

TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE XXIst CENTURY

Peace in the World, Not in the Home

Major Research Paper

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July 2012

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the evolution, successes, failings and future challenges of Turkey's current foreign policy and its impact on regional power dynamics. From failed Empire to modern Republic to regional power, Turkish diplomacy has experienced a notable shift in purpose, branding and execution, reflecting its own domestic socio-economic progress and adapting to ever changing world events and crises. Through what the ruling Justice and Development Party coins as "Strategic Depth", the current government is seeking to maximize Turkey's shared history, culture, language and religion to strengthen strategic cooperation, broker profitable economic agreements and reduce its problems with neighbours down to zero. By balancing multiple strategic alliances to the East and to the West, Turkey's newly invigorated diplomacy has succeeded in moving the country from the periphery of international relations to the centre. Among the notable diplomatic successes are the heightened profile of Turkish humanitarian assistance in places like Somalia and Afghanistan, the fruitful conflict mediation in the Balkans and the ongoing diplomatic viability vis-à-vis Iran's nuclear program. While Turkish soft power foreign policy has been successful in fostering peace for others, it has been unsuccessful in achieving peace for itself. A host of national and international obstacles challenge the sustainability of the government's foreign policies while festering stalemates with neighbouring countries wear away at the credibility of Turkish regional leadership.

“Turkey is the only European country in the Middle East [and] the only Middle Eastern country in Europe”

Bernard Lewis quoting Marshall Slim at a conference held in Istanbul on September 9th 1979
Seyfi Tashan, *Contemporary Turkish Policies in the Middle East: Prospects and Constraints*. Foreign Policy Vol. 17. Ankara. June 1985, p.12

“Turkey bridges worlds desperately in need of understanding.”

Professor Graham Allison in his introduction of guest speaker, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on January 30th 2004.
Harvard University Gazette. Boston. February 5th 2004

ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party (<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i>)
BiH	Bosnia-Herzegovina
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PIC	Peace Implementation Council
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
P5+1	Germany, Britain and France (EU-3) + China, Russia and the US
SEECF	Southeast European Cooperation Process
TİKA	Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (<i>Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Bakanlığı</i>)
TOKİ	Turkish Housing Development Administration (<i>Toplu Konut İdaresi Bakanlığı</i>)
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

TURKISH ALPHABET & SOUNDS

C	sounds like the hard “j” in “Jealous”
Ç	sounds like the “ch” in “Chair”
Ğ	lengthens preceding vowels, i.e. Erdoğan sounds like “Erdo-wan” and Davutoğlu sounds like “Davut-olu”
I	sounds like the short “u” in “Dull”
İ	sounds like the “ea” in “Easter”
Ö	sounds like the French sound “eu” in “Deux”, “Nœud”, “Pneu”
Ş	sounds like the “sh” in “Shelf”
Ü	sounds like the “ui” in “Fruit”

INTRODUCTION

Located in the center of Afro-Eurasia, Turkey stands in the geostrategic center of the world, a place where history and modernity collide and where danger and opportunity live side by side. The young Republic has a scandalous past of crusades, imperialism, war and accused genocide. Turkey is known for living in a “bad neighborhood” and has clashed with nearly everyone on the other side of the fence and the pond. During the 20th century, successive Kemalist governments turned their backs on the country’s Eastern identity, heritage and alliances and blindly followed in the shadow of US foreign policy. This highly monolithic diplomacy did little to foster Turkish pride or garner support and cooperation in realizing its own development aspirations. The Cold War era ushered in a host of new security concerns for Turkey as the country felt vulnerable to Soviet attacks. Despite being betrayed by Washington’s disregard for its national interests in the 1960s and 1970s, Turkey had grown so dependent on its Western alliance that it had nowhere else to turn. In the late 1980s, the country sought solace in applying for European Union membership but got rejected once again by the powers in the West. A national identity crisis would ensue as Turkey no longer knew to which part of the world it belonged. Harsh economic times befell the country at the turn of the century and decades-old stalemates with neighbouring countries increased threats to national security and plunged the country into political turmoil. It would take a new actor on the political scene to push Turkey out of its political stagnation and reaffirm its identity on the world stage.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) would be the one to do just that. This center-right conservative party broke from Kemalist tradition and engineered an ambitious foreign policy based on the tenets of a “Zero

Problems with Neighbours” policy, which uses tools like political engagement, economic inclusion, cultural rapprochement and mediation efforts to foster prosperity, peace and stability in the volatile region. The government’s high profile humanitarian work in Somalia and Afghanistan, combined with its successful peace brokering in the Balkans and continued campaigning for a diplomatic solution to Iran’s nuclear program have done much to consolidate Turkey’s soft power in the region.

As Turkey enjoys international notoriety (even superstardom in some Arab Spring countries) for its rapid economic growth, steady social progress and foreign policy achievements, AKP policies do have important shortcomings that must be considered in tandem with its achievements in the international arena. Turkey’s Balkan policy, while making important advancements in the rapprochement of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, risks alienating non-Muslim groups in the former Yugoslavian states by the biased and unwavering support demonstrated for Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo. This explicit favouritism in the Balkans has led to distrust in the region and rumours that the AKP is pursuing a “Neo-Ottoman” revival.

The boasting of a “Zero Problems with Neighbours” policy also sets up the AKP for criticism and even ridicule in light of recent world events, such as the Israeli raid of the Turkish aid flotilla bound for Gaza, the battle with Greece over offshore drilling in Cyprus and the ongoing violence in Syria. Ankara has been accused of having an overly ambitious strategy, overstretching its actual capacity to broker peace in a region plagued by war and wide-sweeping revolution.

As Turkish foreign policy in the XXIst century makes great strides towards brokering peace for others, it has surprisingly done very little to resolve its own country's conflicts. For as long as the current government is unable to address pressing domestic issues such as Kurdish terrorism and its own festering disputes with Greece over land and sea rights in Cyprus and with Armenia on the topic of genocide recognition, Turkey's credibility and sincerity as a peace broker for others will be forever questioned and doubted. If the government is unable to broker agreements for dealing with its own problems, Turkey will continue to know peace in the world, but will never know peace at home.

TURKEY: A BRIEF HISTORY

With a history dating back more than 8000 years B.C., it is no wonder the modern Republic has known the conflict and war-torn past that it has. From crusades to invasions, to conquered empires and revolutions, no one could have predicted that a country with such a violent past would come to seek the role of peace broker in the 21st century. By spanning back a few centuries, one can appreciate much more the evolution of Turkey and the global-scale importance it has taken on today after only 89 years of independence. Long before Turkey became a nation-state, it served as a bridge between civilizations, hosting migratory fluxes from Central Asia, Europe, the Middle East and even Africa. Crusaders crossed paths in Anatolian land and centuries of evangelizing missions left behind a rich heritage of religious history. In the year 330, Emperor Constantine made Constantinople the cradle of the Byzantine Empire. In 1453, Fatih Sultan Mehmet laid siege

on the Christian stronghold and renamed the city “Istanbul”, marking the beginning of Islamic Ottoman rule. The Empire quickly expanded, spreading past Greece, Albania, Crimea, Sicily, Egypt, Syria and the Mediterranean. For centuries under the Empire, political, economic and cultural ties were created between the various ethnic, religious and linguistic groups all living under the reign of the Ottomans.

By the turn of 20th century, the Ottomans had aligned themselves with Germany and won a striking victory against the Franco-British troops in the straits of Dardanelles in Gallipoli under the direction of then- unknown Colonel Mustafa Kemal. The newly formed Soviet Union threatened to invade the Northeast and the panicked Empire forced the deportation of over a million Armenians from Northeast Anatolia, amounting to the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The labelling of this event as genocide is vehemently denied by Turkey today, as it maintains that the birth of the new homeland following the War of Independence was a painful and bloody affair for all groups residing in the territory, and not only Armenians. The Turkish national struggle was fought against a backdrop of warring world powers fighting to carve up the Anatolian plains and lay claim to any piece they could have. Ethnic Turks and Muslims in the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Black Sea region perished in great numbers and the population exchange between Greece and Turkey was a particularly violent one.

The victorious Allies drafted the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 with the express purpose of carving up the crumbling Empire. Ethnic Turks expelled the Greeks from Smyrna (now İzmir) and Colonel Kemal led the War of Independence against all non-Turkish threats from 1912 to 1922. National victory was not without tragedy as most in the region recount stories of their ancestors’ struggle, pain and devastation. The Sultanate and Caliphate were

officially abolished in 1923 and the Treaty of Lausanne relegated Anatolia back to the Turks. Mustafa Kemal was renamed Atatürk (Father of the Turks) and proclaimed the birth of the Republic -a modern state based on Turkish nationalism and strict separation of religion and state. Atatürk put into motion an ambitious modernization campaign, forbidding Islamic dress, replacing the Ottoman scripts for the Latin alphabet and adopting the French civil code. The Turkish Armed Forces became the most important national institution as they were entrusted with protecting the principles of Kemalism and tasked with pulling, i.e. forcing, the new nation-state to adopt Western ideals by abandoning its relations with the East.

FOLLOWING ANOTHER'S PEACE: TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the hero of the Turkish nationalist cause, brought much internal success to the new Republic but like the ethno-nationalist wave reverberating all throughout Europe at the time, alienated minority groups within the country and steered foreign policy out of state government priorities. For decades Turkish politics revolved around domestic issues and reforms and adopted the West's global prerogative as its own. Following Atatürk's death in 1938, Turkish foreign policy fell into the hands of the military – the “Guardians of Kemalism”, and therefore represented the major interests of the armed forces. Atatürk's legacy of Western-style modernization would lead to the important Westernized identity formation process that determined Ankara's foreign policy orientation for the decades to come.

With the exception of joining the EU, Turkey became part of the European community of nations by joining nearly every other European association (Council of

Europe, NATO, OECD and OSCE). To the dismay of its own markets, Turkey even agreed to a customs union in the 1980s. Ankara fostered close ties with the major powers of the 20th century and joined almost all the international institutions. This intense desire to join the Western club alienated Turkey from its neighbours to the East and from the larger Third World. As Western Europe was rebuilding its war-torn landscapes, the US and the Soviet Union rose to the new bipolar international order. New regional security concerns and opposing world alliances weighed heavily on Turkish foreign policy until the fall of the Berlin Wall. When Turkey joined NATO in 1952, it became the first and only Muslim country to do so. Turkey contributed to many missions and operations, such as Afghanistan and most recently Libya, and played a crucial strategic role in maintaining security and stability in the highly volatile area. Through NATO, Turkey had gained access and exposure to American and European political circles and opinions, which heavily influenced its own worldview. Turkey came to favour its European heritage over all other aspects of its identity and tried to establish the new Republic as a European entity, distancing itself from the Arab world and the Eastern Bloc. Even as other NATO members continued their commercial relations with the East despite official embargos, Turkey avoided commercial relations with them, trying to further prove its allegiance to the West.¹ The Soviets' attempts at rapprochement in the late 1950s and early 1960s were met by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü's cold shoulder. Ankara supported the West against Egypt's claim to the Suez in 1956 despite popular Turkish support for the Egyptians. Turkey later shocked the Arab world when it voted with France at the UN against Algeria's independence in 1957 -a bold move seeing as how Turkey had experienced its own

¹ Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu. *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*. Routledge. New York. 2003, p.60

struggle for independence only a few decades earlier.² Turkey's uncompromising devotion to the West eventually came to hurt national interests in the 1960s and 1970s when two separate international crises exposed Turkey's one-sided relationship. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Washington removed its Jupiter missile from Turkish soil in return for the Soviet's removal of its missile in Cuba. Even though the American missile was outdated and largely ineffective in the face of a real attack from the Soviets, the decision shocked Turkey and left it with an overwhelming sense of vulnerability. Later in 1964 when the Turkish government sought to intervene in Cyprus to protect Turkish minorities from the Greek majority, US President Johnson wrote a strongly worded letter decrying any such action, clearly stating its position and that of NATO's in favour of Greece. Turkey felt betrayed and understood that even with all it had done to prove itself in the eyes of the West, Americans would always prefer Greece to Turkey. Turkey came to feel the wrath of isolation from the larger international community when the UN voted down Turkish claims to Cyprus. Further adding to the feeling of isolation, Turkey's own ally enforced a military embargo on American weapons when the Turkish Armed Forces intervened in North Cyprus in 1974.

In the wake of the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Turkey was pushed to the center of America's greater Middle Eastern strategy once again, lessening Turkey's feeling of isolation. The First Gulf War put a renewed emphasis on Turkish-American strategic cooperation, creating tensions between Turkey and neighbouring Syria, Iraq and Iran. The military coup of 1980 also helped to re-warm relations with the US as the Turkish military regime promoted pro-American policies.³ Weak coalition governments, dreams of joining the EU and the beginnings of the

² Ibid, p.65-66

³ Ibid, p.67

conservative Islamist revival dominated the political scene of the 1990s. As tensions were easing between Western and Eastern blocs following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey's strategic importance for the US was diminishing. No longer baring the fruit of its unconditional loyalty to the US, Turkey had to diversify its international allies, improve its relations with the Soviet Union and reduce its dependence on the West. This shift in diplomatic priorities catalysed major changes in Turkish foreign policy.

Turkey knew the time had come to blaze its own trail in the international system. By the end of the 20th century, as Turkey underwent the beginning of its EU accession process, Turkey was suffering from a major identity crisis. Prime Minister Turgut Özal's official application for full EU membership in 1987 was stalled at first and later deferred indefinitely. Europe's rejection of Turkey was particularly crushing as gaining acceptance as a European state has always been an implicit objective of Turkish foreign policy and as EU-Turkish relations constituted a major component of the country's diplomatic priorities.⁴ Later on those relations became increasingly strained as factors such as culture and identity replaced those of strategic and economic partnership as qualifications for EU membership. Europe emphasized cultural, religious and historical factors in its self-definition, creating a dichotomous image with that of Muslim Turkey.

On the domestic front, major problems bubbled to the surface. Atatürk's political legacy left behind a generation of "Western-Wannabe" governments trying to nurture a still very immature democratic republic, overthrowing its own democratically-elected governments on three separate occasions. The armed Kurdish rebellion in the Southeast known as the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has caused nearly 37,000 deaths in the

⁴ Ibid, p.68

country since 1984.⁵ Terrorism and vigilantism has also displaced nearly 1.2 million people, with most people fleeing the southeastern provinces.⁶ By 2001, rocketing inflation had brought the Turkish economy to its knees, forcing the government to call in the help of the IMF. Further problems developed when the European Parliament denounced Turkey for denying the Armenian genocide and criticised Ankara over its mishandling of the Kurdish issue. Once again, Turkish efforts for Western recognition were hurting the country's national interests. While Turkey would not divert from EU membership aspirations, it came to understand that its monolithic foreign policy could have negative effects on the country. Economically, it would limit its trade relations with non EU-member states as the country would need to comply with industrial, agricultural and trade policies vis-à-vis the third party.⁷ Politically, it would likely force Turkey to accept Greece-favouring concessions over Cyprus, considering Greece's influence over the EU.⁸ Ultimately, the EU's rejection of Turkey's application was the final nail in the coffin that prompted Turkey's departure from the strictly Western path it had been following for decades.

Upon the Asian Turkic Republics' independence, a revived sense of Pan-Turanism reverberated throughout Turkey, as the former Soviet nations looked to Ankara for leadership. Insecurities over identity pushed Turkey to renew its interest in engaging other Muslim nations in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. The country was confused as to which part of the world it belonged and was searching for a new place to fit in. It became obvious that Turkish culture, especially Muslim culture, was incompatible with Europe.

⁵ Hakan Yavuz. *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*, Cambridge University Press, Salt Lake City 2009 p. 171

⁶ CIA Factbook. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>

⁷ Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu. *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*. Routledge. New York. 2003, p.80

⁸ Ibid

Slogans such as: “The 21st Century will be a Turkish Century!” sprout up in Turkey’s political discourse as citizens grew tired of not being good enough.⁹

MAKING PEACE FOR OTHERS: TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 21st CENTURY

The end of the Cold War and pressing world events forced Turkey to progressively adjust its foreign policy in order to address its changing needs, its emerging security threats and its burgeoning aspirations in the region. In 2002, a historic election hoisted Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and President Abdullah Gül’s AKP party to a majority victory. The pro-Islamic, conservative party’s victory came as a shock after decades of Kemalist Republican rule in Turkey. The shift expressed the will of many voters who longed for better representation on the ballot after developing apathy for the usual tired pundits and corruption scandals. The AKP ran on a platform of reconciliation of Kemalist secular principles with religious values and vowed to embark on a journey of European Union accession. The party offered a better balance to the Turkish population who felt like they needed a government that could push for socio-economic progress without compromising their conservative values. EU accession negotiations started in 2005 with the EU outlining 35 points that listed the conditionality of Turkey’s possible membership. Since then, 13 chapters have been opened and 1 provisionally closed. The slowdown in the process can be partly attributed to many European nations changing their policies regarding Turkish membership and contradicting their previous decisions. While the government maintains that EU membership is its main strategic goal, the stalemate in the accession process has caused support for EU membership to wain among the Turkish

⁹ Ibid, p.55

population, who feel they are being rejected by Europe yet again. There is a growing sense among intellectuals that Turkey would fare better to prevent its young robust population and growing economy from jumping onto the sinking ship of the EU. Even after decades of rejection and delay, Turkey keeps going back with its plea to the European Parliament for entry into its club, a desire that boils down once again to its struggle over its identity. Beyond the purely physical attachment to the continent, Turkey believes itself to be European. Ankara believes that by its commitment to the ongoing process and by adhering to the values of the EU, the benefits will provide its citizens with the highest norms and living standards. But on a domestic level, Turkey's pursuit of greater democracy, human rights and rule of law has been imperfect, experiencing major setbacks in all areas. It appears as though what the AKP has been unable to achieve in terms of progress on these issues for its own house, it has been seeking to achieve in its backyard. Even with the host of failings on the national stage, the AKP government has had successive national electoral victories in 2002, 2007 and 2011, proving a certain degree of voter satisfaction with Erdoğan and Gül's vision of conservative modernity and active foreign policy. For the first time, arguably since the days of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has become a major influential player on the world stage. Turks today have an invigorated sense of pride in Turkish identity, a feeling they have not felt since the days of Atatürk.

The architect of Turkey's soft power shift in the region is Ahmet Davutoğlu, a former international relations scholar and the current Foreign Minister. Davutoğlu is seeking to harness the power of commercial development, cultural promotion and peace brokering in lieu of the kind of strict hard power NATO and the West had invested in Turkey during the Cold War. From a domestic point of view, Kemalist foreign policy of the 20th century

represented the major interests of Turkish Armed Forces. Therefore the transition into soft power diplomacy might also be a product of the gradual erosion of the political power concentrated in the hands of the military and the rising influence that Turkish civil society - businesses, media, advocacy groups, think tanks and public opinion, has over decision making in Turkey today.¹⁰ The country's growing independence, combined with its refusal to allow US troops to enter Iraq via its soil, has raised many eyebrows in the US as Americans had once enjoyed unconditional support from Turkey in the pursuit of its greater Middle Eastern policy. The new Foreign Minister provided policymakers in Ankara with a host of regional integration tools, backed by a renewed sense of pride in the country's multiplicity of identities, to access untapped resources and markets. For this bold new shift in foreign policy to work however, it needed a slogan...a really good slogan.

“Zero Problems with Neighbours”

Davutoğlu's vision of “Strategic Depth” emphasizes Turkey's shared history, geography, culture, religion and language in its dealings with surrounding countries to try and bring its problems with its neighbours down to zero.¹¹ This “Zero Problems with Neighbours” policy was meant to bring greater peace, respect and mutually benefitting economic and security cooperation in what is considered a very hostile region of the world. Since adopting this new vision for its foreign policy, Turkey has been on a trajectory to greater bilateral and multilateral cooperation with neighbouring and non-neighbouring states alike. Brokering alliances with both Western and Eastern partners is effectively

¹⁰ Deitrich Jung. *The Domestic Context of New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy: Does Religion Matter?*. International Journal. Volume LXVII, No.1. Winter 2011-12, p.27

¹¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu. *Stratejik Derinlik :Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* , Küre Yayınları / Uluslararası İlişkiler Dizisi, 2009. ISBN: 9756614005 p.281

pushing Turkey out of Europe's shadow and into its own light. Along with robust economic investment, energy transportation and bilateral strategic partnerships, a major part of what defines Turkey's foreign policy in the 21st century has been its active pursuit of mediating disputes over some of the region's most intractable conflicts. A spotlight has also been cast on Turkey's humanitarian assistance initiatives in some of the most disaster prone and marginalized areas. By following what it calls "Preventive Diplomacy", Turkey has fostered greater cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Palestine and Israel, Syria and Israel and Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Turkey has also been a committed conduit for greater US-Iranian dialogue in regards to Iran's nuclear program.

"Preventive Diplomacy"

As a country that shares a land border with 7 other countries and a sea coast with countless others, the stakes for peace are high as a problem in one region has the potential to destabilize other regions and escalate to larger global crises. Turkey has come to realize that tensions and conflicts in one country or between countries lead to unwanted humanitarian, security and economic repercussions for Turkey. The government has therefore been very involved in creating a "belt of stability, security and welfare" through mediation and preventive diplomacy.¹² Regional cooperation, cultural promotion and economic interdependence are but some of the tools utilized by the Turkish government as preventative measures to minimize the risk of conflict. One point of interest in Turkey's particular brand of mediation is that nowhere in its foreign policy framework on mediation does it insist on impartiality. As a developing country suffering from residual "Sèvres

¹² <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/questions.en.mfa>

Syndrome” and having the misfortune of living side by side with volatile neighbors, Turkey is obligated to up its market share in global politics. By establishing a multiplicity of bilateral and multilateral mechanisms dealing with trade, energy, security and environment, Turkey is anything but impartial when it comes to its dealing with the region. Therefore labelling itself as an impartial third party in its mediation efforts would be blatantly hypocritical and would expose itself to even more criticism about its alleged intentions of becoming a regional hegemon. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is careful in stating that in Turkey’s role as mediator, it seeks to maintain not an impartial attitude but rather an “even-handed” one -a choice word for Turkish-style mediation. While the government states that it adheres to the principle of transparency, this remains an area that Turkey needs to work on.

Foreign Policy Motivations

Today’s Turkish foreign policy marks an important departure from the decades before it. While Turkey never intended to divert from NATO policy, Turkey understood it was following a provocative foreign policy against the Soviet Bloc and its Arab neighbours and that it was now vulnerable in case of a nuclear attack. Faced with strong accusations and rejection from the European Parliament, Yalın Erez, Minister of Industry and Trade, said in December of 1997: “Turkey will be partners with its friends, not with its enemies.”¹³ Yet realistically, before the AKP came to power in the early 2000s, Turkey didn’t have many friends, prompting the Zero Problems Campaign to transform old foes into new allies. Whether Turkey is following the old adage of keeping its friends close and its enemies

¹³ Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 19 December 1997 found in Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu. *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*. Routledge. New York. 2003, p.78

closer is left to be seen but the AKP's active foreign policy in all directions has shifted the regional power paradigm in Turkey's favour. After its failed attempts at assuming leadership in Central Asia in the 1990s, Turkey understood just how dependent its foreign policy had become on the West. Turkey was at the center of dramatic regional changes and the AKP sought to do its best to profit from these changes. The key to prosperity and modernization was no longer the Kemalist principle of exclusive Western thinking, but the AKP's inclusive principle of multipolar thinking. Turkey had to take advantage of its "synthesis of different cultures through loose arrangements with several clubs" to yield economic and political results.¹⁴ In other words, Turkey had to assume the role it had during the days of the Empire – not that of hegemon or emperor, but that of a bridge. Turkey had to become the cultural, historical, political and economic bridge between continents, a role it was geographically positioned to do and historically privileged to accomplish. While many accuse the AKP of intentionally pursuing policies that distance Turkey from its most important ally-the US, a more cautious observation leads one to believe that Turkey's new foreign policy direction is a rather natural pragmatic evolution, having learned from old mistakes and adjusting to the drastic domestic transformations of the past decades. As Turkey's economy grows, so does its confidence in pursuing its own foreign policy, becoming ever more independent of overbearing American pressure. Turkey's very vocal disapproval of the Israeli occupation of Gaza and its acceptance of a working PLO office in Ankara illustrates one of several instances where this increasing independence is translating into a foreign policy that rings truer to Turkish values.

¹⁴ Ziya Onis. "Turkey in the Post-Cold War Era: In Search of Identity." Middle East Journal 49 (Winter 1995) p.59

Along with Turkey's political, economic and social changes, external geopolitical events were impossible not to consider in the evolution of Turkish foreign policy. Threats of nuclear attacks from the Eastern bloc, an Islamic revolution in Iran, newly-gained independence in Central Asia, Wars in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Iraq, September 11th and the Arab Spring have all forced Turkey to engage in significant ways in the region. Turkey's wellbeing is obviously sensitive to regional instability and directly affected by conflict spilling over its borders. Turkey's strategic importance as an energy corridor is also heavily dictating its foreign policy with countries it had largely ignored in the past. Decades of looking in only one direction had caused partial blindness and economic stagnation in the country as successive Kemalist governments rejected the country's multiplicity of identities and denied the younger generations the chance to flourish. Unlocking these things would be the key to warming the stalemates that were holding Turkey back.

Foreign Policy Achievements

AKP foreign policy has done much to raise Turkey's profile in global affairs. Ankara's bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts contribute ever more to the nation's foreign policy flexibility and influence in the countries surrounding it. This increase in soft power has allowed Turkey to bolster a sense of pride in its unique East-West identity and improve relations in neighbouring countries, setting long standing stalemates on a path to eventual conflict resolution. While Turkey hasn't yet brokered any official ceasefires or peace treaties between two given nations, it has made notable strides in improving economic, political and strategic relations in areas where the giants in the West have failed

to leave a meaningful mark. By embracing its “Strategic Depth” and working towards a policy of “Zero Problems with Neighbours”, the AKP has penetrated some of the major contentious issues dominating global politics today. While a rigid definition of success is hard to assemble, the AKP’s diplomatic achievements can be measured by the impact its humanitarian assistance has created and the degree of influence Turkey’s preventive diplomacy and active economic overtures have had on the improvement of relations and resolution of problems in the countries it has invested in.

Ankara has conducted effective mediation among several different parties to support peace agreements in places like Iran, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. In September 2010, Turkey and Finland launched the “Mediation for Peace” initiative and the “Group of Friends of Mediation” with the aim of generating interest and support for mediation activities. As a result of this endeavor, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution.¹⁵ Continuing with this framework, Turkey hosted the Istanbul Conference on Mediation in February of 2012, which assembled leading experts in the field of Track Two Diplomacy, representatives from NGOs, the UN and the “Group of Friends of Mediation” member-states to discuss the increasing importance of Academic and NGO involvement, capacity building and the coordination of challenges that arise in the field. Turkey hopes to soon establish a Peace Institute in Istanbul with the goal of conducting concrete and comprehensive studies in all areas of preventive diplomacy, focusing on areas of mediation and capacity-building.

¹⁵ Ibid

Turkey has also hosted successful Trilateral Summits between Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina for strengthening peace and stability in the former Yugoslavian states. The same trilateral mechanisms have been exercised between Pakistan and Afghanistan to foster greater cooperation, security and peace in the war-torn country. Turkey hosted three proximity talks between Syria and Israel and pushed for a ceasefire between Israel and Palestine. Turkey also engaged Syria and the US in 2010 as Washington was considering resuming normal relations with Syria. Political engagement and economic cooperation were working in Syria but attempts for rapprochement quickly dissolved when the uprising began.¹⁶ Ankara's stance on the adoption of a peaceful resolution to Iran's nuclear program and its efforts to launch a resolution process with the government of Somalia and conflicting parties illustrate other examples of the country's committed peace endeavours.

Humanitarian Assistance

Turkey's humanitarian missions have taken on a new life in the region, generating much publicity and recognition for the country's new-found activism in disaster zones. Eurasian geography is spread out over a network of intersecting fault lines, rendering the region vulnerable to earthquakes. Turkey has responded to many calls for help in the region and has increased its assistance significantly in recent years. Turkish Red Crescent and Turkish NGOs are very active worldwide, particularly in the Muslim world. From 2004 to 2006, Turkey provided assistance of over 250 million USD to various disasters such as the South Asian tsunami in 2004, the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005 and the Israeli-

¹⁶ Kadir Üstün. *Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanctions*. Insight Turkey. Vol 12, No.3 (2010) p.24

Hezbollah conflict in Lebanon in 2006.¹⁷ Turkey has also been very active in multilateral assistance programs and was recently named one of the UN World Food Program's major donors for food crisis in Africa.¹⁸ As European member-states are dealing with growing austerity measures and cuts to defense budgets, Turkey is increasing its involvement and commitment to NATO, UN and state-funded humanitarian missions. As the first Muslim member of NATO, Turkish soldiers are in a privileged position in their dealings with other Muslim countries and face considerably less hostility and opposition.¹⁹ Private-Public partnerships are visibly on the rise in Somalia and Afghanistan as Turkey increases its foreign direct investment in businesses, hospitals, mosques, roads and schools.

Somalia

Somalia has been suffering through severe drought and food scarcity since the start of the civil war in 1991. Since the Siad Barré regime collapsed, no authority has been able to reach out beyond Mogadishu, leaving the country vulnerable to violence at the hands of terrorist groups like Al-Shabaab. Extensive internal migrations caused major problems, most notably widespread famine. Prime Minister Erdoğan visited Mogadishu in August of 2011 in an effort to foster greater ties with the country and bring Somalia out of its isolation from the international community. Turkey has targeted mid-term and long-term development projects, rebuilding Somali infrastructure and working with Turkish NGOs in the field of medicine. More than 200 wells were built along with a tent hospital opened by

¹⁷ <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/humanitarian-assistance-by-turkey.en.mfa>

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ J.W. Walker. *Taking advantage of Ankara's resurgence*. German Martial Fund Blog, June 1 2012: <http://blog.gmfus.org/2012/05/taking-advantage-of-ankaras-resurgence/>

the Turkish Ministry of Health.²⁰ Medical equipment, medicine, ambulances, tents, food and garbage installations were also delivered to Somalia. Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) also helped restore the Aden Abdulle International Airport. The Turkish Humanitarian Aid Foundation built the new Yakup Asibi Mosque and the Turkish Housing Development Administration (TOKİ) built more than 1000 houses.²¹ Ankara is a staunch supporter of political reconciliation in Somalia and is providing equipment and educational support to Somali Security Forces and the African Union Mission in Somalia.

Afghanistan

Since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, Turkey has been a key actor in non-combatative missions in Afghanistan. As a Muslim country, Turkey's assistance and development attempts have been well received by the local population. Turkey's growing influence and involvement in the region could effectively work to disassociate the West from reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, creating a newer, possibly more positive paradigm around the future of assisted-development in the country.²² Turkey has contributed close to 2000 troops, nearly 1.5 million Euros in aid along with equipment, ammunition, clothing, and training.²³ Since 2001, the Turkish army trained nearly 10 300 Afghan personnel and even led the ISAF Forces for six months in 2002.²⁴ Turkey has also

²⁰ Kanbolat, Hasan. *Turkish Humanitarian Assistance in Somalia: Turkey's Somalia Strategy*. Centre for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM)

²¹ Ibid

²² Elmira Cheremisova. *Turkish Humanitarian Assistance in Afghanistan: Triumph of the Soft Power: Analysis of Turkish Diplomatic Strategy in Afghanistan*. Centre for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM)

²³ Troops Numbers and Contribution: Turkey. ISAF official web-page: <http://www.isaf.nato.int/troop-numbers-and-contributions/turkey/index.php>

²⁴ M.V. Gönül. "Turkey - NATO Relations and NATO's New Strategic Concept". *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, V.9, No 1, p.18.: <http://www.turkishpolicy.com/images/stories/2010-01-tpq/15-21.pdf>

been very visible in the fields of education, healthcare and reconstruction. It has built 68 primary and secondary schools and granted educational stipends to over 1000 students.²⁵ Turkey has also assisted the country with more than 250 tons of humanitarian aid and has been instrumental in rebuilding mosques, recreational centres, bridges, roads and water infrastructure.²⁶ Turkish investments in Afghanistan are valued at an estimated 200 million USD.²⁷ Top-level meetings between heads of governments are also on the rise. In January of 2010, Istanbul hosted a regional summit for friendship and cooperation entitled “In the Heart of Asia”, devoted to discussing the current problems in Afghanistan and soliciting the support and solidarity of surrounding countries. Turkey is also exercising its brand of preventive diplomacy in mediating relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In December of 2011, Turkish President Abdullah Gül mediated talks between the Afghan and Pakistani Heads of State at a Trilateral Summit, with the express goal of implementing warm, cooperative relations between the two neighbours.²⁸ Ankara’s soft power foreign policy in the war-torn country has arguably done more to advance peace than even its participation in NATO-led missions.

Turkish-Iranian Relations

Turkish foreign policy in Iran merits a special focus as Ankara’s bilateral and multilateral activism vis-à-vis Tehran has caused many to take notice. Turkey has offered itself as a mediator between Iran and the West in response to Iran’s nuclear program. In

25 Elmira Cheremisova. *Turkish Humanitarian Assistance in Afghanistan: Triumph of the Soft Power: Analysis of Turkish Diplomatic Strategy in Afghanistan*. Centre for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM)

26 Ibid

27 Ibid

28 Turkey Hosts Trust-Building Talks Between Afghanistan, Pakistan. Voice of America, December 24, 2010.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/Turkey-Hosts-Trust-Building-Talks-Between-Afghanistan-Pakistan-112440914.html>

voluntarily involving itself with one of the most contentious issues in Middle Eastern affairs today, Turkey is reaping the benefits by engaging with both sides of the dispute. It is nothing short of remarkable how Ankara has achieved the delicate balance of appealing to Iran on the one hand -assuring continued trade and major gas pipeline projects, while still convincing the US, Europe and NATO on the other hand to collaborate on security issues and deterrence policy against Iran. How it is still perceived as the honest broker between the two is also something to be applauded. To better understand how the AKP's Iranian policy is succeeding where other government's policies have failed, a brief historic contextualization is in order.

Turkish-Iranian relations, albeit dotted with disagreements and friction, have been peaceful since the Treaty of Qasr-e-Shirin in 1639. Turkish foreign policy towards Iran was particularly tense after the Iranian revolution of 1979 as secular Turkey feared the spread of political Islam and suspected Iran of backing the PKK. Relations have normalized however since the start of Turkey's EU accession process with Turkey taking on the role of advocate for greater dialogue between Washington and Tehran regarding Iran's nuclear program. As American isolation of Iran has pushed the country to foster closer ties with Russia, it is strategically imperative that Turkey maintain good relations with Iran to avoid a Russian-Iranian power couple, able to limit Turkey's access and influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkey and Iran's relationship has an obvious economic importance with regards to natural gas transportation and energy security. The state of their relationship is also important on a social level as both nations face collective challenges regarding Kurdish separatism. On a political level, in the wake of the Arab Spring, both nations find themselves competing once again for greater regional influence in Iraq and Syria.

Along with political disagreements of ideological nature, Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer admitted during a state visit to Iran in 1992 that Turkey's main problem with Iran was its support of the PKK.²⁹ Turkey participated, albeit unwillingly, in "Operation Provide Comfort" along with the US and its allies to provide a safe region for Kurdish Iraqis. Iran on the other hand was concerned by Turkey's growing number of operations in Iraqi Kurdistan and cooperated with the PKK to get the upper hand. This tit for tat behaviour continued into the last decade, leading to many disagreements and heated rhetoric between the two. Before the Iraq invasion of 2003, both Turkey and Iran were vying for greater geopolitical influence in the country. Since the end of the American combat mission, Turkey's Iraq policy has been largely focusing on the security of its border region with Northern Iraq, strengthening its economic diplomacy through reconstruction efforts and building markets for Turkish companies. America and Europe's volatile relationship with Tehran puts Iran's Iraq policy in a delicate state, as the West has yet to officially pull out of the country, therefore preventing Iran from making open overtures to the current administration in Baghdad. Iran's Iraq policy has been largely reactive to the American invasion that overthrew Saddam Hussein, leaving a power vacuum in the country. America, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey have all been contenders in filling this political void, prompting Iran to seek greater influence amongst the Shia factions, amidst Turkey's heightened presence in Northern Iraq. While Turkey and Iran have not had head to head conflict since the 17th Century, they have used Iraq as a proxy in their competition for regional dominance. The current AKP administration understands that it cannot fight the PKK alone and has since increased its strategic cooperation, intelligence sharing and

²⁹ Jülide Karakoç. *The Impact of the Kurdish Identity on Turkey's Foreign Policy from the 1980s to 2008*. Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 46, No. 6. November 2010, p.7

security operations with Iran to deal with PKK insurgents. The two countries have signed a cooperation agreement against terrorism, organized crime and illegal drug trafficking, leading to a more positive framework for cooperative policy formation regarding the Kurdish question.³⁰ In a collaborative effort to bring greater security to their respective regions, Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey have also agreed on extending Turkey's military presence in Northern Iraq for another 6 years.³¹

Turkish-Iranian Economic Relations

Turkey serves as an important energy corridor between Central Asia and Europe through numerous oil and natural gas pipelines. As Turkey is an energy-poor country, it also relies heavily on imports to meet its own growing energy needs. As nearly 50% of the electricity used in Turkey in 2008 was from natural gas, Turkey became vulnerable to supply shocks following the global economic crisis.³² Through the development of major pipeline channels from Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran, Turkey is pushing to diversify its sources and strengthen its energy security. (Annex 1) The AKP's economic policy has succeeded in transforming regional conflicts into regional cooperation as numerous commercial pipeline projects serve to temper relations between Turkey, Iran, the Caucasus and countries in the Black Sea region.

³⁰ Jülide Karakoç. *The Impact of the Kurdish Identity on Turkey's Foreign Policy from the 1980s to 2008*. Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. 46, No. 6, November 2010, p.7

³¹ *Turkey Troops will stay in Northern Iraq for Another Six Years*. Taraf Daily Newspaper. 24 November 2011

³² Şebnem Udum. *Turkey's Nuclear Comeback: An Energy Renaissance in an Evolving Regional Security Context*. Nonproliferation Review, Vol. 17, No. 2, July 2010, p.367

In October 2009, agreements were signed for the allocation of 3 of Iran's South Pars gas fields to the Turkish Petroleum Corporation, a deal valued at 3.5 billion USD.³³ Turkey is currently advocating for Iranian involvement as a supplier in the major Nabucco pipeline, projected to deliver 30 billion cubic meters of gas per year to Europe.³⁴ The two countries have also signed on to extend their existing Turkish-Iranian pipeline into Northern Greece. Turkey has a vested interest in the warming of relations between Iran and Europe as the project will only be possible if a resolution is found regarding Iran's nuclear program and if the West removes obstacles for the sourcing of oil and gas from Iran. As the US prepares to deliver another round of financial sanctions, Turkey has been exempted from them for a period of 180 days due to its recent cutbacks in Iranian oil purchases. Starting in June 2012, Turkey's Halkbank will continue to make Turkish Refiner Tüpraş's payments for crude oil to Iran's Central bank.³⁵ In the tense international climate regarding Iran, Turkey is doing a very delicate balancing act between remaining a strategic ally with the US and continuing to be an economic partner with Iran.³⁶ Countries like China on the other hand have been less successful with their economic and geopolitical balancing in the area. Stressing that US-Chinese relations were more important than cut-price Iranian oil, Beijing slashed its Iranian imports following the announcement.³⁷ By diversifying its supply channels outside of Iran but still negotiating important long-term crude oil import agreements valued as high as 13 billion USD annually, Turkey is surprisingly continuing to

³³ Thomas Lorenz & Joanna Kidd. *Turkey and Multilateral Nuclear Approaches in the Middle East*. Nonproliferation Review, Vol. 17, No. 3, November 2010, p.516

³⁴ Atul Aneja. Geopolitics of Energy in West Asia: Competing Foreign Interests and Prospects for Regional Realignment. Strategic Analysis Vol. 34, No. 6, November 2010, p.836

³⁵ Turkey exempt from Iran oil sanctions for 180 days 12 June 2012 / REUTERS, WASHINGTON
<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-283351-turkey-exempt-from-iran-oil-sanctions-for-180-days.html>

³⁶ Engin Hava. Free of Iran sanctions, Turkey Flags Overhaul in Gas Trade 12 June 2012 / Istanbul:
<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-283340-free-of-iran-sanctions-turkey-flags-overhaul-in-gas-trade.html>

³⁷ Ibid

appease both sides and saving face in the process.³⁸ Iran currently expedites 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas into Turkey per year, valued at over 10.2 billion USD.³⁹

Turkish Preventive Diplomacy & Iran's Nuclear Program

Since former American President George Bush declared Iran as being part of the “axis of evil”, Turkey has been one of the only countries striving for a more balanced approach to relations with Iran. In 2003, following Iran’s declaration that it was building two separate nuclear sites, Germany, Britain and France (EU-3) agreed with Iran to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to suspend the Islamic Republic’s nuclear enrichment and reprocessing activities. Bush was unsatisfied with the modest measure and proceeded with unilateral pressure, sanctions and military threats. In 2006, China, Russia and the US joined in the EU-3 to become P5+1, a diplomatic grouping able to apply more effective pressure on Iran. In return for Iran’s suspension of uranium enrichment, P5+1 offered to suspend sanctions -an offer that Iran refused.⁴⁰ In 2006, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced he would start enriching uranium, proving that P5+1 “dual track” diplomacy for pursuing negotiation and sanctions at the same time was not producing any concrete results.⁴¹ The IAEA’s findings on whether or not Iran’s pursuit of nuclear energy is peaceful remains inconclusive despite its various reports on Iran’s non-compliance. The basis for the Turkey-Iran-Brazil deal came from an offer from the IAEA for a workable peaceful solution to the stalemate. Iran would send half of its enriched uranium (1,200kg) to a third party (Turkey) and Iran would receive low-enriched

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Turkey’s Energy Strategy. Deputy Directorate General for Energy, Water and Environment. Jan 2009, p.2

⁴⁰ Kadir Üstün. *Turkey’s Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanctions*. Insight Turkey. Vol 12, No.3 (2010) p.19

⁴¹ Ibid. p.20

uranium at the end of the year in the form of fuel rods for health purposes, thereby ensuring its peaceful use.⁴² This policy initiative had the intention of contributing to the resolution of substantive issues relating to Iran's nuclear program in a positive and mutually beneficial atmosphere.⁴³ In lieu of Western-style isolation, Ankara opted for the signing of the joint declaration as a confidence building measure with Iran. The AKP viewed this as a small step in the right direction, as agreeing to the Fuel Swap Deal represented the most concrete action Iran had taken thus far towards cooperation and openness with its nuclear dealings. Unfortunately, Turkish optimism for the diplomatic process did not translate to the other parties and strict economic sanctions were slapped on Iran, preventing the country from upholding the terms of the agreement. On June 9th 2010, the UNSC passed the 4th round of sanctions, despite Turkey and Brazil's voting against it. These sanctions have also incurred disproportionate costs on Turkey, whose trade with the Islamic Republic has increased significantly in the past years. There exists controversy over whether or not the Obama administration ever really intended to let the deal go through as sanctions were passed moments after the signing of the Fuel Swap Deal.⁴⁴ In a letter sent by American President Obama to Brazilian President Lula de Silva in May of 2010, Obama may have also hedged that the negotiations would never actually have a chance to come to fruition at all as it expressed encouragement, but mostly suspicion over the positive prospect of a Brazilian-Turkish deal.⁴⁵ This leads one to believe that Turkey, who must have known this deal went against its allies' diplomatic agenda, acted in such a

⁴² Thomas Lorenz & Joanna Kidd. *Turkey and Multilateral Nuclear Approaches in the Middle East*. Nonproliferation Review, Vol. 17, No. 3, November 2010 p.525

⁴³ Mustafa Kibaroglu. *Acceptance and Anxiety: Turkey (Mostly) Embraces Obama's Nuclear Posture*. Non Proliferation Review, Vol. 18, No. 1, March 2011, p.206

⁴⁴ Kadir Üstün. *Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanctions*. Insight Turkey. Vol 12, No.3 (2010) p.21

⁴⁵ Kadir Üstün. *Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanctions*. Insight Turkey. Vol 12, No.3 (2010) p.21

way as to appear as though it exercised some measure of independence from the West in the execution of its foreign policy decisions (something very important when fostering support from Iran) while knowing that it would eventually have to toe the line of the P5+1 decision, thereby appeasing both camps.

As Turkey has its own very real security concerns vis-à-vis Iran's nuclear program, it is one of the most important regional stakeholders. In dealing with Iran, Turkey is pushing for the pursuit of the "diplomatic track" in contrast to the "dual track" being pursued by P5+1 as it believes that sanctions are not a way of diplomacy but a threat to its chance of survival. (Annex 2) This mindset is important to consider in analyzing Turkey's voting down of the sanctions as it voted "no" in order to remain an honest broker, making it clear to Iran that the channels of communication were still open.⁴⁶ As a non-permanent member of the UNSC, Turkey believes to be well positioned to be the facilitator of further dialogue between the US and Iran. Turkey has pledged to follow suit with the P5+1 decision but sits comfortably knowing that its strategic "no" vote against sanctions on Iran has garnered Iranian support. Turkey is by no means an impartial player in this saga and its vested economic and strategic interests are clear for all to see. The populous, energy-poor country has what are rapidly becoming insatiable energy demands and Ankara is wary of American efforts to tighten nuclear technology export controls.⁴⁷ Turkey has so far hosted two international talks between P5+1 countries and Iran, with the last one wrapping up in April 2012 to discuss the issue of a pre-emptive strike on Iran -a plan that Turkey is vehemently against.⁴⁸ Ankara has been advocating for a diplomatic and peaceful solution

⁴⁶ Kadir Üstün. *Turkey's Iran Policy: Between Diplomacy and Sanctions*. Insight Turkey. Vol 12, No.3 (2010) p.21

⁴⁷ Philipp C. Bleek & Aaron Stein. *Turkey and America Face Iran*. Survival. Vol 54, No.2. April-May 2012 p.29

⁴⁸ Mark Fitzpatrick. Iran: The Fragile Promise of the Fuel-Swap Plan in Survival, Vol.52 no.3. June-July 2010 p.87

to Iran's estrangement with countries doubtful of its nuclear program as it is in Turkey's best strategic and economic interest to do so. Turkey has been playing the role of nuclear mediator between Iran and the West as warming of relations between the two would quash objections to importing energy from Iranian sources and would clear the way for the expansion of the Nabucco Pipeline Project. This is of noteworthy importance because Turkish-Iranian relations risk setting the tone for regional security and energy independence in the future. As stated in the Tehran Declaration of 2010, Turkey believes that sanctions will hurt Iran but will not deter them from developing nuclear capacity. What is troubling is that Iran has yet to convince the international community of its commitment to non-proliferation. Tehran is pursuing its uranium enrichment program while advancing its missile program and refusing to ratify the IAEA's Additional Protocol, which would give more access to international monitors.⁴⁹ Ankara's position is clear in that it believes that further isolation of Tehran will lead to further radicalization – a scenario with direct consequences for neighboring Turkey if the US or Israel were to go to war with Iran. The AKP understands the security dilemma posed by a nuclear-armed Iran and has thus been trying to gently coerce Iran into at least addressing the concerns of the international community regarding the proliferation of weapons of mass destructions. If Iran were to become a nuclear weapon state, its surrounding adversarial states (Saudi Arabia and Egypt) would have legitimate reasons for commencing their own proliferation of nuclear arms, leading to a nuclear arms race in an already unstable Middle East. If Israel were then to feel provoked by Iran, nuclear war would become a possible scenario to the detriment of us all.

49 Şebnem Udum. Turkey's Nuclear Comeback: An Energy Renaissance in an Evolving Regional Security Context. *Non-proliferation Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, July 2010, p.370

The Islamic Republic has been demonized by the US since the hostage crisis of 1979 and seemingly neither side are able to engage in dialogue in a constructive manner. Turkey however has leverage with both, as a long-standing NATO ally and as a neighbour with a shared history. Turkey must be vigilant in striking a careful balance however between its cooperation with the West and its support of Iran. Turkey must continue to make clear that its vision for the Middle East is a stable and nuclear weapons-free one and should also continue to lead by example in remaining committed to diplomacy. Turkey would do well to advise Iran to cut the theatrics and lighten its political rhetoric as much of the international opposition stems from Iran's antics, which often do more to erode relations and close down channels of communication. In recent developments, Iran and members of P5+1 held a new round of talks on Iran's nuclear program in Istanbul in April 2012. The multilateral negotiations led all sides to agree on several issues. They pointed to the importance of a sustained process agreeing to the terms of the NPT and to the obligations under the NPT to be met by Iran while fully respecting Iran's right to the development of nuclear energy for peaceful means.⁵⁰ Turkey strongly maintains that the only viable option for dealing with Iran's nuclear issue is through diplomacy.

Calling Turkish foreign policy vis-à-vis Iran's nuclear program a "success" might be a premature overstretch as Tehran continues to develop its nuclear capacity in wide disregard of international regulations on monitoring and transparency, placing a huge burden on Iranian citizens. There is something to be said however for the strides AKP policymakers have made through their commitment to pursuing a diplomatic solution to

⁵⁰ <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/new-round-of-talks-on-irans-nuclear-program-between-iran-and-p5-countries-was-held-in-istanbul.en.mfa>

the Iranian quagmire. Turkey has been working very hard to serve as a conduit for dialogue between the West and Iran, lobbying for diplomatic and economic solutions for enticing Iran into following IAEA standards rather than pushing for sanctions. Ankara's more pragmatic "carrots over sticks" policy has so far done more to foster Iranian cooperation than Washington's uncompromising stance on Iranian nuclear development.

Turkey's stance is criticised by those in the West who accuse the AKP of sympathising with Iran's conservative Islamic values, ignoring that in fact, Turkey's motivations for keeping Tehran's diplomatic channels open and its economy viable are due to Ankara's personal stake in the country. In the areas of border security, PKK-countering, energy sustainability and future economic prosperity, Iran is crucial to Turkey. What is crucial to Turkey's wellbeing should also be seen as crucial to the West's wellbeing as Turkey is an important US ally and a vital partner in the wake of the Syrian crisis and widespread instability caused by the Arab Spring. For as long as Turkey's policies remain compatible with NATO's vision for the area, Turkey's soft power and regional influence should be encouraged. As the US entertains the option of a pre-emptive strike on Iran, pushing it closer to an all-out war with Israel, Turkish diplomatic efforts are working to lessen the likelihood of such a disaster. While AKP policy hasn't stopped the West from imposing harsh sanctions and hasn't coaxed Iran into abandoning uranium enrichment, its continued efforts and creative preventive diplomacy represent a small beacon of hope in what is becoming an increasingly hopeless scenario.

Turkish-Western Balkan Relations

Turkish foreign policy in the Western Balkan states, notably Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), represent another area where the AKP's "Strategic Depth" and "Preventive Diplomacy" have achieved far-reaching results in decades-old conflicts. Turkey wields much influence today in Southeast Europe thanks to its multiple economic investments and highly profitable bilateral trade agreements. Ankara has successfully marketed itself as the Balkan peace broker by contributing to the region's economic prosperity, by pursuing a campaign of cultural rapprochement and by facilitating high level meetings and summits between Serbia, BiH and Croatia. In order to better appreciate the level of success AKP foreign policy has achieved in the Balkans, one must be reminded of the country's foreign policy behaviour predating that of the Erdoğan administration.

Ankara's foreign policy in the 20th century subscribed almost exclusively to the West's vision and interests for the region. This prevented Turkey from making open overtures to its neighbours in the Balkans. With the fall of communism in 1989 and the beginning of the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991, Turkey stayed in line with American and European support for the maintenance of the status quo and did not affirm any public support for secession in the region. Once Serbia launched attacks against Muslim Bosnians and ethnic Albanian separatists in Kosovo, Turkey became engaged after having first tried to avoid any direct involvement in the Balkan crisis.⁵¹ Turkey had had warm relations with

51 Şaban Çalış. *Turkey's Balkan Policy in the Early 1990s*. Turkish Studies, Vol.2, No.1, Published by Frank Cass, London. 2001. P.135, 136

Yugoslavia, a large federation that served as Turkey's window into Europe. Trade was on the rise and the last thing Turkey wanted was to put yet another stick in its economic wheels or face a refugee problem. In 1994 however, under public pressure from the Turkish population, Turkey called for NATO to intervene in Bosnia against Serbia. In August 1995, NATO began its month-long bombing of Bosnian-Serb forces which led to the US-sponsored Dayton Peace Settlement. Turkey has since become one of the region's greatest defenders in helping NATO-led peacekeeping missions in BiH and Kosovo.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, America's foreign policy shifted drastically towards Afghanistan and Iraq, leaving a leadership vacuum in the area. This void has since been filled by the EU and Turkey. In following with the AKP's notion of "Strategic Depth", Ankara began to emphasize its strategic geographic location as well as the strength of its shared history and culture with the Balkans. Subsequently, Turkey became a permanent member of important international political forums, such as the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) -the international body charged with overseeing the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. It also showed development initiative with the creation of organisations like the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA), which administers development assistance to developing countries. TİKA's mandate is to improve cooperation between these countries through economic, commercial, cultural and educational programs.⁵² The work done by institutions like the PIC and TİKA combine to create confidence-building measures between Turkey and the Balkans and between the Balkan countries themselves.

⁵² <http://www.tika.gov.tr/>

Bosnia-Herzegovina has undoubtedly the most emotional pull in Turkey. In Ottoman times, many high ranking viziers were Bosnian. Within the newly traced lines of the Republic resided important communities of Slavic Muslims and many ethnic Turks still live in the Balkans today. The more than 7 million Bosnians living in Turkey today contribute to a strong cultural and political lobby in the country.⁵³ Turkey supports peace in BiH and is significantly invested in the construction of highways and hospitals.⁵⁴ Turkey, in partnership with Turkish company ENKA and American company Bechtel, also helped broker an agreement between Croats and Bosnians by offering to build the Zagreb-Rijeka highway.⁵⁵

Serbian Prime Minister Mirko Cvetkovic has stated that good relations between Serbia and Turkey contribute immensely to stability in the Balkans.⁵⁶ There are approximately 300,000 Turks of Serbian origin living in Turkey and around the same number of Muslims living in Serbia.⁵⁷ Turkey and Serbia cooperate on every diplomatic level and have relatively warm relations considering Turkey fought against Serbia in the 1990s. The two also cooperate militarily on regional security issues through NATO's Partnership for Peace Program. In November 2011, Davutoğlu pushed for the creation of The Islamic Communities Union of Serbia, an organization whose mandate is to prevent possible separation of Serbian Muslims in the Sandzak region.⁵⁸ The thorn in their

⁵³ Meeting with Deputy Ambassador Sabit Subasic, Embassy of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 28 September 2011, Ankara

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Doğa Ulaş Eralp. *Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Future Reflecting on the Past*, SETA Policy Brief no:46, Ankara August 2010, p.4

⁵⁶ Erhan Türbedar. *Turkey's New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles*. Insight Turkey, Vol. 13, No.3, Published by SETA (Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research), Ankara, 2011. p.144

⁵⁷ Meeting with Counsellor Milorad Sekulic and Vice-Consul Dragana Blagojevic of the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia, Tuesday, October 4th, 2011, Ankara, Turkey

⁵⁸ Serkan Demirtaş. *Turkey Dives Into Balkan Diplomacy Amid Violence*, Hürriyet Daily News, Ankara, November 10th 2011, p.4 <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-dives-into-balkan-diplomacy-amid-violence-2011-11-10>

relations is Turkey's support for Kosovo's independence. When political dialogue began in 2008, Turkey and Serbia put their disagreement aside however and focused on developing a trilateral mechanism between Serbia, BiH and Turkey.

Turkish Preventive Diplomacy in the Western Balkans

Turkey is part of the Southeast European Cooperation Process (SEECP) which works to improve cooperation and stability in Southeast Europe. Turkey, in conjunction with the Regional Cooperation Council and the SEECP, is working to harmonize peace and development initiatives in the region and has even held the position of Chairmanship-in-Office in 2009. Turkey has been very vocal in its support of Balkan countries' integration into Euro-Atlantic organisations, most notably in NATO. One particular effort that merits recognition is the round of Turkish-sponsored Trilateral Summits between Croatia, Serbia and BiH. Preceding the summit, Turkey had already facilitated four official meetings between the three from 2009 to 2010. Following these meetings, BiH appointed a new Ambassador to Belgrade and the Serbian Parliament passed a resolution condemning the Srebrenica Massacre. The first tri-partite consultation mechanism between Turkish, Bosnian and Serbian foreign ministers held in Istanbul on April 24th 2010 proved to be an effective tool for the warming of relations between Serbia and BiH. The meeting also constitutes a precedent for relations between ex-Yugoslavian countries. The Istanbul Declaration adopted at the summit states that efforts will be made for lasting peace and that the territorial integrity of BiH will be respected. While many European countries have turned their backs on developments in the Balkans, Turkey has been extending notable efforts to fostering peace, stability and development in the region. The Trilateral Summit is

the tangible outcome of Turkey's active peace brokering policy between Belgrade and Sarajevo and many are hailing it as a turning point in Bosnian-Serbian relations.⁵⁹ Turkey also initiated a second summit meeting in Karadjordjevo, Serbia in April 2011, at which point the parties agreed to strengthen peace, stability and tolerance, pledging to improve economic, commercial and infrastructure cooperation.

Following the Trilateral Summits, Turkey has been working on furthering BiH rapprochement with its neighbors and fully supported the July 18th 2011 meeting in the Croatian islands of Brijunje between the presidents of Serbia, Croatia and BiH. While not many new solutions were proposed during the last round of meetings, the fact that the trilateral mechanism has continued beyond Turkish direct sponsorship symbolizes progress and Turkey can certainly be credited for helping the process along as the first to host the summit. Now that Croatia has gained EU membership, it is assuming a larger role in the process of peace-making and working towards finding a solution to existing problems. Since the last summit, Croatia, Serbia and BiH have pledged the following: to repeat the process at least once a year, to lend political and technical support during the EU membership process and to work on joint infra-structure projects to stimulate development in the region.⁶⁰ These tangible steps taken by Balkan countries towards cooperation demonstrate that the AKP's foreign policy in the region is experiencing a certain measure of success.

59 Ibid, p.3

60 Erhan Türbedar, PhD –TEPAV [Archive] Trilateral Balkan Summit Held in Croatia21/07/2011: <http://www.tepav.org.tr/en/kose-yazisi-tepav/s/2576>

MAKING PEACE FOR ITSELF: FAILINGS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR AKP FOREIGN POLICY

Areas where AKP diplomacy has failed to resolve problems, has aggravated existing problems or has generated new ones provide a framework for defining Ankara's diplomatic failings and weaknesses. While the political ingenuity that fathered the "Zero Problems with Neighbours" policy and the high standard it aspires to are commendable, its inherently unsustainable nature sets it up for eventual failure. This causes many to believe the AKP is better at marketing its foreign policy slogan than it is at actually carrying it out. In other words, a zero problems policy in a neighbourhood of states with severe conflict among themselves and their own populations is highly idealistic and practically impossible. The AKP's preferential treatment of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Balkans and its personal failings in achieving peace for itself and resolving its own domestic and neighbourly disputes have put into questions Ankara's credibility for mediating conflict and brokering peace for others.

Favouritism in the Balkans

If Prime Minister Erdoğan seeks to solidify Turkey's identity as a true peace broker in the region, it will have to extend its efforts beyond cultural and religious affinities and work to discount accusations of a "Neo-Ottoman" agenda. Turkey's persistent support of mostly Muslim areas has alienated the non-Muslim populations in Turkey's neighbourhood. The Christian Balkan population for example are hesitant to engage with Turkey following Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's emotionally charged speech in Sarajevo in 2009, where he declared that the territorial integrity of BiH was as important as the territorial integrity of

Turkey, further insisting that the prosperity and security of Sarajevo –which he called the “Jerusalem of Europe”, was as vital as the security and prosperity of Istanbul.⁶¹ Such language has not been used with regard to the importance of other Balkan countries to Turkey. Ankara’s hasty recognition of Kosovo’s independence also fed Serbian suspicion that Turkey looked out for its Muslim brother’s first and foremost. Some Western Balkan observers feel that Turkey’s support for Kosovo’s independence is hypocritical in light of its own failures to quash Kurdish secessionist sentiment.

Politicians in Ankara should remember that in making appeals to the country’s shared history, culture, religion, ethnic backgrounds and language, Turkey might actually alienate those who are thereby excluded. Many in Serbia, Croatia, Albania and even some in BiH speak pejoratively of Ottoman times and claim to have been persecuted by the “tolerant” Empire. By insisting too heavily on one shared morsel of identity, as Turkey is doing in BiH, other ethnic and religious groups residing in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious area feel excluded and untrusting of Turkey’s intentions for the region. Instead of focusing foreign policy rhetoric on a common past, one that is not widely accepted by all, Turkey should insist rather on its shared European future, a vision that is more widely accepted. Turkey also ought to work equally as hard on the mending and forging of economic and political ties as to foster a larger trust amongst those in the region who still need convincing. If Turkey wants to ensure the sustainability of its foreign policy in the Balkans, it will need to increase its trade volumes and step up its direct investment, and not only in predominantly Muslim populated areas. Since the international community is still unsure of what to make of Turkey’s new assertiveness in the region, Turkey would be wise

⁶¹ Erhan Türbedar. *Turkey’s New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles*. Insight Turkey, Vol. 13, No.3, Published by SETA (Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research), Ankara, 2011. p.142

to present its leverage and bargaining power in the region as proof of its commitment to achieving EU reforms and as a sign of its commitment to stability and prosperity in the region. This in turn would help move along its own EU candidacy. A higher degree of cooperation with Brussels and Washington would also help to quash any doubts about imperial intentions.

Sustainability of a Zero Problems Policy

Recent world events, such as the Israeli raid of the Gaza flotilla, the conflict with Greece and Israel over offshore drilling in Cyprus and violent unrest in Syria have made somewhat of a mockery of the AKP's policy in that Turkey seems to have zero neighbors without problems. While consequences stemming from events like the Arab Spring are out of Turkey's control, the toppling of old regimes has uprooted new tensions between Turkey and its neighbours. The ongoing violent crackdown against Syrian civilians has eroded all ties Ankara once had with the Assad regime. Turkey is a vocal supporter of the Syrian opposition movement, allowing defectors of the regime the right of assembly in Turkish cities. The presence of thousands of Syrian refugees in the Hatay region combined with the recent downing of a Turkish reconnaissance plane in international airspace by Syrian Armed Forces have pushed relations between the two to a crucial tipping point, prompting Turkey to keep its finger firmly on the trigger in case of further provocation. Adversely, Iran is reported to be funnelling funds to the Ba'ath regime in support of the current administration. In addition to Arab League and UN sanctions against Syria, Turkish Parliament has imposed its own set of sanctions, targeting mostly Syrian financial institutions through the freezing of assets, the increasing of tariffs on Syrian goods and the

diversion of trade routes via neighbouring countries. Iran refuses to impose sanctions against Syria as a regime change could have a major impact on Iran's position in the Middle East and incur the loss of a strategic ally. Supporting opposing sides of the revolution has also contributed to a dip in Turkey's enthusiasm in continuing to act as Iran's diplomatic defender against the US.

Widespread instability in the region has caused Ankara to realign itself with American Middle East policy once again, delivering a blow to the sustainability of the AKP's foreign policy independence. Turkey's acceptance to host an early detection radar system in Malatya is a perfect example of how Ankara has succumbed to NATO insistence on harsher deterrence strategies against Iran. This move has been perceived by Iran as provocative although Erdoğan maintains that the installation serves a wide range of domestic security priorities and is not geared specifically towards Iran. Ali Hajizadeh, the head of the Aerospace Unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, warned that Iran would strike Turkey's NATO installations if the US or Israel prompted an attack.⁶² While Turkey does not fear an imminent missile attack from Tehran, as a non-nuclear weapon state, it recognizes that Syria and Iran both have medium range missiles capable of reaching Turkish urban centres and that both are volatile states that greatly contribute to regional instability. Recognizing the reality and possibility of such risks prevent AKP foreign policy from ever reaching a true state of zero problems.

62 Ankara expresses its radar unease to Tehran. Hürriyet Daily News. 01 December 2011

Turkey's Credibility in Practicing International Mediation

In its attempts to broker peace for other countries, Turkey has ironically been unable to make headway on many of its own domestic challenges and protracted conflicts with neighbours. This has prompted many to doubt Turkey's credibility and sincerity in mediating conflicts between other countries when it cannot seem to keep its own hands clean. The summer of 2010 marked the end of zero problems between Turkey and Israel following the Israeli raid that killed Turkish crewmembers onboard of a aid flotilla bound for Gaza. The rift widened following Israel's vow to help Greece drill for oil off the coast of Cyprus, prompting Erdoğan to recall his ambassador to Tel Aviv and expel the Israeli ambassador in Ankara. On the issue of Cyprus, the decades-old dispute with Greece over the island continues to fester. Turkey is still largely entrenched in a siege mentality with its Greek Cypriot neighbors to the South, preventing it from adopting a spirit of negotiation regarding the sharing of the island's resources.

Relations with Armenia also remain stagnant. Armenians had lived in Eastern Anatolia for centuries under the Ottoman Empire, greatly contributing to the cultural and religious landscape of the region. The disappearance of over 1.5 million Armenians between 1915 and 1923 has defined nearly an entire century of Armenian identity, based on a deep sense of grieving and hatred of Turks. The Armenian diaspora has launched a campaign seeking resolutions in parliaments all over the world to denounce the genocide of the Armenians at the turn of the 20th century. Turks on the other hand, refuse all claims of genocide. While Turkey acknowledges that several hundred thousand Armenians were killed, some putting the blame on Kurdish bandits, Turks maintain that the exodus happened in a time of civil war when not only

Armenians died but thousands of Turks as well at the hand of Armenian insurgents rebelling against the Empire. Different perceptions of historical events in the final years of the Ottoman reign have pitted the two states against one another. Turks are quick to dismiss Armenian accusations for a host of reasons stemming from debatable historical evidence to fierce nationalism and pride along with a threat of ensuing reparations and a fear of territorial claims. Ice cold political relations combined with mounting tensions between the neighboring countries have stunted regional economies, have led to acts of violence, terrorism and assassinated diplomats and have created generations of people that are forced to carry the burden of their parents' and grandparents' grief, anger and hate. Relations between the two countries worsened in 1988 when hostilities broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh over Armenia's occupation of the ethnic Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan. Turkey refuses to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia until the occupied territories of Nagorno-Karabakh are returned to Azerbaijan.

Armenia and Turkey came close to reconciliation on two occasions, once in 2001 and again in 2008, culminating in the signing of two protocols (currently hanging in political limbo) for the development of bilateral trade agreements and the reopening of the border. The Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) was launched in Geneva in July of 2001 by The American University's Center for Global Peace with the aim of improving relations and increasing contact and exposure of both governmental and non-governmental organisations. TARC's ultimate goal was to make recommendations to governments to promote, support and sustain a reconciliation process.⁶³ The Commission was made up of prominent Turks and Armenians, mostly former officials with well-established connections to state

⁶³ David Phillips. *Unsilencing the Past: Track Two Diplomacy and Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation*. Bergham books, New York. 2005 p.151

government. TARC faced many internal and external challenges. The Armenian and Turkish delegations had widely different expectations for the exercise in Track Two diplomacy. Armenia viewed TARC as an access pass to Turkish elites and as a vehicle to engage in dialogue about the genocide. While Turkey was sympathetic to the suffering of Armenians, it viewed TARC as a way to deal with everything but the genocide issue.⁶⁴ These exercises in Track Two diplomacy, while an important symbolic act of good will on the part of both parties, were only mildly successful in affecting any real change in foreign policy. On a fundamental level, Turkey still seems to operate under a siege mentality, believing that all other countries are against it.⁶⁵ TARC exposed Turkey's inherent stubbornness regarding the different interpretations of its history and its unwillingness to accept outside mediation for its own personal issues.⁶⁶

CONCLUSION

Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party has been pursuing a foreign policy that employs a broad spectrum of peaceful means such as humanitarian assistance, peace-keeping operations, trilateral mediation, post-conflict reconciliation and diplomatic advocacy. Ankara's advancements in the Balkans and in Iran serve as great examples of AKP foreign policy achievements. It is important to mention that it has also made considerable strides in the Caucasus, the Turkic States and the Middle East through high-level cooperation council meetings, visa exemptions, free trade agreements, foreign direct investment and cultural funding. Turkey is also helping many countries in solving their

⁶⁴ David Phillips. *Unsilencing the Past: Track Two Diplomacy and Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation*. Bergham books, New York. 2005 p.49-51

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.41

⁶⁶ Ibid. p.63

bilateral problems and becoming more influential, eminent actors in international politics. From the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, to the shadow of the United States, Kemalist policy was transformative domestically but inadequate internationally. Now on the European Union's doorstep, Turkey is working hard not to close the window on its Asian and Middle Eastern partners. By celebrating its multiple identities and by understanding its history in a less Western-centric way, Turkish foreign policy has been reenergized. Turkey's growing influence in neighbouring countries defies the presupposition that only a "Western" way forward is available to the region for dealing with its conflicts, its risks and its opportunities. Ankara's mediation efforts have targeted some of the most protracted issues the world of international relations is facing today. It has brought about more stability and economic prosperity in post-war Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and has even increased cooperation and dialogue between the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. By voting "no" for sanctions against Iran yet still cooperating with the UN by reducing its trade with the "rogue" state, Turkey has achieved a fragile credibility in both the East and the West. This artful balancing act has allowed politicians in Ankara to increase Turkey's influence and policy objectives, setting it on a path to becoming a regional power centre.

So far, Western-style "dual track" diplomacy vis-à-vis Iran has produced no concessions and is further pushing the country towards the brink of complete isolation, poverty and extremism. If Turkey is able to stay committed to the development of a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear program, it will challenge the current international order in the region. In the wake of the next round of international sanctions against Iran, it is to be seen if persistence on the part of Ankara will be appealing enough to Tehran to overlook the NATO radar satellite stationed at its doorstep and come to the table

to discuss transparency and cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the P5+1 body.

As a member of the world's largest strategic defense alliance and as a geographic bridge linking civilizations, trade routes and transcontinental pipelines, Turkey's prosperity and stability are crucial to overall global security. The country has much to gain and even more to lose from instability in surrounding areas and is working very hard to broker peace through trilateral dialogue mechanisms, bilateral trade agreements, strategic alliances, cultural rapprochement and humanitarian assistance. Turkey's history, political tradition and world reputation strike no resemblance to those that define more conventional peace promoting countries like Canada or Nordic nations, making Turkey's success all the more noteworthy. By briefly visiting the history that has led to the current state of affairs in Turkey, one can truly appreciate how a once imperial power has endured war, economic crisis, conflict and sometimes devastating attempts at democracy to become the robust economic power it is today, wielding a soft power foreign policy for the purposes of its own development and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Turkey's diplomatic endeavours are obviously not without their weaknesses or failings. Turkey is not immune to developing world crises nor to the wide sweeping changes in the Arab world. In seeking to please everyone, it risks truly pleasing no one. A zero problems policy in an area with as many severe, longstanding, complex problems as the Middle East is simply unsustainable and has already begun to crack. It seems Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's principle of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" has been turned upside down. To the dismay of Ankara, "peace in the world" has not guaranteed "peace at home".

Turkey is breeding distrust and hesitation in the Christian populated areas of Southeastern Europe as the government displays preferential treatment of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Turkey's current government also lacks the maturity and political will required to resolve its own outstanding conflicts with Cyprus and Armenia

It cannot be ignored that Turkey is in a very unique position today. Its Ottoman past and its geographic location have created strong cultural, religious and linguistic ties with the many nations that surround the Anatolia heartland. As a developing Muslim nation, Turkey faces considerably less opposition and disdain in matters of international intervention and cooperation. Its mediation, humanitarian assistance and economic ventures offer a refreshing alternative to largely exhausted Western-led initiatives. As it stands, Turkey is living up to its potential as a balancing force, one that serves to restrain the West while encouraging greater inclusion of the Islamic world. How Turkey will continue to progress on issues of human rights, how it will weave Kurds into its national fabric, how it will address outstanding grievances in Cyprus and Armenia and how it will lead in the current Syrian crisis will determine Turkey's rightful place in the world league of power brokers.

ANNEX 1

Map of Turkey's involvement in various pipeline projects.

Note the green-dotted Iranian Nabucco Pipeline and solid red Iranian gas line

Black Sea Pipelines and Tanker Routes

BOTAS Projects: Turkey as an East-West Energy Corridor, East-West Energy Terminal



Source: Energy Information Administration (EIA)

ANNEX 2

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, received by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at his presidential office in Tehran on March 29 2012 (Photo: Reuters)



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