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## Turkish Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century

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# Turkish Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century

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# Turkish Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century

*Alexander Murinson*

## INTRODUCTION

Since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rose to power in 2002, especially after the 2007 presidential elections in which the party with Islamist roots consolidated its hold on power, Turkey has pursued a neo-Ottoman vision in its foreign policy. Neo-Ottomanism, which gives a prominent place to Islam and Turkey's imperial history as soft power tools in the conduct of foreign policy, negates the country's secular Kemalist legacy and republican diplomacy tradition.<sup>1</sup> The blueprint for this policy was outlined in the *Stratejik Derinlik* (Strategic Depth) doctrine propounded by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. It called for an activist engagement with all of the regions in Turkey's neighborhood, such as the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. Davutoğlu pushed for re-engagement with the Middle East in particular, specifically with Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and the Gulf states.<sup>2</sup> With reference to the disagreement between the United States and major European countries regarding military action in Iraq during the second Gulf War, Davutoğlu – the architect of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's foreign policy – advised developing a “balanced” approach toward all global and regional actors. He emphasized the importance of economic interdependency in the globalizing world and the need to build strong economic linkages with all regional states. Hence, in 2009, after being appointed foreign minister, Davutoğlu announced the policy of “zero problems with neighbors.” He envisioned that Turkey would transform itself into a true global actor.

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The Jasmine revolutions in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt raised expectations that Turkey would emerge as a key regional power in the Middle East. It was argued that the “Arab Winter of 2011 has created a new Middle East landscape in which the AKP’s Turkey, which has positioned itself as the defender of the Muslim Brotherhood and popular uprisings — Ankara has voiced the strongest support for the Egyptian demonstrators, calling for Mubarak’s departure before any other country did — is a regional power to be reckoned with.”<sup>3</sup> By aligning itself with radical Islamist groups such as Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood and its Gazan spin-off Hamas, Turkey places itself, formerly Israel’s main Middle Eastern ally, at loggerheads with the Jewish state.

This paper explores two questions: What are the ideological, social, and political roots of the new “Islamic” Republic of Turkey? How was the new thinking of the ascending political anti-Kemalist elite translated into a precipitous change in Turkey’s foreign policy?

The first section of will describe the fundamentals that guided Turkey’s foreign policy throughout the Cold War period and the geopolitical crisis that occurred at that period’s end. The second section will highlight the three main causes of the drastic shift in the Turkish orientation towards the Greater Middle East: the American-promoted “Turkish model,” a new revisionist doctrine of foreign policy introduced by Davutoğlu, and the emergence of the new political elite representing the conservative and religious businesspeople of Central Anatolia. The third section will examine how this thinking was translated into concrete policies in the region. The fourth section will describe the new dynamic in the region unleashed by the “Arab Spring.” The conclusion analyzes the ramifications of Turkey’s ambition to become the regional kingmaker and its role in an evolving geostrategic environment.

## **THE TRADITIONAL TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY**

Kemalist Turkey viewed the neighboring Arab regimes with suspicion. The republican governments adhered to the view of a permanent threat of an Arab “knife in the back.” This haunting image,

which describes Arab support of the British goal of dismembering the Ottoman Empire during World War I, had a profound effect on shaping the Republic's perception of its immediate environment.<sup>4</sup> The Kemalist elite, the bureaucratic and political class in Turkey for than more than seventy years, viewed the period of Ottoman expansion into the area of the modern Middle East and the Balkans as disastrous policy that nearly ended in the demise of the Turkish state.

Turkey has been a maverick for most of its modern history, a Middle Eastern regional power that chose to reject its region and its past in favor of the West and Europe. Somewhat counter-intuitively, the revolutionary secular ideas upon which the Republic of Turkey was formed made Turkish leaders reluctant to draw on its past, in which the Ottoman Empire spent 400 years as the head of the Islamic world. Instead of drawing from this reservoir of shared culture, history, and religion that might have resonated with its Middle Eastern neighbors in normative, ideational, and material terms, Turkey chose a different path.<sup>5</sup> Yet despite contemporary Turkey's commitment to the Western alliance and its intention to join the European Union, Turkish leaders have become increasingly aware that their country is being cast in the West in the role of a Middle Eastern regional leader and spokesman for the Muslim world. Particularly in a post-Cold War period of Turkish foreign policy, Turkey has attempted to project an image of a rising global power while entertaining ideas about its place in its wider neighborhood that hark back to its former imperial days. This process of reincorporating past identities and ideas about religion into Turkey and its regional standing has renewed debates about its foreign policy orientation.

Traditional works on Turkish foreign policy emphasize the Western-orientation and *Realpolitik* inclination of Turkey's decision makers, which has led to a relatively consistent security culture in Turkey.<sup>6</sup> Turkey's inclusion into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952 solidified the country's role as a bulwark against communist expansion in the Middle East and established the main tenets of Turkish foreign policy for the Cold War years.<sup>7</sup> Yet despite the best attempts of Turkey's early Western modernizers to detach the country from its pre-Republican imperial history, the ideas and memories of Turkey's role in the Ottoman Empire, as the center of

the Muslim religion, have continued to exert an enduring influence upon the Turkish electorate. The religious motivation among the majority of Turkish citizens was always open to manipulation by political leaders professing a variety of attachment to values of Islam, from former Prime Ministers Turgut Özal (1983-1989) and Necmettin Erbakan (1996-1997) to current Prime Minister Erdoğan.<sup>8</sup> However, the end of the Cold War period had drastic effects on the geopolitics of the West. The classical geopolitical framework of the Cold War, predominantly based on military security, ended for the West, which could hardly find a place for Turkey in the new security architecture.<sup>9</sup>

At the regional level, the factors affecting Turkish foreign policy ranged from the power vacuum left by the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War, to the deterioration of the Kurdish problem and the changing dynamics in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The latter conflict provided Turkey with an opportunity for an enhanced role as a mediator of regional conflicts, especially in the period prior to Operation Cast Lead in Gaza during the winter of 2008-2009. More importantly, the factors include the United States' waning influence in the region and stalled negotiations about Turkey's membership in the European Union. The US was perceived by Turkey as a less-than-steadfast ally because the Americans aggravated Turkey's sensitivities on the Kurdish question in 2003-2007, only later diffusing Turkey's fears by cooperating in the fight against the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). After becoming an EU candidate country in 2004, the prospect of EU membership has turned into a disappointment that reinforced a search for a prominent role in the Muslim world. All these trends, in the direction of moving away from the West, exerted powerful influence on Turkey's foreign and domestic policy.

## **THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW TURKEY**

### ***Turkey: A Model Country***

The shifts in Turkey's policies towards its neighbors are dramatic and can be explained only by a confluence of international, regional, and domestic factors. The systemic change at the international and

regional levels, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is responsible for a shift in general Turkish foreign policy. As Washington and its European allies march to fill a geopolitical vacuum in the Eurasian Heartland, they have tried to establish Turkey as a model country that combines a modernized or “moderate” Islam with secularism in this geographical space.<sup>10</sup> In fact, some Washington policy-makers, including then President George H. W. Bush, proposed that Turkey, with its tradition of eclectic, Sufi-influenced Islamic tradition and secular regime, could serve as a perfect example of coexistence between modernity and Islam; hence the idea was named the “Turkish model.” In the meantime, the lack of clarity of both the concept itself and several resulting policies have created political and social chaos of global proportions in the process. Turkey felt encouraged by US policies to reach out to Islamists in other Muslim countries and support these movements. Along the way some American policy-makers, most recently in the Obama administration, have tried to redefine Islam and subordinate it to the American interests in the region by ushering in a new generation of the so-called “moderate” Islamists, chiefly amongst the Arabs.<sup>11</sup>

***Domestic Transformation: The “Calvinist Islam”***

Without proper weight given to the Turkey’s domestic transformation and, most pointedly, an emergence of neo-Ottomanist ideology, the willingness of the AKP to abolish Turkey’s traditional policy of regional detachment and promote “zero-problems with neighbors,” based on glorification of the Ottoman past, would be impossible.

The domestic contours of Turkey’s foreign policy establishment are notoriously fractious, consisting of institutional actors such as the prime minister, military, and bureaucracy that must work in accord with the democratically-elected legislature. Under the 1981 constitution, the Milli Güvenlik Kurulu (MGK), Turkey’s National Security Council, was established for policy coordination. Given Turkey’s political history of highly unstable coalition governments and corruption scandals, it is not surprising that before the AKP’s rise to power that the country’s political echelons commanded much less public trust and support than the military, which had been seen as the ultimate guardian of Atatürk’s secular republic.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the

constitutional courts and presidency have checked the power of any parliamentary majority until 2007, when Abdullah Gül, a former AKP foreign minister, became the president. While a decisive role in foreign policy decision-making was traditionally entrusted to the military and other state bureaucracies through a mechanism of the MGK, the AKP's institutional and constitutional reforms in Turkey have curtailed the MGK's powers.<sup>13</sup>

While Kemalism and the secular Kemalist establishment are still part of the Turkish scene, they are just one part in a much more varied and fluid social fabric, and hardly in ascendancy. New elites and networks have emerged, with new attitudes toward both foreign policy and governance. Above all, public participation in the foreign policy debate has expanded greatly.<sup>14</sup> The critical input into the AKP's new thinking was made by Davutoğlu in the *Stratejik Derinlik* in 2001, in which he advanced a concept of the "strategic depth" to guide the foreign policy of Erdoğan's government. The origins of Davutoğlu's approach to geopolitics can be traced to Özal's neo-Ottomanism and the multi-dimensional foreign policy of the Erbakan government in the late 1990s. His main thesis is that strategic depth is predicated on both geographical and historical depth. Therefore Turkey, as a result of its historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire, possesses a great geographical depth.<sup>15</sup> According to Davutoğlu, "This key geographical depth places Turkey right at the center of many geopolitical areas of influence."<sup>16</sup> His concept of "strategic depth" is composed of four broad denominators. *Geographical depth* is derived from Turkey's geographical location with equal access to the Balkans, Middle East, Central Asia, and Russia. *Historical depth* relates to the common Ottoman history of the region, which places Turkey, as the Ottoman successor state, in a unique position to exploit such a position as a means of diplomacy. *Geo-cultural influence* relates to the present-day cultural commonalities with the post-Ottoman world that arises from this common heritage. *Geo-economic importance* relates to Turkey's central position as a transit country for Europe's energy supplies. This geo-economic importance is complemented by the potential of the growing Turkish export market for not only Europe and the US, but for Russia as well. This "strategic depth" equips Turkey with unique opportunities in the global political economy, which, according to Davutoğlu, can be produced by a more

proactive and cooperative approach in Turkey's foreign policy. These regional foreign policy initiatives aim at the creation of a realm of zero problems around Turkey. Davutoğlu's oeuvre was "the most systematic, substantial, and comprehensive vision of Turkey's strategic position yet written."<sup>17</sup>

### *The New Turkish Elite and Neo-Ottomanist Ideology*

The strategic depth doctrine was embedded in the new neo-Ottomanist discourse, legitimizing the AKP's ideology. The memory of the disastrous policy of the Ottoman expansion into the area of the Middle East and the Balkans has been dismissed by the AKP leadership, which has undergone the political maturation in the ranks of the Islamist Refah (Welfare) party and cherishes a nostalgic notion of the Ottomans as the benign "master-nation" in the region.

This new neo-Ottomanist trend is a reflection of profound social transformation and of the *zeitgeist* of the changing composition of the Turkish elite and society. It is also the culmination of new ideological innovations that emerged during the period of Turgut Özal's presidency (1989-1993). Neo-Ottomanism is the ideology of the new Turkish elite, which began to form in central Anatolia at the end of the 1980s.<sup>18</sup> This group of elites originated primarily from representatives of the conservative and religious lower class, i.e. urban residents and migrant rural population. As a result of upward social mobility, propelled by Özal's economic reform as prime minister and migration to the major cities, especially Istanbul, the rise of a new entrepreneurial middle class was imminent.

The Anatolian Tigers, successful religiously conservative businessmen, popularized the ideology, using quotations from the Quran and claims that the Prophet blessed commerce and development in general. In the meantime, the population of Konya, the stronghold of the Anatolian Tigers, has grown ten times over fifty years from 65,000 to 600,000. This movement acquired the sobriquet the "Islamic Calvinism."<sup>19</sup> The adherents of this ideology use the discourse of the Protestant ethics of the religious merit of work and the necessity to save, blessing worldly asceticism and advanced education. The new elite, as a result of education and urbanization,

brought new (or rather old conservative) attitudes and ideas into the political discourse. The views of the rising political elite widely diverged from the classical Kemalism espoused by the Ankara establishment. The new elite's ideology, tinged with imperial nostalgia, emphasizes the role of small business, laissez-faire economics, and state non-intervention combined with the conservative values of Turkish society. An important contribution to this ideological trend was made by Huner Sencan, the author of a brochure titled *İş Hayatında İslam İnsani (Homo Islamicus) (A Muslim in Business Life)*.<sup>20</sup> Another influential current among the Turkish Calvinists is the Nurcular religious order, composed of the followers of Turkish Sufi preacher Said Nursi (1876-1960), who admonished his adherents to study Western science and modern technology without abandoning traditional Islamic values. These representatives of the lower middle class from central Anatolia formed their own union of Islamic businessmen, MÜSİAD, which propagates this religious connection between Islam and the values of the free market. In fact, MÜSİAD membership constitutes important, possibly crucial, support for the AKP in local and national elections.

Among Islamist groups which backed the AKP, the most influential and the largest is the Gülen community, known as the *Cemaat*. The Gülen movement, led by Fetullah Gülen, who currently resides in the US, is the most effective and strongest community with geopolitical and imperial goals. The community has thousands of colleges and secondary schools throughout Turkey; 75 percent of Turkey's 2 million preparatory school students enroll in the sect, while the movement runs hundreds of secondary schools and dozens of universities in 110 countries around the world. The community has appreciable influence in economic, political, and cultural spheres, enabling it to operate as the third power in Turkish politics after the AKP and military. Although Gülen claims that his party is not political and does not want to be involved in the political sphere, it is in fact engaged in politics and affects both the Turkish and international political spheres through its grassroots politics.<sup>21</sup>

The objective of the Gülen movement in the 1980s and 1990s was to create a broad community network that positioned itself as an alternative to political Islam, which denied Western values. Since

then, however, the Gülen community has reconstructed itself against the secular Kemalist establishment without directly challenging the military. The movement immeasurably strengthened its financial, cultural, and political influence and now runs many publishing outlets, including the popular newspaper *Zaman*, the journal *Sizinti*, and the media outlets Samanyolu TV, Meltem TV, and Dünya Radio. Gülen members, or *Fethullahcilar*, have also infiltrated state institutions, including the gendarmerie and police forces. More importantly, many members of the *Cemaat* gained key positions within government institutions and the ruling party. In fact, many *Cemaat* members are prominent in Turkey's foreign affairs sector; most Foreign Ministry officers are *Fethullahcilar*, and even *Fethullahcilar* who are not diplomats get special diplomatic treatment when traveling abroad. Whenever a Turkish foreign minister visits another country he visits Gülen's schools.<sup>22</sup>

Fetullah Gülen's domestic policy concerns stem from his objection to the secular laicist constitutional system in Turkey, as derived from Kemalist modernization, and the exclusion of Islam from the public sphere. According to Gülen, Kemalist modernization ignores the place of spirituality in individual's lives and restricts Islam to the private sphere. He states in one of his sermons:

Now it is a painful spring that we live in. A nation is being born again. A nation of millions [is] being born one that will live for long centuries, God willing...It is being born with its own culture, its own civilization. If giving birth to one person is so painful, the birth of millions cannot be pain-free. Naturally we will suffer pain. It won't be easy for a nation that has accepted atheism, has accepted materialism, a nation accustomed to running away from itself, to come back riding on its horse.<sup>23</sup>

The Gülen community wants to move Islam from the private domains of individuals into the public sphere, conducting every aspect of life according to its teachings. In this sense the Gülen community is opposed to territorial definitions of Turkish nationalism that predominantly stem from Kemalist nationalism and the nation-state. Gülen envisions the ideal of imperium and disseminates among his

followers a supranational model embodied in Turkey's Ottoman past and its millet structure, which aims to include all segments of society, unlike nationalism and its exclusionary mechanism.<sup>24</sup>

To achieve this expansionist vision the community supports the integration of Turkey into the European Union and the globalization process in which the community considers itself located in the Western geopolitical sphere, making Turkey a bridge to the Islamic world and Asia.<sup>25</sup> In Gülen's view, the hegemony over the Turkic world, an anticipated commonwealth of the Turkic-speaking former Soviet republics, can make Turkey a great power again. This vision is strongly linked with Turkey's transformation from a secular nation state to Gülen's vision of the Ottoman system. Opening schools throughout the world to Islamize and "Turkify" these regions, particularly in the Turkic world, is a means to this objective. These schools both Islamize the communities in which they are located as well as promote soft Turkish ethno-nationalist sentiments.

As a US resident, Fetullah Gülen is aware of the organized Jewish community's significant influence in American politics, and its promotion of the US as an ecumenical leader that is sensitive to the Jewish concerns, including Israel. The divergent views on Turkish policy toward Israel led to increasing tensions between the Gülen *Cemaat* and the Erdoğan government.<sup>26</sup> The open conflict erupted in 2010, after the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla incident, when Gülen openly criticized Erdoğan for his arrogance in conduct of foreign affairs. In an interview with an influential American newspaper, Gülen said that the flotilla organizers failed to reach an agreement with Israel before attempting to deliver aid, which was a "sign of defying authority." He added, "What I saw was not good, and it was ugly."<sup>27</sup>

### **TURKEY'S NEO-OTTOMANIST VISION**

A substantial part of the Turkish political elite, including former Presidents Turgut Özal (1989-1993) and Süleyman Demirel (1993-2000), were convinced that in the post-Cold War era Turkey needed to return to its historical home, i.e. to fortify its position in the Middle East, improve its historical links with the newly-independent Turkic

states, and ease tensions with its Russian neighbor.<sup>28</sup> The Turkish observer Kivanç Galip Över, who served as the head of the Presidential Secretariat General of Information Production and Publication Department in Ahmet Sezer's administration, argued in 2003 that "[recent] events demonstrated that positions of Turkey in the West will depend on the degree of Turkish influence in the East."<sup>29</sup> A Eurasian future of Turkish foreign policy, an alternative to EU membership and an alliance with the West, was even suggested by some top ranking officers in the Turkish military, such as General Hüseyin Kivrikoğlu, a chief of the Turkish General Staff (1998-2002) and General Tuncer Kiliç, a former secretary general of the National Security Council (2002).<sup>30</sup> This Eurasian dimension of the Turkey's foreign policy was confirmed by the high-level trip to the Turkic states undertaken by Erdoğan after his first electoral victory in the winter of 2003.<sup>31</sup> This was followed by an invitation to President Vladimir Putin to visit Ankara, a first for a Russian president.<sup>32</sup> The Kemalist establishment was in consensus with Erdoğan's policy, as was evident from the statements made by President Ahmet Sezer's cabinet chief and Principal Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of the Republic Tacan İldem.<sup>33</sup>

A deeply religious Ottoman notion of the *Kızıl Elma* (Red Apple), which implies Muslim Turkey's world domination as inevitable, was revived as Turkey's geopolitical vision in the post-Cold War era by Turkish nationalist elites.<sup>34</sup> The search for the *Kızıl Elma* became the main underlying motif of the Turkish foreign policy following the Özal era, and under the "moderate" AKP Islamist government it has shifted into high gear.<sup>35</sup> One of the basic determinants of Turkish foreign policy since 1992 was an ambition to become the predominant power in the Greater Middle East, a region envisioned by former American President George W. Bush that comprises a vast geography stretching from Central Asia to the Maghreb.<sup>36</sup> As such, Turkey seeks a role of the chief moderator and "curator," or facilitator, of interactions in regions adjacent to Turkey: the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the Middle East. By doing so, the Turkish political leadership articulated a vision for Turkey playing the role that the Ottoman Empire used to perform in the region. This new direction of Turkish foreign policy contradicts the spirit of Atatürk, the Republic's founder, who postulated that Turkey should refrain from any grand

designs in its foreign policy and instead concentrate its resources on national development within the boundaries of Anatolia. Atatürk indicated that the only grand design or vocation for Turkey should be the process of Europeanization.

When the AKP won the November 2002 general elections with 35 percent of the vote it gained 365 seats in the Meclis, Turkey's parliament. Successive increases in popular vote (47 percent in 2007, 49.83 percent in 2011) reinforced the dominant party's view that it had earned the legitimate mandate to exert Turkey's influence globally. Under the AKP, the foreign policy domain has gradually come under civilian control, while the military was eliminated by political means from foreign policy decision-making process. The party avoided direct confrontation with the United States and declared entrance into the EU as its main goal. The US even attempted to pressure the European capitals and Brussels to expedite the process of Turkish integration into Europe in exchange for its cooperation on Iraq. The American efforts, however, failed to convince the European leaders at a summit in Copenhagen and the decision was postponed until 2004. The Meclis voted in March 2003 to deny the US access to its territory for deployment for the coming military campaign in Iraq.

Repeated disappointment with its Western allies led Turkey to seek an alternative direction in its foreign and domestic policies. Meanwhile the Russian vector of Turkish foreign policy became stronger, especially after the start of construction of the Blue Stream natural gas project in 2002, a critical development for Turkey's energy security. Turkey is increasingly dependent on Russia's natural gas supplies, and its tourism sector, a source of significant revenue for the national economy, also relies heavily on Russian tourism. In addition, Russia has become a large market for Turkey's construction companies.

The Davutoğlu strategic depth doctrine, while placing less emphasis on nationalism than the traditional Kemalist ideology, stresses Muslim solidarity and the transnational concept of *ummah*, the Muslim community. The national spirit can be described as a source of pride for the Turkish Muslims, for its heritage and tradition of craftsmanship and hard work. The Turkish people feel emboldened to

lead other Muslim nations on the path to the Western standard of living, representative democracy, and modernity. These broad concepts summarize the spirit of neo-Ottomanism. The politicians, represented by the inner circle of the AKP who embraced this vision, have a long-term global agenda with the goal of making Turkey a major global power by 2023, the centennial year of the Republic. This new Turkish elite is implementing this program with zeal, dedication, and sophistication. If, in the period before the consolidation of power by the AKP (2002-2007), none of these policy makers proclaimed the slogans about the “restoration of the empire” or “the new great empire,” recently Davutoğlu revealed his neo-Ottomanist vision: “Turkey could become a union of nations just like Britain’s union with its former colonies,” he said. “Why shouldn’t Turkey rebuild its leadership in former Ottoman lands in the Balkans, Middle East, and Central Asia?”<sup>37</sup>

An essential to this revival of Ottoman legacies has been the expanding economic interests and regional dynamism represented by the rise of new rural Anatolian businesses led by devout Muslims competing with traditional metropolitan Aegean businesses. These Anatolian businesses have emerged as strong advocates for further Turkish expansion into emerging Middle Eastern rather than European markets. It would be hard to make sense of Turkish foreign policy towards countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Iran, Iraq, and Syria without taking into consideration these new business interest groups. Consequently the economic interests of these groups have played an important role in the government’s efforts to promote greater trade and economic cooperation with the Middle East.<sup>38</sup> Between 2002 and 2008, Turkish exports to the Arab world increased five times, reaching \$25 billion. With a significant increase in industrial production, Turkey has sought large-scale competitive markets among her Arab neighbors in such sectors as construction, steel, food, and chemicals.<sup>39</sup>

As the result of its central Anatolian roots and more conservative Muslim outlook, the AKP has focused on the unifying character of the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim values inherited by the Turkish Republic as the key pillars of its domestic and foreign policy agenda. Articulating a new vision for Turkey that is not dependent upon the

West, while actively seeking ways to balance its relationships and alliances within its neighborhood, the AKP harkens back to the days of the Ottoman Empire and projects the image of a self-confident regional power. On June 12, 2011, Erdoğan used his neo-Ottomanist rhetoric on another important occasion. When he delivered a victory speech on the night of his third consecutive national election win, he said that “Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul. Beirut won as much as Izmir. Damascus won as much as Ankara. Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, [and] Jerusalem won as much as Diyarbakir.”<sup>40</sup>

Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Gül are astute politicians and agile diplomats who have set a frenetic pace for their diplomatic activity which they call the “rhythmic diplomacy” or “zero problems with neighbors” diplomacy.<sup>41</sup> It would be a gross oversimplification, however, to attribute this major change in Turkish foreign policy-making to specific personalities. The current Turkish leadership realizes that in the immediate future it is incapable of projecting its hard power in the whole Ottoman neighborhood. The AKP’s leadership has thus opted for a soft power approach in the interim.<sup>42</sup> Turkey’s mid-term goal is to earn domestic and international legitimacy by joining the EU, strengthening the Developing-8 or D-8, a group of developing countries with large Muslim populations (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey), and pursuing the leadership of the Organization of Islamic Conference. The Turkish leadership has undertaken efforts to become the arbiter and mediator of many regional conflicts in the Balkans (Kosovo, Bosnia, and Macedonia), the Caucasus (Abkhazia, Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia), and the Middle East (the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Syrian-Israeli negotiations) through participation in inter-governmental organizations (such as OSCE, BSEO, and CEO) and membership in NATO as well as a UN-sponsored Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). The participation in these structures allows Turkey a lot of flexibility and prestige on the world stage.

While the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic states, along with the European bureaucracy in the European Commission, endorse Turkish membership in the EU, the more inward-looking continental societies oppose the incorporation of its long-standing “definitional other,”

especially at a time of internal crisis.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, however, both groups appear to endorse the Turkey's neo-Ottomanism, albeit for opposite reasons. The neo-liberal European states such as the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the Netherlands are particularly attracted by Turkey's spreading of Gülen's understanding of the relationship between Islam and capitalism and strongly emphasize the perceived geostrategic necessity of Turkey's ascension to the EU. The continental conservatives in France and Germany welcome what they see as Turkey's drift to the East as an implicit acceptance of Turkey's belonging to a different civilization or culture. Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey's neighborhood and its relationship with Washington have drastically changed. Attempts to become the leader of the Turkic-Central Asian world or a European power have failed so far, and the Turks are looking in different directions for opportunities.<sup>44</sup> The Iraq war has proven that American and Turkish security concerns are no longer in lockstep, leading Turkey to re-evaluate its alliance with the United States.<sup>45</sup> US President Barack Obama has been forced to accept Turkey's distancing itself from the West because it is in his best interests to remain close with the "moderate" Islamist nation. Notwithstanding Obama's ebullient expressions of friendship with Prime Minister Erdoğan, the current diplomatic complications with the United States are another indicator of a profound shift in Turkish foreign policy.<sup>46</sup>

Many in the West question whether Turkey is still an ally.<sup>47</sup> Turkey is seen as a problematic but strategic partner in a region by many powerful voices in Washington and members of both houses of the US Congress, whereas the Obama administration desires to project a new image of American openness rather than hostility to the Islamic world after the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. President Obama developed a strong personal relationship with Prime Minister Erdoğan and promotes what he calls a "model partnership" with Turkey.<sup>48</sup> One of the results of this policy was Turkey's decision to base a Raytheon-produced AN/TPY-2 X-band as a part of a NATO anti-missile defense system in September 2011.<sup>49</sup> By the same token, a potential conflict between two key American allies in the Middle East, Turkey and Israel, became a major source of concern for the Obama administration. In September of 2011, the Turkish prime minister threatened that he would send the Turkish navy to protect

future aid flotillas for Gaza. The US State Department issued a warning for both sides to “cool it.”<sup>50</sup> Turkey also challenged Israel’s natural gas exploration rights and delimitation of Exclusive Economic Zones with the neighboring Cyprus.<sup>51</sup> These ongoing Turkish-Israeli tensions compelled the United States to put Turkey on notice that the country should cease its threatening rhetoric and behavior.<sup>52</sup> As a new sign of serious American concerns about the Turkish threatening posture in the eastern Mediterranean, the US Navy, in April 2012, participated in a Greek-Israeli naval exercise which simulated an engagement with an enemy force with similar capabilities to those of Turkey.<sup>53</sup> In another unfriendly gesture toward Israel, Turkey successfully lobbied the NATO Council not to invite an Israeli delegation to the NATO summit which took place on May 20-21, 2012 in Chicago, and the US administration complied with Turkey’s request.<sup>54</sup> It also objected to Israel’s participation in the alliance’s new Partnership Cooperation Menu (PCM), despite the fact that Israel is a member of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue group.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, Obama continues to support Turkey.

### **TURKEY AND THE “ARAB SPRING”**

This last section discusses the Turkish hopes during the “Arab Spring” to position itself as the model for the new Arab aspirations to democracy. Turkey very much wants the Arab world to set for itself the goal of emulating Turkey’s democratic system. In addition, the “Arab Spring” created new dilemmas for Turkey’s foreign policy including a failure of the “zero problems” policy.

#### ***The Turkish Model***

Prior to the “Arab Spring,” Islamists in Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia viewed the AKP as a model for the project of Islamization.<sup>56</sup> Since the AKP is an heir to a chain of Islamist, religiously conservative Turkish political parties, Arab Islamists often viewed Turkey’s ruling party as engaged in the initial stages of a long-term “stealth” project with the purpose of reclaiming Turkish society and bringing it back to Islam. Of course, the AKP rejects this characterization, insisting that is not an Islamist movement

but rather an economically liberal and socially conservative center-right party that is modeled upon Christian democratic parties in Europe.

Seeking an opportunity to ride the tide of the “Arab Spring,” Prime Minister Erdoğan claimed that the inspiration for popular uprisings in the Arab world was Turkey and its “advanced democracy.”<sup>57</sup> Erdoğan believed he could take credit for the wave of protests sweeping the Arab world. In fact, during the protests in Egypt, Erdoğan was among the first who called on Hosni Mubarak to resign voluntarily.<sup>58</sup>

However, it was the protest movements that engulfed Libya and Syria that placed Turkey at the horns of a serious dilemma; Turkey struggled in its role as the promoter of democracy, losing its “clarity of vision” and shifting its position on nearly a daily basis from supporting the Gaddafi and Assad regimes to supporting the protesters.<sup>59</sup> Turkey continued to assign its foreign policy priority to its national self-interest and economic interests, not to the promotion of democracy. This became obvious when Turkey supported use of military intervention in Bahrain to suppress Shiite popular protests, presumably backed by Iran.<sup>60</sup> When the Iranian opposition demonstrated on the streets in support of the Tahrir Square protesters in Cairo, Turkish President Abdullah Gül was coolly negotiating new agreements with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to expand trade between the two countries.

In any case, the electoral successes of Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated parties and groups, such as Ennahda in Tunisia and the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, provided Turkey with an opportunity of creating a belt of moderate Islamist regimes in the region. Ennahda’s leader, Rached el-Ghannouchi, stated that he was interested in the “Turkish model,” which allowed for an Islamic government to operate in a secular society.<sup>61</sup>

Arab Islamists, on the other hand, saw a different opportunity. They perceived the AKP’s rehabilitation of the Ottoman legacy, outright support of Hamas, and vitriolic criticism of Israel in numerous foreign policy pronouncements as a clear indicator of the inevitable and unstoppable process of the Islamization of Turkey and the “virtuous

victory” of their cause. This process also revived prospects of the “Turkish model” represented by the AKP as the spearhead of its neo-Ottoman ambitions, fuelled by Turkey’s growing economic power as well as its newly found international prestige. Turkey’s emerging regional leadership role also offered the Arab Islamists a “Sunni alternative” to Iran.<sup>62</sup> But this perception put Turkey into an intra-Sunni conflict with the Saudis, who for many decades claimed the position of the leader of the Sunnis, a rich kingdom that is home to the Islamic holy sites of Mecca and Medina. In the context of the “Arab Spring,” within the inter-Arab political world, Ankara would inevitably clash with Riyadh because Turkey supports political forces and parties affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, while the Saudis back the Salafis.<sup>63</sup> However, as Sunni nations cooperate to work against the Alawi (and Shia) regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, an Iranian ally, even Turkey and Saudi Arabia have found themselves on the same side, though their goals in the region differ.<sup>64</sup>

In the aftermath of the “Arab Spring,” the Arabs perceive Turkey as exhibiting a voracious appetite for self-aggrandizement, and positing Turkey under the AKP rule as a model for development by the Turkish prime minister presents a quandary for the Arab world. The conservative Arab regimes clearly do not perceive the experience of modern pluralist traditions of Turkey as a role model. Some Arab neighbors, such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Gulf states see Turkish support of the popular uprisings as threatening, while the Egyptian ruling elite cannot tolerate Turkey replacing Egypt as the leader of the Muslim world. The transition to democracy in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya will follow its own script with a clear prospect of long-term political unrest, fragmentation, and fears. The events of the so-called “Arab Spring,” at first glance, have led to two results. The first is an overthrow of the authoritarian, if pro-Western, Arab regimes that have maintained a semblance of stability for more than forty years. The second is the uncertainty and market anxiety that this process engendered, beyond the trend for Islamization (or gaining of power by the Muslim Brotherhood and their affiliate political movements in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya) and fragmentation of the state along ethno-religious lines in Libya and Syria, and, in the case of Egypt, a growing divide between the Christian Coptic minority and Muslim majority.

Therefore, Ankara's hopes that Arab countries will perceive Turkey as a source of inspiration are at best "uncertain."<sup>65</sup> Many opinion leaders in the Arab states already perceive in the Turks' attempts to insert themselves in the domestic politics of Iraq and Syria as "neo-Ottomanist" meddling.<sup>66</sup> In this recent trend of engaging the Arab world, Turkey already encountered expressions of the historic animosity and pan-Arabism. Turkey's drive to become a linchpin to the solution of Assad's regime crisis in Syria and attempts to carve out a sphere of influence in northern Iraq are perceived as intrusion into intra-Arab affairs by Turkey's Arab neighbors. In a symbolic diplomatic gesture, reflecting the current mood among Arab leaders, Turkey was excluded from the Baghdad meeting of the Arab League in March 2012, which deemed Turkish participation a "non-Arab" interference in the crisis. In fact, Turkey was openly derided by the Iraqi foreign minister, who expressing his government's concern over the growing influence of regional powers Turkey and Iran inside Iraq. "This summit will enhance our position to stand on our feet vis-à-vis these regional powers," he said, accusing Turkey and Iran of "competing to fill the vacuum in Iraq in the absence of an Iraqi representative, strong, national unity government."<sup>67</sup> Since most Arab nationalist regimes emerged from the former territory of the Ottoman Empire, Arab elites have predominantly negative associations with the Ottoman past.<sup>68</sup>

***The Effects of the "Arab Spring" on Turkey's "Zero Problems" Policy***

After the onset of the "Arab Spring," Davutoğlu conceded that the realities of the region should be taken into account in drafting further course for Turkey. He referred to the "zero problems" policy as Turkey's "most important goal." He clarified that Turkey "never claimed that there are no problems" but was rather concerned that "relations with other countries in order to create a new political climate cannot help solve problems and create new ones...[the] main objective...is reintegration."<sup>69</sup> In the meantime, there are growing concerns among the conservative Turkish business elites that the "zero problems" policy, combined with the destabilizing effect of the "Arab Spring," is negatively affecting the Turkish regional trade.

These businessmen are especially worried about the trade networks they established in Syria, which served as a Turkey's gateway to the Arab markets in the last decade,<sup>70</sup> although the Israeli-Jordanian transportation corridor can potentially serve as an alternative entry point for Turkish goods destined for Arab markets.

The prime minister on many occasions promulgated his vision of democracy in a majority Muslim state. But when one delves into the nitty-gritty of the frenetic Turkish diplomacy, he can observe a pattern of political coordination with Washington. After the "Arab Spring" the Turkish leader vocally called for a transition to democratic governance in the region.

However, in the case of Libya (and more lately in case of Syria), Erdoğan was equivocating for a much longer period. Since his party came to power in 2002, he enjoyed strong personal and political ties with Libya's Muammar Gaddafi and Syria's Bashar al-Assad. These personal ties were strategically reinforced by Turkish direct investment, participation in multi-million dollar infrastructural projects, and the relief provided to chronic Turkish unemployment upon the hiring of Turkish workers for these projects. As reported by the Turkish Ministry of Economy, Libya was the "most significant market for Turkish contractors in Africa" until 2011. Until that year the report was that "Turkish firms held and are holding 525 projects in Libya with a total value of \$26.3 billion."<sup>71</sup>

When the civil war broke out in Libya and the international community called for deposing the Libyan autocrat and bringing him to trial, Turkey took Gaddafi's side. Turkey gave the priority to the trade and investment benefits the country enjoyed from its relationship with Libya's leadership at the cost of being perceived as supportive of the bloody dictatorship. Shortly after, Turkey gave in to the NATO leadership's demands to support its military operation, which aimed to create a no-fly zone in Libya. However, Erdoğan's government persisted in pursuing a diplomatic solution for the Libyan problem. At the same time, Turkey provided financial aid to the Libyan rebels.

Eventually Ankara yielded to pressure from NATO to participate in the naval blockade against Gaddafi, but still insisted on solving the Libyan crisis through negotiations. While many states closed their diplomatic representations in Tripoli and Benghazi, Turkey continued to run its diplomatic missions. Ankara agreed to take control of provision of port and airport in Benghazi, in order to promote air and sea transport of food and other humanitarian goods.

The Turkish leadership severed their diplomatic ties with Gaddafi's Libyan government and recalled its ambassador only after Davutoğlu visited the eastern rebel stronghold of Benghazi and pledged \$200 million in aid to the NATO-backed rebel Transitional National Council.<sup>72</sup> The aid was in addition to a \$100 million fund for Libyan rebels that Turkey announced in June 2011. "It was time for leader Muammar Gaddafi to leave Libya," Davutoğlu said during the visit, declaring the NATO-backed rebels' National Council "the legitimate representative of the Libyan people." Turkey, which had close economic ties with Gaddafi and signed important investment contracts just five months prior to the rebellion, called on the embattled leader to step down.

In the case of the uprising in Syria, which has slid into civil war between the government forces of the Assad regime and the rebel Free Syrian Army (FSA),<sup>73</sup> Turkey's policy has also undergone several dramatic shifts. The fighting in Syria has so far claimed 20,000 lives and has forced 115,000 refugees to flee the tank and mortar fire unleashed by the Assad regime on its citizens.<sup>74</sup> While Syria is ravaged by an internal conflict emanating from social, ethnic, and religious tensions that can potentially spill into Turkey's predominantly Kurdish and Arabic-speaking southeast, one can hardly speak of "zero problems" with Turkey's neighbors. This "zero problems" policy, enunciated by the current Turkish foreign minister in 2007, faces serious challenges from the unpredicted and still unpredictable "Arab Spring." One such challenge was on June 22, 2012, when a Turkish F-4 jet was shot down by Syria in international airspace. Turkey was angered by the incident and called for an emergency NATO meeting, during which Ankara intended to invoke Article IV of the alliance's charter and seek Western backing for its response.<sup>75</sup> In the interim, the Turkish military has prepared

emergency action plans to create a military buffer zone and no-fly zone over Syria.<sup>76</sup> As Turkey is readying for an eventual Syrian attack on its southern border, anti-aircraft guns and trucks carrying multiple-rocket launchers have been deployed.<sup>77</sup>

In addition, Turkey competes with Iran for influence in Syria, where a Sunni majority is dominated a small minority of Alawites, a sect close to Shia Islam. While Iran's Revolutionary Guards participate in suppressing the opposition to Assad's regime, Turkey provides bases and financial support to Syria's opposition political body, the National Council. At the same time, Turkey pressures Syria against providing bases for the PKK.

An even larger strategic rivalry which undermines the "zero problems" policy, however, has long-term consequences for the region: a battle with Iran over the future of Iraq. The latter country served for centuries as a stage for conflict and competition between Ottoman Turkey and Safavid Persia. A geopolitical vacuum created by the departure of US troops in December 2011 pitted Turkey and Iran against each other in a new competition for control of natural resources of the oil-rich nation, as well as for regional hegemony and leadership in the Muslim world.<sup>78</sup> While Turkey and Iran have common ground for cooperation, they also have opposing interests. While Iran is a major actor in Iraq, where it supports Shiite groups, Turkey supports the secular movement while still maintaining good relations with Shiite elements.<sup>79</sup>

The most serious failure of Davutoğlu's neo-Ottomanist policy manifested itself in a re-emergence of Turkey's Kurdish problem. Instead of alleviating the ethno-national conflict with the largest minority concentrated in Turkey's southeast and the adjacent regions of Iran, Iraq, and Syria, Turkey is now facing radicalized Kurdish masses inspired by the successful model of Kurdish autonomy in the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq.<sup>80</sup> Masoud Barzani was elected president of the region by the Kurdistan National Assembly in June 2005. Over the last seventeen years, President Barzani has created a functioning autonomous region with a booming economy and all the institutions of a nation-state, with a flag, capital city

(Erbil), army (the *Peshmerga*, or regional fighting army), and distinct national education system, all independent of Baghdad.<sup>81</sup>

The “Arab Spring” has only accelerated centrifugal forces driving the Turkish Kurdish population from Ankara, as Syrian Kurds asserted their control over the western region of Syria in May-July, 2012.<sup>82</sup> Two main Kurdish rebel forces, the People’s Council of Western Kurdistan and the Kurdish National Council (KNC) of Syria, took over Syria’s frontier region with Turkey from the receding Syrian Army units. As the central authority over peripheral regions in Syria further dissipated, the Syrian Kurds not only formed the paramilitary organizations that exercise effective control over the territory – in which they represent a dominant majority – but also received an official backing from Barzani.<sup>83</sup> The KRG’s commitment to provide training to the Syrian Kurdish forces had been met with strong opposition by the Turkish government. However, Davutoğlu’s visit to Erbil, which was aimed at preventing this military cooperation, has failed.<sup>84</sup> The process of unification of the Kurdish regions in Iraq and Syria might bring a miscalculated outcome, resulting in secession of Turkish Kurdish regions from Turkey and the formation of an independent and sovereign Kurdistan consisting of Kurds from around the region. In effect, by supporting the Syrian opposition forces, who are striving to topple the Assad regime in Damascus, the highest Turkish political echelons are likely to trigger the dissolution of the unitary Turkish state.

## CONCLUSION

Embarking upon the neo-Ottomanist foreign policy course, the AKP administration, in a sharp departure from the Kemalist principles of foreign policy, marked a new stage in the Republic’s history. Under the rule of the AKP since 2002, Turkey has tried to implement a balancing act in its foreign policy while constantly expanding its influence in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Balkans. On the one hand, Turkey has played the role of reluctant ally of the West, as a member of NATO, and is therefore deeply involved in the military and strategic interests of the Western allies. On the other hand, it has expanded a “good neighbor” policy towards the Arab world, where

growing protest movements have turned into armed confrontations and an overthrow of the ruling regimes. The new foreign policy activism of Turkey has overstretched the country's diplomatic capabilities, while its exaggerated self-importance has raised criticism in the West and concerns even within the Turkish diplomatic corps.<sup>85</sup>

As the inheritor of the Ottoman tradition as a major trading nation, Turkey under the AKP captured the spirit of the end of the Cold War and globalization. The AKP's foreign policy project was designed to benefit from Turkey's growing global political influence and the maximum involvement of all the neighbors in cross-border trade. This direction reflects the drive of the Anatolian Tigers, young, ambitious industrialists who quickly managed to prove that they can utilize the previously untapped market opportunities in the region, including booming trade with Israel.

The "Turkish model" of democracy, based upon the AKP's "moderate" Islam, does not match the social and economic trajectories which the Arab countries have followed since gaining independence after World War II. The historical experience and political developments in Turkey are very different from the path of development in the Arab countries, making it an unviable model for the neighborhood. Westernization, a process that began long ago during the late Ottoman period, is distinguishing Turkey's path from most other Muslim countries in the Middle East. Turkey continues to experiment incorporating Islam into the Western lifestyle. Several decades of democratization and socio-economic changes have led to the emergence of an economically liberal but socially and politically conservative Anatolian entrepreneurial class. This class, which became the mainstay of the current ruling party, does not exist anywhere else in the Middle East and is unlikely to arise elsewhere in the immediate future.

Perhaps the main problem with Davutoğlu's "zero problems" doctrine has been an undifferentiated notion of "problems" that lumps together the minor and major (i.e. strategic or geopolitical) issues with the short and long-term issues. As a result we are witnessing a multiplication of Turkey's problems with its neighbors as well as former allies, like Israel.<sup>86</sup> This evidence appears to have effectively

nullified that doctrine. Consequently there are signs of incoherence accumulating over the substance of Turkish foreign policy, such as the coincidence of economic interdependence with Iran coupled with a Turkey-Iran falling out on regional issues. Instead of “strategic depth,” a favorite term of Davutoğlu and his foreign policy team, Turkey may soon achieve the exact opposite result, deep strategic insecurity caused by mushrooming problems with various neighbors. Some of these problems can be attributed to Turkey’s diplomacy on such issues as the proper response to the ongoing Syrian crisis.

The ideological and social changes in Turkey indicate that the political forces and institutions which traditionally served as the natural base for forging the strategic understanding with Israel, including the Kemalists, the military, and the old bureaucratic establishment, are waning. But it also means that a strategic dialogue on security, energy, and regional issues should be maintained between the two countries in order to prevent bilateral misunderstandings and provide a crucial link to build upon for future generations. Erdoğan’s recent announcement that he approached Russian President Vladimir Putin about joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a Chinese-Russian alternative security alliance to NATO, reconfirmed a new distinctive direction of Turkish foreign policy.<sup>87</sup> This direction combines a strengthening of Turkey’s relationship with the rising powers, such as China, and a more independent line from the United States and Europe with regard to its neighborhood policy. This reversal of direction from the strategy of decades past continues to distinctively shape Turkey’s foreign policy agenda moving forward.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term “*yeni-Osmanlilik*” (neo-Ottomanism) originated during the Turgut Özal period (1987-1993) as a domestic policy to deal with Kurdish separatism.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye’nin Uluslararası Konumu* (Istanbul: Kure Yayinlari, 2001), pp. 249-271.

<sup>3</sup> Soner Cagaptay, “Arab revolt makes Turkey a regional power.” *Hurriyet Daily News*, February 16, 2011

(<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=arab-revolt-makes-turkey-a-regional-power-2011-02-16>).

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<sup>4</sup> See Eli Kedourie, “England and the Middle East: the destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914–1921.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 1956, [reprinted] 1978, pp. 142-143.

<sup>5</sup> For comprehensive analysis of Turkish foreign policy, see William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000* (London: Frank Cass Press, 2000); Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey 3rd Edition* (New York: Oxford UP, 2002); Erik Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: IB Taurus Press, 2004); Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms* (New York: University of Washington Press, 2003); and Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: the Quest for Identity* (New York: Oneworld Publications, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> See Ali Karaosmanoglu, “The Evolution of the National Security Culture and the Military in Turkey.” *Journal of International Affairs*, 2000, p. 54; and İlhan Uzgöl, “Ordu Dış Politikasının Neresinde,” in A. İnsel and A. Bayramoğlu (eds.), *Bir Zümre, Bir Parti Türkiye’de Ordu* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), pp. 312-317.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 316-17, 356.

<sup>8</sup> Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> İlhan Uzgöl, op. cit., pp. 324-325.

<sup>10</sup> Idris Bal, *Turkey’s Relations with the West and the Turkic Republics: The Rise and Fall of the “Turkish Model”* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000), p. 232.

<sup>11</sup> See an article by one of the key advocates of the concept of “moderate Islam,” Graham Fuller, “The Future of Political Islam.” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.8, March/April 2002, pp.48-60; and Angel Rabasa, Cheryl Benard, Lowell H. Schwartz, Peter Sickle, *Building Moderate Muslim Network* [policy paper], RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> See Gareth Jenkins, *Context and Circumstance: The Turkish Military and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> As a part of the EU Harmonization package of 2004, the AKP changed the role and the composition of the Council. The MGK was stripped of its executive authority and became a “consultative” body, with number of military members reduced from five to one, while its budget was placed under the prime minister’s control. Steven A. Cook, “The Weakening of Turkey’s Military.” *Expert Brief*, the Council for Foreign Relations, March 1, 2010 (<http://www.cfr.org/turkey/weakening-turkeys-military/p21548>).

<sup>14</sup> Ian Lesser, *Beyond Suspicion: Rethinking US-Turkish Relations* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars: Washington, D.C., 2009), p.33.

<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive analysis, see Alexander Murinson, “The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy.” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42 (6), pp. 947–61.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 952.

<sup>17</sup> Graham Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008), p. 96.

<sup>18</sup> There is great debate about the origins of the term “neo-Ottoman,” which coincided with Özal’s emergence on the Turkish political scene; therefore, rather

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than engaging in this debate I point to works by Hakan Yavuz that engage in a thoughtful discussion of the term. See Hakan Yavuz, "Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux: The Rise of Neo-Ottomanism," *Critique* 12 (Spring 1998), pp. 19-43.

<sup>19</sup> See a special issue of *Insight Turkey*, July-September, 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Hüner Şencan, *İş Hayatında İslam İnsani (Homo Islamicus)*. Istanbul: MÜSİAD, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> Vela, Justin, "Turkey: Has Gülen Movement Replaced Deep State?" *Eurasianet.org* (<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64769>). For background see Sharon-Krespin, "Fetullah Gülen's Grand Ambition, Turkey's Islamist Danger." *Middle East Quarterly*, 161(2009).

<sup>22</sup> Interview with a Turkish journalist close to the Cemaat, Tbilisi, March 27, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Berrin Koyuncu Lorasdağı, "Globalization, Modernization and Democratization in Turkey: The Fetullah Gülen Movement," in E. F. Keyman (ed.), *Remaking Turkey: Globalization, Alternative Modernities, and Democracy* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2007), p. 162.

<sup>24</sup> Takin, Yüksel, "AKP's Move to 'Conquer' The Center-Right: Its Prospects and Possible Impacts on the Democratization Process." *Turkish Studies*, 9 (1), 2008, p. 65.

<sup>25</sup> Hakan Yavuz describes a new model which Prime Minister Erdoğan promotes for the new Turkish Islamist elites in this opinion piece. Yavuz, Hakan, "Başbakan Caprice Otelle Hilton Arasında Kalmış Yalnız Bir Adam." *Hürriyet*, June 9, 2008 (<http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=9781534&tarih=2008-09-06>).

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Turkish journalist, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> Joe Lauria, "Reclusive Turkish Imam Criticizes Gaza Flotilla," *Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Igor Torbakov, "Geopolitical Pressure Compels Turkey to Re-examine International Options," *Eurasianet.org* (<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav012203.shtml>).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> See "The Eurasian initiative," *Turkish Daily News*, June 07, 2002; and *BBC Monitoring-Turkey*, August 5, 2002. More detailed analysis can be found in Ihsan Dagi, "Competing Strategies for Turkey: Eurasianism or Europeanism?" August 5, 2002 (<http://www.cacianalyst.org/newsite/?q=node/177>); and in Halil M. Karaveli, "Islamic-Western Embrace Fuels Eurasianism in the Turkish Military," *Turkey Analyst*, February 13, 2009 (available at: <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/turkey/2009/090227A.html>).

<sup>31</sup> "Erdoğan to visit Asian countries," *Hurriet Daily News*, January 7, 2003 (<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=Erdoğan-to-visit-asian-countries-2003-01-07>).

<sup>32</sup> "Erdoğan says Putin's visit to Turkey reflects improved relations," *Associated Press*, August 30, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> "Briefing held at Cankaya Presidential Palace," *Anadolu Agency News*, September 29, 2001.

<sup>34</sup> *Kızıl Elma* represents the core of an ancient Turkish myth that universal sovereignty, symbolized in the apple, devolves on the Turks. *Kızıl Elma* served as

the Ottoman symbol for Constantinople, perceived by Muslims as the nerve center of the Christian world and desired by Muslim conquerors for eight centuries. This image was also immortalized in a poem of the same name by one of the most prominent ideologues of Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gökalp, in 1915. See Selcan Taşçı, “Kızıl-Elma Koalisyonu,” *Yeniçag*, May 21, 2010 (<http://www.yg.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/yazargoster.php?haber=13240>).

<sup>35</sup> For analysis of Turgut Özal’s neo-Ottomanist foreign policy, see Sedat Laciner, “Turgut Özal Period in Turkish Foreign Policy: Özalism,” *The Journal of Turkish Weekly* (<http://www.turkishweekly.net/article/333/turgut-Özal-period-in-turkish-foreign-policy-Özalism.html>); also see Ian Lesser, op. cit., p.42.

<sup>36</sup> Gilbert Achcar, “Fantasy of a Region that Doesn’t Exist: Greater Middle East: the US plan,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 2004, (<http://mondediplo.com/2004/04/04world>).

<sup>37</sup> Jackson Diehl, “How WikiLeaks cables capture 21st-century Turkey,” *The Washington Post*, December 5, 2010 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/05/AR2010120503428.html>).

<sup>38</sup> Özlem Tür, “Economic Relations with the Middle East Under the AKP—Trade, Business Community and Reintegration with Neighboring Zones,” *Turkish Studies*, 12 (4), 2011.

<sup>39</sup> See a detailed report on the new trends in international trade with the Arab world related to the new direction of Turkish foreign policy. Nader Habibi, Joshua Walker, “What Is Driving Turkey’s Reengagement with the Arab World?” Middle East Brief, Crown Center for Middle East Studies (<http://www.brandeis.com/crown/publications/meb/MEB49.pdf>).

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<sup>42</sup> Former US Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates defines a need for soft power tools – specifically diplomacy, economic assistance, and strategic communications – because the military alone cannot defend interests. See Joseph Nye, Jr., “The U.S. Can Reclaim Smart Power,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 2009 ([http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/18782/us\\_can\\_reclaim\\_smart\\_power.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/18782/us_can_reclaim_smart_power.html)).

<sup>43</sup> The former EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Vice President of the Commission, Günter Verheugen, recently used the occasion of the publication of Turkey’s accession report to re-emphasize this argument in an interview with German radio station Deutschlandfunk ([http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/idw\\_dlf/1052772](http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/idw_dlf/1052772)).

<sup>44</sup> Cecily Hilleary, “Turkey Asserts Self as Bold Regional Power.” *Voice of America*, September 14, 2011 (<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Turkey-Asserts-Self-as-Bold-Regional-Power-129808273.html>).

<sup>45</sup> Some view the trilateral relationship as potentially “fading.” See Philip H. Gordon, Omer Taspinar, and Soli Ozel [afterword], *Winning Turkey: How America*,

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<sup>46</sup> Jackson Diehl, op. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> “Turkey-US relations upgraded from a strategic partnership to a model partnership.” Remarks by American President Obama and Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan after bilateral meeting (March 25, 2012), *Diplonews* ([http://www.diplonews.com/feeds/free/27\\_March\\_2012\\_74.php](http://www.diplonews.com/feeds/free/27_March_2012_74.php)).

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<sup>50</sup> David Gollust, “US Urges Turkey, Israel to Ease Tensions.” *Voice of America*, September 9, 2011 (<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/europe/US-Urges-Turkey-Israel-to-Ease-Tensions-129554603.html>).

<sup>51</sup> Alexander Murinson, “Strategic Realignment and Energy Security in the Eastern Mediterranean.” *BESA Perspectives* 159, January 9, 2012 (<http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/perspectives159.html>).

<sup>52</sup> A news report detailed the American concerns about the threatening Turkish posture in the Eastern Mediterranean. Morton Abramowitz, a former US ambassador to Turkey, was quoted as saying: “I don’t think the Turks are intent on starting hostilities, but you never know what can happen in this environment.” He added that “Washington needs to be up-front with Ankara and tell them that if conflict breaks out between Turkey and Israel, we’ll choose Israel.” Jay Solomon and Marc Champion, “U.S. Ties to Turkey Face New Strains,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 2011 (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204294504576617282941472812.html>).

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<sup>54</sup> “Turkey blocks Israel from Chicago NATO summit,” *Reuters*, April 23, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Jennifer Rubin, “State Department: Israel was never invited to the NATO summit,” *Washington Post*, April 25, 2012 ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/post/state-department-israel-was-never-invited-to-the-nato-summit/2012/04/24/gIQAR4CXfT\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/post/state-department-israel-was-never-invited-to-the-nato-summit/2012/04/24/gIQAR4CXfT_blog.html)).

<sup>56</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, “Turkey: The New Model?” *The Islamists Are Coming: Who They Really Are* (Wilson Center and U.S. Institute of Peace, 2012).

<sup>57</sup> See an editorial by Prime Minister Erdoğan’s chief foreign policy advisor, İbrahim Kalin, “Turkey and a democratic and prosperous Arab world,” *Zaman*, May 18, 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Benjamin Harvey, “Erdoğan Tells Egypt’s Mubarak He Should Listen to His People,” *Bloomberg*, February 1, 2011 (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-02->

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