

Turkey's Grand Strategy as the Third Power: A Realist Proposal

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Abstract

This article proposes a grand strategy for Turkey that is based on neorealist assumptions. While Turkey's immediate neighbors, with the partial exception of Iran, do not pose a conventional, existential threat to Turkey in terms of their latent or military power, the "periphery" of Turkey's immediate neighbors includes half a dozen regional powers that have the military or economic capacity to threaten Turkey's neighbors or Turkey itself. Thus, Turkey should adopt a "neighborly core doctrine" to keep great powers' military forces out of its immediate neighborhood and, if possible, should seek integration with its immediate neighbors through bilateral or multilateral economic, political and security initiatives. The urgency of this imperative is underlined by the fact that four of Turkey's eight neighbors have been occupied by the great powers or their proxies since the end of the Cold War. Turkey's position has to be that of the "third power", buttressing the independence and territorial integrity of the countries in its neighborhood that are being partitioned and destroyed in proxy wars between the two major rival alliances. Among Turkey's immediate neighbors, Bulgaria, Georgia and Syria are critical as Turkey's gateways to the West, East and South, respectively. Turkey's historically rooted and overwhelmingly amicable ties with more than a dozen countries across Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia are highlighted for their positive significance in this grand strategy.

Keywords

Grand strategy, neorealism, geopolitics, balance of power, Turkey.

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Introduction

Scholarly discussions of Turkey's grand strategy have been extremely rare,¹ despite Turkey's increasing foreign policy activism since the end of the Cold War, and particularly since the turn of the 21st century. There may be several reasons for this lacuna in the scholarship on Turkish foreign policy. First, some scholars argue that "only a superpower (in practice, solely the U.S.), or minimally a great power (extending the list to China and Russia), has the sufficient institutional and material resources to formulate and implement a grand strategy," and therefore, other than these three great powers, no country, including Turkey, can have a grand strategy.² This opinion is very much contested, as recent scholarship on the grand strategies of regional powers, including Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia, which have smaller economies and/or populations than Turkey, demonstrates.³ A second reason for the scarcity of works on Turkish grand strategy might be the assumption that Turkey simply follows a subordinate role within the U.S. grand strategy, and therefore does not have a distinct grand strategy worthy of scholarly analysis. Third, some may think that either there is no agreement on Turkey's national interests domestically or that there is no (or has never been any) intention or initiative to formulate and pursue a grand strategy in Turkey, and therefore this topic is not worthy of scholarly investigation. The current article disagrees with these presumptions against the formulation and scholarly study of a Turkish grand strategy, and furthermore, in tune with the constructive and prescriptive spirit of this special issue, proposes a grand strategy for Turkey that is broadly Realist in its outlines.

Grand strategy, according to one of the most prolific scholars on the subject, is "the calculated relationship of means to large ends."⁴ In both foreign policy and military strategy, officials and officers entrusted with a specific area or "theater of operations" may be prone to what General George Marshall called "theateritis, the tendency of military commanders to look only at the needs of their own theater of operation, and not at the requirements of fighting the war as a whole."⁵ A kind of "theateritis" is arguably one of the biggest challenges of foreign policy making in a country whose geopolitical environment is in flux, as has been the case with Turkey since the end of the Cold War. Each civil servant and military officer is expected to be focused on and responsible for a specific geographic or thematic area, whereas the calculated, holistic relationship of the means to the largest ends in Turkey's foreign policy is rarely if ever discussed.

How can one initiate a debate on different conceptions of grand strategy? Writing on "China's search for a grand strategy," Wang Jisi argues that, "[a]ny country's grand strategy must answer at least three questions: What are the nation's core interests? What external forces threaten them? And what can the national leadership do to safeguard them?"⁶ Therefore, a conception of national grand strategy, whether in the U.S., China or Turkey, should start with the definition of the nation's core interests, and continue with the prima-

ry threats to these interests and a grand strategy to defend against such threats in a hierarchical fashion. A grand strategy should outline a “hierarchy” of national interests or objectives, proceeding from the primary and secondary to tertiary and lesser interests, and an accompanying hierarchy of threats against such national interests or objectives.

My Argument for a Realist Grand Strategy: Turkey as the *Third Power* in the Balkans, Caucasus, the Middle East and North Africa

A successful grand strategy depends on a factual assessment of Turkey’s material and non-material sources of power in relation to its immediate neighbors, followed by the non-neighboring regional powers, both conceived within the context of the global distribution of power. Based on such an assessment, I argue that Turkey is the most powerful country among its neighbors, and therefore, with the notable exception of Iran, none of Turkey’s immediate neighbors have the latent or actual capability to challenge Turkey alone, and none of them, including Iran, is likely to prevail in a one-to-one military contest against Turkey. In short, Turkey inhabits a relatively secure geopolitical environment if one focuses solely on the conventional capabilities of its immediate neighbors. However, Turkey faces numerous unconventional security threats such as various forms of terrorism, organized crime and outbreaks of infectious diseases and the like that flourish in situations of state breakdown. Bearing in mind both the relative insignificance of the conventional threat capacity of its neighbors and the numerous threats that emanate from state collapse, the primary goal of Turkish grand strategy must be to preserve this status quo by protecting its neighbors against the military aggression of any revisionist states. However, both the potential and actual threat that Turkey faces is the military aggression of outside great powers that seek to destabilize, permanently occupy, dismember and even partition and annex Tur-

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key’s immediate neighbors, a threat that, even in the short term, often leads to state breakdown and the proliferation of massive, unconventional security threats such as terrorism. *If a great power permanently occupies or annexes all or a part of the territories of any of Turkey’s neighbors, thus becoming the de facto or even de jure immediate neighbor of Turkey, then Turkey’s national security will be deeply compromised and threatened. The highest priority of Turkish grand strategy should be to prevent the occupation of its neighbors by any of the great powers, including, most*

importantly, Russia and the U.S., among others. Unfortunately for Turkey and catastrophically for its neighbors, outside great powers have indeed occupied significant territories of several of Turkey's neighbors, seemingly on a permanent basis. Relatedly, Turkey's position has to be that of the "third power" buttressing the independence and territorial integrity of the countries in its neighborhood that are being partitioned and destroyed in proxy wars between the two major rival alliances. France and Iran are among the prominent actors that employed a similar strategy for much of the last century in pursuit of expanding their autonomy by weaving together webs of alliances that were viable, albeit limited alternatives to the largest two rival alliances forged by the leading great powers in competition at the time.

Turkish Grand Strategy as the *Third Power* in Comparative Perspective: French Strategy of *Grandeur* under De Gaulle, Iran's *Third Policy*, and Israel's Early Alliance with France

There is at least one major structural reason against and one in favor of Turkey pursuing a grand strategy of "third power" as I propose and briefly outline in this article. Turkey's GDP is only one-third the size of that of France according to the official exchange rate, and Turkey does not have any nuclear power plants, let alone nuclear weapons, whereas France generates the majority of its electricity from nuclear power plants and is one of the five states that officially has nuclear weapons. On the other hand, in terms of Power Purchasing Parity (PPP), the Turkish economy is three-quarters the size of the French economy, and the Turkish population is slightly larger than that of France. Second, it has been convincingly argued that the current world order is multipolar rather than unipolar or bipolar, which is a structural change that should make it easier for "third powers" to flourish.⁷

The French grand strategy of *grandeur* during the Fifth Republic under president Charles De Gaulle is similar to my grand strategic proposal for Turkey in this article.⁸ It also appears somewhat similar to the Iranian grand strategy of the "Third Policy" in the early 20th century, when Iran sought to escape the overwhelming pressures of the British Empire and the Soviet Union by seeking an alliance with Germany. Similarly, Israel in its initial decades sought French, rather than American or Soviet, assistance in building its nuclear capability, and the critical Israeli-French alliance also resembles a "third policy" in a Cold War context.

A Turkish grand strategy would have to resemble the French strategy of *grandeur* rather than the Iranian "Third Policy" for two main reasons. First, similar to France and unlike Iran, Turkey is deeply and justifiably enmeshed in Western security alliances (i.e., NATO) and political economic integration schemes (e.g., European Customs Union membership since 1996 and EU membership negotiations since 2005) and thus Turkey is not equidistant from the Russian-Iranian and North Atlantic alliances. Second, similar to France

and unlike Iran or Israel, Turkey would not be seeking a “third great power patron” such as Germany or France as a way out of a bipolar superpower competition, but would rather seek to establish itself as a pivotal power, and not necessarily as the leading power, within a network of regional powers that can withstand pressures from the two rival (U.S.-led vs. Russian-led) alliances.

Latent and Actual Power: Economic and Military Capabilities

There are many measures of national power, but leading neorealist scholars such as John Mearsheimer distinguish between latent (potential) and military power.⁹ “Latent power refers to the socioeconomic ingredients that go into building military power; it is largely based on a state’s wealth and the overall size of its population.”¹⁰ The reasoning behind such a distinction and linkage between the two forms of power is the assumption that latent (socioeconomic) power can be converted to military power if and when needed. The neorealism of the current proposal is inherent in my implicit assumptions of an anarchic world order where survival is the primary motivation of states, and where “states can never be certain about other states’ intentions,” thus leading states to interpret the military capacity of any nearby entity as potentially offensive and threatening in the future, regardless of their expressed intentions at present.¹¹ These assumptions underpin and shape the broad outlines of the strategy summarized in this article. The emphasis on soft power found in the latter part of the article may be criticized as being incompatible with these neorealist assumptions, but I consider these elements of soft power as useful resources and facilitators in building and mobilizing latent (socioeconomic) and military power.

All states, including regional or middle powers such as Turkey, are expected to ally with the less powerful great power against the more powerful great power: “Because power is a means and not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of two coalitions,” according to Waltz.¹² Of course this general proposition does not solve the security dilemma of a country such as Turkey, which faces coalitions of global and regional powers, such as the U.S.-Saudi Arabia-Israel axis against the Russia-Iran axis, where the globally more powerful U.S.-led coalition may be less committed and thus less powerful than the Russia-led coalition in a specific military theater such as Syria, which precisely has been the case since Russia’s direct military intervention in the Syrian Civil War in September 2015. Thus, the “geographic proximity” of the rival great powers seems to be of paramount significance, “[b]ecause the ability to project power declines with distance,”¹³ as Stephen Walt argues in his study of alliances in the Middle East. This is also a well-known geopolitical insight from centuries of late Ottoman and Turkish foreign policy; even though Russia was almost never the number one great power in the international system, it was always the primary great power that the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic balanced against due to its geographic proximity, often through alliance with great powers with more offensive capabilities, such as the British Empire and

the U.S. Thus, it makes the most sense to begin an assessment of Turkey's geopolitical environment from a comparative overview of its economic and military capacity and that of its immediate neighbors.

Economic and Military Balance between Turkey and its Neighbors

Turkey's economy is twice the size of the largest economy among its neighbors, namely that of Iran, and Turkey's defense budget is roughly one-and-a-half times Iran's defense budget (Table 1). The population of Iran is about five percent larger than the population of Turkey. Leaving aside Iran, all of Turkey's other neighbors have economies that are at most one-fourth of the Turkish economy, defense budgets at most one-third of Turkey's, and populations that are at most one-half of Turkey's. Most importantly, Turkey is ranked as the 9th polity in terms of military strength globally, while its closest neighbors, Iran and Greece, are ranked 14th and 28th, respectively. In other words, Turkey is the only country in the top 10 in terms of military strength among its neighbors, while Iran is Turkey's only neighbor in the top 20, and Greece is the only other neighbor in the top 30. Nonetheless, it should be noted that three of Turkey's eight neighbors, namely, Armenia, Bulgaria and Iran, already have nuclear power plants, whereas Turkey does not, and that the existence of a nuclear power plant might serve as a deterrent in an actual military conflict, although it does not automatically augment their military strength. Overall, with the notable exception of Iran, Turkey's demographic, economic and military strengths are unrivalled among its immediate neighbors.

	GDP / PPP (billion USD) ¹⁴	Population (million) ¹⁵	Defense Budget (2018, million USD) ¹⁶	Military Strength Ranking (2019) ¹⁷
Turkey	851.5 / 2,186	81.2	18,967	9th
Greece	200.7 / 299	10.7	5,227	28 th
Bulgaria	56.9 / 154	7.1	1,095	49 th (+nuclear power)
Georgia	15.2 / 40	4.0	316	85 th
Armenia	11.5 / 28	3.0	608	96 th (+nuclear power)
Azerbaijan	40.7 / 172	10.0	1,708	52 nd
Iran	430.7 / 1,640	83.0	13,194	14 th (+nuclear power)
Iraq	192.4 / 649	40.2	6,318	53 rd
Syria	24.6 / 50	19.5	N/A	N/A

Table 1: Economic and Military Balance of Power between Turkey and its Neighbors

The first principle of Turkish grand strategy must follow from Turkey's nearly unrivalled demographic, economic and military strength among its neighbors:

Turkey must support and secure the existence and territorial integrity of its current neighbors. In other words, Turkey should be vehemently against any revisionist outside power, especially any outside great power, that seeks to occupy, annex, dismember or permanently place its military in all or part of any of Turkey's neighbors. In short, Turkey's neighbors should remain sovereign and indivisible and should not be occupied by any great power (e.g., France, Russia, the U.S.). This strategy would make Turkey a status quo power par excellence; a guardian of the internationally recognized entities and their borders. Beyond the legal and moral reasons that mandate such a stance, Turkey should favor this position because its neighbors serve as a buffer zone between Turkey and far more capable and potentially hostile great powers, as will be reviewed in the next section. Conversely, if and when any of Turkey's neighbors face foreign occupation and imminent dismemberment (e.g., Syria, Iraq, Georgia or Azerbaijan), which amounts to the destruction of Turkey's buffer zone, then Turkey must intervene to secure a buffer zone for itself, which is arguably what Turkey has been doing in response to the Russian, Iranian and American occupation of roughly 90 percent of Syria. An observation in support of this argument is that Turkey's direct military intervention in Syria only came *after* the direct military interventions of global and regional great powers such as Russia, Iran, and the U.S. Such buffer zones can be evacuated if and when the negotiated reconstitution of the occupied or dismembered neighbor states and de facto entities becomes politically viable.

Economic and Military Balance between Turkey and the Regional Powers

A distinctive characteristic of Turkey's geopolitical environment becomes apparent as soon as we turn to examine what could be considered the second ring, shell or layer around Turkey's neighbors, namely, the rather close regional powers that are often neighbors of Turkey's neighbors. In a nutshell, in stark contrast to Turkey's immediate neighbors, there are up to six regional powers with significant economic, demographic or military strength within 700 kilometers of Turkey's borders (Table 2). More specifically, while among Turkey's neighbors there is only one state in the top 20 (Iran), and one in the top 30

(Greece) in terms of military strength, when we turn to regional powers within 700 kilometers of Turkey's borders, we find that there is one global great power (and former super power), Russia, ranked 2nd globally in terms of military strength, three other states within the top 20, namely, Italy (11th), Egypt (12th) and Israel (17th) and two other states within the top 30, namely Saudi Arabia (25th) and Ukraine (29th).

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Table 2: Balance of Power between Turkey and the Regional Powers within 700 km¹⁸

	GDP / PPP (billion USD) ¹⁹	Population (million) ²⁰	Defense Budget (2018, million USD) ²¹	Military Strength Ranking (2019) ²²
Turkey	851.5 / 2,186	81.2	18,967	9th
Iran (neighbor)	430.7 / 1,640	83.0	13,194	14 th (+nuclear power)
Russia ²³	1,578 / 4,016	142.1	61,388	2 nd (+nuclear weapons)
Israel ²⁴	350.7 / 317	8.4	15,947	17 th (+nuclear weapons)
Ukraine ²⁵	112.1 / 370	44.0	4,750	29 th (+nuclear power)
Egypt ²⁶	236.5 / 1,204	99.4	3,110	12 th
S. Arabia ²⁷	686.7 / 1,775	33.1	67,555	25 th
Italy ²⁸	1,939 / 2,317	62.3	27,808	11 th (+ nuclear power)

Note: Regional powers are listed according to their distance from Turkey (refer to the endnotes for details).

The geographical distribution of the significant rival powers in Turkey's neighborhood is also noteworthy. Turkey's only potential rival among its immediate neighbors, Iran, is located to the east of Turkey, where there is no other rival power for over a thousand kilometers, in part because of Iran's sheer size. In contrast, there are significant regional powers within 700 kilometers but not immediately neighboring Turkey in all the other directions, including North (Russia, and Ukraine), West (Italy) and South (Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia), including at least two powers with nuclear weapons (Russia and Israel) and another two powers with nuclear power plants (Italy and Ukraine) that could enable them to produce nuclear weapons in short order. In fact, the remaining two powers (Egypt and Saudi Arabia) are also reputed to have (or have had) ambitions for a nuclear power plant. In short, while the first ring of immediate neighbors around Turkey have considerably smaller economic and military capabilities, the second ring of regional powers that can be described as "neighbors of neighbors", include many states with economic or military capabilities that rival or far surpass those of Turkey.

Turkey Should Secure a "Neighborly Core" as Opposed to a "Periphery Doctrine"

Israel, a country that faced almost exactly the opposite of Turkey's security dilemma, namely, significantly larger and more populous neighbors with which it was at war many times, adopted what is known as the "Periphery Doctrine", formulated by its founding leader and first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. In a nutshell, the Israeli "Periphery Doctrine" meant that in order to maximize security against its Arab neighbors with which it was at war (e.g., Egypt, Syria), Israel would seek alliances with the non-Arab neighbors of its Arab neighbors, such as Iran, Turkey and Ethiopia, as well as the non-Arab

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minorities dispersed across the Middle East.²⁹ Israel’s growing relationship with Greece, Cyprus, Azerbaijan and South Sudan can be seen as an extension of the Periphery Doctrine.³⁰ Furthermore, Trita Parsi intriguingly argues that Israel’s collaborative dealings with Iran continued even after the Islamic Revolution and at the peak of anti-Israeli discourse in Iran’s official rhetoric, demonstrating the resilience of Israeli grand strategy despite ideological rhetoric to the contrary.³¹

The balance of power and the balance of threats in Turkey’s immediate geopolitical environment should motivate Turkey to adopt almost the opposite of Israel’s periphery doctrine. *While Turkey’s immediate neighbors, with the partial exception of Iran, do not pose a conventional, existential military challenge to Turkey in terms of their latent or military power, the “periphery” of Turkey’s immediate neighbors includes up to half a dozen regional powers that have the military or economic capacity to threaten Turkey’s neighbors or Turkey itself, which they have often done in the past. Thus, Turkey should adopt a “neighborly core doctrine” to keep great powers’ military forces out of its immediate neighbors, and if possible, should seek integration with its immediate neighbors through bilateral or multilateral economic, political, and security organizations. The urgency of this imperative is underlined by the fact that four of Turkey’s eight immediate neighbors have been occupied by the great powers or their proxies since the end of the Cold War.* Admittedly, a strategy to prevent great powers’ occupation of Turkey’s immediate neighbors has high strategic costs, both diplomatic and political/economic, but the primary contention of this proposal is that the alternatives, namely, great powers’ occupation of Turkey’s neighbors, come with much greater costs and potentially existential threats.

Balance of Power between the Global Great Powers and Turkey’s Relative Position

The global balance of military and economic power at present indicates a multipolar world order. While the U.S. has the largest defense budget and the largest economy in terms of official exchange rates, the size of the Chinese economy in terms of PPP is already significantly larger than that of the U.S. Likewise, the size of the Indian economy in terms of PPP is already half that of the U.S. Moreover, Russia has slightly more nuclear weapons than the U.S., which is a legacy of the arms race during the Cold War. China, Russia and the U.S. are often considered the three great powers that are capable of projecting power across the world, at least in theory, but one should also remember

that both France and the UK, the two most powerful colonial empires of the 19th century, continue to execute military interventions far away from their core nation-states in Western Europe, as the Falklands War and numerous French military interventions in West Africa demonstrate. Thus, it is reasonable to think of at least three (China, Russia and the U.S.), and up to six (with the addition of France, India and the UK) great powers as the nodes of an emerging, multipolar world order. Turkey's ranking among the top 10 countries in the world in terms of military strength is seemingly surprising in the sense that Turkey has by far the smallest economy and is the only country without nuclear weapons or even nuclear power plants among this group (see Table 3 below).

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	GDP / PPP (billion USD) ³²	Population (million) ³³	Defense Budget (2018, million USD) ³⁴	Military Strength Ranking (2019) ³⁵
U.S.	19,490 / 19,490	329.3	648,798	1 st (+ nuclear weapons)
Russia	1,578 / 4,016	142.1	61,388	2 nd (+ nuclear weapons)
China	12,010 / 25,360	1,384.7	249,997	3 rd (+ nuclear weapons)
India	2,602 / 9,474	1,296.8	66,510	4 th (+ nuclear weapons)
France	2,588 / 2,856	67.3	63,800	5 th (+ nuclear weapons)
Japan	4,873 / 5,443	126.2	46,618	6 th (+ nuclear power)
South Korea	1,540 / 2,035	51.4	43,070	7 th (+ nuclear power)
UK	2,628 / 2,925	65.1	49,997	8 th (+ nuclear weapons)
Turkey	851.5 / 2,186	81.2	18,967	9th
Germany	3,701 / 4,199	80.5	49,471	10 th (+ nuclear power)

Table 3: Balance of Power between the Global Great Powers and Turkey's Relative Position

Balance of Threats for Turkey

The balance of power approach within Neorealism, associated with Kenneth Waltz,³⁶ has been critically refined by Stephen Walt, who emphasizes that states balance against threats rather than against power alone.³⁷ Therefore, the

previous discussion of the economic and military capabilities of Turkey's immediate neighbors and regional powers within a close range may be criticized for not taking into account the actual military threats that have materialized there.

Multiple great powers have occupied most or part of at least three of Turkey's immediate neighbors in the last two decades, in addition to interstate and intrastate wars that they enabled and supported through their proxies in several countries in Turkey's neighborhood. These interventions by great powers and their violent consequences constitute Turkey's main external threat, as briefly discussed in the next section.

Turkey's External Threats: Foreign Occupation and Partition of Turkey's Neighbors

It is indeed an astounding geopolitical development that three of Turkey's eight immediate neighbors (Table 1) have been the targets of military incursions and long-lasting and still continuing military occupations by great powers between 2003 and 2015, whereas another, fourth neighbor has been the target of a military occupation for over a quarter century, with the explicit and massive support of another great power. Equally remarkably, not just one or two but four major great powers, namely, France, Russia, the UK and the U.S., recently had or still have military forces occupying Turkey's neighbors.

Russian, Iranian, American and French Joint Occupation of Syria

Mass protests against authoritarian dictators that have been ruling numerous Middle Eastern and North African countries for many decades began with a rather swift success in removing the autocrats in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, with mass protests spreading to many other Arab countries in a world-historical development popularly known as the Arab Spring. Although the protesters included a vast array of dissident groups, Islamic political movements constituted the backbone of the opposition to secular military dictatorships or Baathist one-party regimes in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Tunisia.³⁸ While many Western countries, including France, the UK and the U.S. initially supported the opposition to the authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Syria, they gradually withdrew their support and went as far as embracing if not abetting the military coup against Mohamad Morsi. These same countries also withdrew their support from the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian opposition in general; instead, France and the U.S. lent their massive support to the Kurdish socialist YPG and SDF.³⁹ To crush a very popular uprising that was gradually defeating the Baathist Assad regime, the Russian military intervened and occupied most of Western Syria starting in September 2015. Russia and Iran together occupied the majority of Syria, including all of its major cities except for Idlib. Millions of mostly Sunni Muslim Syrians have been forcibly displaced from the territories that are jointly occupied by Russia and Iran. Likewise, the U.S. and France occupied almost a third of Syria, including all the territories to

the east of the Euphrates river up until late 2019, also displacing thousands of Syrians, including Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen, who primarily fled to Turkey.⁴⁰ As such, the very popular movement seeking to overthrow the Assad regime has been jointly suppressed by four major foreign powers, primarily Russia and Iran, but also the U.S. and France to a lesser extent. Among the significant regional powers, Turkey alone has remained consistently supportive of the popular opposition in Egypt and the popular opposition in Syria to the present day, even conducting three major cross-border military operations together with the Free Syrian Army/Syrian National Army against Daesh/ISIS and the YPG-SDF in Syria in 2016, 2017 and 2019.⁴¹ A Gallup International survey in the Hasakah and Raqqa provinces that are still under YPG-SDF control showed that 57% of Syrians, including 64% of Arabs and 23% of Kurds support Turkey's military intervention against the French-U.S.-supported YPG-SDF.⁴² Both the Assad-regime and the YPG-SDF rely on tiny ideological minorities within already small ethnic sectarian minorities, and yet they nominally control almost 90 percent of Syria due to the active and overwhelming support of the Russian, Iranian, French and U.S. militaries. Both the Assad-regime and the YPG-SDF are not only potentially but also actually hostile and threatening vis-a-vis Turkey. Thus, the removal of the Russian, Iranian, French and U.S. militaries from Syria, which would almost certainly lead to the collapse of the Assad-regime and the YPG-SDF against the Syrian National Army, is in Turkey's objective interest.

American and Iranian Occupation of Iraq

The U.S. occupation of Iraq in early 2003 was a watershed moment not just for Turkey but for the entire Middle East. Among other momentous developments, the U.S. occupation unleashed a process that led to the Iranian takeover of Iraq and the radical marginalization of millions of Sunni Arabs, which in turn led to the rise of Daesh/ISIS, which primarily exploited the ever-deepening resentment of Sunni Arabs in this process. The U.S. occupation also paved the way for the disintegration of Iraq into a Shiite Arab South-Center and a Sunni Kurdish North, with unrepresented Sunni Arab masses in the middle. During the time of this article's composition, the U.S. assassinated General Qassem Suleimani, commander of "the Quds Force", as the Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps' special operations forces are known, and described as "the most powerful operative in the Middle East."⁴³ This assassination could have escalated U.S.-Iranian tensions as many feared, but it is more likely to succeed in deterring Iran from entirely claiming Iraq at the expense of the withdrawing U.S. forces as some predicted.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, this assassination does not change but rather highlights the status of Iraq as being under the joint occupation of Iran and the U.S. 17 years after the Second Iraq War.

Russian Occupation of Georgia and Ukraine

Russian military presence in Georgia's autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, both of which Russia recognized as independent republics after the Five Day War between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, is another potential threat for Turkey that is often overlooked.⁴⁵ *The importance of an independent Georgia for Turkey's national security and grand strategy cannot be overstated.* Georgia is the only state that stands between Russia, a global great power with a gigantic military, and Turkey. This situation is made even more acute by the centuries-long history of military conflicts between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Second, somewhat similarly and with only a slightly lower level of immediate threat, Russia's occupation and annexation of Ukrainian Crimea in 2014 resulted in Russian hegemony of the Black Sea, making Rus-

sia the most significant potential naval threat for Turkey once again.⁴⁶ While less threatening than Russia's military presence in occupied Crimea, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Russian-backed insurgency in Donetsk and Luhansk in Eastern Ukraine is another potential threat, as it destabilizes and jeopardizes the territorial integrity of Ukraine,

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which is a natural ally of Turkey. Thus, Turkey should also continue to support the sovereign statehood and territorial integrity of Georgia and Ukraine, both of which have been compromised by Russia's military interventions since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but especially since 2008-2014.

Russian-supported Armenian Occupation of Azerbaijan

Armenia's occupation of a significant portion of Azerbaijan with Russia's support and the tacit agreement of some Western and regional powers, such as France and Iran, constituted another potential threat for Turkey among its immediate neighbors at the time of this article's writing in early 2020. As this article was in the final stages of editing and proofreading, Azerbaijan, with the explicit and critical support of Turkey, succeeded in liberating more than half of its territories that were under Armenian occupation in and around Nagorno Karabakh. Turkey has been and should continue to be vocal in demanding the right of return of approximately one million Azerbaijanis who were forcibly displaced by the Armenian occupation to their prewar homes. Ideally, not only should the displaced Azerbaijanis be able to go back to their

prewar homes and claim their properties and civil and political rights, but their lands should also be returned to Azerbaijan. Furthermore, Turkey should be far more vocal in favor of the right of return of millions of Syrians, hundreds

The importance of an independent Georgia for Turkey's national security and grand strategy cannot be overstated.

of thousands of Bosnian Muslims, Crimean Tatars and Meshketians to their prewar homes. Such calls would highlight and amplify the moral high ground on which Turkey already stands with regard to the critical issue of refugees, as will be revisited later in this article as an aspect of Turkey's soft power.

The Primary Goal: To Keep Great Powers' Militaries out of Turkey's Neighbors

The preceding, brief overview of the military and economic capabilities of the global great powers makes one point abundantly clear: any of these great powers' occupation of or indefinite military presence in any of Turkey's immediate neighbors would pose a potentially overwhelming security threat for Turkey. This is not at all an improbable scenario either, but rather what has happened more than twice in the last two decades. The U.S. and the UK occupied Iraq starting in 2003, followed by the Russian occupation of parts of Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014) and Syria (2015), the latter also being occupied in part by the U.S. and France. Most importantly, the top two great powers in the world, the U.S. and Russia, actively occupy significant parts of three of Turkey's immediate neighbors (Georgia, Iraq and Syria) at present, and one can also add Russia's occupation of nearby Ukraine to this list. The military occupation of four countries in Turkey's immediate neighborhood by global great powers not only poses a direct security threat for Turkey—these occupations also indirectly threaten Turkey as they amount to the almost imminent territorial dismemberment of these neighbors. Therefore, the top priority of the Turkish grand strategy should be the withdrawal of the U.S. and Russian military from Turkey's neighbors including and especially Syria, but also Georgia, Iraq and Ukraine, even though the latter is not an immediate territorial neighbor but a maritime neighbor of Turkey across the Black Sea.

Maintaining an Active Forward Presence in Neighbors under Occupation

Turkey should mobilize its hard and soft power to prevent the foreign occupation or dismemberment of its neighbors, but these occupations might still take place despite Turkey's strenuous efforts to prevent them, as happened in the case of the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003. In such cases, as the second-best strategy, Turkey should maintain a forward presence beyond its borders in its immediate neighbors under occupation until the popular sovereignty and territorial integrity of these neighbors are secured. This is how the current Turkish policy on Syria can and should be framed: Turkey has to maintain a zone of "free Syria" in accordance with its responsibility to protect Syrians in a territory where they can exercise popular sovereignty and self-government free from Russian, Iranian, French and American occupation forces, which unfortunately rule over almost ninety percent of Syria at present.⁴⁷

Turkey's Main Internal Threats: Domestic Terrorism and its External Sponsors

Turkey's main internal threat for many decades has been terrorism, and the two most destructive terrorist organizations have been the Gülenists (FETÖ) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The Gülenists sought to capture the unelected components of the state (the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the military and the police), a process that culminated in the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016.⁴⁸ Due to their capture of important levers of state power, the type of destruction caused by the Gülenists makes them more similar to the Stasi in the Communist German Democratic Republic or the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP, popularly known as the Nazis) in Germany, as organizations ensconced within the state rather than non-state actors as typical terrorist organizations tend to be. Therefore, the lustration of Gülenists from Turkish state institutions has some parallels with post-Communist lustration in much of East-Central Europe and Germany. Both the PKK and the Gülenists originated in the 1970s and flourished in the 1980s, and in the geopolitical context of a bipolar world order during the Cold War, the PKK and the Gülenists benefitted from the support of the Soviet Union and the U.S., respectively. Nonetheless, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the PKK increasingly relied on Western European and Middle Eastern (e.g., Syrian) sponsors. Turkey's primary goal as part of its grand strategy has to be to compel the external sponsors of anti-Turkish terrorist organizations such as FETÖ and the PKK to discontinue their support, and, if possible, extradite leading terrorists to Turkey.

Components of Turkey's Soft Power: Democratic Legitimacy and Representation, Islam, Toleration and Sovereignty

My inclusion of soft power as another component of "latent power" deviates somewhat from mainstream neorealism. This difference stems from my

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broader interpretation of the "rationality" of states, one of the five assumptions of neorealism.⁴⁹ I assume that states' rationality goes beyond material sources of power, and that soft power is a form of non-material latent power that can be converted to military power. Soft power, originally conceptualized by Joseph Nye,⁵⁰ is increasingly recognized as a component of grand strategy. Although the definition of soft power is contested, as the concept has been expanded and redefined in ways that go beyond Nye's

original formulation, “the power of attraction”, being a “role model” or being seen as a “benign influence” in world politics can be counted among its various definitions. Moreover, soft power is often multifaceted, and some great powers such as Russia might have five different types of seemingly contradictory forms of soft power.⁵¹

Turkey's Competitive Democratic Legacy

Turkey enjoys various forms of soft power as a result of both structural and agentic factors. Turkey has one of the longest traditions of competitive multiparty democracy stretching back to the Ottoman parliaments of 1908, if not even earlier to 1876. There are very few polities in the world that can claim to have had multiparty elections for more than a hundred years as Turkey has. Even more uniquely, however, late Ottoman Empire had a roughly decade-long and very precious experience of popular legitimacy and parliamentary representation of a religiously diverse population, including numerous Orthodox Christian, Jewish and Muslim members of parliament and even ministers of different religious faiths.⁵²

In contrast, it took the House of Commons, the British parliament, roughly 140 years after the Glorious Revolution to accept any members of the Catholic faith, namely, Christians of a different sect than the mostly Anglican Protestants who had long monopolized the British legislature. It took 170 years after the Glorious Revolution for Britain to accept its first member of parliament belonging to a non-Christian religion, namely, Jewish Lord Lionel Rothschild in 1858. The scenario is similar in the other long-standing Western democracies, where it took four to five decades for France⁵³ and the U.S.⁵⁴ to have their first non-Christian, namely Jewish, members of the national parliament. In contrast to these Western democracies, Ottoman parliaments, and even the first four decades of national parliaments in the Republic of Turkey, always boasted multiple Christian and Jewish members alongside a Muslim majority. The ethnic and linguistic diversity of parliamentary representation was equally pronounced with Albanian, Arab, Armenian, Bulgarian, Circassian, Greek, Jewish, Kurdish, Laz, Vlach and other members. The Ottoman parliaments represented the Ottoman people “from İşkodra [Shkoder in present-day Albania] to Basra [in Iraq]” as the common way to depict the Ottoman homeland during the Constitutional Era maintained. The reflection of this Ottoman and Turkish legacy of a competitive, multiparty electoral system of representation is that many of Turkey's neighbors, and even neighbors of its neighbors (i.e., Albania, Jordan, Lebanon, North Macedonia, etc.), had elected representatives in the Ottoman imperial parliament that in part legitimated a political community extending from present-day Albania and Bulgaria in the North to Kuwait, Libya and Yemen in the South. This heritage of democratic inclusiveness endows Turkey with a kind of soft power capacity for spearheading regional cooperation and integration schemes covering these areas and beyond.

Turkey's Potential to Become "the Missing Muslim-majority Great Power"

Equally importantly, "the absence of Middle Eastern great powers," as critically noted by Ian Lustick,⁵⁵ and the broader phenomenon of "the absence of a Muslim great power" worldwide, endows Turkey, an otherwise "middle power" or "regional power", with the soft power of being perhaps the most likely Muslim great power. As Richard Falk critically observed decades ago, the "Muslim world comprises more than one billion adherents spread across more than forty-five countries, yet no permanent member of the [UN] Security Council is part of the Islamic world, and in most proposals for UN reform, calls for the expansion of the Security Council usually do not propose rectification."⁵⁶ Turkey is the Muslim country ranked highest in terms of military strength (Table 1), and is also the Muslim country with the highest GDP in the world. On the other hand, Turkey is not even among the top five Muslim countries in terms of population⁵⁷ or GDP per capita and, unlike Pakistan and Iran, Turkey does not have nuclear weapons or even a nuclear power plant. Nonetheless, Turkey's economic and military strength, combined with its historical status as the seat of the last great Islamic empire and the Caliphate, are crucial material and symbolic resources for its potential to become the "missing Muslim great power" in the world.

The lack of a Muslim-majority great power has many deleterious consequences for the approximately one and a half billion Muslims around the world, as they do not have a geopolitical patron to effectively intervene when Muslims are the targets of mass persecution.⁵⁸ Examples of such persecution against Muslims include genocidal mass killing (e.g., Bosnia and Myanmar), mass internment (e.g., China), deprivation of citizenship (e.g., India) and prohibition from immigration (e.g., the "Muslim Ban" in the U.S.), all of which have taken place with disturbing frequency since the end of the Cold War. In contrast to the lack of a Muslim-majority great power, there is at least one major great power from all of the other major religious and sectarian traditions, including Protestant Christianity (e.g., the U.S. and the UK), Catholic Christianity (e.g., France, Brazil), Orthodox Christianity (Russia), Confucianism (China) and Hinduism (India). All five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) are non-Muslim, as Richard Falk notes, and even those considered as potential new members in a possible reform to extend UNSC membership, such as Brazil, Germany, India and Japan, are also non-Muslim.

In addition to these structural and historical reasons such as the lack of a Muslim-majority great power and Turkey's long history of competitive multiparty elections, there are also more agentic factors that augment Turkey's soft power, such as its toleration of both Muslim and secular ways of life historically and at present, as well as Turkey's recently more prominent assertive and defiant stance vis-a-vis non-Muslim great powers in defending its sovereignty. There

are many, mostly non-Muslim countries where people persecuted in Muslim-majority countries seek refuge, and there are other mostly Muslim-majority countries where persecuted Muslim minorities seek refuge. Turkey is almost unique among Muslim-majority polities, however, in receiving and welcoming in significant numbers both mostly Muslim people persecuted by European and American governments (e.g., France, Germany, Greece, Russia, Serbia, and even the U.S.) as well as welcoming even more numerous people of different ideological, political, religious or non-religious backgrounds who are persecuted by Asian, African and Muslim-majority governments (e.g., China, Egypt, Iran, and Syria, among others). Turkey's status as being a prominent safe haven for many people persecuted around the world is a crucial component of its soft power. Being a "safe haven" for Muslims fleeing persecution is a constitutive part of Turkey's national identity and founding as a modern nation-state, similar to the founding of Pakistan and Algeria,⁵⁹ and also similar to the function of Israel as a safe haven for the Jewish people.⁶⁰ Thus, components of soft power and grand strategy at large are often related to and broadly consistent with the contours of national identity.

There are several Muslim-majority democracies around the world, some of which also boast a relatively sizeable economy and a reputation for being tolerant of both Muslim and secular ways of life, but none of them have had more than a century of competitive multiparty elections as Turkey has. Furthermore, Turkey is almost unique among this rather small subset of sizeable Muslim democratic polities for being defiant of Western and non-Western great powers as the recent crises between Turkey and Russia, Turkey and France and Turkey and the U.S. over Syria, Cyprus, Libya, Israel-Palestine and Egypt demonstrate. Similarly, and especially after the failure of the coup attempt of July 15, 2016, Turkey increasingly carved out a reputation and identity as a "democracy without or even in spite of Western powers' interventions" rather than a "democracy because of or thanks to the Western powers' interventions," as its image was characterized during the Cold War.⁶¹ All of these factors separately but even more importantly together endow Turkey with significant soft power among Muslim majorities and Muslim minorities around the world.

Turkey's Gateways to the West, East and South: Bulgaria, Georgia and Syria

All of Turkey's neighbors, with the partial exception of Iran, are potential allies with which Turkey should seek bilateral and multilateral cooperation and economic and even political integration. This integration may take the form of a Customs Union as Turkey already has with its European neighbors, or even a political union as Turkey pursued with its applications and candidacy for the EU. Such integration may also take the form of removal of visas and

free movement of goods, services, and people that Turkey pursued with some countries on a bilateral basis. Turkey initiated or joined several such cooperation schemes in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Near East in the past. Nonetheless, for various historical, structural and agentic reasons, several of Turkey's neighbors are particularly valuable and appropriate as Turkey's gateways to the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Near East, corresponding to the geographic directions of West, East and South, respectively. In a nutshell, Bulgaria more than Greece, Georgia more than Armenia and Syria more than Iraq or Iran, provide better opportunities as Turkey's three key potential allies and gateways to these three respective regions.

Bulgaria does not have any significant outstanding disputes with Turkey. Bulgaria also has the largest Turkish minority in the Balkans, a minority that has been peacefully integrated into Bulgarian politics with a political party that is the third largest and often the kingmaker in the formation of coalition governments. Furthermore, Bulgaria is along the main highway that connects Turkey through Edirne to the rest of Europe and, as such, already serves as Turkey's gateway to Europe in a rather literal sense. In addition to these political, demographic and geographic advantages, despite its very recent problems with North Macedonia, Bulgaria has significantly more congenial relations with most Western Balkan countries compared to Greece, Turkey's only other European neighbor; thus, Bulgaria is a more natural bridge connecting Turkey to friendly Western Balkan countries such as Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bulgaria's very recent crisis with North Macedonia that erupted during the proofreading of this article does not change this general evaluation because Greece cannot be considered to have better relations with North Macedonia than Bulgaria since Greece also had a decades-long crisis with North Macedonia. Thus, a strong partnership with Bulgaria would open up the Western Balkans for regional cooperation and integration for Turkey.

Georgia is perhaps Turkey's most important, albeit vulnerable neighbor in terms of a realist grand strategy, as it is the only country between Russia and Turkey, and is also the country that connects Turkey to another critical ally, Azerbaijan, and through Azerbaijan across the Caspian Sea to Turkmenistan and the rest of Central Asia. Yet Georgia is already partially occupied by the Russian military (i.e., Abkhazia and South Ossetia), and the rest of the country has been living under the shadow of a potential Russian invasion since at least the Five Day War of 2008, if not before. The Kars-Tbilisi-Baku pipeline and railroad are both critically significant in connecting Turkey to Azerbaijan and the Caspian basin through Georgia. Moreover,

All of Turkey's neighbors, with the partial exception of Iran, are potential allies with which Turkey should seek bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation and economic and even political integration.

as in the case of Bulgaria, Georgia also has a sizeable Muslim minority that is an integral part of the fabric of Georgian society, concentrated in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara with its capital city of Batumi just north of the Turkish border, and with an oversized Muslim Georgian diaspora dispersed throughout Turkey. In short, for geographic, demographic, cultural, historic and economic reasons, Georgia is well-suited as Turkey's gateway to the Caucasus and Eurasia.

Syria has many advantages similar to those Bulgaria and Georgia enjoy in their relationship to Turkey, with its many demographic groups (Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, etc.) related across the Syrian-Turkish border, and with Turkey's main transportation route to the Near East, historically and at present, running from Gaziantep through Aleppo down to Damascus and beyond, reaching into Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Hejaz. Unlike the popular democratic regimes in Bulgaria and Georgia, where the Turkish/Muslim minorities serve as a demographic facilitator or conduit of closer cooperation with Turkey, the situation in Syria is almost exactly the opposite on both accounts. The Assad regime in power in Damascus is an ideological minority dictatorship that has perpetrated genocidal warfare and demographic engineering against the majority of the Syrian people, including the massacre of half a million people and the forced exodus of approximately thirteen million Syrians, and the Assad regime is openly hostile to Turkey. Up to four million Syrians who sought refuge in Turkey, and several million who live in northwest Syria under the protection of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and the Turkish-supported Syrian National Army (SNA), as well as many others who live beyond these zones but welcome TAF-SNA's interventions in Syria, demonstrate that a majority of Syrians are indeed sympathetic to Turkey, but the regime in power in Damascus is not. As a result, Turkey's gateway to the Near East has been blocked since 2011, or rather limited to the territories of Northwestern Syria free of Assad-regime control, which can also be conceptualized as "Free Syria."⁶²

In the absence of a sustainable resolution to the Syrian conflict, the secondary alternative gateway from Turkey to the Middle East could be through the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (IKRG) or Northern Iraq more broadly. The IKRG and Turkey have cooperated intensely since the early 2000s, if not even earlier, despite the limited crisis over the KRG's unilateral referendum for independence in 2017. Turkey's historically rooted and overwhelmingly amicable ties with both Azerbaijan and the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq are also critical and have multiple significances for its grand strategy.

Building a Network of Third Powers and Buffer States: From Finland to Qatar and from Algeria to Pakistan

Turkey is not at all alone in being a regional power or a middle power being pressured by the rival American-, Russian-, or Chinese-led alliances. Across Eastern Europe, from Finland and Poland by the Baltic Sea down to Ukraine

and Bulgaria by the Black Sea, a large number of small and middle-sized countries are facing the double pressure if not also the destabilizing influence of the competition between Euro-American and Russia-centric alliances. Arguably, Georgia, Ukraine, Iraq and Syria have been disintegrating or have been partitioned as a result of the competitive pressures of these two sets of rival alliances. Similarly, from the Middle East and North Africa to South Asia, countries such as Algeria, Pakistan and Yemen are facing the simultaneous pressures of rival alliance systems.

Qatar, which sought to navigate a middle course between Saudi-American and Russian-Iranian axes, or Algeria and Libya, which potentially or actually face the destructive consequences of Emirati-French-Egyptian or Russian sponsorship of mass intrastate warfare, could be brought together by Turkey as part of a network of third powers.

Turkey has an interest in preserving the sovereign existence and territorial integrity of these countries situated at the fault lines of conflict between different alliances. This situation presents an opportunity for Turkey to build a network of similarly vulnerable third powers and buffer states in between the rival global alliance networks. The well-known Turkish-Qatari and Turkish-Pakistani alliances can be considered already existing applications of this approach, but for the “third power” approach to become the organizing principle of Turkish grand strategy, there would need to be many other bilateral and multilateral cooperation schemes bringing together Turkey and regional powers that are disaffected by the competitive meddling of European, American-Emirati-Israeli, Russian-Iranian and Sinocentric alliances in their affairs.

In Eastern Europe, the “Three Seas Initiative,”⁶³ also known as the Baltic, Adriatic, Black Sea Initiative,⁶⁴ which brings together 12 member states of the EU stretching from Estonia and Poland in the North to Slovenia and Croatia in the Southwest and Bulgaria and Romania in the Southeast, could be a good example of “third power” networking that Turkey should consider at least informally joining or cooperating with as a candidate rather than a member of the EU. In general, the geography in between these three seas,⁶⁵ populated by mostly small and middle-sized states occupied more than twice in the last century by rival great powers, is fertile ground to establish such a network of “third powers.”

EU membership has been an official goal and also a somewhat popular aspiration for much of the Turkish public, elites and masses alike, going back almost 60 years to the Ankara Agreement of 1963 establishing an association between the European Economic Community and Turkey. Despite the seeming incompatibilities between EU membership and historically rooted and popular supranational visions such as Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism, approximately half of the Turkish public was supportive of EU membership when it was a salient topic and a real possibility in the early 2000s.⁶⁶ The EU membership of all of the Balkan countries as a whole, including Turkey, is in Turkey’s interest;

following the same logic, all Balkan countries including Turkey remaining outside of the EU could also be in Turkey's interest if they could be brought together in another regional integration scheme. The guiding principle should be to keep as many, and ideally all, Balkan countries including Turkey in one and the same regional integration scheme. In other words, it is against Turkey's interest for some Balkan countries to join the EU in the absence of Turkey, as has unfortunately happened, thus erecting rather challenging borders and geopolitical hierarchies separating and alienating some Balkan countries from each other and from Turkey. The alternative to all Balkan countries including Turkey being EU members could be alternative integration schemes that bring together Turkey and the non-EU member Balkan states. Turkey's historically rooted and amicable ties with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia are important resources for such regional integration initiatives.

Conclusion

There are obvious challenges for a middle-sized country such as Turkey seeking to build an alternative alliance network instead of joining either one of the two largest alliance networks spearheaded by the great powers. However, relying only on one or the other of these two alliance networks would amount to potentially self-destructive “bandwagoning” in my opinion, since both of these two largest alliance networks, spearheaded by Russia and the U.S., have engaged in numerous adversarial and threatening actions that have harmed Turkey's national security over the last couple of decades, especially in very recent years.⁶⁷ Bandwagoning is a particularly disadvantageous strategy that neorealists strongly warn against.

In conclusion, this article proposes a grand strategy for Turkey that is broadly based on neorealist assumptions. While Turkey's immediate neighbors, with the partial exception of Iran, do not pose a conventional, existential military challenge to Turkey in terms of their latent or actual power, the “periphery” of Turkey's immediate neighbors includes up to half a dozen regional powers that have the military or economic capacity to threaten Turkey's neighbors or Turkey itself, which they have done in the recent past. Thus, Turkey should adopt a “neighborly core doctrine” to keep the great powers' military forc-

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es out of the sovereign territory of its immediate neighbors, and if possible, should seek integration with its immediate neighbors through bilateral or multilateral economic, political and security initiatives. The urgency of this imperative is underlined by the fact that four of Turkey's eight neighbors have been occupied by the great powers or their proxies since the end of the Cold War. Among Turkey's immediate neighbors, Bulgaria, Georgia and Syria are critical as Turkey's gateways to the West, East and South, respectively. Turkey's historically rooted and overwhelmingly amicable ties with more than a dozen countries across Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia are highlighted for their positive significance in this grand strategy.

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- 65 The territory between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea in particular has been conceptualized in the early 20th century as the *Intermarium*, which some scholars see as the predecessor of the current Three Seas Initiative. As a significant similarity, both the historical *Intermarium* and the current Three Seas Initiative have been led by Poland. On the *Intermarium* and its connection to the Three Seas Initiative, see Ostap Kushnir (ed.), *The Intermarium as the Polish-Ukrainian Linchpin of Baltic-Black Sea Cooperation*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.
- 66 Şener Aktürk, "Incompatible Visions of Supra-Nationalism: National Identity in Turkey and the European Union," *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (2007), pp. 347-372.
- 67 On the definition and disadvantages of bandwagoning as such, see Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pp. 139-140 & 162-164.