclusions of March 2021 whereby it recalls the EU's determination to enhance its cooperation with Turkey in several issues of common interests[53] can also be interpreted as the launch of a new discourse which can open the door for the rearrangement of EU-Turkey scalar interaction. The written message from Turkish President Erdoğan addressed to the EU for Europe Day on 9 May 2022, underlining that "It is to the benefit of both sides in a world getting more and more complicated to focus on our common denominators rather than differences and the fundamental values we have been supporting rather than conflicts of

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52 Gerard Delanty, "Introduction: The Idea of a Post-Western Europe", Gerard Delanty (ed.), *Europe and Asia beyond East and West*. Routledge/European Sociological Association Studies in European Societies, 2006, p.3

53 European Council, "Statement of the Members of the European Council", 25 March 2021, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/48976/250321-vtc-euco-statement-en.pdf (Accessed 1 January 2022).

interest, and enhance the EU-Turkey relations in all areas"[54] further consolidates the idea of redefining a less contentious scale for EU-Turkey interactions.

Another important layer of the new EU-Turkey scale is economics. In this context, Turkey and the EU can redefine a new scale that is more centred on economic matters than before, because of their increasing shared interests in the fields of economics, trade and energy. In this context, the modernization of the EU-Turkey Customs Union in force since 1996, for instance, could be an important step toward the re-construction of this new, more economically focused scale between the EU and Turkey, because the customs union still represents one of the main concretizations of Turkey's progressive integration to the EU in terms of outcomes".[55]

The new socially constructed EU-Turkey scale would certainly include a bolder security layer, to further bolster their functional security cooperation. In a context where the EU has lost one of its key members in the security realm, the UK, and where the burden-sharing issue resurged under the former Trump presidency, and where Europe's security came under severe threats with the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the EU has far more incentives to deepen security cooperation with Turkey in this newly created space. The deepening of EU-Turkey cooperation on security matters will be eased by the redefinition of a less contentious interaction scale between the EU and Turkey that will revive the fading trust between both partners brought about by their friction over political issues. Despite the recent developments associated with the Ukraine crisis, and considering US ambition to contain China as the number one challenger to US Hegemony, it is likely that the burden-sharing issue under the framework of NATO will remain an area of contention, as the US' increasing shift away from interest in the Middle East and Europe and toward the Indo-Pacific region is likely to remain so, and because of the current economic crisis and the rise of nationalism in the US. In light of the recent Russian threat perception in Europe, a lowering of the US military presence in the Middle East and in Europe will create a void that can be filled by Turkey in cooperation with the EU, because of the former's strategic geographical location between the Middle East and EU countries and its strong military capabilities. A failure on the part of the EU to cooperate with Turkey on security matters could pave the way for an enhanced rapprochement between Turkey and Russia and for a re-strengthening of terrorist groups in the Middle East, with potentially disastrous spill over effects on Europe's stability.

Another important layer of the new EU-Turkey scale is culture and education, where the two actors have more common achievements and potentialities for the future of their social interactions. The creation of a new cultural EU-Turkey scale can render their relationship more functional and predictable in many sub-issue areas. On the other hand, culture and education appear as the two niche areas where EU-Turkey relations have shown considerable progress since 1999. Any improvement in the EU-Turkey relationship in the field of culture and education shows the depth of these two actors' social and geopolitical space, since both areas are closely connected with the young generations representing the future of Europe.

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54 "Turkey's Full Membership Must for EU's Future: Erdoğan", *Hürriyet Daily News*.

55 Çiğdem Nas. "EU-Turkey Customs Union: Its Modernization and Potential for EU-Turkey Relations", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 20, No 3, 2018, p. 43–60.

Operationalizing a "Global" EU-Turkey Relationship: Opportunities and Challenges

The redefinition of a less contentious EU-Turkey scale will pave the way for the globalization of EU-Turkey relations, which is conceptualized in this paper as Turkey's and the EU's taking up a shared position to enhance their cooperation in global issue areas. This also requires the EU to redefine and reconstruct its relations with its neighbors and third party countries in other regions. Here it is essential to remember that globalizing EU-Turkey ties does not mean at any time invalidating the progress made in the EU-Turkey integration process since 1999. In contrast, a global EU-Turkey context can reaccelerate EU-Turkey rapprochement in new policy areas, by providing a more cosmopolitan and functional grounding in their relations and socially constructing new scales in niche diplomacy areas. For instance, the globalization of EU-Turkey relations may be manifested in the synergy of actions of both actors vis-a-vis global policy issues such as climate change, sustainable development, and trade & economics.

First, Turkey and the EU can globalize their relationship through the modernization of their customs union. The EU seems to be increasingly aware that accelerating the customs union's modernization process can open a new page in EU-Turkey relations and this has been highlighted in the Council's March 2021 Conclusions, which call on the Commission to engage in talks with Turkey in order to tackle the current challenges associated with the implementation of the customs union, to ensure effective performance by member states, and to prepare a mandate for the starting of the talks on the modernization of the customs union.[56] A newly transactional economic scale based on modernized trade relations with Europe is also essential for the Turkish government in re-energizing its own fading popularity caused by the country's economic crisis. However, there are certain political conditions attached to negotiations on the modernization of the customs union because it "is not only about the bilateral trade relationship" but also brings about directly or indirectly Turkey's socialization with and alignment to EU norms, rules, standards, and acquis.[57] This poses a real challenge to furthering the functional cooperation between Turkey and the EU on economic matters, because it would be difficult and unlikely for Turkey to objectively meet these conditions if it coincided with a profound disruption of trust between the two partners. In this sense, it would be beneficial for the EU to lift the political preconditions attached to the modernization of the customs union, to overcome the current stalemate in the negotiation process, since they create disappointment and demotivation on the Turkish side, and may further distance Turkey from EU norms. Successful modernization of the EU-Turkey customs union would undoubtedly increase the EU's leverage over Turkey, while at the same time enhancing Turkey's positive feeling toward engagement with the EU.

Second, with Turkey's recent ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement, Turkey and the EU can greatly cooperate on the issue of climate change, which will prevent Turkey's further distancing from European norms. Turkey's participation in the Green Deal is important, as Turkey is currently moving toward the digitization of its economy; in this regard, the EU's cooperation with Turkey on the Green Deal's goals can have a huge impact on climate change by 2050. Increased cooperation between Ankara and Brussels on the European Green Deal and

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56 European Council, "Statement of the Members of the European Council".

57 Nas, "EU-Turkey Customs Union: Its Modernization and Potential for EU-Turkey Relations", p. 43.

climate change can help the EU overcome the challenges it faces in redefining its partnership with Turkey, since such cooperation will help to rebuild trust between Brussels and Ankara. The fact that Turkey ratified the Paris Agreement further implies that the EU can integrate the Green Deal in the ongoing negotiation process for the modernization of the customs union without resistance from the Turkish side. A way to further propel Turkey's implementation of the Paris Agreement would be to speed up the modernization process of the customs deal by including the Green Deal in the new trade agreement. This would lead to enhanced cooperation between the EU and Turkey, not only on climate issues but also on trade and economics. Such a gradual rapprochement on green matters can trigger "the rules-based engagement and change the mood music enough to improve other areas of the relationship."[58]

Third, and related to their cooperation on the Green Deal, Turkey and the EU can also cooperate in the area of sustainable development, especially in terms of helping the least developed countries in their achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), because both are Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) members. Unlike other rising donors, Turkey shares important commonalities with its European partners, because they abide by the OECD's definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA), and regularly report their ODA statistics to the OECD. Regarding the implementation of the SDGs, the EU is far ahead of Turkey, because Turkey still lacks a long-term, comprehensive strategy for SDG implementation, both inside and outside its borders. Due to the long experience of the EU on this matter, it can provide important guidance to Turkey on steps toward successful implementation of the SDGs domestically and abroad. The fact that Turkey and the EU have divergent modalities of ODA implementation (the issue of political conditionalities, lack of a comprehensive development cooperation framework in Turkey, etc.) might pose a strong limit in their eventual cooperation in this issue area in the least developed countries. Yet, these challenges could be overcome through increased cooperation on economic and climate change issues that will build trust between the two partners in the longer run.

Conclusion

This paper has provided an alternative critical reading and assessment of EU-Turkey bilateral relations, through the lens of global (re)scaling. Scales defined as geographical imaginations and constructions matter in EU-Turkey relations and have mattered since the onset; this is materially evident in the adoption of the 1963 Ankara Agreement and its subsequent customs union, by the formal acceptance of Turkey's EU candidateship application, and by the 2016 migration deal, which positions Turkey as a 'bridge" zone. With that said, these spatial imaginations are not fixed; they are prone to change over time and have had serious repercussions on the shape of EU-Turkey relations. Additionally, it is crucial to mention that besides geographical space, identity and norms also play a not so negligible role in the construction of the interaction scale between Turkey and the EU. The deadlock in the accession negotiations and the customs union's modernization processes can be considered as part and parcel of this norm-based reconstruction of the EU-Turkey space.

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58   Aydıntaşbaş and Dennison, *"New Energies: How the European Green Deal can bring Turkey and the EU Together"*, p. 1.

The sharing of the border between the EU and Turkey implies that the fates of Turkey and the EU are interlinked, and that the level of complex interdependence between the two is very high — to the extent that a negative evolution on either side will inevitably have tremendous repercussions for both. Thus, it is crucial for the EU and Turkey to define a new scale through which they can pursue and strengthen their functional ties and technical cooperation on the likes of the emerging EU-British cooperation or the existing European Economic Area's model of cooperation with Norway and Iceland.[59]

The new, socially constructed EU-Turkey space would focus more on security and economics-related issues through the modernization of the customs union and enhanced security cooperation, that will further bolster their functional security cooperation and, in the long run, bring Turkey back toward European norms and to the consolidation of political relations between the two.

Turkey and the EU can cooperate efficiently in the field of climate change, given Turkey's recent ratification of the Paris Agreement, on trade and economic matters through the modernization of the customs union, and on the implementation of the SDGs. These areas of cooperation, along with the many incentives both sides have to improve relations, present an opportunity for the opening up of a new interaction space based on economic and security matters that would bolster trust between the two partners and consolidate the globalization of their bilateral relations.

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59 Meltem, Müftüler-Baç, "Remolding the EU-Turkey Relationship", *Turkish Quarterly Policy*, Vol. 17, No 1, 2018, p. 122.

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