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# Turkey: Emergence of a Regional Power and a Strategic U.S. Partner

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

For nearly two millennia, present-day Turkey has held political, cultural, and economic importance in world history. From the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires to the modern Turkish republic, Anatolia and Thrace have been straddling the Eastern and Western worlds and continue to have far-reaching importance in Eurasia today. While knowledge of Turkey's historical heritage is essential for an understanding of its contemporary politics, this paper focuses on developments since the founding of the Republic in 1923.

This paper argues that Turkey has emerged as a regional power in Eurasia and that this emergence has implications for US-Turkish relations. Specifically, I argue that the United States must strengthen its partnership with Turkey for the benefit of American strategic interests in the region.

In part one, the paper examines factors that account for Turkey's emergence as a regional power and how that power is manifest. In doing so, the purpose is to show that the factors presented in the literature are inadequate for fully explaining Turkey's emergence. For example, Turkey's introduction of neo-liberal economic policies in the 1980s under Turgut Ozal or its European Union accession process starting in 1999 are often presented as developments that exclusively enabled Turkey's emergence. However, this paper reveals that a multiplicity of developments, over several decades, worked to reinforce one another and resulted in Turkey's emergence as a regional power. In chapter two, Turkey's unique historical foundation is presented as a factor leading to its emergence. The nation-building project under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk which

focused on national unity, secularization, modernization, and westernization was fundamental to laying the foundation for the emergence.

Chapter three analyzes the evolution of democracy in Turkey to better elucidate contemporary internal dynamics. The process of democratization has in many ways defined Turkish politics and society and is necessary for appreciating Turkey as a Muslim majority democracy. Additionally, this chapter evaluates whether Turkey's democracy is replicable and can serve as a standard-bearer for the nascent democracies of the Arab Spring. Chapter four examines economic and political policies over the last three decades, in particular the introduction of neo-liberal economic policies and a more assertive regional foreign policy that induced internal modifications and enabled Turkey's emergence. Chapter five analyzes the political and economic effects of Turkey's interaction with the European Union, especially the EU accession process, which allowed Turkey to assume a larger regional role.

With an understanding of Turkey's emergence as a regional power, part two analyzes the implications of Turkey's new role for US-Turkish bilateral relations and for American interests in Eurasia. The broader purpose of this section is to show that Turkey is emblematic of a changing global political system, in which certain states are accruing larger regional significance mitigating the influence of larger powers like the United States. Chapter six gives an overview of the history of US-Turkish relations to put contemporary developments in historical context. This chapter also analyzes points of contention between the United States and Turkey. Finally, chapter seven

examines the changing power dynamics in Eurasia and their implications for American influence in the region. Also, this chapter argues for a strengthening of US-Turkey relations for mutually beneficial strategic interests.

The emergence of Turkey can be understood through the international relations theory of constructivism which is “characterized by an emphasis on the importance of normative as well as material structures, on the role of identity in shaping political action.”<sup>1</sup> In essence, constructivist theorists like Christian Reus-Smit argue that “how actors define their ‘selves’ . . . informs their ‘interests’” and actions.<sup>2</sup> The notion that Turkey is an emergent power with enhanced influence in the region is a perception insisted upon by the Turkish leadership. By promulgating this self-conceived identity, Turkey is creating a space for itself in the region as a regional power. I argue that the amplified economic and political importance of Turkey justifies this self-conceived identity and that Turkey is an emergent regional power. Furthermore, I see a growing recognition outside of the region, specifically from the United States, of Turkey’s importance. Essentially, US policymakers are increasing cognizant of Turkey’s significance for American objectives in Eurasia, and I argue for strengthened bilateral relations to realize both Turkish policy priorities and US interests in the region.

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<sup>1</sup> Reus-Smit, Christian. "Constructivism." *Theories of International Relations*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 212-35. Print.

<sup>2</sup> Reus-Smit, 221.

## **CHAPTER 2 HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS: NATION-BUILDING UNDER MUSTAFA KEMAL ATATURK**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were eventful times for present-day Turkey. From the Balkan Wars, World War I, and the War of Independence to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Turks were part of a pivotal point in history. The establishment of the Republic of Turkey was yet another monumental event. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the Turks successfully waged and won a war of independence and asserted their territorial integrity and national sovereignty. While initially a fragmented group of ethnic and religious communities, Ataturk succeeded in creating a cohesive nation-state that would eventually assert its regional power. This chapter examines the vision of Ataturk and the methods he used to establish a modern secular republic. The founding principles of the Republic enabled Turkey's emergence as a regional power.

### **THE IDEOLOGY OF ATATURK**

The legend of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk is burned in the national consciousness of Turkey. Turks concur on his greatness and the notion that he alone deserves credit for the creation and resilience of the modern Turkish republic. In the mystique surrounding Ataturk, it is instructive to look at the guiding principles that motivated his vision of a new Turkey. Also, it is equally important to highlight the methods through which he facilitated the creation of the modern republic.

The state of affairs in the Ottoman Empire during Ataturk's formative years shaped much of his ideology. As the "Sick Man of Europe" during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire spiraled uncontrollably to dissolution.<sup>3</sup> Internal and external forces facilitated and precipitated this free-fall. Externally, world powers like Great Britain and France exerted economic and political pressure on a weak and ineffective state to apportion a part of the Empire after its predicted collapse. Internally, the multitude of ethnic groups in the Empire began to resent centralized rule from Istanbul and agitated for national sovereignty. As a result, Ataturk formulated an ideology based on the desire to keep foreign powers out of Turkish domestic affairs, and to create an undeniable Turkish national identity to unite disparate people groups.

Furthermore, Ataturk's view towards the social and religious culture prevalent in much of the Ottoman Empire shaped his ideology. He sought to turn away from the Middle Eastern, Islamic, and Ottoman heritage, and embrace a European identity.<sup>4</sup> Ataturk believed that "national progress would come by emulating, absorbing and reproducing 'European' cultural values and political institutions."<sup>5</sup> He greatly disliked the diffusion of Islam in political and social life and was infatuated with all things European, both of which were evident in the policies and programs he enforced. While Ataturk was not personally religious, he saw the prominence of Islam as a sign of backwardness and a hindrance to the

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<sup>3</sup> Wilkens-Sozen, Erika. "The New Republic and Secularism." Bahcesehir University, Istanbul. 26 Oct. 2011. Lecture.

<sup>4</sup> Wilkens-Sozen, 19 Oct. 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Haynes, Jeffrey. "Politics, identity, and religious nationalism in Turkey: from Ataturk to the AKP." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64.3 (2010): 312-327.

establishment of a modern secular state. Nevertheless, he recognized religion as a “social force” useful as a tool if necessary to mobilize the polity but was quick to discard it when it obstructed his plans of modernization.<sup>6</sup> Ataturk’s clearest position on religion came during his last address to the Turkish Parliament in which he stated, “We take our inspiration from life, and not from books believed to have come down from heaven.”<sup>7</sup> This unambiguous reference to the Quran reveals Ataturk’s secularist ideology. His desire for Turkish progress led to decades of modernization through westernization.

### **THE CREATION OF A NATION**

The establishment of the modern Turkish republic was a formidable task. Ataturk’s legacy lives because he faced and overcame a Herculean challenge. After the Balkan Wars, World War I, and the War of Independence, the Turkish people, landscape, infrastructure, and economy were decimated. Ataturk had to unite illiterate peasants and refugees into a nation strong enough to repel the “imposition of empires and nation-states with far greater resources and more knowledge about modernity.”<sup>8</sup> In essence, Ataturk had the task of institutionalizing new social and political norms that enabled the establishment of a resilient state.

In this context, Ataturk conducted his mission of progress through secularization and modernization in undemocratic ways. Through a one-party

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<sup>6</sup> Mango, Andrew. “Ataturk: Founding Father, Realist, and Visionary.” *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*. Ed. Metin Heper and Sabri Sayari. Lexington Books, 2002. 9-24. Print.

<sup>7</sup> Mango, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Mango, 20.

system, the Republic People's Party (CHP), Ataturk enacted programs and policies intended to change the society drastically and consolidate the nation. While Ataturk used authoritarian methods to reach his objectives, he believed that "unless a modern, secular, and national culture [was] established, a modern political system, potentially hosting some form of democracy could not survive."<sup>9</sup> The Tanzimat Reforms of the mid-nineteenth century had sought to modernize quickly in order to keep pace with rising European powers. One element of the Tanzimat Reforms was an attempt to limit the authority of the religious establishment in Ottoman legal procedures.<sup>10</sup> Given Ataturk's aversion to religion in the public sphere, his policies went further to marginalize the religious establishment. First, he attacked the traditional strongholds of institutionalized Islam including abolishing the Caliphate in 1924, secularizing family law in 1926, removing a constitutional clause making Islam the state religion of Turkey, and removing religious education from traditional bodies.<sup>11</sup> In effect, Ataturk sought to limit the presence of religion from the public sphere to the private lives of citizens. Second, religious symbols were replaced with symbols of European civilization including a ban on the turban and fez in favor of western style hats.<sup>12</sup> Third, he sought to secularize social life, essentially an attack on popular Islam, including the adoption of western clock and calendar, the Latin alphabet, and

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<sup>9</sup> Kalaycioglu, Ersin. *Turkish Dynamics: Bridge across Troubled Lands*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.

<sup>10</sup> Kalaycioglu, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Wilkens-Sozen 26 Oct. 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Wilkens-Sozen 26 Oct. 2011.

greater political rights for women consisting of suffrage and the right to stand for elections.<sup>13</sup>

As Erika Wilkens-Sozen notes, in the midst of these reforms came an effort to create a Turkish “national history” to build a cohesive national identity.<sup>14</sup> In 1927, Ataturk gave a thirty-six hour speech over the course of six days in which he retold the nation’s history from 1919 until 1927 in order to fit the narrative of an Independence struggle and the endeavor to create a new Republic.<sup>15</sup> Part of this narrative emphasized a Turkish and Anatolian heritage as separate from the Middle Eastern and Islamic civilization of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>16</sup>

These aggressive reforms were not enacted without opposition. The new Republic’s biggest challenge came from ethnic and religious communities that still desired the reestablishment of an Ottoman system.<sup>17</sup> The rebellion of Sheik Said, an influential Kurdish religious leader, exemplified this opposition. After the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, Sheik Said led a rebellion motivated by a desire for an autonomous or independent Kurdistan and also a Muslim uprising against the secular ruling party.<sup>18</sup> The government in Ankara reacted swiftly and forcefully by sending an army to quell rebel forces, executing many leaders, resettling 20,000 Kurds from southeastern to western Turkey, and denying the

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<sup>13</sup> Wilkens-Sozen 26 Oct. 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Wilkens-Sozen 26 Oct. 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Wilkens-Sozen 26 Oct. 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Wilkens-Sozen 26 Oct. 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Kalaycioglu, 47.

<sup>18</sup> Wilkens-Sozen 26 Oct. 2011.

existence of a 'Kurdish identity'.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the government passed the Law on the Maintenance of Order, which outlawed any institution or organization that might cause disturbance to law and order.<sup>20</sup> As was true with the Sheik Said rebellion, the armed forces were, and are still, utilized for promulgating the government's secularist agenda. During the Ottoman period, the armed forces were the first group to be modernized along western lines and have functioned as natural defenders of modernization and secularization in the name of progress.<sup>21</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Though the early years of the Republic were volatile and combative, the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk was vital to the consolidation of political authority and national unity. Through extensive secularization of politics, society and the legal system, Ataturk enabled the creation of the modern democratic Turkish state. However, while Ataturk highlighted the desire to be modern like the West, he used one-party autocratic rule to administer his programs and policies. He also disallowed opposition parties, used the state's coercive power to purge opposition leaders, and even executed citizens who violated laws concerning the turban and fez.<sup>22</sup> Evidently, Ataturk was a leader more committed to modernization than to liberal democracy.<sup>23</sup> However, Ataturk remained cognizant of the disparities between his rhetoric and his actions, and justified

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<sup>19</sup> Wilkens-Sozen 26 Oct. 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Kalaycioglu 47.

<sup>21</sup> Mango, 12.

<sup>22</sup> Wilkens-Sozen 26 Oct. 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Kalaycioglu, 46.

them by emphasizing the need for Turkey to reform drastically.<sup>24</sup> In many ways, Ataturk established the institutions of democracy but left them dormant during his rule.<sup>25</sup> In the 1930s he allowed some opposition parties to form and be active in order to foster public discourse. Most importantly, Ataturk's insistence on secularization enabled the eventual development of a resilient democracy in a Muslim-majority state, a feat yet to be emulated. Ataturk's lasting legacy can best be described in his own words: "I have established the republic. But today it is not clear whether the form of government is a republic, a dictatorship, or personal rule. I am mortal. I want the nation to get used to freedom before I die."<sup>26</sup> In promoting new norms of secularization and modernization, Ataturk never lost sight of the need for freedom in order for a society to progress. The political, economic, and social strength of Turkey today can be attributed to the vision and conviction of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and the nation he built.

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<sup>24</sup> Mango, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Mango, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Mango, 21.

### CHAPTER 3

## THE EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN TURKEY: A MODEL MUSLIM DEMOCRACY?

### INTRODUCTION

To understand the internal dynamics of Turkish politics and the nation's broader regional importance, requires knowledge of the historical challenges of democratic consolidation in Turkey. From the inception of the Republic until today, Turkey underwent periods of one-party, authoritarian, military, and semi-democratic rule. While sometimes overlapping and duplicating periods, each was formative in the development of Turkish democratic governance. Important features through all of these periods have been the Kemalist desire to secularize in pursuit of westernization and the active role of the military in civilian affairs. Anne Secor argues that the current ruling party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), has reconfigured the fault lines of democracy in Turkey and prompted the question of whether Islamist rulers can govern in a secular democratic framework.<sup>27</sup> This question takes on greater meaning with the process of democratization sweeping the Arab world today. To examine the notion that Turkey can serve as a model Muslim democracy, this chapter analyzes the composition of Turkish democracy and speculates as to whether it is replicable. Turkey's ability to incorporate moderate Islamist parties into a semi-democratic system has legitimized Turkey in western eyes and given greater credence to its position as a regional power.

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<sup>27</sup> Secor, Anna. "Turkey's Democracy: A Model for the Troubled Middle East?" *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 52.2 (2011): 157-172.

## THE EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN TURKEY

In addition to free and fair elections, principles associated with democracy are freedom of speech, equal protection of minorities, and limiting the “tutelary”<sup>28</sup> rights of the unelected. Throughout the republican period, Turkey has been challenged on all of these fronts in its effort to consolidate democracy.

Authoritarianism began under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Republican People’s Party (CHP). From the creation of the nation in 1923 until the first free and fair multi-party elections in 1950, the CHP used its unrestrained mandate to secularize and to westernize the young republic. Underlying its efforts was the notion that “removal of Islam from political discourse was fundamental to the making of the modern nation-state.”<sup>29</sup> The tensions between religion and politics that plagued the Ottoman Empire dominated the early years of the republic. Anne Secor characterizes the Kemalist project as an aggressive approach towards religion, termed laicism, which was not simply “freedom of or from religion” but instead government control of religion.<sup>30</sup> The goal of subverting religion under government control was to moderate the pervasive influence it could potentially wield in the public sphere. As a result, article 136 of the Turkish constitution established the Directorate of Religious Affairs, tasked with “administration of mosques and the training of religious personnel.”<sup>31</sup> In addition to the Directorate, the Turkish state would utilize the military and constitutional courts as institutions of secularization.

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<sup>28</sup> Sozen, Yunus. "Turkey between Tutelary Democracy and Electoral Authoritarianism." *Quarterly International Review* 13 (2008).

<sup>29</sup> Secor, 158.

<sup>30</sup> Secor, 159.

<sup>31</sup> Secor, 159.

While founded on the undemocratic single-party governance of the CHP, Turkey would eventually make its first transition to electoral democracy in 1950, with the Democratic Party (DP) taking the mantle of government. From 1950 to 1983, Turkey's efforts at democratization were thwarted by political instability, civil unrest, and military intervention. In 1960, 1971, and 1980, the military intervened to displace elected governments, fulfilling its role as a secularist modernizing institution with the task of maintaining political and social order. As a dominant presence in civilian affairs, the military has an interesting, albeit undemocratic role, as stipulated in the Turkish Armed Forces Internal Service Law which gives it "wide room for maneuver to intervene into politics" and has "budgetary autonomy which is not entirely under the control of elected civilians."<sup>32</sup> Lauren McLaren argues that the paradoxical function of the military as the defender of secularism while undermining elected governments poses one of the greatest challenges to Turkish democratization.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, from 1971 to 2001 the constitutional courts banned political parties deemed to be violating the nation's secularist principles. Most recently, on February 28, 1997, the courts and military collaborated to remove the Refah (Welfare) Party after elections that put it in control of a coalition government.<sup>34</sup> The now infamous "February 28<sup>th</sup> process" illustrated the authority held by the military and courts, which McLaren

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<sup>32</sup> McLaren, Lauren. "The Failure of Democracy in Turkey: A Comparative Analysis." *Government and Opposition* 46.4 (2011): 485-516.

<sup>33</sup> McLaren, 450.

<sup>34</sup> Secor, 160.

considers “the high-water mark of secularist backlash against the Islamicization of the Turkish public sphere.”<sup>35</sup>

Since the military intervention of 1980 and the subsequent rewriting of the nation’s constitution, there has been greater progress towards Turkish democratization. However, democracy has yet to be consolidated in Turkey. The “tutelary”<sup>36</sup> powers historically granted to the military are not entirely repudiated by the majority of the population. Many Turks still consider the military and courts as protectors of the Kemalist secularist project. In effect, while the military was vital for stabilizing the government during its interventions, “elites and masses alike can envision alternatives to democratic rule and these are not perceived as terrible enough to force them into democratic compromises.”<sup>37</sup> To become a “fully functioning democracy”,<sup>38</sup> Turkey needs to agree on how the regime will function. In essence, issues such as the role of religion, rights of religious groups, and the treatment of ethnic minorities need to be resolved so there are established “rules of the regime” to enable democratic consolidation.<sup>39</sup>

### **DEMOCRACY UNDER THE AKP**

Since taking power in 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has changed the nation’s political landscape and reconfigured the essence of democracy in Turkey. The meteoric rise and sustained success of the AKP has been of special interest to observers of Eurasian politics. Under its dominant

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<sup>35</sup> Secor, 160

<sup>36</sup> Sozen.

<sup>37</sup> McLaren, 502.

<sup>38</sup> McLaren 488.

<sup>39</sup> McLaren 514.

leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the AKP has solidified its hold on domestic politics and has overseen the economic and political emergence of a regionally influential Turkey. Ideologically, AKP members self-identify as conservatives or Muslim-democrats. While recognizing the importance of Islam for the party, the AKP is careful to distance itself from characterizations of party members as Islamists who want to undermine the secularism of the state with Islamic principles. Criticism of the AKP's ideology rests on the notion that the party is "bent on the Islamization of Turkish society and the Turkish state."<sup>40</sup> The secularist establishment fears that the AKP is hiding its Islamic agenda in order not to be condemned by the constitutional courts, a practice referred to as "takiyye."<sup>41</sup>

The burgeoning popularity of the AKP can be attributed not only to its ideological leanings, but also to its success in producing economic results and effective public administration. The AKP initially gained its national reputation as the party of results, with effective management of municipal public services nation-wide. Economically, the AKP "carried out a successful privatization program and encouraged foreign investment, which has risen twentyfold" since 2002.<sup>42</sup> These successes in addition to the AKP's ideology have resulted in a constituency of supporters able to continue reelecting the AKP. According to Ihsan Dagi, this broad-based constituency includes the pro-market devout

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<sup>40</sup> Dagi, Ihsan. "Turkey's AKP in Power." *Journal of Democracy* 19.3 (2008): 25-30. Web.

<sup>41</sup> Dagi, 26.

<sup>42</sup> Dagi, 29.

bourgeoisie, the urban and rural poor, and the unemployed, a plurality of the electorate that sustain the AKP's electoral success.<sup>43</sup>

Since coming to power, the AKP faced the difficult challenge of balancing EU accession reforms aimed at further democratizing Turkey with a hostile secular establishment that includes the influential military. The AKP's objective has been to establish "new rules of the game and a more democratic definition of the civil-military equation in Turkey, where a politically autonomous and secular military is pitted against a popularly elected Islamic government in the context of an electoral democracy."<sup>44</sup> To this end, the AKP has made many changes, including reducing the role of the military in civilian affairs, "liberalizing laws regarding Kurdish language broadcasting and use, and generally bringing Turkey further in line with Copenhagen criteria for accession to the EU."<sup>45</sup> One major effort towards democratization was a September 2010 referendum with 26 constitutional amendments partially aimed at changing the structure of administrative courts and lessening the role of the military. The passage of the referendum served to vindicate the AKP and showed popular support for the party's modernizing efforts, regardless of staunch opposition from the secular establishment.

Such progressive moves by the AKP have been undermined by other instances of undemocratic practices. Most notably, the 2007 Ergenekon affair was an example of the AKP displaying authoritarian tendencies. The affair involved

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<sup>43</sup> Dagi, 29.

<sup>44</sup> Cizre, Umit. "Disentangling the Threads of Civil-Military Relations in Turkey: Promises and Perils." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 22.2 (2011): 57-75. Web

<sup>45</sup> Secor, 158.

an investigation of a supposed coup conspiracy involving the Turkish ‘deep state’ composed of “networks between military, intelligence agents, organized crime, right-wing paramilitaries, leftist intellectuals, the PKK, and seemingly all manner of anti-AKP elements.”<sup>46</sup> The investigation resulted in draconian measures by the AKP to combat the supposed threat in which “nearly 200 journalists, scholars, military personnel, business leaders, and politicians have been arrested.”<sup>47</sup> Western governments viewed the heavy-handed response negatively as a blatant suppression of free speech. Even more, the “crackdown has been perceived as a pretext to purge ideological opponents across the political spectrum and thereby to consolidate AKP hegemony.”<sup>48</sup>

Under the AKP, democratization in Turkey continues to be problematic. While the party has shown potential, especially with EU-induced reforms aimed at greater democracy, the Ergenekon investigations and prosecutions are an alarming indicator of centralized and undemocratic AKP control. Though the AKP maintains its dedication to progressive reforms, critics claim that “its commitment to diversity and freedom of expression is very narrowly wrought and seems not to move much beyond a commitment to the freedom of Islamic expression within the secular state.”<sup>49</sup> In essence, the AKP appears to be more focused on expanding the visibility of Islam in the public sphere rather than on genuine efforts at democratization. The prospects for consolidated democracy in

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<sup>46</sup> Secor, 164.

<sup>47</sup> Secor, 164

<sup>48</sup> Secor, 165.

<sup>49</sup> Secor, 165

Turkey under the AKP will depend on the ability of EU reforms to institute democratic institutions and practices.

### **TURKEY AS A MODEL MUSLIM DEMOCRACY?**

In the past year a wave of democratization has swept the Arab world. This “Arab Spring” has substantially improved prospects for real democracy in the region. The fall of authoritarian regimes brought elections in Tunisia and Egypt, and forthcoming elections in Libya. In just one year, the region has gone from a bastion of electoral authoritarianism to a region largely unfriendly to despotic rule. Given these developments, Turkey has frequently been considered as a possible model for these infant democracies, as Turkey is the only Muslim-majority nation with experience as a democratic nation, however flawed.

A major difficulty in using Turkey as a model is the dissimilarity of the historical development of democracy in Turkey vis-à-vis the Arab Spring nations. The contemporary political order in Turkey is the result of a “long process of staggered progress towards democratization”<sup>50</sup> which is still developing. After decades of democratizing, some aspects of Turkish politics have stalled democracy. Factors such as the government’s inability to accommodate organized labor, limitations on speech, and continued discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities are all blights on Turkey’s democratic record.<sup>51</sup>

In democratizing nations like Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, their recent political experience has been characterized by electoral authoritarianism in which

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<sup>50</sup> Bali, Asli. “A Turkish Model for the Arab Spring?” *Middle East Law and Governance* 3 (2011): 24-42.

<sup>51</sup> Bali, 33.

the ruling regime maintained authoritarian institutions and practices while instituting some semblance of democracy via elections.<sup>52</sup> In essence, these states are devoid of many of the social and political infrastructures necessary for the establishment of a lasting democracy. Also, the role of Islam in political discourse will be important for the viability of democracy in the Arab world. It will be interesting to see the extent to which secularist principles are adhered to that enable freedom for and from religion. Therefore, using Turkey as a model raises the question of whether it has “successfully incorporated political Islam into a secular state structure, and can therefore be a model of secular democracy for Muslim-majority states?”<sup>53</sup> While lessons can be drawn from the evolution of democratization in Turkey, applying that model to the very different conditions in the Arab world would yield unpredictable outcomes.<sup>54</sup> In its process of democratization, Turkey has attempted to create a state that resembles the western notion of democracy. The Arab Spring nations do not share this western identity and may desire a form of democracy unlike the Turkish model. While Turkey can be instructive in some respects, it should not be considered a standard-bearer for the democratizing Arab Spring nations.

## CONCLUSION

Democratization in Turkey has been a long and protracted process which is continuously evolving. Understanding Turkey’s troubled democratic pedigree is

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<sup>52</sup> Brownlee, Jason. “Executive Elections in the Arab World: When and How Do They Matter?” *Comparative Political Studies* 44.7 (2011): 807-828.

<sup>53</sup> Brownlee, 157.

<sup>54</sup> Bali, 30.

essential for a more nuanced appreciation of its contemporary political condition. While democracy has improved, concerns remain about the extent to which the military influences civilian affairs and government policies on personal liberty and minority rights. Even with its numerous problems, Turkey can be instructive for the emerging democracies across the Arab world in showing one way to incorporate moderate Islam into a democratic political system. Nevertheless, Turkey's unique historical development makes it unfit as a replicable model for these emerging democracies.

## **CHAPTER 4 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TURKEY'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRENGTH**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the last three decades, Turkey has applied economic and political policies to enable its emergence as a regional power. Economically, the transition from import-substitution to neo-liberalism illustrated Turkey's desire to modernize and integrate into the global economy. While there have been some structural difficulties, Turkey's economic liberalization ultimately resulted in a stronger domestic market and greater trade cooperation with regional neighbors. Politically, the post-Cold War era has witnessed the materialization of a more assertive Turkish foreign policy and greater recognition by the international community that Turkey is a formidable player in Eurasian affairs. These occurrences were enabled by Turkey's inclusion in the 'West' during the bi-polar Cold War era and of that legitimization resulting in its pivotal regional role. These economic and political developments encountered considerable challenges, but have undoubtedly been a large part of Turkey's emergence as a regional power.

### **ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION IN TURKEY**

The state of Turkey's economy over the last three decades can be characterized as sporadic, with periods of growth and success, a subsequent period of painful structural failing, and, most recently, with reserved optimism for the future. According to Ziya Onis, this changeability takes root in Turkey's transition from an import-substitution to a neo-liberal economic model beginning in the early

1980s.<sup>55</sup> Prior to this changeover, Turkey's economy was defined by its efforts to protect and strengthen domestic industries through high tariffs and a generally favorable economic climate. Through protection of infant industries, Turkey desired to develop a market that would be competitive on the global stage. However, as Onis argues, Turkey's shift to a neo-liberal model was not "from voluntary choice but as an inevitable and forced outcome of a major balance of payments crisis associated with the exhaustion of the import-substitution model of industrialization."<sup>56</sup> The end of this model was also due to the realization that Turkey would remain a peripheral nation in the global economic market, which was antithetical to the ambitious desires of political leaders.

Onis credits the liberalization of Turkey's economy to the leadership of Turgut Ozal.<sup>57</sup> After Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Ozal is widely considered the most influential political leader in the history of the modern republic. Similar to Ataturk, Ozal had a dogged determination to make transformative changes to Turkey, sometimes using undemocratic methods with certain negative results but ultimately for the betterment of Turkey. As Prime Minister from 1983 until 1989 and President from 1989 until 1993, Ozal provided a consistency in leadership that facilitated the realization of his objectives.<sup>58</sup> Also, his unique and diverse experiences before political life helped in the formulation of his neo-liberal ideology and his ability to institute reform. Ozal's service in the public sector with the Agency for Study of Electrical Energy and as Under-Secretary of the State

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<sup>55</sup> Onis, Ziya. "Turgut Ozal and His Economic Legacy: Turkish Neo-Liberalism in Critical Perspective." *Middle East Studies* 40.4 (2004): 113-34. Print.

<sup>56</sup> Onis, 116.

<sup>57</sup> Onis, 117.

<sup>58</sup> Onis, 117.

Planning Organization, the private sector with the Sabanci Corporation, and with the World Bank, equipped him with the necessary knowledge, connections, and capabilities to effectively liberalize the Turkish economy.<sup>59</sup>

Ozal's neo-liberal policies aimed at opening Turkey's economy to global forces with the goals of strengthening domestic industries and allowing the inflow of foreign investment. This liberalizing effort was encouraged and enabled by the "IMF and World Bank as the providers of massive financial support...due to Turkey's geo-strategic importance."<sup>60</sup> Additionally, Turkey's Customs Union with the European Economic Community became a "crucial element in the full-scale liberalization" of the economy in the 1990s.<sup>61</sup> In his role as a reformist politician, Ozal was charismatic and created a "mood of optimism whereby Turkish businessmen felt confident in their ability to penetrate distant markets."<sup>62</sup> A minor indicator of Ozal's success was that compared to the 1990s, average growth was higher and average inflation was lower through the course of the 1980s.<sup>63</sup>

However, through his leadership, Ozal showed ambivalence to democratic economic institutions and undermined what he saw as inefficient bureaucracies. The institutionalization of Ozal's "reform process in Turkey was associated with a weakening of the bureaucratic apparatus with costly consequences."<sup>64</sup> With the objective of swift and unimpeded reform, it would have been difficult for Ozal to

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<sup>59</sup> Onis, 115.

<sup>60</sup> Onis, 118.

<sup>61</sup> Onis, 119.

<sup>62</sup> Onis, 118.

<sup>63</sup> Onis, 123.

<sup>64</sup> Onis, 121.

reach those goals within the existing economic structure.<sup>65</sup> For example, after 1986, “key decisions on privatization of state economic enterprises” were established top-down instead of utilizing the existing economic structure.<sup>66</sup> The lack of a developed economic structure for facilitating neo-liberal policies would result in disastrous effects, evidenced by the economic crises that occurred in 1994, 2000 and 2001.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, during and after those crises Turkey sought to establish “strong regulatory institutions needed for effective implementation of neo-liberal programs in areas like privatization and banking sector reform.”<sup>68</sup>

Since 1999, “IMF and EU discipline have helped Turkey institutionalize reforms and have greater fiscal discipline.”<sup>69</sup> Subsequent reforms, especially under the AKP administration, enabled the emergence of Turkey as a regional and global economic power with great potential. In essence, the legacy of Ozal’s reforms realized that his “vision and influence was important in helping to transform a self-enclosed society, with a mediocre image of itself, to an outward and forward looking society that aimed to participate and play an active role in the key regions surrounding Turkey.”<sup>70</sup> Parallel to this economic bourgeoning would be more aggressive political policies which collectively serve to illustrate Turkey’s regional ascendancy.

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<sup>65</sup> Onis, 122.

<sup>66</sup> Onis, 120.

<sup>67</sup> Onis, 123.

<sup>68</sup> Onis, 125.

<sup>69</sup> Onis, 125.

<sup>70</sup> Onis, 119.

## THE EMERGENCE OF TURKEY'S POLITICAL POWER

Since the creation of the modern republic in 1923, Turkey has had geopolitical importance because it is situated at the heart of Eurasia. Strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski characterized Eurasia as a “grand chessboard”, equating control of the region to global preeminence and Turkey has realized its potential for becoming a pivotal player in regional affairs.<sup>71</sup>The foundations of this political emergence have been laid since the Cold War era. As part of the western camp in the bi-polar Cold War international political system, Turkey gradually gained political legitimacy with its allies in Europe and with the United States. Also, as a vital member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since 1952, Turkey has resoundingly proven its geo-political importance, potentially as the key to the grand chessboard’.

The post-Cold War era has witnessed drastic realignments in the international political system, resulting in a unipolar world of United States hegemony. While no longer under the American Cold War umbrella, Turkey has undertaken more independent policies in the region, asserting its political strength while maintaining its relations with Cold War allies. Beginning in the 1990s, Turkey sought rapprochement, in the form of stronger political and economic ties, with Middle East states, Russia, former Soviet states and Greece. For example, when Bashir al-Assad came to power in Syria in the early 2000s, there was a “free trade agreement further integrating the economies of avid adversaries of the

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<sup>71</sup> Onis, Ziya, and Suhanaz Yilmaz. "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism." *Turkish Studies* 10.1: 7-24. Print.

1990s.”<sup>72</sup> Similarly, there was a “substantial increase in economic interdependence” between Turkey and its neighbor Georgia, involving the usage of the “Batumi airport” and “Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project.”<sup>73</sup>

More recently, the current ruling government under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has pursued foreign policy objectives that are sometimes counter to the policies of the ‘West’, especially the United States. Most notably, in dealing with Israel, Iran, and the Iraq War, Turkey has undertaken policies to emphasize its “self-confidence” and desire to “carve out an independent sphere of influence.”<sup>74</sup> Despite disapproval of American policymakers, Turkey has deepened its ties with Iran, a neighbor with whom it shares a 310-mile border.<sup>75</sup> Even more disturbing for the United States, was Turkey’s disapproval of American troops using Turkish territory in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, Turkey has drastically altered its relations with former regional partner Israel, as it has “veered from its strong economic and military ties with the Jewish state to firmly backing Palestinian independence.”<sup>77</sup> This shift in AKP policy cannot be underestimated, as Turkey has historically been a major partner for Israel in a hostile region. These policy changes are indicative of a transformation in Turkey’s self-identity. As the AKP government embraces Turkey’s Islamic identity, there are changing perceptions of interests which has a resultant effect on actions. Turkey’s rapprochement with Iran and increasing

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<sup>72</sup> Onis and Yilmaz, 8.

<sup>73</sup> Onis and Yilmaz, 8.

<sup>74</sup> Cohen, Saul B. "Turkey's Emergence as a Geopolitical Power Broker." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 52.2 (2011): 217-27. Print.

<sup>75</sup> Cohen, 221

<sup>76</sup> Cohen, 220.

<sup>77</sup> Cohen, 222.

support for the Palestinian cause signify an evolution in its self-identity resulting in closer alignment with its Muslim neighbors.

According to Saul Cohen, the AKP's foreign policy emphasizes regional cooperation and "zero problems"<sup>78</sup> with its neighbors. Through effective use of soft power, Turkey seeks a role as a "benign regional power" with the responsibility of mediating regional conflicts.<sup>79</sup> For example, Turkey hosted diplomatic meetings between Pakistani and Afghan Presidents Musharraf and Karzai in 2007 as well as between Israeli and Palestinian leaders Peres and Abbas in 2008.<sup>80</sup> Outside of the region, there is growing recognition of Turkey's burgeoning influence, epitomized by the United Nations request that Turkey take a leadership role in the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative.<sup>81</sup> The Initiative is intended to "overcome prejudice, misconceptions, misperceptions, and polarization which potentially threaten world peace"<sup>82</sup> and Turkey's inclusion in the leadership of the Initiative is significant in showing the growing global perception of Turkey as an influential state.

Turkey's relationship with the Arab League is indicative of its growing political influence. While not an Arab country, Turkey has benefited from its participation "in almost every crucial summit held by the 22-country organization."<sup>83</sup> Over the last several decades, "with the absence of an Arab 'national heroic figure' such as Egypt's former President, Gamal Abdel Nasser,"

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<sup>78</sup> Onis and Yilmaz, 8.

<sup>79</sup> Onis and Yilmaz, 12.

<sup>80</sup> Onis and Yilmaz, 12.

<sup>81</sup> Onis and Yilmaz, 5.

<sup>82</sup> Onis and Yilmaz, 5.

<sup>83</sup> Dincer, Bahadır. "Arab League Shuns Turkey, Iran on Syria." *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*. International Strategic Research Organization, 29 Mar. 2012. Web. <<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/133080/arab-league-shuns-turkey-iran-on-syria.html>>.

the Arab world has suffered a power vacuum which is being filled by the charismatic Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.<sup>84</sup> Recently, Turkey worked with the Arab League to resolve the crisis in Syria and took an aggressive stance aimed at removing President Bashar al-Assad from power.<sup>85</sup> That effort is emblematic of Turkey's determination to engage with its neighbors which Inan Ozyildiz asserts is a transition "toward a new coordinated regional system based on a combination of political and moral factors."<sup>86</sup> This engagement has been reciprocated as Turkey is enthusiastically accepted by members of the Arab League. Mohamad Chatah argues that there is growing recognition that Turkey can play a role in "encouraging reforms, and building stability and peace in the region."<sup>87</sup> There are great prospects for Turkey to continue utilizing its enhanced regional influence. Bahgat Korany boldly predicts that by 2050, Turkey will "have a first-class army, be more powerful than Germany, and rank as the world's ninth most powerful state."<sup>88</sup> While this prediction is hyperbolic, it effectively shows Turkey's potential for realizing its new position in the region.

## CONCLUSION

The convergence of Turkey's economic liberalization and political assertiveness has enabled the emergence of Turkey as a regional power. While these economic

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<sup>84</sup> "Turkey's Relations with a Changing Arab World." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 3 May 2011. Web. <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/05/03/turkey-s-relations-with-changing-arab-world/z50>>.

<sup>85</sup> Dincer.

<sup>86</sup> "Turkey's Relations with a Changing Arab World."

<sup>87</sup> "Turkey's Relations with a Changing Arab World."

<sup>88</sup> "Turkey's Relations with a Changing Arab World."

and political explanations do not wholly explain why Turkey is now a pivotal actor in Eurasia, they are a substantial part of a layered progression that has led to this state of affairs.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECTS OF TURKEY'S INTERACTION WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Turkey's interaction with the European Union (EU) has transformed its internal development and enabled its emergence as a regional power. This phenomenon is exemplified by Turkey's ever-tightening relations with the European Union, especially with the accession process that has been underway over the last decade. The accession process precipitated political reforms, most notably efforts at further democratization involving lessening the role of the military in civilian affairs and enhancements of minority rights. According to Dimitar Bechev, these reforms increased Turkey's legitimacy, shown it as a model nation, and bolstered its role as a leading regional player.<sup>89</sup> Additionally, interaction with the European Union has resulted in internal economic developments allowing greater foreign penetration and the improvement of Turkey's economic standing.

#### **THE EFFECTS OF POLITICAL REFORMS**

Throughout Turkey's Republican history, a recurring theme is the need to westernize in pursuit of national progress. This westernization has frequently involved turning towards Europe and pursuing political and economic engagement. Turkey's desire for membership in the European Union is emblematic of this national objective. Since the acceptance of Turkey as a candidate member in 1999, Turkey has undergone extensive changes in order to realize the goal of EU

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<sup>89</sup> Bechev, Dimitar. *Turkey's Rise as a Regional Power*. Rep. Bulgaria: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2011. Print.

membership. Central to the modifications within Turkey has been the objective of fulfilling the EU Copenhagen criteria which emphasize the establishment of democratic institutions and a capable market economy.<sup>90</sup> Also, accession negotiations since 2005 required further reforms to prepare Turkey for EU admission.<sup>91</sup> Turkey's eagerness for inclusion in the European Union was evidenced by a rush of nine harmonization packages adopted between 2002 and 2004.<sup>92</sup> These efforts at further democratization involved provisions for greater free speech and association, new criminal and civil codes, eradication of the death penalty, and "legal changes to facilitate the prosecution of public officials responsible for torture and maltreatment of prisoners."<sup>93</sup> Turkey's commitment to Europeanization was shown in its readiness to modify quickly and the extent to which reforms fundamentally changed the fabric of the nation. Additionally, the reforms were undertaken by a multiplicity of political parties and disparate segments of society, making it a true "national project."<sup>94</sup>

At the behest of the European Union, these reforms addressed the balance of civilian-military relations. As an institution designed to maintain the secular purity of the Turkish state, the armed forces have historically asserted a disproportionate control over civilian affairs. This influence was epitomized in the National Security Council (NSC), a body involving the General Staff, members of

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<sup>90</sup> European Union. European Commission. *Enlargement: Copenhagen European Council*. 27 Oct. 2011. Web.

<[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement\\_process/accesion\\_process/criteria/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accesion_process/criteria/index_en.htm)>.

<sup>91</sup> Kirisci, Kemal. "The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: Limits of European Union Reform." *South European Society and Politics* 16.2 (2011): 335-349. Print.

<sup>92</sup> Hale, William. "Human Rights and Turkey's EU Accession Process: Internal and External Dynamics, 2005-2010." *South European Society and Politics* 16.2 (2011): 323-333. Print.

<sup>93</sup> Hale, 325.

<sup>94</sup> Kalaycioglu, Ersin. "The Turkish-EU Odyssey and Political Regime Change in Turkey." *South European Society and Politics* 16.2 (2011): 265-278. Print

the armed forces and cabinet ministers, whose recommendations were given priority by the cabinet, even though it was established after the 1960 coup to function as an advisory committee.<sup>95</sup> With the amendment of Article 118 of the constitution in 2001, there was an increase in the number of civilian members of the NSC and restrictions which limited it to only advising the cabinet.<sup>96</sup> While there is still some debate as to whether the influence of the armed forces has truly been restrained, the effort to make institutional changes to increase democratization with an eye toward EU inclusion is greatly significant.

Additionally, the Kurdish Question continues to be a stumbling block to Turkey's acceptance in the European Union. A Kurdish minority seeks to protect its national identity, while the government narrative has portrayed the issue as a problem of economic underdevelopment in the region primarily inhabited by the Kurds and of insurgent violence by the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). In the European Union, the Kurdish Question is perceived as a blight on the minority and human rights record of Turkey. However, Turkey faces the challenge of combating security threats posed by the PKK on its southeastern border while allowing the existence of a vibrant Kurdish identity along with a Turkish identity. To this end, beginning in 2009 the Turkish government undertook a campaign to liberalize laws concerning Kurds, allowing use of the Kurdish language and curtailing the government-sponsored village guard system, a program which used local Kurdish militia to crack down on unfavorable activity in the southeastern

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<sup>95</sup> Gursoy, Yaprak. "The Impact of EU-Driven Reforms on the Political Autonomy of the Turkish Military." *South European Society and Politics* 16.2 (2011): 293-308. Print.

<sup>96</sup> Gursoy, 295.

territories.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, with the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in 1999 and a supposed lessening of rebellious PKK activity, the Turkish government was in a better position to extend greater liberties to the Kurdish population. Supporting this initiative was Ocalan's repudiation of violence and "his advocacy of greater democracy and pluralism as a panacea to the Kurdish problem" which "coincided with the new government's aim to develop a more liberal democracy and improve Turkey's human rights record."<sup>98</sup>

While democratizing in pursuit of EU admission, Kemal Kirisci has characterized Turkey's recent foreign policy as "proactive engagement in the neighboring region."<sup>99</sup> With an ideology that emphasizes friendly relations with all neighbors, the current ruling party has improved relations with nations spanning from Iran and Russia to Egypt and Jordan. For example, Turkey's willingness to sign a free trade agreement with Syria in 2004, a country it "almost went to war with in the 1990s," reflects reoriented foreign policy objectives.<sup>100</sup> Using Foreign Minister Davutoglu's "strategic depth" approach, Turkey seeks to claim "a place in the new pecking order of emergent powers."<sup>101</sup> Assisting this objective has been the increased democratization in Turkey that has come as a result of greater Europeanization. Turkey has seemingly become more appealing for regional nations and Saul Cohen argues that "most American foreign policy analysts view Turkey as . . . a forward point for NATO and the West to the

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<sup>97</sup> Hale, 329.

<sup>98</sup> Kirisci, 337.

<sup>99</sup> Avci, Gamze, and Ali Cardoglu. "Taking Stock of the Dynamics that Shape EU Reforms in Turkey" *South European Society and Politics* 16.2 (2011): 209-219. Print.

<sup>100</sup> Tisdall, Simon. "Turkey Has a Key Role in Syria- Now and in the Future." *The Guardian*. 16 Nov. 2011. Web. 10 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/nov/16/turkey-key-role-syria>>.

<sup>101</sup> Bechev, 175.

Middle East, the Transcaucasus, and Central Asia.”<sup>102</sup> In essence, Turkey’s unique hybrid identity has enabled it to function as a bridge between the East and West.

### **THE EFFECTS OF GREATER ECONOMIC INTEGRATION**

While political interaction with the European Union has yielded noteworthy change within Turkey, Kamil Yilmaz argues that great transformations have also resulted from closer economic integration with Europe. The beginnings of economic integration took root in the 1963 Ankara Agreement between Turkey and the European Community (EC). Instead of receiving full EC membership, Turkey was granted special economic privileges. The Customs Union (CU) of 1996 between Turkey and the European Union improved the Turkish economic situation. As the final phase of the Ankara Agreement, the CU allows Turkey to further integrate economically with the EU “without undertaking serious political and institutional reforms, viewed as a precondition for full membership.”<sup>103</sup>

Yilmaz notes that an important element of this economic integration is the notion of reciprocity of tariffs.<sup>104</sup> In the first two phases of the Ankara Agreement, the EU eradicated tariffs on Turkish goods, and in the CU Turkey reciprocated by eliminating tariffs on EU goods as well as levying “the common external tariffs on the EU against third countries.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Cohen, Saul B. "The Geopolitics of Turkey's Accession to the European Union." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 45.8 (2004): 575-582. Print.

<sup>103</sup> Yilmaz, Kamil. "The EU-Turkey Customs Union Fifteen Years Later: Better, Yet not the Best Alternative" *South European Society and Politics* 16.2 (2011): 235-249. Print.

<sup>104</sup> Yilmaz, 236

<sup>105</sup> Yilmaz, 236.

Additionally, the CU mandated that Turkey's economic competition practices be brought in line with the EU's. In effect, the CU "changed the Turkish trade policy framework completely by bringing in predictability, transparency, and stability"<sup>106</sup> for the overall benefit of the Turkish economy. Following the CU and greater foreign penetration in Turkish markets, overall imports between 1995 and 2000 soared from \$35.7 billion to \$54.5 billion.<sup>107</sup> Over this same time period, imports from the EU also increased from \$23.5 billion to \$28.5 billion, highlighting the extent to which the EU dominated Turkey's trade relations.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, the Turkish domestic market has remained strong, as Yilmaz notes "the transformations of Turkish industry following the CU helped it to prepare itself for even more formidable competitors such as China and other East Asian countries."<sup>109</sup> While some sectors, like textiles and chemical products, were initially negatively affected, the overall state of the Turkish economy has strengthened as a result of its integration with the European Union.<sup>110</sup>

Over the last decade, Turkey's economy has been an exemplary success. The restructuring of Turkey's economic institutions over the last two decades, demonstrated by a growth rate of 7.4% from 2002-2007 facilitated this achievement.<sup>111</sup> However, Turkey was not immune to the global economic crisis of 2008-2009 and suffered a slight setback. In 2009, Turkey's GDP decreased by

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<sup>106</sup> Yilmaz, 237.

<sup>107</sup> Yilmaz, 238

<sup>108</sup> Yilmaz, 238

<sup>109</sup> Yilmaz, 239.

<sup>110</sup> Yilmaz, 240.

<sup>111</sup> Chatzivasileiou, Anastasios. "Turkey: A Member of the G20." EKEM European Energy Policy Observatory, Athens. 6 June 2011. Lecture.

4.7% and unemployment rose from 8.8% to 12.5%.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, the Turkish economy showed great resilience and by the second quarter of 2010 GDP increased by 10.3%.<sup>113</sup> Presently, Turkey is a leading emerging market economy along with Brazil, India, South Africa, and South Korea.<sup>114</sup> Turkey is the 15<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$1.1 trillion, a growth rate of 8.9%, foreign direct investment of \$25 billion in 2011, with expectations that exports will reach \$200 billion by 2013.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, Turkey is noteworthy for its tourism industry with revenues of \$25 billion in 2011 and has one of the leading construction industries in the world.<sup>116</sup>

Additionally, Turkey is a member of the G20, a collection of twenty states comprised of the world's biggest economies and other relevant regional powers.<sup>117</sup> In addition to the global economy, the G20 deals with issues involving health, education, the environment, and conflict resolution.<sup>118</sup> As a member of the G20, Turkey enjoys greater prestige and the opportunity to enhance its political and economic strength. These changes over the last three decades signify modifications in Turkey's economic identity. As a free market economy with the benefits of G20 membership, Turkey is enabled to assert its position in the region as an important political and economic player.

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<sup>112</sup> Chatzivasileiou 6 June 2011.

<sup>113</sup> Kacar, Yusuf, and Dries Lesage. "Turkey's Profile in the G20: Emerging Economy, Middle Power and Bridge-Builder." *Studia Diplomatica* 63.2 (2010): 125-140. Print.

<sup>114</sup> Chatzivasileiou 6 June 2011.

<sup>115</sup> Chatzivasileiou 6 June 2011.

<sup>116</sup> Chatzivasileiou 6 June 2011.

<sup>117</sup> Kacar and Lesage, 125.

<sup>118</sup> Chatzivasileiou 6 June 2011.

## CONCLUSION

Decades of economic interaction and more recent political relations with the European Union have been factors in enabling the emergence of Turkey as a regional power. The provisions of the Ankara Agreement, the Customs Union, and Copenhagen economic and political requirements have functioned to increase economic interdependency between Turkey and the European Union. According to Yilmaz, Turkey's internal markets have been strengthened enough to deter competitive pressures from East Asia and assert its own agenda regionally and even internationally.<sup>119</sup> Politically, Turkey has made wholesale changes via constitutional amendments and other institutional reforms to further democratize and extend civil and minority rights. This increased democratization, coerced by the EU, enhanced the legitimacy and strength of Turkey in Eurasia.

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<sup>119</sup> Yilmaz, 239.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **A CONCISE HISTORY OF US-TURKISH RELATIONS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the United States and the Republic of Turkey, relations have been based not only on a military, political, and economic alliance but also shared interests and common identities as secular democracies. Through World War II and the Cold War, Turkey and the United States converged on security and policy interests resulting in increasingly tightened bilateral relations. Challenges to the relationship surfaced in the 1960s and 1970s but were overcome and made way for cooperation in the 1980s and 1990s. In the post-Cold War era, with a less hostile international environment, the motive for a continued strategic partnership has been up for speculation. This notion has been precipitated by increasingly strained relations as Turkey looks to assert its influence outside of the umbrella of American hegemony. A shift in Turkey's self-identity over the last decade has contributed to the tense relations. Some sources of tension include Turkey's relations with Iran and Israel and the US War in Iraq. This chapter puts US-Turkish relations in historical context to elucidate contemporary developments and to assess the present relationship.

#### **RELATIONS THROUGH THE COLD WAR PERIOD**

Following World War II and the establishment of the bipolar international system that characterized the Cold War, the United States and Turkey had mutually beneficial interests in mitigating the power of the Soviet Union. Turkey realized

the threat posed by the burgeoning strength of its neighbor, especially after Stalin demanded border realignment and unlimited access to the Turkish Straits.<sup>120</sup> The Cold War policy aimed at containing the Soviets led the United States to align with a geo-strategically important Turkey. Through the Truman Doctrine of 1947 the United States provided military assistance to Greece and Turkey to support resistance to the Soviet threat. By the late 1950s, relations “blossomed into an extensive network of military, economic, and political relations that had the full support of policy makers in both Washington and Ankara.”<sup>121</sup> During this period, the partnership was institutionalized with Turkey’s inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, a mutual defense agreement between the United States, Canada, and ten western European states.

The first challenges to the US-Turkish alliance surfaced in the 1960s concerning the island of Cyprus. While a sovereign nation since 1960, Cyprus had a considerable Turkish minority in constant contention with the Greek majority. The controversy resulted from a letter from US President Lyndon Johnson in which he communicated that “NATO would not defend Turkey if the Soviet Union attacked it during a Turkish intervention to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority from the communal violence spearheaded by the Greek Cypriot majority.”<sup>122</sup> The infamous Johnson letter was, and continues to be, a source of consternation in Turkey, contrasting the unwavering alliance that had previously characterized relations. The letter increased mistrust of the United States and even

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<sup>120</sup> Sayari, Sabri. "Turkey and the United States: Changing Dynamics of an Enduring Alliance." Ed. Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydın. *Turkey's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: A Changing Role in World Politics*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2003. 27-40. Print.

<sup>121</sup> Sayari, 29.

<sup>122</sup> Sayari, 29.

anti-Americanism among some of the Turkish population.<sup>123</sup> In 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus to protect the Turkish Cypriot community. In response, the US Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey, and Turkey reciprocated by suspending the Defense Cooperation Agreement of 1969 terminating the activities of all the American bases in the country with the exception of those that had a purely NATO function.<sup>124</sup> This series of events represented a nadir in US-Turkish relations. However, relations normalized with a lifting of the weapons embargo in 1978. Ensuing positive relations would be due to concerns about the “security and regional stability implications of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the rise of a fundamentalist Islamic regime in Iran in 1979.”<sup>125</sup> By the time of the Gulf War in the early 1990s, US-Turkish relations had returned to the *status quo* as Turkey was again identified as an important ally in enabling the coalition victory under US leadership.

### **POST-COLD WAR RELATIONS**

From a realist perspective, the end of the Cold War produced a paradigm shift in the international political system from a contentious bipolar system to a unipolar system dominated by the United States. More recently, US hegemonic control is increasingly tempered by regional coalitions like the European Union and even by influential regional powers like South Korea, Brazil, South Africa, India and Turkey. This realist perspective is one alternative explanation for understanding post-Cold War developments. However, analyzing US-Turkish relations in this

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<sup>123</sup> Sayari, 29.

<sup>124</sup> Sayari, 30.

<sup>125</sup> Sayari, 30.

new global context using the constructivist approach yields the question of whether each nation's identities and interests converge enough to continue the partnership. From the constructivist perspective, there is an inherent concern with identity and how perceived self-identity affects interests and actions. Some recent actions and policies by Turkey have highlighted fundamental disagreements in policy considerations and perhaps an identity shift. In the post-Cold War period, Turkey has further asserted an independent foreign policy in pursuit of its own interests reflecting its hybrid identity, which has often not mirrored American policy. These actions support the argument that Turkey is an emerging regional power and is "no longer content to play the role of junior partner"<sup>126</sup> in bilateral relations with the United States. This argument is evidenced by Turkey's actions leading up to the US-led war in Iraq in 2003 and Turkey's current relations with Iran and Israel.

One of the most surprising and conspicuous clashes in policy perspectives came in the lead up to the war in Iraq in 2003. In planning for the invasion of Iraq, the United States expected to utilize Turkish territory to open a second front in the war. When asked for permission, the Turkish Grand National Assembly voted to disallow such an operation much to the surprise and chagrin of US policymakers.<sup>127</sup> In Washington, this signaled disloyalty and distrust from Turkey, with residual effects. However, the decision of the Turkish Parliament must be understood in context. The ruling AKP party was unwilling to "back yet another US war against a Muslim country-especially when opinion polls indicated that

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<sup>126</sup> Larrabee, Stephen. "The 'New Turkey' and American-Turkish Relations" *Insight Turkey* 13.1 (2011): 1-9. Print.

<sup>127</sup> Larrabee, 12.

more than 90 percent of the Turkish population opposed an attack on Iraq.”<sup>128</sup>

Allowing US troops to invade Iraq through Turkish territory would have set a dangerous precedent that was unconscionable for Turkish policymakers. This instance illustrated Turkey following a policy, which undermined US plans, but was necessary for the assertion of Turkey’s interests to sustain its hybrid identity as a modern Islamic democracy and a regional power.

Another recent issue of contention between the United States and Turkey has been relations with Iran vis-à-vis its nuclear program. In its early years, the Obama Administration sought to engage Iran diplomatically to resolve the nuclear issue. However, diplomacy gave way to a more hardline position aimed at using economic sanctions against Iran. Both “unilaterally and through the United Nations,”<sup>129</sup> the United States actively pursued sanctions as the most effective method for crippling the Iranian nuclear program. Conversely, Turkey was committed to diplomacy as the method for engaging its eastern neighbor. This perspective “resulted in Turkey voting ‘no’ at the UN Security Council”<sup>130</sup> for increased sanctions in sharp opposition to US interests. The reason for this policy disagreement may be that Turkey does not perceive a nuclear Iran to be as big a threat as does the United States. Or, Turkey may have wanted to “avoid the rising tensions they feared would result from additional sanctions”<sup>131</sup> against its

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<sup>128</sup> Carpenter, Ted. “Estrangement: The United States and Turkey in a Multipolar Era” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 21.4 (2010):27-37. Print.

<sup>129</sup> Carpenter, 27.

<sup>130</sup> Wexler, Robert. “United States and Turkey: Allies at Odds?” *Insight Turkey* 12.4 (2010): 9-14. Print.

<sup>131</sup> Carpenter, 28.

neighbor. The case of Iran exemplifies a definite divergence of opinion between the United States and Turkey.

Furthermore, Turkey's increasingly tense relations with Israel have strained US-Turkish relations, given the special relationship between the United States and Israel. While Turkey had previously been one of Israel's few supporters in the region, developments in the last few years have soured the relationship. The ruling AKP party has been outspoken in its criticism of Israel, while giving greater support to the Palestinian cause. This was the case in "Ankara's harsh criticism of the Israeli military offensive into Gaza in 2009."<sup>132</sup> Additionally, the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident in 2010 was a source of heightened tensions between Israel and Turkey. The incident unfolded as "Israeli special forces attacked and boarded ships in a Turkish-led relief flotilla, supposedly on a humanitarian mission to Gaza" which resulted in the killing of several Turkish citizens.<sup>133</sup> In addition to attracting international media attention, this incident resulted in increasingly strained diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel. To some extent, the worsening Israeli-Turkish relationship can be attributed to Turkey's evolving identity as it embraces its Islamic identity. As a result, Turkey feels greater solidarity with its Muslim brethren in Palestine, with adverse effects for its relations with Israel.

Nevertheless, regarding Israel, both Turkey and the United States agree on "a Jewish state with defined and recognized borders that can live side-by-side

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<sup>132</sup> Carpenter, 32.

<sup>133</sup> Carpenter, 32

with a self-sustainable, viable, and demilitarized Palestinian state.”<sup>134</sup> This harmony in objectives is true of most policy considerations between the United States and Turkey. While there are some major policy disagreements, as already mentioned, minor differences should not undermine common goals.<sup>135</sup> President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan both emphasize the continued strategic partnership that exists between the United States and Turkey, underscoring the continuity in relations between the two states.

### CONCLUSION

Since World War II, the United States and Turkey have maintained strong political, economic, and military relations, with only brief periods of contention. Throughout the Cold War era, this relationship benefited both states in their efforts to contain the Soviet Union. Also, Turkey benefited by growing its economy, military power, and political influence. As a result, in the post-Cold War period, Turkey was enabled to assert itself as a regional power. This assertion of power involved undertaking independent foreign policy that sometimes countered the interests of the United States. Turkey’s evolving self-identification greatly contributed to these clashes in policy. As Turkey embraced its enhanced economic and political influence and its Muslim identity, it acquired a unique position as a Western ally with commitments and responsibilities in the Muslim world. While this has led to continued disagreement on certain issues, Turkey and the United States share common values, a commitment to secular

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<sup>134</sup> Wexler, 10.

<sup>135</sup> Wexler, 11.

republican democracy, and common political, military and economic interests that maintain the strategic partnership.

## **CHAPTER 7 AMERICAN INTERESTS IN EURASIA AND THE ROLE OF TURKEY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The changing political dynamics of Eurasia necessitate a reexamination of the strategic partnership between Turkey and the United States. Recent developments have bolstered the influence of some states, strained US relations with former partners, and diminished American authority in the region. This reduced American role underscores the importance of strengthening relations with Turkey, an emergent regional power, whose partnership is invaluable to advancing US interests in the region. For the United States, Turkey is a precious resource for issues concerning securing access to energy, military and security concerns, encouragement of democratization in the Arab world, and support for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All of these issues are vital to US regional interests and both countries could mutually benefit from strengthened ties.

### **THE CHANGING US ROLE IN THE REGION**

According to Hillel Fradkin and Lewis Libby, the Middle East has undergone conspicuous changes in its balance of power over the last decade.<sup>136</sup> There has been an emergence of regional power-brokers, like Turkey and Iran, but also the destabilization of formerly influential nations, like Iraq. These changing dynamics are most pronounced with the developments of the Arab Spring and the ousting of decades-old regimes in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen. These changes have

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<sup>136</sup> Fradkin, Hillel, and Lewis Libby. "Last Man Standing: Is America Fading in the New Middle East?" *World Affairs* (2011): 56-63. Print.

implications for US relations with states in the region and for the amplification of American power. Fradkin and Libby argue that American influence in the region has weakened as “our ties have eroded with states that once supported much of our agenda,”<sup>137</sup> undermining American objectives and interests. As a nation that previously exerted extensive influence in regional activities, the United States is increasingly less able to “support friends, punish enemies, or achieve [its] aims.”<sup>138</sup>

Islamic theologian Ibn Hazm famously stated that “if you treat your friend and enemy the same, you will arouse distaste for your friendships and contempt for your enemies, and you will not be long for this world.”<sup>139</sup> Elements of US foreign policy in the Middle East have demonstrated this very point. The hypocrisy and lack of assertiveness that have characterized recent policies have functioned to precipitate the diminishing of US influence in the region. In the wake of the Arab Spring, US willingness to utilize military force in Libya to assist domestic insurrection but ignore similar developments in Syria and Bahrain, highlights an inconsistency in US policy that has served to undermine American legitimacy.

The waning of American power underscores the value of strengthening the partnership with Turkey, a resurgent regional player. The “prevailing security-heavy framework”<sup>140</sup> that has historically characterized relations must be realigned in light of changing dynamics. Recently, American interests in the

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<sup>137</sup> Fradkin and Libby, 57.

<sup>138</sup> Fradkin and Libby 56.

<sup>139</sup> Fradkin and Libby 58.

<sup>140</sup> Lesser, O. Ian. “Turkey, the United States and the Delusion of geopolitics” *Survival* 48.3 (2006): 83-96. Print.

region have centered on routing al-Qaeda and other agents of global terror, resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thwarting nuclear proliferation and insuring access to energy.<sup>141</sup> Turkey is “proximate to countries pivotal to American foreign policy and national security”<sup>142</sup> and has the political and economic wherewithal to assist US objectives positively. Therefore, the delineations of the partnership must reflect these changing realities. In effect, the United States can neither belittle nor unilaterally force Turkey’s hand. The rapprochement begun under the Obama administration must continue to fortify relations in pursuit of mutually beneficial interests. Turkey and the United States share an identity as secular democracies which should reinforce relations and enable future cooperation.

### **US INTERESTS IN EURASIA AND THE ROLE OF TURKEY**

I argue that to achieve its objectives in the region, the United States must better utilize its strategic partnership with Turkey. On issues such as securing access to energy resources, military and security concerns, encouraging democratization in the Arab world, and supporting the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Turkey can serve as a beneficial regional partner. In terms of access to energy, Turkey is located on “critical waterways and narrows (the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, and the Bosphorus and Dardanelles), channels for trade and the flow of energy to global markets.”<sup>143</sup> Additionally, the enormously

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<sup>141</sup> Fradkin and Libby 61.

<sup>142</sup> Menon, Rajan, and S. Enders Wimbush. “The US and Turkey: End of an Alliance?” *Survival* 49.2 (2007): 129-144. Print.

<sup>143</sup> Menon and Wimbush, 131.

important Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline has its terminus at the Turkish Mediterranean city of Ceyhan. Petroleum from this pipeline supplies energy to several Central Asian nations and is “essential to American efforts to reduce the dependence of Azerbaijan, and potentially Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, on Russia’s energy pipelines.”<sup>144</sup> In essence, Turkey’s geographical location makes it a vital part of enabling the supply of energy to the global market. And, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline functions to moderate the potential regional influence that could be wielded by Russia because of its vast energy supplies, for the benefit of broader US regional interests.

Further, Menon and Wimbush argue that decades of military cooperation have helped to solidify Turkey’s position as an essential NATO member with far-reaching benefits for American military missions in the region. As a member of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Turkey has been involved in the stabilization and development of Afghanistan.<sup>145</sup> Military bases throughout Turkey- in Incirlik, Batman, Diyarbakir, Malatya, and Mus- support NATO as well as US missions in the region.<sup>146</sup> In the war against Iraq, the United States was able to use Turkish airspace for its aircrafts and Turkey provided vital “logistical support to US forces in Iraq.”<sup>147</sup> Reciprocally, the United States aids Turkey in its struggle against the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) insurgency. US economic and military assistance supports Turkey in its fight against the northern Iraq based militants. The United States categorizes “the PKK as a

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<sup>144</sup> Menon and Wimbush, 132.

<sup>145</sup> Menon and Wimbush, 133.

<sup>146</sup> Menon and Wimbush, 133.

<sup>147</sup> Menon and Wimbush, 133.

terrorist organization and continually emphasizes its commitment to defeating all terrorists in Iraq.”<sup>148</sup> These long-standing military ties, while part of a variety of strategic interests, are mutually beneficial and should be persistently cultivated.

Furthermore, Turkey, in its role as a mediator, can serve as a partner in the proliferation of peace and democracy in the region, most notably with the developments of the Arab Spring and the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The recent wave of democratization sweeping the Arab world has enabled the emergence of free speech and human rights in previously authoritarian nations. With the American emphasis on personal freedom and democratic institutions, the events of the Arab Spring signal progressive change for the Middle East. However, the process of democratizing, as evidenced by Turkey, can be difficult and protracted. While the United States cannot unilaterally impose democratic institutions on Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, it can utilize Turkey’s status as a regional power and an Islamic democracy. Already, Turkey has taken an active role in working with the Arab League to resolve the crisis in Syria and can extend that role to assisting the democratizing Arab Spring nations.

While Turkey should not necessarily be shown as a model Muslim democracy, the democratizing process in Turkey can be instructive for nascent regimes across the Arab world. Additionally, Turkey can serve a significant role in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, an issue of grave importance to the United States. The special relationship between the United States and Israel is the

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<sup>148</sup> Walker, W. Joshua. “Reexamining the U.S.-Turkey Alliance” *The Washington Quarterly* 31.1 (2007-2008): 93-109. Print.

source of wide-spread consternation and anti-Americanism across the region. However, as a Muslim nation with former close ties to Israel and growing sympathy for the Palestinian cause, Turkey can and is willing to exert its regional power and play the role of peacemaker. In fact, Turkey has “offered its good offices to begin a dialogue between Hamas and Israel”<sup>149</sup>, a potentially substantial development given the current impasse. As Joshua Walker asserts, the importance of Turkey for US regional interests cannot be overstated.<sup>150</sup> Turkey is an essential component in the US pursuit of military collaboration, access to energy, and furthering peace and democracy in the region. Therefore, “a reinvigorated strategic partnership is possible, and will be in the interest of both countries. But it is likely to have quite different contours, with new forms of engagement-and more realistic expectations.”<sup>151</sup>

President Obama highlighted the strategic importance of Turkey in a speech to the Turkish Parliament in 2009. While identifying Turkey as a “critical ally,” President Obama recognized the recent strained relations by emphasizing the need to “build on our mutual interests and rise above our differences.”<sup>152</sup> Going forward, the President proposed that the partnership be centered around recognition of a long historical alliance, the importance of Turkey in the “East-West corridor for oil and natural gas,” and a united fight in the war against terror.<sup>153</sup> In this speech, and through the course of the administration, President

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<sup>149</sup> Walker, 106.

<sup>150</sup> Walker, 106.

<sup>151</sup> Lesser, 83.

<sup>152</sup> Obama, Barack. "Remarks to the Turkish Parliament." Turkish Grand National Assembly Complex, Ankara. 6 Apr. 2009. Speech.

<sup>153</sup> Obama 6 Apr. 2009.

Obama has shown a willingness to further engage with Turkey to ameliorate relations by emphasizing points of convergence. Efforts to support “renewable energy investment in Turkey” or intensified attacks on al Qaeda and the PKK should characterize bilateral relations.<sup>154</sup> The Obama administration recognizes Turkey’s emergent role in the region and acknowledges that there will sometimes be divergence in national interests due to conflicting identities. Increasingly, Turkey hybrid identity as a Western ally and a leading Muslim nation is becoming more apparent and problematic. The United States must respect Turkey’s hybrid identity and be cognizant of conflicting interests. Therefore, the strengthening of bilateral relations will be facilitated by pursuing objectives that are mutually beneficial.

### **CONCLUSION**

For decades, the United States has had strategic interests in Eurasia. These interests are as important as ever, highlighting the importance of maintaining and strengthening relations with the US’s regional partner, Turkey. Over time, developments in the region have reduced American power while inversely affirming Turkey’s position as a regional power. Also, the United States has significant regional interests concerning access to energy resources, military and security concerns, supporting the emerging democracies of the Arab Spring, and resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given Turkey’s important position in the region and its ability to assist in all of these areas, the United States must

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<sup>154</sup> Obama 6 Apr. 2009.

strengthen ties with Turkey for sake of maintaining strategic interests in the region.

## **CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this paper has been to make two general arguments. First, I argue that Turkey has emerged as a regional power, which has been enabled by numerous factors that have reinforced one another. Second, that Turkey's emergence as a regional power has implications for US-Turkish bilateral relations and for American interests in Eurasia. In proving the first argument, the paper analysis Turkey's foundational history and shows how the nation-building project under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk enabled the establishment of unique foundational principles that eventually allowed Turkey's emergence. Then, the paper examines the process of democratization in Turkey. Through decades of democratizing, Turkey has developed a viable Muslim democracy, albeit imperfect, that has legitimized Turkey politically and presented it as a regional player. Additionally, the paper evaluates certain economic and political policies undertaken by Turkey in the last three decades. By instituting a neo-liberal economic model, Turkey attracted foreign investment and integrated into the regional market. Also, through a more aggressive foreign policy and rapprochement with neighboring nations, Turkey has established itself as an economic and political regional power. Furthermore, the paper examines the process of Europeanization in Turkey. In essence, through economic integration with Europe and the reforms induced by the EU accession process, Turkey has further legitimized its regional role.

In proving the second argument, the paper begins with a brief overview of the history of US-Turkish bilateral relations and shows that it has been characterized by a military, political and economic alliance and shared identities

as secular democracies. However, the paper reveals major points of contention between American and Turkish policy, namely the US-led war in Iraq and Turkish relations with Iran and Syria. Because Turkey pursued policy objectives that countered the US position, there was a resultant strain on relations which served to undermine the partnership. There is an analysis of the changing regional political dynamics and its implications for US objectives. Given US interests in the region and a common identity with Turkey as secular democracies, the paper argues for strengthened bilateral relations for the benefit of mutual interests.

In making these arguments, the paper also serves to elucidate certain global developments. For one, Turkey is emblematic of a changing global political system in which certain nations are accruing larger regional significance. Apart from Turkey, this trend is evident in South Korea, Brazil, India, among others. Additionally, these emergent regional powers are mitigating the influence of larger nations like the United States, which has unavoidable implications for the formation and implementation of American foreign policy. In essence, US foreign policy can no longer be unilateral in nature, but must further harmonize with regional partners for the realization of American objectives.

To some extent, the notion of Turkey as an emergent regional power is a self-conceived identity. Through the international relations theory of constructivism which argues that “how actors define their ‘selves’ . . . informs their ‘interests’”<sup>155</sup> and actions, Turkey is identifying itself as an important regional player and promulgating that image. However, I assert that the enhanced

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<sup>155</sup> Reus-Smit, Christian. "Constructivism." *Theories of International Relations*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 212-35. Print.

economic and political importance of Turkey justifies this self-conceived identity and that Turkey is an emergent power. Even among the Turkish polity, there is a general acceptance of the nation's regional role evidenced by a poll showing that 62% of Turks have confidence in Prime Minister Erdogan's foreign policy.<sup>156</sup> Similarly, polls show that throughout the region there is approval of Turkey's burgeoning role with 78% of Egyptians and 72% of Jordanians supporting Erdogan's policies. Furthermore, I assert that there is growing recognition outside of the region, specifically from the United States, of Turkey's importance. Essentially, US policymakers are increasing cognizant of Turkey's significance for American objectives in Eurasia and I argue for strengthened bilateral relation to realize US and Turkish interests in the region.

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<sup>156</sup> "On Eve of Elections, a More Upbeat Mood in Turkey." *Pew Research Center*. 7 June 2011. Web.

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### **Summary of Capstone Project**

The purpose of this project is to show the increasing political and economic importance of Turkey in Eurasia. The paper argues that Turkey has emerged as a regional power in Eurasia and that this emergence has implications for US-Turkish relations. In effect, the United States and Turkey share a common identity as secular republican democracies and common political, military and economic interests and must strengthen their partnership for mutually beneficial interests in the region.

The first part of the paper analyzes the notion of Turkey as a regional power. By using the term regional power, the implication is that Turkey has acquired political and economic influence in the region that has enhanced its importance. While Turkey cannot drastically impact global developments, the paper emphasizes the importance of Turkey in Eurasia. The purpose of this part is to explain what accounts for Turkey's emergence as a regional power, essentially what steps led to Turkey's current position as a politically and economically important state. The paper proposes that four factors led to Turkey's emergence as a regional power: the principles that founded the nation, the role of democracy in Turkey's development, economic and political policies over the last three decades, and Turkey's interaction with the European Union. All of these factors are presented as working collectively to enable Turkey's eventual emergence as a regional power.

The second part of the paper makes a connection between Turkey's emergence as a regional power and its implications for relations between Turkey

and the United States. There is an overview of the history of US-Turkish relations to show the depth of friendship based on a common democratic identity and a military, political, and economic alliance. Also, the paper shows that the United States has certain strategic interests in the region, namely, securing access to energy, maintaining a military presence and containing security threats, supporting democracy in the Arab world and advocating for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Over the last decade, however, there have been tense relations between the United States and Turkey because of disagreements on certain issues. Overall, the paper argues that given US interests in the region and a common identity with Turkey as secular democracies, the United States and Turkey must strengthen bilateral relations for the benefit of mutual interests.

Throughout the paper, the international relations theory of constructivism is used to show the evolving identity, interests, and actions of Turkey. Constructivism argues that the interests and policies of a state are reliant upon the state's self-identity. For example, because Turkey identifies as a part of the West it has attempted to institute a form of democracy acceptable to western states. Also, because Turkey self identifies as a leader in the Islamic world it has sought better relations with all of its neighboring Muslim nations. Throughout the paper, constructivism is used as a lens for understanding the perceptions and actions of Turkey and the United States.

The method for conducting this research involved consultation of journal articles, news media sources, books, interviews, speeches, and relevant blogs. Also, the author was privileged to spend time conducting empirical research in

Turkey. First, the author interned for an organization that advocates strengthened relations between the United States and Turkey. Second, by taking university courses in Istanbul the author was able to gain an understanding of the Turkish perspective. Additionally, consultation with faculty, both in Istanbul and Syracuse, enabled the author to engage with the literature at great length. As a result, the paper serves to inform the reader about Turkey's importance and also function as advocacy for modified US foreign policy towards Turkey.