

PERCEPTIONS

JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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Turkey

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2000s: Revisiting the Basic Parameters of
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Editorial

The growing debate on TFP is likely to evolve in parallel with the activities of foreign policy makers in neighboring regions and beyond. The academics and experts aim to understand and explain TFP, while policy makers pursue a multidimensional policy line with adjustments necessitated by the changing situations on the ground. The duty of the scientific community is to provide a framework of analysis for understanding and explaining broader long-term trends in foreign policy. There is also a growing need for semi-academic analyses that not only offer policy recommendations but also present policy analyses in terms understandable by the ordinary public. The analyses may differ depending on whether the study is pursued from a generalist perspective, is based on a regional approach, or deals with the specifics of a country's foreign policy. Studies analyzing current affairs encounter a major challenge: the difficulty of presenting a complete picture of events while dealing with a rapidly evolving situation.

TFP has undergone a considerable transformation driven by the imperatives of structural transformation in the domestic landscape, the changing dynamics of regional politics and the shifting balance of power in the

international environment. Reforms in the political, economic and legal spheres helped Turkish policy makers to put their house in order and develop a sense of self-confidence in their foreign policies. Turkey's internal democratization attempts also found expression in the foreign policy realm. TFP is formulated and conducted in a more democratic manner and in a pluralistic atmosphere, paying considerable attention to societal demands. TFP is also a response to the changing dynamics of the post-Cold War era and the realities of the new Turkey, which is still in the process of consolidating its democracy and strengthening its economy.

In addition to the changing domestic landscape, chronic regional problems - the most important one being the situation in Iraq - impel Turkey to adopt a more proactive foreign policy in the new atmosphere. Such a proactive policy line has become necessary to preserve Turkey's regional interests, as well as to respond to domestic demands for opening up to the immediate neighborhood and beyond. Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, has formulated a foreign policy framework based on a number of principles and policy mechanisms. Although there are continuities with Turkey's earlier

foreign policy, Mr. Davutoğlu deserves credit both for some brand-new policy principles and mechanisms, and for his performance in the implementation of foreign policy, first as the former Chief Advisor to Prime Minister and now as the current Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The seven articles in this special issue of *Perceptions* deal with different aspects of TFP within this new framework and aim to contribute to an understanding of the new foreign policy and offer insights into the new dynamics, openings and policy adjustments observed in TFP in the last decade. The articles published in this issue are translated and updated versions of Turkish originals published in a recently released book, entitled *2000'li Yıllar: Türkiye'de Dış Politika* (The 2000s: Foreign Policy in Turkey). We would like to thank the editor of the book and the Coordinator of the Office of Public Diplomacy, Assoc. Prof. Dr. İbrahim Kalın, for granting permission to reproduce the articles.

İbrahim Kalın deals with a new phenomenon in TFP: public diplomacy and soft power. There is almost universal agreement among scholars and policy makers that Turkey needs more effective public diplomacy tools to support its policy initiatives towards the neighboring regions and other geographies of interest. Kalın offers a comparative analysis of public diplomacy in different contexts, and concludes with clues as to how Turkish public diplomacy will take shape, looking specifically at

the possible evolution and modes of operation of the newly formed Office of Public Diplomacy.

Şaban Kardaş examines a long-time issue of TFP, the transformation of Turkish-American relations. Having identified the traditional parameters of the bilateral relationship as formed in the early years of the Cold War era, he extrapolates the evolution of that relationship into the years to come. He pays particular attention to transformations in the bilateral relations at two critical junctures: the early post-Cold War era and the first decade of the new millennium. He argues that, as Turkey has sought to reintegrate with its immediate neighborhood and pursue a more autonomous foreign policy, the Turkish-US relationship has also gone through a period of redefinition throughout the last decade.

Hasan Kösebalaban examines TFP in the Middle East, another region which constitutes a major item on Turkey's overall foreign policy agenda. He advances the argument that in the making of Turkey's regional policies in the Middle East, not only material but also ideational factors play certain roles. He identifies areas where, by drawing on the ideational factors, the incumbent AK Party managed to adjust TFP to the rapidly changing structural conditions in the region.

Mehmet Özkan focuses his discussion on the new openings to Asia

and Africa within the wider framework of the emergence of the new TFP. He presents the policies toward Asia and Africa as the most striking examples of the new horizons of recent foreign policy initiatives. Özkan studies Turkey's burgeoning relationship with new regions along geographical sub-divisions, and suggests the formation of alliances and partnerships with a number of countries inside these regions, as well as with some external countries which are already influential in Asia and Africa.

Fahrettin Altun offers a sociological analysis of TFP. Altun focuses on the media's representation strategies and provides a critical assessment of the "World" pages of the two widely-circulated national newspapers *Hürriyet* and *Habertürk*, in order to assess the coverage of international news. He reaches the critical conclusion, in addition to several complementary ones, that Orientalization is pervasive in the mainstream media in Turkey.

Another interesting area in TFP is Turkish-Russian relations. Fatih Özbay undertakes to explain the rapprochement between Turkey and Russia, particularly throughout the recent decade. His examination proceeds on the basis of political and economic analysis. Although he acknowledges that strategic alliance between the two

countries is not presently the case, he posits strategic alliance as a future target and offers policy recommendations for achieving it.

The article written by Bülent Aras and Pinar Akpınar tackles the complexities of TFP in the Caucasus. Their study is based on analysis at the regional level, which takes into account policies of not only the regional countries but also a number of external actors with strong interest in the Caucasus. The role of Russia, the EU and the U.S. are all included as explanatory variables, while analyzing TFP toward individual countries in the region. Aras and Akpınar conclude that, although the prospect for good relations with Armenia is limited for the time being, Turkey is an important player in the region and is likely to remain so.

I also would like announce that *Perceptions* has a new Deputy Editor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Şaban Kardeş of TOBB- University of Economics and Technology, and a Book Review Editor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şule Toktaş of Kadir Has University. *Perceptions* will start to feature a book review section in the next issue and continue to publish special issues, looking at various pressing issues such as NATO and Turkey, Turkish migration to Germany and foreign policy analysis. Stay tuned for more!

Bülent ARAS
Editor-in- Chief

Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey

İbrahim KALIN*

Abstract

Turkey's soft power capacity comes from its history, culture and geography. Rather than seeing them as obstacles or burdens, the Turks are now turning them into strategic assets in both domestic and foreign policy. The new Turkish public diplomacy is building on Turkey's expanding soft power in the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus. As Turkey engages new regions and emerging actors as well as continues relations with its old allies, it develops new capacities for the various elements of soft power and strategic communication in regional and global contexts. The new Turkey that is emerging is also creating a new Turkish narrative with multiple dimensions and faces. The task of the new Turkish public diplomacy is to tell the story of the new Turkey to a wide ranging audience across the globe. As Turkey overcomes its old fears and builds a new identity for itself, the process of change transforming the country will have a deep impact on Turkish domestic and foreign policy.

Key Words

Public diplomacy, soft power, Turkish foreign policy, Office of Public Diplomacy, smart power.

* Associate Professor İbrahim Kalın is Chief Advisor to Prime Minister, Turkey. The views in this article are the author's personal evaluations.

Introduction

The rapid transformation of Turkey's internal and external dynamics manifests itself in a wide range of fields and presents new risks and opportunities. Reconnecting with its history and geography, Turkey ascribes strategic value to time and place in a globalized world, and is leaving behind the one-dimensional and reductionist perspectives of the Cold War era. From foreign policy, economy and public policy to education, media, arts and sciences, Turkey's newly emerging actors position themselves as active players demanding the global transformation of centre-periphery relations in order to create a more democratic and fair world-system.

Political legitimacy has become an integral part of international relations in the 21st century. It is impossible to implement a policy that does not stand on legitimate grounds in a globalized system. In cases where there is lack of legitimacy, crises are inevitable and the cost is often too high. International public opinion has become a key point

of reference for countries to define and implement their foreign policy. The legitimacy crisis of modernity, to a large degree, stemmed from the attitude of placing oneself at the centre and failing to provide any convincing explanations for doing so. Today one of the legitimacy problems of the global system is the lack of a consensus as to its priorities and methods by the majority of the world community. The foremost condition for legitimacy is a fair sharing of resources; and this also applies to the international system. The legitimacy crisis of the global system can only end if the world's economic, political and cultural resources are shared fairly, and ethnocentric hierarchies are overcome.

The growing relationships of interdependency necessitated by the global economic system, the rising cost of centrally controlling the global political system and the experience of multiple modernities affect national and regional dynamics and provide opportunities for the formation of new patterns of relationship. The state of “chaotic order” emerging after September 11 makes it possible for centrifugal forces to influence regional systems. Such new actors as international courts, media, public opinion, human rights organizations and non-governmental organizations are being added to the main actors of the Cold War era, and this forces the global system to be more dynamic, multidimensional and less controllable.

One of the most important results of this dizzying chain of developments is the overcoming of the Eurocentric notions of history and society. The ruptures of modernity within Western civilization, and the zigzagged paths it followed in non-western societies, both necessitate and make possible the idea of a new global order. It is no longer possible in the 21st century to say that the narrative of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution is the only force shaping the dynamic relationships between history and geography, time and place, individual and society, reason and faith, self and other, and centre and periphery. A new “geographic imagination” is emerging and making itself more palpable by the day.¹

Turkey, which has become one of the important actors in the regional order and the global system, is experiencing this transformation in tandem with its unique conditions.

This new idea of time and place makes it possible for Turkey to produce its own concepts and build a new vocabulary. From a semiotic perspective, even the new vocabulary and concepts of Turkish politics and foreign policy should be noted as indicators of a profound mental transformation. This new platform of imagination and

comprehension provides opportunities for Turkish scholars, intellectuals and policy makers to produce their own concepts and theories, and expands the horizons of Turkish intellectual life. The “open horizon” provided by this process of transformation also enables the reconsideration of Turkey’s main issues from a fresh perspective. The narrative pertaining to the effort to see the world from a non-Euro-centric perspective that Ahmet Davutoğlu fleshed out in his work “Strategic Depth: Turkey’s International Position” is becoming commonplace, and is giving way to a new set of conceptualizations.² Far from being just another version of “third-worldism”, Turkey’s new intellectual and political horizon, deserves serious attention.

The changes taking place in Turkish society and foreign policy are as much triggered by ruptures in the regional and global system as they are by those taking place within Turkey itself. Turkey, which has become one of the important actors in the regional order and the global system, is experiencing this transformation in tandem with its unique conditions. It is thus correct to say a “new Turkish story” is emerging. The changes born out of Turkey’s internal dynamics, and its consequent effects on foreign policy, are seen through a wide swath from Europe to America, the Middle East to Asia, and prompt a new discussion about Turkey on different

platforms, ranging from international relations to political science and cultural studies.³ These new dynamics which have emerged in the recent episodes of Turkish modernization are also adding new dimensions to Turkey’s traditional relations with Europe and the United States.⁴ As I have discussed elsewhere, the new Turkey is emerging as a result of a new geopolitical imagination on the one hand, and Turkey’s economic and security-based priorities on the other. The tectonic changes in Turkish foreign policy can be reduced neither to ideological considerations, nor to *Realpolitik* anxieties.⁵

This article takes a look at two core elements of Turkish foreign policy: “soft power” and “public diplomacy.” Turkey’s soft power capacity will be explained as a confluence of the country’s history, geography, cultural depth, economic strength and democracy, and its place in Turkish foreign policy will be highlighted. Public diplomacy, which is a platform for the implementation of soft power, is a new concept in Turkey and is increasingly being discussed especially since the launching of the Office of Public Diplomacy within the Turkish Prime Ministry. Since the publication of decree 27478 announcing its launch on January 30, 2010 in the Official Gazette, the Office of Public Diplomacy has been pursuing various public diplomacy activities. The following excerpt describes how the decree explained the need for

the creation of the Office of Public Diplomacy:

Globalization has rendered the conduct of international relations more complicated in today's world, according an increasingly important role to public diplomacy in influencing and directing the international community alongside traditional diplomacy. In order for us to achieve success in explaining Turkey's position in the face of accusations and problems our country has long endured in the international arena, it is necessary to use public diplomacy tools and methods to inform accurately the international community.

As noted in the decree, certain public institutions and foundations have been assigned tasks to provide information about Turkey abroad in such a way as to increase Turkey's respectability in the international community. However, in today's world, where national and regional problems can easily take on a global dimension, a more efficient coordination, cooperation, and decision making mechanism is necessary among public policy institutions in regard to developments in the information and communication technologies, opportunities and threats emerging in the international arena.

In light of these observations, the foundation of an Office of Public Diplomacy has been decided upon under the supervision of a senior advisor to the Prime Minister, charged with conducting public diplomacy activities and securing cooperation and coordination between public institutions and non-governmental organizations.⁶

Applied by many countries as an active political communication tool, public diplomacy is a country's effort to share a coherent and convincing account

of its own story with the rest of the world. In the second part of the article, we will provide a conceptual framework for public diplomacy as well as brief examples of other countries' practices and observations on Turkey's concept of public diplomacy.

Turkey's Soft Power

The concept of "soft power", which Joseph Nye first began to use in the 1980s, is rooted in the idea that alternative power structures exist in international relations alongside economic and military power. According to Nye, there are three ways to achieve one's goal: threatening the other party and going to war if necessary; "buying out" the other party; and persuading the other party through the use of "soft power." Soft power is "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments." This is possible through *persuading* the other party through *convincing* arguments and rational policies. Here, *credibility* and the *ability to persuade* constitute the main elements of soft power. These elements also provide legitimacy to the use of power.

A country's soft power capacity defines the success of its public diplomacy as much as does the integrity and efficacy of its policies. Soft power, which is rooted in a "value-based" definition of power, explains how much a

country is deemed attractive and worthy of being designated as an exemplar for others. According to Nye, soft power explains “the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political notions and policies.”⁷ The acceptance of a country’s policies as legitimate by others also defines that country’s soft power capacity.

The acceptance of a country’s policies as legitimate by others also defines that country’s soft power capacity.

Nye contends that the United States has lost its credibility, persuasion power and attractiveness after September 11, and that no economic indicator can measure this cost. America’s ability to continue the successful paradigm it achieved during the Cold War era depends not on invading countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq, but on regaining the soft power which it has lost. In a world where anti-Americanism has become a global phenomenon, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the United States to be a trustworthy political power and a centre of attraction. The election of Barack Hussein Obama in 2008 brought about a significant change in the global public perception of America but fell short of eradicating anti-Americanism.⁸

Unlike “hard power,” soft power explains fields of influence and attraction beyond military and economic indicators.

Various factors feed soft power: Culture, education, arts, print and visual media, film, poetry, literature, architecture, higher education (universities, research centres, etc.), non-governmental organizations, science and technology, the capacity for innovation, tourism, platforms for economic cooperation and diplomacy. Soft power emerges as a combination of these elements and gives us an idea about a country’s cultural richness and social capital.

Another key factor that defines a country’s soft power capacity is its political system. The most important among those elements which pave the way for a country to achieve a soft power status and make it a centre for attraction is a political system which prioritizes freedoms and liberties, guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, and which is also just, transparent and democratic. In this regard, one of the main pillars of Turkey’s soft power is its democratic experience. Despite the ups and downs in its history, the strengthening of Turkish democracy and its gaining of legitimacy among the public play a significant role in Turkey’s position as a regional and global actor. For instance, the “Arab Spring” which began with popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011 highlighted Turkey’s democratic experience in the Middle East. Turkey’s democratization efforts and success in economic development have been an inspiration for the newly

emerging social and political movements in the Arab world.

The values Turkey represents, as well as its history and cultural depth, have mobilized regional dynamics and provided opportunities for the creation of new spheres of influence.

Soft power refers to a country's social-human capital apart from its military and economic power. There is no necessary asymmetrical relationship between hard and soft power. The existence of hard power does not guarantee soft power. Nye points to Canada, Holland and the Scandinavian countries as examples of countries that have soft power despite their limited economic and military capabilities. Through their values, organizational capacities, education, innovation, international stance and mediation efforts, these countries enjoy a sphere of influence disproportionate to their military and economic power.

Turkey's soft power is different from that of other countries in its form and content. Turkey's soft power potential, which extends from the Balkans and the Middle East to inner parts of Central Asia, emerges from the cultural and historical experience it has inherited. The values Turkey represents, as well as its history and cultural depth, have

mobilized regional dynamics and provided opportunities for the creation of new spheres of influence. In the larger Euro-Asian landmass, the common denominator for Turks, Kurds, Bosnians, Albanians, Circassians, Abkhazians, Arabs, Azeris, Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs, Uzbeks, Turkmens and other ethnic groups, as well as Armenian, Greek, Jewish and Assyrian communities is the Ottoman experience they have shared and built together. It is this Ottoman heritage that brings together these diverse groups and enables them to relate to a shared experience in time and place. Today, Turkey represents the pivotal point of this heritage. This is not a new imperial adventure, termed by some as "Neo-Ottomanism." Rather, this is a process whereby Turkey's new geopolitical imagination and the new possibilities in the global political system allow the people of the region to reconcile with their history and geography. Remembering this experience plays an important role in defining the spheres of soft power in Turkey.⁹ Furthermore, Turkey's regional and global engagements are expanding in other regions, such as Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In addition, Turkish democracy and its vibrant civil society form the most important pillars of Turkey's soft power. Ever since the introduction of the multi-party system in the 1950s, Turkey has gone through different experiences.

Demands for fair sharing, participation, representation, transparency and accountability by various groups within Turkish society have nurtured and encouraged the growth of Turkish democracy. Turkey's transformation into a centre of attraction in its geographic hinterland, such as the Balkans and the Middle East, depends on its ability to define the freedom-security balance in a coherent manner, and on expanding its spheres of democratic influence.

At this point, Turkey possesses important resources and values unique to itself. The concept of soft power depends upon the "carrot and stick" dialectic of American power. However, it is not always possible or even desirable to use the carrot-stick dialectic in the geopolitical environment of a country like Turkey. Rather, a new geopolitical imagination and a notion of common memory, conscience and cultural depth shape soft-power relations.

Turkey's achievement of an effective soft power status depends on its ability to mobilize these dynamics. As a result of the changes it has been going through, Turkey today has a 'new story' and a 'new narrative'. As I shall discuss below, this story is rich, multi-layered and multidimensional. The purpose of public diplomacy is to tell this story in the most effective, credible and comprehensive manner.

Public Diplomacy

As a strategic communication tool, public diplomacy comprises "understanding, informing and influencing the public."¹⁰ Political communication, which constitutes an important part of this process, is defined as "the production, distribution, control, use and processing of information by the states, organizations, or individuals."¹¹ The purpose of public diplomacy is not propaganda, but building a strategic language of communication based on objective facts and truth.

Public diplomacy activities are conducted within two main frameworks: "State-to-public," and "public-to-public."

Public diplomacy activities are conducted within two main frameworks: "State-to-public," and "public-to-public." State-to-public activities aim to explain the state's policies and activities through the use of official tools and channels to the public. In public-to-public activities, however, civil elements such as NGOs, research centres, public opinion polls, media, opinion leaders, universities, exchange programs, associations and foundations are employed. In this regard, public diplomacy goes beyond official communication between officials,

diplomats and foreign communities.¹² Public diplomacy encompasses a larger field than “diplomatic communication.”

Public diplomacy envisages mutual communication and interaction. Listening to target groups and defining their priorities, public diplomacy constitutes one of the core elements of this multifaceted communication process. In this sense, public diplomacy is a dynamic and multidimensional communication process. Its key elements are listening as much as talking, understanding as much as explaining, and communicating as much as informing.

Soft power is one of the most important components for public diplomacy. Another important element is public opinion, which assumes an increasingly central role in shaping national and global policies. National and international political processes are closely watched and made available to the world community through the media. It is not possible to implement a policy with regard to the economy, foreign policy, energy or the environment without the approval of the public. A fundamental condition for successful public diplomacy is to follow rational, persuasive and defensible policies. It is impossible to espouse or explain to the world community policies that are unjust, ignore universal rules of law, or encourage illegitimate methods such as threats, violence and occupation. For instance, it is impossible for a country

that systematically violates human rights or keeps another country under occupation to follow a successful public policy. China’s policies in East Turkestan, Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories, the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq under George W. Bush and scandals such as Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, make it impossible for these countries, with different political and geographical characteristics, to conduct a successful public diplomacy.

As I shall briefly discuss below, Turkey has acquired a negative image due to past mistakes, and was prevented from conducting an effective public diplomacy because of those failed and misguided government policies. Turkey’s new narrative is more than creating a new image. Rather, it reflects the new identity which the country wants to embrace to overcome its past mistakes and chart a new course for its social and political future.

Public Diplomacy Practices From Around the World

Different countries around the world have different styles of conducting public diplomacy, and explain their positions, policies and theses to national and international communities in various ways. Every country uses a unique language and tool set. Such differences are due to the policies which

a specific country follows as much as to its historical and cultural heritage. As the following examples demonstrate, Europe's public diplomacy is different from that of China or Israel because of its priorities and cultural/societal codes.

European Union

According to a report by the German Foreign Ministry in 2002, "public diplomacy is assigned utmost priority alongside all other European matters."¹³ The European Union (EU), which positions itself as an effective "soft power", focuses on European public opinion as well as on those neighbouring regions such as the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Africa. The EU has developed an effective internal and external communication policy as a result of the new regulations of 1999.

The European Union allocates considerable resources for its external communications and deems communication and diplomacy with non-EU states as a strategic element of its foreign policy

This communication strategy yielded its first fruit on January 1, 2002, when the new Euro currency was launched. Founded in 1999, the EU

Director-General Press has developed programs to eliminate EU-scepticism in certain European countries. The EU Director-General Press involves various news organizations and communications agencies in member and non-member states, and benefits from their resources.¹⁴

The European Union allocates considerable resources for its external communications and deems communication and diplomacy with non-EU states as a strategic element of its foreign policy. Despite difficulties encountered in formulating a common EU foreign policy, the European Commission and its affiliated communication units work effectively to explain EU foreign policy in Europe and beyond. The EU has sped up its efforts to formulate a common foreign policy vision after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which deeply divided European public opinion. This led to the implementation of the "European Security Strategy" in November 2003.

United Kingdom

Once known as "the empire on which the sun never sets," the United Kingdom is actively pursuing a public diplomacy and strategic communication, despite its waning economic and political power. British public diplomacy mixes elements such as politics, foreign policy, trade, culture, language, education, tourism and "brand management" in a successful

and balanced manner. The fact that the English language is the most popular *lingua franca* in today's world provides a significant advantage to British public diplomacy, and allows for cultural diplomacy and social empathy through language instruction.

Britain's public diplomacy efforts are carried out mainly through three institutions: the British Foreign Ministry, the British Council, and the BBC World Service. The last two institutions, despite their official status and use of public resources, maintain an autonomous character and are not subject to government control. There is an effective division of labour among them: The Foreign Ministry is responsible for diplomatic communication, whereas the British Council handles cultural communication, and the BBC is tasked with worldwide media communication. Aside from these three, there are several other institutions that support British public diplomacy efforts.¹⁵ Effective use of these institutions plays an important role in the success of British public diplomacy.

The People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China seeks to employ an effective public diplomacy. Despite the fact that "public diplomacy" as a concept is not widely used in the Chinese political literature, the Chinese

government pays special attention to it. China aims to present itself as "a country that is peaceful, developing, reliable, open to collaboration and able to serve its massive population." In order to buttress this image, China increased its activity in the biggest economic alliance, ASEAN. It acted as a mediator in the North Korean nuclear weapons crisis and used it as a PR strategy in the 2008 World Olympics. Moreover, China has efficiently used all possible diplomatic tools in calming its neighbours that are anxious about China's fast economic growth and political power.

China's historical and cultural richness is certainly one of the most prominent elements of Chinese public diplomacy.

Considering the single-party communist rule in the country, the difficulties of presenting a positive image of China are obvious. Human rights, freedom of the press, and the issues around Tibet and the Uyghur Autonomous Region demonstrate how fragile modern China's image can be. Having placed economic growth at the centre of its foreign policy and public diplomacy, the Chinese officials indirectly respond to the Western criticism that, "economic growth is not possible without internalizing liberal-democratic values."

Notwithstanding such criticisms, China's activities in the area of public diplomacy and propaganda are effective in the neighbouring territories. Despite the communist regime, China focuses on an image around economy, trade, and diplomacy, drawing from its traditional cultural resources. To this point, Chinese artists, literary figures, and especially Chinese cinema play a major role in establishing and popularizing a new image of China. Even before modern times, China has used its rich historical and cultural heritage to impress foreign visitors.¹⁶ China's historical and cultural richness is certainly one of the most prominent elements of Chinese public diplomacy.

The United States

With a long experience and a wide range of resources at its disposal for public diplomacy, the United States has carried out a comprehensive public diplomacy program in order to make itself a centre of attraction during and after the Cold War era. Known as the only superpower of the world, the U.S. has used countless strategies from diplomacy to cultural and artistic activities to display its diplomatic power in various parts of the world.¹⁷

From Europe to the Middle East, Latin America to Asia and Africa, the attitude towards the United States fluctuates between love and hate. On the one hand, the US is a country that offers

freedom and opportunities, is a leader in the areas of science and technology, appreciated for its flexible cultural and immigration policies, whose educational system is replicated and organizational skills applied in various areas. On the other hand, its crude individualism, consumption and entertainment habits, hegemonic foreign policy, military bases, and its disproportionate use of power in the international arena invite harsh criticisms. The public diplomacy activities aspire to encompass all these areas in building the American image.

The U.S. carries out its public diplomacy activities through five major institutions: Broadcasting Board of Governors (which produces all non-military programs such as the Voice of America), The State Department, the White House, USAID, and the Department of Defense. There is no organization that liaises between these institutions. However, all the activities are coordinated collaboratively during the planning and implementation processes.

The estimated amount of financial resources the US Government allocated for public diplomacy in 2008 was 1.6 billion USD. For the year 2003, this amount was around 1.3 billion USD.¹⁸ The estimated amount spent on diplomatic activities focusing on Muslim countries is about 400 million. This budget does not include such programs as the Fulbright university and research

scholarships, exchange programs and media campaigns.

Although the United States carries out the largest public diplomacy activities in the world, the main issues regarding its image and credibility continue to persist in the post-9/11 world. The US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mike Mullen, underlined the strong connection between policies and public diplomacy when he said that “unless we change our policies, no communication will prove successful.” This declaration confirms that successful public diplomacy is possible only through following policies deemed fair and acceptable by others.

Turkey, Identity and Public Diplomacy

The processes of making foreign policies in a globalised world undergo restructuring and generate new dynamics through public opinion, legitimacy, and acceptance. Turkish foreign policy is not exempt from these processes. Thus Turkish public diplomacy must take into consideration global factors as well as particular realities born out of its own story.

Turkish public diplomacy can be discussed around three major questions. Is public diplomacy a priority for Turkey? What are the conceptual outlines, content and priorities of the type of

public diplomacy Turkey should follow? Finally, what are the tools of Turkish public diplomacy?

Before answering these questions, a couple of points about the perception of Turkey must be stated. Negative perceptions about Turkey have come about not only due to propaganda activities against Turkey but also because of imprudent policies that Turkish governments have followed in the past. Extra-judicial killings, torture in prisons, following ill-advised policies on the Kurdish issue, human rights abuses, religious minorities, freedom of thought and belief and similar problems have all reinforced a highly negative image for Turkey both domestically and internationally. In some circles abroad, Turkey is presented as a country invading Cyprus, murdering Armenians, and executing military operations in neighbouring territories in the name of fighting against the PKK.

Turkey has come a long way in changing these perceptions. Apart from some diaspora communities, only a few circles still label Turkey as an invader, oppressor, denier, etc. From East to West, the world focuses on the social change and economic growth that Turkey is undergoing and their impact on foreign policy. In a world where the line between national and international politics is blurred, changing these misperceptions to a success story depends on a well-

advised domestic and foreign policy, and on explaining it effectively.

We live in a day and age in which image shapes reality. The image of a country and its policies, the choice of key words used in their analysis and the framework in which it is placed is more important than the objective reality of that country. The phrase “image is everything,” frequently used in the fashion industry to attract individuals, is indeed applicable to societies, territories and countries as well.

However, what really matters is not image but identity. The determinant of a community’s true qualities is not its appearance. This aspect undoubtedly holds considerable significance in forming perceptions.

Nonetheless, in the final analysis, what counts in the long term are the choices of identity and the political stances and policies that a nation develops through its identity. In this regard, public diplomacy is not a battle between images, a propaganda tool or window dressing.

Changing deep-rooted perceptions overnight is not possible. For instance, reshaping the Turkish-Ottoman image, or updating it in accordance with today’s realities is a difficult task. Despite the many efforts of the two-century

long experience of modernization, the new communication tools which globalization provides, the presence of almost five million Turks living in Europe and all the efforts Turkey has made to join the EU, and the images of the Turk, Ottoman, Muslim and Middle Easterners in many European countries are still shaped by perceptions inherited from the Middle Ages. As the German philosopher Gadamer points out, history lives in and through language, words, symbols, imageries, and stories. These factors continue to play a major role in Europe’s perception of Turkey.¹⁹

The new dynamism and growth of Turkey as a regional power and a global actor must be communicated in an efficient and realistic manner to national and international audiences.

On this point, the new dynamism and growth of Turkey as a regional power and a global actor must be communicated in an efficient

and realistic manner to national and international audiences. Strategically, this is as significant as following well-advised policies. The way the world reads and perceives these policies often overshadows reality. No country, regardless of its being small or big, open or closed, democratic or autocratic, eastern or western, can remain indifferent to the force of public opinion. The role of national and international public opinion increases everyday in determining matters regarding a large portion of world politics, their

implementation and positive or negative results, from economic policies to the use of energy resources, environmental issues to migration policies, and media to regional conflicts. Countries, international organizations, NGOs and other institutions that are aware of the power of public opinion use public diplomacy in an efficacious manner.

Turkey has been playing a major role in such international platforms as the G-20, the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, the European Council, NATO and OSCE, and has been at the centre of decision making processes regionally and internationally. Recent developments regarding Turkey's domestic and foreign affairs point to the birth of a unique "Turkish story" which increasingly draws the world's attention. This story reflects the multi-layered and dynamic qualities of the country. It is not possible to dwell on a single discourse or story to talk about Turkey's new identities, self image, vision, horizon, internal struggles, problems and resolutions, multi-dimensional social and political transformations, and successes and failures, joys and sorrows, thrills and disappointments.

Turkey's new identities offer multiplicity, diversity and distinctness simultaneously with the processes of multi-centred globalization and multiple modernities. This increases and diversifies the attention that Turkey receives. In the past ten years, Turkey's

increasingly respected profile and visibility in the international media, the proliferation of resident foreign journalists, multiplication of academic studies on Turkey, high-level visits and their impacts on the world public opinion, and many similar aspects have made the "story of Turkey" a significant one from east to west.²⁰ It is important to convey this dynamic process in national and international platforms. As a rising power, Turkey's success in the areas of strategic communication and public diplomacy is indispensable for the sustainability of its national interests, regional effectiveness, and global responsibilities. Taking these aspects into consideration, it is clear that public diplomacy is a strategic priority for Turkey.

The Instruments of Turkish Public Diplomacy

As mentioned above, public diplomacy entails the comprehensive communication of the new "Turkish story" effectively to the world. What determines the content of this activity is the construction of a new political and social imagination derived from the country's democratic background, its history and geography. The depth of Turkish foreign policy is in direct correlation with the transformation of this accumulation into a strategic value. Justice, legitimacy, equality

in representation, transparency, accountability, respect for differences, a virtuous society, moral and religious freedom, the protection of dignity and the reassurance of basic rights and freedoms under the constitution are the pillars of Turkey's new social imagery. These aspects not only make Turkey a centre of attraction for both East and West but also grant Turkish foreign policy and public diplomacy a competitive edge in international relations.

Turkey is perceived as a country that is able successfully to fuse traditional Islamic-Ottoman culture with socio-economic modernization.

In recent years, the debate concerning Turkey, which has been taken up and expanded by the international media, think tanks, economic platforms and academic studies, has taken shape around these values and extends beyond Turkey's borders, allowing for the formation of a comprehensive and more dynamic discourse on modernity and the global order. For instance, in relation to the tradition versus modernity debate, Turkey is perceived as a country that is able successfully to fuse traditional Islamic-Ottoman culture with socio-economic modernization. Turkish modernization is taken up in debates about classical modernity, multiple modernities, multiculturalism and

globalism, and this carries the discussions about Turkey beyond its borders. The relationship between tradition and modernity simultaneously includes the ideal of a balance between conservative values and modern means. Turkey is perceived as a country that transforms modernity through the preservation of its conservative values.

Turkey entered the 21st century with great dynamism; no longer finding the role ascribed to it as a peripheral element in the international system during the Cold War era sufficient, Turkey is gradually becoming a central force in the region. Instead of determining its national and regional priorities in relation to the structural preferences or tensions of a polarized world system, Turkey adopts a point of view that is based on its own geographical and historical background.

This deep change at the centre of Turkey's public diplomacy takes place within the internal dynamics and self-image of the country. The Turkish public no longer sees itself as a problematic and small footnote in the Euro-centric historical narrative. Like all societies that are able to produce their own values within history, Turkish society desires to see itself as an active agent in the formation of its own history. We have before us a subject that is able and courageous enough to intervene in the flow of history, not a subject that observes the course of history from a distance with apprehension.

The great transformation in the self-image of Turkey also determines how the internal problems of the country are dealt with. Most problems that were considered taboo or unresolvable are no longer conundrums. Despite the confusion that continues here and there, the questions over identity that are integral to Turkey are now being discussed openly and freely. Concepts such as religion, state, individual, society, community, identity, politics, culture, art, the Kurdish problem, the Alevis, non-Muslim citizens, democracy, human rights and transparency that constitute the “big Turkey debate” allow for an integration of local and global, individual and community, self and other, and provide space for new opportunities.

The new social capital and mobility in Turkey rejects models of globalization that deny cultural values and identity, and dismisses an identity formation and sense of belonging closed to the rest of the world.

This internal transformation and process of normalization is also visible in foreign policy. One of the milestones of the new Turkish imagination is the fact that Turkey is executing an effective foreign policy based on its historical

background. Turkey’s descent from the Ottoman experience results in genuine familiarity with a large geographic area extending from the Balkans to the Middle East. Consequently, the emotional and political distance between Turkey and the Arab world is diminishing, and those relations are normalizing after a long hiatus. Considering the checkered relationship between Turks and Arabs in much of the 20th century, Turkey’s rise to significance for the Arab world is a fascinating development. This is noted not only by Arabs, but also by Europeans, Russians, Americans, Africans, Japanese and other Asian nations.

Another important aspect of the new image of Turkey is the relations that surface along the axis of change and continuity. In Turkey, the relationships between the centre and the periphery are being re-defined. New social classes and elites are emerging, the gap between different social classes is closing and a multiplicity of experiences is beginning to co-exist. Subjects that were once considered taboo are now openly discussed. This social and political transformation does not completely do away with traditional values and relationships, but carries them to a new level, rendering them the new pillars of locally owned modernization. In this sense, continuity and change have co-existed within the course of Turkish modernism over the past few years.

Finally, we have the new dynamic relationship between locality and globalization. The new social capital and mobility in Turkey rejects models of globalization that deny cultural values and identity, and dismisses an identity formation and sense of belonging closed to the rest of the world. In the last decade under AK Party governments, actors of modernization and globalization in Turkey have diversified, and begun to include very different social groups. These actors are no longer drawn only from the bureaucratic elite or the managerial class. People from very different social networks and identities are now extremely active in this process. In terms of the debates around globalization versus locality, this is a unique condition.

This conceptual framework should be considered as the backdrop for the public diplomacy that Turkey is implementing via its various institutions. Many public institutions perform this role directly or indirectly. TİKA (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency), Kızılay (The Turkish Red Crescent), the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, TRT (The Turkish National TV), the Yunus Emre Foundation, the Agency for Investment and Support, the Press Information Office and other institutions are all active in public diplomacy through political, diplomatic, economic and cultural activities. In order to increase the effectiveness of

these efforts, these institutions need to have a well-coordinated relationship among themselves. This task is currently undertaken by the Office of Public Diplomacy under the Prime Minister's Office.

However, by definition, public diplomacy should not be undertaken solely by government institutions. NGOs, aid organizations, human rights organizations, foundations, universities, civilian platforms, media and other civil society actors have become indispensable to public diplomacy efforts. Parallel to the growing proximity between public institutions and non-governmental organizations, public institutions and NGOs should collaborate more in the field of public diplomacy.

The issues that we discussed briefly are the basis of the new concept of public diplomacy in Turkey. The success of Turkish foreign policy and public diplomacy depends upon the effective implementation of these goals, and on continued public diplomacy centred on future policies. The actors involved in this process should range from public institutions to non-governmental organizations, from business to academia, the arts, the media, the sciences, humanitarian aid organizations and human rights institutions. The effective communication of the new "Turkish story" as a rising power is only possible through the participation of these actors that function in the public, private and non-governmental sectors.

Endnotes

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Turkish-American Relations in the 2000s: Revisiting the Basic Parameters of Partnership?

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Abstract:

This article studies developments in Turkish-American relations over the last decade. It starts with an analysis of the three parameters of the bilateral relationship that took shape at the height of the Cold War: Turkey's geo-strategic and geo-political importance; cooperation in return for external assistance; and pursuit of a pro-US political-ideological role at the regional level. While the alliance relationship underwent transformations in following years, the learned behavioral habits from this era continued to impact Turkey's foreign policy practices. The article argues that Turkey's policies over the last decade can be viewed as attempts to break those established behavioral patterns. In particular, it analyzes how the drive for autonomous action became a defining feature of Turkish foreign policy throughout the 2000s, as a result of which relations with the United States entered a new era, characterized by a growing number of frictions. Consequently, both cooperation and competition have become routine features of the bilateral ties, which is examined in various issue areas and regions.

Key Words

Turkish-American relations, strategic partnership, model partnership, geopolitical position, anti-Americanism, regional power.

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Introduction

Relations with the United States occupy a major place in Turkey's foreign policy agenda. Not only is the bilateral relationship undergirded by powerful systemic dynamics, it also cross-cuts Turkey's other foreign policy issues, which makes US-Turkish relations unique in many ways. Any analysis of Turkey's regional policies in the Balkans and Middle East, its problems with neighbors such as Greece and Syria, or its membership process into the European Union would be incomplete without taking into account the United States. At the same time, an analysis of US policies in the regions surrounding Turkey would remain incomplete without bringing Turkey into the equation. Turkish-American relations, thus, can be explained by reference to two interrelated dynamics: the place Turkey occupies in the US global and regional strategies, and Turkey's expectations of assistance from the US in order to reach its foreign policy objectives.¹

Turkey's importance in the US policy owes largely to the latter's needs to work with key regional powers to protect

its strategic interests worldwide. The United States relies on the cooperation of regional powers to maintain its presence in vital regions, or to intervene in local crises. As one of the crucial actors that can satisfy such strategic needs, Turkey's cooperation is crucial for the US interests in the Middle East, Eurasia and the Balkans. At the same time, the relationship it forged with the United States has been Turkey's most vital external connection. As a regional power with a capacity to exert military, political and economic influence in the surrounding regions, Turkey more often than not has cooperated with the United States to advance its security and interests. In many of its foreign policy initiatives, Ankara has had to receive either support or endorsement from Washington, and as a result this relationship has permeated almost all aspects of Turkey's foreign policy agenda. When Turkey stopped short of developing its bilateral and multi-lateral initiatives in coordination with the United States, it ran into disagreements with its senior partner in conducting its regional policies.

The Turkish-American relationship is the culmination of converging or diverging policies pursued by the two powers towards certain regions or issues.

In the final analysis, the Turkish-American relationship is the culmination of converging or diverging policies pursued by the two powers towards certain regions or issues. Washington's pursuit of a global grand strategy and its ongoing interests in the regions around Ankara form the foundations of this relationship. Despite Turkish decision-makers' occasional complaints about the lack of a 'Turkey policy' formulated by Washington, the relationship remains an outgrowth of US policy toward Russia, Europe, the Middle East, Eurasia, and the Islamic world, and of energy geopolitics.²

Traditional Parameters of US-Turkish Relations

The beginnings of Turkish-American ties can be traced back to the late-Ottoman period historically, but the formation of this relationship is a product of the Cold War years.³ Because the United States withdrew from world affairs in the wake of the First World War, its connections with the new Turkish Republic remained limited. With the appearance of the United States as an assertive power in the international system following the Second World War, the foundations of the alliance relationship were laid. Turkey took its place in the US-led international economic order and joined the World Bank and the IMF. It also conducted

its foreign policy on a pro-Western basis and became integrated into the US network of alliances worldwide through its membership in NATO. The policy convergence that was made possible by Turkey's threat perceptions from the Soviet Union gave way to a Cold War alliance and evolved as such in subsequent years. Turkey occupied a place in US foreign policy, in line with the role it played in the US 'containment' strategy.⁴

The unique conditions of the early Cold War years acted as a decisive factor shaping US perceptions of Turkey, and that legacy affected the evolution of the bilateral relationship in the years to come.

As a result, the unique conditions of the early Cold War years acted as a decisive factor shaping US perceptions of Turkey, and that legacy affected the evolution of the bilateral relationship in the years to come. In particular, three interrelated parameters are worth emphasizing here: Turkey's geo-strategic and geo-political importance; cooperation in return for external aid and support; and pursuit of a pro-US political-ideological role at the regional level.⁵

First, decision-makers from both sides continuously emphasized

the strategic importance of Turkey's geographic position. Not only Turkey's geography but also its population and military capabilities helped Turkey's integration into US plans for containing the Soviets and maintaining stability in the Middle East during the Cold War years. Turkey's geopolitical position came to the fore once again in the post-Cold War era and was redefined in response to the changing geo-political reality, especially in the context of energy security, which underscored Ankara's continuing relevance for US interests in the region. The strategic value of Turkey's geopolitical position affected the other two parameters of the relationship.

Second, in order to escape the restraints imposed by its limited power capability, Turkey sought a patronage relationship with the West and pursued a pro-Western policy in return. In that respect, the United States developed military assistance programs towards Turkey and in this way hoped to bolster Turkey's military capabilities so that it could fulfill its responsibilities in NATO's overall defense strategy. On the Turkish side, a perception developed that Turkey's integration into the Western security architecture would hinge on the continuation of military assistance; hence, the assistance-cooperation formula became an integral characteristic of the bilateral relationship. As a result, Turkey allowed its geography to be used

by the United States, and many American military facilities were based on Turkish soil against the Eastern block. Moreover, in return for US assistance, Turkey acted in line with US policy in various international disputes. The Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA) of 1980 illustrated very well the logic underpinning the assistance-cooperation formula. In subsequent years, Turkey received military and economic assistance worth around 500 million USD annually and continued to cooperate with the United States.

Lastly, as an extension of the assistance-cooperation formula, Turkey played a role in its own region in line with the priorities of the US and the Western alliance. While that role was largely military during the Cold War years, it was framed in political and ideological terms in the post-Cold War era. At times, Turkey was presented as a role model for newly independent states or countries going through regime change. At other times, Turkey was referred to as a bridge between the West and different regions. These functions ascribed from outside were also accepted by Turkish leaders, who were eager to consolidate their country's place in the Western security community by capitalizing on those role definitions.

In short, the Turkish-American relationship started as a partnership

among unequal powers and was heavily conditioned by security considerations. The Turkish side internalized the roles expected of it over time and shaped its foreign policy accordingly. Turkey incurred two major opportunity costs because of the bilateral relationship which evolved on the basis of those parameters, namely the limitations imposed by the alliance upon Turkey's ability to take autonomous action, and setbacks to Turkey's regional policies. After a brief discussion of these factors, the article will discuss in greater length how this patronage-based relationship has been transformed in the 2000s.

Turkish-American Relations Prior to the 2000s

While Turkey's alliance with the United States emerged as the major component of its external relations and bolstered its security and defense, it came with significant costs in terms of its foreign policy. The relationship pattern that took shape in the early Cold War years underwent transformations in following years, but still the learned behavioral habits from this era continued to impact the evolution of the relations in subsequent years. Turkey's policies over the last decade or so can be viewed as attempts to break those established behavioral patterns.

The Legacy of the Cold War: The Costs of the Alliance

As a price for its pursuit of security against threats from the Soviet Union through integration into the US-led alliance structure, Turkey in most cases had to accept the limitations on its room of maneuver imposed by the alliance structure. No doubt occasional frictions existed in the relationship after the period of honeymoon that characterized the alliance in the 1950s came to an end, such as those over the Cyprus issue – including the notorious Johnson letter and arms embargo – or Turkey’s feeling of abandonment in the Cuban missile crisis. The many crises encountered between 1960 and 1980 reminded Turkey of the shortcomings of a uni-directional foreign policy. Such bitter experiences led Turkey to explore ways of establishing economic ties with the Soviet Union. In the final analysis, however, Turkey’s security and defense policies remained integrated with the Western alliance, as became even more evident with the reheating of the Cold War struggle in the 1980s. The 1980 DECA revealed those dynamics clearly.

Another shortcoming was that, as a relationship that was shaped largely by security considerations, Turkish-American relations evolved within

a realist paradigm. Although shared threat perceptions showed variations over time, the dependence generated by alliance dynamics, especially by Turkey’s integration into NATO’s military structure, continued to limit its autonomy. Beyond that, the relative weakness of the non-military dimensions of the relationship remained a major problem for years. Though both sides took notice of that imbalance, efforts to bolster economic and social ties achieved limited success. The quest for diversifying the relationship emerged as an urgent need in the post-Cold War era, but satisfactory progress has yet to be accomplished.

Yet another cost of the alliance with the West was incurred in Turkey’s relations with neighboring regions. Turkey, as reflected in terms such as the ‘frontline state’ or ‘southern flank’ of NATO, defined its external policies within the broader outlines of the Western alliance, and to the extent that it did so, could not develop independent regional policies. In addition, in an international environment where bipolar competition had placed the countries in the Balkans and Middle East in opposite camps, and the Black Sea, Caucasus and Central Asian countries had come under direct Soviet control, Turkey’s isolation from its neighboring regions was further deepened.

Post-Cold War Era: The Challenges of Multi-regionalism

Having been isolated from its immediate neighborhood, Turkey was caught unprepared for the new era. With the disappearance of the East-West rivalry, regional systems became more important and local dynamics played a major role in the foreign policy behavior of many countries. Turkey faced difficulties navigating these uncharted waters, given its poor ties with and lack of knowledge about these 'new' regions.

US policies in Turkey's neighborhood facilitated Turkey's adaptation to the new geopolitical reality.

More importantly, in many ways, Turkey was one of the countries that experienced the negative repercussions of the new international environment most immediately. Directly affected by this new setting, Turkey had to develop policies to respond to the challenges presented by many civil wars and conflicts such as the ones in the Balkans or the Azerbaijan-Armenian conflict, and to confronting new security challenges in the Middle East. Moreover, the bilateral problems it had been able to somehow freeze during the Cold War years, such as the Cyprus issue or problems with Greece, Syria or Armenia, emerged as matters requiring

immediate attention. At the same time, Turkey perceived many opportunities to expand its influence into the newly independent states in Eurasia.

As Turkey increasingly conducted its foreign policy as a regional power, its relations with the 'lone superpower' became affected by this new environment. In many ways, US policies in Turkey's neighborhood facilitated Turkey's adaptation to the new geopolitical reality. As the end of the Cold War was nearing, there emerged a widely shared perception that Turkey's geopolitical importance was in decline. Turkish policy-makers were concerned about being left on their own, losing Western patronage and navigating into an uncertain era. A major turning point helping Turkey outgrow this fear of abandonment was the Gulf War. The proactive policy advocated by President Turgut Özal helped Turkey reassert its strategic value inside Western policy circles.⁶ Later, as the post-Soviet space emerged as an area of interest to the United States, Ankara's role in US policy towards this region, and prospects of collaboration offered a renewed justification for the revitalization of the bilateral partnership, while the US support facilitated Turkey's penetration into the new nations. As a result, as Turkish foreign policy entered a new era of dynamism, relations with the United States were redefined on the basis of Ankara's multi-regional orientation.

Toward a 'Strategic Partnership' between a Global Power and Regional Power

Turkey managed to adapt to the new geopolitical environment of the early post-Cold War years, albeit in a painful manner, while regionally-driven activism became a defining feature of its foreign policy. As an aspiring regional power, Turkey overall sought to act in concert with the United States. Since the United States had direct or indirect interests in countries in Turkey's vicinity, bilateral relations became increasingly diversified and gained a multi-dimensional character, which was noticeable in the Balkans, Eurasia and the Middle East.⁷

Due to the activities of lobbies and human rights advocates, Washington's Turkey policy came under criticism occasionally, which led to fluctuations in bilateral relations. Such frictions aside, the multi-dimensional relationship came to be defined as a strategic partnership in the early 2000s. Throughout the first decade of the new century, the concepts used to describe the relations also went through major changes, reflecting oscillations in political ties. Currently, attempts at conceptual redefinition are centered around the term proposed by President Barack Obama: 'model partnership.'

Many factors can be recounted that facilitated the 'strategic partnership'

throughout the 1990s. Firstly, one has to mention policy convergence between the two sides, due to either shared threat perceptions or overlapping interests. Moreover, Turkish governments during the 1990s did not face major opposition at home or in the region for their collaboration with the United States. Given the overall consensus at the state and society levels, the governments faced a permissive environment as they undertook coordinated action with Washington. Perhaps the biggest exception to that general trend was the widely circulated speculation that the United States was secretly engineering the emergence of a Kurdish state in the Middle East, a suspicion which was shared by large segments of the public and some political circles. Such views formed the core of a growing skepticism towards the United States and feelings of 'anti-Americanism' which emerged as a major issue in the next decade.

The Sea Change in the 2000s: Transformation of the Traditional Parameters

The drive for autonomous action became a defining feature of Turkish foreign policy throughout the 2000s, and the relations with the United States entered a new era, characterized by a growing number of frictions. Consequently, both cooperation and competition became a routine part of the

bilateral ties, as well as uncertainty and ups-and-downs. In this section, the 2003 Iraq war, which marked the transition to the new era, will first be discussed briefly and then closer attention will be paid to the factors behind the transformation.

The 2003 Iraq War: Friction Point in Alliance Relations?

In the first years of the new century, the bilateral relationship started on a cooperative trajectory. In the post-September 11 environment, Turkey, welcoming US efforts to define terrorism as a global problem, supported the war on terrorism. In return, the United States did not turn down Turkey's requests for support in its EU membership bid or its efforts to solve the Cyprus issue. Similarly, in an example that was the most vivid demonstration of the assistance-cooperation formula, the United States assisted Turkey both directly and through the IMF, when the latter faced a major financial crisis in the early 2000s. As such, Washington underscored the extent to which it valued Ankara's strategic position in the post-September 11 environment.

In the wake of disagreements over the 2003 Iraq war, the bilateral-

relationship formed during the Cold War years has gone through a period of major redefinition. In many respects, taking this year as the point of departure is meaningful, as many other nations also began to question their relations with the United States, which sparked a debate on the future of US alliances worldwide. While many observers expected Turkey to join the US-led coalition given the decades-old alliance relationship, due to the Turkish Parliament's failure to authorize a governmental motion, Turkey did not allow the opening of a second front through its territory. This development initiated a debate on the future of bilateral ties. While

In the post-September 11 environment, Turkey, welcoming US efforts to define terrorism as a global problem, supported the war on terrorism.

some called on the US administration to punish Turkey, others asked the Turkish government to reconsider its ties with Washington. Despite the occasional

confrontations in subsequent years, which according to many observers, risked bringing the relationship to a breaking point, the parties worked hard to manage such frictions.

Factors Behind the Sea Change

Granted, Turkish-American relations have moved beyond the old patronage dynamics and the accompanying

assistance-cooperation formula, and entered into more uncertain waters. In this section, the underlying reasons behind this change will be studied, by taking into account both the transformations in Turkey's external relations and the trends in US foreign policy.

i) The unilateral turn in US foreign policy and the questioning of unipolarity worldwide

In the debate that ensued from the 2003 Iraq war, Turkey was one of many Western and non-Western powers that started to reconsider their relationship to Washington. Unlike the Afghan campaign, the United States had failed to muster an international coalition behind its invasion of Iraq, an act whose legitimacy was increasingly questioned. To the extent that the Bush administration pursued a foreign policy that was based on unilateral action, power politics and American national interests, the rest of the international community expressed discomfort at Washington's role in the world. The hawkish policies symbolized in the 'preventive war' doctrine resulted in a questioning of the unipolar world order. Washington's assertive policies, which at times even disregarded the interests of its allies, came to be perceived as a source of

threat by other powers, which arguably engaged in new strategies, such as 'soft balancing,' to counter US influence.⁸

Moreover, a simultaneous debate on the sustainability of US global primacy gained pace. On the one hand, the inability of the United States to achieve its desired objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan led to the questioning of US military and political dominance, which gained a new dimension following the 2008 Russian-Georgian war. On the other hand, the global financial crisis, triggered by American housing and financial markets, raised serious doubts about the US ability to command the international economic order. Taken together with the projections that point to a shift in economic activities towards Asia, these developments sparked a debate over the global economic and financial institutions that formed the US-led international order. As a harbinger of this transformation, international efforts to tackle the financial crisis are discussed through new forums, such as the G-20, which also encompass new actors such as Turkey.

In that sense, Turkey can be seen as tuning in with a worldwide trend whereby several powers are developing a more distanced relationship with Washington. On the one hand, Turkey did not refrain from raising vocal objection to US policies in its region, when these policies contradicted its interests. On the other hand, Turkish leaders have questioned

US global preeminence and the unipolar world order. They emphasized the need for more participatory decision making mechanisms for international institutions, arguing that global problems cannot be tackled with from a single center. They highlighted Turkey's growing visibility in international institutions, such as the UN Security Council, the G-20, the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the Council of Europe, as indications of its determination to make such a contribution.

ii) Redefinition of Turkey's geopolitical positioning and increasing regional emphasis⁹

A distinguishing feature of the new Turkish foreign policy has been Turkey's deliberate effort to redefine its position in international relations, and the emphasis placed on regional dimension in such efforts. First, Turkey has increasingly 'rediscovered' its immediate neighborhood and started to redefine its regional policies on an ambitious platform.¹⁰

Regionalization is a major force in international relations, and Turkey's policies are in line with this trend.¹¹ On the one hand, states have exponentially integrated with their regions through economic and political cooperation schemes since the collapse of the

bipolar structure. On the other hand, some regional powers with a capacity to assume leadership roles in their neighborhood have become centers of attraction in global politics.¹² Yet another development that complements these trends is the declining weight of the West in the global economy.

Seen from this perspective, the emphasis on the regional dimension and Turkey's self-perception as a regional power is not unique to AK Party era. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold

A distinguishing feature of the new Turkish foreign policy has been Turkey's deliberate effort to redefine its position in international relations, and the emphasis placed on regional dimension in such efforts.

War, Turkey developed a proactive regional policy to advance its interests in the new geopolitics of Eurasia and the Balkans. Although this vision might have been given a backseat, it remained present and the new regional openings of the last decade are largely an outgrowth of it. Throughout the last decade, the AK Party governments have managed to make good use of the growth in Turkey's national power and mobilized Turkey's capacity to pursue an ambitious foreign policy. Turkey's new initiatives and its

efforts to promote economic and political interests, especially in the Middle East, can be seen as the continuation of this regional emphasis.

iii) Transformation of regional policies in the 2000s

Granted, one has to consider the differences between the regional power model of the last decade and that of the 1990s. First, while the regional approach of the 1990s reflected Turkey's quest to adapt to Western policies in its neighborhood, in recent years Turkey has been searching for a regional power model that would put its own priorities at the center.¹³ The emphasis on setting its own priorities in the formulation of regional policies, the degree of independent action from Western partners, and the daring attitude accompanied by a readiness to risk confrontation in pursuit of its priorities have been the defining characteristics of Turkey's regional policies in the last decade.

As a result of this search for autonomy, which is summarized in Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's concept of central-country, Turkey's willingness to play a regional role in tune with Western interests in its surrounding regions has been curbed. In that regard, the metaphor of 'central-country' rejects not only the Cold War concepts of 'frontline state' or 'southern flank'

but also the post-Cold War metaphors of 'bridge' or 'pivot' country. This new imagination puts at the center of Turkey's foreign policy its perception of the geographical and historical position of the country. Though it stops short of rejecting Turkey's ties to the West and the United States, it proposes to reconceptualize them as one of many external connections. In other words, in the new multi-dimensional regional policy, Turkey's relationship with the United States is reduced to one of many items on its foreign policy agenda, and downgraded from the privileged place it traditionally enjoyed.

Another distinguishing characteristic of Turkey's new regional policies is that security considerations have lost ground to cooperative policies. Although Turkey undersigned such cooperative security initiatives as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation in the 1990s, its regional policies were geared largely towards meeting the threats or instabilities posed by its neighbors or regional crises. This security-driven foreign policy set limitations on Turkey's ability to foster regional cooperation, and forced it to maintain its military-strategic alliance with the United States. Parallel to Turkey's domestic transformation in recent years, which saw the weakening power of the military in civilian politics, Turkey increasingly abandoned the security-centric worldview in its foreign policy. As a result, it rejected

defining its relations with neighbors on the basis of security parameters and came to perceive its region as an area of potential cooperation. At the same time, a parallel outcome of Turkey's domestic transformation has been the growing salience of economic and commercial factors in the making of Turkish foreign policy, which has resulted in a visible increase in Turkey's economic presence in the neighborhood. As a result of this 'trading state' approach, regional policies have been driven by economic considerations, as Turkey aimed to bolster regional cooperation and integration.¹⁴

Moreover, Turkey's new regional power approach is not based on geopolitical factors alone, for geo-cultural elements are also given major prominence in the making of Turkish foreign policy.¹⁵ The conceptual background is set by Davutoğlu, who highlights both geographic and historical depth in his redefinition of Turkey's international positioning. According to this view, Turkey holds a responsibility towards people beyond its borders due to historic-cultural reasons, and in order to fulfill this responsibility, it has to pursue proactive regional policies. For this purpose, Turkish political elites have to make peace with their historical

and cultural legacy, and work toward reintegrating Turkey with its natural geo-cultural hinterland as defined by not only its geography but also its culture, civilization and history.

According to this geo-cultural framework, Turkey's traditional Western vocation was ill-conceived, as it developed in disjunction with the country's historical and cultural environs, a situation evidenced by the fact that Turkey's cultural, social and economic ties with its neighbors remained extremely

Turkey holds a responsibility towards people beyond its borders due to historic-cultural reasons, and in order to fulfill this responsibility, it has to pursue proactive regional policies.

limited. Turkey's mental break with its region became obvious, especially in the context of Cold War geopolitical conditions, which further deepened a political disconnect with Turkey's Eastern

neighbors. The challenge today is to reverse this historical anomaly and help Turkey meet its geo-cultural destiny. In other words, in this view, what is needed is to facilitate 'normalization of history and geography' in Turkish foreign policy.¹⁶

Turkey's rapprochement with its neighborhood and its pursuit of regional-oriented foreign policy has led to occasional divergence with US policies. As will be discussed below, US policy towards the regions surrounding Turkey

more often than not has become an area of tension and competition, rather than an area of cooperation in bilateral relations. The US approach of relying on coercive instruments, including brute force and sanctions, contradicts Turkey's quest to create a stable and peaceful regional order. In search of deeper economic ties and enhanced social and political exchanges at the regional level, Turkey has called for dialogue and diplomacy to solve regional problems. These diverging positions on regional issues have further widened the rift in Turkish-American bilateral relations. In this environment, moreover, Turkey has become more averse towards US efforts to assign it regional roles. For instance, while in the 1990s and in the aftermath of September 11, Turkish leaders welcomed the idea of Turkey serving as a role model for Turkic or Islamic nations, such definitions have been rejected by the new government which prioritizes the concept of central-country.

Furthermore, in addition to flourishing ties with its immediate neighborhood, Turkey has sought to develop closer relations with rising powers such as China, Brazil and South Korea. Such 'openings' to new regions, as they came to be labeled by the government, served many purposes: diversifying Turkey's external relations on a global scale, lessening its dependence on the West and United States, and

stating clearly its readiness to prepare for the post-American world.

At the same time, Turkey took several steps that reflected the value it attached to its geo-cultural positioning. Turkey's growing involvement in the Arab-Israeli disputes, its advocacy of Palestinian rights on international platforms, or its reservations about the selection of Anders Fogh Rasmussen as NATO's chief were all important indications of the extent to which geo-cultural considerations played a role in Turkey's new foreign policy.

Turkey's rapprochement with its neighborhood and its pursuit of regional-oriented foreign policy has led to occasional divergence with US policies.

The tensions with the United States caused by geopolitical or geo-cultural considerations led some circles inside the United States to argue that Turkey is moving away from its traditional axis and drifting towards the Middle East. The Turkish government rebuffed those charges, arguing instead that the new initiatives complemented rather than replaced Turkey's existing commitments. The new steps and the resulting multi-dimensional turn, in their view, signaled normalization for Turkey, by correcting

a unidirectional pro-Western foreign policy which largely was a legacy of Cold War conditions.¹⁷

Areas of Cooperation and Divergence in Bilateral Relations

With the revision of the traditional parameters of the US-Turkish relationship, the parties have run into confrontation on many issues. At the same time, the two sides have continued to cooperate in many areas. In this section, areas of cooperation and divergence will be discussed in greater length, and the phenomenon of anti-Americanism will be studied.

Areas of Cooperation

i) Turkey-EU relations

Europe-related issues constitute a major dimension of the US-Turkish relationship. Traditionally, Turkey often used its ties with the United States as leverage to overcome the problems it encountered with the European powers. Seen from that perspective, US administrations have continued to support Turkey's EU membership bid. In its first years, the Bush administration extended its support to Turkey, especially when the AK Party government solicited help from the White House. But, one

has to mention the reshuffling of the trilateral dynamics between Turkey, the United States and Europe in the context of the 2003 Iraq war. In the run-up to the war and in its aftermath, Turkey's policy converged with that of France and Germany, which joined the worldwide opposition to the unilateral course followed by the United States. In a situation where the Turkish-American relationship was going through a troubled phase, this conjectural convergence facilitated Turkey's pursuit of autonomous foreign policy and had positive repercussions for the EU membership process. The drift towards Europe triggered the Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy culture, and facilitated Turkey's adoption of soft power and diplomacy, characteristic of the European approach to international relations, as opposed to Washington's hard power approach.¹⁸ As a result, Turkey distanced itself from the United States on the Iranian nuclear program issue, thus coordinating its position with European powers.

Despite such divergence, US support for Turkey's EU bid continued in various forms during the Bush era. But, in spite of the opening of accession negotiations in 2005, the accession process became increasingly complicated in subsequent years. One reason why US support failed to have a decisive impact on Turkish-EU relations was embedded in the fact that

the arguments used by the Americans to justify Turkey's entry into the EU were based on geopolitical rationale. They definitely made some sense, but over time they lost their appeal for many Europeans. Given the widening trans-Atlantic gap and the problems Turkey encountered in its relations with the United States and the EU, that argument became largely dysfunctional. Furthermore, with the onset of accession negotiations in 2005, the Turkey-EU process gained rather a technical character and the ability of the United States to meddle in 'internal European affairs' through geopolitical justifications was constrained.

The geopolitical competition over energy resources and transportation routes in Eurasia has been another area of overlapping interest in the bilateral relationship.

Another tendency that began during the second Bush term and has continued through the Obama administration was the association established between the membership process and the 'axis shift' debate. For many Americans, Turkey's exclusion from the West and the EU pushed it toward the Middle East and Russia. To prevent this, the EU had to be pressured so that it would be

more welcoming towards Turkey. Such calls also remained largely ineffective. One reason for this was the changing landscape of European politics in the second half of the 2000s, where the French and German governments increasingly became critical of Turkey, raising questions about its prospects of ever achieving full membership. Operating in an intolerant environment where the negative mood inside the EU coincided with the changing priorities of the Turkish government, Washington was left with limited room of maneuver to move the stalled membership process forward.

ii) Energy security

The geopolitical competition over energy resources and transportation routes in Eurasia has been another area of overlapping interest in the bilateral relationship. Throughout the 1990s, Turkey defined its energy policies in a pro-Western direction and sought to gain a place in oil and natural gas transportation through its integration into the US-led East-West energy corridor. While the first leg of the corridor was completed with the realization of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline owing to coordinated action between Turkey, the United States and other stakeholders, the parties failed to deliver on the second leg, pertaining to natural gas transportation from the

Caspian basin. In particular, no major progress has been achieved in regards to the Trans-Caspian or the Nabucco pipeline project that would form the vital pillars of the East-West natural gas corridor. It seems that rather than a function of Turkish-US competition, the poor state of cooperation was due largely to a lack of interest in these projects on the part of the United States, which was increasingly embroiled in Middle Eastern affairs, resulting in limiting room for joint action in Eurasia. Moreover, the failure of the EU to assume a resolute leadership, despite the fact that many European countries would be the direct beneficiaries of the proposed natural gas pipelines, is yet another factor that has bedeviled these projects.

With the Obama administration's appointment of Richard Morningstar as special envoy for Eurasian Energy, US-Turkish coordinated action in this realm gained pace. Nonetheless, the US policy toward Iran, based on sanctions and exclusion, set important obstacles to Turkey's efforts to deepen ties with that country in the energy sector, a situation most vividly observed in Turkey's plans to include Iran into the Nabucco project which have been thwarted by the United States. Moreover, some circles in the United States view with suspicion Turkey's growing ties with Russia in energy sector, arguing that they risk derailing Western energy security.

iii) Afghanistan

Following the international intervention in Afghanistan, Turkey assumed a major role in this country, and the ongoing partnership there has remained a major area of collaboration, despite persistent differences over the choice of specific policy instruments. The Turkish government of the time provided logistical assistance to the coalition operations against the Taliban, in line with Turkey's declared policy of supporting the global fight against terrorism. Although Turkey refrained from sending combat troops, it joined the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that was first established as a coalition of the willing and was later transferred to NATO command. In different time periods, Turkey assumed the command of the ISAF, while its troop contributions fluctuated between a few hundred and over 1,500. Despite its role in ISAF, Turkey continuously expressed discomfort at the loss of civilian lives due to US or NATO attacks, and sought to maintain brotherly ties with the Afghan people.

Over time, Turkey redefined its policy on Afghanistan, arguing that the problem could not be solved by military means alone, and that therefore its contributions would be concentrated in the social sphere, especially in the reconstruction of the country. Under this

approach, Turkey reorganized its military presence as part of the Kabul regional command, and assumed responsibility for the provincial reconstruction team in Wardak. In this context, in addition to the establishment of social and administrative infrastructure, its activities focused on training and educating Afghan police and soldiers. The transformation in Turkey's approach, which began during the Bush years, continued into the Obama era, leading even to occasional frictions with the new administration.

Turkey objected to Obama's calls for fresh troop contributions from several allies, including Turkey, as part of his troop surge strategy in 2009. While declining to contribute combat troops, Turkey highlighted the non-combat military functions it was already delivering in the country. Moreover, Turkey found the US policy of singling out Taliban problematic, and argued that a lasting solution would require the inclusion of all factions into Afghanistan's political processes. In line with this policy, Turkey spearheaded many regional initiatives such as RECCA, which brought together representatives from various Afghan groups as well as Afghanistan's neighbors. The support such initiatives received from the Western powers is an important indication of the receptivity towards Turkey's *sui generis* approach, as is Washington's acknowledgement that it would maintain bilateral relations by taking into account Turkey's priorities.

iv) The Balkans

Another region where Turkey has enjoyed relatively seamless relations with the United States is the Balkans. While the Balkans formed the stage for proactive Turkish foreign policy throughout the 1990s, by the mid-2000s, this region took a backseat in Turkey's foreign policy agenda. One reason for this development was a decline in international interest, as the hot conflicts in the region subsided. Moreover, as South Eastern Europe came under closer scrutiny by the EU and the countries of the region started to be integrated into European institutions, Turkey's potential influence declined. Nonetheless, Turkey maintained its presence in the international missions under NATO and the EU's lead which were established for the stabilization or reconstruction of Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. Through such contributions, Turkey gained a chance to bolster ties with the United States and the EU. Furthermore, Turkey slowly gained an economic foothold in the Balkan nations, albeit a limited one.

Particularly after 2008, the Balkans gained a renewed visibility in Turkish foreign policy. Having highlighted the risks posed by the West's neglect of the ongoing inter-communal tensions and inability to establish a sustainable peace in Bosnia, Davutoğlu initiated preventive diplomacy in an effort to prevent the outbreak of a new conflict.

The most concrete step in this direction was Turkey's hosting of two separate trilateral summits through which Turkish leaders brought together the leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia on the one hand, and the leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia on the other. Both this initiative and Turkey's policy on Kosovo's declaration of independence underscored the extent to which Turkey continues to act in close coordination with the West in the Balkans.

Areas of Divergence

i) The Middle East

The dynamics of divergence in Turkey-US bilateral relations has been most visible in the Middle East. Having objected to US war plans, Turkey continued its opposition to the United States in the aftermath of the 2003 war, and Iraq-related issues emerged as a topic of confrontation with the United States. The most immediate causes for contention concerned the close relationship the United States forged with the Kurdistan Regional Government in Northern Iraq, and the regional instability caused by the invasion. Nonetheless, the dynamics of cooperation gained ground over time. A major reason that prepared the ground for convergence between Washington and Ankara over Iraq was Turkey's need to ensure the political and military

backing of the United States in its fight against the PKK formations taking refuge in Northern Iraq. With the resurgence of the PKK's violent campaign in the second half of the decade, Turkey's dependence on the intelligence provided by the United States increased, which led to the formation of the Turkey-United States-Iraq trilateral mechanism.

Another factor facilitating policy convergence in the context of Iraq has been both sides' joint stakes in ensuring Iraq's stability. Aware of the security risks that might have been posed by Iraq's descend into total chaos, Turkey moved to support US efforts for Iraq's reconstruction. In this regard, by expressing its readiness to field peacekeeping forces in Iraq as part of an international mission in the initial months following the invasion, Turkey signaled its readiness to cooperate with the United States. Similarly, Turkey offered its mediation services to bridge differences between different Iraqi factions, and worked to convince the Sunni Arabs to join political processes. Later, through its continuing commitment to working in coordination with Washington following Obama's announcement of his plans for withdrawing US troops from Iraq, Ankara reiterated once again how it places a high premium on Iraq's stability.

As Iraq ceased to be the main issue of contention, the Iranian nuclear program emerged as yet another area

of confrontation. The United States increasingly expressed concerns over Iran's reactivation of its nuclear program, especially its underground activities. While initially Turkey's argument for the resolution of the dispute through dialogue and diplomacy resonated with the European powers' position, over time Turkey increasingly diverged from the West. Such an outcome was inevitable, as the Europeans increasingly adopted a position similar to that of the United States, by agreeing to support Obama's policy of sanctions and coercive instruments to stop Iran's nuclear program.

Turkey insisted on its earlier stance, arguing that if military instruments were employed to solve the dispute over Iran's nuclear program, it could create another source of instability similar to the situation in Iraq. Instead, Turkey called for engaging Tehran in order to allay security concerns and build confidence on both sides of the dispute. Towards that end, Turkey has argued that both its efforts to mediate between Iran and Western powers and the swap deal it brokered in coordination with Brazil constituted the most concrete steps toward the solution of this dispute. Turkey voted against the new US-sponsored sanctions package at the UN Security Council, which created another crisis of confidence in bilateral relations. While ultimately agreeing to implement the new round of sanctions authorized

by the Security Council, Turkey declined to join the unilateral sanctions initiated by the United States and some European powers. Similarly, through its diplomatic initiatives in the run-up to the Lisbon summit of November 2010, where NATO adopted a missile shield project, Turkey sought to ensure that this project would not be specifically developed against Iran. Such moves on Turkey's part underscore the severity of the differences of opinion between Ankara and Washington, and the degree to which Turkey was determined to pursue policies autonomous from the United States.

In the same period, Turkey's policy on the Arab-Israel problem emerged as another source of tension in bilateral relations. Following Hamas's victory in the Palestine Legislative Council elections, Turkey advocated recognition of Hamas as a legitimate political actor, and hosted Hamas leader Khaled Mashal in February 2006. This approach led to frictions with the United States and West, which viewed Hamas as a terrorist organization. Neo-conservative groups and the pro-Israeli lobby capitalized on this development to spark a debate on the axis shift in Turkish foreign policy.

In the following years, Turkey not only insisted on the same policy, but also started to vocally criticize Israel's blockade over Gaza and the inhumane treatment of the Palestinians on international platforms. Despite Turkey's

facilitation of proximity talks between Israel and Syria, Israel's aggressive policy on Gaza undermined the Turkish-Israeli relationship. Israel's attack on Gaza in late 2008 and early 2009 invited Turkey's harsh reaction, epitomized by the 'Davos incident.' The Mavi Marmara raid of summer 2010 brought bilateral relations on the verge of collapse. Although the Obama administration differed from earlier administrations in its approach to Israel, the United States largely sided with Israel's interpretations of the events, as was demonstrated by the US position on the UN investigation into the Mavi Marmara raid.

In spite of these areas of contention in the Middle East, Ankara and Washington also found common ground to cooperate there on other issues. Overall, Turkey adopted a constructive approach toward US projects to shape the region in the aftermath of the Iraq war. Following the Greater Middle East Project proposed in 2003, the Greater Middle East and North Africa Initiative (GMENA) was adopted in June 2004 during the G-8 Summit, which sought to stimulate economic, political and social reconstruction in the region.¹⁹ Welcoming this development, Turkey assumed a role in the projects pertaining to social policies, women's rights, and democratization. Yet, following the US reaction to Hamas's election victory, the Abu Gurayb scandal, the deepening of communal conflict in Iraq, and the

reluctance of Arab reformers to being associated with the United States, the GMENA was rendered dysfunctional, lost its credibility, and was given a backseat in US regional policies.

Turkey also lost enthusiasm for the project, initially in tandem with its embroilment in the security risks posed by the resurgence of PKK terrorism and later by its initiation of the economic integration project in the Middle East. Later, Turkey welcomed the Obama administration's announcement that it would seek to revitalize the peace process, and argued in particular for the building of channels of dialogue and diplomacy with Syria. The popular uprisings that swept the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 reiterated once again the two countries' mutual stakes in acting in concert to ensure regional stability and facilitate social and economic transformation in the region.

ii) Relations with Russia and Eurasia

While Turkish-American cooperation in Eurasia provided a venue for forging a strategic partnership in the 1990s, Turkey acted hesitantly when it was called to coordinate its policies with the West against Russia throughout the 2000s. As the United States focused its attention on the Middle East following the Iraq war, Russia increasingly consolidated its power in Eurasia.

Despite the West gaining advantage by advocating democratic regimes, epitomized by the colored revolutions, such gains were soon reversed. The United States was generally acquiescent toward Russia's attempts to regain influence and to balance US power in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Black Sea basin in the second half of the decade.

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In the same period, Turkey's ties with Russia flourished in economic and political realms. Partly reflecting this new mood, Turkey took a 'neutral' position in the undeclared competition between Russia and the West, and, in contrast to the 1990s, avoided taking actions that could be perceived as anti-Russian. Both Turkey's self-conscious distancing from the US agenda in its neighborhood, and its concern to dampen political tensions with Russia in order to maximize gains from commercial exchanges, played their roles in producing this outcome. Turkey's preference for neutrality was most clearly observed in the Black Sea region, especially during the Russian-Georgian war of 2008. This changing Turkish policy triggered debates within the US political community, especially during the second term of the Bush

administration, which questioned whether Russia and Turkey were forming an anti-Western axis.

Beyond that, over time, Turkey's initiatives in Eurasia were freed from the immediate post-Cold War perception of being extensions of the US agenda in the region. As a matter of fact, some commentators found the AK Party's interest in the region lacking. It was only after 2008 that Turkey refocused its attention on the region in a serious way. In this context, Turkey has recently moved to revitalize platforms to facilitate cooperation among Turkic nations. Notably, in coordination with Kazakhstan, Turkey spearheaded multi-lateral initiatives to contribute to regional stability. Such initiatives in Central Asia were not directly coordinated with the United States, and were shaped on the basis of Turkey's own priorities. In the Caucasus, Turkey took steps towards the resolution of the problems with Armenia, and its relations with the United States have exhibited both elements of cooperation and divergence in this region.

Although the United States welcomed Turkey's normalization efforts with Armenia, due to the parties' inability to conclude this process, the Armenian issue remains a potential flashpoint in Turkish-American relations. The Obama administration prevented a debate in the House of Representatives on draft legislation regarding Armenian claims of

genocide in March 2010, reflecting the importance attached to Turkey's strategic value. However, this issue might be brought to the US agenda depending on the changing political climate, and hence poison bilateral relations.

iii) Relations with NATO and cooperation in the defense industry

The dynamics of a US-Turkey divergence became visible throughout the 2000s even in NATO, which traditionally had provided an institutional platform for Turkish-American partnership. Turkey has continuously stated that NATO remains the backbone of its security and defense policies. In this regard, for instance, it became a major contributor to peace support operations, took a lead role in the Partnership for Peace program and supported the Alliance's transformation. Yet, Turkey simultaneously came to be seen as thinking and acting differently from the rest of the Alliance. On the one hand, there have been concerns over Turkey's hindering of EU-NATO cooperation due to the unresolved Cyprus issue. On the other hand, Turkey has been at the center of discussions for its controversial stance on France's return to NATO's military organs, the election of a new Secretary General, the development of the missile shield under

NATO framework, and the transfer of the coalition operations in Libya to NATO.

The growing volume of such instances of divergence led some circles in the United States to question Turkey's commitment to the Alliance. Reminding its partners that it has equal rights just as they do, Turkey reiterated that it wants its voice heard in the Alliance's decisions. Moreover, it is instructive to note that in all these 'crises,' in the final analysis, Turkey dropped its objections, especially after the United States stepped in. As such, Turkey has underscored how it values maintaining the Alliance's unity as well as its relations with Washington.

Meanwhile, defense cooperation, which constituted a major component of the alliance relationship, has gone through significant transformation in the last decade. Turkey has pursued ambitious military modernization programs, initiated in the 1990s. Despite the continuation of joint projects with and defense procurement from the United States, Turkey has increasingly moved in the direction of developing a domestic defense industry and reducing its dependence on imports. Raising the share of domestic contributions, and facilitating technology transfers in joint production projects with foreign suppliers have been the driving themes of Turkey's military procurement

policies. Given the limitations imposed by US regulations on some technology transfers, US arms producers failed to compete in tenders for supplying arms and equipment to the Turkish army.

Turkey has undertaken joint projects with Italy and South Korea to produce attack helicopters and main battle tanks, respectively, as well as developing national warship and unmanned aerial vehicle projects. Partly as a reaction to the exclusion of US producers from defense contracts, the United States is said to be reluctant to sell some advanced weapons systems to Turkey, which arguably has led to deficiencies in Turkey's anti-terrorism struggle. Turkey's military dependence on the United States still continues, especially in intelligence gathering, anti-missile defense systems, and attack helicopters. This dependence remains a major factor that acts as a brake against a total breakdown in bilateral relations.

iv) Rising anti-Americanism in Turkey

The rapidly declining popularity of the United States in Turkish society has emerged as yet another issue in bilateral relations. The arguments that anti-Americanism is taking permanent roots in Turkey are often heard in the United States. As such arguments coincide with Turkey's controversial initiatives towards Hamas or Syria, the Turkish government has come under criticism for either

keeping silent, or acting in a populist manner, or even supporting anti-American sentiments in the society. The government has denied those claims, and instead argues that this phenomenon is a product of the repercussions of misguided US policies in the region, and can only be remedied by the United States revising its Middle East policies.

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Academic analyses on the subject demonstrate that anti-Americanism is largely a reaction to US actions in Turkey's neighborhood. Large segments of Turkish society are troubled by the humanitarian tragedy and instability unleashed by the Iraq war. Washington's close ties with the Northern Iraqi administration and the resurgence of PKK terrorism in the wake of the Iraq war have exaggerated Turkish skepticism towards the United States. In addition, several other incidents, including the US mistreatment of Turkish military personnel in Sulaymaniyah, bred the perceptions that the United States disregards Turkey's interests.²⁰

Obama's election was welcome worldwide, raising expectations that

the ‘Obama effect’ would repair the negative image of the United States created during the Bush years. While such an improvement was recorded in polls worldwide, those Turks who have a favorable outlook toward the United States remained low compared to other Western nations.²¹ This ‘Turkish exceptionalism’ is important, as it indicates an ongoing lack of trust at the societal level, which remains a hurdle to be overcome in the bilateral relationship. In addition to Turkish concerns triggered by alleged American involvement in the Kurdish-question, the perceptions that the Obama administration, having pushed for Turkey-Armenia normalization, continues to use the ‘genocide legislation’ as leverage against Turkey serves to perpetuate deep skepticism towards the United States.

In any case, given the negative public perceptions, all Turkish governments will have to conduct their relations with Washington carefully. In a rapidly democratizing domestic political setting, Turkish-American relations are no longer shaped by military-civilian bureaucrats or political elites; rather, public opinion has emerged as a major force in foreign policy making. Just as Turkish governments take people’s views into account, the United States too will be well advised to pay due attention to the trends in Turkish public opinion, in order to define the relations on a more realistic basis.

Conclusion: From ‘Strategic Partnership’ to ‘Model Partnership’?

Throughout the first decade of the new millennium, Turkey has increasingly sought to conduct its foreign policy autonomously, paralleling the growing number of tensions with the United States. As a result, the traditional parameters of Turkish-American relations have gone through a period of redefinition. First, encouraged by the expansion of its economic, political and military power, Turkey expressed discomfort with the definitions of its place in the Western world based on geographic position. Similarly, Turkish leaders questioned the patronage relationship based on the assistance-cooperation formula. Moreover, Turkey ceased to shape its relations with not only the Western world but also the surrounding regions, based on roles prescribed from outside. Increasingly, Turkish leaders endeavored to determine the country’s partnership with the West and relations with the region in line with their autonomous role perceptions. In this new setting, the concept of ‘strategic partnership’ was no longer suitable to describe the nature of the relationship, while various efforts to base the partnership on a new concept bore limited fruits.

Indeed, parallel to the declining prestige of the United States in the eyes

of the Turkish people, it remains an open question as to how bilateral ties will be redefined at the level of political elites in the wake of the oscillations observed in the last decade. It has been emphasized earlier in the article how both sides were restrained from severing the ties completely even during the height of the post-Iraq war woes in the Bush era. With the election of Obama, the expectation of betterment in bilateral ties was partly realized as the parties expressed on many occasions their shared vision in the Middle East and other regions.

As a result, the Arab-Israeli peace process, the opening of Syria to the international community, the withdrawal of coalition forces from Iraq, the Iranian nuclear program and the stabilization of Afghanistan have emerged as issues of overlapping interests, which further elevate hopes for policy convergence. Indeed, in high level meetings between officials from both sides, the areas of potential cooperation were often discussed. Through joint action, it was argued, not only would the parties be able to advance their interests in those issues areas, but they also would be able to instrumentalize such cooperation to mend the bilateral relations.²²

Obama's visit to Turkey in April 2009 and his idea of a 'model partnership' injected fresh hope to revitalize the relations, but the contours of this concept have yet to be fully defined.

Yet, both during the Bush and Obama years, the parties failed to recapture the spirit of cooperation conveyed by the term 'strategic partnership.' Their inability to agree on a term to replace 'strategic partnership' attests to this observation. In 2006, the parties made an attempt to elevate the ongoing political cooperation, which at times was labeled as 'enhanced partnership.' While the United States solicited Turkey's support on the issue of Iran, Turkey hoped to receive US assistance on the issue of resurgent PKK violence. Through the joint Strategic Vision Document signed in July 2006, the parties expressed their determination to act in closer coordination. While signing a document was expected to set the bilateral relations on a more solid foundation, they soon took steps that apparently undermined whatever 'shared vision' they agreed on, rendering the document irrelevant.

Obama's visit to Turkey in April 2009 and his idea of a 'model partnership' injected fresh hope to revitalize the relations, but the contours of this concept have yet to be fully defined. Moreover, the frictions that broke out during the Obama administration show that the announcement of a 'model partnership' has failed to offer common ground

or eliminate differences of opinion. Despite policy convergence in various fields, some tensions from the Bush era have been carried into the new term, as discussed above. One reason for this development has been Obama's failure to fully realize his promise of setting American foreign policy on an entirely new course. At the same time, as Turkey's desire to pursue autonomous regional policies has taken root, Turkey did not shy away from objecting to US policies when they contradicted its priorities.²³

The most concrete steps undertaken in the context of the 'model partnership' were the activities of the Turkish-American Business Council to bolster economic and commercial ties. Through a new forum bringing together representatives from the business community and chaired by ministers from both sides, the parties wanted to improve the coordination of economic activities. The need for a new forum has been questioned, given the presence of several other mechanisms devoted to the same purpose. Nonetheless, the parties hope to further economic ties by developing new projects under this framework. As underlined at the outset of this article, the economic and social pillars of the bilateral relations have always remained underdeveloped. If the economic ties can

be elevated to new heights through the model partnership, it will mark a major step towards the diversification of the relationship, moving it away from its security-dominant origins.

At the current juncture, it is difficult to base the Turkish-American relationship on a pre-defined partnership paradigm. Such definitions will be faulty because they usually assume that Turkey will eventually cooperate with the United States even at the expense of own interests. But, competition and differences have become characteristics of the Turkish-American partnership, side by side with the cooperative dynamics, and the future of the relationship needs to be defined on this basis. Considering the regional crises and rapidly changing international environment, the interests of Turkey and the United States will diverge and convergence, depending on the specific contingency at hand. Therefore, in the coming years, the relations will evolve case by case and can hardly be expected to be governed by a pre-defined partnership model.²⁴ While the parties will continue to cooperate in cases of overlapping interests, in cases of interest collision, they will have to work hard to develop mechanisms to manage disagreements, lest they escalate into crises.

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The Relations between Turkey and the Caucasus

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Abstract

This article examines Turkish foreign policy towards the Caucasus and argues that Turkey regards the region as a land of opportunity and influence. It first looks into the transformation of Turkish foreign policy in the last decade and its subsequent impact on its policy towards the countries in the Caucasus, namely Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. The article argues that Turkey's international stance has been repositioned from being the "buffer-zone" of the Cold War, to the "model country" of the post-Soviet era and finally to the "central country" of the new international order, which influenced its policy towards the Caucasus. Finally, the article posits that Turkey is an energy corridor which connects the region to Europe and effective use of energy resources and healthy integration of the region to the world economy would bring peace and stability to the Caucasus.

Key Words

Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Caspian energy, Turkish-Armenian protocols.

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Introduction

The end of the Cold War, the new wave of globalization, the events of 9/11, the rise in international terrorism, the increased tension between the East and the West signal a new world order, and the necessity for countries to re-position themselves within this new context. Along with many other countries, Turkey has gone through a process of re-positioning itself in line with the new international setting. Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey is no longer the buffer zone of the West. The European Union's rejection of Turkey's entry bid in 1989 added insult to injury and contributed to the emergence of a sense of alienation in Ankara. Turkish policy makers reached a conclusion that Turkey's former strategic value in the West had substantially decreased. The newly emerging republics in the former Soviet south had created a potential sphere of influence. For these emerging independent nations Turkey is considered a model, with its democratic and secular identity and its free-market economy. This role as a model country was encouraged by Turkey's Western

allies with the expectation that Turkey's influence would limit the roles of Russia and Iran in this region.¹ However, the economic crises in the 1990s and the political unrest in the country prevented Turkey from having an effective role in the region. Consequently, the role of the “model” or “bridge” country that was ascribed to Turkey by the West was inconclusive. The power vacuum in Central Asia and the Caucasus that was anticipated to be filled by Turkey was eventually filled by Russia.

Turkey has repositioned itself within the new world order by prioritizing concepts such as interdependency, economic cooperation, regional integration, proactive foreign policy, as well as peace and stability.

As a result of Turkey's new foreign policy, the policy makers' perception of the neighbouring regions has undergone a deep transformation. Democratization, reform, political stability and economic development have been the domestic sources of this transformation. The AK Party's rise to power, the initiation of the EU accession process and the search for new markets as a result of economic development have triggered a fast transformation. Turkey has

repositioned itself within the new world order by prioritizing concepts such as interdependency, economic cooperation, regional integration, proactive foreign policy, as well as peace and stability.

In that respect, one may argue that Turkey has gone through a process of “de-securitization”, i.e., dragging issues out of the context of security and into the space of political discourse.² Consequently, Turkey's view towards its own region has been shaped through this new lens. For instance, while security, perception of threat and competition are still valid concepts in the formation of foreign policy in the Caucasus, Turkey views the region as a land of opportunity and influence.³ Turkey has been actively implementing its “zero problems with neighbours” principle, one of the key concepts of its foreign policy in this region. This new approach aims at maintaining peace and stability by forging economic and social relations with the countries in the region. In this regard, it is foreseen that the Caucasus, which is one of the important centres of oil and gas reserves in the world, can be integrated into the world economy through Turkey as a reliable energy source. This point of view will not only benefit the economy in Turkey, but also serve stability and peace in the region through economic interdependence and cooperation.

Turkey's Approach towards the Caucasus

Turkey's policy for the Caucasus should be analysed within the context of the newly emerging regional policy in the 2000s. Turkish foreign policy towards neighbouring regions is determined by four principles. The first of these principles is the establishment of the mechanisms of high-level political dialogue which allows the improvement of relations between countries, through expediting problem solving and crisis management. The next step is the establishment of High Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) agreements between prime ministers and relevant ministers.

In addition, a public forum is suggested for developing relations at the societal level. The second principle is economic interdependence. Efforts at developing collaborative economic projects and encouraging free trade and circulation of labour are based on the principle of mutual economic benefit in regional policy. The third principle is to develop regional policies which include all actors in the region. The last principle is to co-

exist in peace, diversity and tolerance of differences. Turkish foreign policy in the Caucasus has been based on these principles since the AK Party assumed power in 2002.

From a historical perspective, the region entered a tumultuous period following the disintegration of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. The end of the Soviet hegemony resulted in the formation of new governments in the region. The difficulties of transition into

The difficulties of transition into a market economy, the lack of mature political culture, the hardships during the democratization process and the efforts of outside forces to dominate the region resulted in corruption, despotic governments, and an unstable political atmosphere.

a market economy, the lack of mature political culture, the hardships during the democratization process and the efforts of outside forces to dominate the region resulted in corruption, despotic governments, and an unstable political atmosphere. The

countries in the Caucasus are well aware that saving the region requires the effective use of energy sources, and a healthy integration with the global economy. Turkey comes to the fore at this point and increases the potency of the region. It functions as an energy corridor that connects the region to Europe. Turkey's EU accession process and its increasing influence in the international arena, together with its stability, make

the country a trustworthy and powerful actor in the region.

On the road to its EU membership, the role that Turkey plays in the region is of increasing importance. Turkey has taken brave steps in terms of national security, military-civilian and state-society relations and democracy. These improvements are reflected in a foreign policy that favours cooperation, interdependency, peace, and stability. As it moved closer to the West, Turkey also strengthened its relations with the East. Lately, Turkey's active policy towards the Middle East and the Islamic World has been criticized, and even interpreted as a shift of axis. These analyses ignore the fact that Turkey's close ties with the Caucasus are of equal importance. The new steps taken by Turkey are reflections of its new multidimensional foreign policy. Turkey is no longer a "bridge" country; it is now a "central country" in the region, and must develop its policies accordingly.⁴ In line with this new foreign policy, the Caucasus is a potential region of influence and opportunity. Turkey's policy towards the Caucasus aims to develop political and economic relations with the countries in the region and help them develop mechanisms of internal stability, prosperity as well as regional peace and security. The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) plays an active role in the region.⁵ A large portion, 44,44 per cent, of TİKA's developmental

aid was dedicated to the Caucasus and the Middle East. This aid has been offered in the areas of economic and industrial infrastructural development, health and education, academic collaboration, internship programs for regional students in Turkey, Turkish language programs and efforts to increase business relations.⁶ In addition to TİKA, the Turkish Businessmen and Industrialist Confederation (TUSKON) and Foreign Economic Relations Council (DEİK) are also active in the region. For instance, TUSKON has initiated the "Turkey-Eurasia International Commerce Bridge" in order to manage Turkey's commercial relations in the region. The aim of the bridge is to transform the Black Sea, Mediterranean and the Caspian Sea into free commerce zones.⁷ In December 2010, TUSKON organized its second summit, with 500 businessmen from 12 countries in Eurasia and 1200 businessmen from Turkey. It hosted 72 senior economic officials from Eurasian countries. In May 2008, a similar event was carried out by the Marmara Group Foundation, called the Eurasian Economic Summit.⁸

Turkey's increasing international commerce with Eurasian countries is a result of its emerging business interests in this region. The volume of commerce between Turkey and Azerbaijan was 326 million USD in 2000; in 2010 this number increased to 1.059 billion. Additionally, Turkey sits atop Georgia's

import and export rankings. For Azerbaijan, it is the second in exports and fifth in imports. The fact that the borders are closed between Armenia and Turkey prevents direct commerce between the two countries. Accordingly, Turkish products make their way to Armenia mostly through Iran and Georgia.

Relations with Azerbaijan

Turkey's relations with Azerbaijan are determined by historical, cultural, ethnic and religious connections as well as mutual good will. The Baku-Tibilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, which has been active since 2006, and the Baku-Tibilisi-Erzurum (BTE) natural gas pipeline constitute the two important dimensions of the relations.⁹ These pipelines are critical in transporting Azerbaijani oil and natural gas to Europe. The BTC pipeline is about 1800 km long, and its agreement was signed after a series of negotiations between Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey, Georgia and various private companies. The total daily capacity of BTC is 1 million barrels and annual capacity is 50 million tons.

The natural gas from Azerbaijan has been transported alongside the BTE pipeline to Turkey since 2007.

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pipeline to Turkey since 2007. The decision to do so was taken while oil was being extracted for the BTC pipeline. By this agreement, which is valid for 15 years, Turkey will receive 6.6 billion cubic meters of natural gas from the field of Şah Deniz I in Azerbaijan. The gas that Azerbaijan anticipates to provide for Nabucco is expected to be extracted from the Şah Deniz II field, which will be ready in 2016. The situation with Nabucco is more complicated than it seems. Since Nabucco is a gas transportation company, the last word belongs with the company, once the agreement is signed between governments. Consequently, if Azerbaijan wants to give gas to Nabucco, it can bypass Turkey. Another important aspect is the fact that Nabucco is a gas transportation company and increases the cost and therefore the price of natural gas. The most profitable option for Azerbaijan is to transfer the natural gas through a direct line to the Eastern and Southern European countries. The plans for transferring compressed gas to Romania have not been realized, largely because of the high cost of transportation through the Black Sea. Consequently, the bigger picture shows us that even though the Nabucco project concerns two countries, it is a matter that goes much beyond the bilateral relations.¹⁰

In late October 2011, Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Aliyev signed two agreements during HLSCC meeting for selling gas from the Shah Deniz-2 in 2017

to Turkey and for transit of gas from Shah Deniz-2 through Turkey in 2017-2042. These two agreements finalised the terms of Turkey's purchase of natural gas and opened up new prospects for transport of gas to European markets. Turkey is likely to obtain re-export rights in the transport deal. These projects also helped to strengthen Turkey's projection of itself as a regional hub, as well as justifying the feasibility of the Nabucco pipeline.¹¹

The close connections between Azerbaijan and Turkey and the cooperation in the field of energy have made Azerbaijan the most important country for Turkey in the region.

Turkey's relations with Azerbaijan play an important role in determining relations with other countries in the region. For instance, the relations with Azerbaijan have a great impact on the relations with Armenia. Without doubt, the largest issue is that of Karabagh. In the years following Azerbaijan's independence, the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan resulted in great losses. This included the entirety of the Nagorno Karabagh region. Almost one fifth of Azerbaijani soil was annexed by Armenia. About 1 million Azeris were forced to emigrate. This situation still continues today.¹² While Armenia

considers its presence in Karabagh legitimate and a natural right, Azerbaijan deems the situation an "occupation." The official stance taken by Turkey and the UN is in agreement with Azerbaijan. Turkey insists that the Karabagh issue be resolved by the two countries on a diplomatic plane through the use of international channels. The Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP) that was established by Turkey after the Georgia-Russia crisis of 2008 aims to realize this goal. However, it is hard to say that the Minsk process that was initiated and carried out by the U.S., Russia and France (one of the most significant attempts at diplomacy so far) has been a success. Even though the parties came together on various platforms and occasions, no progress was made regarding the dispute.¹³ As mentioned by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "We, as Turkey, desire the issue to be resolved in a peaceful way. We support all efforts in this regard; however, it is concerning that the Minsk group has not been able to resolve the issue in the past 16 years. The recent conflicts in the region illustrate just how fragile the situation in the Southern Caucasus is."¹⁴

The close connections between Azerbaijan and Turkey and the cooperation in the field of energy have made Azerbaijan the most important country for Turkey in the region. In the past years, Turkish and Azeri collaborations

have been developed between NGOs, universities and research institutes. The Qafqaz University founded by Turkish entrepreneurs has become a respectable educational institution.¹⁵ It was decided during Prime Minister Erdoğan's trip to Azerbaijan on May 17, 2010 that the HLSCC would be founded. Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Aliyev co-chaired the first HLSCC meeting in İzmir, Turkey's trade-attractive Aegean city, on 24 October 2011. The two sides had an extensive agenda for cooperation in economy and politics and accordingly signed agreements ranging from investment promotion to police education.¹⁶ During the HLSCC meeting, State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic and Turkey's Turcas Oil Company agreed to build a refinery, which entails a 5 Billion USD investment, scheduled to go online in 2015.

Normalization of Turkish-Armenian Relations

Armenia perceives the close ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey as a threat to its national security. In return, Armenia follows a balance policy, and allies itself with Russia and Iran. Russia, in particular, appears as

a strategic partner of Armenia. After the collapse of the U.S.S.R. Armenia gained independence; however, although twenty years have passed since the Cold War, concepts such as security, threat and competition dominate the vocabulary of Armenian foreign policy. This deep-rooted perception results in perpetuating problems with Turkey and other neighbouring countries, with the exception of Iran, and only causes Armenia to inflict more self-harm. For example, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline bypasses Armenia and goes through Georgia. In addition, domestic instability, economic difficulties and increasing rates of unemployment in Armenia continue in a precipitous downward spiral. The Armenian economy is dependent on Georgian ports, and when Russia bombed these ports in 2008, it pushed Armenia into a more precarious situation. In another light, the crisis between Russia and Georgia has compelled Turkey to revise its relationship with Armenia. From the Turkish perspective, the status quo in the Caucasus was no longer sustainable. Turkish policy makers initiated a multidimensional policy toward the Caucasus, primarily focusing on creating regional and bilateral mechanisms to deal with Russian-Georgian crisis,

The protocols signed by Armenia and Turkey are effective foreign policy tools in normalizing the relationship between these countries, and still hold the potential to be utilized successfully.

Azerbaijan-Armenia problem and Turkish-Armenian normalization. From the Turkish perspective, it would make sense for Armenia to explore opportunities for regional cooperation.

The major reason for the disruption in Turkish-Armenian relations is the difference in disposition and conceptualization of their foreign policies. Moreover, Turkey's stance on the Karabagh issue supporting Azerbaijan, and the pressure Armenia receives from its diaspora, prevent both countries from putting theory into action. Consequently, in order to normalize the bilateral relations between Armenia and Turkey and open the closed borders between two countries, both countries signed protocols in October 2009. However, the Armenian Constitutional Court issued a statement that the protocols should be interpreted and applied on condition of being in compliance with the Armenian constitution and, in particular, paragraph 11 of the Declaration of Independence. This paragraph reads that: "The Republic of Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia."¹⁷ In response, the Turkish foreign ministry immediately issued a critical statement that "this decision contains preconditions and restrictive provisions which impair the letter and spirit of the protocols."¹⁸

The protocols signed by Armenia and Turkey are effective foreign policy tools in normalizing the relationship

between these countries, and still hold the potential to be utilized successfully. Turkish and Armenian foreign ministers have given their word, before the eyes of the entire world, to resolve the issues that have been dragging on since the previous century.¹⁹

In the normalization process of Turkish-Armenian relations, first, there is the challenge of putting forth the protocols in the parliaments, and second, the struggle to overcome psychological barriers in the respective societies. At the same time, the ruling parties have to manage internal affairs in a way that will minimize risks. There are strong oppositions in both countries and the majority of the societies have a tendency to react in a nationalist manner. From a larger perspective, Turkish-Armenian relations are of great importance to state and non-state actors from the U.S. to Europe and Russia, due to influences of the Armenian diaspora and the unending Cold War atmosphere in the Caucasus.²⁰

In another dimension, it is asserted that the confusion continues because of the populist approach that impedes the process. Prime Minister Erdoğan draws much criticism by linking the situation to the Karabagh problem. While questioning Erdoğan's stance, the opposition's reaction must also be addressed. From an objective point of view, Erdoğan's approach is easily discernible as the only one supporting the normalization process. The opposition

parties criticize normalization attempts with Armenia and use nationalist rhetoric for cornering the ruling party. One should consider that in the recent years societal demands have played a considerable role in the foreign policy making process in Turkey, which appears as an obligatory aspect for legitimizing the normalization process. In this regard, both countries must consider the normalization process as a unique opportunity.²¹

There have been many improvements regarding Armenian heritage in socio-cultural life in Turkey.

The guiding principle of Turkish foreign policy, “zero problems with neighbours,” has not been successful in normalizing relations and solving problems with Armenia. Having reached a reasonable level of close relations even with Greece, Turkey still has not achieved this political normalization with Armenia. Regardless, this process has seen improvements in social, cultural and economic areas. Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize Armenia’s independence. Although Armenia does not border the Black Sea, in 1993 Turkey invited Armenia to join the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation as a founding member. Moreover, in

spite of the fact that the Armenian-Turkish border is still closed, there are direct flights between the two countries.

There have been many improvements regarding Armenian heritage in socio-cultural life in Turkey. For instance, many buildings, including the Akdamar Church, Armenian Catholic Church in Diyarbakir, historic Armenian houses in Beykoz and the Armenian Church in Ordu, which have historical and sentimental value for the Armenians, have been restored. Also, on September 6, 2008, President Abdullah Gül paid a visit to Yerevan the a guest of Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan to watch the Turkey-Armenia soccer game. Furthermore, as part of the 2010 Istanbul Cultural Capital events, an exhibition featuring the documentation of works by renowned Armenian architects was displayed in Istanbul. In December 2008, as part of a campaign, 200 Turkish intellectuals have apologized for the “Great Catastrophe” that Ottoman Armenians suffered in 1915.²² The Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered this initiative an instance of alternative democratic voices.²³

Despite the fact that currently there are no official diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia; diplomacy took place backstage up until the recent deadlock in the implementation of the protocols. After Turkey had turned

down Iran's offer to mediate between the two countries, on the grounds that Turkey already has direct contact with Armenia, the diplomatic initiatives were made public.²⁴ As mentioned earlier, the primary Turkish opposition parties, the MHP and the CHP (Nationalist Action Party and Republican Peoples' Party, respectively), did not welcome endeavours in normalizing the relationship, while their Armenian counterparts, the ultranationalist Dashnak Party and the diaspora reciprocate this opposition. Turkey's closest ally in the region, Azerbaijan, has remained silent throughout this process, perhaps hoping that it will help with the resolution of the Karabagh conflict. The opposition in Azerbaijan is also strongly against the improvement of Turkish-Armenian relations.²⁵

As a result of this deadlock in finalizing the protocols, Turkish-Armenian relations have been put on hold, and the revival seen in 2009 has been at a standstill throughout 2010. Turkey has used this time to deepen its relationship with Azerbaijan, which had been weighed down by Turkey's sympathetic approach to Armenia.²⁶ On August 16, 2010, Turkey signed the Strategic Partnership and Mutual Assistance treaty with Azerbaijan, which was followed by the HLSCC treaty on September 15, 2010.

Relations with Georgia

Turkish-Georgian relations have been steadily improving in recent years. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize Georgia's independence. Turkey has also given support in the political development and restructuring of Georgia and kept it as a close ally, considering its important role in regional stability. Turkey and Georgia also cooperate in terms of their military powers, as the two countries have signed several military agreements. The Turkish army has made contributions to modernizing the Georgian army.²⁷ It must be noted that Turkey always had to be cautious, considering the possibility that its close relationship to Georgia might disturb Russia. However, this situation did not prevent Turkey from helping in the modernization of the Batumi Airport, which in turn resulted in the decision to make the airport available to both countries. Turkey utilizes the Batumi Airport for domestic flights. Hence, the visa requirements have been mutually abolished as well.

In 2010, Turkey's relations with Georgia followed a positive course. The Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railway line was initiated in the same year. Annual trade volume exceeded 1.5 billion dollars. In the first half of 2010, Turkey became the biggest trade partner of Georgia with a volume of 496 million dollars.²⁸

Although the seizing of Turkish ships on a commercial trip to Abkhazia had created a temporary crisis between the two nations, Georgia ordered the release of the ships in December 2010 after a year-long negotiation.²⁹ Today there are many strategic projects between Turkey and Georgia, from commerce to energy, defence to security.³⁰ In Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's words, for Georgia Turkey is a "friend" and "the window opening to Europe."³¹

It is in Turkey's best interests to continue positive relations with Georgia, considering border security and energy resources. Georgia plays a key role in transporting Azerbaijani oil to the world market.³² Three projects deserve special attention: the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan crude oil pipeline project; the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline project; and the Kars-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku Railway Project that is estimated to be completed in 2012 as part of the East-West transportation line of the New Silk Road project. It is crucial to note here that it was a difficult process to have all the countries including the EU, Georgia, U.S., Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and private companies approve the agreements. This competition over energy resources and pipeline routes is known as the "New Big Game," referring to the 19th century rivalry between Russia and Britain.

The ethnic conflicts in southern Ossetia and Abkhazia have generated serious unrest, affecting Turkey as well.

The Russian military intervention brought anxiety and violence into this region, which has caused trouble for Turkey. During the 2008 crisis between Georgia and Russia, Turkey took immediate action, sending food aid and building 100 houses for the refugees in Gori.³³ In one view, the reason behind Russia's reaction was anxiety over Georgia gaining economic independence through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Crude Oil Pipeline Project.³⁴ The BTC pipeline was a serious blow to Russian dominance in the energy geopolitics of the region. In this equation Turkey is dependent on Georgia, since the only alternative route for the region's natural resources is through Armenia. The conflict between Russia and Georgia, therefore, has added more burdens on Turkey's shoulders regarding the region. Being a NATO member, Turkey has had to balance its relations both with Georgia and the U.S., as well as the Russian Federation. The important fact is that Turkey is Russia's seventh biggest trade partner, whereas Russia is at the top of Turkey's trade list.³⁵ Moreover, Russia is also Turkey's biggest source of natural gas. Consequently, this crisis has put Turkey in a difficult position in keeping its rapport with all the countries in the region.

It is in Turkey's best interests to continue positive relations with Georgia, considering border security and energy resources.

In 2008, Turkey proposed the establishment of the CSCP, in hopes that conflicts may be resolved within the region through cooperation and new foreign policies developed by the respective countries. The CSCP has been formed as a platform between Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and the Russian Federation, based on international norms and principles, and built on the premise that it will protect peace in the region while encouraging economic cooperation. All the mentioned countries have reacted positively to this suggestion. The fundamental principles of the CSCP are in the process of establishment through meetings with the deputy secretaries and consultants. So far, there have been a total of three meetings. The first was held in December 2008, the second in January 2009, and the last one in April 2009.

For a long time now, the thesis that Turkey and Russia will have a conflict of interest due to Turkey's long-standing focus on Western countries, and Russia's assertive policies regarding Eurasia, has been continuously discussed. However, Russia's privileged position in the ex-Soviet territories has been balanced out by reciprocal Turkish-Russian relations and Turkey's multifaceted foreign policy. Furthermore, Turkey has the tendency to assume the bilateral negotiator role in case of any tensions that may rise between the

EU and Russia. Turkey perceives Russia as an indispensable partner in regional entrepreneurial and political initiatives.³⁶ Recent agreements made with Russia are not only crucial for the respective countries, but their positive influence extends to the political and economic terrains of a larger geographical area from Eastern Europe to China. Turkey and Russia have many disagreements about regional and international issues. Regardless of the discord and competition their relationship causes in the region, it follows a positive course in general and hints at how regional systems will be shaped in the new international order.³⁷

Conclusion

During the Cold War era, the West gave Turkey the role of being the "buffer zone," which, after the U.S.S.R collapsed, yielded to the mission of becoming the "model country." However, Turkey failed to play this role in the 1990s due to economic crises and domestic turmoil. Thus, the vacuum in the region was filled mainly by Russia. Nevertheless, in the past ten years, Turkey has risen as an active and influential actor in line with its new foreign policy. Turkey no longer situates itself as a "buffer" or "model" but rather as a "central country." It has the strength to influence policies in the region as a result of its democratic reforms, political stability and economic growth.

The pivotal points in this process point to the rise of the AK Party, the beginning of the EU membership process, the restructuring of civil-military relations, and democratic reforms overcoming the focus on security. One other crucial element is the search for new markets for rising foreign trade and economic growth. In this course, Turkey has repositioned itself both regionally and globally. Having revisited its relationship with the Caucasus, it is a top priority for Turkey to bring peace, security, and stability to the region.

The Caucasus is a region where East-West energy lines pass through and it is constantly stirred by international power struggles. After the Russian-Georgian crisis, the status quo is not sustainable due to high security risks, which may trigger regional and international conflicts. Turkey's history with three countries in the region - Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia - goes back a long way. These relations sometimes benefit Turkey, whereas at other times they may be quite disadvantageous, overshadowed by history. Turkey has initiated regional cooperation with Azerbaijan and Georgia, but Armenia remains distant due to certain problems between the two countries. In these times of global crises and political turmoil, Turkey's priority is to resolve issues so that the region can prosper through cooperation. The Eurasian territory of the Caucasus

requires a multifaceted diplomacy for the EU and the West. However, the recurring conflicts and the risk of going to war loom over the future of the Caucasus.

After the Russian-Georgian crisis, the status quo is not sustainable due to high security risks, which may trigger regional and international conflicts.

The EU has only begun to pay attention to this region after the war between Russia and Georgia. French President Sarkozy's attempts at resolving the issue have proved successful. The Eastern Partnership has emphasized the importance of the three countries and helped generate a clear path regarding relations with the EU. Although the EU's influence will manifest itself in time, expectations are low. During the Bush administration, when the U.S. focus was steered away from the Caucasus, Turkey had been, at first covertly, then openly pursuing diplomatic relations, such as the CSCP initiative, which the U.S. found out about much later. Turkey's diplomatic endeavours since 2004 have demonstrated a constructive approach in the politics of this region, independent of the U.S. leadership, opening up a new space.

Turkish-Russian relations have also seen a steady rise in recent years, going through golden times since the Moscow Treaty that ended the First World War ninety years ago. As a token of trust, Prime Minister Erdoğan made a trip on March 15-16, 2011 on the 90th anniversary of the Moscow Treaty, and became the first Turkish Prime Minister to visit Tatarstan. During the Cold War era, Eurasia and the Caucasus were shaped by a dialectic which centered on conflict. The positive course that Turkish-Russian relations follow, as well as their commitment to resolving issues, is of great benefit, especially to the Caucasus. The power struggle between Russia and the U.S. prolonged the Cold War. The crisis between Russia and Georgia has clearly shown that the status quo cannot continue to rule this region, because the threat does not only affect the Caucasus any more, but the entire world. Turkey's active diplomacy, the CSCP initiative, the positive course of Turkish-Russian relations, and the Russian leadership in dealing with the Azerbaijan-Armenia struggle demonstrates that the Cold War has just ended. The trust between Turkey and Russia, and their similar approach to resolve matters within the region, is a sign that these countries will create new opportunities for the region in the near future. The resolution between Turkey and Armenia will depend on how Azerbaijan and Armenia deal with the frozen conflict. Chronic problems

persist, although it is obvious that the status quo cannot be sustained any more, and there are positive signs of new policies being implemented. In addition, Turkey keeps Russia-Georgia relations under a close watch, and facilitates their good relations with special attention which is received well by both countries.

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Turkey is well aware that peace and stability in the region hangs by a thin thread. Often, the country is stuck between the U.S. and Russia; however, it manages continuously to gain power with its confident and principled approach. Turkey holds on to the trans-Atlantic identity in its foreign policy and strives to carry out a policy that prioritizes its regional characteristics. Having adopted a multidimensional approach in international politics, an all-encompassing political dialogue and cooperation in regional politics, and a strategy that supports high-level integration in bilateral relations, Turkey has become a playmaker in the Caucasus, and a key actor taking initiative in resolving regional conflicts.

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The Relations between Turkey and Russia in the 2000s

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Abstract

Turkey and Russia are working to transform their century-long geopolitical disputes into a geo-economic partnership. From the 2000s onwards, there have been rapid improvements in the political-diplomatic relations between the two countries. In recent years, Turkey-Russia relations have been gradually transforming thanks to the constructive and peaceful approaches embraced by Ankara and Moscow. Ankara and Moscow's approach to international problems generally tends to exhibit overlaps or similarities. For many years both sides have expressed their desire for bilateral relations not to remain merely economic, also encompassing regional and global interests, and being based on shared trust and respect. Relations between Turkey and Russia are often described through various terms such as "strategic." Nonetheless, the existence of some problems between the two countries cannot be denied, even though they are not explicitly voiced. The general structure of Turkish-Russian relations implies that in the coming years, cooperation and competition will remain as determining factors.

Key Words

Turkish-Russian relations, strategic partnership, cooperation, competition.

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Introduction

With their historical, ethnic and cultural ties, and geographical positioning, Turkey and Russia occupy a highly significant position in terms of maintaining global and regional peace, as well as development and cooperation in their respective regions. The relations between Turkey and Russia span over 500 years. Throughout this period, their economic, political, historic and cultural bearings have impacted each other, and the other countries and communities with which they have entered into relations. The present day relations between Turkey and Russia are the product of various phases that have followed a meandering path. Periodic instances of conflict and cooperation characterize this historical past, which have left deep marks in the social memory of both countries.

Due to the erratic nature of their relations, both Turkey and Russia have strived to act most vigilantly in order to obtain maximum benefit, even during the highly restrictive atmosphere of the Cold War. The ground breaking changes

in international politics following the Cold War were the key factors leading to the eradication of the taboos and barriers characterizing Turkish-Russian relations. It is possible to historically examine post-Cold War relations between the two countries within the time frames of the 1990s and 2000s. During the 1990s, despite increasing economic relations, both countries prioritized competition in the fields of energy, ethnic problems and regional balance of power; hence, they were unable to take full advantage of this period. Therefore, in terms of politics, the 1990s can be classified as the “lost years” in Turkey-Russia relations. The second period encompasses the 2000s, which is the current phase. During these years, both countries have come to terms with the negative impact of destructive rivalry and the positive value of increasing economic relations, which today have reached record rates. With this transformed vision, the two countries have been seeking out new ways for improving trust relations. Therefore, in terms of politics and diplomacy, this second phase can be identified as the “maturation” period of Turkish-Russian relations.¹

From the 2000s onwards, there have been rapid improvements in the political-diplomatic relations between the two countries. The course of these relations has changed in accordance with global developments, which have

played an important role in reshaping perceptions of one another. The “win-lose” perspective of the Cold War period has now been replaced by the “win-win” equation. This substantial turn in relations has given way to stability, trust and welfare, which in turn have had a direct and positive impact on lives of the Turkish and Russian populations. For this reason, it can be argued that both societies are supportive of this convergence between Turkey and Russia.

The most obvious examples of this development include rapidly expanding trade volume, top-level visits between the leaders of both countries, removal of visas, and signing of cooperation agreements in the nuclear field. The expansion of diplomatic relations has also facilitated the development of relations in other fields. This state of affairs has greatly contributed to the eradication of the mutually held problems of negative perception and mistrust, both products of the Imperial and Cold War periods. The purpose of this article is to examine Turkey-Russia relations in the 2000s and analyse their present standing.

Winds of Change in Foreign Policy

When speaking of Turkish-Russian relations, the subject must be evaluated in terms of the new foreign policies adopted by both countries in recent

years, and especially as part of Turkey's new foreign policy vision. Equally, this change can be seen as a product of the restructuring processes of Turkish and Russian diplomacies. Turkey's multi-dimensional foreign policy approach is gaining influence. As one of the requirements of Turkey's active foreign policy which is based on increasing its economic relations with other countries, regional security, stability and zero problems with neighbours, Russia is inevitably positioned in the higher ranks of the agenda within this scope.

Turkish-Russian relations began accelerating during the presidency of Vladimir Putin in Russia and with the election of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in Turkey.² The AK party came to power at the end of 2002 and the first signs of their reformed position were apparent in the party program, where it is stated: "The relations established with the Russian Federation, Central Asia and the Caucasus will be based not on competition but friendly cooperation".³ Through this new perspective aimed at multiplying relations in the fields of tourism, economy, energy and regional security, the exchanges between the two countries have deepened. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has defined Russia as important in terms of trade, investment, tourism and energy security, which also points to the new policy transformations.⁴ Moreover, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has

expressed how Turkey sees Russia as "a very important partner, an influential world power, and a country that holds a key role in terms of regional cooperation." Relations with Russia are primary and inseparable aspects of Turkish foreign policy.⁵

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Turkey's recently upheld new foreign policy approach is reflected within Turkish-Russian relations and has opened the way for collaborative opportunities in solving regional problems. Likewise, it has provided the necessary motivation and aspiration to further develop relations with Russia. Turkey believes in the importance of applying policies of good neighbourliness and zero problems along its border regions, and also views Russia from this perspective. Within Turkey's current policy approach, the improvement of both political and economic relations with Russia is a priority. At the same time, Russia is seen as a vital partner in terms of achieving stability and regional peace in Eurasia.⁶ Alongside Greece, Iran and Iraq, Russia no longer remains among the potential

threat factors listed in Turkey's National Security Policy Document, which is widely accepted as Turkey's secret constitution and publicly known as the "red book." This development is an important expression of Turkey's new foreign policy determination.⁷

Turkey and Russia's political expectations from one another may not always overlap with their individual capacities to meet these expectations.

Turkey and Russia's political expectations from one another may not always overlap with their individual capacities to meet these expectations. When one or both of the sides are aware of this fact and take initiative accordingly, it can provide rather important benefits and contributions both to the individual country and the totality of the relations. It is possible to state that this mode of action precisely characterizes Turkey's approach towards Russia in recent years. Had Moscow misinterpreted this approach or not reciprocated it accordingly, serious problems could have surfaced. However, the new developments are a sign that Russian perceptions of Turkish foreign policy are much more encouraging compared to 10 years ago. Russia has been positive about Turkey's new stance

and has showed much less hesitation in taking steps in accord with Ankara.

In the previous framework of Turkish-Russian relations, Moscow evaluated relations with Turkey not in terms of global policies, but regional policies, attributing to them secondary importance. On the contrary, Ankara viewed its northern neighbour, once a superpower, of primary significance in terms of both regional and global policies. In this new period, however, there is a change in Russia's approach as well. Through an active, peaceful and constructive foreign policy, Turkey has achieved growing significance in the Middle East, Islamic World, Balkans, Caucasus and Africa, which is increasingly drawing the interest and attention of Russia.

Russia is a great regional and global power in terms of its natural resources, economic, political and military strength. When examined from the Russian front, it is observable that with the presidency of Vladimir Putin, a new approach is being assumed, which favours collaborations with regional and international actors as long as they do not conflict with national interests. In this same period, Turkey, too, has been pursuing a foreign policy of zero problems, dynamic and multidimensional relations, which has led both countries to grow closer to one another. After Putin was elected as Russian State President, he made the

statement that “As long as there is no conflict of interest, we will cooperate with everyone”.⁸ During the Putin period, high price increases in raw natural resources has led to the strengthening of the Russian economy and the country has been assuming a much more active foreign policy. In this framework, Russia has been trying to establish new relational networks in regions of influence and concern, while also trying to return to the spheres of interest and authority that had been abandoned with the disintegration of the Soviet Union.⁹ As a result, it is possible to state that Russia no longer perceives Turkey as a rival and a threat, as was the case in the 1990s.

From the current perspective of Russia, Turkey has become an economic and political partner that cannot be ignored.

Russia is discomfited by US policies on the Middle East and wishes to see Turkey as an ally in this region, where Russia held close relations during the Soviet period. Due to the hegemonic policies observed after 9/11, the US is currently working to isolate the hostility surfacing in the Islamic world. Hence, for Russia, close relations with Turkey, which is the strongest and most influential country in the Islamic world, holds special importance. Turkey

is positioning itself to become a future energy hub and Moscow is aware that this will not just upset their interests as a competitor, but will also present new opportunities. Therefore, from the current perspective of Russia, Turkey has become an economic and political partner that cannot be ignored.

Economic, Political and Cultural Relations

Turkey and Russia accumulated quite important experiences in trade and economic cooperation towards the end of the 20th century. Some of the main factors accelerating this process include mutual economic interests, scientific-technical potential and Turkey’s rich experiences in shaping the market economy. The expanding trade volume between the two countries has led both sides to emphasize initiatives that improve collaborations around shared economic interests. By increasing and diversifying trade and economic relations, Turkey and Russia have created the opportunity for solving current and prospective political problems more easily and in a manner fitting the conditions of both countries.

In 2008, the trade volume between the two countries reached record height at 38 billion dollars. There are plans to further increase this figure to 100 billion dollars.¹⁰ This Turkish-held aspiration was expressed during the visit of Russian

State President Dmitry Medvedev to Ankara between August 11-13, 2010. The possibilities for its realization will surface with time. Although due to the economic crisis and problems experienced with customs, the trade volume in 2009 decreased to 22 billion dollars, it reached to 27 billion dollars in 2010. In 2009, over 3 million Russian tourists visited Turkey. The share of the Turkish construction sector carrying out contracts in the Russian market has reached 25 billion dollars. Even though they are not as substantial as the Turkish investments in Russia, there are notable Russian investments made in Turkey, transportation and energy being the most notable examples. Turkey purchases 63% of its natural gas and 29% of its petroleum from Russia. Another important item within energy collaborations is the establishment of nuclear plants. As a matter of fact, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has stated “It is significant and meaningful that we make our first investments in energy with the Russian Federation”.¹¹

Some of the main problematic issues in relations between the two countries during the 1990s entailed conflicts of power over the Caucasus and Central Asia, Russia’s sale of S-300 missiles to the Greek Cyprus, the CFE (Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty) debates, the passage of Caspian petroleum through the Turkish straits, and the Kurdish and Chechen problems. However, new

fields of opportunity were also formed during this time. Above all others were general economic relations. Additionally, there was the “Blue Stream” natural gas pipeline, cooperation in fighting against terrorism, military-technical relations and search for collaboration in Eurasia.¹²

The core factor leading to the transformation from rivalry to cooperation was the changes in the international system and its reflections upon the relations between the two countries and the Eurasian geography.

During the 1990s, the greatest problem between the two countries has been the lack of trust and both sides focused on eliminating this problem. It is observable that in the early 1990s, both Russia and Turkey became aware of this fact. Between December 15-17, 1997, Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin made his first official visit to Ankara. This visit occurred during a period in which Russian-Turkish economic relations had reached record heights and was the first concrete outcome of the convergence in relations. Both countries were seeking out ways in which economic relations could be expanded into other fields. It was during this period that the term “strategic partnership” was first expressed.¹³ The visit by the Turkish Chief of Staff İsmail

Hakkı Karadayı to Moscow in May 1998 may also be seen as the first signs of the evaporation of the Cold War cloud overshadowing relations.

The core factor leading to the transformation from rivalry to cooperation was the changes in the international system and its reflections upon the relations between the two countries and the Eurasian geography. In December 1997, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, and other former members of the Warsaw Pact, took the first steps towards NATO membership. Despite Russian opposition, the Western world had initiated the process, and this, for Russia, was unacceptable. In the same period, Turkey was experiencing serious problems with the EU regarding membership, which became evident during the Luxembourg Summit. Moreover, in 1997 and 1998, both countries struggled with economic crises. These circumstances had already started bringing both sides closer to one another both in the political, commercial, and economic domains.¹⁴

The most important development indicating an open and decisive drive to move towards cooperation in bilateral relations was the visit made by Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit to Moscow during November 1999. During this visit, Ecevit was posed a question regarding Chechnya, where he answered: “We do not want to meddle in the internal affairs of Russia. We believe that the problem

will be solved through peaceful means”.¹⁵ Likewise, in his meeting with Ecevit, Russian President Vladimir Putin made the statement “Whatever the source may be, Russia has not and will not support any terrorist acts against Turkey”.¹⁶

This increase in diplomatic relations during the first years of the 2000s was a clear sign that relations between the two countries were becoming determinedly different from the 1990s

As a result of these parallel developments, there was a notable increase in diplomatic visits between Turkey and Russia, and new channels for political dialogue, which today are progressively expanding, also started to take form. This increase in diplomatic relations during the first years of the 2000s was a clear sign that relations between the two countries were becoming determinedly different from the 1990s. Both sides began evaluating the present level of their relations within economic, political, military-technical and other fields. They also identified each other’s perspectives and developmental tendencies in these fields, openly exhibiting their shared desire in carrying relations to a higher level. Before the end of the 1990s, bilateral relations

between Turkey and Russia proceeded without a particular central focus and in a somewhat unstable manner. At the end of the 1990s, however, economic and energy issues started framing relations. A shared description was not reached on the subject of terror and counter terrorism. Nonetheless, it no longer hindered the relations centered around economic and trade relations, and also prepared the ground for multi-dimensional partnerships.¹⁷

On September 6, 2000, Vladimir Putin and Ahmet Necdet Sezer held a top-level meeting during the “Millennium Summit” in New York. In October 2000, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov visited Ankara, which was to become a turning point in Russian-Turkish relations. Most notable was his statement: “Russia and Turkey are not rivals. We are partners and our governments will enter into relations in accordance with this principle.” Both sides expressed the future potential of developing the relations even further, “from collaboration to strategic partnership”.¹⁸ For many years, both countries had been damaged by terror, therefore the events of September 11, 2001 presented the opportunity for convergence in the framework of mutual understanding. The policy of putting problems behind and emphasizing economic cooperation was taken a step further in the climate formed after 9/11. On November 16, 2001, the Turkish

and Russian Foreign Ministers, İsmail Cem and Igor S. Ivanov, who were in New York for the UN General Assembly Meetings, signed the document titled: “Action Plan Between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation on Cooperation in Eurasia: From Co-operation to Multidimensional Partnership.”

In the years 2004-2005, the new frameworks established by these agreements began bearing fruits and can be identified as the period in which relations prospered.¹⁹ Between February 23-26, 2004, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül made an official visit to Moscow. In light of the changing dynamics of the Turkish-Russian relations, such a visit was, for the first time, treated as an “exception” and accepted at the level of “Prime Minister.” It was then reciprocated through the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Ankara on 5-6, December 2004. In the span of over 500 years of Turkish-Russian relations, perhaps the only other comparable visit was that of Nikolai Podgorny, President of the High Presidium, in 1972. Therefore, Putin’s visit to Turkey was of great historic significance. When evaluated from the perspective of bilateral politics, the year 2005 was in every sense an *annus mirabilis* (‘incredible year’). Within one year alone, Putin and Erdoğan came together four times, including a seven hour long special meeting held along

the Black Sea coast.²⁰ Russian President Putin came to Samsun (Turkey) on November 17, 2005 to join the opening ceremony of the Blue Stream natural gas pipeline. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Turkey between May 31 -June 1, 2006. Turkey's President Ahmet Necdet Sezer visited Russia during June 28-30, 2006. This was the first presidential level visit to take place between the two countries since the founding of the Russian Republic and was highly significant in that respect. In the following years, this traffic of mutual visits was maintained in a regular fashion. Between 12-15, February 2009, Turkey's President Abdullah Gül set forth on a visit including Moscow and Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan. This was the first time for a Turkish president to visit the Tatar Republic and was also an important reflection of the emerging trust between Turkey and Russia. In previous decades, such a visit by Turkey to the leaders of a Turkic community unit in Russia would have caused much suspicion. On this point, President Abdullah Gül made the statement, "Normally such visits are followed by some disturbances. For this reason, both sides have exhibited mutual sensitivity. We did not experience the slightest problem regarding our visit to the Tatar Republic. On the contrary, it was encouraged. This is proof that a relation based on trust is evolving between Turkey and Russia".²¹

In 2009, three high level visits were realized between the two countries: President Gül between 12-15, February 2009, Prime Minister Erdoğan's Sochi visit on May 16, 2009, followed by Russian President Putin's Ankara visit on August 6, 2009. During his visit to Turkey, Putin agreed to provide oil to the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline; at the same time Turkey declared that as an alternative to Nabucco, the South Stream pipeline would be permitted to cross Turkish waters. This matter between the two countries has not yet been resolved. While Russia is expecting an "official permit" from Turkey in order to start construction, Turkey is demanding the prior completion of ecological and seismic research. Matters related to this project continue to progress according to a timeline. During Putin's visit, agreements were reached on a number of other topics as well, including the construction of the Blue Stream-2 pipeline, the creation of underground natural gas reserves in Turkey, and Russian construction of nuclear power plants in Turkey.

The year 2010 was also very successful, raising the bar in Turkish-Russian relations. Top level contacts and visits between the two countries continued full speed. Visits at the level of prime minister and president, as well as agreements reached, especially around energy, transpired in a stable manner. Following the invitation by Russian

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Erdoğan visited Russia at the beginning of 2010. Subsequently in May, Russian President Medvedev made a three-day official visit to Turkey. During this visit, Medvedev held meetings with both President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan, and signed 17 agreements including, foremost, agreements foreseeing a visa exemption between the two countries and the construction of a nuclear power plant in Turkey. The latter agreement involves the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant in Mersin-Akkuyu at the cost of 20 billion dollars.

Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu evaluated this visit during a private interview he gave to the Russian *Ria-Novosti* news agency. Davutoğlu expressed that Turkey and Russia had entered into a sincere and open dialogue on the topic of bilateral relations as well as regional and international matters, stating: "In our bilateral relations with Russia, in all regional and international fields, our dialogue is one of sincerity and openness. The eradication of past prejudices and formation of mutual trust has been achieved. Cooperation with the Russian Federation constitutes one of the most important elements of our multidimensional foreign policy".²²

Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to both Moscow and Kazan during March 14-16, 2011 has indicated that Turkish-Russian relations will continue to

strengthen in the coming years. During the "High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council" various issues were addressed and lengthy negotiations were made. The Russian side demanded that Turkey make a definitive statement about the nuclear power plant tender and declare their decision on the Blue Stream. The Turkish side expected that Russia take the necessary steps regarding the visa exemption, the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline and an appeasement of the "take or pay" principle in the natural gas agreement. The final steps towards the visa scheme exemption were in effect realized, and it was declared that the visas would ultimately be removed in April 2011. This development can be identified as one of the greatest gains from the relations in recent years and another one of the peaks achieved. Following the earthquake in Japan and the subsequent accidents in the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, nuclear energy has become a contested matter throughout the world. In this negative climate, Turkey's commitment to the nuclear power plant project also became questionable. However, Prime Minister Erdoğan has spoken in a very clear and precise manner stating that the project will continue full speed.²³ This approach has created a great sense of relief on the Russian front. Turkey has requested that Russia freeze the "take or pay" clause stated in the natural gas agreements, but the Russians have declined the offer on the presumption that it may encourage

other clients. In turn, the Russian side has conveyed that Turkey has still not granted Russia an official permit for use of the exclusive economic region in the Turkish Black Sea for the South Stream project. Another topic of negotiation concerns the construction of the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline. For the Russians, the transit passage fee requested by Turkey is too expensive and they would like to participate in the project as a “major partner.”

Prime Minister Erdoğan’s March 2011 visit should not be considered

either as a diplomatic, economic or political victory, nor a defeat of any kind, but rather as a new step towards improved relations.²⁴ The fact that meetings gave way to lengthy

negotiations is a clear sign that bilateral relations are being re-established on solid foundations and an understanding of trust. Both sides are trying to make the maximum gain by taking a pragmatic approach. The fact that the meetings and negotiations were long and that agreements could not be reached on certain matters is actually an important indication that both sides are strong, being seated around the table as equals. Meetings where such equality does not exist inevitably lead to one side being unjustly treated. Whereas meetings

amongst equals are lengthy and difficult, and end with both sides being satisfied.

There is one point that must be emphasized and concerns the announcement regarding the realization of final arrangements for the visa exemptions in April 2011. On this matter, Turkey had been the enthusiastic side, even though it would mean a loss of millions of dollars of visa fees which Turkey earns from the more than 3 million Russian tourists annually visiting Turkey. However, for Russia, this is not a priority issue. Either way, the number

of Turkish tourists to Russia does not exceed a couple hundred thousand people. Moreover, there is rising opposition towards migrants and foreigners in Russia.

It is possible to understand Moscow’s reluctance in light of the presence of millions of Caucasian diaspora members in Turkey and the volatile situation in the Northern Caucasus region of Russia. Therefore, it is possible to claim that the elimination of the visa with Russia is a psychological barrier that needs to be surpassed through bilateral relations. With these points taken into consideration, the agreement reached on the visa exemption is an important marker of the level of success achieved in mutual relations.

Prime Minister Erdoğan’s visit to both Moscow and Kazan during March 14-16, 2011 has indicated that Turkish-Russian relations will continue to strengthen in the coming years.

Besides the economic and political dimensions, cultural relations are also an important aspect of bilateral relations, which facilitate the two countries to know and understand each other better and contribute to the strengthening of socio-cultural ties. Yet the cultural dimension tends to be ignored.²⁵ Despite the positive developments in the fields of politics and economics traced above, Turkish-Russian relations in the cultural domain have not yet reached the desired levels even though they carry great potential. The existing activities taking place in the cultural field are indeed important, however they remain insufficient. In Turkey, the year 2007 was celebrated as the “Russia Year” and, in 2008, Russia celebrated the “Turkey Year.” A notable development in this field has been the establishment of the “Russian-Turkish Societal Forum” aiming to accelerate cultural relations. The Forum was founded during the official visit by Russian President Medvedev in May 2010 and held its first meeting on February 18, 2011. On the occasion of its founding, Mikhail Svidkoi, the Russian President’s special representative for foreign cultural relations, stated that “Russia and Turkey have agreed on developing cultural relations through the context of the Societal Forum.” The Forum aims to improve societal relations, as well as social relations in the fields of culture, arts, education, science, history, media, tourism, sports, business and

religious dialogue. Vladimir Ivanovskiy, Russian Ambassador to Turkey, has commented that the Societal Forum stands as an important step towards the improvement of public diplomacy.²⁶

Despite the positive developments in the fields of politics and economics traced above, Turkish-Russian relations in the cultural domain have not yet reached the desired levels even though they carry great potential.

In fact, both societies have been experiencing a convergence of relations irrespective of the political and economic atmosphere. The number of shared families, of Russians settling in Turkey, of Russian Culture Associations and language centers found in Turkey, and Turkish language courses in Russia, are all rapidly increasing. Turkish youth are becoming ever more interested in learning Russian and receiving higher education in Russia. Today, Russian is taught in 17 Turkish universities, whereas in 2000, this number was only 5. Also, there are on-going discussions about establishing a Turkish-Russian University in Turkey.²⁷ Tourism plays a very important role in improving the level of trust between both societies. It is expected that, with the removal of the visa restriction, there will be a significant

rise in the number of Turkish tourists to Russia, which is an important step for both societies to better know each other directly.

Fields of Cooperation, Problems and Discussions about Strategic Partnership

Ankara and Moscow's approaches to international problems generally tend to exhibit overlaps or similarities. During the July 2005 Erdoğan-Putin meetings, Erdoğan made the statement "Our opinions on matters related to the maintenance of global stability, as well as the situation of the region, completely overlap".²⁸ Turkey and Russia share similar perspectives on international issues such as: solving the Iranian nuclear problem through diplomatic means, normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations, solving the Nagorno-Karabakh problem through negotiations, maintaining peace in the Middle East, the problem between Syria and Lebanon, restoring security in Afghanistan and Iraq, and military intervention in Libya. Russia has been supportive of Turkey's EU membership and Turkey has supported Russia's participation in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation as an observer. Both countries have been working towards improving the effectiveness of the the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

One of the most important developments shaping the bilateral relations was the Turkish Parliament's rejection of the March 1, 2003 Iraq Resolution. Russian President Vladimir Putin has declared this act as the most vital incident on the eve of the Iraqi occupation.²⁹ Through this act of rejecting the resolution, in Russian eyes, Turkey confirmed its position as an independent actor.³⁰ After this incident, Russia no longer saw Turkey as a classic US ally, and instead began accepting Turkey as a reliable and powerful country exhibiting a strong political resolve by taking independent decisions on issues concerning national interests. The fact that the American government was preoccupied with the Iraqi and Afghan occupations at the time also had a positive impact on Russian-Turkish relations. With US attention steered elsewhere, Turkey and Russia found room for manoeuvre in applying more lax policies in the Caucasus and Middle East.³¹

During the August 2008 Russia-Georgia War, Turkey earned Russian recognition for remaining neutral, for making peace efforts, for following the rules of the Montreux Agreement and initiating the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Pact.

Following the rejection of the March 1, 2003 resolution, the second incident greatly accelerating relations was the war between Russia and Georgia. Ankara's new geographical perspective involves the development of special relations with Moscow, but equally so, it refrains from taking part in any kind of conflict around "Russia versus the West".³² During the August 2008 Russia-Georgia War, Turkey earned Russian recognition for remaining neutral, for making peace efforts, for following the rules of the Montreux Agreement and initiating the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Pact. During the war, NATO and US ships made attempts to enter the Black Sea, making the excuse of wanting to take aid to Georgia. Turkey's response to the matter largely prevented disruptions to the regional balance of power and gave Russia great advantages in the war. Prime Minister Erdoğan pointed to the importance of relations with Russia stating: "The US is our ally, and Russia is an important neighbour. Moreover, Russia is our primary trade partner. Two thirds of our energy need is met by Russia. We are acting on the basis of our own national interests...we cannot ignore Russia".³³ According to the Prof. Aleksey Bogaturov of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Turkey's stance on the Caucasus region, its attitude on the Russia-Georgia war and other foreign policy approaches

have radically transformed Moscow's perceptions of Turkey.³⁴

The Black Sea factor plays an important role within Turkish and Russian relations.³⁵ According to Prime Minister Erdoğan, Turkey and Russia are the two main countries determining the success of regional cooperation policies especially on the Black Sea region.³⁶ One of the important factors bringing Russia and Turkey closer together in the 2000s was the American efforts at defining the Black Sea basin as a security void, hence justifying, as in other parts of the world, the presence of American military forces in the basin in order to eliminate this threat. For the first time in history perhaps, this approach aligned Russia and Turkey on the subjects of the existing status of the Black Sea and defense of the Montreux Convention. Both sides strongly agree on the point that the Black Sea should not become a new arena for global power struggle. Both Russia and Turkey want problems relating to the Black Sea to be solved among countries neighboring the basin in a cooperative manner, and that foreign powers and third parties do not interfere. Turkey holds that a NATO operation in the Black Sea for the purpose of counter terrorism is unnecessary and has advocated instead that the required interventions and operations be carried out by member states and in the framework of BLACKSEAFOR (Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group) and

OBSH (Operation Black Sea Harmony). This policy is also supported by Russia.

Relations between Turkey and Russia are often described through various terms such as “enlarged,” “multi-dimensional,” “deepened,” and “strategic.” Nonetheless, the existence of some problems between the two countries cannot be denied, even though they are not explicitly voiced.³⁷ Both countries make every effort to politely evade disputed matters.³⁸ On certain occasions, Russia has tried to utilize its advantageous position within economic relations as a means of control and persuasion. This policy has been used against countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and Georgia. The aim of this policy has been to expose the side that is sensitive and fragile within the relations. At times, Russia has also played out this policy against Turkey. The harsh rules applied against Turkish products in Russian customs still remain fresh in memories. The vegetable–fruit crises between the two countries during summer months have almost become something of a tradition. Turkey’s greatest flaw in this respect has been its inability to develop equivalent policies to respond to these Russian ones.

On the other hand, it is noticeable that Russian investments in Turkey are

far below Moscow’s expectations. Russia claims that their companies face many difficulties in Turkish energy, military and transportation tenders. Russia was greatly disappointed with the result of the ATAK tender for procurement of military helicopters. In this tender, Turkey chose Italian helicopters made by AgustaWestland over the Russian offer. Russia maintained grave concerns over experiencing the same disappointment with the tender for the nuclear power plant. The tender was in fact annulled by the State Council, which meant that these concerns were somewhat well founded.

Both Russia and Turkey want problems relating to the Black Sea to be solved among countries neighboring the basin in a cooperative manner.

However, Turkey has been determined to improve relations even further with Russia, and to overcome the aforementioned problems. They

decided to allocate the contract for nuclear power plant construction to Russia through an interstate agreement rather than the tendering process. This has been a great source of relief for Russia and has clearly pointed out to Turkey’s determination.

It should be remembered that Turkey is opposed to the literal use of the Turkish Straits as a pipeline for concerns over the environment and security. This situation had been a source of dispute between the two countries, especially during the 1990s. At present, however, this problem

remains much less important, thanks to the realization of projects developing alternative passage routes.

There are also disagreements between the two countries about the types of projects to be developed for making the oil and natural gas coming from the Caspian basin and Central Asia available to the world markets. Russia utilizes the matter of energy as a foreign policy tool and wishes to maintain monopoly. Therefore, Russia tends to oppose all projects that aim to develop resource diversity and sideline Russia. Instead, as a counter attack, Russians have been developing their own projects. The North Stream and South Stream projects are a result of this policy. Russia has been negative towards the Nabucco project, to which Turkey is a partner, holding the view that it is a political rather than economic project. By developing an East-West corridor for transferring Caspian energy sources to European markets, Russia claims that the Nabucco project aims to “bypass” it. Turkey wants Russia to participate in the Nabucco project and does not perceive of it as being against Russia. On the other hand, the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline project has also re-entered the agenda, as a result of the decisions by Turkey to allow

Following his Ankara visit in May 2010, Russian President Medvedev stated that Turkish-Russian relations are characterized by “partnership, not just in words, but in reality.”

Russian usage of the Black Sea’s exclusive economic zone for the South Stream project and to grant Russia the nuclear power plant tender. Moreover, Moscow has directly proposed to Ankara that a second pipeline be built parallel to the Blue Stream natural gas pipeline.

During the 1990s, relations between the two countries were marked by the “Chechen” and “Kurdish” problems. Both countries occasionally had to confront one another due to the activities by the Caucasian diaspora in Turkey and the Kurdish and Armenian

diaspora in Russia.³⁹

These problems largely came to an end in 1999 thanks to the agreement signed between Russia and Turkey on counter terrorism.

However, Russia still does not accept PKK

as a terrorist organization. Turkey has requested that Russia include the PKK in their list of terrorist organizations, but has not received a positive response thus far.⁴⁰ In Russia, only those organizations carrying out activities within Russian territories and having links to Russia may be considered as a “terrorist organization.” Because of Russia’s geopolitical strategies concerning the Middle East, Moscow has been unwilling to define the PKK as a terrorist organization thinking that the Kurds may in the future become useful.

Today Russia remains Armenia's strongest ally, and is the most influential country in terms of mediating between Turkey and Armenia, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan. Yerevan sees Russia as a strategic partner. However, Russia has concerns over Armenia becoming closer to the West. Therefore, despite Ankara's great expectations, Russia failed to support the normalization process between Armenia and Turkey. Although Moscow has expressed that they are supportive of the Turkey-Armenia normalization process and resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, they request that both problems be unravelled separately. On the one hand, Russia is abstaining from solving the problem, while on the other hand, they do not wish to remain outside the process. Moreover, due to the efforts of the Armenian diaspora, the sub-section of the Russian Parliament, the Duma, has twice recognized (in 1995 and 2005) the so-called genocide.

The Cyprus issue is another area of dispute between Russia and Turkey. Russia has interests in Cyprus that go against Turkey.⁴¹ From its own perspective, Russia rightfully sees barriers in establishing and developing relations with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Russia maintains strong trade and economic relations with Greek Cyprus. It is known that Russia uses Greek Cyprus as an off-shore region for Russian capital. For this

reason, Russia does not wish to damage political and economic relations with Greek Cyprus. In April 2004, only a few days prior to the Cyprus referendum prepared by the UN in the framework of the Annan Plan, Russia vetoed a decision that potentially would have relieved the Greek Cypriots' security concerns, giving the excuse that the parties should not be put under pressure and that the Russians had not been consulted beforehand. Following the referendum held on April 24, 2004, Russia prevented a UN Security Council call to end the seclusion of Cypriot Turks.

Following his Ankara visit in May 2010, Russian President Medvedev stated that Turkish-Russian relations are characterized by "partnership, not just in words, but in reality." Likewise, Turkish President Abdullah Gül stated that the rapidly expanding and multidimensional relations entail "a strategic dimension." In fact, during this visit Turkey and Russia did ascribe a "strategic dimension" to their relations in the field of energy through the agreements signed.⁴²

Can one really speak of a strategic partnership between both countries in its full sense? Relations between Turkey and Russia are not exactly at the level of "strategic partnership" in the real sense. However, strategy does play a dominant role for both countries in terms of relations. In fact, relations in fields such as energy and trade do maintain a strategic dimension.⁴³ Even though relations have

been progressively developing since the 2000s, this convergence has not yet transformed from a virtual framework to a true strategic partnership for a number of reasons, including Turkey's preference to take a place within the Western world and Russia's desire to keep relations within an economic frame rather than a strategic one, working to Russia's advantage.⁴⁴

In terms of achieving the target of “strategic partnership,” the removal of the visa has played a very important role in strengthening trust relations.

Contrary to the view of top-level officials and diplomats, experts argue that Turkey-Russia relations are not yet identified by a strategic partnership.⁴⁵ According to Vladimir Ivanovskiy, Russia's Ambassador to Ankara, a pragmatic understanding and the need for maintaining national interests trigger the development of partnership between Russia and Turkey. Russian-Turkish partnership has strategic importance on matters of vital importance to both countries.⁴⁶ According to Dmitriy Vasilyev, an expert from the Oriental Institute of the Russian Science Academy, Turkey continues to be a strong rival to Russia in the Black Sea and Southern Caucasus.

This is a geopolitical reality and Russia must take this into consideration.⁴⁷ Konstantin Simanov, Director of the National Energy Security Foundation, has expressed that Turkey does not see Russia as a strategic partner and that the US still retains a heavy influence over the Turkish elite.⁴⁸ Various reports issued on the topic of Turkish-Russian relations also highlight this matter.⁴⁹ In essence, the strategic partnership which is arguably being developed between Turkey and Russia has a defensive basis. It permits taking joint action in the face of possible regional instabilities. It can also be perceived as a natural reflex against the new European model, which seemingly excludes both countries.⁵⁰

In terms of achieving the target of “strategic partnership,” the removal of the visa has played a very important role in strengthening trust relations. Turkish-Russian relations will soon reach a brand new level, thanks to the signing of the nuclear power plant agreement, the removal of the visas, and the activation of the “High Level Strategic Cooperation Council.” This council will be determining the strategic dimensions and new fields of partnership. As such, the activities of the council will be very important for carrying the relations towards strategic partnership. Previously, Russia has formed similar top-level councils with Germany, France and Italy. Turkey is currently the fourth country. This fact can be seen as an indication

of Turkey's significance to Russia. The strategic transformation of relations will depend upon the council becoming operational.⁵¹

The West is another factor whose influence on the bilateral relations cannot be ignored.⁵² Turkey's relations with Russia have been important in overcoming the sense of exclusion and declining confidence felt by Turkey in its relations with the West. From time to time, Russia too has experienced the problem of not being understood and feeling alienated. This sense of exclusion laying in the unconscious of both countries naturally draws them closer to each other. Both Turkey and Russia think that there are problems in the way the West receives them and have thus developed reactive policies. In a sense, these reactive policies have facilitated the process of trying to form a common language or understand one another.

It is possible to observe this situation, especially in the case of Turkish-EU relations. Interestingly, in the 1990s, either immediately before or after the meetings in which the EU reached an important decision concerning Turkey, either a Russian top-level commission visited Turkey or vice versa. During the 1990s, the EU negatively responded to Turkey, time and again. For this reason, the Turkish political elite entered debates on exploring and realizing alternative geopolitical initiatives with other countries such as Russia and Iran.

Even though this situation continues today, Turkey and Russia have managed to develop a successful policy towards enhancing a rational relations network, centered less around the Western factor and more on shared interests. Such an approach is the requirement for a healthy relationship that is not stuck on conjunctural developments.

Conclusion

At present, the regional and global strategies adopted by Russia and Turkey have become a much more significant trigger in reinforcing relations between the two countries compared to economic factors. Turkey has chosen to remain in the Western system for its own security and stability, and will remain determined in holding on to this view. However, this condition does not form a barrier to the development of multidimensional relations with Russia. On the contrary, strong relations with Russia will empower Turkey in its relations with the West. Turkey must remain cautious in isolating uncontrollable competition and conflict from relations with Russia. There is still a long way to be achieved within these relations and it should not be expected that this is going to be an easy process. Also, it must not be forgotten that the two countries share a longer history of rivalry compared to cooperation.

Turkey and Russia are working to transform these century-long

geopolitical disputes into a geo-economic partnership. The mutual initiatives taken to this end are an indication of the efforts to create new relational dimensions. In this sense, the Blue Stream natural gas pipeline project that Turkey proposed was an important step towards ending the competitive spirit of the 1990s. In the 2000s, the nuclear power plant project, which again Turkey fervidly advocates, is another very important step in strengthening relations. The catalyst of the 1990s was economic relations; in the 2000s, it has become energy relations. In recent years, Turkey-Russia relations have been gradually transforming thanks to the constructive and peaceful approaches embraced by Ankara and Moscow. In this sense, one could argue that the formatted relations are being re-loaded.

Turkey and Russia are working to transform the century-long geopolitical disputes into a geo-economic partnership.

The frame or border defining relations between Turkey and Russia is rather sensitive and the prospect of both narrowing and broadening this frame or border depends on the initiative of the two countries. In the history of bilateral relations between Turkey and Russia, several events can be pointed out for broadening borders such as: Soviet

assistance during Turkey's independence war, industrial cooperation in the 1930s and 1960s, the 1984 natural gas agreement, Russia's position regarding Abdullah Öcalan in 1998, the Blue Stream project, Bülent Ecevit's visit to Russia in 1999, Putin's Turkey visit in 2004, the visits made by President Gül and Prime Minister Erdoğan to Russia and the recent decision by Turkey to grant the nuclear power plant construction project to Russia. For many years both sides have expressed their desire for bilateral relations not to remain merely economic, also encompassing regional and global interests, and being based on shared trust and respect. The current level of relations achieved is an important indication of Turkey and Russia's success to this end.

Cultural relations between the two countries continue to lack. Despite the thousands of common families and millions of tourists visiting each year, the Turkish and Russian peoples do not yet know each other at the level desired. The climate of trust in relations must be maintained through frequent top-level visits. For ordinary people to also sense this positive spirit, cultural relations must be activated and new projects must be developed which encompass both societies. The realization of the visa exemption decision in April 2011 is an important step in this direction. Furthermore, history books in both countries should be jointly examined,

while the media should refrain from using a negative sounding language. Both sides need to pay special attention to cultural relations so that the current level of relations achieved is permanent and long lasting. Efforts in the cultural domain will not only facilitate political efforts, it will also allow for the erasure of all negative images marked in the memories of both sides. Public dialogue, shared cultural, arts and sports activities and educative collaborations serve as effective means for reaching this goal.

Despite the thousands of common families and millions of tourists visiting each year, the Turkish and Russian peoples do not yet know each other at the level desired.

Turkey and Russia are situated in a geography spanning from the Caucasus to the Balkans, from the Middle East to Central Asia, home to numerous regional identities and diverse perceptions of interests. The general structure of Turkish-Russian relations implies that in the coming years, cooperation and competition will remain as determining factors. The relations must be of a quality

that is able to serve the interests of both countries. When evaluating the present standing and future prospects of relations, it is necessary to be as realistic as possible. Being realistic also requires withholding the element of caution in relations. It must not be forgotten that the present day multidimensional relations achieved between Turkey and Russia bear within it the unpleasant marks of history and the difficulties of their shared geography. Both countries maintain historical and cultural ties within this geography and also have a shared impact upon it. Therefore, any prospective problems to surface in the region have the potential of deteriorating relations. Even though such a situation is only a probability, it is important to remain prepared and prudent. Such an approach means that a multidimensional relational network must always be protected and developed carefully, and in case problems do occur, rational and pragmatic solutions should be sought after. The confinement of relations to the cliché term “strategy” in this early stage could present a barrier to the establishment of a healthy relational model. As long as the relations remain just, realistic, transparent and direct, and satisfying to both sides, Turkey and Russia will continue to reap the benefits.

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Turkey and the New Middle East: Between Liberalism and Realism

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Abstract

It is sometimes argued that Turkish foreign policy under the AK Party government reflects its ideology, and Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East is often used as an illustration of this influence. When it is closely examined, however, one can easily see that the government has often followed a mainly realist foreign policy approach in the Middle East and used the idealism for the maximization of Turkish national interests. In contrast to the power resources at the disposal of other regional powers, including the support of external powers, sectarian identities, or ethnic-linguistic ties, the key asset of Turkish foreign policy is its successful combination of democracy and Islam. Utilizing this image, Turkey has emerged as the most outspoken supporter of democratic transformations, aiming to create a liberal-democratic regional order. This, however, brings Turkey ultimately into conflict with other aspiring hegemonic powers, including both Israel and Iran.

Key Words

Turkey, Middle East, Liberalism, Realism, Arab Spring.

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Introduction

It is often asked whether it is objective material interests or ideas and perceptions that are decisive on Turkey's Middle East policy during the AK Party era. However, it is quite hard to answer this question since the AK party acceded to power in a rather critical stage with regards to relations with the Middle East. At this critical juncture the intellectual and structural context of the Middle East had been significantly shaped by the September 11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent Iraq war in 2003. It could be therefore argued that many policies that emerged with the AK Party government's initiatives and ascribed to intellectual factors have actually reflected changes in the strategic and structural environment surrounding Turkey. This does not mean that the AK Party leaders had no effect on the formation of policies. However, with the advantage of the intellectual foundations it represents, the AK Party government has been able to portray a more flexible and dynamic foreign policy perspective as regards the Middle East.

In the AK Party era, Turkey has succeeded in returning to the region as a normal power without having an historical fixation. In this sense, it could be argued that AK Party government, with its strong mandate, has realized a revision in foreign policy that could not be completed following the end of the Cold War due to domestic political instability. The AK Party has projected to the region a vision that emphasizes secular democracy and its compatibility with Islam. As Fuller indicates “For most Arabs, the election of a mildly Islamist party in Ankara exemplified that countries, which shares common heritage and history can unite one day.”¹ As a symbolic expression of this reunification, Turkey facilitated the election of Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, an academic who is closely acquainted with the region, as the General Secretary of the Organization of Islamic Conference in 2005 in the first democratic elections conducted in the history of the organization. It was a symbolic expression of the message that the Islamic world and the Middle East are, from now on, located at the centre of Turkish foreign policy and that Turkey desires to see materialization of a democratic Islamic world.

In accordance with Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu’s policy target of “zero problems with neighbours”, Turkey moved to assert itself as a central player in the region by playing a mediatory

role in the conflicts between its close allies and neighbours. Although Turkey’s mediation efforts between Israel and Syria as well as between the United States and Iran have been aborted, they were nevertheless initiatives that emphasized assertiveness in Turkish foreign policy. By virtue of this proactive attitude that numerous foreign observers have evaluated as neo-Ottomanism, Turkey has embraced for itself an active role not only in the Middle East, but also in Central Asia and Northern Africa.²

In this article, a general perspective on the Middle Eastern policy that Turkey has pursued in the last ten years will be presented by examining Turkey’s relations with four power blocs in the region: (1) Israel, (2) Iran, (3) the Arab countries that are within Iran’s sphere of influence (Iraq, Syria and Lebanon) and (4) the Arab countries which stand in opposition to Iran’s increasing dominance in the region (apart from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain). Evidently this categorization shows that the most significant factor in Turkish foreign policy making vis-à-vis the Middle East is the emergence of Iran’s regional hegemony.

The outbreak of the Arab democratic revolts in the winter of 2010-2011 caused a dramatic rupture in this regard by forcing a revision of foreign policy.

Under the AK Party rule, Turkey followed a foreign policy towards the region that emphasized bilateral relationships that often ignored internal characteristics of regimes, particularly human rights issues in Syria and Iran, emphasizing instead strengthening trade relations. In this sense it was realist with regard to acceptance of existing regimes as partners and liberal in the sense of placing heavy emphasis on economic integration. The outbreak of the Arab democratic revolts in the winter of 2010-2011 caused a dramatic rupture in this regard by forcing a revision of foreign policy, according to which Turkey emerged as the champion of democratic transformations in North Africa. The victim of this revision, however, was the strategic partnership with the Syrian regime that Turkey had built in the last decade. Under the cloak of Turkish democracy promotion in Syria lies a realist mindset regarding the rise of an Iran-led Shia bloc, which Turkey so far attempted to manage diplomatically. Also in this regard, Turkey's activism regarding the Palestinian question, leading to a deep crisis with Israel, helped trim Iran's regional influence.

Tension in the Turkish-Israeli Relations: AK Party's Secret Agenda?

Following the establishment of the AK Party government after the 2002

general elections, many internal and external political observers were curious about the nature of the new government's Israeli policies. According to some circles, this subject was a litmus test of the new government's loyalty to secularism. Subsequent to the February 28 process, even a slight deviation from the pro-Israeli perspective was seen as sufficient to reveal its Islamic identity. Presumably, taking these concerns into consideration, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan before assuming the post of Prime Minister paid a visit to Washington and held meetings at several key Jewish institutions where he expressed a strong will to further develop the relations between Turkey and Israel.³ Accordingly, until the outbreak of the 2008 Gaza War, the AK Party government maintained the usual course of Turkish-Israeli relations.

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It could thus be claimed that the AK Party kept its commitment to the relationship, which resulted in a spectacular growth in the volume of trade between the two countries. Whilst the

trade volume between Israel and Turkey was 1.3 billion US dollars in 2002, this had risen to 3.38 billion US dollars in 2008. In 2009, Turkey's exports to Israel totalled 1.5 billion US dollars, whereas its imports had reached 1.7 billion US dollars. More significantly, Turkey signed several defence contracts with Israel, including the purchase of ten Israeli-made unmanned aerial vehicles, which amounted to 2 billion US dollars. However, it should also be mentioned that the value of the trade relations with Israel constituted a very modest sum of one percent of Turkey's total trade volume. In contrast to this, Turkey's trade volume with the 22 Arab states had reached at 30 billion US dollars during the five years before 2008 and 40 billion US dollars in 2008. As for the Turkish-Iranian trade volume, this figure climbed above 10.5 billion US dollars in 2010.⁴

However, the political relations between the two countries have been heavily hindered by a series of actions by Israel. The offensive orchestrated by Israel against the refugee camp in Jenin in April 2002, had occurred only months before the AK Party government took office. This attack, which had the nature of a massacre, and the subsequent US support, directly contributed to

the development of an anti-American and anti-Israeli public sentiment in Turkey. US President George W. Bush's description of the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as "a man of peace" provoked strong reactions in the Turkish public opinion.⁵

The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the most important event that changed the strategic context of the Middle East, and in turn, affected the course of Turkish-Israeli relations. This has undoubtedly left a deep impact on the Turkish public opinion contributing

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to an already strong resentment against American foreign policy as well as Israel which was the only country in the region which supported the invasion. At the same time, the Iraqi war

disrupted the traditional calculations regarding Turkish foreign policy within the Turkish political system due to the Northern Iraqi problem. The war helped the Iraqi Kurds emerge as a new actor in the region, and as a result, ensured that certain revisions in Turkey's internal and external political decisions were inevitable. With the new geo-strategic calculations that emerged on the Kurdish question, Turkey established close security relations with Syria and Iran. The Turkish-Israeli strategic alliance, which existed partially to end the

support Syria was providing to the PKK at that time, lost its meaning within this new conjuncture.

Israel's assassination of the seventy-year-old quadriplegic leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and Abdulaziz Rantisi who was subsequently chosen to replace Yassin, provoked strong reactions in the Turkish public opinion, especially the grassroots of the AK Party. In the face of these events, Prime Minister Erdoğan increased his criticism towards Israel stating with a clear voice that these targeted assassinations amounted to "state terrorism".⁶ In February 2006, a Hamas committee led by Khaled Mashal visited Ankara and met with some Turkish authorities. The Turkish media and the main opposition party CHP considered this as a great mistake in terms of relations with the West.

Whereas Tel Aviv strongly criticized this visit, interestingly, Washington avoided making any direct criticism and stated that what really mattered were the messages that were given to Hamas. Despite being perceived and regarded in the West as a violent Islamic movement, it was an undeniable fact that Hamas enjoyed a strong support base in what was accepted as the Palestinian territories, having emerged as the winner in the democratic elections that the United States promoted. This posed a real dilemma. Seemingly, the realist flank in the US administration led by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was warm

towards Hamas's liaison with Turkey in order to avoid pushing Hamas to Iran's ranks.⁷ Ross Wilson, who was appointed as the US ambassador in Ankara to replace the arch neo-conservative Eric Edelman, and represented this pragmatic and realist perspective also placed the meeting on a positive framework.⁸ Meanwhile, from the perspective of Hamas, building good relations with Turkey was critical for earning diplomatic legitimacy as well as for reducing its dependency on Iran.⁹ Nevertheless, the pro-Israeli circles in the United States criticized the visit very strongly, stating that "Islamist" AK Party foreign policy architects were responsible for the Hamas visit.¹⁰

Despite these moments of crisis, the AK Party government continued the security dimension of relations with Israel. It employed these contacts to broker negotiations between Israel and Syria, the Arab state that Turkey now enjoyed close relations with. In the context of Turkey's approach to regional politics that placed diplomacy at the centre, Israel's surprise attack on Gaza between December 2008 and January 2009 was received with strong condemnation from Ankara. According to the report issued by the US-based Human Rights Watch approximately 1500 Palestinians lost their lives as a result of this attack in which white phosphorus bombs were dropped on civilian population.¹¹ The Turkish government was surprised since Israel

carried out the attack despite a verbal peace promise made by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert during his visit to Ankara just a couple of days prior to the offensive. In reaction, Ankara declared the end of its mediatory mission between Syria and Israel. The government also ensured that the children injured in the attacks would be brought to Turkey and receive treatment in Turkish hospitals. Prime Minister Erdoğan and his wife visited those children in hospitals and followed up on their situation personally. Erdoğan family's close attention to the Palestinian crisis has been closely followed by the Turkish as well as the Arab public through satellite television networks. The reaction by the Turkish public to Israel's disproportionate use of force in Gaza was massive. From Istanbul to Diyarbakir, demonstrations protesting the Gaza attack were held in nearly every city and town throughout the country.

Prime Minister Erdoğan's abandonment of a panel during the 2009 Davos Summit, in which he was accompanied by Israeli President Shimon Peres, Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki Moon and Secretary General of the Arab League Amr Moussa, in condemnation of the Israeli aggression was the most dramatic event displaying Turkey's reaction. During the panel Erdoğan quite straightforwardly told Peres "You know how to kill children very well!" A more

concrete development that strained the relations between Turkey and Israel was the exclusion of Israel from the military manoeuvres, that were to be conducted within the framework of NATO, in Turkey in January 2009 as a reaction to Israel's Gaza attacks. The manoeuvres were postponed indefinitely when the USA and Italy also announced that they would not be joining as a reaction to Israel's exclusion.¹² In response, Turkey conducted its first joint manoeuvres with Syria in April 2009.¹³

Israeli navy commandoes attacked the largest ship of the convoy, the Mavi Marmara, killing nine Turkish people, one of whom with American citizenship.

After this event Israel openly started to have an attitude towards Turkey. As evidence that proves Israel's reaction, in January 2010 the Israeli deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon invited the Turkish ambassador to Tel Aviv making him sit in a lower chair than his own and spoke against Turkey, in Hebrew, to Israeli television cameras in front of the ambassador. Although Israel explained this attitude as a reaction to a Turkish television series airing on the TRT called "Ayrılık", depicting the slaughter of Palestinian children by Israeli soldiers, it

still had to issue a written apology as a result of Ankara's strong response.

Prime Minister Erdoğan, in his speech at the opening of TRT's Arabic television *TRT et-Turkiye*, described Israel as the real threat to the region. Turkey's statement that it would not stay silent in the face of another Israeli attack towards Gaza was an indication of the final stage of the tough language against Israel.¹⁴ In the meantime, Turkey increasingly started to bring up the contradiction of the international powers by comparing the nuclear weapons in Israel's possession and the sanctions against Iran. Israel did not attend the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit as it was afraid that Turkey might bring up this subject to the agenda. In return, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman made statements comparing Erdoğan to the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

Among all these, the most dramatic development that permanently unsettled Turkish-Israeli bilateral relations was the attack conducted by Israel on the Gaza aid flotilla comprised heavily of Turkish citizens. Israeli navy commandoes attacked the largest ship of the convoy, the *Mavi Marmara*, killing nine Turkish people, one of whom with American citizenship. Turkey's immediate reaction came from the deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç, while Erdoğan was in the midst of an official tour to several Latin American nations. In a cautious language, Arınç described the attack as

an act of piracy. Erdoğan cut his tour short and returned to Ankara, sending his Foreign Minister to New York to call the United Nations Security Council, on which Turkey was then a non-permanent member, to an emergency meeting. Describing Israeli aggression as state terrorism, Erdoğan expressed that Israel showed the entire world the levels it reached in killing civilians and that Turkey's enmity would be as thorough as its friendship.¹⁵

Despite the negative comments by some circles within the Turkish media, Erdoğan's severe criticisms of Israel did not receive a strong reaction from domestic political actors. One possible reason for this might be that despite the government's strong criticisms of Israel, the defence contracts signed with this country largely continued until recent days. When it is considered that Turkey, following a liberal economic understanding, permitted the investment of Israeli firms in telecommunication and agricultural sectors, it could be said that the AK Party follows a course that does not represent the presumed ideological perceptions with regards to foreign trade. For example, the contract providing satellite pictures for the Turkish Air Forces was signed for 141 million dollars with the companies Israeli Aerospace and Elbit.¹⁶ From this perspective, the reason for the political tension in Turkish-Israeli relations should not be sought in the political

ideology that AK party represents, but rather in the paradigm shift that took place in the way the Turkish political elite interprets Middle Eastern geography and the geo-political environment. At this point, the increasing power of Iraqi Kurds and Iran, as a result of the new power distribution after the Iraqi war, reveals new developments that should be emphasized.¹⁷

The Turkish government presented Israel a list of demands that includes an apology, compensation to the relatives of the victims and a lift of the embargo placed on Gaza from Israel as conditions in to relieve tension and normalize the relations.

The disappointment caused by Israel's neutral stance during the crisis Turkey experienced with Syria over the PKK in 1998 increasingly led the perception that Israel stands opposed to Turkey with regard to the Kurdish question. However, this was precisely why Turkey had set up an alliance with Israel. In 2003, the support of Israel and the pro-Israeli groups in the United States for the war against Iraq, a war which stood against Turkish interests, was noted by the Turkish political elite. Israel's further support for the Kurdish autonomous structure in Northern Iraq

was perceived as an indirect support given to the PKK.

The Turkish government presented Israel a list of demands that includes an apology, compensation to the relatives of the victims and a lift of the embargo placed on Gaza from Israel as conditions to relieve tension and normalize the relations. The secret meeting held in July 2010 between the Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and Israeli Minister for Industry and Trade Binyamin Ben-Eliezer produced no outcome, either. By including within its demands Israel's lifting of the embargo on Gaza was a clear message to Palestinian and the Arab public opinion that Turkey saw the Palestinian issue within the scope of its national interests.

The last episode in the crisis took place when the UN-commissioned Palmer-Uribe report on the 2010 Gaza flotilla attack was leaked to the *New York Times*.¹⁸ According to the report, the Israeli-imposed blockage on Gaza was acceptable and the Israel's intervention on the blockade area was justified from an international legal perspective. Furthermore, according to the report, the Israeli commandoes faced 'organized and violent resistance' and were compelled to use force as an act of self-defense. Yet the Israeli forces' use of 'excessive and unreasonable force' and the Israeli military's treatment of passengers was found abusive. Turkish member of the panel, Özdem Sanberk, wrote a separate

note of objection pointing out that the legality of the blockade was itself challenged by the UN Human Rights Council and the passengers onboard Mavi Marmara resisted to defend themselves. Sanberk suggests that the report omits the fact that the Israeli troops opened fire on the passengers from the helicopters before boarding of Israeli commanders and some passengers were deliberately shot dead by the Israeli forces.¹⁹ Several international critics of the report point out that the panel that prepared the report questionably included as its deputy chair the former Columbian President Alvaro Uribe who was criticized for human rights abuses during his term in office.²⁰

In reaction to leaking of the report, Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu immediately announced a series of measures against Israel, including most significantly the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador and the downgrading of its diplomatic representation to the level of second secretary. He also announced that Turkey would take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of sea navigation in the Mediterranean Sea. Turkish anger at Israel was not only related to the lack of apology but also to the Israeli cooperation with Greek Cypriot government in natural gas drilling in waters south of Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot natural gas drilling, being carried out by Texas-based Noble, enjoys Israeli air force cover.²¹ Turkey claims that, unless the dispute

in the island is addressed first and the naval boundaries are demarcated with agreement, Greek Cypriots' claim of the area as its exclusive economic zone carries no international legitimacy. Yet, unable to prevent the Greek gas drilling, Turkey moved ahead to sign its own underwater exploration agreement with Northern Cypriot government to carry out its own drilling.²²

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While the fate of relations depends on whether or not Israel meets the primary Turkish condition of apology, such an apology is highly difficult to come, particularly after the release of the Palmer-Uribe report. Also, it is highly questionable whether a late apology would restore the relations back to its normalcy. According to Israeli sources, the Israeli government appears to make the strategic decision not to apologize because apology may not reverse the tide in relations between the two countries. In case of an apology, as

the Israeli government suspects, “the Turkish government could present this as a vindication of its policies, gaining more points in the region and giving no assurances that it would stop its [verbal] attacks on Israel.”²³

Arguably the principal party responsible for this crisis in relations between the two countries is Israeli policies that completely disregard international law. In so doing Israel considers itself unaccountable relying on the unquestioned exclusive support it receives from the United States. Turkey strongly criticizes the US acquiescence of the Israeli aggression in open seas and its silence in the face of murder of Furkan Doğan, an American citizen, by Israeli commandoes at close distance multiple times. Turkey’s decision not to reduce the Israeli diplomatic status following the flotilla incident, in which Turkish citizens were murdered, was met with strong negative reaction by the domestic public opinion. The public mood against Israel is so strong that even the PKK is irked at any suggestion of receiving help from Israel when such an idea was raised by the Israeli officials.²⁴

Turkey’s Deep Geo-political Rivalry with Iran

Turkey’s perception of Iran varied in accordance with the ideological foundations and the political outlook of

different political actors. This is not only a result of Iran’s existing Islamic regime, but also of Turkey’s historically-rooted rivalry with this nation. Not allowing its relationship with Iran to be shaped by perceptions, Turkey carried out a cautious, but close diplomatic relations with Iran in the last ten years. As regards dealing with the Kurdish question, a complete alliance was established in economic and security areas. With this diplomacy-first approach, Turkey was able to desecuritize its relations with both Iran and Syria.²⁵

It is not possible to explain the policy of the AK Party government towards these two countries with the ideological foundations of the party leadership. Undoubtedly, Iran and Syria are two powerful neighbours that cannot be disregarded by Turkey and the Turkish business world. As a matter of fact, former President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who was an ardent secularist, visited Iran after Bush defined Iran as part of the “axis of evil” in 2002 and signed two treaties that aimed to strengthen economic and cultural cooperation.²⁶ Furthermore, Sezer confirmed the beginning of a new era in relations between the two countries by attending the funeral service of the late Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad. The AK Party leadership very much embraced the same approach and further developed a nearly problem-free relationship with Iran at least on the surface level. In essence, however, Turkey

remained cautious regarding Iran and its emergence as a regional hegemon following the Iraq War of 2003.

Undoubtedly, unlike others in the region, Turkey does not see Iran as an existential security threat, but as a rival in terms of impact and influence, a significant trade partner and natural gas supply source without which Turkey had to completely rely on Russia, and an operational ally against the PKK terrorism. Nevertheless, policy-makers in Ankara are deeply concerned about the profoundly increased power of Iran in the regional geopolitical structure that emerged after the Iraq War. In this new environment, it is necessary to state that Turkey's two Arab neighbours, Iraq and Syria, are now within Iran's sphere of influence, which is an unprecedented development in the entire history of Turkish-Iranian competition. Due to this chain of alliance, Iran has effectively become a Mediterranean power and many Arab leaders including the Jordanian King Abdullah II spoke of an emerging Shia crescent, encapsulating the area from Bahrain to Lebanon, and to the fear of many Sunni Arab regimes, might turn into a Shia full moon.²⁷ For this reason, in order to decrease Iran's impact in the Middle East in general,

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Turkey felt it necessary to gain more prominence in the Palestinian question and win hearts and minds of the Arab public. However, until very recently, Turkey did not pursue a policy that confronts the Shia bloc and expressed that an Iran integrated within the system is very important for regional peace and stability. The main logic in this calculation was that Iran was in a particularly critical position with regard to Iraq's stability with implications for the Kurdish question. In this framework, Turkey followed a pragmatic and integrationist policy towards Iran as different from the axis of the Arab world and that of Israel and the United States. Turkey is aware that confronting Iran will not stop it from acquiring nuclear weapons, but on the contrary, further accelerate this process. Turkey grants Iran its right to nuclear energy as a result of its increasing influence and decreasing natural resources and natural rights arising from international law. Together with Brazil, Turkey has played an active role in overcoming Iran's nuclear crisis by means of a uranium swap scheme. Along with Brazil, it was the only country to vote no on the sanctions brought against Iran in the UN Security Council.

It was also with this strategic mindset that the AK Party government was amongst the first governments to congratulate the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad after his disputed 2009 presidential election victory. Although this attitude was sharply criticised by Iranian liberals, Turkey was not convinced by any evidence that indicates fraud in the elections and did not make it a part of its policy to intervene in domestic politics of Iran with the expectation, of course, that Iran adhered to the same principle. Interestingly, the Iraqi and Afghani governments almost competed with each other to congratulate Ahmedinejad despite being under the invasion of American troops.²⁸

As will be discussed in the following section, Turkey's diplomatically cordial relationship towards the Shia bloc has dramatically changed after the Arab popular revolts, especially after they encapsulated Syria. Iran clearly sees Syria as an indispensable part of its sphere of influence in the region and after Turkey began to pressure Syrian regime to be respectful of the democratic demands of its people, majority of whom are Sunnis, Iranian military circles have directed against Turkey some harsh statements. It was in this context that Ankara accepted to deploy NATO early warning system in the southeastern province. In reaction, a senior commander in Iran's Revolutionary Guard stated that it will

target Malatya in case of an Israeli attack against its nuclear facilities.²⁹ Most likely in response to such threats, Turkey would like to strengthen its missile defence capabilities by purchasing Patriot PAC-3 anti-missile batteries from the United States.³⁰

The Iranian Sphere of Influence in the Arab World

Syria, Iraq and Lebanon are three critically important countries for Turkey. Turkey has a historically-rooted fierce rivalry with Iran in this region. However, a soft geopolitical competition is currently on the agenda. With the Iraqi war completing the puzzle by bringing Shia elements to power, Iran is now able to reach the Mediterranean thanks to its sphere of influence over three countries. In addition, Iran with Syria and Iraq completely closes Turkey's geographic reach to the rest of the region, with a combined border of nearly 1800 kilometres. These countries also are of critical importance to Turkish security interests due to the Kurdish question. As a result of the Iraq war, an autonomous political Kurdish presence emerged, which Turkey has to take into consideration from political and economic aspects. In the meantime, both Iran and Syria have not completely abandoned their interest in using the PKK card against Turkey.

Syria was often cited as the most successful diplomatic undertaking of the AK Party government in the last few years as a realization of “zero problem with neighbours” ideal. Although the normalization of Turkish-Syria relations started before the AK Party government, the contribution of the AK Party government in the development of these relations was indisputable.

The death of Hafz al-Assad who pursued anti-Turkish policies and supported terrorism meant the end of another serious obstacle for the betterment of Turkish-Syrian relationship. In protest for Turkey’s ambitious Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), hydroelectric project which allegedly decreased quantity of Euphrates water flowing into Syria, Hafiz Al-Assad developed a policy of supporting PKK terrorism and moved to develop an alliance with Greece. In response, Turkey supported Israel in an attempt to create a bloc. In 1998, Turkey threatened Syria with a military offensive if it did not close the PKK camps in Syria and hand over leaders of the PKK. Syria complied with these demands easing the way to start diplomatic and economic relations between the two countries. The prospects of good relations were further improved when Beshar al-Assad who was regarded as more pragmatic and liberal replaced his father in 2000 following his death. Meanwhile Turkey supported Beshar during his deep family power struggle with his uncle, Rifaat al-Assad.³¹

In the course of next few years, Turkish-Syrian relations were improved to the point that the two states declared mutual removal of visa requirement in 2009. As of 2010, civilian human traffic between the two countries has reached 100 thousand people per month. While only twenty thousand Turkish citizens visited Syria in 1990, this number reached a record of one million.³²

In parallel, Turkish government moved to waive visa requirements for Lebanese and Jordanian citizens visiting Turkey. In addition, Turkey led in the establishment of a free trade zone to include Syria, Lebanon and Jordan creating a market of 100 million people. In July 2010, the “Close Neighbours Economic and Trade Association Council” (CNETAC) to include the same countries was created to research the possibility of cooperation and integration in different economic sectors. Turkey’s 3 billion dollars worth of trade with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan constituted around ten per cent of Turkey’s total trade volume with the Arab world, far exceeding its trade level with Israel worth 2.5 billion US dollars.³³

In March 2011, public revolts similar to the ones that toppled regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya soon encapsulated Syria, leading to massive uprising in Syria.

Unfortunately, the honeymoon in Turkish-Syrian relations was not to last long. In March 2011, public revolts similar to the ones that toppled regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya soon encapsulated Syria, leading to massive uprising. The Syrian Baath Party regime in power since 1963 reacted to the events with violence despite attempts by Turkey to convince al-Assad to lead a peaceful transformation. According to a report published by the United Nations, Syrian regime utilized brutality against civilians, including torture and rape of under-aged children.³⁴

The 22-member Arab League took the initiative to pressure Syria to end its violence and when it failed in these attempts expelled it from the organization. In August, the UN Security Council adopted a statement condemning Syria's violence; yet, due to Russian and Chinese objections, it has failed to pass a resolution involving economic measures against Syria. Turkey fully cooperates with the Arab League, the United States and Europe in imposing sanctions against Syria while the Baath regime is given firm support by Russia, China, Iran and Hezbollah. In response to Turkish position, Syria cancelled its free trade agreement with Turkey prompting the latter to impose 30 per cent customs duty on products entering from Syria. In addition, provoking Ankara's strong protest, a pro-Assad mob attacked the Turkish embassy

in Damascus burning the Turkish flag. Meanwhile, quite interestingly, Israel is ambivalent in its stance regarding the fate of Assad despite his support to Hezbollah and Hamas. For Israelis, it is easier to deal with the regime in Damascus since "it represents a coherent state with more reliable leadership."³⁵ One can interpret this line as an Israeli preference to see the continuation of Syria's minority regime to a new democratic political system in which pro-Islamic parties ascend to power as they did elsewhere in the region.

The present tension in Turkish-Syrian relations spells the end of Turkish diplomatic handling of Iranian sphere of influence, as well Turkey's following a non-conventional foreign policy in the region distancing itself from the position of the West. While Turkish-Israeli tension is a clear indication that Ankara does not necessarily synchronize its foreign policy with that of Washington, it is also interesting that the same tension does not create an obstacle for an unusually warm relationship between the AK Party government and Obama administration.

Ironically, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki who himself came to power following Iraq war of 2003 voices support to Assad.³⁶ This was a predictable outcome of the Iraq war, in addition to creating suitable conditions for a *de facto* independence to Northern Iraqi Kurdish groups resulting in serious implications for its fight with the PKK terrorism. With the coming to power of Shiite majority

in Iraq, Iran has closed the geographic gap between itself and its Syrian ally, reaching to the Mediterranean Sea.

Despite all these negative developments, Turkey avoided moves that would threaten stability in Iraq. On the contrary, it tried to provide integration of all parties, most significantly Sunni Arab groups by ensuring their involvement in Iraqi national politics and 2005 general elections.

Undoubtedly, having a clear majority in the population, the Shiite Arab parties dominate any election results, leading to the outcome of Iranian influence in Iraqi politics. Recognizing this reality, Turkey has attempted to build ties with the Shiite Arabs. In March 2011, Prime Minister Erdoğan became the first Sunni leader to have visited the mausoleum of Ali, son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad in Najaf. The Prime Minister, during the same visit, organised a sincere discussion regarding the future of Iraq with the most prominent Shia leader in Iraq, Ayatollah Sistani, who is regarded as the most influential figure in Iraqi politics. The fact that Sistani is Persian and of Iranian citizenship, however, is an indicator of the depth of Iran's historically-rooted influence in the country. In this regard, Turkey does not have any chance to compete with Iran over gaining popularity of the country's Shia Arab population. Recognition of this fact in the new realist context will force Turkey to approach Iraqi Kurds,

since they increasingly recognize that their isolation cannot be ended by Israel. In fact, in the realm of economics, Northern Iraq is a lucrative market for Turkish companies, particularly in trade and construction sectors. As a result of this interaction, Turkey's export to Iraq, much of which is to Northern Iraq, grew from around 900 million dollars in 2003 to 6 billion dollars in 2009. In the meantime, Turkish NGOs invested in education from primary schools to universities. The fate of this relationship, however, rests on the relationship between the Northern Iraqi authority and the PKK, as well as on the success of Turkish democratization as regards to its own Kurdish question.

Turkey seeks to play an active role in Lebanon to help mediate sectarian divisions countering Iranian efforts to gain influence. In November 2010, Prime Minister Erdoğan visited Lebanon shortly after Iranian President Ahmedinejad's visit to the same country in October of the same year and was enthusiastically received by the Sunniled government.

Lebanese politics is deeply divided between the March 14 alliance led by Saad Hariri who is supported by Saudi Arabia and the United States, and the March 8 alliance led by Hezbollah and supported by Syria and Iran. In 2008, a clash between Hezbollah and followers of then Prime Minister Saad Hariri over his decision to close a Hezbollah

telecommunications facility broke out and left 80 people dead. Qatar then brokered a deal that ended the conflict. Yet the tension has returned, when a UN-backed Special Tribunal for Lebanon investigating the 2005 assassination of Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri indicted four senior Hezbollah members of involvement in the incident. Eleven Hezbollah-led opposition ministers in the coalition government resigned in protest of Prime Minister Hariri's refusal to reject the Tribunal, causing its collapse in January 2011.

In all of these events, Turkey assumed an active diplomatic stance especially through regular trilateral summit meetings with Syria and Qatar to resolve the crisis. In the absence of Saudi Arabia and Egypt as large Arab powers to play an effective role in regional politics, Turkey enlisted the support of Qatar, a tiny but diplomatically influential Gulf state.

Showing the volatile nature of Lebanese politics, the Lebanese political division further increased following the events in Syria.

The crisis of government was solved when March 8 coalition managed to convince Sunni politician Najeb Mikati to become the Prime Minister and thus form the government. Still, Turkey's active diplomacy in Lebanon indicates its

central position in Middle East politics and ultimately increases its rivalry with Iran. In this regard, Lebanese crisis shows shifting balance of power in the region where, as Anthony Shadid notes, "Turkey has proved the most dynamic, projecting an increasingly assertive and independent foreign policy in an Arab world bereft of any country that matches its stature."³⁷

Showing the volatile nature of Lebanese politics, the Lebanese political division further increased following the events in Syria. Hezbollah firmly supports the Syrian regime causing friction in the March 8 coalition, and the March 14 coalition backs the opposition.³⁸ In this new context, as Turkey has clearly distanced itself from Syria and taken an active position to force a democratic transformation in its neighbour, it will not be able to maintain its claimed role as a neutral arbiter in Lebanese politics.

The Sunni Arab Bloc

Bahrain and Saudi Arabia perceive Iran as an existential threat from their traditional foreign policy perspectives due to their own Shia populations, while the United Arab Emirates has a troublesome relationship with Tehran due to Iranian controlled group of islands in the Gulf. One can add to this group Egypt, the most populous Arab nation that is also disturbed by Iran's increasing power in the Middle East and the

Mediterranean region. Although Egypt maintained a hostile relationship with Iran during the Mubarak era, after the toppling of Mubarak regime, it showed some gestures to Iran, allowing Iranian warships to pass through the Suez Canal. Israel expressed concerns about the prospects of relations between the two countries, which have not had diplomatic relations since 1979.³⁹ Nevertheless, as the 2011 parliamentary elections clearly demonstrated, pro-Islamic parties will have the most dominant position in the future of Egyptian political system and, in this regard, one can expect that sensitivity about Iran's emerging regional hegemony would be maintained in Egyptian foreign policy.

Egyptian and Iranian interests ultimately clash, since the former desires to emerge as the leader of the Arab world, which is a natural position for a country of its size and influence. As a matter of fact, the el-Fatah and Hamas reconciliation, which Turkey was not able to achieve despite all its efforts, has become possible under the mediation of Egypt. Turkey's interests lie in turning Egypt, which attained a democratic system, not into a rival but a partner. In this sense, for Turkey, Egypt can emerge as a significant geostrategic partner. According to Davutoğlu, "a partnership between Turkey and Egypt could create a new, democratic axis of power".⁴⁰ As a matter of fact, Turkish leaders voiced the strongest international support

for the regime change in Egypt and expressed their appreciation for Egypt's efforts towards achieving Palestinian reconciliation. Both countries have shared concerns regarding Israel and Iran. The Freedom and Justice Party, established by the Muslim Brotherhood, emerged as the strongest in the recent elections and will be playing an important part in Egypt's future. In contrast to its main competitor, the Salafi al-Nour party, which is closer to Saudi Arabian interpretation of Islam, Freedom and Justice Party sees the AK Party as a model for the country's democratic transformation.

Saudi Arabia is at some distance from Turkish interpretation of democracy and its compatibility with Islam. The strict interpretation of Wahhabism, Saudi official teaching of Islam, regards Shia in extreme hostility terms. In Saudi perceptions, Iran is an existential threat mainly because of the Shia minority which constitutes approximately 10-15% of its population. What is more critical is that this population lives in the oil rich Gulf area of the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia takes the most active position as regards to the expansion of Iranian sphere of influence. The latest indicator of this was Saudi Arabia's sending troops to help repress the public uprising in Bahrain, where more than sixty per cent of the population adhere to the Shia sect.

The Saudis expect Turkey to employ a tougher stance on Iran and are

disturbed by Turkey's more diplomatic approach towards Iran on the nuclear energy issue. While sharing a concern about the rise of Iranian power in the region, Turkey has so far persistently refused to take part in a Saudi-led Sunni alliance. As mentioned above, Turkey accepts the existence of Shia populations as a reality and has sought ties with the Shia community with Prime Minister Erdoğan paying symbolically significant visits to Shia religious sites in Iraq and holding meetings with leaders of the Shia community. Turkey issued warnings against Iran and Saudi Arabia to act with restraint in their clash over Bahrain and opposed Saudi interference in the island.⁴¹ Foreign Minister Davutoğlu held many discussions over the phone with numerous leaders including the Bahraini Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa in order to ease the tension. Turkish officials hosted the Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal to discuss the topic. The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement noting that Saudi forces' entrance to Bahrain was a result Bahrain's right to sovereignty, but nevertheless stated that the proportionality of the force used against the protestors increased after this event.⁴²

Until the recent hardening of Turkish position vis-à-vis the Iran-led Shia bloc and Turkey's support to the Arab League in countering the Syrian regime, the Saudi-led Gulf alliance

was quite unhappy with Turkey's soft diplomatic approach. This does not mean, however, that Turkey sides with the Saudi-led alliance of monarchies. Due to differences in interpretation of religion, Saudis are not very happy with the prospect of a Turkey-friendly Muslim Brotherhood-controlled chain of regimes from Tunisia to Egypt and mostly likely expanding to Syria. Furthermore, there is a concern that the expansion of a democratization wave may eventually encapsulate the Kingdom itself. It voices support to democratization wave in the Middle East and clearly demands ending all unelected repressive dictatorships. In his message sent to the Alliance of Civilizations forum held in Qatar in December 2011 Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan made a statement that targets regimes beyond Syria: "We have to end blood and tears in the Middle East. As long as dictatorships that are intolerant of all kinds of opposing views and movements continue to exist, we cannot have peace of mind and stability."⁴³

Turkey accepts the existence of Shia populations as a reality and has sought ties with the Shia community with Prime Minister Erdoğan paying symbolically significant visits to Shia religious sites in Iraq and holding meetings with leaders of the Shia community.

Turkey's liberal and pro-democracy discourse is followed with suspicion by authoritarian Sunni Gulf regimes who, being unable to counter Iranian ambitions on their own, rely on the support of the West and even Israel. According to *the Times* of the United Kingdom, in the event of an Iranian attack, Saudi Arabia will open its air space to Israel, a speculation that Saudi regime has vehemently denied.⁴⁴ Interestingly, such overtures do not escape from the attention of pro-Israeli circles. Martin Indyk, an important name of the American Jewish lobby as the founder of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) and the director of Saban Centre for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute, is of the opinion that Israel ought to resolve its Palestinian question somehow and form an alliance with the Sunni Arabs in order to counter Iran's increasing influence in the region.⁴⁵

Concluding Remarks: Turkey's Moment in the New Middle East

The wave of democratization which grasped all Middle Eastern nations following the overthrow of regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya is a moment of crisis as well as opportunity for Turkish foreign policy. Turkey naturally chose to pursue its foreign policy with existing governments and in this respect

engaged in comprehensive relations with authoritarian unelected Arab regimes, including Syria and Saudi Arabia.

The wave of democratization which grasped all Middle Eastern nations following the overthrow of regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya is a moment of crisis as well as opportunity for Turkish foreign policy.

Democratic uprisings in the Arab world is a moment of crisis for Turkey at least in the sense of economic relations. As a trading nation short of major energy resources, the main priority of Turkey is to expand its exports to the Middle East. Between 2002-2010, the period in which AK Party was in power, Turkey managed to increase its volume of trade with the Arab world five-fold.

The foreign trade lobby in Turkey was suspicious of the Arab democratic revolts and saw it as foreign-inspired disturbances keen on destroying Turkey's economic expansion. According to calculations fed by these circles, the damage of the Arab spring for the Turkish economy is estimated to stand at 384 million US dollars. According to the Turkish Exporters Assembly, the biggest part of the loss in exports was in Libya. While Turkey has exports worth 146.6 million dollars in January 2011, this figure fell to 23.5 million dollars in

March. The fall in exports was recorded at 24 percent for Egypt and Yemen, and at 20 percent for Tunisia.⁴⁶ Such figures, however, discard the long term prospects in which democracy in the region leads to major economic boom for the entire region, boosting Turkey's trade volume.

Democracy is the greatest foreign policy asset and source of soft power for Turkey in the region.

However it is clear that Turkey's liberal democratic system and economic success, coupled with the stance it took against Israel, creates an important appeal in the Arab world. As Ibrahim Kalin, chief advisor to Turkish Prime Minister, points out, a democratic and prosperous Arab world will reinforce Turkey's power in the region.⁴⁷

Democracy is the greatest foreign policy asset and source of soft power for Turkey in the region. Unlike other

aspiring regional powers, Turkey does not enjoy the unquestioned support of a superpower, or a deeply-rooted geo-cultural sphere of influence, based on sectarian solidarity. It does not speak the language of the region, and, as a secular system, does not champion a religious ideology that would help spread its influence. History offers advantages as well as disadvantages for Turkey when it approaches the region. The only power that will pave the way for Turkish sphere of influence in the region will be its own democratic and economic appeal. In this sense, Turkey's liberal foreign policy is clearly based on *Realpolitik* calculations of national interest rather than any idealist dreams. The political system in which Islam, democracy, and secularism coexist and result in a peaceful society experiencing stability and an economic boom in the middle of a global financial crisis is Turkey's greatest export asset. It for this reason that, according to all public opinion polls, Prime Minister Erdoğan emerges as the most popular leader in the entire region.

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Turkey's 'New' Engagements in Africa and Asia: Scope, Content and Implications

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Abstract

Since the AK Party assumed power in 2002, Turkish foreign policy has gone through a tremendous change both in its content and scope. The most striking and 'new' aspect of Turkey's foreign policy has been toward Africa and Asia. This article examines and offers a holistic view of these developments. African opening represents a perfect convergence of civil society and state cooperation and bear fruit in political, economic and social terms in a very short time. However, the most important implication is that it aims to conceptualize a 'new' Africa in Turkey by overcoming the image of two separate Africa: Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa. Ankara's Asia policy has been shaped with an intention of placing the existing relations "in a certain systematic" with the Turkic republics in Central Asia; to reach "a policy of normalization" with countries like China and India; and to follow certain political and economic policies to translate relations "from normal to deep cooperation" with countries like South Korea and Japan.

Key Words

Turkish foreign policy, Africa, Asia, China, India.

Introduction

Following the AK Party's accession to power in 2002, Turkey's foreign policy opening towards long-neglected regions has been gaining more depth and diversity. Among these initiatives, the most striking and in some aspects the most "novel" opening has been the relations developed with Africa and Asia. To place these relations within the general course of Turkish foreign policy is of importance in understanding both the general direction of these relations and their possible inclinations.

The purpose of this article is to place Turkey's post-2002 African and Asian openings in a framework and to develop a general perspective. Firstly the economic, political and intellectual foundations that have led these relations to develop will be discussed; following this, the economic and political course of the relations with Africa and Asia, including problem areas, will be examined in detail.

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The Intellectual, Economic and Political Foundations of the Openings

While it is not possible to separate Turkey's African and Asian openings from the general tendencies of Turkey's foreign policy, it is possible to evaluate the economic, political and intellectual foundations of this opening in three basic points. A correct understanding of the analysis of the intellectual basis for the openings will provide an answer to the question of why Turkey has started to undertake these openings towards different regions of the world that were previously neglected in Turkish foreign policy.

The major intellectual transition in Turkish foreign policy has been the visible prominence of a geographical perception in its outlook towards the whole world.

Especially following the AK Party's accession to power, the first foundation for change has been intellectual. The major intellectual transition in Turkish foreign policy has been the visible prominence of a geographical perception in its outlook towards the whole world. Turkey no longer construes the world as it was during the Cold War period, but has rather adopted new balances

of power while re-conceptualizing its understanding of international politics in a new framework. This intellectual transition and transformation has emerged as a result of foreign political circumstances as much as Turkey's own political dynamics.

Turkey is today looking at its region and the world with a new and different perspective and as a consequence there have been radical changes in its approach to Africa and Asia. According to this new perspective Africa and Asia are not regarded as distant and troubled regions but as possible partners with which relations in political and economic areas ought to be established and developed, and where unity of action should be undertaken when necessary.

The second transformation that constitutes the economic foundation of the openings has been Turkey's efforts to reposition itself in a changing global economy. Although Turkey's increasing engagement with the global economy started after 1980 with the efforts of Turgut Özal,¹ the systematic framework of a growing economic engagement was established after 2002 in the AK Party era, because Özal perceived the world as an area of opportunities rather than a land of perils and especially had tried to realize these new global economic opportunities..

The struggle to redefine a worldview which concentrated on economics has led the way and laid the foundations

for the definitions of a new “national role” and foreign policy orientation, which have manifested themselves even more during the AK Party era.² Yet even a short comparison of the AK Party and Özal eras clearly presents the basic differences between the two periods. Özal’s approach displayed both a structuralist and an opportunist character and regarded the economy as the principal component. As a result, in this period Turkey embraced a pragmatic approach. However, during the AK Party era, Turkey has been trying to develop a new regional and global perspective based especially on historical and cultural components. Ankara’s proactive and dynamic openings towards different regions of the world have been systematic and important initiatives rather than being appendages to its relations with the West.³ From this framework, Turkey’s definition of itself as a “central country” rather than a “bridge” is an indicator of this new vision.⁴ Turkey, when viewed from this standpoint, both started to open up towards other regions such as Asia and Africa with an institutionalized partnership and wanted to play a more active role in international relations.⁵ Therefore, the AK Party era’s foreign policy is more comprehensive and has more depth in both style and expression than that of the Özal era, and, as a result, will probably have long-term outcomes.

Third, the political foundations of Turkey’s Africa and Asia openings, which

are parallel to the two aforementioned approaches, are to increase Ankara’s activities in all regions and international organizations, and to increase Turkey’s activities to contribute to regional and global peace. Today Turkey is not prone to crisis, but instead pursues a foreign policy with a specific vision and perspective.⁶ Within Turkey’s political vision, its relations with Asia and Africa are not only an alternative to its relations with the West, but also do not pose a contradiction. In a world where the international system is no longer bipolar, Turkey wants to display an active presence in all international and regional organizations and has determined its foreign policy inclinations within this framework.⁷ Turkey’s observer status in the African Union, its partnership of dialogue in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), its active stance in the G-20 and its non-permanent member status in the UN Security Council in the 2008-2010 term have to be evaluated in this framework. The African and Asian openings are part of these efforts.

African Dimension of ‘New’ Turkish Foreign Policy⁸

Until recently it could not have been thought that Turkey would show a deep interest towards Africa nor would it have been expected that a Turkish minister of

foreign affairs would stress that Africa is important with regards to a new foreign policy.⁹ However, there has been a drastic change in Turkish foreign policy after 2002 in this respect. Although Turkey's relations with the African continent have a long history, today, especially in economic areas, important steps have been taken within a short period of time. Whilst Turkey's interest in Africa in the post-Cold War era started in 1998, this relationship has moved forward and has undergone revolutionary transformations especially as a result of the efforts of AK Party. Africa, which 10 years ago was remembered with images of hunger, poverty and conflict, is today seen as a continent with which mutual cooperation could be developed in economic and political fields. In the following section, a short summary of the historical dimension of the relations will be given in order to better understand the contemporary Turkey-Africa relations, followed by an analysis of the economic and political relations that have been developed since 2002.

The Historical and Social Foundations of Turkish-African Relations

It is important to look at the African continent from a geographical perspective in order to better understand Turkey's historical relations with Africa. The geographical apprehension about Africa

in Turkey has been that Africa generally is divided into two: North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. This division has been shaped by historical developments, particularly the Ottoman legacy, and has also operated as a foundation for Turkey's outlook towards Africa with regards to foreign policy. The Ottomans had established considerably strong relations with North Africa and many states in contemporary Africa had been part of the Ottoman State in the 15th and 16th centuries. Therefore, North Africa is not a distant region from the context of the geographical contemplation of Turkish society basically for two reasons. The first is the historical proximity that arises from the Ottoman past of these North African nations and the Muslim population in these countries. This has caused Turkey to view North Africa as part of its immediate surroundings. From this perspective, the political and economic relations that have been developed with North Africa have never been questioned and the region has always been seen as an important part of diversifying Turkish foreign policy. The second is that because North Africa is regarded as part of the greater Middle Eastern region, Turkish society has always felt close to it.¹⁰

Sub-Saharan Africa, on the other hand, has always been seen as a distant geographical region and has generally been associated with poverty, hunger, epidemics and civil war. This approach is generally the principal component of

the identification of Sub-Saharan Africa in Turkish society. Although Turkey, due to its Ottoman past, has relatively important relations with Africa, this historical past has not drawn any academic or political attention. Following 1999, especially with the 700th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of the Ottoman state, researchers have started to pay attention to neglected areas in Ottoman history.¹¹ However, it is possible to say that the unfavourable image regarding Sub-Saharan Africa has started to change thanks to the work of the AK Party government and of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the recent period.

The Ottomans had established considerably strong relations with North Africa and many states in contemporary Africa had been part of the Ottoman State in the 15th and 16th centuries.

When all is considered, Turkey's relations with Africa can be examined in three parts: The relationship starting from the final years of the Ottoman state to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923; the relations between 1923 and 1998; and the relations after 1998. From a general perspective, there had been considerable relations with Africa in the Ottoman period,¹² and

then relations hit a record low during the Republican era. Relations have only been improved with the work that started after the approving of the Opening up to Africa Plan in 1998 and then gained momentum after 2005.¹³

In the first period, the Ottomans were involved in close relations with North Africa. Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and some other countries were completely or partially parts of the Ottoman state and were administered by the Ottomans. Furthermore, the Ottomans played an important role against Spanish interventions in North Africa and sent military assistance. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somali, Djibouti and even Niger and Chad lived under Ottoman reign. The Ottomans actively worked to prevent the spread of Portuguese colonialism to West Africa. In the northern regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Ottomans played an important role within the balance of power system and developed relations of close companionship and cooperation with the Kanem-Bornu Empire, which was founded in the north of modern Nigeria, Niger and Chad. The Ottoman state signed a defence pact with the Kanem-Bornu Empire in 1575 under the reign of Murad III and sent military equipment and instructors to the Kanem-Bornu Empire.¹⁴ Also, after the opening of the first mosque in Lagos in 1894, the Ottoman state sent a special envoy to the region and rewarded

Muammer Shitta, the leader of the northern Nigeria Muslim community with the highest rank as “Bey” and decorated him with the Ottoman Medal of Honour. Members of the Shitta-Bey family still play an important part in Nigerian social and political life and preserve their influence.¹⁵

In the southern part of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Ottomans had diplomatic relations since 1861. After the appointment of PE de Roubaix on 18 February 1861 as honorary consul to Cape Town, which remains within the borders of the contemporary Republic of South Africa, the appointment of permanent consuls was continued. On 21 April 1914, Mehmet Remzi Bey was appointed as the first diplomat to the region and passed away there on 14 February 1916. Mehmet Remzi Bey’s grave is located in Johannesburg, South Africa, in the Braamfontein cemetery.¹⁶

The religious dimension also gained prominence from time to time in the Ottomans’ relations with Africa. For example, in 1863 the Muslim community in Cape Town petitioned for an imam from the Ottoman state through the honorary consul at the time, PE de Roubaix. Because the region was under British rule, this request of the Muslim community was delivered to the Ottoman state by the British Monarch. The Ottoman Sultan at the time ordered for an imam to be sent and Ebu Bekir

Effendi was sent to Cape Town. With the arrival of Ebu Bekir Effendi, strong relations between the Muslims of the region and the Ottoman state were established. The best example of this is the contribution made by South African Muslims to the Hejaz railway campaign. Between 1900 and 1907, the Muslim community raised approximately £366,551 and this money was sent to Istanbul.¹⁷ In return, the Ottoman state awarded contributors with over 200 golden, silver and copper medals. Some members of the Effendi family entered politics and played an active role in South Africa. While the Effendi surname is still widely used in South Africa, some family members have come back to Turkey, whilst others have immigrated to Canada, Australia and New Zealand.¹⁸

The Opening up to Africa Plan has been addressed in a serious manner by the AK Party since 2002 and has been implemented, with the support of a number of NGOs such as TUSKON and İHH.

In the period between 1923 and 1998, Turkish-African relations experienced a record low level. The main reasons for this are internal problems, such as the struggle against colonialism and the subsequent process of nation-state building experienced by both sides.

Although Turkey gradually started to show some interest in Africa during the Cold War, this remained rather limited to North Africa. Turkey, which approached the region with the logic of the Cold War, pursued a policy that was in some places in contradiction with historical and social realities. For example, in the UN General Assembly vote on Algeria's independence in 1956, Turkey's "no" vote is remembered as a historical mistake.¹⁹ Although Turkey's relations with North Africa remained limited, some developments in the economic and political sense were exhibited within the context of the multi-dimensional foreign policy efforts in the 1970s; however, no special significance had been attributed to Sub-Saharan Africa in that period. Despite this, Turkey had a role, albeit a limited one, in Zimbabwe's and Namibia's independence. Similarly, when Ghana won its independence in 1957, Turkey officially recognized Ghana and appointed an ambassador. Turkey recognized the independence of all African nations in the post-colonial period of the 1950s and 1960s and established diplomatic relations with them.²⁰ In this context, Turkey's first official permanent diplomatic mission in Africa was the consulate in Lagos that was opened in 1956.²¹ Whilst noting that Turkey generally showed some, albeit not very much, effort to establish political, cultural and economic relations, it is nevertheless necessary to emphasize that

these projects were not based on long-term goals or plans and that Turkey did not have any plans to undertake a comprehensive opening towards Africa.

The ongoing process, namely the third period in Turkey-Africa relations, first started in 1998 with the approval of the Opening up to Africa Plan.²² However, both the coalition government and the economic crisis of 2000-2001 delayed the implementation of this plan to the post-2002 AK Party government era.

Contemporary Turkish-African Relations

The Opening up to Africa Plan has been addressed in a serious manner by the AK Party since 2002 and has been implemented, with the support of a number of NGOs such as TUSKON (Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey) and İHH (Human Right and Freedoms Humanitarian Aid Foundation). The year 2005 was declared as "the Year of Africa" in Turkey and diplomatic, political and economic preparations were made accordingly. In this context, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visits to Ethiopia and South Africa in March 2005 were a turning point as they were the first visit of a Turkish prime minister below the equatorial line in the country's history. This tour was subject to criticism by many reporters, retired diplomats

and certain media organizations and was interpreted as wasting Turkey's limited energy.²³ However, despite these criticisms, with the political and economic returns gained from the work of especially non-governmental organizations and the initiatives that the AK Party government took, it is now possible to say that the image of Sub-Saharan Africa has changed.

Turkey, under the auspices of President Abdullah Gül, hosted a Turkish-African Summit for the first time between 18 and 21 August 2008 with the participation of top officials from over 50 African countries. Only Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland failed to send a representative to the summit. Morocco, which is not a member of the African Union due to the Western Sahara conflict, also participated. During the summit, Turkish leaders carried out numerous senior level meetings and petitioned for support in Turkey's bid to gain non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council election for the period of 2008-2010. Commercially, following this summit, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey and the Union of African Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture and Professions took a joint

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decision to set up the Turkey-Africa Chamber and have laid the institutional foundations for developing commercial relations between the two countries. The next summit was decided to be held in an African country in 2013.²⁴

Since 2008, Turkey has been in an effort to increase its diplomatic presence in Africa and decided to open 15 new embassies. Currently Turkey has a total of 23 honorary consulates in Africa and has 24 embassies, half of which were established in 2009-2010. At least nine more embassies are already in preparation. While some of these ambassadors have been appointed already, they are busy finding building and organizing other logistics; for others, the official procedures are almost complete.

In 2005 Turkey gained observer status in the African Union and Prime Minister Erdoğan was invited as an honorary guest to the 2007 African Union Summit. In May 2008 Turkey, which was named as a strategic partner by the African Union, became a member of the African Development Bank.²⁵ In addition to the progress of Turkey's institutional relations with Africa, economic relations have also shown a significant development.

Along with formal relations, the activities of public bodies, such as the Presidency of Religious Affairs and the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA), have played an important role in the development of relations. Muslim religious leaders coming from 22 different African countries met from 1-3 November 2006 in Istanbul as guests of the Presidency of Religious Affairs. The meeting took place with the participation of representatives from Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon, Madagascar, Rwanda, South Africa, Mali, Kenya, Congo, and numerous other countries. During the three-day meeting, various topics such as “Religious Identity in the Globalization Process”, “Religious Education and Opportunities in the Educational Field”, and “The Basic Approaches and Stances in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage” were discussed. However, more than the topics, the real merit of the meeting was to create for the first time a platform for sharing religious experience and knowledge between Turkey and Africa. In the meeting, many African participants openly demanded Turkish-style mosques and imams trained in Turkey. Although the importance of the continuity of such meetings was stressed, the fact that there has not been a second meeting since 2006 is an indicator that Turkey is not adequately utilizing its soft-power opportunity in Africa.

TİKA has operated in 37 countries in Africa and has particularly supported economic development projects.

The priority in Turkish-African relations is economic development. TİKA, especially with its three offices in Ethiopia, Sudan and Senegal, has played an important role in this respect. Through these offices, TİKA has operated in 37 countries in Africa and has particularly supported economic development projects. For example, in 2008, TİKA started the African Agricultural Development Program with the aim of assisting agricultural development in Africa and has undertaken projects in 13 countries, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Senegal, Comoros, Madagascar, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda.²⁶ Turkey also gives direct economic support to Africa's development through both the Turkish Red Crescent and other international organizations.

Non-governmental organizations have played a crucial role in Turkey's presence in Africa and in the development of relations. Among many Turkish NGOs operating in Africa, the most active ones are TUSKON and İHH. TUSKON, especially through the World Trade Bridge meetings, has pioneered in

bringing African businessmen to Turkey and encouraging Turkish businesses to expand to Africa. Such meetings have been conducted without interruption since 2006 with increasing participation each year. TUSKON also sends several delegations to Africa to examine investment opportunities on site.²⁷

IHH, one of the leading humanitarian aid organizations in Turkey, along with the developmental work it has done in 43 countries in Africa, is especially helping thousands of people to gain sight with its Cataract Project conducted throughout hospitals in Sudan. IHH, in addition to its well-drilling projects and its support for technical and vocational education, directly contributes to numerous projects, including setting-up of schools and hospitals in numerous African countries.²⁸

The principal difference that has distinguished the AK Party era openings from that of previous ones is that they have assigned equal value to both Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, overcoming the image of two separate Africas. Moreover, in the new era there are efforts to establish a united apprehension of Africa in Turkish foreign policy. From this perspective, it can be said that today in Turkey, the negative image of Sub-Saharan Africa has been replaced by a community of potential partners of economic and political cooperation.

Another element that distinguishes the AK Party era policy on Africa is the close work of the state and non-governmental organizations that was not witnessed before.²⁹ Business associations and relief agencies are especially at the forefront. The newly-founded African Institute also contributes with information and document support.

Turkey's Asian Openings

Although Turkey previously paid senior level visits to Asian countries, there has been a visible increase in presidential, prime ministerial and other ministerial visits in the 2000s. President Abdullah Gül paid visits to Pakistan in 2007, Japan in 2008, China in 2009, South Korea, India, and Bangladesh in 2010, and Indonesia in 2011. Similarly, Prime Minister Erdoğan visited Pakistan in 2003, Japan and South Korea in 2004, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Mongolia in 2005, Indonesia in 2006, India in 2008, Pakistan in 2009 and Bangladesh, Pakistan and South Korea in 2010. Generally, visits are made to East and South Asia at least once or twice a year at the head of government and presidential level. This is an indicator that Ankara, unlike in the past, has a more systematic interest in Asia. In this section, the general framework of this systematic approach will be explained.

The Nature of Economic, Political and Institutional Relations

Turkey's Asian opening is making progress and taking shape in accordance with the aforementioned foundation and philosophy. While a special importance is attached to developing the existing institutional relations in the region, it is possible to examine Turkey's policy towards Asian states in three basic categories. First,

the political and economic policies toward placing the existing relations "in a certain systematic" with the Turkic republics in Central Asia, which lacked a shared vision despite working relations, have been pursued.

Second, "a policy of normalization" has been pursued and gained prominence in relations with countries like China and India, because, due to several instances in the past, Ankara's relations with Beijing and New Delhi could have been regarded as problematic. Third, certain political and economic policies to convert relations "from normal to deep cooperation" have gained prominence with countries like South Korea and Japan with which Turkey has had a history of good relations.

Since 2002, in addition to generally improving economic and political relations with the Turkic republics, a framework for foreign policy is also being pursued with these countries. Central Asia does not only introduce a new dimension for Turkey, but it also opens a new space in Turkish foreign policy, increases Turkey's strategic importance, and presents opportunities in the field of energy. It contributes to Turkey's relations with Russia, Iran and China as well. Strengthening the independence of

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the Turkic republics and supporting reforms has been one of Turkey's core foreign policy aims in the region since 2002. Turkey's approach does not assume the role of a big brother, as it did during the 1990s but instead operates on

the basis of equality and maximization of mutual interests. Also, in the AK Party era, Turkey has abandoned the rhetoric of "Unity of the Turkic World" since it caused misunderstanding and has instead prioritized cultural unity. From this perspective, during their visits, Turkish leaders especially emphasized the linguistic, historical, cultural and religious unity between Turkey and the Turkic republics. In this context, efforts to improve multidimensional

cooperation by utilizing mechanisms such as the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TÜRKSÖY), Turkish Language Speaking Countries' Heads of State Summit, the Friendship, Fraternity and Cooperation Council of Turkic States and Communities are underway. TİKA's projects to increase social ties will help institutionalize the relationship.

In 2009, during the 9th Turkish Language Speaking Countries' Heads of State Summit, which has been held at regular intervals since 1992, certain decisions were taken to deepen and place relations in a systematic framework. One decision was the formation of a Council for Cooperation Amongst Turkish Speaking Countries. In addition, in line with the Nakhchivan agreement, a consultancy mechanism composed of the Council of Heads of State of Turkish Language Speaking Countries, the Council of Foreign Ministers of Turkish Language Speaking Countries, the Senior Civil Servants' Committee, the Council of Elders and a secretariat headquartered in Istanbul were decided to be formed. It was also decided that the summit meetings, which had been held at irregular intervals, would be organized every two years with the next summit to be held in Kazakhstan in 2011.

The increasing role of China and India in world politics and especially the speed of their economic development have aroused Turkey's interest like many

other countries, and steps to improve bilateral relations have been taken accordingly. There are two main reasons for Turkey's desire to become closer to China and India: Whilst the desire to act together with rising powers in certain areas at the international level constitutes the political reason, the real motive of Turkey's interest in Beijing and New Delhi is economic. India, having the 12th biggest economy in the world with a population of 1.1 billion, has a special place in the information technologies sector. Gaining a greater share for Turkish companies investing in construction, communication and the energy sectors in India and its development in the international system is a priority in terms of Turkish foreign policy. The same applies to the foundations of its foreign policy stance towards China.

Turkey's relations with India and China during the Cold War could be seen as somewhat problematic. Turkey's special relationship with Pakistan for India and its possible support for the struggle of independence of the Uyghur people in China have been sources of concern in relations. Within the context of its Asian opening, Turkey has addressed its relations with India separately from its relations with Pakistan and tried not to let other states be influenced by these relations. Similarly, the Uyghur question, although still forming an important part of Turkey's perception of China, no longer constitutes a primary element.

In order to open a new chapter in relations, Prime Minister Erdoğan in November 2008 and President Abdullah Gül in February 2010 visited India with a large delegation. Although India did not return any visits, it is nevertheless possible to say that these visits have radically changed India's perspective on Turkey and played an important role in increasing trade between India and Turkey and developing bilateral relations.³⁰ In the following period, the biggest problem with India was caused by India's reaction to Turkey's decision

not to invite it to the Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral meetings organized under the leadership of Turkey. India's participation in subsequent meetings and the trilateral meetings that turned into an international forum helped overcome this complication. For Turkey, India has the potential to become the second biggest market in Asia after China. Moreover, Turkey has potential to increase its market share in India. Also, Turkey and India, by improving bilateral trade and political relations, are creating opportunities for regional and strategic cooperation. From the scope of regional cooperation, Turkey and India could cooperate in the areas of trade, energy and security in Central Asia.³¹

Turkey's relations with China were diversified with a military dimension as Chinese military jets were invited to the Anatolian Eagle manoeuvres conducted in Konya.

In the context of Turkey's Asia opening, it could be said that a new era in relations with China has begun.³² President Gül paid a formal visit to China on 24-29 June 2009 with a large delegation, the first for 14 years. Significantly, for the first time in history, a Turkish president visited the Xingjian-Uyghur Autonomous Region. Also, seven bilateral agreements worth 3 billion dollars were signed in the presence of Gül and President Hu. President Gül's visit was productive and the trade volume between the two countries has

shown a significant increase and China has become Turkey's biggest trading partner in the Far East. Turkey's strong criticism of Chinese violence in Eastern Turkistan immediately

following President Gül's visit caused a low-level of tension but relations have nevertheless gained stability. In October 2010, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabo visited Turkey and signed several agreements. The most important development was the trade agreement between the two countries that stipulated the use of the lira and yuan instead of the dollar in trade exchanges.³³

Similarly, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's six-day China trip at the end of October 2010, which started from

Kashgar, was interpreted as improving the mutual understanding between Turkey and China with regards to the Uyghur question.³⁴ In September 2010, Turkey's relations with China were diversified with a military dimension as Chinese military jets were invited to the Anatolian Eagle manoeuvre conducted in Konya. This event, which was criticized by the West, was the first military manoeuvres that the Chinese forces conducted with a member of NATO.³⁵

Turkey has had a long-standing history of good relations with South Korea and China. This situation has manifested itself in Turkey's policy to deepen relations with these countries, especially in the economic field. Relations with South Korea, which had started as one of a military nature during the Korean War, gained a strong political foundation during the Cold War, with both countries being a strong ally of USA. The fact that South Korea was one of the countries which provided the most aid to the victims of the Marmara Earthquake of 1999 and the very amicable conditions in which the 2002 World Cup match for third place between Turkey and South Korea took place strengthened the Turkish-South Korean friendship at an emotional level.

During Prime Minister Erdoğan's South Korea visit in 2004 and the South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun's 2005 visit to Turkey, concrete steps towards establishing comprehensive

political relations were taken. Although economically the bilateral relations are seemingly intensive, the trade imbalance against Turkey's favour constitutes a risk which hinders the deepening of bilateral economic relations.³⁶ However, social relations, especially the significant increase in the number of South Korean tourists, made important progress which is likely to contribute to cultural cooperation. To carry relations further, President Gül visited South Korea in June 2010. This was first presidential visit to South Korea in 28 years and gave a chance for the evaluation of possibilities for cooperation in the energy field. Lastly, Prime Minister Erdoğan participated in the G-20 summit held in South Korea and met his South Korean counterpart.

Similarly, deepening economic ties constitutes the backbone of Turkish-Japanese relations. Prime Minister Erdoğan in April 2004 and President Gül in June 2008 visited Japan, the first such visit since Turgut Özal's in 1990. The year 2003 was celebrated as the "Turkish Year" in Japan while 2010 was celebrated as the "Japanese Year" in Turkey. Japan is currently one of Turkey's largest trading partners in the Far East. Today Japan is seen as not only an indispensable creditor, as the third biggest economy in the world, but also as an ally for Turkey. In 2010 several events were organized in Turkey within the context of the Japanese Year towards the deepening of economic and political

relations. Along with economic relations, progress in social relations is manifesting itself more clearly. For example, in recent years there has been an explosion in the number of tourists who visited Turkey. In 2010 alone, nearly 200,000 Japanese tourists came to Turkey and this number has been on the rise.³⁷

Turkey's accession to ASEAN was a historical step in the process of Turkey's Asian opening as Turkey for the first time established an institutional relationship with ASEAN and gained the opportunity to further deepen its political, economic and cultural relations with the region.

Another important part of Turkey's Asian opening has been the development of relations with the regional institutions and increasing its presence in the area. In this context, Turkey applied for observer status in ASEAN, which was accepted in 2010. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu signed the ASEAN certificate of participation on 23-24 July 2010 in Vietnam's capital Hanoi during the 43rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting. Turkey's accession to ASEAN was a historical step in the process of Turkey's Asian opening as Turkey for the first time established an institutional relationship

with ASEAN and gained the opportunity to further deepen its political, economic and cultural relations with the region. ASEAN, which was founded in 1967, is not only a summit in which Southeast Asian countries meet, but has also become an organizational headquarters for all of Asia. During the annual ASEAN summits, South Asian Summits are also held with the participation of 16 countries.

Another regional structure ASEAN leads is the ASEAN Regional Forum that is organized with the participation of important world powers such as the USA, Russia, and the European Union. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu joined the ASEAN Regional Forum on 24 July 2010 and with the signing of a partnership agreement Turkey has become the 28th member of the Forum. Turkey's ASEAN membership and its attendance at ASEAN meetings are seen as critically important steps towards making Turkey's Asian opening more permanent.

Likewise, Turkey is also resuming its active participation in another regional association, the 21-member Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA). Turkey's active participation in this organization gained greater significance with its chairmanship of the official summit held on 21 June 2010 which increased Turkey's presence and influence.

Relations with Muslim Countries and the Uyghur Question

It is possible to evaluate Turkey's relations with the Muslim countries in Asia under three categories. First, steps to strengthen Turkey's relations with countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, with which Turkey generally has good relations, have been taken. Second, contributing to the economic development of countries like Bangladesh which experiences economic difficulties has been amongst Turkey's priorities. Third, relations with Afghanistan, never seems to leave the international and the Pakistan-Turkey relations, which were in a complicated state after the invasion of Afghanistan, have historically been positive and strong. Turkey has worked to assume a problem-solving role and to contribute to these countries within this context.

Following Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Indonesia in 2005 to deepen economic relations, the trade volume between the two countries has shown a significant rise compared to previous years. For example, in 2008 the trade volume increased by 64% compared to the previous year. Efforts to make the Developing 8 (D-8) more active and Turkey's partnership of dialogue with ASEAN have the potential to deepen Turkish-Indonesian relations.

Relations between Turkey and Malaysia have developed on mutual trust, cooperation and sympathy, and these two countries have supported each other in several international organizations

Similarly there have been efforts to deepen relations with Malaysia. Relations between Turkey and Malaysia have developed on mutual trust, cooperation and sympathy, and these two countries have supported each other in several international organizations where possible. Generally there are no political problems that would adversely affect Turkish-Malaysian relations.³⁸ Malaysia, which is a leading member of ASEAN, has played an influential role in regional organizations in South Asia. The cooperation between Turkey and Malaysia in the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the D-8 is also strong. Malaysia is Turkey's seventh largest trade partner in the Far East and the bilateral trade volume has risen from a modest 242 million dollars in 2000 to 1.1 billion dollars in 2009. In this context, during Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's visit to Turkey in February 2011, there was a joint decision to abolish the visa requirements between the two countries, which is expected to further strengthen the bilateral relations.

Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh's independence and has placed a particular importance on the country. However, the transition of this importance into a meaningful economic and political partnership has only been possible in recent years. Within the context of Turkey's Asia opening, President Gül visited Bangladesh in February 2010. During this visit, meetings on new cooperation opportunities were held and decisions especially towards improving economic relations were made. In December 2010 Turkish Airlines started direct flights to the capital Dhaka. The bilateral trade volume, which amounted to only 47 million dollars in 2002, increased to 658 million dollars in 2009, and 3 billion by 2015 is targeted. Prime Minister Erdoğan, who visited Bangladesh in November 2010, was the first Turkish Prime Minister to visit this country in 21 years. Following the meetings a joint decision to further increase relations in health, education and the defence industry was made.³⁹

Although Turkish-Afghan relations have always been good due to the strong ethnic and historical ties between the two countries, relations between Turkey and Afghanistan have reached a new level since 2001. Hamid Karzai, who visited Turkey for the first time in April 2002, attended meetings with the then Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit and President Ahmet Necdet Sezer. Prime Minister

Erdoğan, who visited Afghanistan in November 2005, was the first Turkish prime minister to visit Afghanistan. Turkey sent troops to the region within the context of the International Security and Aid Forces (ISAF) conducted by NATO following the 11 September terrorist attacks. Turkey, which contributed with 300 troops in 2001 when ISAF was founded, has, unlike other NATO countries, identified its troops as non-combatant forces.⁴⁰

The trilateral summit among Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey, which was initiated by Turkey, has become an important platform towards finding solutions to problems.

Turkey took command of ISAF twice, between June 2002 and February 2003 and again between February and August 2005, and increased its number of troops during the process. Also, former Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin served for two terms as NATO's Senior Civilian Representative between January 2004 and August 2006, and Turkey's success in this period led to an increase in support for Turkey's greater role in this process in both Afghanistan and in international public opinion. Today Turkey contributes around 1,800 personnel to ISAF. In this context, Turkey took over the Kabul Regional Command for the second

time for one year in November in 2009 and has agreed to extend one more year later on. Turkey leads active operations in the fields of development and urban planning besides its contributions to securing safety. Set up in Wardak province 40 km west of Kabul, the Turkish Provincial Reconstruction Team, the only provincial reconstruction team in Afghanistan managed by a civilian diplomat, has, with the support of TİKA, undertaken around 200 projects in the last four years.

Turkey, with its contributions in Afghanistan, has become a country whose expertise is sought in the world. The fact that Turkey is invited to numerous international meetings, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's March 2009 Afghanistan special meeting, is an indicator of this. Also the trilateral summit among Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey, which was initiated by Turkey, has become an important platform towards finding solutions to regional problems.⁴¹

Turkey has historically attached a great importance to its relations with Pakistan, the only Islamic country with nuclear weapons. President Gül visited Pakistan in December 2007. Just a year later, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari visited Turkey. In the past few years, Turkey has shown a strong political will in diversifying and furthering bilateral relations. With Turkey's active efforts, during Prime Minister Erdoğan's 24-26

October 2009 visit to Pakistan, for the first time, relations between the two countries were elevated to a strategic level with the founding of a Council of High Level Strategic Cooperation. On the other hand, President Gül visited Pakistan between 30 March and 2 April 2010 and held meetings towards improving bilateral economic and commercial relations.

Turkey, through TİKA, runs several projects for the economic development of Pakistan. Numerous Turkish non-governmental organizations operate in Pakistan. For example, Turkish relief agencies played an important role in dealing with the catastrophic flooding of August 2010. In the same period, Prime Minister Erdoğan visited the area and promised aid and assistance. However, the real contribution Turkey tries to make to regional and global peace is the trilateral meeting that brings together Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the annual Afghanistan-Turkey-Pakistan Trilateral Summit meetings that started in 2007, countries are represented at the head of state level. Whilst the agenda is shaped by different issues each year, dialogue, economic cooperation, security and education stands out. Following the Fifth Summit, organized in Istanbul on 24 December 2010, concrete steps in much wider areas were taken. The real goal of the Trilateral Summit Process is to prevent Afghanistan's isolation and

to produce permanent solutions in the areas of security and stability with the help of neighbouring countries.

One of the most perplexing subjects in Turkish foreign policy is the Uyghur question. The development that has clearly caused this is Turkey's attitude towards the events in which more than 150 Uyghur people were killed in East Turkistan on July 2009. This event increased East Turkistan's weight in Turkey's agenda. Turkey refrained from political statements to avoid raising tensions with China but criticized China using stringent and precautionary language towards the region. In accordance with its general foreign policy understanding of not meddling into other countries' internal affairs, Turkey used careful language, but approached the matter from a human rights perspective and respect for China's territorial integrity. It is necessary to emphasize that this approach was appreciated by China, the clearest indicator of which was the Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's visit to Turkey not long after the events and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to East Turkistan and China in November 2010.

Conclusion and the Future of the Openings

Turkish foreign policy during the AK Party era has entered a new process

of opening to all regions of the world with the goal of redefining Turkey's role in the world in accordance with the changing political and economic conditions and increasing its influence. Africa and Asia are important in the sense of globalizing these openings, which not only led Turkey to improving its relations with distant regions but also globalising Turkish politics in a real sense. The fact that economic relations especially have been deepening with key countries, like China and India in Asia, and South Africa and Nigeria in Africa, is an indicator that these openings and convergences will have a long-term effect on Turkish foreign policy.

The fact that economic relations especially have been deepening with key countries, like China and India in Asia, and South Africa and Nigeria in Africa, is an indicator that these openings and convergences will have a long-term effect on Turkish foreign policy.

When compared with Sub-Saharan Africa, Turkey's image in Asian countries has been favourable all along. However, as a result of the active openings undertaken since 2002, Turkey's image in Africa has radically changed and its positive image amongst Asian countries

has been reinforced. Some of the key countries in both continents, such as South Africa, China and India, whilst previously adopting a cold stance towards Ankara, have changed their approaches in the past years. The fact that these countries have a special interest in Turkey shows that the current foreign policy and public diplomacy have been exceptionally successful.

Despite positive developments in commercial, political and other areas, the biggest problem that still persists in Turkey's relations with Asia and Africa is lack of information. Both the fact that the number of experts and academics

working on Africa and Asia is very limited and that Turkish resources are insufficient are the principal problems to be dealt with in the future. Especially, the lack of information and contiguity with Turkey in the Far East and Sub-Saharan Africa can cause the countries in the region to view Turkey with caution and misinterpret Turkey's well intentioned policies. Especially student and academic exchange programmes are the easiest way to solve this problem. Given the rising interest in Africa and Asia, organizing festivals, conferences and concerts in various fields will strengthen the social foundations of these openings.

Endnotes

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Orientalization Practices in Mainstream Turkish Foreign News Coverage

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Abstract

This study explores the content, causes and results of Orientalization practices in mainstream Turkish foreign reporting. The analysis is made of the “World” pages of the two national newspapers (Hürriyet and Habertürk), which can be considered the mainstream Turkish media. Limiting the analysis to the field of journalism, news articles published between May 5 - June 5, 2010 are analyzed. Orientalism theories and the cultural strategies of media provide the basis of analysis employed in this study. Foreign coverage in the given articles provides the samples of Orientalization discourse and practices in mainstream Turkish media. This study suggests that Orientalist perspectives are quite common in ‘foreign coverage’ in the Turkish media. Foreign news reports clearly exhibit the Orientalization ‘reflex’, which is one of the most visible legacies of Orientalist cultural strategies.

Key Words

Orientalization, mainstream Turkish media, foreign news coverage, Hürriyet, Habertürk.

Introduction

Media sociology research takes place within three main areas: media organization, message and effect. This paper considers the “message” as fundamental and focuses on media’s representational strategies. In the field of media sociology, even though its framework has been essentially formed by the problematization of media effect, media organization and the content of media are becoming important. Therefore, the methodological perspective adopted in media effect studies can also be observed in the direction and framework of studies of the content and organization. Research in media sociology has to manifest its methodological perspective within the context of the “media effect” in the interests of clarity. In this study, which depends on newspaper articles, it is assumed that, contrary to the “direct effect theory”, media do not impose opinions and attitudes on individuals, groups and communities, as was suggested by research based on “uses and gratifications”, but rather

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individuals get involved with media through their identity, personality, social, political, and economic status, as well as through their prior expectations. People can participate in many different communication processes in daily life while not submitting to the message even though they are exposed to it. While perceiving the message, they can handle many other social practices as well. They perceive it not in isolation but in a context. They are not passive consumers of the message. As presented in social learning theory, media has a socializing role, and as it is described in cultivation theory, those who are in contact with media can gradually make the media reality supplant the social reality, and some situations can occur in which the media symbols supplant the real world.

Discussing Orientalization practices in Turkish foreign coverage means admitting the existence of a sociological reality called “Turkish media” (or Turkish press). It should be stated at once that in this study, the term “Turkish media” refers to mass media in the Turkish language. Turkish media incorporate different assumptions, habits, styles, traditions, vocational knowledge and cultures. However, the domain of social reality referred to as “Turkish media” has a unique historical and sociological reality that can be conveniently perceived as the ideal type by the modernization ideology in Turkey. The practices of media that

developed during the modernization process of Turkey contributed to the formation of a common vocational cultural realm along with different assumptions, habits and styles. Members of the new media generation that socialize within the aforementioned cultural realm maintain their vocational activities by permuting the features unique to the Turkish press. Another important notion in this article is that of the “mainstream media.” Nico Carpentier indicates that alternative media, in contrast to mainstream media, organize in a way that is sharing, open to real participation and usually small-scaled. They offer alternatives to hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives outside of the market and state, give importance to local information, and try to give a voice to civil society by being non-hierarchical.¹ These features that are presented as characteristic of alternative media offer some perspectives on the mainstream media as well. The notion of “mainstream media” is mostly used for describing “manipulative”, “ideological”, “monolithic” and “strict” media in recent critical media research.² However, these features aren’t adequate in themselves to describe the “mainstream media”, inasmuch as, along with its close relationship with the formal ideology, factors such as media circulation, its social influence, political clout, economic power and the communication technologies. Through

mass circulation, media organizations that are in accordance with formal ideology have an effect on the political, economical and social agenda, delivering their message through widely-used mass media (newspaper, television etc.) and can be categorized as “mainstream media”.

According to Edward Said, the Orient is the combination of symbolic images that the West fictionalizes to build up its own being and legitimacy.

Other concepts essential to this study are “Orient” and “Orientalization”. According to Edward Said, the Orient is the combination of symbolic images that the West fictionalizes to build up its own being and legitimacy. The Orient is the “founding other”, which has been avoided as taboo and particularly undesirable to be in. Orientalization is the process of othering. Orientalization might be described as the act of imprisoning within the borders of the Orient. Orientalization is the effort of making each occasion in which “cultural selves” that are identified with the Orient belong to the Orient. In this study, the Orientalization practices in mainstream Turkish foreign reporting, content and causes, and the results of these practices, will be analyzed, though this analysis will be limited to the field of journalism,

based on analysis of the “World” pages of two national newspapers among the mainstream Turkish media (*Hürriyet* and *Habertürk*). Some articles, published between May 5 - June 5, 2010, are analyzed. Their readings are mainly shaped by Orientalism theories and the cultural strategies of media.

Cultural Strategies in Media and Orientalism

The “Orient representation” that can be observed in Western cultural life after the Renaissance became institutionalized as the field of Orientalism. Orientalism has had an immense influence on the dominant forms of representation of the Orient. Edward Said views Orientalism as an academic tradition as well as a thinking style which depends on a strict distinction between the Orient and the Occidental, marginalizing the Orient, and as a Western knowledge system that aims to impose its authority on and rebuild the Orient.³ According to Yücel Bulut, Orientalism might be defined as “the images of the West about the East or the collective imagination related to the East.”⁴ Byran S. Turner associates Orientalism with the Western heritage that regards the East as an entity that is stable, hardwired, disinclined to social change, devoid of modernization, deprived of middle class bourgeois culture and missing a social community.⁵ Edmund Burke III and David Prochaska

suggest that the Orientalism process is a discursive practice that defines the view of the current Western world, especially of the Middle East, and which comprises both culture and power.⁶ Mahmut Mutman suggests that Orientalism “might be called the “style” or “discourse” that disguises the Western imperial agenda.”⁷ As Orientalism is presented as a “Western” experience, how could this notion be useful in analyzing Orientalization practices within mainstream Turkish journalism? Studies of the relationship between Orientalism and Turkey have mostly focused on the image of Turkey in Orientalist thought or knowledge, problematized how Turkey is objectified and Orientalized⁸, or analyzed the progress of Orientalist thought, knowledge or art in Turkey.⁹ Moreover, it has recently also become possible to encounter studies based on Turks’ capacity to generate Orientalism. These studies mainly fall into two categories. The studies that are in the first category mostly depend on Turks’ Orientalizing themselves, and make analyses based on the notions of self-Orientalism or auto-Orientalism. In these analyses, as in that of Matthew Gumpert, it is claimed that Turks Orientalize themselves in a cultural context in which “Orientalism is recalled or reproduced”¹⁰ or, as in the analysis of Hilmi Yavuz, “by transferring from the West at a partial level and so making themselves Orientalized”.¹¹ In spite of the style and genre resemblances, studies

in the second category, which may arise out of the first category in respect of content, have begun to be based on the capacity of Turks to Orientalize their own East. This study falls within that second category and tries to analyze the style in which mainstream Turkish journalism discovers its own East and employs its own Orientalization practices. At that point if the question is revisited, how meaningful would the attempt to posit a relationship between “Turkish media” and “Orientalism” be? If the occidentalization process that Turkey has gone through had not happened, and if the media had not come to the forefront as one of the most important actors in this process, the aforementioned attempt would not be meaningful. In other words, Turkey’s adopting the ideal of reaching a Western level of modernization and the media’s being one of the leading actors in this process make it meaningful to mention Orientalist representation in the mainstream Turkish media. Another reason for problematizing the relationship between media and Orientalism in Turkey can be found in discussions regarding the sources of Orientalism. Some significant Orientalism analyses made in the field of cultural studies, especially after the 1980s, suggest that Orientalism may not be just a Western phenomenon, reality or discourse.

Edward Said, even though he tried to assess the effect of Orientalism on

the elite culture “outside of the West”, regards Orientalism as a Western idea, institution and discourse. For Sadik Jalal Al-Azm, who discusses the topic from the point of view of “reverse Orientalism”, Orientalism also exists in a social context outside of the West within historical myths and identities built around Orientalist images and associated with being ashamed of one’s own history and community.¹² Ussama Makdisi states that “in the era of West-centered modernization every country builds its own Orient.”¹³ This process, to Milika Bakic-Hayden, operates as a “regenerating model of the original dualism on which Orientalism was based, producing the “hierarchy of Orients” and “constantly rising Orientalism”. In this context, Asia is more “Oriental” or more “other” than Eastern Europe. This sort of grading is reproduced within Eastern Europe, with the Balkans being perceived as the most “Eastern”; similarly, new hierarchies were established in the Balkans themselves.¹⁴ In this “hierarchy of Orients” Turks, for instance, could be “othered” by virtue of their features being perceived as “Oriental” by Europeans.¹⁵ According to the approaches encountered, each community makes its existence

meaningful by othering the one that stands to its East as Oriental, so that Orientalism becomes a global notion that does not just belong to Western cultural geography and history. At this point, Orientalism turns into an epistemological device describable by terms such as “Oriental Orientalism”¹⁶, which Yuko Kikuchi suggested while discussing the “Japanese-style Orientalism” that developed through antagonism towards Korea. Nadem Al-Betar’s “Arabic Orientalism”¹⁷ and Arif Dirlik’s “Easterners’ Orientalism”¹⁸

The first cultural strategy employed by mainstream Turkish media was to show an ideal image of Western modernization in the fields of politics, community, culture, art, thought and daily life.

are other examples of such notions. This discussion of the forms of Orientalism outside of the West does certainly not mean that Orientalism has lost its influence in the West or that its

reflections in Western popular culture have disappeared, but aims to show the theoretical possibilities of Orientalism reaching beyond the West.¹⁹

During the Turkish modernization process, the media adopted three separate but related cultural strategies. The first one is Occidentalism. The Republic formally endorsed the project of keeping up with the pace of the West that began with the nineteenth century Ottoman reforms. During this post-republic modernization period, the media was thought to be the

main tool of “social enlightenment”. Certain duties such as “integration”, “moral reformation” and “dismissal of those who came from abroad” were assigned to the media in *Kararname-i Âlî* in 1867. Similar duties were also adopted by the Republic and assigned to the contemporary media.²⁰ Thus, during both periods, those who claimed to be enlightened adopted the mission of “enlightening the crowd by keeping them unified” and this mission became one of the main dynamics of media activities of the time. The Enlightenment culture²¹ gives an ontological existence to the modern-day media, changing language from being a “gift from God” to a “communication tool”, also allowing the concentrating of cultural capital in the direction of Enlightenment. The mainstream Turkish media, which found its own “Enlightenment ideal” in the revolution of the Republic, perceived the political ethics initiated by Kemalism as a benefit, and for this reason, while conducting its activities in accordance with Kemalist power and ideology, assumed that the aforementioned ideology would play an important role in establishing constitutionalism. In this context, the first cultural strategy employed by mainstream Turkish media was to show an ideal image of Western modernization in the fields of politics, community, culture, art, thought and daily life. Occidentalism as defined by Şerif Mardin as “an approach, which

started in the Ottoman Empire and received other forms in the Republic of Turkey, which viewed Western Europe’s social and philosophical unity as a target to be reached”²², was based on the goal of refining traditional values and removing bigotry and ignorance through the help of an enlightening soul.²³ Though the ruling elites of the Republican era criticized “over-westernization”²⁴, many Occidental ideals were adopted and had an important effect on the formation of some cultural policies. Media assumed an important role in the formation and conveyance of these cultural policies.

The second cultural strategy that is presented in the mainstream media is based on the West’s being othered, in other words its being Occidental. Here appear concepts like “other West”, “enemy West”, “and West that needs to hear the voice of Turks”. Some researchers, who regard the arising of Occidental and Occidentalism in the same place as a contradiction, either ignore this situation or choose to perceive one as a fact and the other as cyclical. Yet, as Meltem Ahıska expresses, Europe becomes “both an object of desire and a source of disappointment for Turkish national identity”, and this generates anti-West Occidentalism in a “long and nervous process.”²⁵ As Said Faiq presented in the Arabic world²⁶ and Xiaomei Chen presented in China, Occidentalism also gains currency as a prolongation of power relationships

just as does Orientalism, functioning especially as a means of “internal dominance.”²⁷ During this process, the main medium in which Occidentalism was reproduced and cycled was mass media, and while the media was depicting the “ideal West”, it was emphasizing “extremeness” and “Turkish antagonism” towards the West and picturing it as an enemy to be defeated at the same time. This tension, signs of which can be discerned in the texts written by the New Ottomans in many literary works, from Ahmet Mithat to the culture-technology arguments of the Second Constitutionalism or to the founding texts of the Republic, is reflected in the content of news, entertainment, and advertisement through a challenging rhetoric popularized by means of media.

The third strategy apparent in mainstream Turkish media is the Orientalized representation of Eastern Turkey. This, as mentioned above, legitimizes the connection built between “Turkish media” and “Orientalism”. Mainstream Turkish media is the primary medium in which Orientalism is produced. This so-called Orientalization activity mainly tries to present the cultural legitimacy and superiority of Turkish modernization. The most systematic and effective cultural representation of the East in Turkey, as expressed by Hasan Bülent Kahraman, is “internalized Orientalism”, an Orientalist practice feeding on the consciousness of being

Turkish. Internalized Orientalism is the process in which a subject calls upon a Western Orientalist perspective while rendering judgment on the community he was born in and the conditions that made him.²⁸ This process, according to Sabri Ateş, comes along with “Turkish or Turkey-style Orientalism”.²⁹ Turkish style Orientalism is firstly based on the activity of creating an “imaginary East”, and then generating one’s own identity by othering it. The main object of the “Orientalization” strategies that Maqdisi said were developing collaterally with Ottoman modernization in Turkey were the communities considered not modernized enough. Mahmut Mutman states that being an easterner or being in the East cannot be accepted as a guarantee of being out of or distinct from the Orientalist understanding, because the Oriental is damaged by representation.³⁰

Apart from this representation or the “representation crisis” referring to imaginary Westernization fictions, “Turkish style Orientalism arising during this period comes into existence by feeding above all on dualities such as “West-East”, “modernization-tradition” and “ancient-new, which had a practical role, purposefully providing a socio-political field regarding the psychological necessities of being Western and modern. East is identified with poverty, underdevelopment, traditionalism, violence and terror. The critical approach

feeds on the desire to domesticate. This desire especially appears in the face of “Kurdish” and “Arabian” social reality; in the meantime the borders of this desire merge with the borders of the fear of that same reality. The “advanced”, “hardworking”, “superior”, “devoted to its values” and “clear” Turkish image generates the orientalizing activities that come along with Turkish style Orientalism. At this point, the question should be asked: around which images or in which fields is the Orientalist envisagement in mainstream Turkish media encountered?

Undoubtedly, it isn't easy to give an inclusive and lucid answer to this question. However, it is possible to study the Orientalist overtones in Turkish media

of images such as “Kurdish”, “Arab”, “moral laws”, “woman”, “violence”, and “terror”. Most of the studies conducted on the media/Orientalism relationship are carried out through similar themes and images.³¹ The analysis of Orientalist content and orientalizing practices can be done through these themes, while it may also be done by focusing on the different media technologies, types and fields of work. The relationship between the media channels such as television, newspaper, radio, and cinema, internet, etc. in Turkey can be analyzed in this

framework. Orientalist practices, the representations of the East that are encountered in reality shows, soap operas, local movies and the serials, and the Orientalism that is produced in advertisement and news texts, are also points of analysis. This reading makes it possible to present the differences between mass communication channels and the types of media activities. However, the studies that problematize the relationship between media and Orientalism don't underline the differences between occupational culture

and convention in the media field, and make general readings without paying specific attention to the divisions that affect the production of media, such

as media-press, advertisement-news, advertisement-entertainment, news-comment, etc. In the readings made for this study, the news of finance and politics, foreign news, tabloid or popular culture news are not taken into consideration. This situation could make the relation between the researcher and the object of the research problematic and could lead to reductionist results. Within this aspect, this study makes an effort to analyze the orientalizing practices through the sampling of “foreign coverage” which is encountered

The “advanced”, “hardworking”, “superior”, “devoted to its values” and “clear” Turkish image generates the orientalizing activities that come along with Turkish style Orientalism.

in recent mainstream Turkish journalism. The main assumption of this study is that one of the fields of Orientalist contents in Turkish media most worthy of exploration is “foreign coverage”. The Orientalization “reflex”, which is shaped by Orientalist cultural strategies, could easily find a place in that field. In the following sections the Orientalist perspective and Orientalization representations in foreign coverage will be analyzed. Primarily, the analysis will focus on the relationship between foreign coverage and Orientalization, then on its representations.

Foreign News Coverage and Orientalization

Ibrahim Al Dakuki’s study of the Turks’ and Arabs’ opinions of each other reveals the negative images Turks have of Arabs. He states that these are: that Arabs abuse the Islamic religion to the detriment of Turkey’s national security, intervene in Turkey’s domestic affairs, put forth claims on the territorial waters of Turkey, lay eyes on Turkey’s lands, provoke Kurds to seek autonomy, are against Turkey and Turks, and abuse Turkish minorities in Arab lands.³² These seven points can be mainly observed in the field of foreign coverage, and these images appear mostly in “foreign news.” Meanwhile, there is no media analysis of representations of the East in the

foreign news or of the kinds of images reproduced.

However, there is an obvious parallelism between the production of foreign news and Orientalism. Both try to carry information about the external to those who are internal and maintain their activities by depending on essentialist internal - external discrimination. Foreign coverage turns external reality - from the daily lives of the outsiders to economical, political, social and cultural lives, from natural disasters to wars, from crisis to migration - into information. Undoubtedly, the people who prepare foreign news don’t just report the events experienced in this process, but at the same time they represent and translate the events within the context of their own interests and limits.³³

Foreign coverage presents the news along with the potential direct or indirect effect it will make on the life of the reader, since it is thought that the externality of the news brings the need to internalize it. The main legitimization strategy in this internalization activity is providing liaison between the foreign news and the lives of the “internal subject”. In this process, the “threats and opportunities” that the reader is subjected to as a nation-state citizen are central. News is prepared around “we” and “they” (collaterally “the good” and “the bad”) categories. An important feature of the images reproduced at that point is that the facts are never presented

in the context of their own historical conditions, but instead are just presented as mere facts. Thus, these so-called facts become the basis for generalization, and partialities, originalities, differences, dilemmas and changes can be just ignored. Many journalists, even though they instinctively question the relation of the event to themselves and the society they live in when they decide whether an event is news or not,³⁴ do this more often in the case of “foreign news”. This situation also feeds on the generally valid assumption that foreign news is read less in Turkey.³⁵ For this reason, the content in “foreign news” could fall behind the possible effects ascribed to the event, and there may be an important gap between the representation of the fact and the fact itself. In the news from Northern Iraq, the potential effects of the event on Turcomans are discussed before its meaning and costs for the direct participants in the event. In the news story of the decline of national income in Armenia, its causes or the people involved are not mentioned, but many comments are made regarding its effects on Turkey-Armenia relations and on Armenians living in Turkey; even the historical controversies and advantages of Turkey are in the news text. This constitutes a violation of the “5 Ws and 1 H rule”, and it seems there is no need for cause-effect analysis.

This obvious effort to relate the foreign news to the lives of the readers

is the result of the desire to make it attractive. This also has the result of foreign news’ being tabloidized. In Turkish foreign news the texts are either made entertaining or foreign events thought to be entertaining are covered. Tabloid culture in the media has started to affect foreign coverage in Turkey, which has begun to deal with the private lives of famous figures.³⁶ This is not only within foreign coverage, as this “tabloidizing” causes more and more production of stereotypes and induces exoticization, marginalization and the othering of cultural realities assumed to be outer or strange. Later in this paper, the forms of this process will also be mentioned. The correlation strategy of foreign coverage makes context supersede text, and individual content is sacrificed for overall inferences. However, this situation doesn’t actually mean that in foreign coverage historical and structural analyses are consulted. As a matter of fact, in their classic article entitled “The Structure of Foreign News”, Johann Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge state that reporters see and present events as human practice, not as a product of social power or structure. They suggest that this approach derives from a cultural idealism in which it is believed that the human is “master of his own destiny and events emerge as a result of free human will”.³⁷ Yet reporters believe that news should be about individuals, not about groups or social processes,³⁸

and problematize individual authority, not fundamental power. However, this doesn't prevent generalizations about the content, causes and effects of the events in question. In this process, news can exist in relation to either the needs of the institution constructing the news or the personal choices of the reporter, either the importance of the event or the demand of the news' source.³⁹

Undoubtedly, it is an essentialist approach to assume that mainstream Turkish foreign coverage embodies a single Oriental imagination. Moreover, the existence of various Oriental representations in foreign coverage is not an obstacle to reveal the Oriental representations. However, emphasizing the importance of Oriental perspectives in mainstream Turkish foreign coverage doesn't mean the same thing as stating that "Turkish or Turkey-style Orientalism" is a "consciousness and reflection style" functioning as a "dominant perspective" when considering what is to the east of Turkey.⁴⁰ Though there may be some cases when Oriental representations sometimes function as the "dominant perspective" in Turkish media, it should be stated that this situation could change with new strategies and tactics; new cultural strategies can be put into practice partially or as a whole in accordance with Michel de Certeau's suggestions. This study will focus on Orientalization reflexes developed by foreign coverage in mainstream Turkish

journalism. Thus, a series of foreign news (world news) stories with Oriental representation power will be analyzed and signs of Orientalization reflexes will be discerned. The news articles in question are gathered from two active and high-circulation Turkish national newspapers' "World" pages between May 5 - June 5, 2010. *Habertürk* and *Hürriyet* newspapers, which are funded by separate capital, are thought to be representative of mainstream Turkish media. During the analysis period of the newspapers, firstly all the news from the determined course and dates are reviewed and from among them news associated with the "Orient" image in terms of geography and/or culture and which contain Oriental images through the body, titles or visual materials are listed. After reviewing all the news items, they are classified, and according to this classification, news items that are thought to have high symbolic power and which exemplify various Orientalization practices are selected and examined. Columns in "World" pages are not included; research is just confined to the news stories. In this study, the newspapers' printed copies are used for analysis. The first reason for this is the desire to see the analyzed news' location in the page, the shape of the visual item (or items) supporting the news text and the contextual and formal features related to their design. The second reason is that the news in the printed version is not found in the same form in their

digital version, and sometimes some news can be removed from publication. Besides, it is important to state that especially “minor news” often does not occur in online copies of the newspapers, but these “minor news” items have the utmost importance for this study. This inadequately processed news published without signature may directly reflect the publisher’s perspective. Another point to be underlined is that it is not the purpose of this study to find the quantitative rate of the Orientalization practices in foreign coverage. Instead, it focuses on how Orientalization practices are reflected in the newspapers’ foreign news. In this study, 191 different sources of news that are thought to include Oriental images are determined; they can be found in the list given in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. It is apparent that some of the news which is subject to a critical reading in terms of “Orientalization performances” is generally related to “foreign politics”, some related to “daily life” and among the foreign politics news, “violence”, “terrorism”, actual political figures and the Middle East come to the fore; among the daily life news, “reaction” and “burqa” are frequent. The distinction between the “daily-life news” and “foreign politics news” is an artificial border, which helps us understand the reality as in the “ideal-type”, Max Weber suggested. Yet, news collected around the themes of violence, terrorism, reaction, burqa, the Middle East, etc. can be placed in both “foreign

politics” and “daily life” news. In this context, the news in question will be analyzed around these areas and themes and through those high in representative quality.

Examples of Orientalization in the World News

Among the news examined, terrorism-themed and violence-themed news is remarkably prominent in terms of Orientalization performances. The construct and presentation of both violence- and terrorism-themed news provides a series of images that cannot be analyzed. For instance, the news item entitled “The New Enemy of the USA “Jihad Janes””, talks about “the new national security strategy” of the USA, and states that the notion of threat has changed for the USA. In the news, one is reminded that the primary goal of the security strategy which George W. Bush declared after September 11 was to direct operations primarily towards the al-Qaeda terrorist organization and that the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were carried out as part of this strategy, and it is indicated that the new president Obama distances himself from the ex-president with the strategies he applies. In the news given under the subtitle “Target is Internal Danger”, it is implied that actually the threat is “terrorists born and raised in the USA”. In order to embody the notion of “terrorist born

and raised in the USA”, “Muslim Major Nidal Hasan, who has killed 13 soldiers” and “American Muslim woman, Coleen LaRose, who uses ‘Jihad Jane’ as a nickname on the internet and enlists militants for religious organizations” are held up as examples. In the news it is stated that these two specific examples having “impact on Obama’s focusing on internal threats in his new strategy” is “speculated”, though no data is submitted regarding the source of this speculation. Moreover, in the same news, under the subtitle “New York Impact”, the example of Pakistani Muslim

Faizal Shahza, who has lived in the USA for many years and attempted to blow up a car in New York, is given as a reinforcing example.

In the body of the news, no first hand reference, neither written nor verbal, is given regarding “the new national security strategy”; under the subtitle “renewed once in four years” a “strategy document” is referred to, and it is declared that in this strategy document the notions of “global war against terrorism” and “Islamist Extremism” are not mentioned. Despite this information, the overall construct of the news reflects “global war against terrorism” images and the perception of threat, where terrorism is associated with Islamic properties.⁴¹ Similar news can

be found under the title of “Retaliation to Obama’s Batting Order” about an American citizen, Anwar al-Awlaki, and his statements involving the message “Muslim soldiers in the American Army murdering other American soldiers on the way to Iraq and Afghanistan”. Awlaki, who is said to have connections with al-Qaeda in Yemen and whose words are presented as “retaliation”, is declared to be both a political figure calling for terrorism and an American Muslim scholar.⁴² On the same day the same news is given in *Habertürk* under

the title of “Yemeni Imam threatens USA”, in which it is stated that “al-Awlaki, American Citizen Yemeni Imam, calls for attacks on American soldiers and citizens”.⁴³ Similarly, news entitled “Eyes

on Islam Seminar in Germany” is constructed in such a way as to evoke the “Muslim Terrorist” figure, and the concern about the “Islamic Threat” is conveyed through the words of Manfred Munck, deputy chief at the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Hamburg. Focusing on the “notion of threat” produced by the Office, the body of the news about the “controversial seminar” states that the meeting, which will last for three days, will be “followed carefully” during this period. Here,

Within the scope of news about terrorism and violence, in addition to the news of “East in the West”, the Orientalization reflexes also affect news of “East in the East”.

negative public opinion regarding the meeting is encouraged by the news, which explains that the seminar will be followed intently; also it is effectively criminalized, though there is no action nor any record of crime yet. The only basis for this coloring of the news is Manfred Murck's concern about "some speakers" attending the meeting being radical. People who write this news simply reproduce this discourse of "threat".⁴⁴ Similar news is entitled "Campaign annoying Muslims".⁴⁵ The news is about the reaction of Muslims to an "advertisement against Islam" and it is reported that posters on which is written "Do you want to quit Islam?" hung on about 30 buses direct people to the website "RefugeFromIslam.com". Conspicuously, people "who want to quit Islam" are represented as people "who need help" and the posters are described as "aid posters". In the news the speech by Pamela Geller, the "manager of the organization" named "Stop Islamization of America", about "the fact that it is a must to evaluate this in terms of religious freedom" as well as the opinion of Fazia Ali, from the Council on American-Islamic Relations, that "the campaign creates the wrong impression that people were forced to be Muslim" and that of Robert Jackson, from the New York City Council, that "the campaign is an attack by extreme rightists on Islam" are referenced.

The news ends with an expert opinion and shares "analysts" ideas that

those posters may get reactions from "radical Muslim parties" and may "lead to terrorist attacks on the buses". It is obvious from the subtitle of the news "Is that an invitation to the terrorists?" that public perception is reinforced of a tendency towards violence as a result of the matter, instead of any actual violence. Finally, it should be stated that the same matter is mentioned in the *Hürriyet* newspaper under the title "Poster that drew Muslims' attention" and that the content of the poster, the ones who prepared it and the relevant parties' views are presented in a more simple and objective way.⁴⁶

Within the scope of news about terrorism and violence, in addition to the news of "East in the West", the Orientalization reflexes also affect news of "East in the East". For instance, the news article entitled "Attack at Council of Peace under Burqa" is about a "suicide attack" on a council in Kabul.⁴⁷ At the beginning of the news, a list of the council attendees is given and, of the attendees in question, first "clan leaders", then "county and district representatives", "members of parliament" and "non-governmental organization representatives" are mentioned. In the news, although it is said that the council of peace was held in a university, no information is given about the university where this major event took place, and instead of focusing on a particular actual institution, a place in need of the protection of 12 thousand soldiers and police is ambiguously

described and associated with rockets and 3 suicide bombers between the ages of 17 and 20, and it is announced that these suicide bombers “posing as women” were planning to blow up the bombs they carried. Though no detail is released about their clothes, the description in the news item “Taliban militants in burqa” openly states that these people hid themselves under burqas. The subtitle of the news and the photograph chosen gives us the impression that Afghani “peaceful and modern women” constitute the “most appropriate answer” to those bad heroes who present themselves in a ridiculous manner in women’s clothes. The news is accompanied with a photograph of the bombers in burqas, which seems threatening, contrasted with a photograph of some women attending the council in colorful scarves and makeup. The Afghani modern woman is not presented as an actual subject, but the photo in question is entitled “Women attend too”. Another message of the news is that all people in the district are used to - even have to get used to - such violent events, whose dates, places or reasons are purely random. As a matter of fact, in the body of the news, the message from Kharzai, the president of Afghanistan, related to the violent events is presented under the title “I’ve got used to that” and it is mentioned that Kharzai said “everybody is used to those events.” So violence is perceived as an element belonging to a certain district and

culture, and performing violent crimes is reduced to a cultural habit.

It is possible to see such news in *Habertürk* and *Hürriyet* as terrorism is restrained to specific margins and wherever it appears, it is presented as an Oriental phenomenon. Within this context, news such as “al-Qaeda Cannot Find Bomber”, “Obama Would Be Killed in Indonesia”, “New York Bomber Caught in Airplane”, “Somali Leader’s Palace is Under Compass”, “Bangkok on Fire, Rebellion Quashed”, “Massage Shoes or Movable Bomb”, “Suicide Attack on NATO Convoy”, “Time to Clean Up In Thailand”, “Wrote ‘Love with Barzani’s Daughter”, “Tortured to Death”, “Judgment like Revolution from Saudi: Girls won’t be Burned”, “Incredible Penalty for Somalian Pirates”, “Caricaturist’s House Sabotaged”, “Attack on Mosque in Pakistan”; can be shown as examples of news in which terrorism and violence are related to a “cultural essence” that is classified as pre-modern and/or anti-modern.⁴⁸ Another category of news that constitutes a meaningful whole in terms of Orientalization practices is news about Iran. Iran and the relationships it has with Turkey and the West is the subject of a lot of news in the world pages, as an image representing “the dark face of the Middle East”. It is very common to see Iran represented as “a nuclear threat”, “an image of tension in foreign politics” and “a country with a conservative life style”.

In the world news examined, there is much about “oppressive and conservative Iran management”. The news is produced in parallel with reactionary news in the world pages, and it mostly mentions the “oppressive and conservative” nature of daily life in Iran; thus Iran is being othered through the concept of being “behind the times”. This othering process can be illustrated with the help of some news examples. For instance, the news entitled “Penalty for Drivers Insulting Women” talks about forty drivers’ cars being taken away from them due to their abusive behavior towards women in Tehran, and is about “the cracking down by vice squads on teenagers in Iran”. It is also stated in the news that those cars are exhibited on a famous boulevard in Iran with anti-women-abuse banners on them. Moreover, a driver’s saying “they caught me with my girlfriend in the car and, yes, the music was a little loud” found a place in the text. Finally, some more information is given regarding the “increasing pressure on youth in Iran”.⁴⁹ News entitled “If she returns to Iran, she will be executed” discusses the Iranian lesbian actress Kiana Firuz’s asylum request in England, where she took refuge two years ago. The title conveys the message that Firuz will undoubtedly be “executed” if she returns to Iran. However, in the text this “certain” information is replaced by the sentence “Firuz’s friends claim that in case the young woman is sent to Tehran, she will

be executed”. It is stated that the reason for Firuz to be targeted by the Iranian officials is the movie *Cul de Sac*, based on her life and revealing “the secret life of Iranian lesbians”.

In the news, the support of homosexual groups in England and Iran as well as that of Iranian opponents is emphasized. It is stated that Firuz should be given asylum, with the justification that “if she is sent back to Tehran, she will be tortured and executed”. In the final part of the news text, it is stated that women identified as lesbian in Iran are sentenced to “100 lashes”, and that “women caught for the same crime four times are executed”, and thereby “violence” applied by the oppressive Iran regime is revealed.⁵⁰ Similar news with titles such as “Emancipation for 300,000 Dollars”, “Ahmedi showed mercy: The American Mountaineers’ Mothers Are Permitted”, “Two Iranian Prisoners Against French Teacher”, “Prisoner Exchange on Paris-Tehran Line”, “Murderer of Prime Minister Is Returned to Tehran”, “Sarkozy Met Him After His Return from Iran”, “The Arrested Are Surely Spies”, “Released With Bail” appear in the world pages.⁵¹ In the context of the foreign policy news, “Uranium Exchange” between Iran, Turkey and Brazil also found much space in the world pages.⁵² In these news articles, Iran is portrayed as a trouble-making Eastern country, and Turkey is

shown as a Westernized country which should concern itself with Iran on behalf of the West. There are comments regarding Turkey's "ideal location" and Turkey's new foreign policy in recent times. "Turkey's turning its face to the East and back to the West" and "paradigm shift" have started to come to the fore in the newspapers' May publications and have been the subjects of many foreign policy news articles, starting from the first week of June.⁵³ In the news studied, it is sometimes stated that Turkey has lost its impartiality towards Iran's nuclear program and has followed a pro-Iran policy. An image of "manipulated", "deceived" Turkey has been conveyed. However, it is also stated that Turkey will or must in the end realize its having been deceived, otherwise there will be the problems indicated by the news texts and titles.⁵⁴ Another attention-grabbing fact is that Turkey and Iran are portrayed as "dependent" and "subject to approval" actors, not as two independent actors located in the same area and having the capacity to enact realistic foreign policy. For instance, in the news entitled "USA: With No Approval, They Went To Tehran", when Turkey-Iran relations are the issue, the USA is presented as an approval authority. In the news text, the USA's independent status, but Turkey's and Iran's dependent status, is implied by reference to a meeting joined by teleconference technology by three unnamed US diplomats.⁵⁵ Apart

from this, we should point out that Iran is mostly represented as an easily offended "theocratic government". For example, in news about the execution of five members of a terrorist group – PJAK - in Tehran, the reason for their execution is suggested to be Iran's considering the terrorists the enemies of God.⁵⁶ At the same time, while Iran is shown as an aggressive power, on the other hand, it is evaluated as a country that is "inevitably violent", "passive" and "poor". For example, in the news entitled "Israel Delivered Submarine To Iran", the claim of Israel's deployment of three submarines armed with nuclear missiles to the coast of Iran tries to show that Iran is vulnerable, and it is stressed that "Israel can hit anywhere in Iran" and "Israel can insert Mossad agents into Iran".⁵⁷ Other news produced with a similar approach is entitled "Obama Is Hard on Ahmedi's Trail", "Ankara Is Waiting For The News About Iran from the USA" and "How Will Israel Stop Tehran?"⁵⁸ This "Iran" and "Taliban" news in the world pages is significant in terms of Orientalization practices. The Taliban is portrayed not only as an actor in pursuit of a state in a certain geography, but also as a group of people who are puritanical and symbolize the darkness of the Middle Ages. Sourced from the British *Guardian*, the news entitled "Taliban Leaders Will Be Exiled" which is about "the exile proposal" by the Afghan Government in exchange for "Taliban leaders' laying down arms"

can be considered an example. The news headline suggests not a proposal but an inevitable situation, and Taliban leaders are shown not as actors but as passive elements that have to accept the proposal offered to them at some point. It is stated that the projected proposal plan has been drafted in an international conference arranged in London, and is also expected to be discussed with Barrack Obama during his visit to Afghan President Hamid Kharzai between May 10 and 13. The news text refers to thousands of jobs available in handicrafts, notably in the field of handmade carpets, for Taliban militants described as “angry brothers”, thereby portraying the existence of the Taliban as related to unemployment; it is implied that if poor Afghans are employed, then it is possible to save them from the Taliban’s trap. Subtitles in the text reveal Orientalization steps: they are published in a different color from the prevailing colors of grey, black and white. For instance, “Thief’s Hand Cut” is in red, as if to inform readers about what the Taliban is actually doing, and it is apparently considered a necessary reminder. The news in which three people accused of robbery in the North Veziristhan region of Pakistan are tried in a court set up by the Taliban, and then have their hands cut off, reminds readers of the assumed relationship between the culture and violence. The text in which court and trial are given in quotation marks gives no factual detail and is not

supported by any file or photograph. In the news there is no photograph directly related to the story, but two men (father and son) in traditional clothes can be seen in the left corner and two military tanks deployed in the desert in the right corner.⁵⁹ Furthermore, news stories entitled “Taliban Has 8 German Militants”, “New Gas Attack From Taliban”, “Mysterious Disease In Afghanistan”, “Taliban Kills For Money”, “Operation From The Army To Taliban”, “Taliban Attacked Ahmedi Mosque” portray the Taliban not as an organization formed for a political cause but as a puritanical and harsh religious organization, and thus the religious teaching motivating the Taliban is shown as an element feeding violence.⁶⁰

Daily Life News

Apart from the foreign policy news analyzed above, other news stories illustrating Orientalization practices include daily life news in the world pages. We can state that, in this news especially, “reaction” and “reactionary” news is frequently seen; among which “burqa” news has a privileged place. Firstly let us consider the reactionary news, and then the burqa news. The reactionary news in the world pages can be described as news that is mainly about “over-religious interventions” in modern social, political, financial and cultural life. Relevant interventions are

criminalized, pushed into an Eastern and out-of-history cultural category based on the modernism-traditionalism opposition. It can be easily seen that in the news of this category, starting with Saudi Arabia and Middle Eastern countries, “religious oppression policies” are especially emphasized. For example, the news entitled “Saudi Police In Search Of Three Arab Guys On MTV” tells how the documentary *Resist The Power* on MTV is “making trouble in Saudi Arabia”. In the news it is stated that the documentary closely examines some Saudi men’s daily lives in Cidde, and that this provoked reactions from conservative people; a Facebook site was set up to foment public opinion against the documentary, and then the Saudi Religious Police went in search of the three men in the documentary. In the news, there are no details given regarding the identities of “conservatives”, “Facebook site makers” or “Saudi Religious Police” and they are represented as part of a unified conservative opposition.

In the world news section, one may often encounter a “modern individual” standing up against traditional and despotic Eastern authorities.

In the documentary, stories about three different people are told. In the first one, Aziz attempts to “secretly

meet a girl he met on Facebook in a shopping mall where only families can enter”. The second one is about Fatima and her attempt “to buy a colorful burqa in a country where black burqas are compulsory”. The last one is about Ahmet, who shows to the camera “his library full of books prohibited by the government” and “complains about oppressive government”. In the news an important detail is given, which is that, although the documentary was shown on the Arabic MTV channel, many Saudi citizens watched it on the web. The statement at the end of the news text that “this is an important test for the country, which is making an effort to reform in recent years” implies the journalist’s Orientalist perspective.⁶¹ Similar news is the one entitled “Saudi Women Wage War on Police”. The news about the “hard week” of the Saudi Arabian vice squad responsible for checking whether strict Islamic rules are observed relates that police were attacked in two different cities. Incidents are described in which “a woman walking in a park with a man not from her family is stopped by a policeman, whom they beat to death”, and “a woman seen with a man in a public place opened fire on the vice squad’s car”, followed by praise for the women’s struggle for freedom against the Saudi Arabian vice squad. While referencing local media, no specific information is given about the identities of the perpetrators nor any

reasons for the incidents, yet an image of “conscious modern women” rebelling against Eastern despots applying strict rules is obviously created by this news.⁶²

In the world news section, one may often encounter a “modern individual” standing up against traditional and despotic Eastern authorities. In this sense, such news as “female rebellion against compulsory headscarves”, “Abu Dhabi opposition to “Sex and the City””, “liberal journalist pressured to resign”, “he became the unwanted man in Pakistan”, and so forth evoke many elements that associate cultural and social realities with the Orient.⁶³ One of the most common types of reactionary news is burqa news. Burqa bans, which seasonally occupy the agenda in Europe, are among the most frequently discussed themes in the world news during the period of this analysis. However, the burqa’s place in the world news is not limited to these burqa ban discussions. The burqa is also discussed as a cultural symbol and marginalized as an Oriental image. The first item of news to be analyzed below is about burqa ban discussions and the second one is about the image of the burqa as a cultural symbol. The news entitled “From Sarko to Parliament: Ban the Burqa”, conveys important clues to Orientalization practices. This news, with its reference to “French media” without giving the name of a specific media agency, refers to French President Nicolas Sarkozy’s will to bring to the agenda “immediate

approval of the resolution of burqa ban in public places in the parliament”. News that draws attention to the “complaint” and determination of Nicholas Sarkozy is reinforced by two sub-titles. The first news, entitled “He will lock up his wife at home”, quotes Bin Salih Ibrahim, whose wife, Amel Mamouri, may have to pay a 500 Euro fine for entering the post office in a burqa. The news is organized in such a way as to evoke an eastern burqa-wearing imprisoned woman dependent on her husband, and concentrates on the decision of the “hopeless husband” about “his wife’s going out”. However, by including in the story “She will never leave home again. There is nothing I can do about it”, the “hopeless husband’ image is reinforced, and in the title of the news the tyrannical Eastern man stereotype is invoked.

The second sub-title, next to this anonymous news, seems to be emphasizing the oppositional perspective of the secretary of Internal Affairs in Germany, Thomaz de Maiziere. However, Maiziere’s opposition to this ban is ascribed to the fact that only 100 women wear the burqa in Germany and it simply suggests its being “excusable”. Once again, by emphasizing the prevailing opinion that there should be more serious problems discussed in an Islam Conference conducted by Maiziere, Islam’s capacity to create problems is recalled. It should also be stated that, while a picture of a woman wearing a black burqa constitutes 40%

of the place reserved for this particular news, a picture of Sarkozy straightening his tie is placed on the left corner of the news.⁶⁴ The other news entitled “Sydney talks about the robbery in burqa” that tells of a robbery by an “armed man wearing a burqa”, is an example of how the burqa, a cultural symbol, is marginalized in the world news. There is no specific information concerning this incident, which is alleged to be the event of the day, and there is no concrete information about the amount of the robbery, time of the robbery, the crime scene or actors in the crime. The news reports that the “poor courier” “handed over the bag full of money” to the armed man in the burqa, and it amplifies the cultural aspect of the image of the crime.

In this news story about the robbery in Australia, the word “burqa” occurs three times as often as the word “robbery”, an indication of the Orientalist bias in the world-news pages. Obviously what is emphasized in the text is not so much a crime committed by a man as a crime committed by a man wearing a burqa. This situation can be best understood with the help of the last sentence of the news: “It is reported that Muslim women in Australia usually wear a head scarf and that the number of the women wearing a burqa is quite low.”⁶⁵ The picture used is a woman wearing

a burqa. The message conveyed here is that it is actually a man wearing it on this occasion. Although it is a photograph of a woman, since it is decided that it is not feminine enough, this photograph is used to represent “an armed man wearing a burqa” constituting 45% of the news area. The burqa has been the main subject of a lot of news in which it is discussed as a cultural symbol and references are made to the burqa ban. In this news, the main theme is the burqa as an Oriental element and its reflection to daily lives in the East and West.⁶⁶ Along with the burqa news, exoticization, an

important element of the process of Orientalization, is frequently encountered. Such news as “Miss Hezbollah Accuses Miss USA”, “Was the Polygamous Leader

Cheated”, “The most beautiful girl of the USA is a Muslim.” “Don’t make love! warning to Dubai passengers”, “People who attended the concert were taken in custody”, and so forth, reproduce the stereotype in popular culture of an exotic East.⁶⁷

Conclusion

As the analysis of the news so far suggests, news encountered in world news pages has been fundamentally shaped by a journalistic approach that

News encountered in world news pages has been fundamentally shaped by a journalistic approach that concentrates not on the action but on the essence.

concentrates not on the action but on the essence. In the news, details of the incident, quality of the incident, time, place and style or any descriptive detail about the participants are not adequately given; instead, speculation by the producer of the news about the essence of the incident is central to the text. Instead of the uniqueness and/or originality of the news, attention is drawn to its universality and resemblance to other incidents. While constructing the news text, not the content but the context of the incident is being problematized, and most of the time content is reshaped according to the context. In the news text, the uniqueness of the incident, its original aspects, and details about the actors are not presented; instead, attempts to make the news more interesting are made. Another attention-grabbing fact is that the sources and the writers of the news do not seem to exist, and this anonymizing of the news has the effect of objectifying it. In most of the world news studied, dates and places, signatures of the writers or the sources of the news do not appear, and the term “claimed” is frequently used. When reproduction of stereotypes occurs, this anonymizing effect creates an opportunity for the writer. One notable aspect of the news studied is the display of Orientalization practices through the use of simplistic polarities, e.g., “modern vs. non-modern”, “East” vs. “West” oppositions. The social, political,

ideological and cultural costs of not being modern are reflected through images in the news text. In the investigated news, we confirmed the views of Edward Said and Thery Hentch regarding the West’s attitude towards the Orient: the image of the Orient continues to be a negative one, while the image of the West is a positive one.⁶⁸ In the world pages, Turkey is portrayed as a Westernized or Western country, and the biggest threat to Turkish foreign policy is being identified with the Orient. In news where Orientalization practices are encountered, there could be found not only news about the East but also the Orient in the West. News of those physically in the West but “culturally not saved from the Orient” reflects the problems of the West created by the Orient. Especially in daily life news, it is implied that “traditionally Oriental” elements owe their existence to “Western” cultural elements, and some images that are displayed as characteristic of the “Orient” and limited to “pastoral” are criminalized, and thus the borders of concepts such as “normal”, “urbanism”, “Western” and “modern” are drawn. One of the most notable points in the world news is the security reflex after September 11 frequently evoked in speculation about the news. The kind of media portraying violence as a cultural practice and terrorism as related almost entirely to Islam has often been observed in the post-September 11 political atmosphere.⁶⁹ This news-making style, which is said

by Elizabeth Poole to be shaped by the notion of the “war against terrorism”, is to be found in the world pages of the newspapers *Hurriyet* and *Haberturk*.⁷⁰ A lot of news suggests that violence belongs to the Orient and is a commonly observed and ordinary practice in the East. Terrorism is identified with Islam and Muslims, and Islam is classified according to its “potential as a trouble-maker”, and “Arabic Islam”, “Radical Islam” and “Moderate Islam” categories are posited. In this process, Moderate Islam is identified with Turkish Islam, and “Radical Islam” is identified with “Arabic Islam” and “Persian Islam”.

This identification process and other Orientalization practices derive from strategies of alienation, pacification, exoticization and humiliation. Those that are used as objects of Orientalization practices are seen as “alienated”, “pacified”, “exotic” and “comic” elements in different times and on varying levels. For example, sometimes portrayed as alienated or exotic, “Eastern Woman” is mostly presented as a caged, dependent property, with a passive status of secondary importance. News about women could also be qualified as sexist news, apart from the Orientalization practices. Sometimes comic or alienated, the “Arab” image is presented within subtexts of pacification and exoticization. Moreover, the “East” which is othered by being identified mostly with violence, “opposition to the West” and

“stagnation”, is sometimes exoticized by being identified with spirituality, and this shows us how influential “the Spiritual East” approach - which is said to find its equivalents in Walt Whitman’s poems or Charles Wilkins’ texts and is said to be one of the important sources of Orientalism - is in popular culture. Potential Eastern elements are included in the news with the help of these four sub-strategies, and many prejudices can be observed in this area. The existence of these elements in news is related to the way foreign reporting is currently organized, in addition to “internalized Orientalism”. As mentioned above, the news studied was mainly reports with no signatures. The basic justification for this is that a reporter who works for a media organization does not report news; instead most news is simply compiled from various sources. During this compilation process, instead of big news syndicates with a subscription system, websites and news portals that offer tabloid-type reports to the newspapers are more actively used. Development of internet-centered reporting in media activities, and the thought that reporting has become global and foreign news reporting more costly have marginalized foreign news and foreign reporters, thus decreasing the role of foreign reporters in producing foreign news.⁷¹ Instead of the relevant reporter, the page editor in the media center manages the process; the central control of news

increases, and news becomes uniform in terms of content, attitude and design. News production is a selective process and requires the newsmaker's active participation. In other words, selecting what is news is not dependent on its place in social reality, but on the aims of the news producer. In cases where the reporter is close to the news, the reporter mostly does the selection work. Even if under instructions from the editor or from the editor-in-chief, the reporter is the one who mostly creates the content. The reason for this is that the reporter is an "outsider" and claims to have a grasp of "outside intelligence". The fact that the foreign reporter is alienated from the news production process and that an editorial eye is shaping the process facilitates many stereotypes. As the distance between the newsmaker and the publisher increases, it is easier to see more presumptions in the news texts. This produces more problems due to the direction of the information.

The Orientalist images in European and American media are reproduced in Turkish media; perceptions, stereotypes and judgments are translated into Turkish without being critically filtered. This produces a reporting practice shaped by John Urry's "tourist perspective".⁷² Tourist perspective is that which is derived from the will to gain exotic experiences.⁷³ One important feature of tourist perspective is that it overlooks the actual nature of the social reality in which one lives, changes and exists - with its contradictions, hosts of different actors, and the clashes among them, given its tendency to Orientalize the relevant reality. This Orientalization makes the "undistorted communication" ideal of Habermas more unattainable for media, and a reporting culture emerges in which value is placed upon "violence" instead of "word", "sensation" instead of "fact", and "generalization" instead of "detail".

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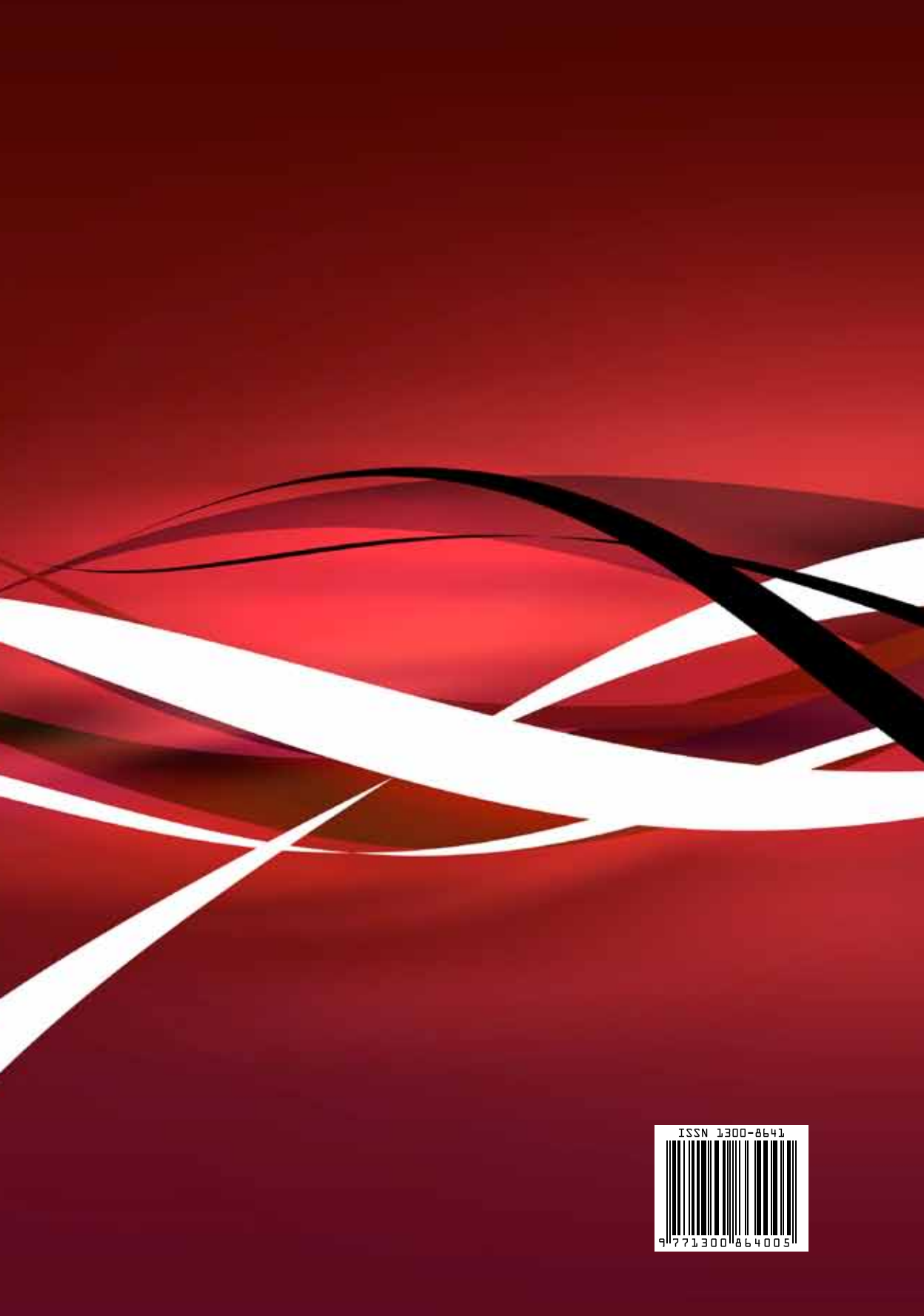
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