



Türkiye-EU Relations in Changing Geopolitical Parameters

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Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine forced the world into a different settlement with reflections on the unity and future of the European Union (EU) as well. Jean Monnet, one of the original architects of the European Union had said repeatedly that 'Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of solutions adopted for these crises'. This is indeed what the EU had been doing already during the euro, pandemic and the climate crisis. Carrying the strength of the name economic Europe, the EU has evolved into a strong and stable single currency and since the eurozone debt crisis, the bloc has also strengthened its financial system and monetary tools. More recently, in response to the Covid- 19 pandemic, the EU has developed converging economic structures and a common budgetary capacity. It also pooled the purchase of vaccines and laid the groundwork for a 'Europe of health'. And now, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, beyond the speedy implementation of sanctions against Moscow, the EU has understood the need for more pan-European decisions and unity for security and energy independence and has been taking concrete actions in several areas.

One of the most important outcomes of the war for the actions of the EU is the potential to turn the EU into a 'geopolitical power'. Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine is shaking up the EU, accelerating its evolution into a well-designed sovereign political power, complementing its existing economic strength. As a true geopolitical power the EU must become an anchor of stability for the European continent as a whole; symbol of democracy and political power against Russia's imperialist war and its threats to weaponize energy and food for destabilizing the whole world.

Needless to say, this is not easy. Russia's military campaign is running low but still dangerous, and with battle lines in Ukraine moving little in the past two months, both sides are facing significant attrition. And the outcome of the war, once thought to be a decisive Russian victory in a matter of hours, is far from clear. As Russia is aware of this, it is planning to weaponise its gas and oil advantages against a vulnerable EU till the unity of support in the EU breaks down as leaders face complaints from their constituencies against the rising heating and electricity bills. It looks unlikely to retreat, even if it ceases fighting it will do so only to revitalize its troops and arms.

In that sense Türkiye can be a great help in two ways. The first one is through its potential to be the mediator in this conflict. Türkiye's role as a mediator can be traced back indeed more than a decade. Even before this war started, the Turkish Foreign Ministry had a vision of Türkiye establishing itself as a mediating state in the world; as an example its brokering

indirect peace talks between Syria and Israel in 2008 can be given. And now backed with the success of the Ukrainian grain shipment deal it helped negotiate, Türkiye is hoping to eventually translate its position as a mediator or facilitator between Kyiv and Moscow into a peace agreement. Given the fact that Türkiye already facilitated high level talks in Antalya Diplomacy Forum back in March and that it is one of the rare countries holding a good relationship with both sides, it has substantial advantages. Peace between the warring parties will successfully complete EU's transition into a geopolitical power before the war of attrition breaks down the unity.

The second way is through Türkiye's role as a candidate country negotiating for membership into the EU and an important NATO member since 1952. With the war, the EU started acquiring a new dimension in defence as well. Following on from the Versailles summit in March, the EU has been reinforcing, enhancing and coordinating national and European investments in defence capabilities, has also established common financing initiatives such as the European Defence Fund and a new organisational structure to respond to cyber risks. In addition, most members of the EU are also NATO members as well. As a geopolitical power also needs to have strong military capability, the strong Turkish military assets, its defence vision and capabilities and its relationship with the EU will be boosting EU's geopolitical role.

To sum up, we have all witnessed the world going through transition, countries evolving into having different roles and perspectives. The EU has once more come up a long way into becoming a geopolitical power as a result of the crisis between Ukraine and Russia. It has been affected negatively, through gas and oil dependency on Russia creating economic recession in the EU with substantial reflection on the public opinion. As its potential role as a geopolitical power has been put in jeopardy because of this, for the reasons explained above Türkiye can be a great asset for impro-

ving the success of its desire. This will also be a good reason to improve the Turkish-EU relations as well, which has been stalling a lot recently. Both sides need each other to strengthen their position in the world and to guarantee peace and democracy.

