

## An Unusual Development of Turkey-EU Relations in 2015-2016

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to analyze Turkey's foreign policy (TFP) towards the European Union (EU) in the context of Syrian refugee crisis in 2015. In lieu of Syrian refugee crisis, Turkey and the EU had been tied up with a condition of interdependence. In such situation, Turkish government demonstrated that its optimum option was to mutually cooperate with the EU in managing Syrian refugees on one hand and to put forward its EU membership by re-energizing EU-Turkey relations on the other. Turkey was obliged to implement a refugee containment policy in exchange for receiving financial assistance and other incentives from the EU. It is argued that Turkey's commitment to the EU in 2015 was, at its utmost and enduring effort, to reaffirm Turkish European identity in the EU community. However, such kind of interaction appeared to be short-lived because it was based on an immediate challenge and a short-term strategy. Thus,

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the result is a volatile relations and a return to their previous contentious politics.

**Keywords:** Turkish foreign policy (TFP), Syrian refugees, the European Union (EU), Turkey-EU relations, foreign policy analysis

## พัฒนาการที่ไม่ปกติของความสัมพันธ์ระหว่าง ตุรกีและสหภาพยุโรปในปี 2015-2016

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### บทคัดย่อ

บทความชิ้นนี้ศึกษานโยบายต่างประเทศของตุรกีที่มีต่อสหภาพยุโรปในปี 2015 ภายใต้บริบทวิกฤตผู้ลี้ภัยชาวซีเรีย นับตั้งแต่วิกฤตผู้ลี้ภัยชาวซีเรียเริ่มขยายตัวในปี 2014 ตุรกีกับสหภาพยุโรปตกอยู่ในสภาพที่ต้องพึ่งพาระหว่างกันมากขึ้น ในสถานการณ์ลักษณะดังกล่าวตุรกีได้แสดงท่าทีให้เห็นว่าตัวเลือกทางนโยบายที่เหมาะสมที่สุดคือการร่วมมือกับสหภาพยุโรปในการรับมือกับวิกฤตผู้ลี้ภัยชาวซีเรียไปพร้อมกับการผลิตันวาระการเข้าเป็นสมาชิกสหภาพยุโรปของตุรกีด้วยความพยายามในการเจริญสัมพันธ์ใหม่ด้วยเหตุนี้ตุรกีจึงยอมรับนโยบายการควบคุมผู้ลี้ภัยชาวซีเรียให้อยู่ในตุรกีด้วยการแลกกับการช่วยเหลือด้านการเงินและแรงจูงใจอื่นๆ จากสหภาพยุโรป อย่างไรก็ตามความสัมพันธ์ในลักษณะดังกล่าวมีความผันผวนสูงเพราะตั้งอยู่บนความท้าทายเฉพาะหน้าและ

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ยุทธศาสตร์ระยะสั้น ทำที่ของตุรกีต่อสหภาพยุโรปมิได้  
เป็นไปโดยธรรมชาติหากแต่เพื่อเป้าหมายทางการ  
เมืองในการต่อยอดอัตลักษณ์ความเป็นยุโรปของตุรกี  
ในเวทียุโรปอย่างสม่ำเสมอ ดังนั้น เมื่อวิกฤตผู้ลี้ภัย  
ภายในประเทศสมาชิกของสหภาพยุโรปได้รับการ  
แก้ไข ทำที่ระหว่างตุรกีและสหภาพยุโรปจึงเปลี่ยนผัน  
กลับไปสู่การเมืองที่ไม่ลงรอยกันเหมือนเดิม

**คำสำคัญ:** ความสัมพันธ์ตุรกี-สหภาพยุโรป นโยบาย  
ต่างประเทศของตุรกี วิกฤตผู้ลี้ภัยชาว  
ซีเรีย สหภาพยุโรป

## Introduction

Turkey and the EU engagement had been dramatically intensified in 2015-2016. This paper examines the Turkey-EU relations concerning the influx of Syrian refugees in 2015-2016. It concentrates on a triangle relation between the Syrian refugee irregular movement, Turkish foreign policy (TFP), and EU's response to the crisis. It can be seen that Syrian irregular migration was a condition for the recent relations between the EU and Turkey, posing a direct and indirect impact on both sides. The EU, therefore, attempted to deal with this crisis indirectly by using Turkey as an intermediary to confront and contain the crisis. Notwithstanding this can be observed as such, this paper demonstrates that Turkey was trying to reorganize itself to control the situation from the two sides. On the one side, Turkey had to calculate its short and long term national interests in order to set an agenda with the EU, especially on the issue of EU integration and membership. On the other side, dealing with the influx of Syrian refugees was not only a matter of humanitarian task, but it also encompassed economic, social, political, and security issues that were gradually becoming an incremental burden for the Turkish government in the long term. How can we understand a complex interdependence between Turkey and the EU in the context of this crisis? And what drives Turkey to pursue such kind of policy path? These will be guiding questions that this paper is trying to tackle.

To this end, the paper is divided into three sections. Section one will demonstrate a historical context of Turkey-EU relations by arguing that Turkey-EU relations were in a positive turn in 2015 because of the influx of Syrian irregular migration. The EU was aware that their Schengen zone cannot be protected effectively without cooperation with Turkey.

Section two will concentrate on a discussion of the Syrian refugee crisis as a factor that contributes to a making of an intensive Turkey-EU relations in 2015. In section three, the paper will examine a motive behind and a condition around the TFP towards the EU. It is contended that because a condition of interdependence did not encourage the EU and Turkey to act unilaterally, thus they have to commit themselves to cooperation and political exchanges. In this context, Turkey attempted to take this opportunity to reaffirm its European identity and rebuild its image in the EU community.

### **I: Turkish Foreign Policy and the EU: a New Turn in 2015**

History has always been treated as an important source for political analysis. In order to have a rational sense of the case, this section demonstrates a historical context of Turkey-EU relations. The relations between Turkey and the EU can be traced back to the Ankara agreement of 1963, which was noted as a starting point of their official contact (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey, 2015). An important stage has nevertheless taken place in 1999 when Turkey had been rendered a status of the EU candidate. Prior to 2002, it was revealed that Turkey's goal of becoming the EU member had constantly been put forward and their willingness to comply with EU requirements has never been given up. The Justice and Development Party (AKP), in order to qualify Turkey as a full member of the EU, passed series of constitutional amendments and harmonization packages. To emphasize, Muge Aknur (2012, p. 304), a Turkish scholar of democratic consolidation, asserts that these amendments and packages aimed at democratization reforms and consequently the EU launched the accession negotiation with Turkey in 2005.

However, under the leadership of AKP at the same period, it paradoxically appears that Turkey has shifted a strategy of its foreign policy towards the Middle East at the expense of the European image and identity. This can be seen by a hostile rhetoric of the current President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his administration to the West (Akyol, 2015). Even on the occasion of the 2015 Paris March when world leaders rallied for solidarity against a terror attack, Davutoglu was not very well perceived and welcomed by Western media and leaders. In the same vein, Erdogan appeared on the news accusing the West of being hypocritical over the Paris Attack (Yackley, 2015). To put the matter more complicated, Turkey has been accused of acting as a gateway for Muslim jihadists to transit them to Syria and join Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Vick, 2015). Turkey prior to mid-2015 seems to be perceived as “other” to the European identity according to European media. Even though some analysts claim that Turkey has been a significant partner for the EU in term of trade by contributing 129,013 million euro in 2014 of its share in EU's economy, securing the EU's top five in export markets (European Commission, 2015). Yet, its image still appears to be negative to the EU community.

However, after European refugee crisis embarked in 2015, a shift of the EU's policy towards Turkey was evidenced. Since mid-2015 the Turkey-EU relations have changed to a positive direction and have been seen in a different pattern of interaction. The EU authorities expressed their willingness to cooperate with Turkey in many fronts, portraying Turkey as a real strategic partner and good friend (European Council of the European Union, 2015). In the same way, Turkish foreign policy towards the EU has emphasized on many levels of international cooperation. What was happening around this volatile and unusual

development? What are the conditions that turn things upside down? Undoubtedly, a new pattern of interaction between the two parties cannot be comprehended without turning our attention to the salience of Syrian refugee crisis.

## **II: Syrian Refugee Crisis as a linkage of interdependence between Turkey and the EU**

Syrian refugee crisis marks a historic milestone of a man-made catastrophe not only for Turkey and EU policymakers but also to humanity at large. It was reported that in 2015 more than 4 million Syrians had fled their homes to seek a safe haven and better life in their neighboring countries as well as Europe (UNHCR, 2015a). Turkey alone has now received more than 2.4 million Syrian refugees since the outbreak of Syrian civil war in 2011 (Guldogan, 2015). From the beginning, Turkey was willing to accept refugees with an open door policy and calling the refugee a “guest”. Later on, in 2013, a new Law on Foreigners and International Protection was adopted by Parliament, thereby giving a temporary protection status to Syrian refugees. The first-hand Turkish authority that has to deal with the Syrian influx was the immigration office at the borders under the preview of the Directorate General of Migration Management (GOC). UNHCR also notes that GOC has been the sole institution responsible for asylum matters in Turkey (UNHCR, 2015b). In the matter of providing camps for refugees, Turkish authority under Turkish Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (AFAD) joined forces with Turkish Red Crescent to accommodate refugees. Apart from these, Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) has been also another actor, coming from the non-governmental organization, for helping



refugees in term of humanitarian assistance. The main international organization that specifically has been dealing with handling refugee crisis in Syria has been UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

As it can be seen, these are a number of national and international actors that jointly managed the issue in 2015-2016 on the ground and on the policy levels in Turkey's soil. It shows that Turkish authorities alone cannot hold this burden whether financially or non-financially without the support of other sectors. The reality on the ground, however, demonstrated that a combination of governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations had been formed to handle the refugee crisis. Notwithstanding, 1 million refugees were able to spread out to Europe in an unprecedented wave. It was reported that, by the end of 2015, 34,000 refugees had reached Greece through Turkey by land route, while a total number of 818,654 refugees in Greece were ready to make their way to other European countries (BBC, 2015). This phenomenon was undoubtedly affecting relations between Turkey and the EU directly, though the EU did not experience the first-hand crisis similar to Turkey.

It can be said that the relations between Turkey and the EU become more complex and constructive in the recent times because of the Syrian refugee crisis. The EU realized that Turkey was a strategic partner because of its geopolitics and proximate location to Syria and the EU. As the statistic shows, the astronomical number of Syrian refugees was getting to European countries from Turkey. Similarly, Turkey was now containing the largest number of Syrian refugees as well. The best option as a safe haven for Syrian refugees in the eyes of the EU could be

nowhere else but Turkey. It was quite clear that the EU was concerned with a challenge of securing its Schengen regime, which was built on the shared principle of free movement without a frontier. Kemal Kirisci (2015), a Turkish expert in Turkish foreign policy and migration policy, argues that to seal off the internal border of the Schengen zone was not a good strategy because it was costly, uneasy, and economically unwise. It also disturbed the EU single market, which benefits all members including Turkey. The EU had recently been trying to figure out about policy options in order to encounter the refugee crisis. It appears that, after series of meeting with Turkish authorities in November 2015, the EU was able to convince Turkey to join hand in hand with the union in order to stem the Syrian refugee influx to the EU in exchange of a new turn of Turkey-EU relations. With visa liberalization, opening new chapters of EU accession requirements, 3.2 billion euro, and other incentives Turkey was offered, it was, however, uncertain at the time that whether such honeymoon between Turkey and the EU was to last long.

It is important to note that Turkey has organized itself around the crisis in a number of ways. Legally, in April 2013 Turkey had approved the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, which was fully in force in 2014. In effect, this law rendered a status of temporary protection to refugees and was abided by a principle of *non-refoulement*. In an international level, Turkey has signed an agreement with the EU on the readmission of persons residing without authorization in December of the same year, which was fully in force in 2016. This important agreement was signed as a preventive measure from the EU's side to control the influx of Syrian refugees that come from Turkey. As it can be predicted, the content of the agreement entailed

an obligation of Turkey to receive irregular migrants that came to Europe through Turkey. Some scholars observe that the Turkey-EU agreement was one of the main factors that contributed to an increase in the number of Syrian refugees to Europe in 2015 by noting that the news about the effect of the agreement could easily get to refugees by hearsay (Yazgan, 2015, p. 183). Notably, in 2013 the number of Syrian refugees moving to Europe was very minimal due to the fact that the escalation of the Syrian civil war and invasion by ISIS were not as severe as it has been between 2014 and 2015. Be that as it may, it can hardly be concluded at the moment that whether the legal implication on the refugee condition imposed by Turkey and the EU or the root-cause of Syrian war had a direct correlation with the current influx of Syrian refugees to Europe. Nonetheless, the fact that can be clearly seen was that Turkey and the EU relations were constrained at the time by a condition of its interdependence, which consequently paved a way to a joint cooperation in handling their common burden and collective action problem.

Having demonstrated that the recent development of the Turkey and the EU relations were largely connected to the way in which they cooperate on the issue of Syrian refugees. In 2015, Turkey and the EU communication can be observed by analyzing their formal contacts throughout the year. Important events and meetings can be enumerated as follows: in May 2015 the EU-Turkey working dinner was held to discuss on the preventing irregular migration flow from Turkey; in September 2015 informal meeting of the EU Heads of State or Government was discussed on the call for reinforcing dialogue with Turkey at all levels; in October 2015 important agreement “EU-Turkey

Action Plan” was released; and on 29 November 2015 EU-Turkey Summit was held in Brussels. In this regard, Al Jazeera (2015) reports that Ahmet Davutoglu was warmly welcomed by 28 EU member states in a friendly manner while finalizing their agreement in the EU-Turkey Summit. It is important to note that, out of the above official interactions between two sides, the starting point of international outcry and serious commitment by governments can be referred to the loss and death toll of refugees in the Aegean Sea. Yazgan, Utku, and Sirkeci (2015, p. 182) observe that the issue got into the international political agenda particularly because the picture of the lifeless body of Alan Kurdi, a small Kurdish child from Syria, was spread out by media on September 2, 2015. As it can be perceived, a new pattern of EU-Turkey relations in 2015 was driven by an ethical commitment, shared liberal values, and common challenges. Bargaining and negotiation for the national interests between two parties also played an important role in shaping the outcome of their migration policy.

When it comes to the issue of EU-Turkey relations, it cannot go without paying attention to the leaders' expressions in the time of the EU-Turkey summit taking place on the 29th November 2015. Davutoglu's expression was clear that his government was willing to join force with the EU in order to serve the interests of the EU counterpart and to cooperate on the common challenges. He also saw the crisis of Syrian refugees as an opportunity to refresh the relations between the two parties as he states during the event,

“today is a historic day in our accession process to the EU with EU leaders today we will be sharing the destiny of our continent, global challenges of the economic crisis as well

as regional geopolitical challenges in front of us, including migration issues,” (Daily Sabah, 2015).

More interestingly, in order to summarize the current cooperation, he defines the EU-Turkey summit as a new milestone between both parties by saying that “I am grateful to all European leaders for this new beginning” (Guarascio & Emmott, 2015). As it can be expected, the comments from EU leaders also turned out to be in a positive way. Though there was a mix of different expressions but they held a similar line of thinking that Turkey was an essential partner for solving the EU irregular migration crisis. For instance, Angela Merkel, Donald Tusk, and Francois Hollande put forward a similar expectation that the current EU-Turkey relations will contribute to save a Schengen zone and help manage the Syrian refugee crisis in an indirect and direct ways (Reuters, Nov 29, 2015). Thus, the official high-level meetings between both parties showed that the EU could not effectively handle the crisis by its own shoulder, while Turkey was also looking for a company to share a burden. Both sides had been engaging with each other more frequently and constructively in 2015 and that was a result of a significant condition of the interdependence and the need for international cooperation.

### **III: Turkey’s Foreign Policy towards the EU in 2015:**

#### **Reaffirmation of European Identity**

The recent development of Turkey-EU relations in 2015 had been undoubtedly shaped by an agenda of the influx of Syrian refugees into the EU. As it can be observed, the Syrian crisis had posed a direct impact on Turkey but its implications were beyond what Turkey expected and were far-reaching towards the EU. From a zero problem

with neighbors to an open door policy is a gradual adjustment of Turkish foreign policy to handle the refugee crisis. With this policy, Turkey was at the time hosting more than 2.4 million Syrian refugees in camps. Many of them took this opportunity to use Turkey as a gateway in order to pass through European countries causing unprecedented concerns to the EU (Guldogan, 2015). It was not yet certain at the time on how the relation between Turkey and EU will become next, but what was obvious was that the constraints and crisis had shaped a common agenda and determined Turkey-EU relations now and beyond. In the followings, I will give an analysis by examining Turkey-EU's common problem, a condition of interdependence, and policy choice subsequently.

Firstly, it is essential for us to define a policy problem concerning the Syrian refugee crisis within which the EU and Turkey were facing. For the EU, the most important concern was the protection of Schengen zone as Donald Tusk, the European Council President, stated: "without control on our external borders, Schengen will become history" (Guldogan, 2015). Thus, the main cause that was now challenging the principle of Schengen was the irregular migrations of Syrians. As the data are shown, at the end of 2015 more than 1 million refugees had reached the EU illegally. Hence, in order to save the Schengen, it was for the EU to find a way to stem the irregular migration, especially the Syrian refugees getting coming from Turkey. As it can be expected, the best option that the EU can resort to was to request a cooperation from Turkey in order to contain a number of Syrian refugees on the Turkish soil. Thus, it can be said that protection of the Schengen area was a main policy problem of the EU at the moment and it already

occupied a priority of the political agenda across the EU countries.

As for Turkey, the problem concerning the coming of Syrian refugees was not about the irregular migration, but how to handle and manage more than 2.5 million refugees inside the country. Turkish authorities had announced from the beginning of the Syrian crisis that Turkey was ready to try its best to serve as a safe haven for the refugees. It was reported that by the end of October 2014 Turkey only received 250 million US dollars from international donors. At the time, Turkey had been dealing with the management of refugee affairs mainly by its own capacities and resources. However, as the number of refugees increased Turkey was reorganizing itself to the response to the problem. One of the smart strategies was to diversify a number of Syrian refugees to other countries. But since the political will of other countries can hardly be reached Turkey adopt a new role as being passive to prevent the refugees moving towards the EU. By adopting inactive policy orientation towards irregular migration, Turkey was able to transfer a burden to the EU counterpart ingeniously without committing an unethical act and violating international norms. Thus, it can be said that the Syrian irregular migration to the EU served the interest of the Turkish national interest because it reduced the burden of the Turkey in handling a massive number of refugees.

As it can be seen now, Turkey and the EU did share a common problem on the existence of the Syrian refugees on their soils. On the one side, Syrian refugees caused a problem of internal security management in the EU countries, on the others, they challenged the implementation of the shared principle of the Schengen at the same time. This is to say that the movement of Syrians towards the EU did

not cause a problem to Turkey but if they remained in Turkey then it becomes a Turkish problem. Whether or not Syrians perceived that they had become an intervening factor, Turkey and the EU found themselves in a knot of interdependence. Hence, the case at hand reveals that, at the initial stage, the TFP was negatively correlated with the condition and interest of the EU and if they acted unilaterally they would end up with a negative-sum game. The potential and positive way to unlock the potential was to realize the nature of interdependence and work along with it. In this regard, the issue at hand can be interpreted that the relations between the two parties were not exclusively revolved around the refugee crisis alone but rather connected to multilayer issues such as economics, socio-political security, and especially the EU accession agenda. Thus, this was how interdependence opened up a door for international cooperation.

Secondly, the perceived nature of interdependence in the era of globalization between the two parties renders the fact that their policy choices reflected not only the problem they were facing but also a direction they were moving forward. Turkey might have decided to remain silent on the irregular migration if it preferred because it comparatively served the interest of reducing the pool of the refugees. However, it was not rational enough to act as such in the interdependence condition. Combining a threat, opportunity, and situation on the ground into the analysis, it was rather more rational for Turkey to seize this opportunity in order to attain wider and long-term national interests through cooperation with the EU. As Davutoglu claimed, such situation opened a new beginning between Turkey and the EU on many other issues. On the other side, the EU had actually



more than one policy choice to deal with the Syrian irregular migration crisis such as building fences around its internal and external borders as well as implementing a push-back policy. But, such policy choices did not fit very well in line with the EU shared principle and ethical norms, also it was not effective in term of cost-benefit calculation. The best way to preserve the Schengen zone was to stop the Syrian irregular migration coming from Turkey and the best option was to work hand in hand with Turkey in order to cope with the crisis. It cannot go without saying that the policy choice of cooperation and the common ground between the two were derived from a consideration of the interdependence, mutual interests, and political constraints.

Thirdly, because there was no other option that was best feasible to combat the common challenge between Turkey and the EU at the time except a mutual cooperation. It was undoubted that the leaders of two sides had come to realize about their burden-sharing and a win-win bargaining. As the crisis was unfolding, they decided to engage more on high-level communications between two parties in order to handle the ongoing crisis and uncertainty in the future. The EU was afraid of an increasing number of the influx of the Syrian refugees, which could hardly estimate without a cooperation from the Turkish side. In the meantime, Turkey could hardly predict when the civil war in Syria would come to an end, and therefore it had no precise prediction about the incoming number of the Syrian refugee into the country. A liberal perspective portrays that the uncertainty of the future situation and about state's behavior can be coped with by exchanging information and communication. As a consequence, the EU decided to give a financial assistance worth 3.2 billion euro together with visa

liberalization, the opening of a new chapter for the Turkey's EU accession, and other stimuli. These incentives, however, have to be exchanged with a containment of the Syrian irregular migration inside Turkey. The deal though was at the time still in a drafting process, but it seems that both sides were able to claim an absolute gain for their political success. The recent undertakings between two sides, therefore, showed that, instead of acting unilaterally, they were trying their best bilaterally to clarify, rationalize, and overcome the existing crisis by having a shared vision, common problem, and mutual gains.

It cannot go without saying that the use of force and military mission was not relevant in order to handle the humanitarian crisis at hand. In the liberal democratic countries, it is perceived that the use of force and violent means will cause harm more than gain to one another because the world is connected in such a way that one's economic success/crisis depended on conditions of their counterparts. Also, democratic peace theorists assert that democracies will not fight against democracies, but rather they are likely to expand a liberal zone of peace with those who hold a set of shared liberal norms, values, and principles (Doyle, 2007; Oneal & Russett, 2000). As it can be seen, Turkey has been demonstrating to the EU counterpart since 1999 that they were and continues to be a loyal ally with the liberal democracy. In this regard, Renda (2011, 95-96) asserts that the transition of Turkish military power in the domestic politics to a civilian government was a part of a democratization process that was required by the requirement of the EU accession. It shows that issues of the low politics such as socio-economic challenge can become as important as the high politics. The TFP and the EU's external policies were not

there to win each other militarily, but rather to conquer a heart and mind of their counterpart with a soft power. This can be done with acting constantly with a shared value of liberal democracy and that was what Turkey was demonstrating to the EU that they were consistent with the European value and identity.

Lastly, the issue of identity significantly occupies a special position when it comes to a discussion of the relations between Turkey and the EU. Morocco was one that had been rejected from getting into the league of the EU due to the reason that it was not part of the European identity and geography (European Commission, 2009). In order not to fall into the same trap, as Bozdaglıoğlu (2003, pp. 45-56) reveals, Turkey had put a lot of energy in the past to convince the EU that they have a good faith in the liberal democracy and were no less European in term of the identity and geography. In my humble opinion, the recent undertakings and communication between Turkey and the EU in 2015 can be seen as an outcome of a rational choice process. While Turkey was taking this opportunity to reaffirm their European identity as Ahmet Davutoglu has declared in the EU-Turkey summit in Brussels that “We are European nations; the destiny of our continent belongs to all of you” (Daily Sabah, 2015), the EU counterpart similarly felt that it is essential to take Turkey as a strategic partner. It also appears that it was time for Turkey to push the ongoing negotiation into a serious bargaining by not only reaffirming the European identity but also integrating the short and long-term strategic plan for the future cooperation. However, there was a concern from scholars that the EU will only regard Turkey as a buffer zone between the origin of the refugees and the Schengen area (SETA, Vakfi, 2015). If this was the

case, it was predicted that their relations in the future will likely lead to a fragile condition and undermine international norms and cooperation between the two. Notwithstanding, the recent engagement between the two parties had already created a new momentum in a constructive turn by increasing multi-channels of interaction between the two sides. Though the EU-Turkey relations in 2017 appeared to be contentious again, the development of their relations in 2015 showed that the EU and Turkey were interdependent, cooperative, and positive at the time of Davutoglu's administration. In short, the 2015-2016 Turkey-EU relations were moving in a line with the reasoning that if the more socialization and engagement take place, then the more common identity will be shaped and the more mutual interests will be actualized.

In sum, this section demonstrated that the EU and Turkey had more than one policy choice, but they resort to cooperation because it was the best rational option that corresponded to the conditions, mutual interests, and political constraints at the time. It can be seen that the mutual cooperation in 2015-2016 paved a way for Turkey to re-energize its relations with the EU in a constructive engagement. In this regard, Turkey had attempted to demonstrate its consistency with European identity and the liberal democratic values in order to rebuild its image in the EU community. However, the post-Davutoglu era in 2017 had turned out to be another story of the same coin.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has demonstrated that the recent development of Turkey-EU relations in 2015-2016 was at its unusual peak due to their

immediate crisis and a short-term undertaking. Their uncommon alteration of interaction from its passive to active mode cannot be separated from the defining feature of globalization, which can be characterized by condition of interdependence and the need for international cooperation. The influx of the Syrian refugees into the EU appeared to be a threat and opportunity for both sides. Such condition, however, paved a way for both parties to re-energize their relations constructively in 2015. As it can be observed, the Turkey-EU relations prior to mid-2015 were not quite in a good mood, which can be perceived by the expression of Turkey's leaders and the way in which European leaders welcomed Ahmet Davutoglu in the global leaders' rally for the Paris Attack solidarity. However, it has not been until mid-2015 the EU's rapprochement to Turkey was obvious. Turkey was asked to engage seriously in the EU problem in order to mitigate Syrian irregular migration. Consequently, Turkey-EU relations appeared to be in a positive turn but were short-lived when Davutoglu resigned from the office. It has been argued in this paper that such liberal kind of 2015-2016 foreign policy was best suited to Turkey at the moment in order to deal with the EU affairs. The need for international cooperation allowed Turkey to turn a crisis into an opportunity. In this sense, the interdependence should be understood as a determining feature of Turkey-EU relations in this case because it determined a condition within which the two parties were required to bear the shared-burden commitment and resort to multi-channels of communication and cooperation. By this token, Turkey took such an opportunity to reaffirm its European identity and constant humanitarian commitment in order to remind the EU that its path towards the EU membership

should be reconsidered with a greater emphasis. Though the EU-Turkey relations in 2017 swung back to its normal contention, their engagement in 2015-2016 proved to be an unlikely positive development before the Turkish failed coup took place on 15th July 2016.

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### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> It is reported in “European Commission’s 20 Years of European Single Market” that the EU economic growth increases from 800 billion euro in 1992 to 2,800 billion euro in 2011 for the value of good exchanged (European Commission, 2012, 8).

<sup>2</sup> Renda (2011, p. 106), for example, casts some light on Turkey’s interdependence with her neighbors and concludes that “Turkey has gained a strong foothold in regional politics through the new mechanisms of interaction and its soft power”.

<sup>3</sup> On a different note, it can be roughly perceived from the “zero-contribution thesis”, which derived from a contribution of Mancur Olson (1965) and Russell Harding (1971, 1982), that bilateral agreement between the EU and Turkey was an attempt to manage the crisis within a small group (two parties), but the outcome affected a number of countries.

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