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STILL IN THE WEST:

TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POST-ARAB SPRING ERA

by

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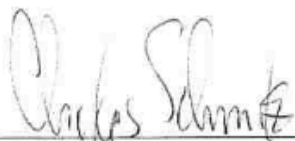Towson, MD 21252

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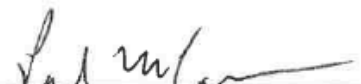"Still in the West: Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Post-Arab Spring Era"

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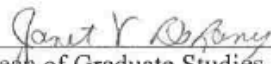
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ABSTRACT

"Still in the West: Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Post-Arab Spring Era"

Daniel Long

Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has reevaluated its relationship with the West in terms of its new security environment. This paper argues that structure has been more important than agency in determining Turkey's foreign policy. Turkey's ruling party, the AKP, initially pursued an independent, nonaligned foreign policy during its early years (2002-2010), but regional instability caused by the Arab Spring has forced the AKP to shift back into its traditional Western alliances in more recent years (2011-2015). This study uses a mixed-methods approach in support of its argument, incorporating qualitative data from political discourse and Turkey's military relationship with the US and NATO as well as quantitative data from military expenditures and opinion polls.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Since King Xerxes built a bridge of flax and papyrus across the Hellespont in the

Persian Wars, the Anatolian peninsula upon which sits the modern nation-state of Turkey

has been the historic intersection of East and West. The Roman Empire, Eastern

Orthodoxy, Islam, the Crusades, the Ottoman Empire, and the Westernizing reforms of

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk have all left an indelible imprint on the land and people of

Turkey. Turkey occupies a "contested historical space," and the continual tug-of-war

between East and West continues to shape the modern-day republic of Turkey. [1] The

Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet described his country as a horse with its head in Europe and

its body in Asia galloping westwards.[2] Samuel Huntington offered a more portentous

description of Turkey, classifying it as a "torn country" because of the irreconcilable

differences between the ideologies of Western-oriented Kemalism and Eastern-oriented

neo-Ottomanism.[3]

Turkey's relationship with the West is of vital importance, not only for Turkey's

own security interests but for Western interests as well. Turkey plays a crucial role as an

intermediary between the West and the Muslim world, and to the extent that Turkey

aligns with the West, Turkey helps give legitimacy to Western objectives in the Middle

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[1] Michalis S. Michael, "Navigating through the Bosphorus: Relocating Turkey's European/Western Fault Line," *Global Change, Peace & Security* 20, no. 1 (February 2008): 73.

[2] Cited in Michael, "Navigating through the Bosphorus," 73.

[3] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 42; see also Robert W. Merry, "The Huntington Thesis and Turkey's New Role," *National Interest,* November 6, 2011.

East. Turkey is the only Muslim-majority democracy in the Middle East and serves as an important model of Western values in a Muslim context. A strong relationship between Turkey and the West is critical to avoiding the "clash of civilizations" that Huntington predicted at the end of the Cold War, and recent developments in Turkey's foreign policy have tested the strength of that relationship.

Today Turkey is beset by forces both within and without. The increasing instability in the Middle East since the end of the Cold War has empowered and emboldened Turkey's large Kurdish population and its separatist aspirations. The Syrian civil war and the rise of ISIS pose an immediate external threat to Turkey's southeastern border, and Russian military incursions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria awaken old fears of Soviet expansionism.

The secular reforms of Ataturk from 1922-1935 placed Turkey on a decidedly Western trajectory, and Turkey further solidified its Western alignment when it joined NATO in 1952. But the overwhelmingly Muslim population of Turkey and conservative appeals for a more Islamist government continue to pull Turkey toward the East, and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in particular has pursued closer ties with the Middle East and exhibited a greater skepticism toward Turkey's traditional Western alliances.

Turkey's relationship with the West has always been based more on military necessity than ideological affinity. There was a period after the Cold War ended when Turkey had the opportunity to chart its own foreign policy in a relatively unconstrained structural environment, but a protracted counterinsurgency campaign against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a stalled economy, and obstruction from Turkey's own

military prevented this from happening in the 1990s. When the AKP came to power in 2002, its leaders made a conscious effort to become a "trading state" and pursue diplomatic relationships with all of Turkey's neighbors.[4] Turkey was not moving away from the West as much as it was moving toward the Middle East, although many in the West perceived it as a "strategic drift."[5] But regional instability brought on by the Arab Spring turned neighbors into enemies, and Turkey is now once again dependent on the West for its security. This is an unwelcome development to the AKP and there still is tremendous will on the AKP's part to chart an ambitious and autonomous foreign policy, but these plans are increasingly frustrated by the restrictive nature of Turkey's security environment. There is not much good will between Turkey and the US these days, nor between Turkey and any other Western partner. Nevertheless, Turkey remains a reluctant ally of the West because of overriding security threats in its own structural environment.

The purpose of this study is to analyze Turkey's foreign policy under the AKP administration (2002-2015) and to show that, while the AKP has attempted to pursue an independent foreign policy, the increasing instability in Turkey's structural environment is restricting the agency of the AKP and keeping Turkey attached to its traditional Western alliances. This argument will be supported by an analysis of Turkey's military relationship with the US and NATO as well as evidence from Turkish political discourse and public opinion. The theoretical framework that guides this study comes from Kenneth Waltz's three levels of analysis in international relations—the individual, the

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[4] Kemal Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 40 (2009): 29-57.

[5] Sally McNamara, Ariel Cohen, and James Phillips, "Countering Turkey's Strategic Drift," *Backgrounder* 2442, July 26, 2010. http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/07/countering-turkey-s-strategic-drift.

state, and the systemic levels.[6] Some of the recent research on Turkey's foreign policy has conflated these levels and led to misguided conclusions. These arguments typically focus on developments occurring at the individual or state level, such as the neo-Ottoman ideology of AKP leaders or Turkey's refusal to allow US forces to use Incirlik Air Base in 2003, and they conclude that Turkey is "leaving the West."[7] This myopic approach too often ignores the systemic level of analysis, which this study argues is most critical to understanding Turkey's longstanding relationship with the West.[8] While developments at the individual and state level have recently pushed Turkey more toward the Middle East, overriding security concerns at the systemic level have ultimately kept Turkey within its conventional Western alliances.

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[6] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

[7] Soner Çağaptay, "Is Turkey Leaving the West?" *Foreign Affairs,* October 26, 2009; Ariel Cohen, "Washington Concerned as Turkey Leaving the West," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (2010): 25-35.

[8] See also Mustafa Kibaroğlu and Selim C. Sazak, "Business as Usual: The US-Turkey Security Partnership," *Middle East Policy* 22, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 102.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND

The collapse of the bipolar international system at the end of the Cold War gave

Turkey a unique opportunity to chart its own foreign policy. Turkey was unable to form a

coherent foreign policy during the 1990s because of domestic instability, including a

weak coalition government, a series of economic crises, and a protracted

counterinsurgency campaign against the PKK. But the ability of the AKP to consolidate

political power, usher in economic reforms, and normalize relations with Turkey's

Kurdish population during the early 2000s allowed the AKP to pursue an ambitious

foreign policy in which Turkey shifted from a largely acquiescent role as a Western ally

to an increasingly independent actor pursuing its own interests. Ultimately, however, the

extent of Turkey's foreign policy transformation under the AKP was limited by

overriding structural concerns in Turkey's security environment, which is the central

argument of this study.

The extent and nature of Turkey's "new" foreign policy under the AKP remains the

subject of much debate. Most scholars argue that Turkey has become more balanced and

autonomous in its foreign policy interests since 2002, while a few researchers assert more

strongly that Turkey is "leaving the West."[9] One of the basic divides in the research on

Turkish foreign policy under the AKP is a difference of views on Turkey's new

alignment with other countries. Kennedy and Dickinson offer a helpful taxonomy of

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[9] Çağaptay, "Is Turkey Leaving the West?" Cohen, "Washington Concerned," 25-35.

these groups, classifying them as either "axis theory" or "autonomy theory."[10] Scholars and commentators who follow the axis theory argue that Turkey is experiencing a fundamental shift in its orientation, as the country shifts its support from the United States, NATO, and the European Union toward Iran, China, Russia, Hezbollah, and Hamas.[11] It should be noted that many of the authors promoting the axis theory are US-based and are writing for popular news outlets rather than academic journals, but they nevertheless maintain considerable influence in shaping public policy.[12]

Because of the pervasiveness of the axis theory in public discourse, proponents of the autonomy theory have spent much effort in opposing this view. The autonomy theory proposes that Turkey's new foreign policy is a result of popular nationalism and greater self-confidence rather than an ideological change. Turkey has become more autonomous and multidimensional in its foreign policy, these scholars argue, but this should not be construed as Turkey "leaving the West."[13] This study favors the autonomy theory, arguing that since 2002 the AKP has made a concerted attempt to nationalize Turkey's foreign policy while its fundamental axis with the West has remained unchanged.

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[10] Ryan Kennedy and Matt Dickenson, "Turkish Foreign Policy and Public Opinion in the AKP Era," *Foreign Policy Analysis,* no. 9 (2013): 171-2.

[11] Çağaptay, "Is Turkey Leaving the West?" Cohen, "Washington Concerned," 25-35; Steven A. Cook, "How Do You Say 'Frenemy' in Turkish?" *Foreign Policy,* June 1, 2010; Thomas L. Friedman, "Letter from Istanbul," *New York Times,* June 15, 2010.

[12] Kennedy and Dickenson, "Turkish Foreign Policy and Public Opinion in the AKP Era," 171-2.

[13] Meliha B. Altunışık and Lenore G. Martin, "Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East under AKP," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 4 (2011): 569-87; F. Stephen Larrabee, "The 'New Turkey' and American-Turkish Relations," *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 1 (2011): 1-9; Tarık Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?" *Turkish Studies* 9, no. 1 (March 2008): 3-20.

However, this study goes a step further by identifying the divide over axis theory and autonomy theory as essentially an argument over structure and agency. The reason why Turkey's axis has not shifted away from the West is not because of any intentionality on the part of the AKP but because of the primacy of structure over agency. The AKP's pursuit of an autonomous foreign policy has not resulted in an axis shift because of structural constraints that set boundaries to Turkey's aspirations.

The development of Turkey's foreign policy from 2002-2015 can be best understood by examining it from Waltz's three levels of analysis – the individual, the state, and the systemic levels.[14] At the systemic level, the multipolar environment of the post-Cold War era is often credited as a major factor in the development of Turkey's foreign policy.[15] The "new world order" ushered in by the collapse of the Soviet Union challenged the old paradigm of Turkey's partnership with NATO and other Western alliances. The present multipolar system has allowed Turkey to emerge as a regional power, and yet at the same time, instability in the Middle East has brought new challenges to Turkey's security environment. Among the scholars who follow this realist framework, some argue that the structural changes have a determining effect on Turkish foreign policy and they minimize

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[14] Waltz, *Man, the State, and War.*

[15] Altunışık and Martin, "Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy," 569-87; Ahmet Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: Transition and Challenges," *Turkish Studies* 11, no. 1 (March 2010): 103-123.

the role of the AKP,[16] while others argue that domestic determinants have played an equal role.[17]

This study leans toward the realist argument of the primacy of structure, although still granting the agency of the AKP a subsidiary role. The ability of the AKP to subjugate the role of the Turkish military in foreign policy and to suppress political opposition has allowed the AKP to succeed where previous Islamist movements have failed and demonstrates the relative efficacy of agency. At the same time, however, while the AKP has been able to consolidate power domestically, Turkey's ability to exert influence internationally remains greatly dependent on structural factors beyond the control of the AKP.

At the state level, the role of the AKP in Turkish foreign policy is the subject of much discussion.[18] The AKP is a moderate Islamist party with ambitious foreign policy goals and a much greater propensity than previous administrations to pursue partnerships with Middle Eastern countries. The AKP has ruled continuously since 2002, a rarity in the multi-party system of Turkey, and it has reduced the power of the military to interfere in politics.

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[16] Larrabee, "The 'New Turkey' and American-Turkish Relations," 1-9; Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy," 3-20.

[17] Altunışık and Martin, "Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy," 569-87; Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy," 103-123; Sabri Sayarı, "New Directions in Turkey-USA Relations," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 15, no. 2 (2013): 129-42.

[18] Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 6 (November 2006): 945-64; Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era," *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (March 2009): 7-24; Murat Yeşiltaş, "The Transformation of the Geopolitical Vision in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Turkish Studies* 14, no. 4 (2013): 661-87.

The rise to power of the AKP exposes two competing ideologies in Turkish society: neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism. The term "neo-Ottomanism" came into use during the 1980s under the leadership of Prime Minister Turgut Özal, who favored an activist foreign policy, popular sovereignty in the government, and a greater role for Islam in the public sphere. The AKP is viewed by many scholars as a continuation of the neo-Ottoman ideology.[19] On the other hand, Kemalism is the militantly secular and nationalist ideology of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the modern republic of Turkey. Kemalism restricts the public expression of Islam, favors an insular foreign policy and the repression of ethnic minorities, and it relies on the military to intervene if the government betrays these principles.[20] The military has in fact overthrown the government on three occasions, in 1960, 1971, and 1980, as the self-appointed protectors of Kemalism. The ability of the AKP to reduce the power of the military has allowed the current government to be more assertive in its foreign policy, but Kemalist concerns, particularly related to Turkey's southeastern border and the threat of Kurdish separatists, remain important challenges.[21]

At the individual level, Ahmet Davutoğlu is the undisputed architect of Turkey's new foreign policy, and the ideas set forth in his book "Strategic Depth" (*Stratejik*

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[19] Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, "Modernity, Identity and Turkey's Foreign Policy," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 1 (2008): 55-76; Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 7-24; Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism," *Carnegie Papers* 10 (September 2008): 1-36.

[20] Taşpınar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies," 1-36.

[21] Bozdağlıoğlu, "Modernity, Identity and Turkey's Foreign Policy," 55-76; Taşpınar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies," 1-36.

Derinlik) have generated intense discussion among Turkish and Western-based commentators alike.[22] Davutoğlu is the current Prime Minister of Turkey and he previously served as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2009-2014. He has been an integral part of the AKP leadership since the party's inception in 2002 and is often referred to as *hoca,* or "teacher," by other members of the AKP.[23] Davutoğlu argues that Turkey possesses "strategic depth" through its geo-strategic location and its rich cultural heritage. Rather than being a peripheral state subservient to Western interests, Davutoğlu asserts that Turkey is a "center" state and should be projecting its own power in all directions. His vision for Turkish foreign policy is for Turkey to balance its dependency on the West with multiple regional alliances, particularly in the Middle East.[24] According to Davutoğlu, the five principles that guide Turkey's foreign policy-making process are a balance between security and democracy, zero problems towards neighbors, proactive and preemptive peace diplomacy, multi-dimensional foreign policy, and rhythmic diplomacy.[25]

The other two central characters of the AKP are Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül, who, together with Davutoğlu, have established a Romanesque triumvirate of power in Turkish politics for the past 15 years. Erdoğan and Gül cofounded the AKP in 2001, with Gül serving as Prime Minister from 2002-2003, followed by Erdoğan

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[22] Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy," 945-64; Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy," 103-123.

[23] "Turkey's Foreign Policy: An Eminence Grise," *Economist,* November 15, 2007.

[24] Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy,* May 20, 2010; see also Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy," 103-123.

[25] Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy."

serving as Prime Minister from 2003-2014 and Gül serving as Foreign Minister from 2003-2007 and later as President from 2007-2014. Davutoğlu served as Foreign Minister from 2009-2014 and is now the Prime Minister of Turkey while Erdoğan currently serves as President. This "musical chairs" game of power consolidation has given these three individuals enormous influence over Turkey's foreign policy, and Erdoğan is currently seeking to change the constitution to give the presidency even greater executive authority. The foreign policy views of these AKP leaders, and especially those of Davutoğlu, will be presented and discussed at length in the discourse analysis of this study.

Much of the research to date on Turkish foreign policy has been largely conceptual and focused on identity-related factors. Very few quantitative studies have been conducted, and even fewer studies have attempted to blend both qualitative and quantitative data together. This study seeks to address this deficiency in the extant literature by adopting an interdisciplinary approach that includes an analysis of qualitative data such as Turkey's military relationship with Western allies and Turkish political discourse as well as quantitative data such as military expenditures and opinion polls.

Previous research on discourse analysis in Turkish foreign policy includes Güney and Mandacı, who provide a constructivist framework for understanding the new geopolitical imaginations of the AKP, [26] while Başer emphasizes the continuity in

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[26] Aylin Güney and Nazif Mandacı, "The Meta-Geography of the Middle East and North Africa in Turkey's New Geopolitical Imagination," *Security Dialogue* 44, no. 5-6 (2013): 431-48; see also Yeşiltaş, "The Transformation of the Geopolitical Vision in Turkish Foreign Policy," 661-87.

discourse between the AKP and previous administrations in the 1990s.[27] Güney and Mandacı also highlight the growing instability in the Middle East since the Arab Spring and how this is threatening the conceptual framework of "Turkish exceptionalism" in the region.[28]

On the quantitative side, Tezcür and Grigorescu conduct an empirical analysis of Turkey's UN voting records and trade relations, arguing that changes in foreign policy are primarily due to the diversification of Turkey's political and economic interests.[29] Kennedy and Dickenson analyze Turkish foreign policy through public opinion, as measured by the Pew Global Attitudes Project,[30] and Kirişçi provides a mixed-methods approach by focusing his study on what he calls the "three channels of transnational relations" in foreign policy, including trade relations, migration, and diffusion of values in civil society.[31]

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[27] Ekrem T. Başer, "Shift-of-axis in Turkish Foreign Policy: Turkish National Role Conceptions Before and During AKP Rule," *Turkish Studies* 16, no. 3 (2015): 291-309.

[28] Güney and Mandacı, "The Meta-Geography of the Middle East and North Africa in Turkey's New Geopolitical Imagination," 431-48; see also Cenk Saraçoğlu and Özhan Demirkol, "Nationalism and Foreign Policy Discourse in Turkey under the AKP Rule: Geography, History, and National Identity," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3 (2015): 301-319.

[29] Güneş Murat Tezcür and Alexandru Grigorescu, "Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy: Balancing European and Regional Interests," *International Studies Perspectives* 15 (2014): 257-76; see also Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy," 29-57.

[30] Kennedy and Dickenson, "Turkish Foreign Policy and Public Opinion in the AKP Era," 171-88.

[31] Kemal Kirişci, "Turkey's Engagement with its Neighborhood: A 'Synthetic' and Multidimensional Look at Turkey's Foreign Policy Transformation," *Turkish Studies* 13, no. 3 (September 2012): 319-41.

This study will follow the example of Kirişçi by employing a mixed-methods approach to provide a more comprehensive picture of Turkish foreign policy before and after the Arab Spring. Very few studies have incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data, and as the aftermath of the Arab Spring is still unfolding at the time of this writing in the context of the Syrian civil war and the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS), there is great need for an interdisciplinary analysis of Turkish foreign policy that incorporates the most recent developments in the Middle East. That is what this study will seek to provide.

CHAPTER THREE

TURKEY'S MILITARY RELATIONSHP WITH THE US AND NATO

The relationship between Turkey and the US has always been somewhat contrived and certainly not always amicable, but ultimately, overriding security concerns have led the US and Turkey to view each other as important, if not indispensable, allies. The US and Turkey began their long-term military relationship when Turkey joined NATO in 1952. Turkey was welcomed as a bulwark state that would protect against the encroachment of communism from the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 and the Cold War ended, Turkey and the US had to recalibrate their relationship, as did the entire NATO alliance.

A 1995 United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Report on Turkey observed that the changing international order gave Turkey the maneuverability to redirect its foreign policy from its predominantly western orientation to one in which the countries of the Middle East could become potentially more significant.[32] In 1996 Turkey signed a $23 billion deal with Iran calling for construction of a natural gas pipeline between the two countries, just weeks after President Clinton had signed a bill sanctioning any country making new energy investments in Iran, prompting New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman to write "Who Lost Turkey?"[33] The apparent loss of Turkey as a US ally and concerns over Turkey "leaving the West" became a recurring refrain in subsequent foreign policy articles during the early 2000s, as the AKP pursued an increasingly activist

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[32] Cited in İbrahim Kalın, "US-Turkish Relations under Obama: Promise, Challenge, and Opportunity in the 21st Century," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 2010): 98.

[33] Thomas L. Friedman, "Who Lost Turkey?" *New York Times,* August 21, 1996.

agenda and sought closer relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors.[34] But these alarmist

concerns frequently suffer from a flawed "presentism" that emphasizes agency over

structure.[35] While it is true that the US and Turkey have policies that differ and

sometimes even directly oppose each other, the overriding structural instability of the

Middle East—an instability that is threatening to both the US and Turkey and is not

likely to go away anytime soon—has forced the two countries into an uneasy partnership

of mutual interdependence.

Background of US-Turkey Military Relationship

The military relationship between the US and Turkey was relatively stable

throughout the Cold War as both countries shared a common objective of containing the

Soviet Union. Even this relationship was not without conflict, however, as the US

strongly condemned Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus and imposed an arms

embargo on Turkey in 1974. When the Cold War ended, Turkey demonstrated its

continued allegiance to the West by participating in Operation Desert Storm, the US

invasion of Iraq in 1991. However, Turkey eventually felt betrayed as the US not only

kept Saddam Hussein in power but also left a power vacuum in northern Iraq in which

Turkey's insurgent Kurdish population could establish a safe haven.[36] The fight against

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[34] Soner Çağaptay, "Where Goes the US-Turkish Relationship?" *Middle East Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 43-52; Philip H. Gordon and Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey on the Brink," *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 57-70; Çağaptay, "Is Turkey Leaving the West?"

[35] Kibaroğlu and Sazak, "Business as Usual," 98.

[36] Friedman, "Who Lost Turkey?"

the PKK would consume Turkish resources throughout the 1990s and had a crippling

effect on the Turkish economy. The memory of apparent US indifference in the 1990s

almost certainly influenced Turkey's decision to not allow the US to use Incirlik air base

in the Iraq invasion of 2003, as well as Turkey's hesitancy to join the US-led coalition

against ISIS. Turkey is now once again critical of the US, in much the same way as in

Operation Desert Storm. Now Turkey is upset at the US for not attempting to remove

Bashar Assad from power and for arming Kurdish rebels who have ties to the PKK.

Turkey argues that the Assad regime's oppression and use of force against civilians

created the conditions that led to the rise of ISIS, and that the failure of US to intervene in

the conflict more decisively at the outset has allowed ISIS to gain strength.[37] Erdoğan

expressed his frustration with the limited objectives of the US in Syria, saying, "If you

are doing something, do it properly. If you are going to do it with us, you need to value

what we say."[38]

NATO's Article Four

Turkey's military relationship with NATO is similarly problematic. On the one hand,

Turkey has readily made use of NATO's Article Four, which requires the member states

to consult together whenever the security of any member is threatened. In fact, Article

Four has only been invoked five times in NATO's history, and four of these times have

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[37] Aaron Stein, "For Turkey, It's All About Regime Change in Syria," *Al Jazeera,* October 8, 2014.

[38] Soner Çağaptay, "Is the US-Turkey Relationship Crumbling?" *Policy Watch* 2367, February 5, 2015. http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/is-the-u.s.-turkey-relationship-crumbling.

been by Turkey.[39] Article Four was first invoked by Turkey in 2003 during the US

invasion of Iraq, was invoked twice in 2012 in relation to the Syrian civil war, and was

invoked a fourth time in 2015 in response to ISIS bombings in Turkey. (The only other

use of Article Four was by Poland and Lithuania in response to Russia's annexation of

Crimea in 2014.) Ironically, Article Four was never invoked during the Cold War, the

most dangerous period of NATO's history, and all four of Turkey's requests have come

during the administration of the AKP, which is frequently perceived as being non-aligned

or even anti-West in its foreign policy. This once again demonstrates the primacy of

structure over agency. Regardless of the ideological preferences and ambitions of the

AKP, it is practical security concerns and *realpolitik* that consistently pull Turkey back

into its longstanding relationship with NATO. The collapse of the bipolar international

system at the end of the Cold War gave Turkey greater latitude to chart its own foreign

policy. But it is a short leash. Ultimately, regional insecurity in the Middle East and

Turkey's own limited resources keep Turkey tethered to the West.

NATO Missile Shield

While Turkey has made frequent use of NATO's security mechanisms, the AKP also

seems intent on keeping its options open and not relying solely on NATO for its defense.

This can be seen most clearly in Turkey's vacillation regarding NATO missile defense

systems in its country. In 2010 Turkey rejected the implementation of NATO missile

defense systems on its southeastern border as Turkey did not wish to provoke

neighboring Iran, a country with which the AKP was building a stronger relationship.

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[39] "Why Turkey Called a NATO Article Four Consultation," *Economist,* July 28, 2015.

Turkey was also concerned about the possible sharing of intelligence information with Israel, a country with which relationships had soured because of the Gaza flotilla raid and Erdoğan's open support of Hamas.

Turkey's prioritizing of Middle Eastern interests over its traditional Western ties drew severe criticism from both the US and NATO. One senior US official said that NATO missile defense was an "acid test of [Turkey's] commitment to the collective security arrangements it has with its western allies."[40] Turkey eventually allowed the NATO missile defense system to be deployed in 2011 as concerns grew over the increasing instability in Syria. But the issue of Turkey's loyalty to NATO was far from resolved. Since the NATO missile defense system was only capable of intercepting short-range missiles and left large populated areas of Turkey unprotected, Turkey decided to shop around and ultimately struck a deal with China to develop long-range missile defense interceptors. From the point of view of the Turkish government, Turkey was simply looking out for its own interests. According to one Turkish senior military officer, "We do not have the luxury not to have a powerful, long-range air defense architecture. We cannot forever rely on NATO assets inside and outside Turkey."[41] NATO, however, was not so sympathetic to Turkey's argument. Among NATO's chief concerns were the incompatibility of a Chinese system with NATO technology and the risk of intelligence

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[40] Praveen Swami, "Turkey's Relationship with West on the Line in European Missile Defense Negotiations," *Telegraph,* October 29, 2010.

[41] Burak Ege Bekdil, "Turkey Mulls Stopgap Air Defense Acquisition," *Defense News,* December 12, 2015.

leaks. In response to the Chinese deal, one NATO official said, "Turkey is recasting itself as a nonaligned country in its rhetoric, which is making NATO very uncomfortable."[42]

As of November 2015, Turkey has backed out of the China deal, undoubtedly from pressure by its Western allies. But ultimately, Turkey's goal is to have neither a NATO defense system nor a Chinese defense system, but a Turkish defense system. Turkey has now appointed military electronics specialist Aselsan, Turkey's biggest defense company, and missile maker Roketsan, both state-controlled, to develop an independent missile defense system.[43] This move is part of a broader effort by the Turkish government to boost a rapidly growing domestic arms industry that is already supporting its own forces with locally built tanks, warships, drones, and missiles.[44]

So while on the one hand Turkey is not hesitant to use its NATO privileges when threatened, such as the multiple Article Four consultations, on the other hand Turkey is clearly on a trajectory to making its own military decisions independently. "We lost World War I because the Ottoman state did not have its own combat technique," Davutoğlu said at a ceremony in March 2015 commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Turk victory over the Allies in the Dardanelles. "A nation that doesn't have its own defense industry cannot have a claim to independence."[45] Turkey's resources are currently insufficient to the task, as evidenced by Turkey's search for a stopgap solution

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[42] Emre Peker, "Turkey Breaks from West on Defense," *Wall Street Journal,* April 21, 2015.

[43] Bekdil, "Turkey Mulls Stopgap Air Defense Acquisition."

[44] Peker, "Turkey Breaks from West on Defense."

[45] Ibid.

to its missile defense needs while its indigenous system is being developed.[46] But Turkey could conceivably view its entire alliance with NATO as a stopgap solution, an undesirable but necessary crutch to be discarded once Turkey reaches its full military capability.

The "Kurdish Question"

The Kurdish people, who represent between 15 to 20 percent of Turkey's population as well as significant minorities in Syria, Iraq, and Iran, are integral to understanding the current conflict in Syria, Turkey's problematic relationship with the US, and the competing ideologies of Kemalism and neo-Ottomanism. The modern-day republic of Turkey was created in 1923 as the rump state of the Ottoman Empire after it lost significant amounts of territory to the Allied Powers in World War I, who were in turn assisted by insurgent ethnic minorities within the Ottoman Empire, including the Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds.

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and his followers (called "Kemalists") treated these minorities with severe prejudice and suspicion in the early days of the republic, and the Kurds were marginalized and suppressed as second-class citizens. Ataturk's ideology of Kemalism, which is still adhered to by many in Turkey, views the Kurds as an existential threat to the national and territorial integrity of the Turkish Republic.[47] Kemalism imagines Turkey as a unified homogenous society, and the Kurds have no place within this system. Neo-Ottomanism, by contrast, is a revival of the multicultural and Islamic

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[46] Bekdil, "Turkey Mulls Stopgap Air Defense Acquisition."

[47] Taşpınar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies," 2-3.

heritage of the Ottoman Empire, where Kurds and Turks live peaceably as Muslim

brothers. The AKP has followed this neo-Ottoman ideology in its efforts to recognize and

legitimize the Kurdish presence in Turkey. In a speech in the predominately Kurdish city

of Diyarbakır, Prime Minister Erdoğan said,

> Rejection, denial, and assimilation have ended with our government… We are one nation with
>
> all these differences. Within this concept, within the concept of the nation, there are Turks,
>
> Kurds, Laz, Circassians; one nation in its entirety… I love all of you for the sake of God, not
>
> because you are Turk, Kurd, Laz, or this or that. I love you just because God, who created me,
>
> also created you.[48]

The AKP has allowed greater freedom in Kurdish education, broadcasting, and

political rights. But the continued threat from the PKK and other Kurdish militant

organizations, in spite of the occasional ceasefires, is testing the resolve of the AKP to

adhere to its neo-Ottoman principles. The latest ceasefire between the Turkish

government and the PKK ended in July 2015, and there have been numerous terrorist

attacks and government airstrikes on Kurdish villages since then.

The US has a history of close ties with Kurdish militants, from the Persian Gulf War

in the early 1990s to current combat operatives against ISIS. The Kurds are the most

capable ground threat against ISIS, and the US has invested considerable resources in

training and arming them. But the Kurdish militia in Syria (PYD) has close relations with

the PKK in Iraq, a group recognized as a terrorist organization by both Turkey and the

US. The US seems to be okay with using one terrorist group (PKK) to fight another

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[48] Saraçoğlu and Demirkol, "Nationalism and Foreign Policy Discourse in Turkey under
the AKP Rule," 309.

(ISIS). In fact, it was PYD forces, with logistical support and reinforcement from the PKK, that were instrumental in recapturing Kobani from ISIS.[49]

The ISIS-held siege of Kobani from September 2014–January 2015 revealed the limits of US-Turkey cooperation. Kobani is a Kurdish-majority city in northern Syria just south of Turkey's border. When ISIS forces gained control of the city in September 2014, Turkey blocked the arrival of any weapons or ground troops into Kobani that would help the besieged Kurdish population because of an unwillingness to support affiliates of the PKK. Turkey eventually relented under intense US pressure, but the idea that Turkey would actually be complicit with ISIS in the siege of a civilian population drew swift condemnation from Western commentators.

In an article titled, "Shame on Turkey for Choosing the Islamic State over the Kurds," Bernard-Henri Levy wrote, "If Kobani becomes the name of yet another Turkish default, this one inexcusable, its future in NATO is in doubt."[50] Conrad Black was even more direct: "Tell the Turks to stop supporting terrorism – or get out of NATO."[51] What these commentators failed to recognize is that Turkey might actually have different security objectives than the US. From Turkey's perspective, Kurdish militants in Kobani represented just as great a threat as ISIS, and there was little reason to get involved in a conflict that involved two terrorist groups fighting each other. But while Turkey is

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[49] Eric S. Edelman, "America's Dangerous Bargain with Turkey," *New York Times,* August 27, 2015.

[50] Bernard-Henri Levy, "Shame on Turkey for Choosing the Islamic State over the Kurds," *New Republic,* October 12, 2014.

[51] Conrad Black, "Get Tough with Turkey," *National Review,* October 30, 2014.

directly threatened by the PKK's actions, the US tends to view the PKK more as a useful buffer against ISIS.[52]

While the US apparently has no qualms about working with the PKK, at least indirectly, Turkey does not have the luxury of empowering a terrorist organization that exists in its own backyard. For Turkey, the Kurds have a long history of separatist insurgency and terrorism, and the Turkish government views the existence of autonomous Kurdish territory in Iraq and Syria as a direct threat to its own national security. "I say to the international community that whatever price must be paid, we will never allow the establishment of a new state on our southern frontier in the north of Syria," said President Erdoğan in June 2015.[53]

Turkey's fears of the US creating an independent Kurdistan, with large territorial claims in Turkey, go all the way back to the Treaty of Sevres during World War I.[54] In fact, Kurdistan would have become an independent country under the terms of this treaty were it not for the subsequent War of Independence led by Ataturk and the superseding Treaty of Lausanne. Turkish fears of US intentions regarding the Kurds (along with the

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[52] Kılıç Kanat and Kadir Üstün, "US-Turkey Realignment on Syria," *Middle East Policy* 22, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 88-97.

[53] Tim Arango and Eric Schmitt, "Turkey Uneasy as US Support of Syrian Kurds Grows," *New York Times,* June 29, 2015.

[54] Kanat and Üstün, "US-Turkey Realignment on Syria," 96; Michael, "Navigating through the Bosphorus," 74-75.

Armenians and Greeks), sometimes referred to as "Sevres syndrome," run deep.[55] The

Kurdish question remains the biggest obstacle to harmonious US-Turkish relations.

"Incirlik, at last!"

"Incirlik, at last!" exclaimed Martin Indyk, the Director of Foreign Policy at the

Brooking Institution, upon learning the news that Incirlik Air Base in Turkey was now

open to US and NATO coalition forces fighting ISIS militants.[56] Not only was the

opening of Incirlik in July 2015 of immediate strategic value to the US in the war against

ISIS, but even more importantly it carried important long-term implications for the

endurance of US-Turkey relations.

The base at Incirlik, which sits outside the city of Adana in southeastern Turkey, is

"at the heart of U.S.-Turkish relations."[57] The base was built by the US Air Force in 1952

as part of its containment strategy against the Soviet Union and proved useful to the US

during the Cold War years in responding to Middle East crises in Lebanon and Israel.

Incirlik was used as a main hub for US missions during Operation Desert Storm in Iraq in

1991 and in Operating Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan in 2001.

But Turkey stunned the US when the Turkish parliament voted against allowing

Incirlik to be a base of operations for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. In retrospect, the

move should not have been all that surprising. Incirlik had been used during the first

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[55] Michael, "Navigating through the Bosphorus," 71-85; see also Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey's Strategic Vision and Syria," *Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 127-40.

[56] Cited in Kibaroğlu and Sazak, "Business as Usual," 99.

[57] Ishaan Tharoor, "This Turkish Base Could Be a Game-Changer in the US-Led War against the Islamic State," *Washington Post,* July 24, 2015.

invasion of Iraq to equip Kurdish militants in northern Iraq to fight Saddam Hussein, a move that Turkey saw as destabilizing to its own national security. And Turkey's opposition to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 was hardly exceptional. Nearly every country in Europe (and for that matter, in the world) was opposed to the US invasion of Iraq. So Turkey's rejection of US policy in Iraq was not so much a case of Turkey distancing itself from the West but rather a demonstration of solidarity with most of Europe in protest of US unilateralism.

Nevertheless, the critical importance of Incirlik to US combat operations in the Middle East created an undeniable rift in US-Turkish relations from 2003-2015. The fact that Turkey's decision to refuse US access to Incirlik was one of the first major policy actions of the newly elected Islamist AKP only served to further create the impression that Turkey's administration was deliberately charting a course of nonalignment with the West.

So the reopening of Incirlik to the US in July 2015 was understandably hailed as a significant and long-awaited breakthrough in US-Turkish relations. The decision was a "game-changer" in the war against ISIS according to a US senior administration official, and a "watershed moment" for US-Turkish relations.[58] Turkish media greeted the news with the headline, "Turkey-US Realignment Reaches Top Point."[59] Optimism quickly shifted to skepticism, however, as Turkey began to focus its military strikes on Kurdish targets, many of which were US allies in combatting ISIS. The development was a

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[58] Ceylan Yeğinsu and Helene Cooper, "US Jets to Use Turkish Bases in War on ISIS," *New York Times,* July 23, 2015.

[59] "Turkey-US Realignment Reaches Top Point for Northern Syria," *TRT World,* July 25, 2015.

sobering reminder that, while the US and Turkey were at least nominal allies, they had widely differing objectives in the war against ISIS that could potentially bring them into direct conflict with each other. The Turkish strikes on Kurdish targets could easily hit US personnel who were training these militias.[60] The use of Incirlik began to be seen as a "dangerous bargain" and one that would ultimately bring greater harm than benefit to the US.[61]

Turkey could be using its decision to allow the US to use Incirlik as leverage to now act more aggressively in its own interests. Turkey has been somewhat of a loose cannon in the war against ISIS since July 2015. Besides the ongoing airstrikes on Kurdish targets that continue to endanger US security forces, Turkey also shot down a Russian warplane and sent unauthorized troops into Iraq within a two week period. On November 24, 2015, two Turkish F-16s shot down a Russian Su-24 as it entered Turkish airspace near the Syrian border. The incident had disturbing Cold War overtones, as this marked the first time a NATO country had shot down a Russian or Soviet plane since the 1950s.

After downing the Russian warplane, Turkey immediately called for a NATO emergency meeting, during which time it was confirmed by radio recordings that Turkey had warned the Russian pilots multiple times to no avail before opening fire. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg made a clear declaration of support at the meeting, saying, "We stand in solidarity with Turkey and support the territorial integrity of our NATO ally."[62] At the same time there was concern, particularly by the US, that Turkey's

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[60] Kanat and Üstün, "US-Turkey Realignment on Syria," 88.

[61] Edelman, "America's Dangerous Bargain with Turkey."

actions were scuttling the chance of any broader coalition with Russia to combat ISIS, and President Obama called on all sides to "take measures to discourage any escalation."[63]

Then in early December 2015, Turkey sent in a regiment of approximately 200 soldiers and 20 tanks into northern Iraq without request or authorization from the Iraqi government, ostensibly to protect Turkish personnel working with Iraqi forces to combat ISIS. Iraq immediately denounced the "illegal incursion" and appealed to the UN Security Council to intervene, while Erdoğan initially refused to withdraw the soldiers, arguing that Turkish citizens were in danger from ISIS and that Iraq was unable to provide sufficient protection. "Are we to wait for the invitation of the central Iraqi government when there is an attack to our country? We have no such luxury," Erdoğan said.[64] The outraged Iraqi government then demanded a "complete withdrawal" of Turkish troops from Iraq, including any soldiers who had been deployed there previously. The conflict was eventually resolved when Obama called Erdoğan and urged him to "take additional steps to de-escalate tensions with Iraq, including by continuing to withdraw Turkish military forces, and reinforced the need for Turkey to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq."[65]

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[62] Neil MacFarquhar and Steven Erlanger, "NATO-Russia Tensions Rise after Turkey Downs Jet," *New York Times,* November 24, 2015.

[63] Juliet Eilperen and Karen DeYoung, "Obama Urges Steps to Avoid 'Escalation' after Russian Jet is Downed by Turkey," *Washington Post,* November 24, 2015.

[64] Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraqi Prime Minister Calls for Withdrawal of Turkish Troops," *Salon,* December 11, 2015.

This implicit rebuke of Turkey by the US underscores the difficulty and complexity of their alliance in the Middle East, as well as reveals the ambitions and limitations of Turkey's activist foreign policy. The AKP envisions Turkey as a regional power in the Middle East and acts accordingly. It should be noted that the US frequently sends unauthorized troops into foreign countries and is currently acting in Syria without the permission of the Syrian government. But while the US has the military strength to get away with such unilateralism, Turkey does not.

Military Expenditures

As part of Turkey's military relationship with the US and NATO, this study analyzes Turkey's military expenditures from 1961-2014, using data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The two pieces of data that are analyzed from SIPRI's database are Turkey's military expenditures in constant US dollars and as a percentage of Turkish GDP. For context, data from the World Bank on Turkey's GDP is also included. The phenomenal growth of Turkey's GDP during the AKP era has most certainly had an important effect on Turkish foreign policy; however, as this phenomenon has already been researched by many others, most notably Kirişçi, it is only briefly discussed in this study.[66]

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[65] "Readout of the President's Call with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey," December 18, 2015. https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/18/readout-presidents-call-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-turkey.

[66] Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy," 29-57; see also Kirişci, "Turkey's Engagement with its Neighborhood," 319-41; Tezcür and Grigorescu, "Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy," 257-76; Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism," 7-24.

The purpose of this analysis is to determine if Turkey's military expenditures since the Arab Spring and the accompanying regional instability are consistent with what might be expected of Turkey given the assumptions in this study. Specifically, a "normal" response of Turkey to regional instability, with no other considerations or controlling factors, would be a significant increase in military expenditures. This increase would conceivably be even greater if Turkey is pursuing a more independent foreign policy than it had in the past and must rely on its own resources. On the other hand, if there is no significant increase in Turkey's military expenditures, even in the face of immediate regional conflict, then this would indicate that Turkey is dependent on its alliances (i.e., the West) for its territorial security. Since this study argues that regional instability caused by the Arab Spring is causing Turkey to revert back to its Western alliances, the projection is that there will be no significant increase in Turkey's military expenditures from 2011-2015.

Looking at the data, Turkey's military expenditures reached a high point of US $21 billion in 1999 and then decreased significantly, coinciding with the capture and imprisonment of the PKK's leader Abdullah Öcalan and a subsequent ceasefire between the Turkish government and the PKK (Figure 1). Turkey's military expenditures have increased since 2005, but not significantly. The average annual growth rate of military expenditures increased by only 1.6% between 2005 and 2014, and in fact, military expenditures actually decreased as a percentage of GDP during this time period. By 2014, military expenditures as a percentage of GDP were at their lowest point in fifty years (Figure 2). The fact that this trend occurs in the midst of growing instability in the Middle East and renewed hostility with the PKK suggests that Turkey is still very much
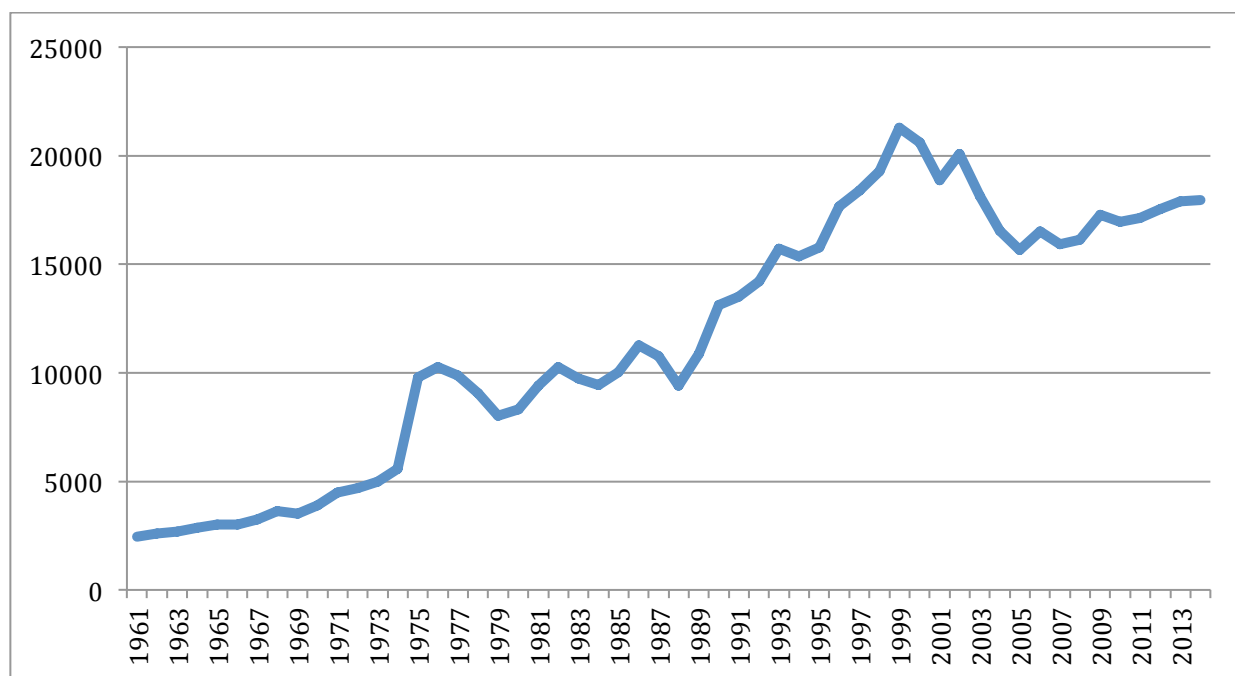
Figure 1: Turkey's military expenditures in constant (2011) USD million

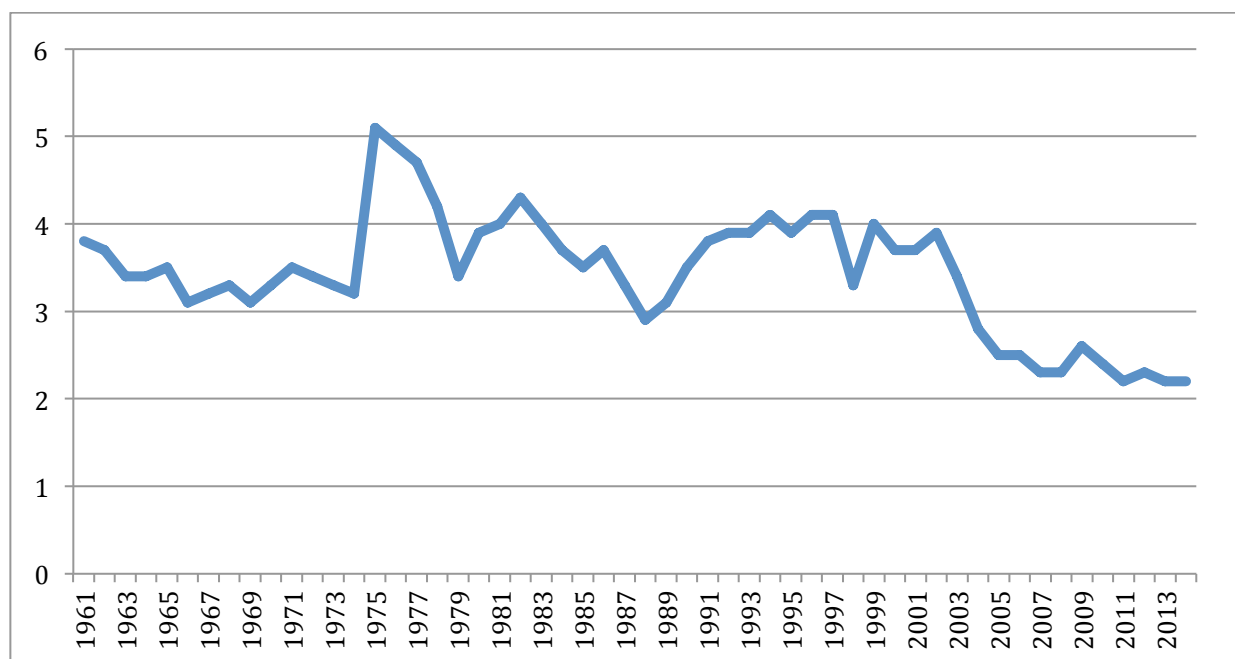*Source:* SIPRI Military Expenditures Database

Figure 2: Turkey's military expenditures as % of GDP

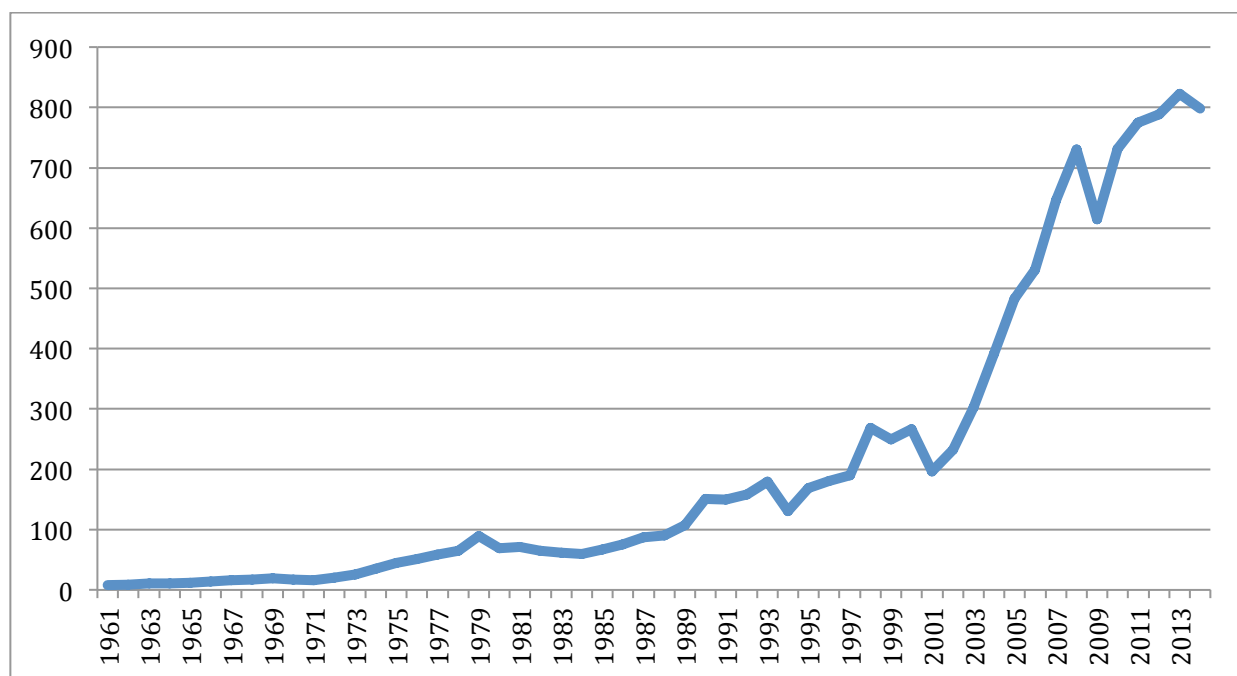*Source:* SIPRI Military Expenditures Database

Figure 3: Turkey's GDP at market prices (current USD billion)

Source: World Bank

dependent on the West for its national security and also is not trying to diminish that

dependence by aggressively building up its own military. At the same time, the dramatic

growth of GDP during the AKP era (2002-2015) means that, even though military

expenditures are decreasing as a percentage of GDP, they are still increasing in real dollar

amounts (Figure 3). Even so, the increase in military expenditures over the past decade is

minimal and certainly not as great as might be expected given the substantial security

threats on Turkey's immediate borders.

Turkey's current military expenditures, in real dollar amounts, are still well below

what they were at the height of the PKK conflict in the late 1990s, even though Turkey

ostensibly now has more money to spend. But there are other factors that may explain

Turkey's stagnant military expenditures. Many experts have warned that Turkey's

economic growth is unsustainable and too dependent on foreign investment, and in fact

Turkey's GDP has leveled off in recent years (Figure 3).[67] In addition, the regional

instability of the Arab Spring has hurt Turkey's trade relations with the Middle East and

reduced Turkey's exports.[68] A 2015 report by the Bipartisan Policy Center found that

Turkey's economic prospects are "increasingly shaky—with rising inflation, fiscal

expenditures, and overall debt."[69] In this fragile economic climate, Turkey may not have

as much ability to invest in military expenditures as the AKP desires. While

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[67] International Monetary Fund, "Turkey: Article IV Consultation—Staff Report, Press Release, and Statement by the Executive Director for Turkey," *IMF Country Report* 14, no. 329 (December 2014); Cenk Sidar and Emre Tunçalp, "Who's Going to Save Turkey's Economy?" *Foreign Policy,* April 3, 2015.

[68] Bipartisan Policy Center, "Fragile or Favored? Prospects for Turkey's Economy in 2015" *National Security Reports* (March 2015): 6.

[69] Ibid.

acknowledging the broader economic concerns that Turkey faces, it can still be safely argued that Turkey is not demonstrating a significant investment in military spending that would be expected if Turkey were indeed abandoning its Western alliances.

Conclusion

For now and for the foreseeable future, the US and Turkey need each other. Turkey needs the US to protect its border against the increasing instability in the Middle East, and the US needs Turkey's military resources—including Incirlik Air Base and NATO's second largest army—to be effective in accomplishing its own objectives in the Middle East. But this US-Turkey dynamic lacks the simplicity of the bipolar order of the Cold War period. Instability in the Middle East is a common threat to both the US and Turkey, as was the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and this common threat binds the US and Turkey together on foreign policy at a fundamental level. But on specifics, the US and Turkey have significantly different objectives, which complicates their alliance. The most pronounced disagreement is on the Kurdish question. In spite of these obstacles, Turkey's national security currently remains dependent on US and NATO military resources. The AKP knows this and will continue to stay in its Western alliances despite its ideological differences. If Turkey were to ever become self-sufficient in its national security (which admittedly is a huge "if"), then it would not be surprising to see those Western alliances be discarded. For Turkey (and perhaps for the US as well), the US-Turkey relationship is an alliance of necessity, not of preference.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICAL DISCOURSE

This chapter examines discourse from 2002-2015 related to Turkey's foreign policy. The discourse consists primarily of statements and articles by Davutoğlu, as he has been the chief spokesperson for Turkey's foreign policy throughout the AKP's administration, first as chief foreign policy advisor, then as foreign minister, and now as prime minister of Turkey. The foreign policy followed by the AKP is to a large extent an application of the principles outlined in Davutoğlu's influential book, *Stratejik Derinlik* (Strategic Depth), which was published in 2001.[70] Davutoğlu is thus not only the chief spokesperson but the authoritative source of the AKP's foreign policy. This chapter also includes selected statements and articles from Turkey's AKP leaders as well as leaders from other countries to provide a useful context for understanding Davutoğlu's discourse. The discourse has been divided into four themes: patterns of continuity and change, democratic movements, Davutoğlu's ideal of "zero problems with neighbors," and Turkish exceptionalism. The analysis will be an attempt to prove that the AKP initially pursued an autonomous, nonaligned foreign policy during its early years (2002-2010) but that regional instability caused by the Arab Spring forced the AKP to shift back into its traditional Western alliances in more recent years (2011-2015).

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[70] Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* [Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position] (Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001); see also Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy," 945-64; Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy," 103-123.

Continuity and Change

Since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and Ataturk's sweeping secularist reforms, Turkey has been pro-Western in its ideology and alliances. This relationship was reinforced in 1952 when Turkey officially became part of NATO. However, since the conservative Islamist AKP came into power in 2002, there has been wide discussion over whether the AKP is taking Turkey's foreign policy into a different direction away from the West, prompting some observers to talk about an "axis shift." This paper analyzes discourse from Davutoğlu and other AKP leaders to get a sense of how the AKP views its own policies. How does the AKP view Turkey's relationship with NATO, the US, and Europe? How does the AKP view Turkey's relationship with the Middle East? Does the AKP see itself as ushering in a new era of foreign policy? What elements of continuity and change are found in how the AKP views its diplomatic relations?

Turkey's leaders, and Davutoğlu in particular, have been consistently affirmative in their commitment to NATO. "The axis of our foreign policy is toward NATO, the EU, and the transatlantic process," Davutoğlu said in a conference at Princeton University in 2009.[71] At a speech celebrating the 60th anniversary of Turkey's membership in NATO, Davutoğlu said, "NATO continues to be the milestone of Turkey's defense and security policy… Turkey will continue to be a reliable ally and contribute to NATO, as she has done so during her membership to the Alliance for sixty years."[72] Davutoğlu takes pride

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[71] "Davutoğlu Rules Out Shift from Transatlantic Axis," *Today's Zaman,* March 23, 2009.

[72] "Message by the Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu on the Occasion of the 60th Anniversary of Turkey's Membership to NATO," February 18,

in highlighting Turkey's critical involvement in NATO operations in Afghanistan and other regions, stating that "Turkey is not a security consumer, but a security promoter" and is of great value to NATO.[73] He wrote,

> Over the last 60 years as a member of the Alliance, Turkey has not only benefited from NATO's security umbrella but also contributed immensely to the security of her Allies and to NATO's efforts to project security in the Euro-Atlantic geography and beyond… With Turkish troops and assets deployed in ongoing NATO missions and operations in three continents, and extensive contributions—in soft security terms—reaching out to Central Asia, Caucasus, Middle East and Northern Africa through NATO's partnership mechanisms, Turkey has proven to be a staunch member of the Alliance, and a net contributor to both regional and global peace and security.[74]

In response to critics who accuse the AKP of being anti-West, Davutoğlu points out that the AKP's commitment to NATO surpasses that of previous Turkish administrations. "The European Union and NATO are the main fixtures and the main elements of continuity in Turkish foreign policy," Davutoğlu wrote in an article for *Foreign Policy*. "Turkey has achieved more within these alliances during the past seven years under the AK Party government than it did in the previous 40 years. Turkey's involvement in NATO has increased during this time; Turkey recently asked for, and achieved, a higher representation in the alliance."[75]

2012. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/message-by-the-minister-of-foreign-affairs-h_e_-mr_-ahmet-davuto%C4%9Flu-on-the-occasion-of-the-60th-anniversary-of-turkey_s-membership-to-nato_-17-february-2012.en.mfa.

[73] Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Transformation of NATO and Turkey's Position," *Perceptions* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 16.

[74] Ibid., 15.

[75] Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy."

While Turkey has proven to be a committed and valuable member of NATO under the AKP, at least according to Davutoğlu, there is a perceived shift of status in Turkey's role within NATO. Turkey has the second largest military in NATO after the US and is centrally situated in a region of critical importance to global security that includes Syria, Iran, and Russia. In this context, Davutoğlu and other AKP leaders argue that Turkey must have a stronger leadership role within NATO. "Turkey is not a country that has to be convinced by NATO," Davutoğlu said as the AKP decided to deploy a NATO missile defense system in Turkey after initially objecting. "Turkey is at the center of NATO."[76]

At the same time, the AKP is not hesitant to criticize NATO's actions when they conflict with Turkey's interests, a stance reflective of Turkey's self-perceived status as a rising power. In 2011 Erdoğan was vocal in his opposition to NATO's intervention in Libya and accused Western powers of being more interested in oil than democracy. "What has NATO to do in Libya? NATO's intervention in Libya is out of the question. We are against such a thing." He continued, "We are not one of those who see oil when looking at the Middle East… Why are those who want democracy and human rights for countries that do not have oil keeping silent vis-à-vis countries that have oil? Here you see the double standard. Here you see the insincerity."[77] Davutoğlu wrote that NATO's agenda should not be "dominated by *a priori* negative perceptions of Iran and positive perceptions of Israel, regardless of whatever these countries do."[78] Davutoğlu has also

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[76] İsmail Duman, "What is Turkey's Position on Libya?" *World Bulletin,* April 12, 2011.

[77] "PM Rules Out NATO Intervention in Libya," *Today's Zaman,* February 28, 2011.

[78] Davutoğlu, "Transformation of NATO and Turkey's Position," 11.

been critical of the inequality in NATO's command structure and the unilateralism of the

U.S. in particular. He wrote,

> Consensus-based decision-making processes and reliance on international law and legitimacy
>
> will be the guiding principles of Turkey's position in NATO. There are other perspectives within
>
> NATO that assume a stronger role for some of its members. There are also inclinations toward
>
> justifying country-specific interests using NATO as a pretext. Turkey will resist any
>
> manipulations of NATO or maneuvers without international legitimacy.[79]

Before discussing patterns of continuity and change in US-Turkish relations, it

should be noted that, while the AKP has been consistent in expressing Turkey's steadfast

commitment to NATO (its criticisms notwithstanding), there is very little mention of

NATO by the AKP from 2002-2009. This is not to say that there was a rupture in

Turkey's relations with NATO; as Davutoğlu himself pointed out, Turkey was very

involved in NATO operations during this time, particularly in Afghanistan.[80] However, in

terms of discourse Turkey's relationship with NATO was minimized. A possible

explanation is that Turkey was heavily involved in rapprochement with its Middle

Eastern neighbors during the AKP's early years, and so outspoken proclamations of

Turkey's loyalty to NATO could have been seen as a liability in these new diplomatic

relations.[81] The fact that NATO surfaces repeatedly in AKP discourse after 2009 seems to

indicate that increasing regional instability caused Turkey to be more intentional in

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[79] Davutoğlu, "Transformation of NATO and Turkey's Position," 17.

[80] Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy"; Davutoğlu, "Transformation of NATO and Turkey's Position," 16.

[81] See Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy," 14.

emphasizing its NATO alliance, even though Turkey's involvement in NATO operations had always been present.

US-Turkey relations under the AKP administration did not get off to a good start. On March 1, 2003, only a few months after the AKP had been elected into power, the Turkish parliament rejected a resolution authorizing the deployment of US forces to Turkey to open a northern front in the invasion of Iraq. US-Turkey relations deteriorated even further a few months later when US forces detained 11 Turkish military intelligence officers in northern Iraq and, according to Turkish media, subjected them to harsh treatment. Turkey's military commander, Hilmi Özkök, called the incident "the biggest ever crisis of confidence between the Turkish and US armed forces."[82] Relations appeared to have thawed somewhat by 2006, when US Secretary of State Rice and Turkish Foreign Minister Gül met and crafted a "Shared Vision" statement that reaffirmed the US and Turkey's partnership and agreement on issues of mutual concern. Turkey agreed to cooperate with the US vision of "promoting peace and stability in the broader Middle East through democracy" and "fostering stability, democracy, and prosperity in a unified Iraq" while the US in turn pledged its support for Turkey's accession to the EU, fighting against the terrorist activities of the PKK, and working toward a "mutually acceptable solution of the Cyprus question" and "ending the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots."[83]

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[82] Mevlüt Katık, "US-Turkish Strategic Ties Confront "Biggest Ever Crisis of Confidence," July 9, 2003. http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav071003.shtml.

[83] "Shared Vision and Structured Dialogue to Advance the Turkish-American Strategic Partnership," July 5, 2006. http://turkey.usembassy.gov/news_06052006a.html.

Both the US and Turkey were cautiously optimistic when Obama became president in 2009, as he campaigned on the promise of a multilateral foreign policy and working in consensus with allies. Gül, in his new role as Turkey's president, spoke positively about US-Turkey relations. "Our interests coincide over a wide spectrum of issues in a broad region," he said. "Our will to cooperate is stronger than ever."[84] Davutoğlu agreed, saying, "Our approach and principles are almost the same, very similar on issues such as the Middle East, Caucasus, the Balkans and energy security… We hope that there is a golden era ahead in cooperation."[85] Obama visited Turkey on his first overseas trip as president and addressed the Turkish parliament. He said, "Where there's the most promise of building stronger US-Turkish relations is in the recognition that Turkey and the United States can build a model partnership… that we can create a modern international community that is respectful, that is secure, that is prosperous."[86] It should be noted that, in both Davutoğlu's and Obama's remarks, they spoke in ideal terms of a relationship that the US and Turkey could hope to have, suggesting that actual relations between the US and Turkey were still less than amicable.[87] Indeed, the AKP never felt that Obama's promise of multilateralism was fully realized. Speaking at a Turkish investor conference in 2011, Davutoğlu said,

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[84] Amberin Zaman, "Turkey and Obama: A Golden Age in Turkish-US Ties?" *On Turkey,* March 20, 2009. http://www.gmfus.org/file/2421/download.

[85] "Davutoğlu Rules Out Shift from Transatlantic Axis," *Today's Zaman,* March 23, 2009.

[86] "Joint Press Availability with President Obama and President Gül of Turkey," April 6, 2009. https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/joint-press-availability-with-president-obama-and-president-gul-turkey.

[87] See Kalın, "US-Turkish Relations under Obama," 93-108.

"In the Middle East the US is losing credibility because people think that the US represents only

the Israeli interests… The US as a leading global power should be as inclusive as possible. And

President Obama therefore is a good symbol for the new global approach of the US… Compared

to the President Bush era, it is more multilateral and less unilateral… If they prefer to continue to

disperse multilateralism and inclusiveness I think that will be good. But if they go back to

unilateralism and more assertive foreign policies, trying to protect the status quo of the US

global hegemony, that will create more discussion and problems."[88]

Davutoğlu has made clear on multiple occasions that Turkey is no longer a country

that will automatically submit to US interests. "The psychological ground on which

Turkish-American relations is now moving has been reconstituted," wrote Davutoğlu in

2008. "In this framework, Turkey is no longer a sole alliance nation whose support is

taken for granted, but a significant country with regional and global influence whose

strong vision and the proven capacity to make meaningful contributions need to be taken

into account by a healthier communication and a cooperative dialogue."[89] In an interview

with the *Cairo Review* in 2012, Davutoğlu said that the US and Turkey "do not always

pursue identical approaches on international issues." He continued, "As Turkey has

traditionally strong ties with its neighborhood and beyond, sometimes there may be

nuances in Turkey's approach on issues taking place in our region. Turkey's geography

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[88] "Speech entitled 'Vision 2023: Turkey's Foreign Policy Objectives' delivered by H.E. Ahmet Davuto**ğ**lu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey at the Turkey Investor Conference," November 22, 2011. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-entitled-_vision-2023_-turkey_s-foreign-policy-objectives__-delivered-by-h_e_-ahmet-davutoglu_-minister-of-foreign-af.en.mfa.

[89] Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 1 (2008): 90.

necessitates a multidimensional foreign policy."[90] These statements by Davutoğlu indicate that he believes Turkey has experienced a shift in its relations with the US and in its foreign policy as a whole, caused by changes in Turkey's structural environment as well as domestic improvements (e.g., economic growth) that increase Turkey's ability to exert influence.

In their discourse related to NATO and the US, Davutoğlu and other AKP leaders affirm Turkey's continued partnership with its traditional Western allies, but at the same time they view Turkey as a rising power that is entitled to a greater role in its existing alliances, is free to criticize Western powers when they go against Turkey's interests, and is able to determine its own foreign policy when necessary.

Democratic Movements

Democratic movements in the Middle East, and the Arab Spring in particular, provide a helpful context for understanding the changes in Turkish foreign policy from 2002-2015. The AKP initially sought good relations with the autocratic regimes in its region as part of its "zero problems with neighbors" policy, and Turkey was opposed to US intervention in the Middle East. With the onset of the Arab Spring, Turkey saw an opportunity to remake the region in its image as a Muslim democracy and championed the cause of democratic movements, although the AKP's support was heavily biased toward the Muslim Brotherhood and Sunni-led organizations. As the progress of the Arab Spring unraveled and democratic movements were either repressed or descended into

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[90] "Interview by Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu published in AUC Cairo Review," March 12, 2012. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/interview-by-mr_-ahmet-davuto%C4%9Flu-published-in-auc-cairo-review-_egypt_-on-12-march-2012.en.mfa.

anarchy, Turkey started to accuse the US and other Western powers of a lack of intervention in the region.

When the AKP came into power in 2002, the Bush administration had high hopes for Turkey in serving as a critical player in Washington's Greater Middle East Initiative, which was an agenda to promote democracy in the region, including regime change. A draft paper of the initiative read, in part,

> The Greater Middle East region, which refers to the countries of the Arab world, plus Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and Israel, poses a unique challenge and opportunity for the international community… Demographic changes, the liberation of Afghanistan and Iraq from oppressive regimes, and the emergence of democratic impulses across the region together present the G-8 with a historic opportunity… G-8 leaders should forge a long-term partnership with the Greater Middle East's reform leaders and launch a coordinated response to promote political, economic, and social reform in the region.[91]

The G-8 countries included the US, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Russia. The US saw Turkey as a key player in the region with the most to contribute in promoting democracy in a Muslim context. US National Security Advisor Rice called Turkey "an excellent model, a 99 percent Muslim country that has great importance as an alternative to radical Islam," while President Bush stated that Turkey "provided Muslims around the world with a hopeful model of a modern and secular democracy."[92]

Turkey, however, was skeptical of Western intentions. During the same week that the agenda of the Greater Middle East Initiative was made public, Foreign Minister Gül

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[91] Cited in Aylın Güney and Fulya Gökcan, "The 'Greater Middle East' as a 'Modern' Geopolitical Imagination in American Foreign Policy," *Geopolitics* 15, no. 1 (2010): 30.

[92] Taşpınar, "Turkey's Strategic Vision and Syria," 131.

encouraged Arab states to initiate domestic reforms to prevent foreign intervention. "If we don't take the reins ... and prefer to cover up and ignore them [our problems], then others will try to solve them their way and interfere in our affairs," he said. "And this interference will take place in the wrong way because they don't understand our sensitivities, our habits, our cultures, and our social structure."[93]

By 2012, with the Arab Spring in full swing, Davutoğlu found it necessary to explain the AKP's evolving foreign policy as Turkey was now breaking off relations with repressive regimes in the Middle East and openly supporting democratic movements. He said,

> By positioning itself on the side of the people demonstrating in the streets, Turkish foreign policy took a courageous but risky decision last year. We thought it was a prudent and just action as it was in line with our vision for the region discussed earlier. That vision in fact had shaped our policy in the region even before the Arab Spring when we established good neighborly relations with the incumbent regimes. We developed ties with these regimes because at the time they were not at war with their own people. But when they preferred to suppress the demands of their citizens, we sided with the people and still remain committed to the same democratic vision for our region.[94]

Davutoğlu talked about being on "the right side of history" and having a moral imperative to defend universal values and human rights.[95]

While the AKP started to pursue this values-driven foreign policy, Davutoğlu made clear that Turkey was still opposed to Western intervention in the Middle East. "We

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[93] "Turkey Won't Be Israel-Syria Peacemaker," *Al Jazeera,* February 18, 2004.

[94] Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring," Vision Papers, Center for Strategic Research, April 2012. http://www.sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/vision_paper_TFP2.pdf.

[95] Ibid.

expressed our opposition to foreign intervention because this region's future has to be decided by its people," he said.[96] In truth, Turkey wanted to decide the region's future on the people's behalf. Turkey's opposition to foreign intervention coincided with its aspiration to be a regional leader and impose a "new regional order" in the Middle East.[97] The AKP was essentially crafting its own Monroe Doctrine, setting up its own sphere of influence where Turkey could assert its power over the Middle East without interference from the West. In an impassioned speech to the Turkish parliament in 2012, Davutoğlu said, "A new Middle East is emerging. We will continue to be the master, the leader, and the servant of this new Middle East. In the new Middle East, the aspirations of the people and justice will rule—not tyranny, oppression, and dictatorships. And we will be [a] strong defender of this voice."[98] He continued, "The Middle East's people see Turkey not only as a friend and comrade, but also as a country pioneering a new regional order, a new idea having the potential to determine the region's future."[99]

As the new self-appointed arbiter of peace and justice for the Middle East, the AKP promised that it would be an impartial leader in the midst of these democratic upheavals. "We considered all people of the region as our eternal brothers irrespective of their background and saw it our duty to dampen sectarian tensions," Davutoğlu said in 2012.

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[96] Davutoğlu, "Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring."

[97] Güney and Mandacı, "The Meta-Geography of the Middle East and North Africa in Turkey's New Geopolitical Imagination," 439-41.

[98] Barış Ornarlı, "Davutoğlu: Turkey Poised to Lead in Syria and New Middle East," *Middle East Voices,* April 27, 2012.

[99] Güney and Mandacı, "The Meta-Geography of the Middle East and North Africa in Turkey's New Geopolitical Imagination," 440.

"We also were careful to ensure that this transition process will not draw new lines of division… In particular, it was incumbent upon us to work towards preventing divisions across sectarian lines, i.e. Shiite versus Sunni, or political regimes, i.e. defenders of the old regimes, versus new democratic regimes."[100] Unfortunately, Turkey failed miserably in this respect and lost a great deal of credibility in the Middle East as Turkey strongly supported the Muslim Brotherhood and other Sunni-led groups, which alienated Shiite-majority states such as Iran and Bahrain. At the same time, Turkey's encouragement of democratic revolution also angered Sunni-led regimes in Saudi Arabia and Syria.

As Turkey saw its reputation crumble in the Middle East and the democratic prospects of the Arab Spring withered away, the AKP now began to blame Western powers, ironically, for their lack of intervention. "The United States and Europe supported the winds of change in the Balkans, we were sure they would support the winds of change in the Middle East," said Davutoğlu in 2014.[101] "I'll be very frank, there is an Orientalist approach," he continued. "In the outside world they say: 'these Muslims, they really need an authoritarian leader, it doesn't work any other way'… This is a form of hidden racism."[102]

The Arab Spring, which initially held such promise in Davutoğlu's mind for enhancing Turkey's influence and prestige, ended as a crushing disappointment and isolated Turkey diplomatically. Turkey and the US were never on the same page, as the

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[100] Davutoğlu, "Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring."

[101] Jonny Hogg and Nick Tattersall, "Turkey, Frustrated with West, Clings to Fading Vision for the Middle East," *Reuters,* October 1, 2014.

[102] Ibid.

US initially supported democratic movements while Turkey spurned foreign intervention, and later Turkey actively encouraged the revolutions of the Arab Spring while the US, having seen the effects of regime change in Iraq and Libya, lacked the political will for further military adventurism.

"Zero Problems with Neighbors"

The phrase "zero problems with neighbors" was coined by Davutoğlu and is a central tenet of the AKP's foreign policy. The idea reflects the AKP's intentions to pursue a multidimensional foreign policy and in particular to strengthen its relations with Middle Eastern countries, which had been neglected by previous administrations. Davutoğlu argued that the shift in foreign policy reflected the new structural realities of the post-Cold War era. In an article titled "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy," Davutoğlu wrote, "Turkey experienced the direct impact of the post-Cold War atmosphere of insecurity, which resulted in a variety of security problems in Turkey's neighborhood. The most urgent issue for Turkish diplomacy, in this context, was to harmonize Turkey's influential power axes with the new international environment."[103]

The AKP's activist foreign policy was a clear break from the isolated policies that had characterized Turkey since its founding as a modern republic. "A major reason for Turkey's relative isolation from its neighborhood had to do with the framework that dominated the mindset of Turkish foreign-policy elites for decades—a mindset that erected obstacles between Turkey and its neighbors physically, mentally, and politically," wrote Davutoğlu. "The new AK Party government hoped to reintegrate Turkey with its

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[103] Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy."

surroundings, and this new strategy necessitated a major break with the old foreign-policy culture. In its electoral platform, the AK Party resolved to improve relations with Turkey's neighbors and pursue a more dynamic and multidimensional foreign policy."[104]

Of course, the effort to "harmonize Turkey's influential power axes" was easier said than done. A major part of the problem in the early years of the AKP administration was that two of Turkey's immediate neighbors, Iran and Iraq, were in President Bush's "axis of evil."[105] Turkey's attempts to move closer diplomatically with these countries thus pulled Turkey farther from the US as well as from Israel, two of Turkey's closest allies during the Cold War. This was perhaps most apparent when Turkey supported Iran's nuclear program in 2010, against the wishes of the US and the UN Security Council. In a joint declaration between Iran, Turkey, and Brazil, Iran agreed to send low-enriched uranium to Turkey in exchange for enriched fuel for a research reactor.[106] When the UN Security Council rejected this agreement and instead passed a resolution implementing further economic sanctions on Iran in order to pressure Iran to completely disband its nuclear enrichment program, Turkey and Iran expressed their displeasure toward the international community and the US and Israel specifically. Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, "Domineering powers headed by America are unhappy with cooperation between independent countries."[107] Erdoğan was similarly critical. He said, "There is no

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[104] Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Zero Problems in a New Era," *Foreign Policy,* March 21, 2013.

[105] "President Delivers State of the Union Address," January 29, 2002. http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html.

[106] "Joint Declaration by Iran, Turkey, and Brazil," *BBC News*, May 17, 2010.

[107] "Turkish PM to Join Brazil's Lula at Iran Nuclear Talks in Tehran," *Hürriyet,* May 16, 2010.

nuclear weapon in Iran now, but Israel, which is also located in our region, possesses nuclear arms. Turkey is the same distance from both of them. What has the international community said against Israel so far? Is this the superiority of law or the law of superiors?"[108]

Before the Arab Spring, Turkey had established positive relations with many of its neighbors, including Syria. Turkey and Syria previously had a long history of conflict, as Syria was both an ally of the Soviet Union during the Cold War and a strong supporter of the Marxist-leaning PKK. But by 2008 Davutoğlu could describe Turkey's relations with Syria as the "most striking" example of success in the region, saying, "Turkey's level of relations with Syria today stands as a model of progress for the rest of the region."[109] (2008) Syrian president Bashar Assad was similarly optimistic and saw Turkey's rapprochement as part of a new alignment of power against the West. Citing a failure of US and European foreign policy in the Middle East, Assad said, "What's emerging out of necessity is another alternative—a geostrategic map that aligns Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Russia, linked by politics, common interests, and infrastructure."[110]

Turkey's relations of course would deteriorate rapidly in the years following, not only in Syria but also in many other countries affected by the Arab Spring, including Egypt, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. The loss of Egypt as an ally was particularly disappointing for the AKP, as they had strongly supported the election of Mohamed

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[108] Sharif Nashashibi, "Israel and Turkey: If It's Broke, Why Fix It?" *Al Arabiya,* June 10, 2013.

[109] Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision," 80.

[110] Herb Keinon, "Assad: US Has Lost Influence in ME," *Jerusalem Post,* May 25, 2010.

Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, only to see him ousted from power a year

later by a military coup. Turkey's policy of "zero problems with neighbors" was quickly

becoming "zero neighbors without problems" and was in danger of becoming simply

"zero neighbors."[111] As the AKP saw its diplomatic relations fade in the Middle East,

Davutoğlu's chief policy advisor İbrahim Kalın coined the term "precious loneliness" to

describe the evolution in Turkey's foreign policy. "At some point in history there comes

a time where you stand by the truth all alone when the world keeps silent against coups

and slaughters," Kalın said. "You do not give up your principles and values because your

allies and other countries do not stand by you… If this places you in a different position

than the rest this is a 'value-centered loneliness' and this actually is a precious

loneliness."[112]

The AKP's "zero problems with neighbors" policy simply could not be sustained

during and after the Arab Spring. Even Davutoğlu admitted in 2013 that the policy was

"an idealistic model" even though it remained a worthy goal.[113] The "zero problems"

policy was intended to stabilize Turkey's security environment so it could become more

powerful. "A new belt of peace, stability, and prosperity will surround Turkey, while

Turkey will establish economic development, democratization, and international prestige

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[111] Taşpınar, "Turkey's Strategic Vision and Syria," 134-135; Piotr Zalewski, "How Turkey Went from 'Zero Problems' to Zero Friends," *Foreign Policy,* August 22, 2013.

[112] "Turkey Not 'Lonely' But Dares to Do So for its Values and Principles, Says PM Adviser," *Hürriyet*, August 26, 2013.

[113] Davutoğlu, "Zero Problems in a New Era."

along with this new Middle East and its peoples," Davutoğlu said.[114] On another occasion,

he said, "Turkey can become politically powerful again only if it utilizes the 'strategic

depth' of its neighborhood, developing better ties with those Muslim neighbors. Turkey's

future power depends on having good ties with its Muslim neighbors."[115] Turkey

currently does not have good ties with its Muslim neighbors, it is surrounded by a belt of

war, instability, and poverty, and Turkey has declined in power as a result. The "zero

problems with neighbors" policy has failed, and Turkey does not have the resources to

sustain the diplomatic isolation of Kalın's "precious loneliness." In this context, Turkey

is gradually renewing its relationship with the West as a guarantor of its security.

Turkish Exceptionalism

There is a clear pattern of exceptionalism in Davutoğlu's discourse as he sets a bold,

independent foreign policy for Turkey. This has obvious ramifications for Turkey's

traditional Western alliances as the AKP does not feel as bound to their transatlantic

commitments as much as previous administrations. The roots of Turkish exceptionalism

are found in Davutoğlu's book *Strategic Depth,* in which he argues that Turkey is

centrally located in a region that is bound to Turkey through historical and cultural ties

and that Turkey can exert influence throughout this region. This idea is referred to by

many as neo-Ottomanism, although AKP leaders reject this label because of its obvious

irredentist overtones. Nevertheless, while the AKP may not want to conquer these

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[114] Güney and Mandacı, "The Meta-Geography of the Middle East and North Africa in Turkey's New Geopolitical Imagination," 439.

[115] Soner Çağaptay, "Defining Turkish Power: Turkey as a Rising Power Embedded in the Western International System," *Turkish Studies* 14, no. 4 (2013): 804.

neighboring lands militarily as did their Ottoman predecessors, Davutoğlu's discourse makes clear that Turkey intends to use "soft power" to impose its influence over the region as a benevolent hegemon.

Davutoğlu explains some of the ideas found in *Strategic Depth* in a 2008 article, in which he writes,

> In terms of its area of influence, Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf, and Black Sea country. Given this picture, Turkey should make its role of a peripheral country part of its past, and appropriate a new position: one of providing security and stability not only for itself, but also for its neighboring regions. Turkey should guarantee its own security and stability by taking on a more active, constructive role to provide order, stability and security in its environs.[116]

For Davutoğlu, the initiative and responsibility for Turkey's security comes not from NATO or the US, but from Turkey's own resources and ability. Moreover, Turkey assumes the responsibility for providing security for its neighbors, without really considering whether this support is requested or welcomed. Güney and Mandacı have observed that Turkey's promotion of itself as a "security provider" is problematic because it "implies a hierarchical positioning" for Turkey over its Middle Eastern neighbors, something Turkey's neighbors have not been eager to accept.[117]

The contrast between a "wing state" *(kanat ülke)* and a "center state" *(merkez ülke),* which was first articulated in *Strategic Depth,* can be found throughout Davutoğlu's speeches and writings. The concept of Turkey as a "wing state" is a reference to the Cold

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[116] Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision," 79.

[117] Güney and Mandacı, "The Meta-Geography of the Middle East and North Africa in Turkey's New Geopolitical Imagination," 438.

War era, when Turkey was situated as the southern flank of NATO against Soviet expansion. In Davutoğlu's mind, the construct of "wing state" implies that Turkey is only of peripheral importance in international relations and that this construct must be discarded. "During the Cold War, Turkey was a 'wing country' under NATO's strategic framework, resting on the geographic perimeter of the Western alliance," said Davutoğlu. "NATO's strategic concept, however, has evolved in the post-Cold War era—and so has Turkey's calculation of its strategic environment… We are a wing country no longer."[118] On another occasion Davutoğlu said, "Turkey perceives any threat in its neighborhood and does not plan to be a frontier country as it was during the Cold War era."[119] And in 2008 he wrote, "[Turkey] should be seen neither as a bridge country which only connects two points, nor a frontier country, nor indeed as an ordinary country, which sits at the edge of the Muslim world or the West… A central country with such an optimal geographic location cannot define itself in a defensive manner."[120] Davutoğlu's dismissal of the term "ordinary country" and his emphasis on Turkey as a "central country" suggests that Davutoğlu views Turkey as exceptional and superior to its surrounding neighbors.

Perhaps the most vivid example of Davutoğlu's idea of the centrality of Turkey in world politics came in a speech he made in Sarajevo, Bosnia in 2009. He said,

> Yes, whatever happens in the Balkans, Caucasus, or Middle East is our issue. Sitting in Ankara,
> I drew a thousand-kilometer circle around my office. There are twenty-three countries. All of

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[118] Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy."

[119] Duman, "What is Turkey's Position on Libya?"

[120] Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision," 78.

them are our relatives and they expect something from us… Our foreign policy aims to establish order in all these surrounding regions… Like in the 16th century, when the rise of the Ottoman Balkans was the center of world politics, we will make the Balkans, Caucasus, and Middle East together with Turkey the center of world politics in the future. This is the objective of Turkish foreign policy and we will achieve it.[121]

This expansionary foreign policy is in stark contrast to the foreign policy followed by Turkey throughout the 20th century, when Kemalist nationalism regarded the former Ottoman territories with suspicion and adopted a defensive posture, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus being a notable exception. The AKP, in contrast, sees the former Ottoman territories as its *tarihdaş,* or "people sharing a common history," and aspires to bring these lands back into its embrace. Addressing the Turkish parliament in 2011, Davutoğlu said,

All these lands, all these regions are our *tarihdaş*. As the state of the Turkish Republic we are obliged to protect the rights of our citizens, as a nation preserving the past ties with our *tarihdaş* is our historical mission. In this context, regardless of their ethnic and sectarian origins, we are determined to embrace all of our *tarihdaş* and eliminate all the existing barriers between us and our *tarihdaş;* this is why we are pursuing region-wide policies; this is why we are establishing trilateral and multilateral mechanisms.[122]

Embedded within this idea of Turkish exceptionalism is a paternalistic attitude toward Turkey's surrounding regions, the notion that Turkey naturally understands and acts in

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[121] Saraçoğlu and Demirkol, "Nationalism and Foreign Policy Discourse in Turkey under the AKP Rule," 312.

[122] Ibid.

the best interests of its dependents. Davutoğlu portrays Turkey as a "wise country" that

provides stability in times of crises and acts responsibly in mediating conflict.[123]

By taking ownership of its region and by asserting its leadership and influence in

regional affairs, Turkey has implicitly and explicitly communicated to Western powers

that they should not interfere in Middle Eastern affairs but should rather let Turkey take

control of events. In a speech at an ambassadors' conference in 2011, Davutoğlu said,

> Our foreign policy will be conducted autonomously. We suffer from a perception that other
> powers design regional politics and we only perform the roles assigned to us. We need to do
> away with this psychological sense of inferiority that has permeated in many segments of our
> society and amongst political elites. Today, we determine our vision, set our objectives, and
> execute our foreign policy in line with our national priorities. We might succeed or fail in our
> initiatives, but the crucial point is that we implement our own policies. We do not receive
> instructions from any other powers, nor are we part of others' grand schemes. In particular, our
> policies towards neighbors are devised with careful consideration of our own evaluation of the
> situation. As has been the case so far, we will continue to coordinate our policies with those of
> our Western partners as we see fit, but we will never let such partnership negatively affect our
> relations with neighbors.[124]

Davutoğlu's repeated use of the pronouns "we" and "our" in reference to Turkey's

foreign policy demonstrates that Turkey sees itself as a strong, independent actor and

chafes against any suggestion that Turkey is a pawn of Western powers. Davutoğlu

makes clear that Turkey does not need any country's permission or approval for its

actions. "The era of policies [such as] 'wait and see' and following behind big powers has

ended," he said. "Turkey is no longer a country which does not have self-confidence and

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[123] Davutoğlu, "Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy and Regional Political Structuring."

[124] Ibid.

is waiting for foreign approval."[125] The irony of course is that, while Turkey rebukes Western powers for imposing their own interests on the Middle East, Turkey aspires to exercise that same role as a regional power. In a speech cited earlier, Davutoğlu says, "A new Middle East is emerging. We will continue to be the master, the leader, and the servant of this new Middle East."[126] The words "master" and "leader" unequivocally place Turkey in a superior position to its neighbors, while the word "servant" gives subtle legitimacy to Turkey's self-aggrandizement by assuring the region that Turkey has purely altruistic motives.

Davutoğlu further defends Turkey's exceptional role as a "subject of history" in 2013, saying,

> The other states say to us, 'do not engage in adventures in foreign policy, do not follow an active politics.' And we keep saying 'Turkey has always been a subject, can never be objectified. We have always been a subject, and no one can make this nation an object. Today, could anyone, particularly Palestine, oppose anything in the Middle East without the presence of Turkey? We should do what our history necessitates. This nation has always been a subject of history and will continue to be so.[127]

The idea of Turkey being a "subject of history" implies that Turkey makes its own rules and is answerable to no one.

Turkish exceptionalism is enabled by a confluence of factors, including the AKP's consolidation of political power over an extended period of time, the diminished role of the Kemalist military in shaping Turkey's foreign policy, and most importantly, an

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[125] "Turkey Owns, Leads, Serves to 'New Mideast,'" *Hürriyet,* April 27, 2012.

[126] Ornarlı, "Davutoğlu: Turkey Poised to Lead in Syria and New Middle East."

[127] Saraçoğlu and Demirkol, "Nationalism and Foreign Policy Discourse in Turkey under the AKP Rule," 315.

unprecedented surge in economic growth. Since 1990, Turkey's gross domestic product

has quadrupled, while exports have grown by a factor of five, foreign direct investment

by a factor of twenty-five, and the value of traded stocks by a factor of forty.[128] The fact

that this economic growth has continued in spite of a global recession and a faltering euro

has only heightened Turkey's sense of superiority over the West. Turkey is currently the

17th largest economy in the world and aspires to be among the top ten economies by

2023, the centennial of Turkey's founding as a modern republic. In a speech entitled

"Vision 2023: Turkey's Foreign Policy Objectives," Davutoğlu is optimistic, if not

idealistic, when he says,

> If God wills, as we aspire, so by 2023 we will become one of the ten greatest world economies
>
> with a GDP exceeding 2 trillion dollars. The world will see how a strong yet compassionate
>
> Turkey extends its hand to humanity. With this growing economy, we aim not only to enhance
>
> the well-being of our own people, but to redress all of humankind's grievances.[129]

The idea that Turkey will somehow "redress all of humankind's grievances" goes well

beyond the typical national security interests of nation-states and is a distinctly

exceptional aspiration.

Turkey's strong economic growth has given the AKP great confidence in charting an

ambitious foreign policy. The economic stability has also enabled the AKP to win

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[128] Svante Cornell, "Axis Shift," in *Turkish Foreign Policy under the AKP: The Rift with Washington,* ed. Soner Cağaptay (Policy Notes, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 2011), 3.

[129] "Speech entitled 'Vision 2023: Turkey's Foreign Policy Objectives' delivered by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey at the Turkey Investor Conference," November 22, 2011. http://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-entitled-_vision-2023_-turkey_s-foreign-policy-objectives__-delivered-by-h_e_-ahmet-davutoglu_-minister-of-foreign-af.en.mfa.

successive elections, which in turn allows the AKP to argue it has a popular mandate to act assertively and take risks in the international arena. To the extent that Turkey continues its economic climb, it is likely that exceptionalism will continue to dominate the discourse of the AKP.

It is interesting to note that much of the exceptionalism in Davutoğlu's discourse came at the height of the Arab Spring, when Turkey had grand ambitions to remake the broader Middle East in its image, a region of pan-Islamic democracy that could exist unfettered by Western interference. The failure of this vision to materialize has delivered a blow to Turkey's exceptionalism, although there is little indication that the AKP has given up on its dream of regional prominence. Davutoğlu's tone was more subdued but still resolute in 2014, when he said, "There are countries which have a vision for the region they live in and for the world. They will be the rising stars. Then there are countries that have the capacity to rule but do not have the vision. They will be the status quo and, in time, will regress. Turkey is in the first category."[130] While the Arab Spring has revealed the limitations of Turkey's aspirations, the AKP seems intent on pursuing its vision of exceptionalism undeterred. Turkey's recent decisions to launch airstrikes on US-trained Kurdish militias and its downing of a Russian fighter jet over Turkish airspace instead of first appealing to Western powers can be understood as the actions of a self-confident country that does not hesitate to act unilaterally.

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[130] Hogg and Tattersall, "Turkey, Frustrated with West, Clings to Fading Vision for the Middle East."

Conclusion

Davutoğlu's concept of an autonomous, multidimensional Turkish foreign policy has been a central feature of the AKP platform since its inception in 2002, but his ideas have faced significant challenges in the past five years, including the Arab Spring, the Syrian civil war, and ISIS. The visions of "zero problems with neighbors" and Turkish exceptionalism lack the credibility and resonance they once had, and Turkey's aspirations have frequently overreached their capabilities. To borrow a football term, as one high-ranking Turkish diplomat did, Turkey has frequently "found itself offside" in its foreign policy.[131] And yet even though much of the AKP's discourse has failed to materialize into significant results, the AKP has given the Turkish public a sense of national pride, which is reflected in the AKP's enormous appeal among the populace and remarkable longevity in a country formerly characterized by unstable coalition governments. For this reason, there is a great deal of continuity in the AKP's discourse regarding foreign policy, both before and after the Arab Spring. Simply put, the discourse wins votes. The AKP has given Turkey a vision of power and prestige, an "imagined community" that inspires the national psyche with significance. For political reasons, it is likely that the AKP will continue to promote an assertive and autonomous discourse of foreign policy, while at the same time making use of their Western alliances to bridge the widening gap between their rhetoric and their security capabilities.

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[131] Zalewski, "How Turkey Went from 'Zero Problems' to Zero Friends."

CHAPTER FIVE

PUBLIC OPINION

This chapter analyzes Turkish public opinion of Western entities, including the US, NATO, and the EU. Turkish public opinion of the United Nations is also included, although not so much because it is a Western institution but because it offers perspective on Turkish attitudes toward international engagement in general. In keeping with the central argument of this study, the analysis of Turkish public opinion will attempt to show that public opinion was initially unfavorable toward Western entities during the early years of the AKP administration (2002-2010) but that regional instability caused by the Arab Spring (2011-2015) resulted in a need for greater security and a corresponding increase of favorable opinion toward Western nations and institutions that could provide that security.

For measuring Turkish public opinion, this study uses the Global Attitudes & Trends annual surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center and the Transatlantic Trends annual surveys conducted by the German Marshall Fund. These surveys are widely used in the social sciences and in the field of international relations in particular, and they both have a reputation for reliability and clear methodology. A number of Turkish polling companies also exist; however, they are almost all affiliated with political parties and are not generally considered reliable, and so they have not been used for this study. One of the greatest strengths of the surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center and the German Marshall Fund, as it pertains to the purposes of this study, is that a question is often asked repeatedly over a span of multiple years so that a researcher can observe any pattern of continuity or change in public opinion. Some of the questions in these surveys

go back as far as 2002, which means that Turkish public opinion can be measured over the entirety of the AKP's administration.

Turkish public opinion of the United States

Both the Pew surveys and the GMF surveys asked the question, "Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the United States?" In the Pew surveys, this question was asked every year from 2002-2015 while the GMF surveys covered every year from 2009-2014. The data in the Pew surveys convincingly demonstrates that Turkey has never had a high opinion of the US at any point in the AKP administration. For every single year polled, the majority of Turks had an unfavorable opinion of the US, and for most years (2003, 2005-2014) the majority of Turks had a *very* unfavorable opinion of the US (Figure 4). In fact, the "very unfavorable" response was the most popular category every singe year, often by a large margin. The number of respondents with a favorable opinion of the US peaked at 30% (2002, 2004) and those with a "very favorable" opinion of the US were never more than 7% (2015). The differences in public opinion were not quite as pronounced in the GMF surveys, but the overall pattern was the same. As in the Pew surveys, more respondents in the GMF surveys had a "very unfavorable" opinion of the United States than any other category for every year polled, and those with a favorable opinion were never more than 34%. Taken together, the Pew and GMF surveys indicate that Turkish public opinion of the US has been consistently negative throughout the AKP's administration.
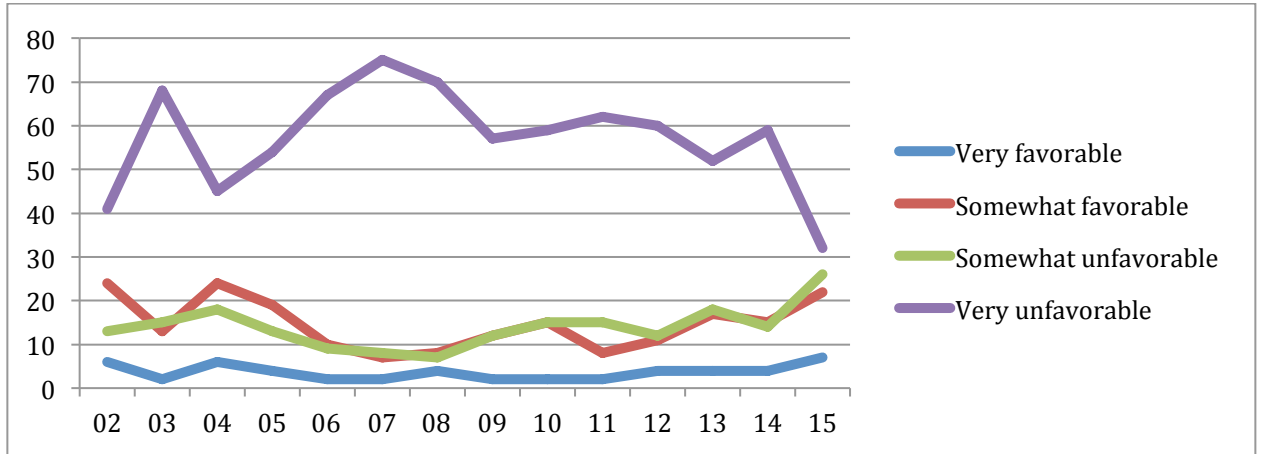
Figure 4: Turkish public opinion of the United States, 2002-2015

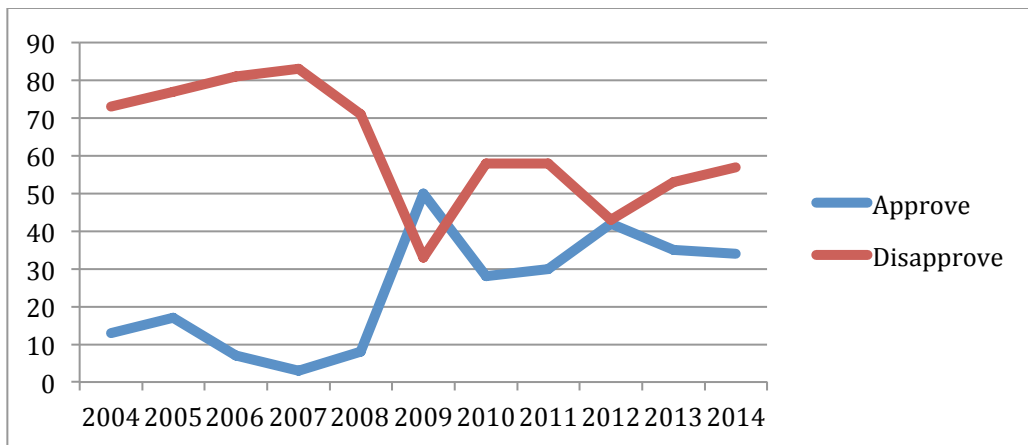*Source:* Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database

Figure 5: Turkish public opinion on US President's handling of international policies, 2004-2014

Source: GMF Transatlantic Trends Topline Data

In a more specific measurement of Turkish public opinion of the United States, the GMF surveys asked the question, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way the President of the United States is handling international policies?" This was one of the more useful questions in the GMF surveys, as it contained data for every year from 2004-2014. Turkish disapproval of the US President was strong throughout, although there was a distinct difference in public opinion during 2004-2008, when approval ratings ranged from 3%-17%, and 2009-2014, when approval ratings ranged from 28%-50% (Figure 5). However, the fact that Turkish public opinion improved dramatically in 2009, increasing from 8% approval in 2008 to 50% approval in 2009, and then leveled off, suggests that this shift in public opinion was not caused by the Arab Spring and regional instability but rather by changes in administration from Bush to Obama. In fact, 2009 was the only year polled when Turkish approval was higher than disapproval, and while there was a relative drop in disapproval between the Bush and Obama presidencies, Turkish disapproval remained dominant from 2010-2014.

The rest of the questions related to Turkish public opinion of the United States on the Pew surveys followed the same pattern of continuity observed earlier; that is, that Turks have demonstrated a consistently negative opinion of the US throughout the tenure of the AKP's administration from 2002-2015. When Turks were asked to what extent does the US take into account the interests of countries like Turkey in making international policy decisions, over 70% of respondents said "not too much" or "not at all" for every year polled between 2002-2013. Over 50% polled between 2002-2012 said they "oppose the US-led efforts to fight terrorism." And between 2003-2011, over 50% of Turks said they were worried "that the U.S. could become a military threat to our country."

Some of the questions on the Pew surveys were not asked in more recent years (2012-2015), and the GMF survey for 2015 was not yet released at the time of this writing, and so it is difficult to make any conclusive argument about whether the Arab Spring and the regional instability caused by the Syrian civil war had any affect on Turkish public opinion of the US. The Pew 2015 survey data does suggest that Turkish public opinion may be shifting. Those with an unfavorable opinion of the US fell to 58% in 2015, the lowest percentage ever during the AKP administration (the AKP had not yet been voted into power when the 2002 survey was taken). At the same time, the Pew 2015 survey shows that only 29% of Turks had a favorable opinion of the US, and that among them only 7% had a "very favorable" opinion. While this admittedly represents a relative increase in Turkish approval over previous years, it is hardly an effusive display of warm feelings for the US.

As a whole, the Pew and GMF surveys show a remarkably consistent pattern of Turkish disapproval toward the US during the entire time period studied (2002-2015). The one modest increase in Turkish approval represented in the GMF surveys appears to be correlated to a change in US presidential administrations, but even that approval rating reached no higher than 50% in 2009 and dropped immediately the next year. As discussed in a previous section, the year 2015 was a critical year for US-Turkish relations, as Turkey and the US began to cooperate in countering ISIS, and Incirlik Air Base was reopened for US-led military operations. Further research that incorporates more recent polling data will help in clarifying whether these recent developments have any sustaining affect on Turkish public opinion.

Turkish public opinion of NATO

The data on Turkish public opinion of NATO in the Pew and GMF surveys is limited. The Pew surveys only cover the years 2011-2014, which makes a comparison to the early years of the AKP administration difficult, and both the Pew and GMF surveys have a limited amount of questions related to NATO. Still, there was enough data to make some general observations, especially when considered in the context of Turkish public opinion in other areas discussed in this study.

The Pew surveys asked the question, "Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of NATO." Similar to the data on Turkish public opinion of the United States, the most popular response in every year polled was "very unfavorable." Over 50% of Turks had a generally unfavorable opinion of NATO for every year polled, and this disapproval peaked in 2014, with 70% of Turks having a "somewhat unfavorable" or "very unfavorable opinion" of NATO (Figure 6). The Pew surveys did not contain data on this question prior to 2011, so it is difficult to know how these measurements compare to Turkish public opinion of NATO in previous years. However, the fact that Turks generally disapproved of NATO during a period of increasing instability in Turkey's environment is significant. Two possible conclusions are that either Turkey is unhappy with NATO's lack of intervention in the region, or Turkey does not want to be reliant on NATO and prefers to make its military decisions autonomously. There is probably some truth to both of these explanations, but further data presented in this study will give specific support for the latter conclusion.
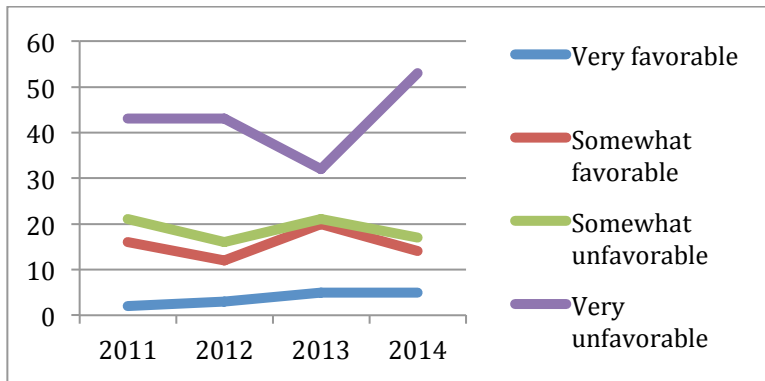
Figure 6: Turkish public opinion of NATO, 2011-2014
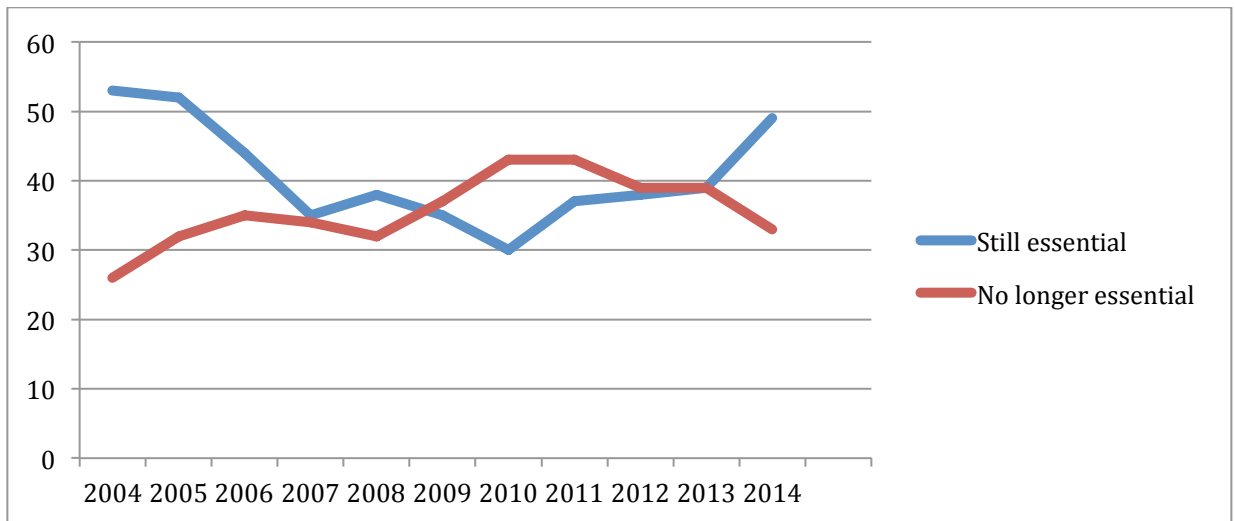
Source: Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database

Figure 7: Turkish public opinion on whether NATO is still essential to Turkey's security, 2004-2014

Source: GMF Transatlantic Trends Topline Data

The GMF surveys asked a more specific question related to NATO, which helps to clarify the reasons for Turkey's unfavorable opinion of NATO measured in the Pew surveys. The GMF surveys asked, "Some people say that NATO is still essential to our country's security. Others say it is no longer essential. Which of these views is closer to your own?" This question was asked every year from 2004-2014 and gives a good overview of Turkish public opinion during the AKP administration. A majority of Turks polled in 2004 said that NATO was still essential to Turkey's security (53%), and this opinion steadily declined in subsequent years, reaching a low of 30% in 2010, and then steadily climbed back up to 49% in 2014 (Figure 7).

The GMF surveys temper the findings of the Pew surveys because they show that, while 70% of Turks had an unfavorable opinion of NATO in 2014, almost half of Turks believed that NATO was still essential to their country's security. At the same time, the percentages in the GMF surveys were not as strongly divergent as the data in the Pew surveys, suggesting that Turks were generally ambivalent regarding NATO's importance to their national security. An interesting and illuminating piece of data was presented in the GMF 2013 survey, which asked a follow-up question for respondents who thought that NATO was no longer essential. When asked why they thought NATO was no longer essential, 70% of the respondents said, "Turkey should be able to make its own military decisions," a sentiment that will be explored further in this study when Turkish public opinion of the UN and international cooperation is examined.

The data on Turkish public opinion of NATO indicates that Turks are generally ambivalent regarding NATO's importance, though the number of Turks who believe that NATO is still essential to national security has steadily increased since 2010. The fact

that this increase coincides with the rise of conflict in the Middle East supports the argument of this study that regional instability has caused Turkey to reaffirm its relationships with Western allies. However, the Pew data showing Turkey's consistently unfavorable opinion of NATO during this same time period of instability (2011-2014) suggests that Turkey has strong ideological differences with NATO and that any loyalty to NATO is given begrudgingly and out of necessity rather than preference.

Turkish public opinion of the European Union

Both the Pew and the GMF surveys asked the question, "Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the European Union." The GMF survey data on this question only went back as far as 2009, while the Pew survey data covered a larger time period from 2004-2013, although the question was not asked every year. In the GMF surveys, a majority of Turks had either a "somewhat unfavorable" or "very unfavorable" opinion of the EU for every year polled, although public support for the EU did increase significantly from 35% to 46% during 2013-2014 (Figure 8). In the Pew surveys, the majority of Turks had either a "somewhat unfavorable" or "very unfavorable" opinion of the EU from 2007-2013, with "very unfavorable" being the most popular response for every year polled during this time period (Figure 9). Those with a favorable opinion of the EU, either "somewhat favorable" or "very favorable," were never above 28% from 2007-2013. However, 58% of respondents had a favorable opinion of the EU in 2004, representing a 30 point increase from the highest measure recorded in 2007-2013. (The question was not asked in 2005 or 2006). The same trend can be seen in another Pew survey question, which asked,

"How do you feel about our country becoming a member of the EU? Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose or strongly oppose our country becoming a member of the EU?" A slight majority of Turks favored the country joining the EU between 2010-2014, but public support was much higher in 2005, when 68% of respondents favored EU membership (Figure 10). (This question was also not asked every year.)

The dramatic shift in Turkish public opinion of the EU between 2005 and 2007 can be readily explained by developments in Turkey's accession process to join the EU. Before 2006 the accession process for Turkey was going smoothly, as Turkey was officially recognized as a candidate for full membership in 1999 and accession negotiations began in 2005. However by 2006 the accession process had stalled due to a number of issues, including the lack of Turkish reforms on human rights and freedom of the press, but the most important setback was the Cyprus question.

The island of Cyprus has been settled by Greeks and Turks for much of its history and was occupied by a steady succession of major empires, including the Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, Hellenist, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and British. In 1960 Cyprus won its independence from Great Britain, and representation in the new national government was immediately contested among the resident Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Over a decade of inter-communal violence ensued, resulting in the minority Turkish Cypriot population being displaced and losing their representation in government. Fearing that Cyprus would pursue unification with Greece, the Turkish military invaded Cyprus in 1974, established the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (which is only recognized by Turkey), and continues its occupation to the present. Since Cyprus became a member of the EU in 2004, Turkish relations with Cyprus have became
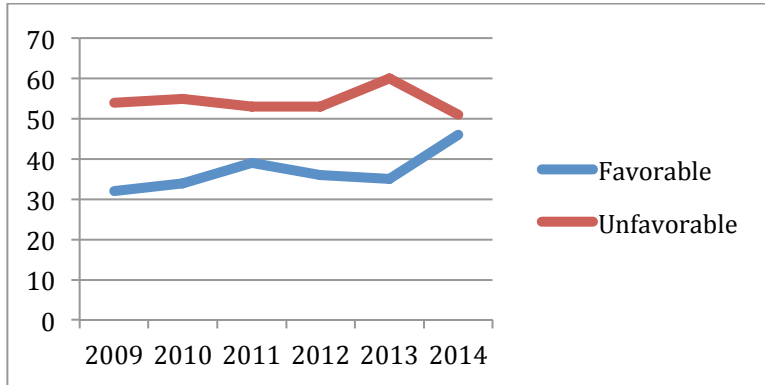
Figure 8: Turkish public opinion of EU, 2009-2014

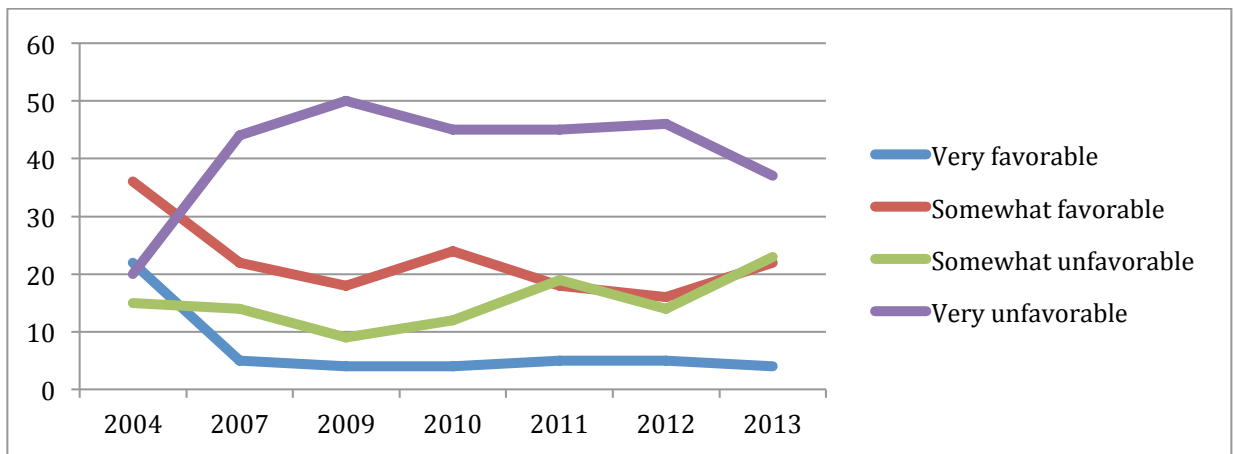*Source:* GMF Transatlantic Trends Topline Data

Figure 9: Turkish public opinion of EU, 2004-2013

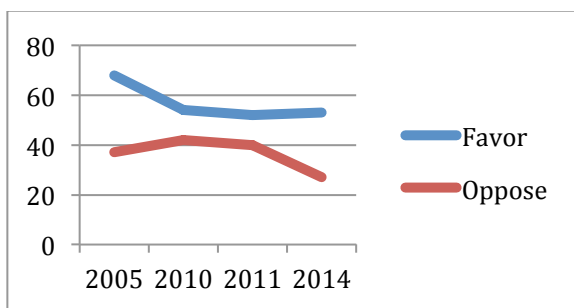*Source:* Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database

Figure 10: Turkish public opinion of EU membership, 2005-2014

Source: Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database

a major obstacle to Turkey's own EU bid, as Turkey refuses to recognize the legitimacy of Cyprus, and the EU refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The EU membership given to Cyprus in 2004 is an especially sore point for Turkey, as Turkey supported UN Security-General Kofi Annan's plan for a united republic of Cyprus that would join the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots together under a federal two-state government. Even though a majority of Turkish Cypriots supported the Annan Plan, the Greek Cypriots rejected it and the plan failed to pass. The very next week Cyprus was admitted as a member state into the EU, while the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus—which had voted in favor of a diplomatic solution that held wide support among the international community—was left out.[132] Cyprus as a EU member state is now directly responsible for blocking six chapters of Turkish accession negotiations and stalling Turkey's EU membership bid.

The double standard of the EU in accepting Cyprus but rejecting Turkey is not lost in Turkish public opinion or in the AKP administration. Speaking at a conference on EU-Turkey relations in 2013, Prime Minister Erdoğan said, "In 2004, when the first step on the accession negotiations was made, support in Turkey for the EU membership process was around 70-75 percent. Today, this number fell to 30-35 percent." Erdoğan continued, "You ask the public 'Do you want to enter the EU?' to which they answer that they do. Then you ask 'Would they accept [Turkey's membership]?' 70 to 75 percent say 'they

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[132] "Cyprus Misses 'Historic Chance' as It Rejects UN Reunification Plan, Annan Says," April 24, 2004. http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=10512&Cr=Cyprus&Cr1#.VvcnNT-GiC4.

won't.' Why? Because they have lost faith."[133] While Erdoğan's numbers vary slightly

from the data presented in this study, his overall argument is accurate. For example, the

Pew 2011 survey showed that 52% of Turks supported joining the EU even though only

23% of respondents had a favorable opinion of the EU. Both the Pew and the GMF

surveys from 2007-2014 demonstrate consistently that, while a majority of Turks have an

unfavorable opinion of the EU, a majority of Turks also still support EU membership. In

addition, Turkish support for EU membership was much higher before negotiations

stalled in 2006, supporting Erdoğan's contention that Turks are frustrated with the

perceived obstructionism of the EU.

Compounding this frustration is the sense among Turks that the Cyprus issue is

symptomatic of a much broader issue, i.e., that the EU is a "Christian club" that is

prejudiced against Muslims. Former European Commissioner Fritz Bolkestein argued

that Turkey is "too big, too poor, too different" and that Turkish membership in the EU

would lead to an Islamization of Europe.[134] In 2015 Erdoğan said,

> "We are continuing the EU accession process… Are they against Islamophobia or not? If they
>
> are, they must accept Turkey. Otherwise, the EU will prove the claims that it is a Christian
>
> club… If you [the EU] still see Turkey as a country that would beg at your door [to be allowed

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[133] "EU's Double Standards towards Turkey Reduce Faith in Membership: PM Erdoğan," *Hürriyet*, November 8, 2013.

[134] Tom Heneghan, "EU's Talks with Turkey Opposed by Most Europeans," *Hürriyet,* September 28, 2005; see also Kemal Kirişçi, "Is Turkey Too Big, Too Poor, and Too Different for the European Union?" in *European and Turkish Voices in Favour and Against Turkish Accession to the European Union,* ed. Christiane Timmerman, Dirk Rochtus, and Sara Mels (Brussels, Belgium: Peter Lang, 2008), 127-38; Meltem Müftüler Baç, "Turkey's Accession to the European Union: Institutional and Security Challenges," *Perceptions* 9, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 29.

in] – Turkey is not a country to beg. If we are accepted, we will join, and if not we will draw our own path."[135]

Identity-related concerns and fear of "the other" present a formidable roadblock to Turkey's EU membership.[136]

In terms of the central argument of this study, it does not appear that regional instability in the Middle East has significantly affected Turkey's opinion of the EU one way or the other. The GMF surveys do show a significant increase in Turkish approval of the EU in 2014 compared to previous years, but the Pew surveys show that Turkish support for EU membership has remained essentially unchanged during this same time period. Since Turkey's relationship with the EU does not have a military dimension, unlike Turkey's relationship with NATO, it appears that Turkey's relationship with the EU is driven more by factors intrinsic to the EU accession process than by external security concerns. Of course, part of the EU's reluctance in accepting Turkey as a member state could be Turkey's proximity to Middle Eastern conflict, especially in light of the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis that is straining EU resources. But this observation has no clear support in the current data.

Turkish public opinion of the United Nations and international cooperation

The Pew surveys asked the question, "Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the United

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[135] "If EU Opposes Islamophobia, It Must Accept Turkey as Member: Erdoğan," *Hürriyet,* January 24, 2015.

[136] Ingrid Kylstad, "Turkey and the EU: A 'New' European Identity in the Making?" *LEQS Paper* 27 (October 2010): 1-29; see also Baç, "Turkey's Accession to the European Union," 29-43; Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "What Is Driving the European Debate about Turkey?" *Insight Turkey* 12, no. 1 (2010): 185-203.

Nations." This question was asked during the time period of 2004-2013, although not for every year. From 2006-2013, a majority of Turks had either a "somewhat unfavorable" or "very unfavorable" opinion of the UN, with "very unfavorable" being the most popular response for every year polled during this time period (Figure 11). This pattern was reversed in 2004, when a slight majority of Turks had either a "somewhat favorable" or "very favorable" opinion of the United Nations.

As noted earlier in Turkish public opinion of the EU, the relatively high rate of public approval of the United Nations in 2004 was most likely related to expectations regarding the UN-proposed Annan Plan and general optimism about EU membership and increased prestige for Turkey in the international community. The subsequent failure of the Annan Plan and the breakdown of EU accession negotiations likely created disillusionment among Turks about the efficacy of diplomatic efforts with Western institutions.

Erdoğan has been one of the most vocal advocates of UN reform, specifically concerning the UN Security Council. In 2012 Erdoğan called for the inclusion of emerging powers, such as Turkey, Brazil, India and Indonesia, as permanent UNSC members, saying, "The West is not the only center of the world."[137] Erdoğan has also advocated for eliminating permanent members' veto power and the requirement to reach unanimity in order to pass resolutions. Many of Erdoğan's strongest criticisms of the UN have come in the context of the Syrian civil war. In this case, Erdoğan's objection is not primarily about the UN as a Western institution but about the ability of Russia and China

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[137] Oliver Stuenkel, "Turkey's Complex Case for UN Security Council Reform," *Post-Western World,* October 13, 2012.

to subvert the will of the greater international community. "If we leave the issue to the vote of one or two members of the permanent five at the UN Security Council, then the aftermath of Syria will be very hazardous and humanity will write it down in history with unforgettable remarks," Erdoğan said. "It's high time to consider a structural change for international institutions, especially for the UN Security Council."[138]

In response to a perceived failure of the UN in promoting international cooperation, Turkey under the AKP administration has demonstrated a preference in pursuing its foreign policy objectives unilaterally. This development has already been observed in Turkish political discourse and in Turkey's military and diplomatic actions, but it is also evident in Turkish public opinion.

From 2008-2014 the GMF surveys asked the question, "On international matters, with which one of the following do you think Turkey should cooperate most closely?" The choices presented were "the countries of the European Union," "the United States," "the countries of the Middle East," "Russia," or "Turkey should act alone." For every year polled (there was no data collected in 2012), "Turkey should act alone" was the most popular response (Figure 12). However, this sentiment was strongest in 2008-2009 and declined in subsequent years, which suggests that regional instability caused by the Arab Spring could be at least partly related to Turkey's diminished resolve to act unilaterally.

As public opinion in favor of Turkey acting alone declined, there was a corresponding increase in support for Turkey cooperating with the EU and the US, although the respondents demonstrated a much greater affinity for the EU than for the US. Turkish public opinion in favor of cooperation with the US never rose above 10%,

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[138] Jo Adetunji, "Turkey Calls for UN Security Council Reform over Failure to Pressure Syria," *Guardian,* October 13, 2012.
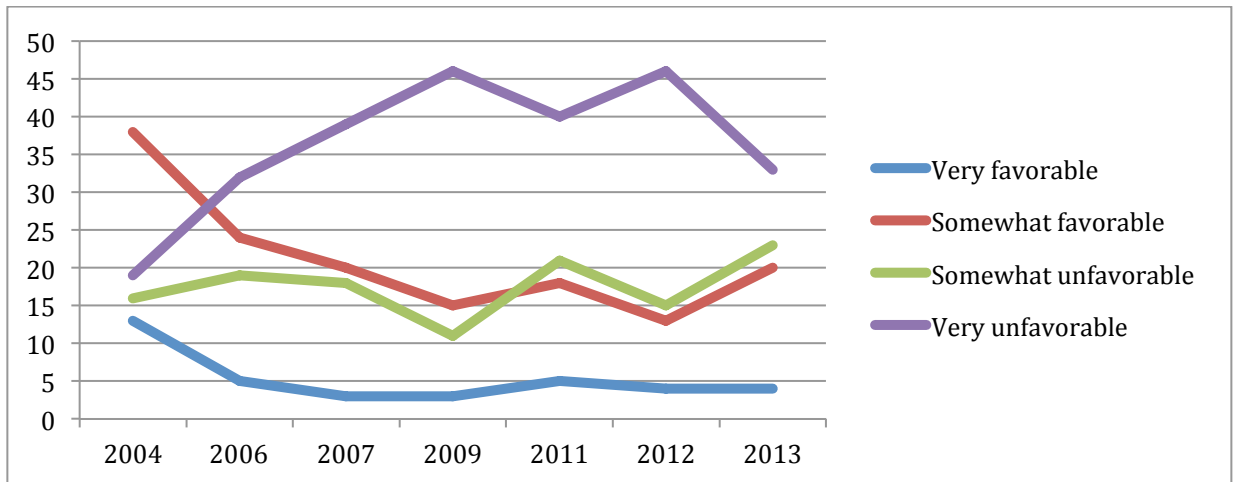
Figure 11: Turkish public opinion of the United Nations, 2004-2013

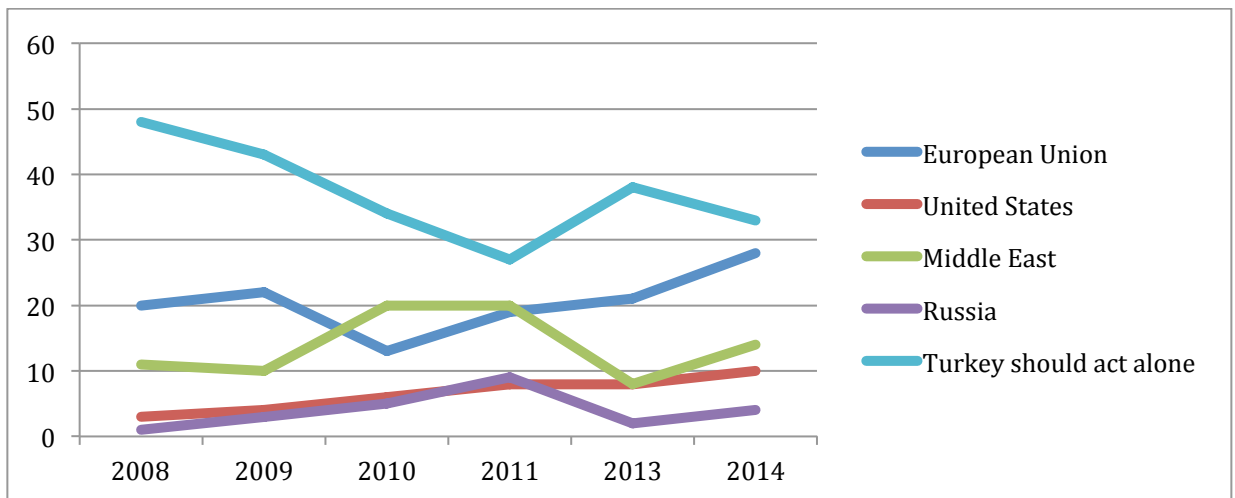*Source:* Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database

Figure 12: Turkish public opinion on international cooperation, 2008-2014

Source: GMF Transatlantic Trends Topline Data

and only Russia had a lower approval rating among the choices given. There was a brief surge in support of Turkey cooperating with the Middle East during 2010-2011, coinciding with the Gaza flotilla raid and Turkish approval of Iran's nuclear program, which strengthened Turkey's ties with Muslim countries in the Middle East at the expense of Western relations. This time period also marked the beginning of the Arab Spring, when Turkey had grand ambitions to remake the Middle East in its image. However, as the democratic movements faltered and the Syrian civil war brought conflict to Turkey's southeastern border, public support for cooperation with the Middle East quickly dissipated. While there has been a modest increase in willingness to cooperate with Western entities such as the EU and the US in recent years, Turkish public opinion has remained consistent in preferring unilateral action over any outside alliance.

Conclusion

After examining the data, Turkish public opinion of Western nations and institutions from 2002-2015 can be simply summed up in two words: "very unfavorable." Turks were not hesitant in expressing their strong displeasure toward Western entities. When the annual surveys were examined collectively, a majority of Turks were unfavorable and a plurality of Turks gave a "very unfavorable" response for a staggering 30 out of 32 questions asked on Pew surveys regarding opinion of the US, NATO, EU, and the UN. While the GMF surveys did not always ask the same questions as the Pew surveys, the results were similar.

While Turks were consistently unfavorable toward each of the Western entities surveyed, the United States reigned supreme as the target of unbridled animosity. To put

this in perspective, the highest percentage of Turks who had a very unfavorable opinion of the UN was 46% in 2009 and 2012. The highest percentage of Turks who had a very unfavorable opinion of the EU was 50% in 2009. The highest percentage of Turks who had a very unfavorable opinion of NATO was 53% in 2014. But for the US, there were 10 different years surveyed when more than 53% of Turks had a very unfavorable opinion of the US and the highest percentage was an overwhelming 75% in 2007.

If there is any small consolation for US policymakers concerning Turkey's supposed "drift" or "who lost Turkey," it is that Turkey has *never* liked the US, at least not in recent memory. Anti-Americanism has a long history in Turkey, going back to the 1960s with the Cuban missile crisis and the Cyprus question, and it is not unique to the AKP era.[139] An outright majority of Turks had an unfavorable opinion of the US in every single year polled by the Pew surveys, including in 2002, before the AKP ascended into power and before the US invasion of Iraq. Turkish hatred of the US runs deep and is not simply a creation of the AKP or a result of particular policies or crises that have occurred over the past decade but is deeply ingrained in the Turkish mindset.

This high level of animosity toward the US would not be surprising in a country like Iran or North Korea, but it takes on added significance when considering that Turkey is, at least ostensibly, an ally of the US and has been for over half a century. Indeed, it is hard to imagine another country in the world that reserves such strong displeasure toward its own ally. To put this in context, France and Germany are known for having their disagreements with US foreign policy, and Germany's current public opinion of the US could best be described as lukewarm, with 50% favorable and 45% unfavorable in a Pew

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[139] Aylin Güney, "Anti-Americanism in Turkey: Past and Present," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 3 (May 2008): 471-87.

2015 survey. Yet from 2002-2015, those with a very unfavorable opinion of the US were never higher than 22% in France and 30% in Germany. In Turkey during the same time period, those with a very unfavorable opinion of the US were never *lower* than 30% and were as high as 75%. To put it another way, Turkey ranks near the bottom in every Pew survey measuring public opinion of the US from 2002-2015, and the only countries polled that have a consistently lower opinion of the US than Turkey are Jordan and Palestine.[140]

When Turkey's generally unfavorable opinions of the US, the EU, NATO, and the UN are examined collectively, one begins to appreciate the profound sense of isolation that Turkey feels diplomatically. Who are Turkey's allies, after all? Are they the West? Perhaps out of military necessity, yes, but certainly not based on public opinion or any ideological sense of shared purpose. Are Turkey's allies in the Middle East? For a brief period at the beginning of the Arab Spring, it appeared so, but those ties have quickly disappeared. Turkey seems to be returning to its old motto, "The Turk has no friend but the Turk," which dates back to the early days of the republic, when Ataturk was fighting off a coalition of British, French, Italian, and Greek forces intent on carving up the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. The fact that Turkey is today reliant on Western actors for its security is a cruel irony for the Turks, one in which they take little comfort, and most Turks continue to have a deep-seated suspicion of Western intent.

Taken as a whole, the survey data on Turkish public opinion of Western entities has little to support the argument that Turkey is turning back to its Western alliances as a result of regional instability. But perhaps this is not surprising, because other sections of

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[140] Pew Global Indicators Database. http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/1/.

this study have shown that Turkey's relationship with the West is not based on ideological affinity but on military necessity. It follows then that, even if Turkey must shift its foreign policy priorities back to the West because of *realpolitik* concerns, this may not necessarily be reflected in Turkish public opinion. The data on Turkish public opinion of NATO was revealing in this regard, as it showed that while most Turks have an unfavorable opinion of NATO, many Turks still feel that NATO is essential to their national security. Similarly, most Turks indicate a preference for Turkey acting alone in its foreign policy, even though this is not a realistic option given Turkey's security framework.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The Stratfor Annual Forecast for 2016 featured Turkey prominently, listing "Turkish

Expansion" as one of the four biggest global trends and calling Turkey "the most critical

player to watch" in the Middle East region.[141] While Stratfor likely overestimates

Turkey's capabilities, the report accurately conveys the central role that Turkey plays in

many of the most important developments currently shaping international relations.

Turkey may not be the "center state" of Davutoğlu's geopolitical imagination, but Turkey

certainly remains a country of great consequence to the Middle East, to NATO, and to

US foreign policy.

This study has shown that, while there are significant developments occurring at the

individual and state level that are moving Turkey away from the West, overriding

security concerns at the systemic level are keeping Turkey bound to its Western alliances.

A careful analysis of Turkey's military relationship with the US and NATO and an

examination of Turkish political discourse and public opinion reveal that Turkey may not

be a friend of the West, but Turkey nevertheless remains an important ally. The systemic

level is what has always defined the terms of Turkey's relationship with the West and it

has proven to be remarkably durable in spite of domestic challenges. Turkey's problems

with the West are not unique to the AKP era. Turkey remained in its Western alliances

during the 20th century despite significant differences over Cyprus, military incursions in

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[141] "Annual Forecast 2016," *Stratfor,* December 28, 2015. https://www.stratfor.com/
forecast/annual-forecast-2016.

Iraq, the Kurdish question, and pro-Islamic governments, and it is reasonable to expect that Turkey will remain an ally of the West for the foreseeable future.

This does not mean, however, that the systemic level is absolute or that domestic considerations are irrelevant. Turkey's longstanding partnership with the West during the Cold War resulted in a sense of complacency in US foreign policy with the assumption that Turkey would always acquiesce to US interests and objectives. While geopolitical forces continue to constrain Turkey into a Western-based security framework, the reluctance and disdain with which Turkey views its Western alliances means that Turkey's commitment to the West can not be taken for granted. To give one recent example, the simplistic refrain of "arm the Kurds" that is currently heard among US policymakers and presidential candidates as the solution to defeating ISIS reflects a lack of understanding about the Kurds themselves as well as ignorance about US-Turkey relations and the significance of Turkey's role to long-term US objectives in the Middle East.[142]

Turkey is a country that wants to be taken seriously. This is reflected in statements by Davutoğlu regarding Turkey as a "center state" rather than as a "wing state,"[143] and Kirişci's appeal to the US and the EU to deal with Turkey "more as an equal partner instead of a junior contractor."[144] Turkey does not have a problem with being a member of NATO per se, but Turkey does have a problem with US unilateralism and NATO

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[142] Justin Salhani, "This Solution to ISIS that All the Presidential Candidates Endorse Could Be a Huge Mistake," *Think Progress,* January 20, 2016.

[143] Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy."

[144] Kemal Kirişci, "Turkey's 'Demonstrative Effect' and the Transformation of the Middle East," *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 2 (2011): 50.

being used as a "toolbox" to carry out US objectives.[145] Turkey has a surging economy, currently ranked 17th in the world, and the second largest military in NATO. With all its political shortcomings, Turkey still remains the only legitimate Muslim-majority democracy in the Middle East. Public opinion in Turkey shows that the Turks have a strong sense of self-reliance and seek a greater role in international affairs. Turkey's recent aggressive actions, including the downing of a Russian warplane and sending in unrequested troops into Iraq, demonstrate that Turkey does not feel it necessary to ask for permission, though it often asks for help when it gets in too deep. Essentially, Turkey wants to chart its foreign policy on its own terms, use its alliances when convenient, and bypass these alliances when necessary. These are the characteristics of a great power, which Turkey aspires to be. Turkey is of course not yet a great power, and much of the tension in its foreign relations, especially with the West, lies in Turkey's ambitions hitting the wall of reality in its structural environment.

In spite of significant cultural and ideological differences, Turkey needs the West and the West needs Turkey. Francis Ricciardone, a former US ambassador to Turkey, placed Turkey's relationship with the West in context with the ongoing conflict in Syria by asking, "How do we in the West and those in the region collaborate to mitigate the violent, catastrophic breakdown of the post-Ottoman regional order? How do we regenerate stability and the rule of law based on legitimate, well-governed states? This is what truly requires a strategy, and it will be the work of a generation."[146] The extent to

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[145] Oğuzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy," 6.

[146] Tim Arango and Ceylan Yeğinsu, "Turkey Blames Kurdish Militia for Ankara Attack, Challenging US," *New York Times,* February 18, 2016.

which Turkey and the West are able to cooperate in the years to come will have much

impact on the prospect of stability in the Middle East and the wider international order.

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