



ATLANTIC MEMO #21

Seizing Opportunities from Turkey's Growing Influence

Atlantic Community members agree that Turkey is becoming an increasingly important regional player and an indispensable ally to the United States and the European Union. During a special analysis week on Turkey – launched after numerous news outlets warned Ankara's so-called new foreign policy represents a shift East – our members developed the following suggestions to ensure Turkey will continue to be a constructive ally.

1. The US and the EU must embrace Turkey's multidimensional foreign policy.

Most atlantic-community.org members agree that Turkey's recent active engagement in the Middle East should not be interpreted as a turn East (Celik), but as a diversification of its foreign policy (Avci). By showing its newly found confidence as a regional player and mediator, Ankara has been demonstrating what an invaluable asset it can be as a partner (Morris). Brussels and Washington should keep in mind that complex states never have just one geo-political direction and need to realize that treating every controversial action as a betrayal of the West is counterproductive (Jackson).

Albeit a far from perfect ally, the US and the EU need to become more embracing of Turkey by treating it as a respected partner without condescension (Morris). Instead of approaching Turkey's relation with Iran with great suspicion, the US and especially the EU must keep in mind that Turkey and Iran are long-time geopolitical rivals (Jackson). Washington and Brussels should focus on the benefits Turkish-Iranian diplomatic ties could provide them (Dahhan), including alleviating the strained relation between Iran and the West, and access to the world's second-largest gas reserves. Turkey is in fact key to Europe's energy diversification (Lawson) as Ankara can play a crucial role in overcoming the remaining hurdles to the realization of the Nabucco pipeline project that will decrease EU dependence on Russian gas imports (Davidovic). Washington should aim to further expand its cooperation with Ankara, in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, where stability is in the interest of both parties (Katulis).

2. The EU needs to demonstrate its commitment to the accession process.

The EU has been losing leverage over Turkey, which is showing signs of reform fatigue, due to the perceived uncertainty about the EU accession process (Avci). Therefore, atlantic-community.org members agree that it is crucial for the EU to:

1. *Take an active stance in the unification of Cyprus.* As the EU allowed Cyprus to join without making the resolution of the Greek-Cypriot dispute a prerequisite for its accession, EU membership has become a chimera for Ankara, as it is well aware Cyprus would use its veto-power to try and decide their bilateral dispute in its favor (Theiler). Resolving the Greek-Cypriot dispute will also serve to improve EU-NATO relations in the context of the Berlin Plus agreement, as Turkey would then stop using its veto-power against Cyprus and could start contributing constructively to crisis management. (Mazzucelli).
2. *Address public opposition towards Turkey's accession in the EU:* Negative public opinion in the EU has worked as a brake on constructive collaboration, and therefore an aggressive perceptions shifting campaign is needed (Kline), starting at the office of the newly elected President of the European Council. This will also serve to increase understanding and acceptance of Turkish immigrants in Europe (Follick). Most members agree that, as Morris put it, "the EU needs to commit wholeheartedly to building a multicultural identity that goes beyond the religious divide," whilst continuing to show a strong and clear human rights line (Palmer) and by pressing Turkey to make progress on minority rights (Foster).

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