
Turkey and Italy: Interests and Cooperation in the Mediterranean and the Middle East

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Abstract

Both Turkey's and Italy's strategic centers lie outside the Mediterranean, in particular the North Atlantic and Europe, where their major alliances, namely NATO and EU, are located. Their gravitation towards these centers has involved the two countries in policy frameworks in the Mediterranean initiated by those alliances, such as the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean. This situation has been altered by the end of the Cold War and the weakening of the alliances' rationales and, even more so, by the post-September 11 American decision to intervene militarily in the Middle East. This intervention has shifted Turkey's and Italy's focus in their southern approaches from the Mediterranean to the Middle East. While Italy's shift is peripheral with respect to its foreign policy strategy and is mostly an opportunistic move, Turkey's shift may have a more structural significance and bring about changes in its strategic posture. Cooperation between Turkey and Italy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East involves less strategic-intense areas, such as developing structured economic cooperation in the area, support for small and medium sized firms, transport and energy security. In

this sense, the Union for the Mediterranean, if duly reformed, could offer opportunities for expanding cooperation.

Key Words

Turkey- Italy bilateral relations, EU, Middle East, Union for the Mediterranean.

Introduction

Turkey and Italy enjoy very good and cooperative relations, both bilaterally and in the framework of numerous international organizations and alliances to which they both belong. Both countries happen to have important historical and, currently, relevant geopolitical interests with respect to their southern neighbors in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. This article considers Turkey's and Italy's relations with the Mediterranean and the Middle East with a view to understand the similarities and differences in their strategic and policy approaches to southern areas and the two countries' ensuing prospects for cooperation as well as disagreement.

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The relative importance of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in Turkish and Italian grand strategies and foreign policies has traditionally depended on the significance of the two areas for the major alliances to which they both belong, namely NATO and the European Union (EU). In this sense, neither the Mediterranean nor the Middle East can have a central strategic significance for Turkey or Italy. The center is in the West and Europe, and the Mediterranean and the Middle East are bound to be, to a varying extent, peripheral to the former.

While Italy's shift is peripheral with respect to its foreign policy strategy and is mostly an opportunistic move, Turkey's shift may have a more structural significance and bring about changes in its strategic posture.

Until the end of the Cold War, the Mediterranean was undoubtedly more important for Turkey and Italy than the Middle East, consistent with the policies of their major alliances, which largely included the Mediterranean and stayed aloof of the Middle East. Beside their important political and economic bilateral relations in the Mediterranean, Turkey and Italy engaged in successive Euro-Mediterranean policies: the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) from 1995-2008, and, since 2008, the emerging Union for the Mediterranean

(UFM). Furthermore, they are also engaged in the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue.

In the 2000s, developments in the international and domestic arenas contributed to promoting shifts in the balance between the Mediterranean and the Middle East for both the alliances and the two countries. These shifts were not promoted by the alliances, which merely tried to adjust to them. However, neither the NATO-initiated Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) towards the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), nor the long-standing EU-GCC relationship managed to expand the Euro-Atlantic alliances' outreach to the Middle East. As a matter of fact, the alliances did not really move from the Mediterranean. The later shifts were promoted by the United States alone and with the initiatives it took in response to the September 11 attacks. In agreement or disagreement with the United States, Turkey and Italy began to look towards the Middle East. They are now doing so to an extent that seems unprecedented in the post-World War II era, an extent that is rather reminiscent of historical times.

The question is whether Turkey's and Italy's shift towards the Middle East remains in tune with or contradicts their central strategic tenets. The present situation confronts us with the question of how the changing balance between the Mediterranean and the Middle East is reflected in Turkey's and Italy's foreign policies and grand strategies. Are the two countries' policies a harbinger of

alterations in the grand strategies of the alliances or are they going to collide with those of their long-standing allies? Are the ongoing changes bringing Turkey and Italy nearer or further away from one another?

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Against this backdrop, this article highlights the role of the Mediterranean in Turkish and Italian respective interests. Then, it illustrates the shifts that are taking place as a consequence of new developments in the 2000s and the impact of such shifts on the two countries' strategies and policies. Finally, it looks into the consequences on the two countries' relations that could stem from current shifts in the balance between Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Euro-Mediterranean interests.

The Southern Approaches' Relevance to Turkey and Italy

An illustration of the respective importance for Turkey and Italy of the various Mediterranean and Middle Eastern areas and the relative weight these areas have for them in terms of national political and economic interests

is necessary. To that purpose, among the array of possible benchmarks, let us consider one economic and one political indicator, namely (a) trade relations, and (b) participation in multilateral Mediterranean policy frameworks.

a) Trade

When it comes to trade, the different areas we can take into consideration are (a) the Mediterranean as a whole, i.e. the area comprising the riparian countries plus Jordan and Portugal, which are normally included in the various EU frameworks referred to as the "Mediterranean"; (b) the Western Balkans; (c) the Maghreb; (d) the Near East; (e) the Gulf; (f) Southern Europe; and (g) Turkey, taken alone. Another important area is the Euro-Mediterranean one, i.e. the area comprising all the EU countries and the non-EU Mediterranean countries. The former EMP and today's UFM encompass the Euro-Mediterranean areas.

The Euro-Mediterranean area is of extreme relevance to both Turkey¹ and Italy as it includes their top trading partners. This point is self-evident and we will not delve into it. But what about the pan-Mediterranean area, the area comprising the southern members EU only, plus the Western Balkan countries and those of the Maghreb and the Near East?

The tables attached to this article can help to answer this question as well

as similar questions regarding other Mediterranean sub-areas and the Middle East. Evaluations are made by comparing 2004-2008 Turkish and Italian trade flows with relevant areas, calculated as percentages of their total trade. If we begin by considering the whole pan-Mediterranean area, we see that Italy's exports towards that area amounted to 29.9% of its total export, whereas imports accounted for 24.3%. By the same token, Turkey's exports accounted for 27.6% of its total exports, while imports amounted to 18.1%. These figures tell us that the pan-Mediterranean area is as important as the Euro-Mediterranean for both countries. This is explained by the presence in the grouping of top trading partners in the Southern European group for both Turkey and Italy.

When it comes to sub-Mediterranean areas and the Gulf, the picture is somewhat different. The Gulf looks more important for Turkey (10.1% of exports and 5.7% of imports) than for Italy (3.1% and 3% respectively). Equally, the area comprising the Maghreb and the Near East is more important for Turkey (6.9% of its exports and 3.8% of its imports) than Italy (3.9% of exports and 7.4% of imports- the latter figure largely due to gas imports from Algeria). If we add the Western Balkans countries to the Maghreb and the Near East, we see that Turkey's share of its total exports towards this grouping is more important than Italy's (8.5% versus 5.3%), whereas its imports are considerably weaker (3.9% versus 8.2%). The relatively weak share of Turkish imports can probably

be explained by a different geographic pattern in energy imports (from Russia and the Caspian Sea).

In evaluating these figures, one has to keep in mind that the absolute amounts are quite different and that the Italian economy, in terms of GDP, is about three times that of Turkey. Nevertheless, consideration of relative values suggests that, while the Euro- and pan-Mediterranean areas, in which all or several EU countries are included, do not show significant differences between Turkey and Italy; in contrast, the Mediterranean sub-areas- in which EU countries are not included or the Middle East is included- show differences. It may be interesting to see that, if we consider a grouping comprising the Maghreb, the Near East and the Gulf, more or less akin to what is known as the MENA region, whereas Turkey's exports toward this area amount to 17.2% of its total exports, Italy's only amount to 7%. As for imports, Turkey's imports from this group amount to 9.5% while Italy's amount to 10.5% (which again is probably explained by the pattern of energy imports).

Let's try to draw some conclusion from this overview. First of all, the Mediterranean and the Middle East play a remarkably secondary role in the framework of the two countries' total trade. The United States, other OECD countries, China and Russia are by far their most important trade partners. The Mediterranean takes on a bigger role only when we refer to Euro-Mediterranean

frameworks- including the EU- as the principal Western partner of Turkey and Italy. But if we take the Mediterranean region and exclude the EU or the Middle East, as relatively important as these areas may be in the context of respective trade flows, they prove peripheral to both countries' patterns of trade relations.

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It can also be noted that non-EU southern approaches to Turkey and Italy are, in relative terms and considering trade, more important for Turkey than for Italy. This conclusion would be even greater if we were to consider the figures showing the current fast-growing relationship between Turkey and Iran, Syria and Iraq. There is no doubt that Turkey's relations with the Middle East and, to a lesser extent, several Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries are growing stronger and, at least in the short and medium term, bound to outstrip Italy.

b) Participation in Euro-Mediterranean Policy Frameworks

At the end of World War II, both countries had good, though different,

reasons to see the West and Europe as central to their national security. Both entered NATO but not without difficulties and reservations from several European countries. Italy was a founding member of the then EEC and Turkey soon applied for association and membership. In both countries, there was a debate on the role the Mediterranean and the Middle East was supposed to play in the framework of their emerging grand national strategies and both responded by giving priority and prominence to the Mediterranean, as it was regarded a dimension of their Atlantic and European engagement.

Admittedly, this major strategic assumption was frequently challenged in respective domestic debates. In Turkey, the strategic alliances of the country have been challenged by ultranationalist, leftist and pan-Turkic groups. These groups looked at other strategic alternatives, such as Central Asia, and to a much lesser extent the Islamic and Muslim world. In Italy, the Western/European strategic option was long challenged by the left, in particular the powerful Italian Communist Party, and large sections of Catholics inside and outside the Christian Democratic Party, which looked with interest and empathy at the Third World. These political groups used to see the West and the EEC as expressions of international capitalism and imperialism and thought of solidarity among Mediterranean countries as a preferable alternative to the Western/European alliances. The

Turkish left and the Kurds must have looked at the Mediterranean through an anti-imperialist prism as well. However the “Mediterraneanist” movement in Southern Europe, with its climax in the 1980 with Craxi, Mitterrand, Gonzales, Papandreou and Mintoff, only marginally involved Turkey.

In Italy, the alternative between “climbing the Alps or sailing towards the Mediterranean” was a key debate between those who wanted to keep the West and Europe as the central tenet of the nation’s grand strategy and looked at the Mediterranean as nothing more than an important dimension in that strategy, and those who looked at the Mediterranean as the central national strategy. In Turkey, this debate was marginal and, to the extent that it took place, did not really concern the Mediterranean or the Middle East. Only with the rise of the AKP did things change with the Middle East/Mediterranean becoming strategically more significant than in the past.

Nevertheless, the political majorities that have governed the two countries have unequivocally predicated their national grand strategies on the Western and European alliances and looked at the Mediterranean and the Middle East as functional to those alliances. Hence, their effective contributions to NATO’s Southern Commands, operations in the Western Balkans, the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, the EMP and, today, the UFM.

The strategic agendas match the commercial and, more broadly speaking, the economic agendas of the two countries, as considered in the previous paragraph. Both agendas are primarily rooted in their national grand strategies predicated on the Euro-Atlantic platform, with prominence given to the alliances.

Shifts in the 2000s

The picture presented in the previous paragraph is now changing because of the many political and strategic shifts that occurred in the first decade of the 2000s. It may be too early to say how important these shifts are strategically. However, in the post-Cold War and post-September 11 world there is no doubt that changes in and challenges to the traditional strategic setting are not lacking. Let us argue about the main ones.

First of all, the direct and massive intervention of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan has changed perceptions of the Mediterranean and the Middle East and made it difficult for the Mediterranean to survive as a workable and credible geopolitical entity. From a geopolitical point of view, after the war in Iraq, the intervention in Afghanistan, the rise of Iran as a regional power, and the consolidation of trans-national Sunni radicalism, the European vision of the Mediterranean as a geopolitical entity on its own appears unsustainable and is in fact fading away. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is strongly embedded in an Islamic-Middle Eastern framework, in

which the Mediterranean no longer makes any sense. In this emerging framework, both Israel and the Mediterranean Arab countries are being firmly attracted by developments in the Greater Middle East; more than ever, they are focusing on the United States and they feel more and more disillusioned and alienated towards Europe. If the representation of the Mediterranean as a geopolitical entity has weakened, so has the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework put forward by the Europeans.

These developments have strongly affected the foreign policies of many allied countries, Turkey and Italy being no exceptions. Italy has responded to the US initiatives towards the Greater Middle East by uncritically following the US.² The Italian government has sent relatively important military forces to Iraq and Afghanistan and become a staunch supporter of Israel, no matter how nationalist or chauvinist its policies. It also sent a force to strengthen UNIFIL after the 2006 war between Israel and Hizbollah. This force was constructed by the then Prodi government as part of a Euro-Mediterranean policy, but objectively it was framed in a pan-Middle East context in which Iran has turned into a Mediterranean actor and Near East conflicts are now firmly and inherently linked to the Gulf and beyond. Ten years after September 11, despite domestic rhetoric, Italy is in fact looking more at the Middle East than the Mediterranean.³

Turkey's response to US initiatives towards the Gulf and the Greater Middle East has been more complex and diversified than Italy's. While it has confirmed its Atlantic engagement by sending troops to Afghanistan, the US intervention in Iraq created serious risks, if not threats, to its economy and security. For this reason, it was compelled to more closely examine these risks, a problem which did not affect Italy at all, and Turkey was forced to develop a new foreign policy towards the Middle East, which basically did not exist before then. Turkish foreign policy has received an entirely new strategic doctrine of "zero problems" with its neighbors, as preached by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.⁴ Based on this doctrine, Turkey is working strongly on developing relations with Syria, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Arab world in general. So, ten years after September 11, Turkey's foreign policy has turned towards the Middle East, like Italy's, but more so.

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In conclusion, Turkey and Italy have both moved eastward. Until the end of the 1990s, Turkey and Italy essentially pursued a Mediterranean

policy, predicated on their Atlantic and European strategic priorities and strongly embedded in the policy frameworks initiated by NATO and the EU. Ten years later, they continue to have Mediterranean interests, but their focus more broadly speaking is on the Middle East. Is this a policy shift only or does it have strategic implications as well?

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Since the Western/European alliances were not established to look after the Middle East and- as we argued above- have proved unable to integrate the latter in their mandate, when it comes to this region the role of the alliances is not very clear. As a consequence, the allies' policy shifts from the Mediterranean to the Middle East cannot easily square with the alliances' strategic platform. Furthermore, we are living in an era in which the great multilateral organizations that structured the Western world until the end of the 1990s are somehow weakening. In Turkey as well as Italy, national interests tend to compete with and prevail over the alliances' interests (or the latter prove unable to reconcile national and collective interests). No doubt, this reflects an ongoing political shift, which has been affecting all the

allied countries and their organizations, Turkey and Italy being no exception. For these reasons, one can wonder how the two countries are balancing their new interests towards the Middle East and their continued strategic focus on the Western/European alliances and the Mediterranean.

The response to this question is quite different according to whether we want to look at Italy or Turkey. For Italy, after the long post-war period came to an end (the so-called First Republic), the new domestic political actors that emerged in this country at the beginning of the 1990s have concentrated their interests mostly on the implementation of their agenda of domestic conservative and constitutional reforms. This domestic focus requires some measure of re-nationalization of the country's foreign policy so as to minimize interference from the alliances, especially the EU. Re-nationalization is a broad and winning trend in intra-EU relations. In this new environment, Italy happens to be a relatively weak "nation" with respect to other major EU "nations". To get around this weakness, it has shifted from its traditional Europeanist policy towards a policy of privileging bilateral relations with the United States. All in all, these approaches have generated a kind of opportunistic soft nationalism, which is eroding and changing the early strategic platform of Italian foreign policy, alienating the country from any Euro-Mediterranean or Mediterranean grand design, and directing its foreign

policy towards the Middle East as a consequence of its American strategic priority. If these changes are taken into consideration, it is clear that Italy's shift is not simply a policy shift, but a change in its strategic setting. The real change regards its traditional relations with its allies to which the Middle East is only instrumental. This shift fully reflects the broad weakening of the post- World War II alliances and their creeping decline.

For Turkey, as already pointed out, its interest in the Middle East is, above all, a response to the national security risks raised by the US intervention in Iraq and the various implications of the Greater Middle East concept. The intervention and the alterations it triggered in the region have caused a new Middle Eastern dimension to emerge in Turkey's national security and this has, in turn, caused an eastward enlargement of Turkish security and foreign policy. This was perceived of as compatible with- even supportive of- the Atlantic alliance platform and its present pattern of Middle East relations as long as Ankara developed good relations with its Arab neighbors without upgrading its low-profile relations with Iran and spoiling its long-standing excellent relations with Israel. As soon as Turkey's patterns began to remarkably improve relations with Iran and worsen with

Israel, that compatibility was thrown into question. Many see a strategic shift in Turkey's Middle East policy, that is a Middle East policy not clearly linked to, if not de-linked from, its persisting Western/European and consequently Mediterranean strategic priorities.

The shift is regarded by some in the West as a result of the AKP's Islamic agenda which, concealed so far, will now be unveiled by the rise in domestic support the AKP has enjoyed in past years. Thus, according to this argument, a strategic shift in Turkey's foreign policy derives from the broad changes in the Western/

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European strategic predicament, but the actually outcome is magnified by the governing party's Islamic orientation. This author guesses that the Turkish drivers are essentially national and perhaps

nationalist, and that they are the offspring of the re-nationalization era in which we are all living. Ideology is only providing the domestic flavor and consensus for the national Turkish responses to the regional environment. These responses would not be that far from those of the AKP if a Kemalist government were in power. In fact, these responses began to emerge before the AKP took over. As the common rationale is nationalism, they are substantially shared, albeit with caveats, by different streams of opinion going beyond the AKP.

Both Turkey's and Italy's strategic perspectives are definitely undergoing a shift. In both cases the shift is seen most clearly in the weakened fabric of the alliances due to Bush's unilateralism (from which Obama has not clearly distanced himself), the re-nationalization trend in the EU, and the ultimately short-sighted European closure of Turkey EU's membership application. There are important differences, though, for while Italy has chosen to respond with a defensive and inward-looking re-nationalized strategy, in which the Middle East is instrumental to its privileged relationship with the United States, Turkey has chosen to respond by actually expanding its strategic horizon to the Middle East in the framework of reinforced national objectives and aspirations. This course may lead to a collision, unless there is some dialogue with a view to work out strategies to deal with emerging realities in the region on the allied side, and more flexibility and pragmatism on Turkey's side.

The Euro-Mediterranean Setting

The two countries' turn towards the Middle East has not cancelled their interest in and commitment towards Euro-Mediterranean endeavors. Before describing the current situation in the UFM, we must note the similarities and differences in Turkish and Italian perceptions of Mediterranean and Euro-Mediterranean prospects.

Italy perceives the whole Mediterranean (including the Western Balkans) as a region of primary national interest, whereas Turkey has a more specific national interest in the Eastern Mediterranean. Historical memories regarding their southern approaches are different: while empires and states located in the Italian peninsula have constantly dealt with the Mediterranean basin and, more rarely, some adjoining areas, the empires and states in the Anatolian peninsula and Asia Minor (the Ottomans and the Turks as well as the Byzantines before them) always had to do with a multiplicity of strategic directions, the Mediterranean as well as Central Asia, Iran and the Arab countries.

These different national perceptions, while irrelevant in NATO, do matter when it comes to the EU-initiated Euro-Mediterranean frameworks of cooperation. NATO provides the two countries with joint perspectives, perceptions and actions, such as the NATO's Southern Flank in the Cold War, the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue and ICI, the operations in the Balkans after the breakdown of Yugoslavia, and other joint operations, such as today's Active Endeavour. When it comes to Euro-Mediterranean initiatives, Turkey's interest is different from Italy's, first of all, because, as we have just argued, the Mediterranean is culturally and historically less relevant for Turkey than for Italy and, second, because Turkey's primary interest lies in becoming a member of the EU rather than being

a member of a Euro-Mediterranean framework. In this sense, its interest towards the EU's Euro-Mediterranean initiatives are instrumental: they are mostly regarded by Turkey as a dimension of the membership to come. In this, Turkey's position looks similar to that of the new Baltic, Central-eastern European and Eastern Balkans members of the EU.

The developments we considered in the previous paragraph and Europe's recent closure to Turkey's membership have certainly contributed to further diluting Turkish interests in Euro-Mediterranean initiatives. President Sarkozy's proposal to turn the Mediterranean into a platform for an EU-Turkey strategic partnership completely misunderstands Turkish priorities and betrays Turkey's expectations. Proposing a privileged strategic partnership with the EU in the Mediterranean with a view to dealing jointly with the Middle East as an alternative to Turkey's membership in the EU is reminiscent of the British attempt to offer Turkey a partnership in the Middle East as an alternative to or as a condition of its membership in NATO in the 1950s.⁵ For Turkey the strategic stakes are less the Mediterranean than the EU.

Turkey's diplomacy argues that the country is ready to cooperate in the Middle East as well as in the Mediterranean, but as a member of the EU rather than an external power. In summary, we can say that while Turkey's interest towards the Euro-Mediterranean

framework is a proxy of its primary interest in becoming a member of the EU, Italy's interest is predicated more on its important bilateral relations with the countries of the basin and the EU as a facilitator of its bilateral relations in the region. In both cases, interest is not that high and always instrumental to other aims.

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Having said that, Turkey has vehemently rejected the French interpretation of the UFM but has accepted to be a part of this emerging Euro-Mediterranean framework.⁶ Italy has supported Sarkozy's proposal, on the condition that it is "Europeanized". Turkey's driver is always the need to stay apace of the EU. Italy sees the UFM essentially as an opportunity for commercial and business relations in the area. However, both Turkey and Italy play a leading role in the UFM as deputies of the secretary-general, Turkey for transport and Italy for business development, in particular for small- and medium-sized firms. As is known, the UFM is not precisely a success at the moment. It has deep-seated shortcomings

such as a high political value which is not matched by its actual political cohesion (and this exacerbates the members' impotence in solving the area's conflicts), as well as the inherent weakness of the Euro-Mediterranean format. If the UFM can narrow its misplaced political ambitions and develop into a framework for organizing economic cooperation regionally and implementing big joint projects, it may succeed. Otherwise, it may fail.

Conclusions: Turkish and Italian Cooperation in their Southern Approaches

Both Turkey's and Italy's strategic centers lie outside the Mediterranean, in particular in the North Atlantic and Europe, where their major alliances, that is NATO and EU, are located. Their gravitation towards these centers has involved the two countries in the policy frameworks initiated by those alliances in the Mediterranean, such as the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean. Thus, the Mediterranean policies of Turkey and Italy, undoubtedly predicated on strong proximity interests and bilateral relations, have developed as proxies of their strategic Atlantic and European interests. This situation has been altered by the end of the Cold War and the weakening of their alliances' rationale and, even more so, by the post-September 11 US decision to intervene militarily

in the Middle East. This intervention has shifted Turkey's and Italy's focuses in their southern approaches from the Mediterranean to the Middle East. While Italy's shift is peripheral with respect to its foreign policy strategy and is mainly an opportunistic move, Turkey's shift may have a more structural significance and could bring about changes in its strategic posture.

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Turkey's situation today is in flux and the way in which its strategic posture evolves depends greatly on what its Atlantic and European allies do. The decisions taken by such important European countries as France and Germany could force Turkey to "go it alone" and transform its policy towards the Middle East from one based on legitimate national interests into one predicated on identity. This would be a risky development for Turkey and Western countries. However, the United States and many countries in the EU are keeping the door open. What they should do, while waiting for shifts in the German and French postures, is to prevent a break. In this sense, efforts should be made in the context of the

current negotiations for membership to achieve significant partial results even if affiliation cannot be immediate, in other words keep up the perspective. This requires a strong and concentrated effort by those EU members willing to have Turkey in Europe. If Turkey is in flux, there is no doubt that more efforts to embed it in the Western-European alliances would contribute to shaping Turkish foreign policy and keeping it from getting “lost”.

Definitely, Italy can play a role in this. From the point of view of the Mediterranean and the Middle East and in view of cooperation, more effective Italian diplomatic support for Turkey’s affiliation to the EU should be a central factor of cooperation in the Mediterranean and, now, in the Middle East. Italy is very close to Turkey’s aspirations and views on this point, including on the Cyprus issue. However, Rome has never really translated this position into effective policies in intra-EU relations.

While a more active Italian approach on Turkey’s affiliation to the EU is desirable, both in bilateral and allied relations, cooperation between Turkey and Italy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East also concerns less strategic-intense areas, such as the development of a structured economic cooperation

in the area, support for small- and medium-sized firms, transport and energy security. This requires bilateral cooperation, but also cooperation in the regional and international arenas and in organizations to which Turkey and Italy are committed. In some of these areas, cooperation is already well developed, as in the field of energy, especially in the transport of gas and oil across that crucial hub between different regions that Turkey is becoming.⁷

The UFM is where upgraded cooperation between Turkey and Italy could be developed, if the two countries, in coalition with others, are able and willing to first of all reform this emerging organization. As it is conceived today- a political endeavor with an economic arm- it will never really work. If redirected towards being a regional economic endeavor with a soft political background, it could. Cooperation is thus needed primarily with a view to redirect the UFM towards this aim. Once redirected, the UFM, with its goal of implementing big regional projects and infrastructure, as well projects in social and cultural fields, could allow for strong and fruitful cooperation between the two countries, both interested in multiplying development opportunities in the Mediterranean.

Table 1: Turkey Import (in mn. US \$)

Countries & areas	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2004-2008
France	6.201	5.884	7.236	7.832	9.022	36.175
Greece	593	727	1.044	950	1.151	4.465
Italy	6.864	7.561	8.653	9.967	11.012	44.057
Portugal	237	398	382	408	480	1.905
Spain	3.249	3.550	3.831	4.342	4.548	19.520
Cyprus						
Malta	73	46	21	99	168	407
South Europe	17.217	18.166	21.167	23.598	26.381	106.529
Albania	16	16	13	24	37	106
Bosnia	11	15	9	21	25	81
Croatia	35	86	61	77	106	365
Fyrom	52	52	56	55	30	245
Montenegro*	87	97	52	74	1	311
Serbia	---	---	---	---	62	62
Western Balkans	201	266	191	251	261	1.170
Algeria	1.256	1.693	1.865	2.108	3.262	10.184
Libya	1.514	1.984	2.297	400	336	6.531
Morocco	106	143	174	198	361	982
Tunisia	100	117	150	229	365	961
Maghreb	2.976	3.937	4.486	2.935	4.324	18.658
Egypt	255	267	393	679	943	2.537
Jordan	14	28	9	12	25	88
Israel	714	803	782	1.081	1.448	4.828
Lebanon	146	144	127	116	179	712
Syria	358	272	187	377	639	1.833
Near east	1.487	1.514	1.498	2.265	3.234	9.998
Mediterranean	21.881	23.883	27.342	29.049	34.200	136.355
Iran	1.961	3.470	5.626	6.614	8.200	25.871
Iraq	468	459	376	645	1.321	3.269
GCC	1.477	2.209	2.773	3.173	4.360	13.992
Gulf	3.906	6.138	8.775	10.432	13.881	43.132
World	97.340	116.562	139.480	169.986	201.964	725.332

* Until 2007 Serbia and Montenegro

Source: FMI Direction of trade statistics yearbook 2008 & Quartely March 2010.

Table 2: Turkey Export (in mn. US \$)

Countries & areas	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2004-08
France	3.699	3.806	4.604	5.975	6.621	24.705
Greece	1.167	1.127	1.602	2.262	2.430	8.588
Italy	4.625	5.617	6.752	7.479	7.820	32.293
Portugal	395	396	563	551	541	2.446
Spain	2.617	3.011	3.721	4.580	4.047	17.976
Cyprus		6	12	8	11	37
Malta	98	279	227	621	956	2.181
Southern Europe	12.601	14.242	17.481	21.476	22.426	88.226
Albania	161	191	214	294	306	1.166
Bosnia	100	128	151	445	572	1.396
Croatia	118	168	214	356	329	1.185
Fyrom	149	162	173	272	296	1.052
Montenegro*	211	258	363	615	48	1.495
Serbia	---	---	---	---	458	458
Western Balkans	739	907	1.115	1.982	2.009	6.752
Algeria	806	807	1.021	1.232	1.614	5.480
Libya	337	384	489	644	1.074	2.928
Morocco	330	370	551	722	958	2.931
Tunisia	256	295	325	530	778	2.184
Maghreb	1.729	1.856	2.386	3.128	4.424	13.523
Egypt	473	687	709	903	1.426	4.198
Jordan	229	288	322	389	461	1.689
Israel	1.309	1.467	1.529	1.658	1.935	7.898
Lebanon	234	196	241	393	665	1.729
Syria	393	552	609	797	1.115	3.466
Near East	2.638	3.190	3.410	4.140	5.602	18.980
Mediterranean	17.707	20.195	24.392	30.726	34.461	127.481
Iran	810	913	1.066	1.387	2.030	6.206
Iraq	1.815	2.749	2.589	2.812	3.917	13.882
GCC	2.291	3.011	3.636	5.567	12.268	26.773
Gulf	4.916	6.673	7.291	9.766	18.215	46.861
World (Dots total)	62.989	73.451	85.492	107.113	132.313	461.358

* Until 2007 Serbia and Montenegro

Source: FMI Direction of trade statistics yearbook 2008 & Quartely March 2010.

Table 3: Italy Import (in mn. US \$)

Countries & areas	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2004-08
France	38.923	38.413	41.043	45.511	47.663	211.553
Greece	1.868	1.926	2.497	2.632	2.633	11.556
Portugal	1.658	1.720	1.992	2.029	2.010	9.409
Spain	16.554	16.391	18.864	21.440	21.851	95.100
Cyprus	30	70	65	87	185	437
Malta	184	250	251	229	365	1.279
Southern Europe	59.217	58.770	64.712	71.928	74.707	329.334
Turkey	4.941	5.426	6.788	7.328	8.286	32.769
Albania	422	439	518	631	708	2.718
Bosnia	366	420	466	558	658	2.468
Croatia	1.346	1.525	1.607	1.557	2.029	8.064
Fyrom	232	265	302	401	377	1.577
Montenegro*			224	217	183	624
Serbia					1.070	1.070
Western Balkans	2.366	2.649	3.117	3.364	5.025	16.521
Algeria	6.023	7.645	10.039	8.667	12.545	44.919
Libya	7.920	12.119	15.893	19.278	25.764	80.974
Morocco	581	616	680	856	906	3.639
Tunisia	2.427	2.310	2.646	3.364	3.445	14.192
Maghreb	16.951	22.690	29.258	32.165	42.660	143.724
Egypt	1.590	1.589	2.725	2.486	3.318	11.708
Jordan	25	29	37	36	84	211
Israel	1.121	1.079	1.246	1.325	1.720	6.491
Lebanon	25	29	30	40	52	176
Syria	927	1.139	891	1.279	1.191	5.427
Near East	3.688	3.865	4.929	5.166	6.365	24.013
Mediterranean	87.163	93.400	108.804	119.951	137.043	546.361
Iran	2.713	3.648	4.914	5.737	5.796	22.808
Iraq	1.005	2.017	2.791	4.068	5.836	15.717
GCC	4.131	5.863	5.903	5.773	7.388	29.058
Gulf	7.849	11.528	13.608	15.578	19.020	67.583
World (Dots Total)	355.285	384.682	442.579	504.827	556.328	2.243.701

* Until 2007 Serbia and Montenegro

Source: FMI Direction of trade statistics yearbook 2008 & Quarterly March 2010.

Table 4: Italy Export (in mn. US \$)

Countries & areas	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2004-08
France	43.800	45.890	49.082	56.233	60.259	255.264
Greece	8.051	7.511	8.581	10.109	11.232	45.484
Portugal	4.249	4.127	4.679	4.670	5.186	22.911
Spain	25.789	27.977	30.761	36.309	35.431	156.267
Cyprus	805	910	1.058	1.107	1.582	5.462
Malta	889	853	1.112	1.112	1.716	5.682
Southern Europe	83.583	87.268	95.273	109.540	115.406	491.070
Turkey	7.062	7.644	8.509	9.891	11.126	44.232
Albania	726	758	848	1.121	1.367	4.820
Bosnia	503	578	545	708	930	3.264
Croatia	2.743	2.894	3.417	3.853	4.619	17.526
Fyrom	170	192	206	259	329	1.156
Montenegro*			177	208	308	693
Serbia					1.818	1.818
Western Balkans	4.142	4.422	5.193	6.149	9.371	29.277
Algeria	1.544	1.656	1.956	2.556	4.417	12.129
Libya	1.863	1.691	1.759	2.255	3.882	11.450
Morocco	1.176	1.253	1.443	1.994	2.499	8.365
Tunisia	2.602	3.025	3.262	4.001	4.355	17.245
Maghreb	7.185	7.625	8.420	10.806	15.153	49.189
Egypt	1.678	1.726	1.941	2.951	4.272	12.568
Jordan	400	404	468	554	627	2.453
Israel	1.667	1.913	2.055	2.464	2.720	10.819
Lebanon	946	974	973	1.004	1.140	5.037
Syria	687	840	835	1.290	1.525	5.177
Near East	5.378	5.857	6.272	8.263	10.284	36.054
Mediterranean	107.350	112.816	123.667	144.649	161.340	649.822
Iran	2.693	2.799	2.290	2.567	3.187	13.536
Iraq	250	362	163	131	299	1.205
GCC	6.053	6.915	9.687	14.308	16.809	53.772
Gulf	8.996	10.076	12.140	17.006	20.295	68.513
World (Dots total)	353.472	372.847	417.098	492.000	539.933	2.175.350

* Until 2007 Serbia and Montenegro

Source: FMI Direction of trade statistics yearbook 2008 & Quartely March 2010.

Endnotes

- 1 Mehmet Babacan, “Whither Axis Shift: A Perspective From Turkey’s Foreign Trade”, *SETA Policy Report*, No. 4 (November 2010).
- 2 Roberto Aliboni, “La politique méditerranéenne de l’Italie: de la stratégie à la routine”, *Confluences Méditerranée*, No. 68, Hiver 2008-2009, pp. 173-182; Maurizio Carbone, “Italy in the European Union, between Prodi and Berlusconi”, *The International Spectator*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (September 2009), pp. 97-115.
- 3 The respective role of the Mediterranean and the Middle East from Italy’s point of view is brilliantly discussed by Ludovico Incisa della Camerana, “Oltre il Mediterraneo” (Beyond the Mediterranean), *Politica Internazionale*, Vol.23, No. 2 (January-April 1993), pp. 25-31. The author, a diplomat, has always supported the idea that the real and long-term strategy of Italy leans towards the Middle East rather than the Mediterranean. Recent events seem to vindicate his views.
- 4 Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Zero-Problems Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Policy*, 20 May 2010. Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Middle East is the focus of a diffuse and important debate as of today. See, among many other articles and essays, Meliha Benli Altunışık, “Redefinition of Turkish Security Policies in the Middle East After the Cold War”, in Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu and Seyfi Taşhan (eds.), *The Europeanisation of Turkey’s Security Policy: Prospects and Pitfalls*, Ankara, Foreign Policy Institute, 2004; Meliha Benli Altunışık, “The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East”, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 1 and 2 (Winter-Spring 2005), pp. 45- 63; Tarık Oğuzlu, “Middle Easternization of Turkey’s Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (March 2008), pp. 3-20.
- 5 Maria Antonia di Casola, “Turchia e Mediterraneo. Il rifiuto della marginalizzazione” (Turkey and the Mediterranean. The refuse of marginalization), *Nuova Antologia*, No. 2247 (July-September 2008), pp. 103-125.
- 6 An official point of view can be found in Hüseyin Naci Akıncı, “L’Union pour la Méditerranée. Approche de la Turquie”, *Etudes Internationales*, No. 109 (December 2008), pp. 126-131.
- 7 An excellent review of Turkish-Italian relations can be found in the interview to the Italian Ambassador in Ankara, Carlo Marsili in Emine Kart, “Italy’s motto in ties with Turkey: A friend in need is a friend indeed”, *Today’s Zaman*, 27 October 2009.