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THE EU AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN: how to deal with Turkey

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EU leaders and institutions have always seen Ankara as a difficult partner and a troublesome ally, but Turkey is increasingly depicted as a geopolitical rival.

Intersecting conflicts, the assertive policies of key players and the crisis of trust between Turkey and its European and Western partners contributed to raising the tension in the Eastern Mediterranean in 2019 and 2020.

The impossibility of the EU agreeing sanctions, Turkey's perception that confrontation could be too costly, and the expectations created by Biden's election in the US contributed to postponing a major crisis.

The bases for this appeasement are fragile and sooner or later tensions will resurface. The Eastern Mediterranean is the space where an EU-Turkey rivalry may solidify or where a policy of productive engagement could be given a new chance.

A more cohesive, frank and understanding EU could make a difference – one which avoids the temptation of a grand bargain, opts for the segmentation of contentious portfolios, and places a shared green recovery at the centre of a cooperative agenda.

The stakes of an adversarial relationship

Can a NATO ally and candidate for accession also be an adversary? EU leaders and institutions have always seen Ankara as a difficult partner. In 2019, the members of the FEUTURE research project argued that the EU-Turkey relationship seemed to be advancing towards a state of conflictual cooperation. Yet, an increasing number of countries and individual leaders in the EU are starting to treat Turkey no longer as a difficult partner but rather as a hostile actor or even as a geopolitical rival. The same is happening in Ankara's decision-making circles. This adversarial relationship may either solidify or be replaced by a policy of tenacious engagement which, despite all the grievances, rediscovers the benefits of cooperation.

Nowadays, EU leaders and institutions may disagree on the best way to deal with Turkey, but they share the feeling that the EU is surrounded by a ring of instability, that the Eastern Mediterranean is part of that ring and that Turkey's leadership has contributed to igniting it. Turkey, meanwhile, also feels encircled. A good example are the statements by the foreign affairs minister, **Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu**, describing the Philia (Friendship) Forum organised by Greece in February 2021 as an "attempt to form an alliance built upon hostility towards Turkey". The forum gathered Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Cyprus and Greece – countries that share bilateral disputes with Turkey or with its president.

No single factor explains why EU-Turkey relations have deteriorated to this point, and there is more than one point of friction. Yet, the Eastern Mediterranean

is among the most visible and is likely to be the space where the deterioration or improvement of relations between Turkey and the EU can have greatest impact. Agreeing to a solution on Cyprus and the maritime disputes between Greece and Turkey – or at least getting closer to one – would remove fundamental obstacles in EU–Turkey relations. By contrast, if tensions escalate and unilateral and aggressive actions continue, it could ultimately trigger a thorny political or military crisis with the potential to wipe out any hope for cooperation. The risk of an accident is real and should not be ignored.

The optimists tell us that we could be in a much more difficult situation. Indeed, in 2019 and most of 2020 the situation deteriorated rapidly. Analysts were warning that the possibility of a military confrontation between Turkey and some of its NATO allies was **no longer a remote possibility**. Yet that train wreck was avoided. Turkey decided to backtrack and make some goodwill gestures to de-escalate the tension in the Eastern Medi-

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terranean, and the EU gave itself time to decide whether to apply sanctions or implement a positive agenda with Turkey.

By the end of 2020 EU–Turkey relations had entered a phase that is often referred as appeasement but that could also be depicted as an extremely fragile truce. The proponents of adversarial policies momentarily concurred that it was not the right time to enter full-fledged confrontation, but that does not mean their mutual perceptions have significantly improved. If the factors that have prevented the conflict from spiralling wane or are neutralised by other forces, confrontation will again become a possible and dangerous scenario. The Eastern Mediterranean is likely to be the space where this tension will first resurface.

The stakes are high for both the EU and Turkey. Relations are based on a complex network of interests and relations that will be severely damaged if conflictual attitudes prevail. It is not only that the EU would no longer be able to rely on Turkey's cooperation but that it would have to redirect significant resources to contain Turkey's hostile actions. Neighbouring Greece and Cyprus (and eventually Bulgaria) would suffer the most. Turkey's already fragile economy would also face additional shocks if it were on a collision course with the EU.

To avoid this risk materialising and to create conditions for cooperative engagement, we should try to understand how relations reached a new low and identify the elements that then contributed to diffusing a major crisis as well as those that could undermine relations again. Only then will we be able to imagine how the EU can modify its attitudes and improve its toolkit to deal and work with Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond.

Old and new disputes, a dangerous mix

Disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean (the division of Cyprus, delimitation of airspace, territorial waters and continental shelf in the Aegean and the Mediterranean, as well as the demilitarisation of some islands and disputed sovereignty over rocks and islets claimed by both Greece and Turkey) have always damaged bilateral relations and became an integral part of EU–Turkey relations when Greece joined the EU in 1981 and Cyprus in 2004. Still, both Turkey and the EU were able to handle these disputes and preserve a minimum level of cooperation. The clearest sign of this is that neither Greece nor Cyprus vetoed the start of accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005. Fifteen years later the situation has become even more complex. The points of friction – and consequently the risk of conflict – have increased. As **Michael Tanchum** has said, the Eastern Mediterranean has become “the eye of a gathering geopolitical storm”.

Firstly, because conflicts in the region have proliferated and are increasingly connected. In the Eastern Mediterranean two new conflicts (Syria and Libya) coexist with several that are decades old (the Arab–Israeli conflict, Cyprus and the bilateral disputes between Turkey and Greece). In the absence of functional structures for regional security cooperation to manage them, ad hoc alliances and counter-alliances have been formed, which has contributed to entangling the different conflicts. Israel, for instance, has aimed at cultivating relations with Greece and Cyprus to counter a combative Turkey on the Palestinian issue. Greece also negotiated with the eastern Libyan authorities to counter Ankara–Tripoli cooperation. As some of these alliances include EU member states, the whole of the EU has become partly embedded in the dangerous game of short-lived, topic-by-topic **liquid alliances** in the Middle East.

The discovery of energy sources in the Eastern Mediterranean has added a layer of complexity to this matrix of conflicts and alliances. Although energy could have been an incentive for cooperation, it has mainly fuelled competition between fluid regional blocs precisely because of the prevalence of the negative-sum mentality. As a result, Turkey found itself excluded from regional platforms such as the East Med Gas Forum, an international or-

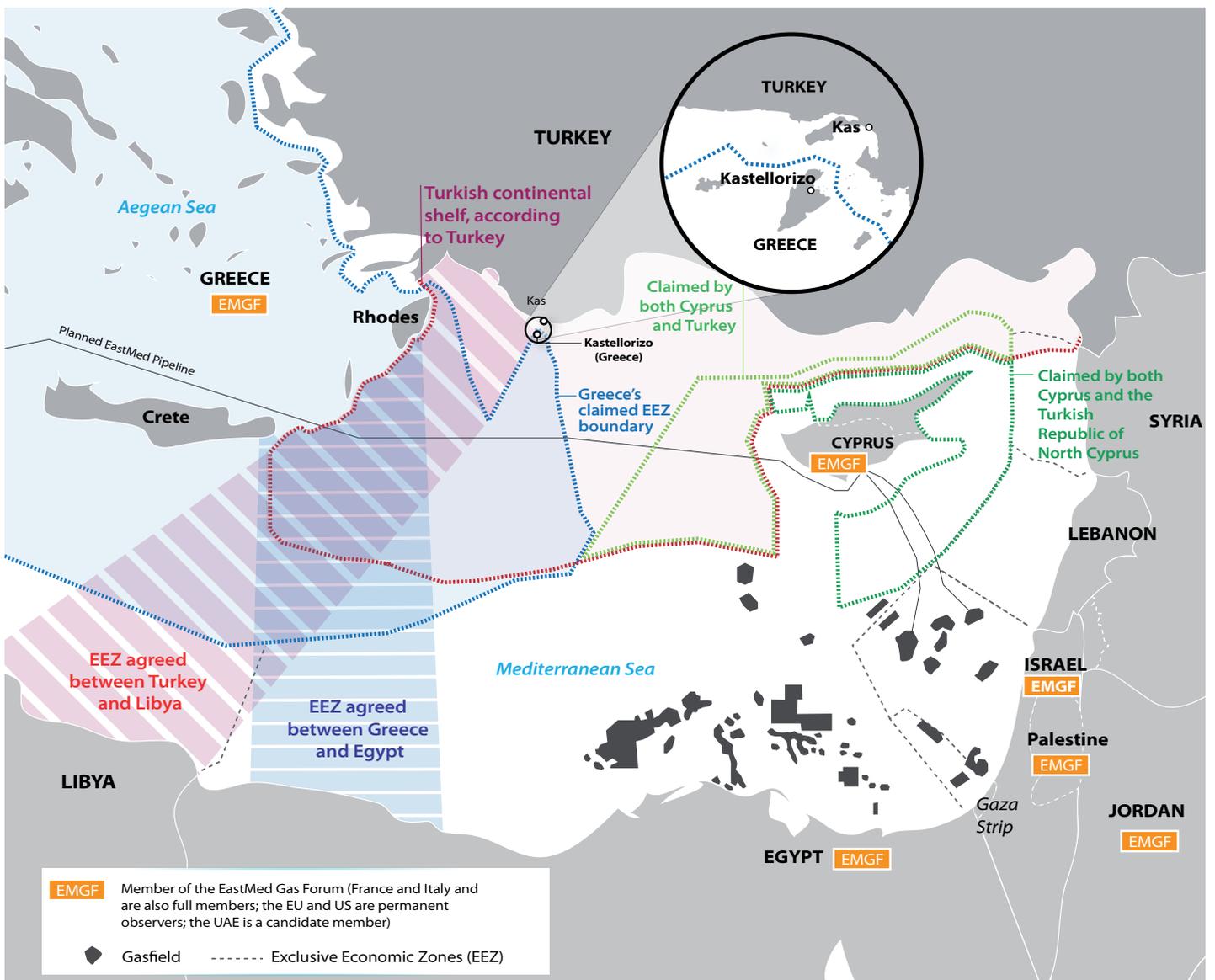
organisation established in 2019, formed of Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan and Palestine. These developments have raised the stakes around the delimitation of territorial waters and exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and the construction of infrastructure to exploit them, like the EastMed gas pipeline.

There is a considerable distance between Turkey's claims and those of Greece and Cyprus. Turkey, which is not a signatory of UNCLOS (the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea), considers that islands have a lesser effect in terms of maritime delimitation than continental coastlines. According to Ankara this applies to Cyprus but also to Crete and the Dodecanese, including the small island of Kastellorizo. In the case of Cyprus, Turkey also maintains that the Republic of Cyprus must not exploit the natural resources even in the parts that would fall within its EEZ until a solution is reached that allows Turkish Cypriots to benefit. Turkey not only denies Greek

and Cypriot claims but promotes a different – maximalist – delimitation that is popularly known as the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine, whose origins are to be found in the thinking of nationalist segments of the Turkish armed forces. These incompatible views – shown in the map below – reduce international investors' appetite for exploiting the natural resources in the area, condition the way the three countries relate to other littoral states and increase the risk of conflict.

The Erdoğan government's embrace of the *Mavi Vatan* doctrine may be seen as a negotiation tactic, but it is also the result of the evolution of Turkey's foreign policy. Since 2016, Ankara has deployed a more assertive and nationalist foreign policy and proved its willingness to drive change. Turkey may no longer be a status quo power, but the times of the doctrine of zero problems with neighbours are also long gone. In fact, the new turn in Turkey's foreign policy is often described as **revisionist**, **revanchist**,

Maritime disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean



Created by CIDOB. Source: *The Economist*, Petroleum Economist.

interventionist and even **irredentist**. This evolution is the result of several factors including changes in Turkey's domestic politics and decision-making processes, but also regional and global developments (the vacuum left by Arab regional powers, the Arab uprisings and their shockwaves, a competitive and multipolar world order, perceived US unreliability and stalemate in the EU accession process, among others). Moreover, Turkey has diversified its international partnerships by turning towards Russia (including the purchase of the S-400 missile system and co-sponsoring diplomatic initiatives that exclude the West, such as the Astana Process) and, amid the pandemic, China – albeit to a lesser extent.

However, the evolution of cooperation and conflict dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean cannot solely be explained by Ankara's actions and strategies. Greece has also deployed a more robust and proactive policy in the Middle East, partly as an attempt to contain Turkey's own nationalist policies and partly to attract foreign investment for a much-needed economic recovery.

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Gulf countries, particularly a very assertive and self-confident UAE, have also upgraded their diplomatic and military cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean, establishing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Greece and Cyprus, offering decisive support to Sisi's Egypt, meddling in the Libya conflict in support of Khalifa Haftar and, more recently, normalising relations with Israel. Abu Dhabi has become Ankara's nemesis, as it holds opposing viewpoints on almost all the regional and domestic conflicts in the wider Middle East. A report by the **ECFR** argued that this confrontation "is not only feeding instability in areas that have an immediate impact on European interests, such as Libya and the Horn of Africa, but is also seeping into Europe itself, in the Eastern Mediterranean. The rivalry is deepening Europe's divisions, making it more difficult for the European Union and its member states to develop a cohesive policy on the Mediterranean".

Finally, France is also outspoken on regional affairs, is a key player on several issues (Lebanon, Syria, Libya) and is often at odds with Ankara. France has openly criticised Turkey's foreign policy not only in the Eastern Mediterranean but also in Africa and the Caucasus and has intensified its diplomatic and military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. French cooperation efforts with Greece, Egypt and the UAE are seen in Ankara as hostile diplomatic moves.

Dissecting escalation

All the factors noted in the previous section (intersecting conflicts, the assertive policies of key players and the crisis of trust between Turkey and its European and Western partners) have contributed to raising the tension in the Eastern Mediterranean. The alarms rang when Turkey sent a research vessel, the *Oruç Reis*, to explore contested waters close to Kastellorizo in summer 2019. Cyprus and Greece protested and the European Council agreed to further **downgrade** relations with Turkey, endorsing the Commission's proposal to reduce the pre-accession assistance to Turkey and inviting the European Investment Bank to review its lending activities in Turkey. In October the Council agreed to establish a **framework regime of restrictive measures** targeting natural and legal persons responsible for or involved in illegal drilling for hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean and invited the High Representative and the Commission to present proposals to this effect. The framework was finally **adopted** by the European Council in November 2019.

This did not soften Turkey's positions. Instead, Turkey announced a bilateral deal with the Libyan government on exclusive economic zones that ignored Greek claims. The European Council in December 2019 lamented this decision and once again reaffirmed its solidarity with Cyprus and Greece. Egypt and France also backed Greek and Cypriot claims. The foreign ministers of the four countries met in Cairo and declared the deal signed by Ankara and Tripoli "**null and void**".

In January 2020 the Turkish parliament went a step further and approved the **deployment of troops in Libya**, a move that was largely seen as hostile by France and Egypt. That was followed in February by a second migration crisis on the Greek borders. Then COVID-19 forced all actors to focus on dealing with the pandemic and temporarily distracted from those other sources of tension. However, the health emergency was not a powerful enough incentive to try to resolve this crisis. In summer 2020, tension between France and Turkey in the Mediterranean escalated even further. France accused Turkey of breaking the arms embargo in Libya and of targeting a **French frigate** that was trying to inspect a Tanzanian-flagged cargo ship. France then decided to suspend its participation in NATO's Mediterranean mission. This incident rang alarm bells and countries such as Germany and Spain intensified their diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tension. Turkey seemed receptive to these messages and in September 2020 the *Oruç Reis* **withdrew** to the port of Antalya. This was largely seen a gesture of good will.

Yet, a new round of unilateral actions defied the hopes of appeasement. Greece and Egypt announced

a **bilateral agreement** delimitating their exclusive economic zones without taking Turkey's claims into consideration. In October, **Macron** also denounced the alleged deployment of jihadi fighters in Nagorno-Karabakh and said that Turkey had crossed a red line. In November, Erdoğan visited the fenced-off district of Varosha during the commemoration of the celebrations for the 37th anniversary of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, an entity only Turkey recognises. Erdoğan then called for a "two-state" solution to the Cyprus conflict. This visit and the statements by the Turkish president were condemned by High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy **Josep Borrell**, who said that they "cause greater distrust and tension in the region and should be urgently reversed".

How was the clash avoided?

The run-up to the European Council of December 2020 was marked by a heated discussion on whether the EU should have imposed new sanctions on Turkey. Ultimately, European leaders agreed to postpone the decision and reiterated their willingness to explore the possibility of implementing a "positive agenda" with Turkey, but also the option of imposing restrictive sanctions, and gave High Representative Josep Borrell the responsibility for coming up with ideas on how to proceed. The European Council also endorsed the idea of convening a multilateral conference for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Although France, Greece and Cyprus asked the EU to send a clearer message to Ankara, other countries were not convinced about the usefulness of a new round of sanctions. Germany's main concern was that tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean could spiral into a broader Turkey-EU crisis that would have immediate domestic consequences due to its large Turkish diaspora population. **Bulgaria** also opposed sanctions, fearing the repercussions of a deterioration of relations with its powerful southern neighbour and the consistently good connection between Bulgarian prime minister Boyko Borissov and president Erdoğan. Other EU countries, particularly those from central and eastern Europe, were afraid of the impact this could have on the cohesion of NATO. Spain and Italy were also in favour of appeasement, adding economic interests to the list of concerns, but above all feared a confrontation with Turkey and the shockwaves this could have in the Mediterranean. The southern European countries which had met in **Ajaccio** in September 2020 were visibly divided on the strategy to follow towards Turkey.

Joe Biden's victory in the US elections in November 2020 also contributed to beginning this phase of appeasement. Although the Turkish leadership tried to frame the new presidency as an opportunity for yet another reset, Joe Biden and secretary of state Antony Blinken's first statements and gestures did not comfort Turkey. In fact, Ankara felt increasingly cornered, which may be the reason it tried to tone down the rhetoric and reached out to most of the actors with whom it has had strained relations in recent years. This re-engagement strategy has borne fruit. Greece and Turkey held two new rounds of exploratory talks, which contributed to re-freezing the risk of conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean. The attempts to improve relations with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel are also visible and may soon produce results in the form of the normalisation of relations and official visits. In January 2021, Macron and Erdoğan also exchanged **letters** vowing to resume communication and mend ties. Even in an interview in which Macron denounced Turkey's interference in French domestic politics, the French president noted a

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change in Erdoğan's desire to re-engage in the relationship and **argued** that "We need a dialogue with Turkey. We must do everything so that it does not turn its back on Europe and go towards more religious extremism or negative geopolitical choices for us".

The US elections also modified the EU's position. Europeans expect the new administration to play a constructive role in securing the current phase of de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean or, at worst, to coordinate with the EU to face a potentially defiant Turkey. This was a powerful argument for the EU not to rush its decisions, and among other things the December **European Council** agreed that "the EU will seek to coordinate on matters relating to Turkey and the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean with the United States".

The need to stabilise Turkey's economy was also a powerful argument for appeasement. The pandemic has hit strategic sectors such as the tourism and travel industries and has aggravated previous economic challenges (inflation, depreciation of the lira, lack of international trust in those responsible for Turkey's economic and monetary policies). Hence, Turkey's economy needed the shift from threats to diplomacy. But the sudden **dismissal** of the central bank chief, a move that was poorly received by investors, sent a warning signal. The economy may not be a strong enough buffer to prevent a crisis if short-term political benefits are at stake.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the successful UN-sponsored talks that allowed the formation of an interim government in Libya. This did not trigger the phase of EU–Turkey de-escalation and it was not a product of it, but it eased a major source of friction between Turkey and France. Although the effects are less visible, the ongoing reconciliation between Qatar – Turkey’s most solid regional ally – and Saudi Arabia and the UAE following the Al-Ula summit in January 2021 may also help; certainly it has contributed to the larger feeling that the regional confrontation had already reached certain limits.

At this point, everyone knows that EU–Turkey relations are a minefield. Both parties are aware of where the landmines are planted but neither the EU nor Turkey have made a real effort to disarm them.

What could go wrong?

Many in the EU may feel relieved and tempted to turn to more urgent crises than that of the Eastern Mediterranean. This is understandable but would be a mistake. At this point everyone knows that EU–Turkey relations are a **minefield**. Both parties are aware of where the landmines are planted (human rights, Cyprus, the Kurdish issue, migration, etc.) but neither the EU nor Turkey have made a real effort to disarm them. The priority when trying to avoid an accident is to identify the factors that could suddenly increase tension so that they can be contained.

Turkey’s domestic politics are one of the most apparent risks on this list. Short-term individual interests may prevail over long-term and national ones. If Erdoğan finds himself in a situation of domestic political weakness, he could easily play the nationalist card and the Eastern Mediterranean would be one of the most appealing scenarios. If Erdoğan goes ahead with the idea of promoting the “two-state solution”, or worse, a Crimea-like annexation in Cyprus, a radically different situation would be created. Sanctions would inevitably follow and NATO would face a major internal crisis. Although it would not have the same effect, a new migration crisis could also ruin this phase of appeasement. In all these areas, the positions taken by Cyprus, Greece and the EU as a whole can increase the chances of disruption, particularly if they feed Turkey’s grievances and confrontational discourses.

The violations of human rights and the erosion rule of law in Turkey, with constant attacks on dissenting voices and opposition leaders, will continue to negatively affect

relations. History suggests that this factor alone will not be enough to trigger a crisis with Turkey. Nevertheless, the lack of political progress will hamper the application of the positive agenda, particularly if a vote by the European Parliament is needed to implement it. So unless Turkey’s authorities radically change the way they deal with internal dissent, the positive agenda will remain limited and will have lesser capacities to prevent or buffer a crisis.

EU domestic politics could also harm the current phase of appeasement. It “**takes two to tango**” and Turkey has been the subject of multiple episodes of acute politicisation in member states’ elections over the last two decades, often connected with parallel politicisation processes in Turkey. One of the clearest examples was in 2017 when Turkey’s constitutional referendum coincided with a crowded electoral cycle in Europe (Netherlands, France, Germany and Austria, among others). In October 2021, Germany will hold elections. So far, Germany has been a stabilising force in the tense dynamics between Turkey, the EU and some member states, but political changes in Germany – Merkel is no longer the CDU candidate – will open a period of uncertainty. France, whose president has blamed Erdoğan for **interfering** in domestic politics, also goes to the polls in 2022 and is arguably one of the countries where Turkey is most present in the political and public debate, often connected to other controversial topics such as migration and religiosity.

External actors could also have a destabilising effect. It is too early to say whether the current détente between Turkey and some Arab countries will last, and even if Cairo and Riyadh mend ties with Ankara, it will be tougher for Abu Dhabi. The UAE has been very active in the Eastern Mediterranean in the last two years, has a preferential relationship with France, and will continue to support the idea that Turkey is a hostile actor that needs to be contained. Another destabilising force is Russia. As mentioned, this is the country with most to gain if the EU and NATO are divided and distracted. Moscow has a visible interest in further weakening the EU and NATO and Turkey is one of the buttons it could push.

What kind of engagement?

Considering the accumulation of risks, the current phase of appeasement appears to be a positive development but one whose foundations are not solid enough. Unilateral gestures, inflammatory speeches and miscalculation could trigger a new phase of escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean and further backsliding in EU–Turkey relations. In other words, appeasement may

work as a short-term, second-best option but should not be the goal of the EU's policies vis-à-vis Turkey.

France has been the most outspoken proponent of the need to contain Turkey. Some of its arguments are compelling. For instance, that the current Turkish leader may easily understand the language of power while misinterpreting promises of dialogue and cooperation as signs of weakness to be exploited. However, it is key to define what kind of relationship the EU and Turkey aim to build before concluding whether containment will help reach that goal or divert from it. Are the EU and Turkey willing to live side by side with an adversarial neighbour in the Eastern Mediterranean? Are they ready to accept losses provided that their rivals' are higher? Is this a battle worth fighting while the post-COVID multipolar world is reordering?

Should the EU (and Turkey) agree that they want to avoid solidifying their rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean and that they have more to gain by rediscovering dialogue and switching to a policy of engagement, some changes are needed on both sides. Turkish analysts are better placed to provide sensible advice for Ankara. As for Brussels, this is the **list of ingredients the EU should incorporate into its Turkey policy before the foundations of appeasement start shaking again.**

- 1) **Cohesion.** Visible divisions over how to react to new provocations in the Eastern Mediterranean or elsewhere and threats of sanctions without ensuring the consensus exists to back them only increase the Turkish perception that the EU is weak. Ankara may be more prepared to create increasingly intractable situations, always pushing to know where the limits lie. Increasing EU cohesion on how to deal with Turkey will require intensive discussion behind the scenes in which all member states should strive think in terms of EU-wide long-term interests, leaving short-term political calculations behind and avoiding borrowing external actors' interests and visions on Turkey, be they those of the US, Russia or the Gulf Countries.
- 2) **Frankness.** The EU should be able to send clear, unequivocal and precise messages to Turkey. Too many expectations have been disappointed, for instance on mobility. In other areas, such as the shrinking space for civil society and dissenting voices, the EU has not been outspoken enough. A high-level political dialogue cannot resume without progress in this domain. And this is an area with ample room for concertation with the new US administration in order to send the exact same message. A change is indispensable. On the one hand, because the current backsliding goes against the very idea that Turkey aspires to be part of the same political community

as the other members of the EU (whatever form this community may take). On the other, because the lack of progress in this field will most likely prevent any attempt to deepen and widen cooperation with Turkey, undermining the credibility needed to deliver on the so-called positive agenda which should, in turn, create incentives to work towards aligning positions on the Eastern Mediterranean issue.

- 3) **Acknowledgement.** The EU should try to empathise with and accommodate the concerns of Turkey's elites and the population at large. Some of Turkey's complaints that certain initiatives seek to isolate the country are well-founded and may be countered by

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inviting Turkey to join regional platforms such as the East Med Gas Forum. However, deconstructing the deep societal mistrust on both sides will be a titanic longer-term effort, but one that is much needed. For instance, the EU has not been credible enough in sending the message that a weaker, impoverished or destabilised Turkey is not in the EU's interests. Far too many in Turkey have the opposite impression and more intense engagement with all segments of the Turkish population is needed to change this perception. For instance, during the pandemic, the EU could show more visible solidarity with Turkey. It should be treated as part of the family, albeit a relative with whom relations have not always been easy. This is an area where the EU should take advantage of the positive image some of its member states retain in Turkey, of which Spain is one.

- 4) **Segmentation.** The European Council endorsed the idea of holding a multilateral conference for the Eastern Mediterranean. Yet, doubts persist about its feasibility, the preconditions for all partners reaching an agreement on the agenda, and the actors around the table. If there is a chance of holding such a conference, perhaps taking advantage of a détente between Turkey and Egypt, it should be explored. Yet, it would not be wise to entangle all the contentious issues (maritime delimitations, security, energy issues, migration) as part of a great bargain. Quite the opposite – it would be better to explore them independently and only with the countries with most at stake. In that respect, reinforcing the bilateral talks between Greece and Turkey, exploring alternative tracks (dialogues with mayors could make an interesting contribution) and studying whether the EU can offer positive incentives to move them forward should be explored independently of the possibility of holding a larger multilateral conference or achieving progress in the other areas.

5) **Recovery.** Too many issues have estranged Turkey from the EU and vice versa. But the pandemic and above all the need to enhance the economic recovery should bring them closer, if only because of the intensity of economic and societal ties. Room should be made to further include Turkey (and all the other candidate countries) within the EU's economic recovery and reconstruction roadmap. Doing this will also require Turkey to make some signals, particularly regarding its commitment to the green transition, as it is one of the few countries that has not ratified the Paris Agreement. This is an area that is worth exploring, being the perfect example of a positive-sum game and one with major consequences for the Eastern Mediterranean. A recent survey published by **GMFUS** shows that this idea is well-received by Turkish public opinion. Besides the green transition, this joint recovery strategy should also include other aspects that are vital for Turkey (and for the other countries of the Eastern Mediterranean) such as tourism, international mobility, trade, connectivity and rescaled global value chains.