
ERDOĞAN'S EU SHIFT FORMALISES A RELATIONSHIP ALREADY BUILT AROUND INTERESTS, NOT ACCESSION

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Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's declaration that European Union membership is no longer a priority for Ankara appears, at first sight, to mark a substantial change in Turkish policy. In practice, it is closer to an acknowledgement of how EU-Turkey relations have already evolved.

The European Union is not a priority for us, Erdoğan said in an interview with Al Jazeera, while stressing that Turkey had not closed the door on eventual membership. He also argued that Europe, rather than Turkey, would lose if the country remained outside the bloc. The remarks were reported on 17 August.

The distinction matters. Erdoğan is not withdrawing Turkey's application, nor is Ankara renouncing candidate status. Instead, he is reducing the political importance attached to a process that has been effectively frozen for eight years.

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