

TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY AND  
TURKEY'S ROLE AS A MIDDLE POWER

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TÜRK DIŞ POLİTİKASI VE ORTA BÜYÜKLÜKTE  
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## Abstract

Turkey has been often identified as an important player in the world system. Analysts are using terms such as regional power, pivotal state, middle power and global actor, among others, to describe Turkey's position in international relations. This study examines Turkish foreign policy from the viewpoint of middle power theory and attempts to establish a link between the theory and Turkey's foreign policy behavior. After briefly examining Ankara's contemporary foreign policy in her neighboring regions, emphasis is given in Turkey's recent involvement and her role in providing for a diplomatic solution regarding Iran's nuclear program. The study argues that this initiative can be seen as an attempt to acquire middle power functions in order to claim for a bigger role in global affairs.

## Kısa Özet

Türkiye sık sık dünya sisteminde önemli bir aktör olarak ifade edilmiştir. Analistler Türkiye'nin uluslararası ilişkiler dünyasındaki konumunu tanımlamak için diğerlerinin yanında bölgesel güç, kilit devlet, orta büyüklükte güç ve küresel aktör gibi terimler kullanmaktadırlar. Bu çalışma, Türk Dış Politikası'nı Orta Büyüklükte Güç Teorisi açısından inceleyerek teori ve Türkiye'nin Dış Politika davranışı arasında bir bağlantı kurmaya çalışacaktır. Ankara'nın komşu bölgelere yönelik güncel dış politikası kısaca incelendikten sonra, İran'ın nükleer programıyla ilgili diplomatik çözüm arayışlarına Türkiye'nin güncel katılımı ve bu bağlamda oynadığı rol vurgulanacaktır. Çalışma, bu girişimin küresel meselelerde daha etkin bir rol oynama adına "orta büyüklükte güç" özelliklerini kazanma girişimi olarak görülebileceğini savunuyor.

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## Introduction

During the last half of a century most international issues had been viewed through the lens of bipolarity and were analyzed through theoretical frameworks that relied on realist theory about the balance of power. Regional conflicts were exploited by the two great powers, or even sometimes regional states counted on the bipolar character of the system in order to promote their national interests, as the example of Yugoslavia illustrates. During the Cold War, even issues of no vital importance to the superpowers were being caught in the middle of their rivalry, as was partly the case for the war in Vietnam.

After the end of the Cold War the United States stopped being so preoccupied with every issue on the international agenda and concentrated on their vital interests. The collapse of the bipolarity had as a result the narrowing of US interests and, therefore, left more room for maneuver to other actors, and especially important states in regional constellations. The withdrawal of the two superpowers from some parts of the world, but more importantly the dissolution of the Soviet Union, left a power vacuum that quickly tempted other actors to move toward filling. Some states have attempted to become more active players in the new world order. States like Brazil and South Africa have claimed to represent the developing countries and argue that they should be consulted in issues ranging from the economic order<sup>1</sup> up to disarmament and climate change.<sup>2</sup> It is in this context that they have claimed for reforms in the Security Council of UN and a bigger role through their permanent representation in it.<sup>3</sup>

Turkey also found herself in search for a new role in this new unipolar world. Since Turkey has lost her significance as a barrier to Soviet expansion, she had to reorient her foreign policy and objectives. Starting from the 1990s and the

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<sup>1</sup>“Economic powers- BRICS countries want to reform the world financial system”, Economics Newspaper, <http://economicsnewspaper.com/policy/german/economic-powers-brics-countries-want-to-reform-the-world-financial-system-13768.html>

<sup>2</sup> Eduard Jordaan, “The concept of a middle power in international relations: distinguishing between emerging and traditional middle powers”, *Politikon*, 30: 2, November 2003, 165 [http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/877271\\_758064766\\_714856417.pdf](http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/877271_758064766_714856417.pdf), accessed 15 March

<sup>3</sup> “BRICS nations call for UN Security Council reform”, 14 April 2011, <http://en.baomoi.com/Home/world/www.saigon-gpdaily.com.vn/BRICS-nations-call-for-UN-Security-Council-reform/132229.epi>, accessed 10 May 2011

first Iraq War, Turkey has turned to a more active policy, related to the one followed in the Cold War era. New strategies have been implemented in the Balkans, the Middle East, South Caucasus, the Black Sea region and in Central Asia.

After the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in November 2002, this trend has become even more obvious. Turkey has taken initiatives concerning her neighboring countries and has expanded the scope of her foreign policy. Currently Turkey seems to be driven by the five principles put forth by Davutoglu which include ‘zero problems’ with neighbors and the development of “relations with the neighboring regions and beyond”.<sup>4</sup> It can be stated that Turkey is among the states that seeks for a bigger role in international affairs.

Turkey has been often identified as an important player in the world system. Analysts are using terms such as regional power, pivotal state, middle power and global actor, among others, to describe Turkey’s position in international relations, as it will be presented in the first chapter. However, there is still discussion of whether Turkey is an aspiring, emerging or an actual power such as the aforementioned. Because of this growing importance of Turkey many scholars engage in thorough analysis of contemporary Turkish foreign policy. There is a wider acceptance that Turkish foreign policy has been undergoing some changes in the last years, which has sparked the debate about the role of the ruling AKP party and a possible change of axis in Turkish foreign policy.<sup>5</sup>

An analysis of present foreign policy and Turkey’s role in today’s world will be the focus of the following paper. Information is mainly drawn from books, articles in scientific magazines and articles in newspapers. Moreover, the help of two professors, Ilter Turan and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou was provided through interviews with the writer, in order to clarify some aspects of contemporary Turkish foreign policy.

After a presentation of theoretical concepts with an emphasis in middle power theory, an effort will be made to evaluate Turkey’s position in the post-

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<sup>4</sup> Ahmet Davutoglu, “Turkey’s foreign policy vision: an assessment of 2007”, *Insight Turkey*, 10:1, 2008, [www.insightturkey.com/Insight\\_Turkey\\_10\\_1\\_A\\_Davutoglu.pdf](http://www.insightturkey.com/Insight_Turkey_10_1_A_Davutoglu.pdf), accessed 10 May 2011

<sup>5</sup> Suleyman Ozeren, “Axis and Turkey: what should change?”, *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, 14 June 2010, [www.turkishweekly.net/columnist/3354/axis-and-turkey-what-should-change.html](http://www.turkishweekly.net/columnist/3354/axis-and-turkey-what-should-change.html), accessed 10 April 2011

Cold War era. Instrumental to this endeavor is Turkey's relations with its neighboring countries. Therefore, in a later section, the foreign policies of Turkey, with concentration on those followed after the formation of the AKP government, will be looked at, so as to examine the role of Turkey in international affairs.

In the next part, an examination of Turkey's relations with Iran will be made. Emphasis will be given in Turkey's recent involvement and her role in providing for a diplomatic solution regarding Iran's nuclear program, which can be seen as an attempt to acquire middle power functions.

In the concluding section, using the information provided in previous sections of the paper, an attempt will be made to characterize Turkish foreign policy and its possible future orientation. However, since the world is evolving and events that can change Turkish foreign policy are likely to materialize, the current study is as updated as it could be on the date of its completion. Finally, given the limited space and time for the writing of a dissertation, the resources selected do not cover the broad variety of publications about Turkey's foreign policy.

## Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

The end of the Cold War marked a new era in international relations. Apart from the collapse of one of the two superpowers, resulting thus in the end of the bipolar order in international relations, new states emerged trying to assume their place in the reshaped international order. Moreover, the end of bipolarity and the increase of state actors have complicated international affairs to a great extent. Terms like ‘regional power’<sup>6</sup>, ‘intermediate state’<sup>7</sup> and ‘pivotal state’<sup>8</sup> have been frequently used as theoretical concepts to depict the new world order. Besides these relatively new notions that were introduced in the international relations theory, old terms like ‘power’ and ‘influence’ went under re-examination. The neorealist school was challenged concerning the pre-eminence of military power in foreign policy, as new concepts, like behavioral power<sup>9</sup>, were introduced in the literature.

In addition, more attention has been given to states that are not as powerful as the United States for example, but are nevertheless seeking for role and influence in the international affairs, supported by what Lake and Morgan

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<sup>6</sup> Detlef Nolte, “How to compare regional powers: analytical concepts and research topics”, [www.essex.ac.uk/ecpr/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/helsinki/ws9/Nolte.pdf](http://www.essex.ac.uk/ecpr/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/helsinki/ws9/Nolte.pdf) accessed 24 January 2010

<sup>7</sup> For example, Andrew Hurrell refers to Brazil as “activist and influential intermediate state”. Andrew Hurrell, “Hegemony, liberalism and global order: what space for would-be great powers?”, *International Affairs*, 82:1, 2006, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=4&hid=3&sid=8fe1a130-fd9e-4206-a517-6d913e93ec80%40sessionmgr11>, accessed 12 March 2010, 19

<sup>8</sup> Robert Chase, Emily Hill and Paul Kennedy, “The Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy”, *Foreign Affairs*, 1997, 75:1, as referred in Detlef Nolte, “Macht und Machthierarchien in den internationalen Beziehungen: Ein Analysenkonzept für die forschung über regionale Führungsmächte”, GIGA Working Paper No. 29, 2006, [http://www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/publikationen/pdf/wp29\\_nolte.pdf](http://www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/publikationen/pdf/wp29_nolte.pdf), accessed 24 January 2010. The term has also been used by Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American primacy and its geostrategic imperatives*, (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 41

<sup>9</sup> “...new elements of power- especially psychological and behavioural ones- liberated by the end of the Cold war are invalidating traditional views of foreign relations”, “psychological, behavioural power emerges from “national will” born as historical experience and perspective, national myths, sense of destiny, and perceived ethnic or religious mission”. Graham Fuller and John Arquilla, “The intractable problem of regional powers”, *Orbis*, 40:2, Fall 1996, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?hid=9&sid=1eff88b-59f7-4c0f-b58c-03dde7759041%40sessionmgr12&vid=5&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=a9h&AN=9610043758>, accessed 12 March 2010

proclaim as a decrease in the interest of great powers, and especially the US, with regard to “supporting local clients and regulating regional conflicts”.<sup>10</sup>

In the following section, a brief presentation of outlooks concerning power will be undertaken. After touching upon views of scholars about what constitutes the elements of power, the next section will deal with some examples of classifications according to power. Taking different researchers into account, approaches concerning regional power and middle power will be put forth and an attempt will be undertaken to clarify the differences of scope between them. In a subsequent part the case of Turkey will be examined through the middle power theory aiming to appraise Turkey’s position in today’s world.

### **1.1. Elements of power**

During the Cold War most researchers were interested in the behavior and policies of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Now, there is only one superpower left but there are also some other important players in the international system. Some of them are referred to as great powers, while others are labeled middle powers or regional powers. Sometimes even a combination of two of the above is being made for a country, as is the case for Brazil. While Nolte categorized Brazil as a regional power,<sup>11</sup> Eduard Jordaan adheres to Brazil’s categorization as a middle power.<sup>12</sup> Before classifying a state in one of the above, it is meaningful to examine what constitutes a powerful state.

Despite the extensive bibliography concerning relations and politics between states, the notion of power has had different connotations for different scholars or schools of thought, and therefore has resulted in different classifications of states. For example, David Mares accepts four categories of states according to their power, great powers, secondary powers, middle powers

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<sup>10</sup> David A. Lake, Patrick M. Morgan (eds.), *Regional orders: building security in a new world*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1997) [www.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=2qDIcDbdeWkC&oi=fnd&pg=PA45&dq=regional+security+complex+theory&ots=V4uzh98oxT&sig=tur1-5K5HIUevAmEwhbujblaufs#v=onepage&q=regional%20security%20complex%20theory&f=false](http://www.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=2qDIcDbdeWkC&oi=fnd&pg=PA45&dq=regional+security+complex+theory&ots=V4uzh98oxT&sig=tur1-5K5HIUevAmEwhbujblaufs#v=onepage&q=regional%20security%20complex%20theory&f=false), 6, accessed 13 June 2010

<sup>11</sup> Detlef Nolte recognizes that “Quite a few of the actual candidates for regional leadership are also listed as middle power-for example India, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa (Cooper 1997; van den Westhuizen 1998; Hurrell 2000, 2006; Schoeman 2006)”, Detlef Nolte, “How to compare regional powers: analytical concepts and research topics”, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Jordaan, 165

and small powers. For him, great powers have the ability to change the balance of the system, while secondary powers can influence the system but not alter it. Middle powers can have an influence on the system through coalition with small number of other states but small states need to be in coalition with a large number of other states in order to affect somehow the system.<sup>13</sup>

A well-known definition belongs to Robert Dahl, who postulates that “power is the ability to get another actor to do what it would not otherwise have done (or not to do what it would have done)”.<sup>14</sup> However, it is not a commonly accepted definition, since there are different approaches to the notion. Realists pay great attention to power as material and mainly military resources and capabilities. These capabilities include tangible and intangible characteristics or possessions of states. While non measurable attributes, like diplomatic skill and popular support, are included in the calculations of power, special emphasis is being given to material capabilities, with military and economy ranking at the highest positions. In the words of Goldstein, “realists tend to see military force as the most important element of national power in the short term, and they see other elements like economic strength or diplomatic skill or moral legitimacy as being important to the extent that they are fungible into military power”.<sup>15</sup> For realists the pursuit for national power is a natural drive.<sup>16</sup> According to realists, clashes of interests can only be contained by a balance of power. This implies that states will not avoid war because of some higher moral code and human inclination towards peace and cooperation, as the liberals advocated, but because the balance of power would not ensure their victory. Moreover, neo-realists argue that the structure of the international system poses constraints to states regarding their foreign policy. It is concluded that due to the anarchic order of the international system, states because of their security dilemma resort to self –help, which is conceived as a strengthening of their power.

Morgenthau, while concentrating on “the concept of interest defined in terms of power”, gives a broad definition of power by stating that “power may

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<sup>13</sup> David Mares, “Middle powers under regional hegemony: to challenge or to acquiesce in hegemonic enforcement”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 32:4 (December 1988), 456, [www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2600593.pdf](http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2600593.pdf), accessed 21 May 2010

<sup>14</sup> Joshua S. Goldstein, *International Relations*, third edition (New York: Longman, 1999), 55.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 61

<sup>16</sup> Carr, quoted in Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1996),70

comprise anything that establishes and maintains the control of a man over a man".<sup>17</sup> For him, power is not restricted to material capabilities and can include 'soft power' capabilities as well, a view that differentiates him from other realists. Morgenthau distinguishes the political power from the actual exercise of natural force. Military capabilities can be source of power but also "expectations of benefits" or "fear of disadvantages", for example, can be a source of control.<sup>18</sup>

For a realist like Martin Wight "power is composed of many elements. Its basic components are size of population, strategic position and geographical extent, and economic resources and industrial production. To these must be added less tangible elements like administrative and financial efficiency, education and technological skill and above all moral cohesion".<sup>19</sup> In further explaining his view, Wight puts forth that "influence is not power"<sup>20</sup>, affirming the primacy of the material dimension in measuring power.

Along the same reasoning, the representative of neo-realism, Kenneth Waltz has dealt with the capabilities of the states that are relative and can change over time, and has put forth seven factors as criteria, "population, territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence".<sup>21</sup>

While realists view power as means of influence or coercion, liberals treat power as a means "to accomplish desirable ends".<sup>22</sup> For realists, power is subjective to comparison with other states, since the power of a state is measured as its leverage against the power of another state. On the other hand, for liberals the power of a nation is not subjected to outside measurement. If a country has enough means to achieve its goals whether it is more powerful than some other state is of no relevance. Moreover, this difference in conceptualization of power reflects to different prioritization in foreign policy actions. When realists propose the building up of a country's capabilities for enhancing one's power, liberals

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<sup>17</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: the struggle for power and piece*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 9

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 29

<sup>19</sup> Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, edited by Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (New York: Holmes and Meyers, 1978), 26, [http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=G\\_LIJYMLqUMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=power+politics+wight&cd=1#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=G_LIJYMLqUMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=power+politics+wight&cd=1#v=onepage&q&f=false), accessed 13 June 2010

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 27

<sup>21</sup> Waltz (1979) quoted in David R. Mares, "Middle powers under regional hegemony: to challenge or acquiesce in hegemonic enforcement"

<sup>22</sup> Goldstein, 103

advocate for cooperating policies that would facilitate the achievement of one's goals, thus stressing the importance of international institutions. Realists treat power as a possession of states while liberals conceive it as a facilitator to achieve one's goals.

Keohane defines power as "control over resources or as control over outcomes".<sup>23</sup> Given the asymmetries in interdependence, which stems from the interactions in international affairs, a state's power over resources does not necessarily mean the same amount of power over outcomes. Therefore, for Keohane, the asymmetries in interdependence that derive from different degrees of sensitivity and vulnerability can be seen as a source of power. Moreover, institutions help the states to cope with the consequences of the interdependence and therefore interfere between inputs/resources and outputs/outcomes, changing the power relations between states.

Neoliberals like Joseph Nye define power as "the ability to effect the outcomes you want and if necessary, to change the behavior of others to make it happen".<sup>24</sup> Although recognizing that the possession of certain resources is required to achieve the desired outcomes, he points out that the military force ceased to be the absolute measurement of power, especially since geo-economic considerations increased in importance.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Nye makes a distinction between soft power and hard power. He identifies hard power with the military and economic resources available at one state that can be used through inducements or threats to accomplish one's objectives. While the notion of hard power includes the element of coercion, soft power "rests on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others".<sup>26</sup> Making the distinction between hard and soft power, Nye introduces another dimension of power and opens way to yet another hierarchical order in international relations. For example, one state can be considered an important power because of its level of soft power despite its lacking in hard power. Interestingly, Nye uses the

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<sup>23</sup> Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence, World Politics in transition*, (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1977),11

<sup>24</sup> Deltef Nolte, "Ideas, interests, resources and strategies of regional powers", [www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/english/content/rpn/conferences/nolte.pdf](http://www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/english/content/rpn/conferences/nolte.pdf), accessed 24 January 2010 and Joseph Nye, *The paradox of American power: why the world's only superpower can't go it alone*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Nye, 5-7

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

examples of Canada, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian states, all of which are broadly considered middle powers, in order to point out the greater political clout of those states despite their lower military and economic weight.<sup>27</sup> For Nye, the power of these states rests on their ability to influence outcomes by using cooperative policy, even without having the resources available to exercise influence on another actor as the realist conceptualization of power would expect.

Apart from differentiating between different types of power, some scholars have assumed that there are different levels of analysis for inter-state relations. According to the multiple hierarchy model developed by Lemke, there exist different hierarchies of power depending on which level is under consideration.<sup>28</sup> In the work of Buzan and Waever, the regional level is highlighted and an effort is made to introduce it as a different level of analysis, apart from the global and the local level.<sup>29</sup> Since one may choose different levels of analysis, it can be therefore deduced that a state that might be considered as a great power in a regional level will be regarded as a small power in the international level. In the following chapters Turkey's position will be examined in the international level, leaving aside other possible levels of analysis.

## 1.2. Classifications of power

According to what each scholar hypothesizes as elements of power, some have been involved in providing a hierarchical order of states. It seems that only the status of the United States today as a superpower is uncontested. For other states, like China and Russia for example, different terms, such as great powers and regional powers, are used. For Wight, China and Russia, along with France and the United Kingdom, are great powers<sup>30</sup>, while Hurrell refers to the first two,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 10

<sup>28</sup> Deltef Nolte, "How to compare regional powers: analytical concepts and research topics"

<sup>29</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and powers, the structure of international security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27, [http://books.google.com.tr/books?id=N3LfkrrNM4QC&printsec=frontcover&dq=regions+and+powers+buzan&source=bl&ots=QukKh-z1zS&sig=psTCGXW\\_6tfvzWFLIXfP7Ok964s&hl=tr&ei=Y-1XTZ6nA5H6sgbEjpilCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com.tr/books?id=N3LfkrrNM4QC&printsec=frontcover&dq=regions+and+powers+buzan&source=bl&ots=QukKh-z1zS&sig=psTCGXW_6tfvzWFLIXfP7Ok964s&hl=tr&ei=Y-1XTZ6nA5H6sgbEjpilCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CDMQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false), accessed 13 June 2010

<sup>30</sup> Wight, 28

along with India and Brazil, as important second-tier states<sup>31</sup>, at the same time when Huntington names Russia and China major regional powers, along with others like the “German-French condominium, Japan, India, Iran, Brazil, South Africa and Nigeria”.<sup>32</sup> However, there seems to be a common pattern of acknowledging three groups of states in the international level, regardless of the measurement used: great power(s), middle powers or second-tier states, and the rest, namely states that play no special role to the international order.

For Wight, a great power is a power with general interests, meaning worldwide interests, and has the “ability to protect or advance those interests by force.”<sup>33</sup> Since Wight has developed his ideas in the Cold War period he does not use the term superpower or differentiate between the five permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations, labeling all of them great powers.

In a later conceptualization of great power status, Hurrell, who has taken Wight’s proclamations into consideration, elaborates that, in order to be qualified as a great power, or an emerging great power, a state must have the capacity for an effective state action, along with some degree of internal cohesion, and the capacity to contribute to international order, combined with economic and military power to pursue its goals.<sup>34</sup> While for a state to be labeled as a power, Wight takes into consideration elements such as the population, the geographical position, the economy, education and moral cohesion<sup>35</sup> it seems that he lays more emphasis on military capabilities and actions when he deals with international affairs than his succeeding researchers.

Goldstein summarizes that great powers are the states that have such a military strength that can only be defeated by another great power. Moreover, “great powers tend to share a global outlook based on national interests far from their home territories”.<sup>36</sup> Proceeding with the numeration of great powers, Goldstein includes Germany and Japan apart from the permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations. In drawing up this list of great powers

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<sup>31</sup> Andrew Hurrell, “Hegemony, liberalism and global order: what space for would-be great powers?”

<sup>32</sup> Huntington (1999:36), quoted in Nolte “How to compare regional powers: analytical concepts and research topics”, footnote 3, 7

<sup>33</sup> Wight, 50-52

<sup>34</sup> Hurrell, 1

<sup>35</sup> Wight, 26-27

<sup>36</sup> Goldstein, 81-82

the most important criterion is the economic power, followed by the military capabilities.<sup>37</sup>

Buzan and Waever engage in a distinction between superpowers and great powers. According to their rationale, superpowers are expected to have “broad-spectrum capabilities exercised across the whole of the international system”.<sup>38</sup> The extent of the engagement is what distinguishes superpowers from great powers, since the exercise of power from great powers is mostly confined in their home continent.<sup>39</sup> For this reason the United States are considered a superpower, while Russia, China, Japan, Great Britain, France and Germany are labeled great powers. The writers refer to states as great powers when taking the system level under consideration. Therefore, they put forth that great powers are distinguished from merely regional powers because others respond to great powers “on the basis of system level calculations about the present and near-future distribution of power”.<sup>40</sup> Since Buzan and Waever use the terms great power and regional power to label states using a different level of analysis each time, it is possible to deduct that a country can be both at the same time. For example, China which is placed among great powers in the international level, qualifies as a regional power in the South-east Asia, when the regional level is taken under consideration.

Apart from great powers there are also some other states that may not be of the level of great powers but cannot be left unnoticed in the international order. These are called middle states, or second-tier states, although different scholars have a different understanding of the term and therefore list different countries under this category. Lately, there has also been a flourishing literature about smaller states that can be labeled neither as a great power, nor as a middle power in international politics. In view of the fact that the end of the Cold War and the suppression of the bipolar competition have increased the role of regional politics, scholars have been focusing lately in studying the regional level and dealing with countries that have some significance in their regions but not in the international system as a whole. The new terms used include ‘regional great

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 82

<sup>38</sup> Buzan and Waever, 34

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 33

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 35

power'<sup>41</sup> and 'major regional power'<sup>42</sup>. These terms are used interchangeably to refer to states that are significant in a regional level but their role is less noteworthy in the international level.

Additionally, other terms with different nuances are used to describe states in the new power hierarchies. The terms 'pivotal state' and 'anchor state' have been used to refer to important states in the international system. The term anchor state has been used in an article of the German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, in order to refer to states "like China and India-that are major economic players in their region".<sup>43</sup> The economic power of a state is used in order to label a country as an anchor state.<sup>44</sup> The term 'geopolitical pivot' has been used by Brzezinski to refer to "states whose importance is derived not from their power and motivation but rather from their sensitive location and from the consequences of their potentially vulnerable condition for the behavior of geostrategic players."<sup>45</sup> From the abovementioned it can be deducted that the terms anchor state and pivotal state have as criterion only one dimension of power, since the importance of an anchor state lies in its economic power and the importance of a pivotal state lies in its geographic position. However, these criteria could also be used in characterizing a country as a middle power or as a regional power.

Due to the fact that different scholars have different understanding of terms and provide different categorizations of countries, confusion is created concerning definitions and the status of some countries. For example, as it is already stated above, China is sometimes labeled as great power and sometimes as regional power. The same holds true for Brazil which is sometimes considered middle power and others as regional power. The terms regional power and middle power will be analyzed below so as to pinpoint their notional differences.

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<sup>41</sup> Wight as referred in Nolte, "How to compare regional powers: analytical concepts and research topics", 7

<sup>42</sup> Huntington, as referred in Nolte, "How to compare regional powers: analytical concepts and research topics", 7

<sup>43</sup> Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul, "Anchor countries: partners in global development", [www.inwent.org/E+Z/content/archive-eng/05-2005/tribune\\_art1.html](http://www.inwent.org/E+Z/content/archive-eng/05-2005/tribune_art1.html), accessed 28 April 2011

<sup>44</sup> Detlef Nolte, "Macht und Machthierarchien in den internationalen Beziehungen: Ein Analysenkonzept für die Forschung über regionale Führungsmächte"

<sup>45</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, 41

### 1.3. Regional power theory

As in almost every notion in social sciences there is no commonly accepted definition for establishing which country constitutes a regional power. Moreover, because of this deficiency, the term is usually misunderstood and used interchangeably with the term middle power. Although the two terms are relatively close in meaning they have substantial explanatory differences. Broadly used terminology and theory about regional power is being provided by the GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, which uses a very broad definition naming regional powers as the states that “are powerful actors in their own regions”.<sup>46</sup> However, since there is no commonly accepted definition of power, resulting in the absence of a method as to how a state can be listed as powerful, and region can be also a term used according to the preferences of the writer, this definition of a regional power is too broad and vague to be of wide use.

Wight, in a book written in 1978, used the term regional great powers to refer to states that were neither great powers, nor middle powers, but had general interests relative to the limited region and the capacity to act alone, thus creating a miniature of the international system where great powers held general interests globally.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, for Wight middle powers and regional great powers are measured according to their capabilities and their difference lies in the breadth of their capabilities. It is interesting that Wight puts forth that some regions might be culturally united but politically divided, giving another meaning to the notion of region as a geographical defined area.<sup>48</sup>

The same term was also later used by Osterud (1992), coupled with an attempt to provide criteria for what may constitute a regional great power.<sup>49</sup> According to Osterud, a regional great power must be part of a geographically delineated region, a postulate that is still present in modern definitions of regional power. Another criterion proposed by Osterud, still valid today, is a high level of

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<sup>46</sup> [www.giga-hamburg.de/english/index.php?file=conceptual\\_framework.html&folder=rpn](http://www.giga-hamburg.de/english/index.php?file=conceptual_framework.html&folder=rpn), accessed 24 January 2010

<sup>47</sup> Wight, 63

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Daniel Flesmes, “Conceptualizing Regional Power in International Relations- Lessons from the South African Case”, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1000123](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1000123), accessed 6 November 2009

influence in regional affairs. Moreover, he suggests that a regional great power should be able to stand up against any coalition of other states in the region and may well also be a great power on the world scale.<sup>50</sup> For Osterud power is apprehended as the ability to confront successfully any possible regional coalition challenging the leading role of the regional great power. It can be deduced that this approach is directly involved with the perception of power as mainly military power. This approach is based on the ability of a state to exert power over outcomes without dealing with other dimensions of power as for example the cultural influence, and therefore can be viewed as one-dimensional.

Later on, scholars undertook more thorough analyses of regional powers and their characteristics. In 2003, Schoeman upholds that a regional power must have the willingness to assume a leading role, combined with the internal characteristics that would ensure it such a role. Moreover, he puts forth that others, and most importantly its neighbors must adhere to the regional power's role.<sup>51</sup> Schirm moves along the same rationale and regards that a regional power should be judged by the claims it puts forth as a rule maker, its potential material, organizational and ideological resources, its activities in pursuit of this aim, the acceptance of its leadership by others as well as the amount of influence this state exerts on the regional politics. For Schirm a state must possess both power over resources and power over outcomes.<sup>52</sup>

The above mentioned characteristics are included in Nolte's more thorough definition. According to him, and others that have taken up these touchstones<sup>53</sup>, a regional power is a state that:

- “1. is part of a geographically, economically and politically definable region with an identity of its own,
2. raises claims to a leading role in the region (self-image of a regional power),

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.,10

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Schirm (2005) quoted in Flesmes “Conceptualizing regional powers”, 11 and Nolte “How to compare regional powers: analytical concepts and research topics”, 13

<sup>53</sup> For example Flesmes, “Conceptualizing regional power in international relations” and Sandra Destradi, “Empire, hegemony and leadership: developing a research framework for the study of regional powers”, GIGA Working Paper No. 79, June 2008, [www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/publikationen/pdf/wp79\\_destradi.pdf](http://www.giga-hamburg.de/dl/download.php?d=/content/publikationen/pdf/wp79_destradi.pdf), accessed 13 December 2009

3. exerts decisive influence on the geopolitical demarcation of the region as well as on its ideological construction,
4. disposes over material (militarily, economic, demographic), organizational (political) and ideological resources to project power,
5. is well integrated into the region, mainly economic, political and cultural integration with the region,
6. exercises big influence to regional problems/ affairs,
7. exercises this influence also and more extensively through regional governance structures,
8. defines the regional security agenda to a high degree,
9. is appreciated as a regional power, or at least tolerated as such, by other powers in the region and beyond, especially by other regional powers, and
10. is well connected with regional and global fora, where apart from its own interests is also acting as an advocate of regional interests”<sup>54</sup>

An interesting approach to regional powers that departs from the abovementioned comes from Graham E. Fuller and John Arquilla. In their work they refer to regional powers as states that “by definition possess the will, the means and ambition to conduct foreign policy in their own neighborhood”. Until that point they are in line with other understandings of regional power status, since they put forth the capabilities of a state as well as its proclivity to engage in a leading role in its region. However, they continue by stating that regional powers have no “dove regard to the preferences of the US or multilateral organizations, including the UN”.<sup>55</sup> This means that they consider that regional powers have the potential capabilities of resisting pressures from the international community or the US, although in confined scale. Moreover, they uphold that new regional powers, among them Iran, Uzbekistan, India, Vietnam, Nigeria and Turkey, are self-selected, downplaying the criterion put forth earlier of recognition by others.

The work of scholars from other research fields has also been incorporated into the discourse about regional powers. For example, Baldwin has engaged in examining different dimensions of power, which can be of use when

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<sup>54</sup> Nolte, *Macht und Machthierarchien in den internationalen Beziehungen: Ein Analysenkonzept für die forschung über regionale Führungsmächte*, 28

<sup>55</sup> Graham E. Fuller and John Arquilla, “The intractable problem of regional powers”

trying to examine a state's power in order to measure it up to the regional power theory. These dimensions are scope, domain, weight, costs and means. Scope determines the issue or issues that a state can exert influence or power, while domain deals with the range of a state's power. Referring to weight, Baldwin takes into consideration the probability of realization of power. The next dimension, costs, revolves around the easiness of imposing one's will or accepting another's influence or power. The last dimension, which needs to be taken into account according to Baldwin, is the means used to exert influence or power. A state may possess over relatively large diplomatic means, while falling short in military, economic or symbolic means.<sup>56</sup> These dimensions can be criteria in determining which states are regional powers. For example, one country might possess considerable power in only one issue, such as economics, or in only one region, and as a consequence can only deploy economic means to promote its interests and exert influence. In that case it can be proclaimed that this state is a regional power as far as economics is concerned, acknowledging that this may not be the case for military or cultural issues. Therefore, a state's power should be viewed in light of all of Baldwin's dimensions.

Summing up, a regional power needs to have important material and ideational resources to deploy while claiming leadership of its region. It is anticipated to act as a promoter or representative of the interests of its region. Moreover, apart from its willingness and its capabilities, a regional power must proceed to actions and strategies in order to affirm its leading role. Finally, these activities are expected to have the acceptance of other states in the region and extra-regional actors. However, this recognition may merely have the form of tolerance, in the sense that other states of the region do not engage in balancing acts in order to challenge a regional power's claim to leadership.

Undoubtedly, a lot of questions still remain concerning the delineation of the term regional power. Most importantly, scholars have not agreed to what constitutes power, which are its attributes and how to measure them. Moreover, there is no agreement on what constitutes a region. Further complication comes from some of the criteria put forth to characterize regional powers. For example,

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<sup>56</sup> David Baldwin, "Power and International Relations" in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005 edition), 178-179

how can one measure the recognition of a country's role as a regional power by others? Some other issues also need to be addressed in view of regional power theory. For example, how many regional powers can there be in one region? And if a great power is present does this mean that other states are overshadowed and cannot be qualified as regional powers? Furthermore, how can we measure the influence of a candidate regional power in regional governance structures or in international fora? Is it enough for a state to promote its region's interests or should it also be successful in it?

After dealing with the characteristics a state is expected to possess in order to be defined as a regional power, the concept of middle power will be dealt with, with the aim to clarify which characterization is more suitable for Turkey.

#### **1.4. Middle power theory**

A first reference to the notion of middle power is being cited by Hasan Basri Yalcin to belong to the Mayor of Milan, who, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, categorized states as empires, middle powers and small powers. In this first mentioning, middle powers were considered the states that "have sufficient strength and authority to stand on its own without the need of help from others".<sup>57</sup>

Yet, the concept of middle power has started being broadly used during the Cold War to describe states that could not, on the one hand, qualify for being a great power but whose importance, on the other hand, could not be bypassed in international affairs. Canada was the first to claim to belong to this category after the Second World War, in its effort to find a role for itself in the new bipolar system.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the fact that it has been long used, the term does not have a single commonly accepted definition. Further difficulties arise from the fact that the word "middle" is on its own ambivalent, since it is relative according to what

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<sup>57</sup> Hasan Basri Yalcin, "The concept of middle power: the cases of Turkey and Egypt", [www.allacademic.com/meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/2/6/8/0/5/pages268053/p268053-2.php](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/2/6/8/0/5/pages268053/p268053-2.php), accessed 12 December 2010

<sup>58</sup> John Ravenhill, "Cycles of middle power activism: constraint and choice in Australian and Canadian foreign policies", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 52:3, 1998, 309, [http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/157425\\_758064766\\_791639050.pdf](http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/157425_758064766_791639050.pdf), accessed 21 May 2010

constitutes “big” and “small”. There seem to be two broad groupings of scholars concerning the denomination of a state as middle power, which will be analyzed further down this chapter. Scholars belonging to the first grouping, under the influence of the realist school, put their emphasis on material criteria. Closer examination can provide evidence of two subgroups inside this first grouping. While the first subgroup refers to middle power status in correlation to a state’s capabilities, namely its economic situation, its size and population and its military power, another subgroup maintains that this status is deducted from geographical criteria. This may imply that a regionally powerful state can qualify as a middle power, or that a positioning between the two ends of an ideological spectrum may endow a state with the middle power label.<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, many scholars tend to use the term in order to pinpoint a specific foreign policy behavior of some states. For this second school of thought behavioral attributes are used as criteria for categorization. Dealing with sub-categorization within this grouping, it can be stated that part of the scholars have a normative view of the notion and are interested in the behavioral characteristics that a middle power should possess, as for example to be considered trustworthy and to be interested in sustaining the international order. In contrast, some other scholars, who also deal with the behavioral criteria, are focusing on the actual behavior of states that are considered middle powers.

According to Hasan Basri Yalcin, the realist approach can be considered as complementary to this second, idealist approach, since the first one deals with the perceptions of third countries and the latter focuses on the own perceptions and actions of the country under examination.<sup>60</sup> In support of this argument it can be maintained that the most commonly identified middle power countries, Canada and Australia, seem to combine and comply with both the material and the behavioral attributes identified by these two schools of thought. This fact may complicate the demarcation of the notion, since with the increasing complexity of international relations different lists of middle powers derive from the use of these different approaches.

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<sup>59</sup> Andrew Fenton Cooper, Richard A Higgott, Kim Richard Nossal, “Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a changing world order” (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 17, <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Hw3laaTpOiiC&printsec=frontcover&dq=middle+powers+cooper&cd=1#v=onepage&q&f=false>, accessed 12 January 2011

<sup>60</sup> Hasan Basri Yalcin, “The concept of middle power: the cases of Turkey and Egypt”

In order to further shed light to the term, different opinions and postulates of scholars will be briefly reviewed.

In the first school of thought, scholars have used the term middle power in order to point out the relative predominance of these states over minor states as far as resources are concerned. For example, Wight measures the leverage of a middle power mostly by its military power compared to a great power. He points out that a middle power “is a power with such military strength, resources and strategic position that in peace time the great powers bid for its support, and in wartime, while it has no hope of winning a war against a great power, it can hope to inflict costs on a great power out of proportion to what the great power can hope to gain by attacking it”.<sup>61</sup> Following Wight’s reasoning that middle powers at the time of his writing were “powers which have lost the status of great power”, it can be inferred that, for him, today, apart from the United States, many countries that are considered by other scholars as great powers, as for example Germany or China, will be considered merely middle powers. Wight’s interest in a middle power’s military power can be justified by the Cold War context that dominated in the time of his writing. Modern scholars have included “superior material resources such as demographic (inhabitants) and economic indicators (GNP) as preconditions for middle power status”<sup>62</sup>, still paying attention to the resources available to a state.

From Mares’ neorealist point of view, middle powers “have enough resources so that in an alliance with a small enough number of other states they are not merely ‘price takers’, they can affect the system”.<sup>63</sup> According to his reasoning, the capabilities of middle powers are relative and can only be measured in comparison with great and secondary powers, which he considers more ‘powerful’ in the international system.

For those scholars who pay attention to a country’s capabilities a specific list of middle power states is formed. For example, Goldstein, who is highlighting GDP as a crucial criterion for a country’s power, places Brazil, India, Italy, Canada, Mexico, Indonesia, Spain, South Korea, Iran and Turkey in the first tier of middle powers. He maintains that these countries’ size, economic activity,

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<sup>61</sup> Wight, 65

<sup>62</sup> Kelly (2004) quoted in Flemes, “Conceptualizing regional powers in international relations”, 8

<sup>63</sup> Mares, 456

fairly strong military forces and considerable regional political influence justify their status as middle powers.<sup>64</sup> Although he deals with mainly material criteria that can be measured, the notion of regional political influence is not easily measured, and he does not provide for any measurement tactics.

Bernard Wood, the Director of the North-South Institute in Canada, maintains that the GNP can be used as a sole indicator to place middle power countries in rank-order, since the “GNP automatically captures aggregate economic power, wealth and/or population size, and to a substantial extent, military potential”.<sup>65</sup> In a report written in 1987 he results in a list of 30 middle powers “as qualified by capabilities, measured in GNP rankings”.<sup>66</sup> However, the writer himself compromises the criterion that he is putting forth, when he also includes Pakistan, Algeria and Iran in the list of middle powers, “by reason of their special regional or global importance”.<sup>67</sup> Wood’s list does not seem to differ substantially from contemporary lists of middle powers based on capabilities, with the difference of exclusion of some states like China, which is now considered as great power, or like Yugoslavia, which ceased to exist as a unitary country.

Holbraad, recognizing that the reliance on material criteria like the GNP was not a sufficient variable for determining a state’s position, introduces also geopolitical criteria and positions the states according to their capabilities within their region. From that endeavour he concludes, in the mid 1980s, in a list that enumerates as middle powers “South Africa and Nigeria for Africa, Japan, China, India and Iran for Asia, Germany, France, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and Poland for Europe, Canada and Mexico for North and Central America, Brazil and Argentina for South America and Australia and Indonesia for ‘Oceania and

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<sup>64</sup> Goldstein, 84

<sup>65</sup> Wood, quoted in Hussein Solomon, “South African Foreign policy and Middle Power Leadership”, [www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Monographs/No13/Solomon.html](http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Monographs/No13/Solomon.html), accessed 17 January 2011

<sup>66</sup> Bernard Wood, Middle powers in the international system: a preliminary assessment of potential, UNU-WIDER Working Papers, 1987/11, [http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/working-papers/previous/en\\_GB/wp-11/\\_files/82530817520633193/default/WP11/pdf](http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/working-papers/previous/en_GB/wp-11/_files/82530817520633193/default/WP11/pdf), accessed 23 January 2011

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 5

Indonesia’”.<sup>68</sup> As a consequence, it can be stated that for Holbraad the geographic position of a state too is a decisive factor for its denomination as middle power.

The second school of thought pays more attention to the behavior of states, without, however, totally disregarding the material resources of states. For Jordaan, “middle powers are states that are neither great nor small in terms of international power, capacity and influence, and demonstrate a propensity to promote cohesion and stability in the world system”.<sup>69</sup> He, therefore, provides a combination of these two approaches in his definition, which, nevertheless, distinguishes him from the first approach, which is preoccupied only with material criteria. For Jordaan, both capabilities and a specific behavior are mandatory for the characterization of a country as middle power. In further elaborating the concept of middle power he maintains that a number of criteria, like “considerations of state capacity, position in the world order, the normative composition of the middle-power state-societal complex, domestic class interests, and the role and influence of foreign policy-makers”<sup>70</sup>, are being deployed by different scholars in order to categorize states, and usually a combination of more than one attributes gives a state the label of a middle power. For Jordaan the most important characteristic of middle powers is their role as stabilizers of the international system through multilateral initiatives. In line with Jordaan, Cox also takes both material and behavioral criteria into consideration and postulates, according to Solomon, that “middle powers are to be found in the middle rank of material capabilities, both military and economic, and that they seek to bolster international institutions for co-operative management”.<sup>71</sup>

For scholars adhering to the behavioral model, middle power states are mainly middle sized countries, which are “unwilling to be classified with the ‘mediocre rest’, and seek alternative roles to exercise leadership”.<sup>72</sup> This view implies shaping a distinct behavior and engaging in foreign policy actions that distinguish the middle powers from smaller states.

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<sup>68</sup> Holbraad (1984), quoted in Denis Stairs, “Of middle powers and middling roles”, 4, [http://politicalscience.dal.ca/Files/syllabi\\_docs/fall08/poli2520/Lecture18.pdf](http://politicalscience.dal.ca/Files/syllabi_docs/fall08/poli2520/Lecture18.pdf), accessed 29 January 2011

<sup>69</sup> Jordaan, 165

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 166

<sup>71</sup> Robert Cox “Middlepowermanship, Japan and the future world order”, *International Journal*, 44:4, Autumn 1989, [www.jstor.org/pss/40202638](http://www.jstor.org/pss/40202638), accessed 15 May 2010

<sup>72</sup> Flandes, “Conceptualizing regional power in international relations”, 9

It is considered that middle powers could more easily play the role of the promoter of the general good. According to Reid, middle powers have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo and usually seek to promote the general interest.<sup>73</sup> To that end, middle powers attribute considerable significance to international organizations towards realization of their multilateral approach in international affairs. It is reasonable to say that the intention of a middle power is not domination upon others but the building of consensus in order to address global problems.<sup>74</sup> Middle powers usually take up the role of a mediator in conflicts and have a high level of developmental aid and participation in UN missions. Canada, for example, has used the fact that it had not been a colonial power and its neutrality during the decolonization period to promote its image as a middle power. And, according to Hasan Basri Yalcin, Canada has been keen to supporting smaller nations in the UN as well as engaging in humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts well beyond its own region.<sup>75</sup>

Cooper et al. proclaim that middle powers “are defined primarily by their behavior: their tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems, their tendency to embrace compromise solutions to international disputes, and their tendency to embrace notions of ‘good international citizenship’ to guide their diplomacy”.<sup>76</sup> This behavioral approach is being criticized by Chapnick as being a tautology, since it examines the behavior of states already labeled as middle powers in order to extract the characteristic behavior of middle powers.<sup>77</sup>

The approach of Cooper et al., is “based on the technical and entrepreneurial capacities of states like Canada and Australia to provide complementary or alternative initiative-oriented sources of leadership and enhanced coalition-building in issue specific issues”.<sup>78</sup> It can be deduced that for them the capacities of a state are of importance, but they are not focused on

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<sup>73</sup> Reid (1983), quoted in Flemes “Conceptualizing regional power in international relations”, 9

<sup>74</sup> Daniel Flemes and Adam Habib, “Introduction: regional powers in contest and engagement: making sense of international relations in a globalized world”, *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 16:2, August 2009, [http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/177656\\_758064766\\_916782138.pdf](http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/177656_758064766_916782138.pdf), accessed 16 December 2009

<sup>75</sup> Yalcin, 1-2

<sup>76</sup> Cooper et al., 19

<sup>77</sup> Adam Chapnick, “The middle power”, in *Canadian Foreign Policy*, 7:2, Winter 1999, 73-74, [http://post.queensu.ca/~nossalk/sps858/readings/chapnick\\_middle.pdf](http://post.queensu.ca/~nossalk/sps858/readings/chapnick_middle.pdf), accessed 29 January 2011

<sup>78</sup> Cooper et al., 7

capabilities such as the GNP or the size of the military, but rather on diplomatic capabilities. Most importantly, they are studying a state's activities and behavior in international affairs. Their approach highlights that middle powers can take limited initiatives in building coalitions in specific issues, especially the ones dealing with the second and third agenda of international relations as they name them, "economic security", or "social concerns, such as environmental policy and human rights".<sup>79</sup> Therefore, they are not suggesting that middle powers could potentially take the place of great powers, but rather that in issues of low politics they can play a leading role, provided of course that their actions are not in contradiction with the interests of the great powers. Summarizing the behavior of middle powers during the Cold War era, Cooper et al. suggest that their impact "remained for the most part atypical and were restricted to instances in which the US was basically willing to be reined in".<sup>80</sup>

The basic argument of Cooper et al. is that middle powers have limited capabilities, mainly diplomatic skills, which they choose to deploy in specific issues of special interest to them and through the building of coalitions of interested, like-minded states. They are engaging in a categorization of middle power behavior, which they consider is changing over time, and they are coming up with three stages. According to their argumentation, a middle power may act as a catalyst, a facilitator, or as a manager. A state may act as a catalyst, when it takes the initiative of a diplomatic effort, while a facilitating role is being played most likely at a later stage of the diplomatic activity, when this state proceeds to the "planning, convening and hosting of formative meetings, setting priorities for future activity and drawing up rhetorical declarations and manifestos".<sup>81</sup> At a next stage, a middle power will be interested in institution building, which would entail "the creation of formal organizations and regimes but also the development of conventions and norms".<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the middle power will engage in confidence building measures that may also include "liaison efforts, shuttle diplomacy, the use of alternative formal and informal fora".<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 21

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 20

<sup>81</sup> Cooper et al., 24

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 25

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

In continuing the search for a definition of middle power, Ravenhill, while elaborating the arguments of Evans and Grant, codifies the characteristics of a middle power state in five “Cs”: capacity, concentration, creativity, coalition-building and credibility. According to this approach, capacity refers to the abilities of a state as far as its diplomatic services and intelligence gathering services are concerned. Therefore, a middle power should possess highly skilful and experienced diplomats and bureaucrats in general. Moreover, because of the inability of a middle power to engage in every international problem worldwide, as a great power can afford to do, a selection of priority issues is made and the diplomatic efforts of a middle country are concentrated on these limited issues. On the other hand, on these specific issues selected a middle power exemplifies intellectual leadership and introduces creative solutions while providing brokerage in international problems. As a consequence, a middle power is in the position to engage in coalition building and persuade other states to follow its lead. In order to have this ability, apart from the capabilities mentioned before, a middle power should also be considered an honest broker. If a state is being seen as inconsistent or as trying to accommodate the interests of a greater power, the coalition-building chances would be slim.<sup>84</sup> Ravenhill, while realizing the importance of these attributes, postulates that “it is the combination of expertise, the constraints on resources that necessitate concentration, and the credibility that stems from not being a major player that conditions and distinguishes middle power diplomacy”.<sup>85</sup>

In further elaborating the arguments of Cooper et al. and Evans and Grant, Ravenhill suggests that three more elements should be taken into consideration, which can help clarify the variations in middle powers’ active policy. These three variables refer to context, content and choice. Taking the behavior of Canada and Australia as case studies, he maintains that there has been a change in their middle power activism. Ravenhill suggests that his three variables, rather than systemic factors, can best explain these behaviors. First of all, there have been changes in the international environment, among them, the changes brought to the international order by the end of the Cold War, and the growing importance of domestic affairs. Although middle power activism has not changed much in

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<sup>84</sup> Ravenhill, 310-313

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 313

content, Ravenhill puts forth that the governments of Australia and Canada have chosen to retreat from “middle power activism”.<sup>86</sup> It can be deducted that, for Ravenhill, capacities are not a sufficient indicator of middle power status and one must also study the restraints of the international system, the kind of behavior exhibited and the amount of a state’s willingness to engage in such middle power behavior.

Deviating from the postulates of the behavioral model, Chapnick puts forth that the so-called middle powers are rather “sometimes strong small powers”, since for him they are “capable of exercising influence in the international community based on their relative capabilities, interests, and involvement in specific issues at specific times”.<sup>87</sup> Therefore he maintains that middle powers are functional middle powers and they cannot be labeled as such at every time, but only in a issue-specific context since they do not exert constant and even influence in international affairs. He refers to a Canadian diplomat that “argued that Canada’s influence should be based on three functional criteria: the extent of its involvement, its interests, and its ability to contribute to the situation in question”.<sup>88</sup> However, this functional model, as Chapnick refers to it, may be useful to enunciate which states are capable to exert some influence but this fact alone does not predetermine that these states will be willing to make use of it. His model may be compared with the hierarchical model that simply indicates a state’s position in the system without having any explanatory capacity. The difference lies in the fact that the hierarchical model only deals with the capacities of a state in general and does not touch upon the interests of the state in an issue to issue case. Although he distances his approach from the hierarchical model it appears that this functional model is closer to it than to the behavior model.

Cooper et al., also state, as Chapnick does, that middle powers are taking initiatives towards coalition building in specific issues of their interest and within their capabilities to play a leading role. The difference in the two approaches can be detected in the fact that for Chapnick it is enough for a state to be able to perform a leading function but Cooper et al. accentuate the precondition that a

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 313-320

<sup>87</sup> Chapnick, 74

<sup>88</sup> Hume Wrong quoted in Adam Chapnick, 74

state should behave accordingly so as to be labeled as middle power. On the other hand, if the functional model proposed by Chapnick is used, Japan for example could be counted among the middle powers. Japan could also qualify, if material criteria, such as GNP, are taken into account. But for the scholars that adhere to the behavioral approach, Japan could not be considered as middle power, since it has not taken a leading role in building coalitions to address international issues.

Critical scholars have pointed to the latent national interest of a middle power when assuming the role of the mediator. According to Touval and Zartman, “mediation by the medium-sized states appears to have been motivated by the desire to enhance their influence and prestige”.<sup>89</sup> Further advancing this critical approach, it is advocated that the multilateral approach of middle powers also results from pragmatic calculations, since the capabilities of a middle power, compared to those of a great power, restrict the decisive influence opportunities that middle powers could have if they operate by themselves.<sup>90</sup>

Moreover, it can be maintained that middle powers are usually content with the existing status quo and they are interested in protecting the international order. Therefore, apart from the expected gains regarding influence, a middle power may also exhibit certain behavior so as to protect its position in the international system. According to Cooper et al., middle powers have taken a leading role in dealing with issues that affect them directly, as for example economic security. On the other hand, they have withdrawn from some expected behaviors because of internal pressures, as was the case with “protectionism on textiles practiced by a number of industrialised middle powers”.<sup>91</sup> Although this might be valid, middle powers are nevertheless considered to play the role of stabilizers in the international system. Notwithstanding their self-interest driven motives, their contribution to the institutionalization of international affairs as well as their soothing impact on regional conflicts cannot be overlooked.

Another point of criticism refers to the supposition that middle powers are good global citizens. It can be observed that states which consider themselves as middle powers as well as scholars from the relevant literature tend to pose claims to moral superiority regarding middle powers’ behavior. Middle power states

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<sup>89</sup> Touval and Zartman (1985) quoted in Flesmes, “Conceptualizing regional power in international relations”, 9

<sup>90</sup> Solomon

<sup>91</sup> Cooper et al., 22

generally take pride of their unselfish ‘interventions’ in times of crises and their support for the weaker and/or smaller states. However, Solomon, after quoting Black’s opinions about the interest of middle power in supporting the post-war status quo, arrives at the conclusion that “Western middle powers are prone to supporting the interests of the North at the expense of the South”.<sup>92</sup> Besides, Cooper et al. provide evidence of the relativism of this moral superiority, when referring to the non-reaction on the invasion and annexation of East Timor by Indonesia in 1975.<sup>93</sup>

From the abovementioned, it can be deduced that there are two approaches in the way the status of a country can be measured in order to be categorized as a middle power. Firstly, one may look at the military capabilities and other resources available. Under this mentality, a middle power is a state whose material capabilities are less than those of a great power but still considerable in the international system. The second approach lays more attention to the political behavior of middle powers and mainly their proclivity to multilateralism and preservation of stability in international affairs. Since most literature is highlighting the functioning importance of middle powers through institutions in the stabilization of international order, states like Canada and Australia are traditionally considered middle powers, mainly because of their participation in initiatives such as the “Middle Powers Initiative”, which aims at the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons<sup>94</sup> and their role in institutional building, such as their support for the GATT and the build up of the Food and Agriculture Organization.<sup>95</sup>

It is essential to indicate, that since different criteria are used different lists of middle powers are available. For example, Ravenhill refers to the “Group of 16”, which enumerates Australia, Brazil, Canada, Cote d’Ivoire, Czech Republic, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, South Africa, South Korea and Sweden, as its members.<sup>96</sup> For Jordaan, Australia, Canada, Norway and Sweden are placed among the traditional

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<sup>92</sup> Solomon

<sup>93</sup> Cooper, Higgott and Nossal quoted in Solomon

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.middlepowers.org/about.html>

<sup>95</sup> Cooper et al., 27

<sup>96</sup> Ravenhill, 310

middle powers, while Argentina, Brazil, Nigeria, Malaysia, South Africa and Turkey are considered emerging middle powers.<sup>97</sup>

According to Jordaan, a distinction should be made between emerging and traditional middle powers. This distinction can be justified by the retraction of activism of middle powers such as Canada and Australia on the one hand, and by the rise of other states that claim for a bigger role in international affairs on the other hand. Traditional middle powers, as for example Canada, Australia and the Scandinavian countries, are wealthy, stable states that seek to act as an intermediate to ease international tensions. Furthermore, it is regarded that these states are not regionally influential. For the new, emerging middle powers, a different profile is being depicted. These states are recently democratised with imbalanced distributions of wealth and have a high regional influence, and thus higher tendency to promote and participate in regional integration schemes. Jordaan advocates that traditional middle powers assumed such a role in order to be distinguished from the great powers, while emerging middle power are using this label in order to demarcate from the weaker states in their region. The emerging middle powers resemble to the traditional ones in the legitimizing and stabilizing role they play, mainly through institutions, in the international order. However, while traditional middle powers' attitude is described as 'appeasing', the behavior of emerging middle powers is seen as 'reformist'.<sup>98</sup> His distinction does not deviate from the behavioral model but in stressing characteristics, such as the dominant position in their region or their proclivity to regional integration<sup>99</sup>, it can help accommodate these emerging powers into the middle power literature and provide for a framework to back up their aspirations and actions.

Despite the fact that there is a lack of a broadly accepted definition for 'middle power', useful conclusions have been drawn from analyzing the states that are considered as middle powers. In the relevant literature Canada is most commonly identified as a middle power in addition to Australia and the Scandinavian countries.<sup>100</sup> These states are rather industrialized as well as economically and socially developed and have no unresolved disputes with

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<sup>97</sup> Jordaan, 165

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 165-176

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 172

<sup>100</sup> Ravenhill, Jordaan

neighbors. Their main preoccupation is to maintain the status quo and their wealth and living standards. On the other side, newly characterized, emerging middle powers, such as Brazil and South Africa, have a high regional influence and sometimes act as representatives of their region in issues such as trade and wealth distribution, as well as environmental threats.<sup>101</sup>

Traditional or emerging, middle powers usually take over the role of an honest broker in times of conflicts and are the promoters of further cooperation and institutionalization in international affairs. These states may search for a more significant and determining role in the new world system but they do not crave to promote their national interest through coercion via the establishment of hegemony. Middle powers use multilateral diplomacy through institutions to enhance their status, since power for these states is not conceived in military terms any more.

### **1.5. Operationalization of middle power**

For the purposes of this paper, a middle power is conceived as a state with considerable competences in the global context. A combination of both material and behavioral criteria can best serve the purposes of research regarding middle powers. A middle power should be both able and willing to pursue a foreign policy behavior that would differentiate it from the rest of the states. Therefore some capabilities, even at a limited field of international relations are a prerequisite for a middle power. Apart from material resources, diplomatic capabilities are also of high importance. Moreover, a middle power is expected to pursue an active foreign policy which consists of initiatives to effectively handle international issues.

Countries that are very small in size or economic power usually cannot have the resources needed to assume leadership in addressing international problems. If a country is not internally stable and is preoccupied with its own economic or political problems the chances of aspirations for middle power behavior are slim. On the other hand, a state may some times choose to use this label and engage in active foreign policy behavior, so as to create an illusion of

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<sup>101</sup> Jordaan, 165

power. For example Iran seems willing to assert a role for itself in the wider region, mainly because of its size, strategic location and its claim to spiritual leadership of Muslims. Although this may be enough to rank Iran as a regional power, middle power scholars have always assumed that a middle power is a state in favor of the status quo which aims to stabilize the system.

Consequently, a middle power should be capable of successfully engaging in coalition building so as to exert influence. In order for this to happen, this country's leading initiatives should be approved, or at least tolerated, by others. Others may, on the one hand, include smaller states that would join forces with a middle power with the aim to promote institution building or changes in the international affairs. On the other hand, others may also enclose important states, such as major powers or regional powers, which would have to acquiesce to the initiatives of a middle power.

Moreover, apart from coalition building, a middle power is expected to be able to act as an honest broker and assume the role of negotiator, or negotiations' facilitator. This requires the consent of all players involved, including the parties in conflict and other states with significant interests in the region. To be successful in addressing a dispute or a conflict, a middle power is expected to be able to present viable propositions that will not be considered biased or one-sided. To accomplish this, not only the necessary funds and capabilities but also some kind of previous experience and a 'good international reputation' are needed.

## **1.6. Regional power versus middle power**

As Wood notes, there is an assumption that the terms middle power and regional power are synonymous in international relations,<sup>102</sup> thus resulting in the misinterpretation of these terms. Further confusion to the demarcation of these notions is fuelled by the fact that some states can be identified as being both middle and regional power at the same time. Nolte names India, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa as simultaneously middle powers and regional great

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<sup>102</sup> Wood, 23

powers.<sup>103</sup> Jordaan advocates that among others, Nigeria and Turkey can be classified as emerging middle powers<sup>104</sup> when at the same time, Fuller and Arquilla name these countries as new self-selected regional powers.<sup>105</sup>

The basic difference between middle powers and regional powers can be identified to be the range of their scope of influence. Middle powers are internationally influential, even through groupings of states or international organizations, while regional powers may be more powerful than middle states but only in a confined geographical region, whatever criteria might be used for the delineation of that region. The status of a regional power does not preclude a state of being a middle power at the same time. Consequently, it can be maintained that the two notions touch upon different levels of the international system. The notion of regional power deals with a specific geographical region and therefore is applicable in the subsystems of the international system. A regional power can also be a superpower, as is the case for the United States, who is a regional power in the subsystem of America but is labeled as superpower if the whole international system is taken into account. Moreover, internationally great powers, as for example China, can be considered regional powers in a more restricted geographical region. On the other hand, Canada is a middle power, without being a regional power.

For realists that focus on capabilities the difference of analytical levels seems to be the distinguishing line between regional powers and middle powers. On the other hand for idealists there exist also qualitative differences in the behavior or the expected behavior of middle powers and regional powers.

From the sections above it can be deducted that a middle power is usually seen as a stabilizer of the system, or in any case a supporter of the status quo, while for a regional power this is not a prerequisite. The example of Iran, or Iraq under Saddam Hussein, can be taken as examples where a state that is challenging the established order of international affairs can be considered a regional power.

One of the main characteristics of a middle power's behavior is its proclivity to multilateral approaches via international organizations and

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<sup>103</sup> Nolte, "Macht und Machthierarchien in den internationalen Beziehungen", 24

<sup>104</sup> Jordaan

<sup>105</sup> Fuller and Arquilla, "The intractable problem of regional powers"

international regimes. The interest in institutions and order is spanned well beyond a middle power's region, which is not the case for a regional power, which is more concentrated on regional governance structures. Therefore, not only the scope of capabilities or influence but also the scope of interests is more confined for a state that is merely a regional power.

Additionally, a middle power is taking a leading role in coalition building with the aspiration to promote the general good, or in any case, the general good also. However, in the case of regional powers it cannot be excluded that a state will try to assume leadership to promote only its own interests or impose its will upon others.

The reason for the above made comparison and clarification is that in the case of Turkey both characterizations have been used frequently. Therefore after presenting how different scholars perceive Turkey's role in today's world, a research will be undertaken to ascertain if Turkey can match up with the notion of middle power or not, and if it does in what degree.

### **1.7. Turkey and regional power theory**

The papers of scholars engaged in regional power analysis have as common denominators in the definition of a regional power its abilities, defined as having the necessary power over resources and actively exercising power over policy outcomes, the claim of a country to a leading role in the region, and an external criterion of acceptance or at least tolerance by other stakeholders in the region. Some researchers have pointed out that a regional power should be in the position to effectively endure any coalition of other states in the region<sup>106</sup> or even be able to disregard the "preferences of the US or multilateral organizations".<sup>107</sup>

Extensive literature written about the role of Turkey after the Cold War seems to be taking Turkey's role as a regional power for granted. For example, according to Nurcan Ozgur, Turkey was evolving as a leading regional power after the 1990 because of her military power, her geostrategic position and her good relations with the United States. In addition, Turkey's power also derived

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<sup>106</sup> Osterud, quoted in Flandes "Conceptualizing regional power in international relations"

<sup>107</sup> Fuller and Arquilla

from the spreading of her political influence through the promotion of its Turco-Islamic model.<sup>108</sup>

Nevertheless, the literature concerning regional powers usually does not include Turkey in its listings. In the working group “(leading) regional powers” of GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, the main focus of research is Brazil, China, India, and South Africa.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, Nolte includes China, India, Brazil and South Africa in his listings of regional powers, while also consenting to the inclusion of states such as “Mexico, Nigeria, Venezuela, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia and perhaps Israel”.<sup>110</sup>

Under Nolte’s definition<sup>111</sup> Turkey seems to comply partially with some of the formulated criteria. Firstly, Turkey possesses significant military, economic and demographic capabilities compared to her neighbors. It can even be maintained that Turkey exerts decisive influence on the ideological construction of its surrounding region, since she is projecting the “Turkish model of government and society” as a model of democracy for the Middle East and Caucasus countries.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, Turkey is part of numerous international and regional institutions, has fairly good diplomatic and trade relations with her neighboring states and is an important actor in regional cooperation schemes. Taking into consideration Turkey’s talks with Syria about terrorism and the role of PKK<sup>113</sup> it can also be asserted that Turkey is also contributing to defining the regional security agenda. Finally, Turkey is projecting herself as an important player in the region. From the AKP program it is quoted that “Turkey has a geo-strategic position, which may help it to play an influential role in its region”.<sup>114</sup>

Notwithstanding the above, Turkey can not be considered a regional power under Nolte’s definition. Firstly, her projected model of moderate Islam is not accepted as a pattern in the region. Moreover, Iran’s projection of her own

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<sup>108</sup> Nurcan Ozgur, “Οι σχέσεις Τουρκίας-Βουλγαρίας από το 1989 μέχρι σήμερα (Turkish-Bulgarian Relations from 1989 until today)” in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής: Μύθος και πραγματικότητα (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis: Myth and Reality)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.) (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans.), (Αθήνα: Infoγνώμων Εκδόσεις, 2001), 457

<sup>109</sup> <http://www.giga-hamburg.de/english/index.php?file=research.html&folder=rp2#>

<sup>110</sup> Nolte, “How to compare regional powers: analytical concepts and research topics”, 3

<sup>111</sup> Nolte, “Macht und Machthierarchien in den internationalen Beziehungen”

<sup>112</sup> Bulent Aras, *The new geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey’s position*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 7

<sup>113</sup> Emine Kart, “Turkey, Syria vow cooperation will repel terrorism in the region”, 4 October 2010, [www.todayszaman.com/news-223399-102-turkey-syria-vow-cooperation-will-repel-terrorism-in-the-region.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news-223399-102-turkey-syria-vow-cooperation-will-repel-terrorism-in-the-region.html), accessed 6 October 2010

<sup>114</sup> <http://eng.akparti.org.tr/english/partyprogramme.html#top#top>, accessed 12 June 2010

model of Islamic state is undermining and limiting Turkey's ideological capabilities and influence. Secondly, although being considered as a substantial actor, her claim to regional leadership is not being uncontested by neighboring countries, such as Iran and Israel.

Finally, Turkey can not be perceived as being the representative or advocating for the interests of a region. Turkey has been placing her attention to her geostrategic position and in the words of the Prime Minister, "Turkey is in a position to be a bridge between East and West, Islam and Christianity and Europe and Asia"<sup>115</sup>. It can be asserted that Turkey sees her position as a link between regions and not belonging to one specific region. Moreover, recently the inclination to consider herself as a spokesperson of the Muslim world can be detected in Turkish foreign policy. The OIC-EU forum in 2002 hosted by Turkey<sup>116</sup> can be provided as evidence for this argument.

Even when taking a less strict definition than the one used by Nolte, and accepting that a regional power is a state with considerable capabilities that exerts influence in its neighborhood and its positions and strategies are taken into consideration by other actors involved in the region, Turkey cannot again be accommodated under such definition.

Although Turkey has significant capabilities and is able to exert some influence in her neighboring countries, the most important impediment in categorizing Turkey as a regional power, irrespectively of which definition is used, is the inability to include her in a demarcated geographical region. For example, in the CIA World Factbook Turkey is considered to belong in South-eastern Europe and South-western Asia, while in its maps Turkey is part of the Middle Eastern map.<sup>117</sup> For the researches of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Turkey is again placed in the Middle East region.<sup>118</sup> For the European Union's institutions Turkey is been considered as part of Europe and is included in the Directorate of Enlargement. In searches through the internet, Turkey appears in both maps of Asia and maps of Europe. Consequently, it can

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<sup>115</sup> <http://eng.akparti.org.tr/english/chairman.html>, accessed 14 March 2010

<sup>116</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Turkish foreign policy in the Post-Cold War period* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2004), 12

<sup>117</sup> [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html), accessed 12 June 2010

<sup>118</sup> [www.carnegieendowment.org/regions/](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/regions/), accessed 12 June 2010

be stated that there seems to be no consent regarding which geographical region Turkey belongs to.

Scholars have used different characterizations for Turkey, including trans-regional power<sup>119</sup> or multiregional power<sup>120</sup>, in order to avoid including Turkey to a specific geographical region. Moreover, a new notion of a geographical region, that of Eurasia<sup>121</sup>, has been developed by intellectuals to describe the region in which Turkey is located. Brzezinski also adheres to this inclusion of Turkey in the Eurasian region, which is envisioned as the combination of the European and the Asian continent. On the other hand, for Barry Rubin, Eurasia is the sum of more than one region, consisting of the former Soviet Republics, stressing over the Caucasus and Central Asia, including also Turkey.<sup>122</sup>

For Fuller and Arquilla, Turkey can be seen as a first-tier actor in the Transcaucasus and Caspian Basin and in the Black Sea region but is an extra-regional actor in the Inner Asia, in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East.<sup>123</sup> It can therefore be deducted that, for Fuller and Arquilla, Turkey is placed in West Asia, without being considered part of Europe, the Balkans or Middle East, regions where she seeks to have influence today.

Lenore Martin agrees with the argumentation presented by Ahmet Davutoglu that Turkey is a trans-regional power. This characterization derives from the interconnection of Turkey with all of its neighboring regions, namely Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Black Sea.<sup>124</sup> In the foreign policy program of the AKP it is stated that along with the traditional Atlantic and European dimensions of Turkish foreign policy Turkey should also develop a policy with a Eurasian axis.<sup>125</sup> This indicates that Turkey considers her neighborhood as being Eurasian.

According to the arguments presented in a previous section, a regional power is not important only for the foreign policy planning of its neighbors but

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<sup>119</sup> Lenore G. Martin, "Introduction: Turkey as a Trans-Regional Actor", *Turkish Studies*, 10:1, March 2009, [http://pdfserve.infomormaworld.com/178378\\_758064766\\_909767937.pdf](http://pdfserve.infomormaworld.com/178378_758064766_909767937.pdf), accessed 10 June 2010

<sup>120</sup> Barry Rubin, Kemal Kirisci (eds.), *Turkey in world politics, an emerging multiregional power*, (Istanbul: Bogazici University Press, 2002)

<sup>121</sup> Aras, *The new geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's position*

<sup>122</sup> Barry Rubin "Foreword" in *The new geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's position*, Bulent Aras, vii

<sup>123</sup> Fuller and Arquilla, "The intractable problem of regional powers"

<sup>124</sup> Lenore G. Martin, "Introduction: Turkey as a Trans-regional actor"

<sup>125</sup> <http://eng.akparti.org.tr/english/partyprogramme.html#6>, accessed 14 March 2010

also of other states that are involved in the area. This significance comes mainly from this state's capabilities. However, these capabilities do not necessarily mean a strong army or even a strong economy. A state's eminent position in its neighborhood may come from some ideational factor or merely by its size or geographical location. For example, Egypt has a disproportionate political weight compared to its capabilities because of the fact that it is seen as a representative of the Arab world. Other examples include India and Brazil, states that claim for a bigger role in international relations and cannot be ignored, largely due to their size, population and dynamic economy. Therefore, the inclusion of a country in the strategic planning of its neighbors is a sign that this country is an important player in the region.

Regional power may also be a state that provokes balance-of-power movements by its neighbors. For example, no country accepts North Korea's role as a regional power and it does not even meet the criterion put forth by Nolte of being integrated in the region. But the fact that its foreign policy and actions can have great impact on its region make this country a constant concern for countries in the region, and thus open the way for North Korea to be characterized as regional power. It is Fuller and Arquilla who suggest that a regional power may be in a position to disregard or counter American and international interests and concerns.<sup>126</sup>

Although Turkey's capabilities cannot go unnoticed they don't guarantee that Turkey's interest will be taken into consideration in the planning of other important players in the region. An attestation to this opinion is the fact that the United States proceeded with the war in Iraq in 2003, disregarding the interests and opposition of Turkey concerning the invasion in Iraq. United States' proven power to act out in all of Turkey's surrounding regions despite Turkey's opposition nullifies Turkey's claims for influential regional leadership.

### **1.8. Turkey as a middle power**

For William Hale Turkey is viewed as a middle power, "power being here defined as the ability to oblige other states to take actions which they would not

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<sup>126</sup> Fuller and Arquilla, "The intractable problem of regional powers"

otherwise have taken, and to resist pressure to do so from other states”.<sup>127</sup> Middle power status is intertwined with the size and population of the country, its capabilities in the economic and military sphere as well as its strategic importance. Hale does not incorporate the functional dimension of a middle state’s foreign policy and follows the realist school of thought. The important attributes are the military capabilities and the ability to influence the policies of other states.

Turkey has the material resources to support her positioning among the middle powers in the international level. Turkey is placed as the 37th largest country by total area out of 235 countries. With an estimated population of 75 millions Turkey is the 18<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world.<sup>128</sup> With more than half of her population being in the ages among the ages 15-65 and the median age at 28 years old,<sup>129</sup> Turkey is a country with young working population.

As far as economy is concerned, Turkey has, according to 2009 data from the World Bank, \$8,720 GNI which puts Turkey in the category of upper middle income countries.<sup>130</sup> She is in the 17<sup>th</sup> place according to her GDP<sup>131</sup> which places her at the Group of 20 (G-20) Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors. According to the official site for promoting investments ‘Invest in Turkey’, Turkey is estimated to have an average GDP growth rate of around 8%, “enabling international organizations to regard it as the fastest growing economy in Europe and among the OECD countries, too”.<sup>132</sup> Taking these economic facts into consideration it is not surprising that Turkey is considered a “growth market” and is listed along with Mexico, South Korea and Indonesia to belong to the second group of emerging economies after the BRICs.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000* (London, Portland: Frank Cass, 2000), 1

<sup>128</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_population](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population), accessed 11 February 2011

<sup>129</sup> [www.kwintessential.co.uk/articles/article/Turkey/The-Population-of-Turkey/161](http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/articles/article/Turkey/The-Population-of-Turkey/161), accessed 12 February 2011

<sup>130</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/country/turkey>, accessed 11 February 2011

<sup>131</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_GDP\\_\(nominal\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)), accessed 12 February 2011

<sup>132</sup> Republic of Turkey, Prime Ministry, Investment Support and Promotion Agency, [www.invest.gov.tr/en-US/turkey/factsandfigures/Pages/Economy.aspx](http://www.invest.gov.tr/en-US/turkey/factsandfigures/Pages/Economy.aspx), accessed 11 February 2011

<sup>133</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, “‘BRIC father’ to include Turkey in new grouping”, 17 January 2011, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=8216bric-father-to-include-turkey-in-new-grouping-2011-01-17](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=8216bric-father-to-include-turkey-in-new-grouping-2011-01-17), accessed 18 January 2011

Turkish military is the second largest standing force in NATO and is estimated at over one million uniformed personnel.<sup>134</sup> The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute ranks Turkey as the 16<sup>th</sup> spender in military expenditures and estimates their share as 2.2% percent of GDP for 2008.<sup>135</sup>

Apart from being a member of NATO Turkey also holds membership in almost all important international organizations as for example the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Turkey takes part in 10 UN peacekeeping missions with a total of 523 personnel.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, Turkey is part of some regional organizations such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), which was founded upon her initiative, and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Last but not least Turkey contributed to \$780 millions in development assistance through the Turkish Development Cooperation Agency (TIKA) in 2008. In addition with the financial aid provided, Turkey is also restructuring TIKA in order to be able to better respond to development needs. Although the main focus of her assistance is her adjoining regions, Turkey exhibits willingness to “scale up support to Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean”.<sup>137</sup> The fact that Turkey seeks to expand her development aid program in regions far remote to her may be seen as an indication that she seeks of a bigger role in international affairs.

Moreover Turkey’s geographic position is of great importance since she is located between East and West, North and South, a bridge between Europe and the Middle East, linking energy rich regions such as the Gulf countries and the Caspian Sea. Turkey is also a significant transit country for energy supplies to Europe. Finally, Turkey adjoins regions of strategic US interest such as the Middle East, South Caucasus and the Balkans.

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<sup>134</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey>, accessed 11 February 2011

<sup>135</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_military\\_expenditures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_military_expenditures), accessed 12 February 2011

<sup>136</sup> [www.un.int/turkey/UN%20Peace%20Keeping%20-%202010.pdf](http://www.un.int/turkey/UN%20Peace%20Keeping%20-%202010.pdf), accessed 12 February 2011

<sup>137</sup> <http://europeandcis.undp.org/cd/show/2C25D6F0-F203-1EE9-B697018550E77C38>, accessed 12 February 2011

It can be concluded that Turkey is a state with considerable financial resources, young population and high development rates. Moreover, she possesses of significant military capabilities and is represented in almost every international organization. Consequently, she can be considered a middle country according to her capabilities and geographic location.

With the aim to establish a link between Turkey's foreign policy behavior in recent years and the abovementioned literature about middle powers a brief presentation of Turkish foreign policy in her neighboring regions will be undertaken. The third chapter will deal with Ankara's relations with Tehran and Turkey's mediation efforts to address the problem of Iran's nuclear program. In that section, Turkey will again be measured up to middle power theory, this time based on her behavior regarding the Iranian issue.

## Chapter 2: Turkey's relations with her neighboring regions

### 2.1. Overall policy directions

Turkey's contemporary foreign policy has been extensively debated not only in Turkey, but also in capitals around the world. The topic that concentrates a lot of attention is the nature of Turkish policies and the role that Turkey is playing or is aspired to play both in the neighboring regions and globally. With the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power a lot of eyebrows have been raised and the discussion about the orientation of Turkish foreign policy has fired up.<sup>138</sup> Many accuse the present government of disassociating from the West and attempting to revive a sphere of influence equivalent to the former territories of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>139</sup>

Some elements of Turkey's contemporary foreign policy can be considered to derive from her Ottoman past, as for example some special relationships that exist with Muslims in the Balkans and the Middle East. During the Ottoman time, Turkey was trying through alliances with the European Powers to exploit their differences so as to hold on to her territories and avoid mutilation. In the republican years this attitude of occasional alignment has continued but it shifted radically after World War II, with the alignment with the USA through NATO on a permanent basis in order to counterbalance the threat from the Soviet Union.

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic the main objective was to consolidate the newly established state and to avoid adventures in the exterior that might compromise the wellbeing of the Republic.<sup>140</sup> Therefore the foreign policy became mainly passive and Turkey followed a neutral policy "with a

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<sup>138</sup> The Economist, "Turkey's foreign policy: Is Turkey turning?", 10 June 2010, [www.economist.com/node/16333417?story\\_id=16333417&source=most\\_commented](http://www.economist.com/node/16333417?story_id=16333417&source=most_commented), accessed 11 June 2010

<sup>139</sup> Suat Kiniklioglu, AK Party deputy chairman for external affairs, "'Neo-Ottoman' Turkey", 5 December 2009, [www.todayszaman.com/columnists-194663-neo-ottoman-turkey.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/columnists-194663-neo-ottoman-turkey.html), accessed 6 December 2009

<sup>140</sup> Barry Rubin, "Turkey: a transformed international role" in *Turkey in world politics: an emerging multiregional power*, Barry Rubin, Kemal Kirisci (eds.), 2

general conservative outlook and antirevisionist stand” until the Second World War.<sup>141</sup>

The beginning of the Cold War marked a reorientation of Turkish foreign policy towards prescribing to an alliance on a permanent basis, which would not have been the case before the Second World War. Moreover, the inclusion of Turkey in Western cooperation schemes, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Council of Europe, “was welcomed by Turkey as a sign of its acceptance as a European Nation”.<sup>142</sup> The wish and efforts to be recognized as a European state can be considered as being a diachronic pattern of Turkish foreign policy which nowadays is being expressed through the endeavor to join the European Union.

It can be stated that Ankara has generally refrained from active policies after the Second World War because of the constraints that the inclusion in NATO entailed. The Cold War antagonism between the two poles was the regulatory framework within which Turkish foreign policy was being executed. Moreover, Turkey had shown little consideration for the improvement of relations with countries under the Soviet influence.<sup>143</sup> The first years after the end of the Second World War, Turkey was very considerate of the Alliance’s objectives and has for that reason engaged in several foreign policies that were considered instrumental in the foreign policy of NATO or USA. A characteristic example is Turkey’s participation, in 1955, in the “western sponsored Baghdad Plan”.<sup>144</sup> Although anti-western sentiments have risen during the years, the Soviet threat and the western orientation of the Turkish foreign policy establishment did not fundamentally change the relationship with the West and particularly the United States, notwithstanding some differentiations in policy that never resulted, however, in a breakup of relations.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Cengiz Okman, “Turkish foreign policy: principles- rules- trends, 1814-2003”, in *Turkish Foreign Policy in post Cold War era*, Idris Bal (ed.), (Boka Raton: BrownWalker Press, 2004), 13

<sup>142</sup> Hale, 117

<sup>143</sup> Duygu Bazoglu Sezer, “Turkey in the new security environment in the Balkan and Black Sea region”, in *Turkey between East and West: new challenges for a rising regional power*, Vojtech Mastny and P. Craig Nation (eds.), (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 73

<sup>144</sup> Bruce R. Kuniholm, “ Turkey and the West since World War II”, in *Turkey between East and West: new challenges for a rising regional power*, Vojtech Mastny and P. Craig Nation (eds.), 50

<sup>145</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey, a modern history*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris &Co Ltd, 1998), 288

The end of the Cold War has brought drastic changes in the international order and had profound influence in the Turkish foreign policy framework and planning. Firstly, new states were created after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the majority of whom located in the neighborhood and having some sort of special link with Turkey. Secondly, not only NATO, but USA and the West in general have re-orientated their policies concerning regions such as the Balkans and Asia. Therefore, Turkey's prominence in the strategic considerations of the western alliance has been challenged, since the threat of the Soviet Union was no longer present. Besides, the emancipation of Western European countries from communism resulted in the diversion of Europe's interest away from Turkey, a distant neighbor, and into these Central European countries, which were striving for their incorporation into the world markets and political order.

Turkey faced not only a changed international structure but also significant alterations in her neighboring regions. For instance, as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Turkey's regional enemies such as Syria, Iran and Iraq were also weakened, according to Nasuh Uslu<sup>146</sup>, since they could no longer turn to the USSR for support.

Moreover, some developments that occurred inside Turkey have influenced her foreign policy making. For example, public opinion and interest groups have asserted a more active role in politics, both domestic and foreign. Besides, economic issues were also introduced to foreign policy calculations.<sup>147</sup>

After the end of the Cold War, it was also assumed that "Turkey has lost some of its bargaining cards in the new era and therefore has needed new arguments".<sup>148</sup> Turkey sought to reaffirm her significance for the West firstly through the participation in the war against Iraq. Additionally, Turkey's historical and cultural ties with some of the regions that were a source for western concern in the 1990s, as for example the Balkans and the Central Asia, have renewed Turkey's value for the West. Accordingly, leaders in Ankara have endeavored to project Turkey as a model in some cases, as for example in Central Asian countries, and as an intermediate for relations and integration with the West in some other cases, as was the case for the Balkans. There is merit in the argument

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<sup>146</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Turkish Foreign Policy in the post-Cold War period*, 1

<sup>147</sup> Barry Rubin, "Turkey: a transformed international role", in *Turkey in world politics: an emerging multiregional power*, Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci (eds.), 5

<sup>148</sup> Idris Bal, "Introduction" in *Turkish Foreign Policy in post Cold War era*, Idris Bal (ed.), 1

that, under this prism, Turkey's foreign policies can be seen as re-active. Therefore, Turkey has tried to enhance her relations with neighboring countries in order to avoid a decline of her strategic importance vis-à-vis the Americans and the Europeans after the restructuring of the international affairs.

On the contrary, others have advocated for a rising in the influence of Turkey's power in neighboring areas which would turn her into a regional power, and the assertion of a more independent role in international relations. For instance, the Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel stated the rise a "gigantic Turkic world" and envisioned an association of Turkic States.<sup>149</sup> This position upheld that Turkey should be disassociated from the West and should pursue foreign policies that best serve her interests, despite opposite directions and even at the expense of her relations with the West.<sup>150</sup>

It can be put forth that today Turkey is trying to find a balance between her quest for a more independent foreign policy and her relations with the West. On the one hand, Turkey does not seem powerful, confident or internally stable enough to choose to raise her voice against the Americans and the Europeans. On the other hand, it can be argued that Turkey has not yet come to terms with a possible disassociation from the West that the pursuit of a more independent role in global affairs would entail. For instance, Turkey has not abandoned the quest for membership in the European Union.

The next section comprises of a brief history of Turkey's relations with her neighboring regions, namely the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and the Middle East, with emphasis on the years after 2002 and the rise of the AKP to power.

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<sup>149</sup> Gareth Winrow, "Turkish Policy toward Central Asia and the Transcaucasus", in *Turkey's new world, changing dynamics in Turkish foreign policy*, Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari (eds.), (Washington D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), 117

<sup>150</sup> An example was the "Islamist party's call for Turkey to turn away from the West and become leader of a large Muslim bloc". Sule Kut "The contours of Turkish foreign policy" in *Turkey in world politics: an emerging multiregional power*, Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci (eds.), 14

## 2.2. Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans

### 2.2.1. From the end of the Cold War until 2002

Turkey's policies towards the Balkans until the 1990s can be seen under the restraints posed by the Cold War and the two competing blocs. Before the 1990s Turkey has showed a lack of interest concerning Turkic people or Balkan people of Muslim heritage, and has refrained from developing close relationships with them, mainly in order not to jeopardize relations with Moscow.<sup>151</sup> Consequently, Turkey has not attempted to increase her influence in former Ottoman areas. As a result of the alignment with the West, Turkey had sometimes to participate in foreign policies which were mainly drawn in the United States. For example, during the 1950s Turkey was encouraged by the United States to enter in a Balkan Pact with Greece and Yugoslavia, so that the West could have some influence in Yugoslavia, which was usually at strains with the Soviet Union.<sup>152</sup> To sum up, Ankara was not involved in the Balkans during the Cold War and occasional active policies were motivated by the Allies.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reformation which took place in the Balkans, Turkish policy was freed from the constraints that existed during the Cold War. Since the beginning of the war in Yugoslavia Turkey has shown an increased interest on the subject. Especially the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a priority in Turkish foreign policy after the 1990s. Bosnia-Herzegovina and FYROM (Former Yugoslavic Republic of Macedonia) took up a lot of Turkish foreign policy makers' time and resources. In the beginning, Turkey was cautious not to indulge in their requests for acknowledging their independence and was underlying her preference for the integrity of Yugoslavia. This stance was in accordance with year-old practices of passive foreign policy. But the continuation of the war and the general changes in the international order had as a result the alteration of Turkish foreign policy. For example, Turkey engaged in a diplomatic marathon in international organizations and fora, according to Sule Kut, in order to ensure the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina

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<sup>151</sup> Duygu Bazoglu Sezer, "Turkey in the new security environment in the Balkan and Black Sea region", in *Turkey between East and West: new challenges for a rising regional power*, Vojtech Mastny and P. Craig Nation (eds.), 73

<sup>152</sup> Zurcher, *Turkey, a modern history*, 248

during the spring and summer of 1992, when Turkey was also holding the chairmanship of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and of the Council of Europe.<sup>153</sup> In the case of FYROM, Turkey proceeded in her recognition as Republic of Macedonia, amid protest from Greece, and at the same time supported FYROM with humanitarian help and loans.<sup>154</sup>

These two newly founded republics pointed out to cultural and ethnic ties in order to gain the support of Turkey in their independence struggle. Firstly, both were former territories of the Ottoman Empire and many Turks in Turkey have a Balkan origin, in addition to around one million Muslims of Turkish origin living in Yugoslavia in the 1990s.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, these communities have exerted pressure in the Turkish government to act in favor of their Muslim brothers, as they were perceived at that time. It is interesting to note that in Turkish minds the Muslims in the Balkans are largely considered Balkan Turks and Turkey is perceived to rightfully own the right of their protection. Nasuh Uslu asserts that “inserting itself as the protector of the Muslims in the region” is among Turkish foreign policy’s aims.<sup>156</sup> Apart from internal pressure by the media and public opinion, Turkish foreign policy was also motivated by an attempt to create allies in the Balkans, especially in response to a perceived alliance between Christian nations, namely Serbia, Russia and Greece, in the Balkans. However, Turkish rulers have not totally supported public opinion’s demands for more pro-Muslim intervention in the Balkans, in order not to raise suspicions about Turkey trying to revive her past rule in the region.

Additionally, Ankara has promoted development projects in the Balkans with the participation of Bulgaria, Albania and FYROM, which raised suspicions, from the Greek side, concerning attempts to create an ‘Islamic arc’ in the Balkans.<sup>157</sup> At the same time, Turkey tried to develop regional cooperation schemes that would involve her neighbors. The most important initiative was the

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<sup>153</sup> Sule Kut “Η Γιουγκοσλαβική κρίση και η πολιτική της Τουρκίας για τη Βοσνία-Ερζεγοβίνη και τη FYROM: 1990-1993 (The Crisis in Yugoslavia and Turkey’s policy for Bosnia-Herzegovina and FYROM)” in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής: Μύθος και πραγματικότητα (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis: Myth and Reality)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans.), 435-436

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 447-448

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 452-453

<sup>156</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Turkish Foreign Policy in the post-Cold War period*, 115

<sup>157</sup> Sule Kut, “Η Γιουγκοσλαβική κρίση και η πολιτική της Τουρκίας (The Crisis in Yugoslavia and Turkey’s policy)”, 447-448

one concerning the Black Sea. The proposed cooperation had as objective to promote the economic cooperation of countries around the Black Sea but was considered by some of its founding members, among them also Bulgaria, as an attempt from Turkey to use this initiative to promote her own goals. Fears of Turkey's leading role in this cooperation scheme did not deter Bulgaria to join, although it was a source of hesitation regarding the development of cooperation.<sup>158</sup>

According to Nasuh Uslu, "what Turkey did was to try to affect developments in the Balkans in the context of multilateral structures such as NATO".<sup>159</sup> This acknowledgement of her inability to effectively exert influence on her own and therefore resulting to the use of multilateral structures or international or regional organizations is consistent with middle power theory. It can be maintained that both in the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, Turkey had similar concerns and aims with the West and especially the United States, which allowed for a more "active Turkish engagement in the Balkans".<sup>160</sup> Turkey has been facilitating western policies in the Balkans, and was playing a stabilizing role. Turkey's participation in both the Iraq war and the clashes in the Balkans has neutralized not only the potential influence of Iran<sup>161</sup> but also arguments concerning clashes of civilizations between Christians and Muslims. Therefore, it can be concluded that Turkey could be seen as a middle power which helped the transition to new structures of power without disrupting the overall international structure.

Although Turkey's engagement in the Balkans can be considered as a proof of Turkey's rising role as a middle power the point that her activities were "overlapping" with the overall western and especially American policies<sup>162</sup> in the area must also be stressed. Turkey's active policies in the Balkans were successful mostly because of the point mentioned above and not necessarily because Turkey was strong enough in the international scene to take the lead and

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<sup>158</sup> Nurcan Ozgur, "Οι σχέσεις Τουρκίας- Βουλγαρίας από το 1989 μέχρι σήμερα (Turkish-Bulgarian Relations from 1989 until today)", in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής: Μύθος και πραγματικότητα (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis: Myth and Reality)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), 494

<sup>159</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Turkish Foreign Policy in the post-Cold War period*, 115

<sup>160</sup> Ilhan Uzgel, "The Balkans: Turkey's stabilizing role" in *Turkey in world politics: an emerging multiregional power*, Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci (eds.), 88

<sup>161</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Turkish Foreign Policy in the post-Cold War period*, 116

<sup>162</sup> Ilhan Uzgel, "The Balkans: Turkey's stabilizing role", 88

convince other states to follow her initiatives despite their possible disagreements. The theory on middle powers, as it is presented in the previous chapter, advocates that these states may some times act in accordance with the interests of the major powers or in other times inducing minor changes that do not challenge the overall power structure but it is always acknowledged that a middle power never advocates for policies that are totally opposite to the major powers' interests.<sup>163</sup>

Generally, in the Balkans Turkey has sought to pursue her own interests but always in concert with other important players in the region. The bigger part of Turkey's diplomatic efforts was used during the Bosnian crisis. Thereafter a loss of interest has been observed in the Balkans but it was only temporarily. The geographical proximity and feelings of kinship did not let Turkey to overlook the developments in the Balkans.

To sum up, during the Cold War, relations with the Balkans were conducted inside the Cold War framework and the East-West rivalry. Since 1990s Turkey has sought the improvement of relations with her Balkan neighbors. According to Sule Kut, "Turkey has played the role of a mature, rational and unbiased regional power"<sup>164</sup> in the Balkans, especially in the first half of the 1990s. Additionally, Ilhan Uzgel, as the title of one of his articles reveals, maintains that Turkey's activities in the Balkans have served the purpose of the region's stability.<sup>165</sup>

However, Turkey's 'Ottoman legacy' in the Balkans has been seen as an obstacle to the fostering of closer relations with her neighbors.<sup>166</sup> Despite fluctuations in the relationship with the Balkan countries, a revitalizing of interest and efforts has been observed since the mid 1990s. Moreover, former Foreign Minister Ismail Cem "repeatedly stressed that he would make the Balkans again a top-priority area".<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Jordaan, 167

<sup>164</sup> Sule Kut, "Turkish policy towards the Balkans", in *Turkey's new world, changing dynamics in Turkish foreign policy*, Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari (eds.), 88

<sup>165</sup> Ilhan Uzgel, "The Balkans: Turkey's stabilizing role" in *Turkey in world politics: an emerging multiregional power*, Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci (eds.)

<sup>166</sup> Sule Kut, "Turkish policy towards the Balkans", in *Turkey's new world*, , 78

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 76

### 2.2.2. *From 2002 until today*

The new government that came to power in 2002 followed in general terms the policy followed in the previous years in the Balkans.

An agreement to improve the relations between Ankara and Skopje was signed in 2008 and in a visit to Ankara President Ivanof recognized the importance of the support been given by Turkey to FYROM.<sup>168</sup> Ankara has been a strong advocate of FYROM's inclusion in NATO and in the European Union.<sup>169</sup> Turkey has been stepping up her investments in FYROM in the past five years<sup>170</sup> but has not managed to take the lead from Greek investments in the country. Albeit the rising nationalism in FYROM that aims to portray that “the country belongs ultimately to the Slavic Christian majority and not the Albanian Muslim minority” it seems that Turkey, with a predominantly Muslim population is most welcomed in FYROM.<sup>171</sup> It can be maintained that the country with the least reservations about Turkey's rising influence in the Balkans is FYROM. This derives not only from a shared history and of people of Turkish ancestry living in FYROM and vice versa, but also from “shared political enmity with Greece”.<sup>172</sup> Notwithstanding the close diplomatic relations, Turkish foreign policy in FYROM is not always welcomed by the Albanian minority and therefore should be conducted with caution, and, as Darko Duridanski advocates, there are limits to Ankara's influence in the country and especially in dealing with the ethnic and religious disputes.<sup>173</sup>

Ankara's engagement in the Balkans, and especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is apparent by the foreign ministry's efforts to protect the integrity of the confederation, in the formation of which Turkey played a catalytic role. For that reason, Turkey engaged, for example, in consultations with the Spanish

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<sup>168</sup> “Δηλώσεις αλληλοϋποστήριξης στη συνάντηση των προέδρων Τουρκίας και ΠΓΔΜ (Statements of mutual support in the meeting between the Presidents of Turkey and FYROM)”, 16 October 2009, [www.in.gr/news/article.asp?lngEntityID=1064736&lngDtrID=245](http://www.in.gr/news/article.asp?lngEntityID=1064736&lngDtrID=245), accessed 16 October 2009

<sup>169</sup> Darko Duridanski, “Macedonia-Turkey: The Ties That Bind”, *Balkan Insight*, 10 February 2011, [www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-turkey-the-ties-that-bind](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-turkey-the-ties-that-bind), accessed 10 March 2011

<sup>170</sup> Lavdim Hamidi, “Turkey's Balkan Shopping Spree”, *Balkan Insight*, 7 December 2010, [www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/turkey-s-balkan-shopping-spree](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/turkey-s-balkan-shopping-spree), accessed 10 March 2011

<sup>171</sup> Marcus Tanner, “Ottoman Past Haunts Turkey's Balkan Image”, *Balkan Insight*, 2 December 2010, [www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/ottoman-past-haunts-turkey-s-balkan-image](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/ottoman-past-haunts-turkey-s-balkan-image), accessed 10 March 2011

<sup>172</sup> Darko Duridanski, “Macedonia-Turkey: The Ties That Bind”

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

government, just before they assumed the presidency of the European Union, in the first semester of 2010.<sup>174</sup> Apart from participation in the Peace Implementation Council, which is responsible for the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, Turkey has established her own mediation track. Two separate mechanisms, one involving Turkey, Bosnia and Serbia and the other Turkey, Bosnia and Croatia have been launched. The trilateral consultation mechanism between the Turkish, the Serb and the Bosniac Foreign Minister was launched in October 2009, during a Summit of the Southeast European Cooperation Process, when Turkey held the presidency, in order to discuss the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>175</sup> Subsequently, the trilateral talks between the Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina started in January 2010.<sup>176</sup>

Ankara's initiatives have resulted, among others, in the Istanbul Declaration in May 2010, where the Turkish President, the Serbian President and the member of the Bosnian Presidency agreed to promote peace, economic development, regional stability and integration in EU structures. Moreover, the agreement to hold regular meetings between the three parties was reached.<sup>177</sup> On the other hand, Turkey does not seem to be welcomed by the Bosnian Serbs. In a trip to Israel, on August 2010, the Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska, one of the parties in the federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, has stated that Turkey is intervening in internal affairs of that state and is biased in her support for the Bosnian Muslims. Moreover, he pointed out that Israel was also sharing Bosnian Serbs' concerns about "Turkey's growing engagement in the Balkans".<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Abdullah Bozkurt, "Turkey secures Spain's help to solve Bosnian crisis", 19 November 2009, [www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-193358-turkey-secures-spains-help-to-solve-bosnian-crisis.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-193358-turkey-secures-spains-help-to-solve-bosnian-crisis.html), accessed 19 November 2009

<sup>175</sup> Fulya Ozerkan, "Turkey to energize the Balkans", 7 October 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-to-energize-the-balkans-2009-10-07](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-to-energize-the-balkans-2009-10-07), accessed 7 October 2009

<sup>176</sup> Today's Zaman, "Turkey and Croatia pledge support for Bosnia in Ankara talks", 29 April 2010, [www.todayszaman.com/news-208780-100-turkey-and-croatia-pledge-support-for-bosnia-in-ankara-talks.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news-208780-100-turkey-and-croatia-pledge-support-for-bosnia-in-ankara-talks.html), accessed 29 April 2010

<sup>177</sup> Igor Jovanovic, "New beginnings in the Balkans?", 21 May 2010, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch/Detail/?lng=en&id=116496>, accessed 14 March 2011

<sup>178</sup> Milorad Dodik, Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska, as quoted in Today's Zaman, "Israel concerned over Turkey's role in Bosnia and Herzegovina", 20 August 2010, [www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-219556-israel-concerned-over-turkeys-role-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-219556-israel-concerned-over-turkeys-role-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina.html), accessed 10 January 2011

Another attempt of the Turkish side to affect developments in the Balkans can also be seen in the recent trip of Turkish Prime Minister Davutoglu to Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>179</sup> The fact that Davutoglu held talks with all the stakeholders in the country, including the Serbs, can on the one hand be seen as an attempt to be impartial so as to promote a solution in the deadlock in the formation of government that followed the October elections. On the other hand it can also be seen as an attempt to downplay Serbian accusations for favoritism towards the Bosnian Muslims and to appease fears about the increasing involvement of Turkey in the Balkans. However, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, who is responsible for the implementation of the Dayton Agreements, upholds that Ankara's role is being constructive and impartial.<sup>180</sup>

Concerning the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkish diplomats oppose his replacement by the Special Representative of the EU, with the reasoning that Russia and Turkey, both instrumental in the stability of Bosnia- Herzegovina, are not members of the EU. Besides, Turkey has criticized the European Union for not easing the visa regime for Muslim Bosnians.<sup>181</sup>

The importance that Turkey assigns to Bosnia-Herzegovina is also exhibited by continuing efforts to bring the concerned parties in the discussion table. For instance, in a visit to Sarajevo in late 2009, the Turkish Foreign Minister has urged the representatives of the Croats, Serbs and Bosnians to reconcile.<sup>182</sup> However, a new initiative that has been launched by US and the EU, called the Butmir process, has excluded Turkey as well as Russia from the

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<sup>179</sup> Today's Zaman, "Flag row mars Davutoglu's visit to Serb region of Bosnia", 31 January 2001, [www.todayszaman.com/news-233971-flag-row-mars-davutoglus-visit-to-serb-region-of-bosnia.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news-233971-flag-row-mars-davutoglus-visit-to-serb-region-of-bosnia.html), accessed 2 February 2011

<sup>180</sup> Fulya Ozerkan, "Bosnia's international governor praises Turkish role, dispels concerns", [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=bosnia8217s-int8217l-governor-praises-turkish-role-dissipates-concerns-2010-11-22](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=bosnia8217s-int8217l-governor-praises-turkish-role-dissipates-concerns-2010-11-22), accessed 11 March 2011

<sup>181</sup> Abdullah Bozkurt, "Turkey secures Spain's help to solve Bosnian crisis"

<sup>182</sup> Kemal Balci, "Turkey, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina hold trilateral talks", 15 December 2009, [www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action;jsessionid=F3A00A4138994DD5C394795D6D3E4172?newsId=195560](http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action;jsessionid=F3A00A4138994DD5C394795D6D3E4172?newsId=195560), accessed 15 December 2009

negotiations due to “EU’s belief that Turkey is taking sides and favors Bosnian Muslims, and as such, cannot be an objective mediator”.<sup>183</sup>

In the case of Kosovo, Turkey has recognized its independence as soon as it was declared in February 2008 and has been a strong advocate of Kosovo’s integration in the European Union.<sup>184</sup> Recently, the Ambassador of Kosovo in Ankara has stated that Kosovo would welcome Turkey’s contribution to the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, since “Turkey is a very well-respected country in Kosovo but it also has good relations with Serbia”.<sup>185</sup>

Apart from Kosovo, Montenegro also is in favor of an active Turkish role in the region.<sup>186</sup> It can be maintained that smaller countries in the Balkans are more susceptible to Turkish involvement in the Balkans, as they see Ankara as protecting their interests, especially against other regional powers. This holds true for example, in the cases of Kosovo and Montenegro, which perceive Turkish involvement as a counterweight to Serbia. However, larger countries, which are also aspired to bigger role in the Balkans, as for example Bulgaria<sup>187</sup>, seem to be less enthusiastic about Turkey’s engagement in the region.

It is worth mentioning that the trip of the Turkish President Gul to Serbia on October 2009 land-marked the first visit of a Turkish President in Serbia for the last 23 years.<sup>188</sup> This visit was within the framework of diplomatic activities aiming to foster a stable environment in Turkey’s neighborhood. According to Hurriyet’s reporter Fulya Ozerkan, Turkey was redirecting her diplomatic efforts

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<sup>183</sup> Barcin Yinanc, “Excluded by US and EU, Turkey undertakes own mediation in Bosnia”, 15 January 2010, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=excluded-by-us-and-eu-turkey-undertakes-its-onw-mediation-in-bosnia-2010-01-15](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=excluded-by-us-and-eu-turkey-undertakes-its-onw-mediation-in-bosnia-2010-01-15), accessed 16 January 2010

<sup>184</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, “Former president urges Europe to integrate Kosovo and Bosnia”, 9 December 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=former-president-urges-europe-to-integrate-kosovo-and-bosnia-2009-12-09](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=former-president-urges-europe-to-integrate-kosovo-and-bosnia-2009-12-09), accessed 9 December 2009

<sup>185</sup> Fulya Ozerkan, “Kosovo welcomes Turkey role in restoring ties with Serbia”, 16 February 2011, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=kosovo-welcomes-turkey-role-in-restoring-ties-with-serbia-2011-02-16](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=kosovo-welcomes-turkey-role-in-restoring-ties-with-serbia-2011-02-16), accessed 11 March 2011

<sup>186</sup> Balkan Insight, “Montenegro ‘Supports’ Turkish Role in Balkan Stability”, 7 March 2011, [www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/montenegro-supports-turkish-role-in-balkan-stability](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/montenegro-supports-turkish-role-in-balkan-stability), accessed 10 March 2011

<sup>187</sup> Yana Buhner Tavianier, “Ottoman Past Dogs Sofia-Ankara Relations”, 22 December 2010, [www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/ottoman-past-dogs-sofia-ankara-relations](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/ottoman-past-dogs-sofia-ankara-relations), accessed 10 March 2011

<sup>188</sup> Lutfu Karakas and Firat Keskinilic, “Gul becomes the first Turkish president to visit Serbia in 23 years”, 26 October 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=gul-becomes-the-first-turk-president-to-visit-serbia-in-23-years-2009-10-26#](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=gul-becomes-the-first-turk-president-to-visit-serbia-in-23-years-2009-10-26#), accessed 26 October 2009

towards stabilizing the Balkans, “after intense diplomatic undertakings in the Caucasus and Middle East”.<sup>189</sup>

It is noteworthy that in the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, the Balkans are characterized as “a priority for Turkey from the perspectives of geographical location, economy, culture as well as historic and human bonds”.<sup>190</sup> It can be inferred that Turkey is considering herself an honest broker in the Balkans, especially regarding the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is formally expressed that Turkey is “conscious of her responsibilities to the peace and stability of the Balkans”<sup>191</sup> which is indicative of the perception of Turkey’s role in the region. For that reason Turkey has been actively taking part in international civil and military missions in the Balkans, such as the IFOR and KFOR.<sup>192</sup> Besides, Turkey has also been a strong advocate of the integration of Balkan countries in Western cooperation institutions, such as NATO and the EU. Turkey is also supporting regional cooperation schemes which promote regional integration, such as the South East European Cooperation Process, the Southeast Europe Multinational Force (SEEMNF) and the Southeast Europe Cooperative Initiative (SECI)<sup>193</sup> thus creating cooperation relations in the regional level with Balkan countries.

Generally speaking, these diplomatic moves can be seen under the broader strategy to make Turkey more visible in the international affairs and grant her the status of a middle power in the international system, through taking the role of mediator, as in the case of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, and of the advocate of some states, as indicated by the support to FYROM’s NATO candidacy.

Overall, the Balkans do not seem to be the first priority in Turkish foreign policy. One reason may be that the Balkans have already started their approach with the European Union, which makes Turkey’s help and guidance much less attractive. Moreover, due to fears of the revival of the old Ottoman sphere of influence, most states in the region are trying to avoid, if not lessen, Turkish increasing involvement in the region. Last but not least, from the economic point

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<sup>189</sup> Fulya Ozerkan, “Turkey to energize the Balkans”

<sup>190</sup> [www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-with-the-balkan-region.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-with-the-balkan-region.en.mfa), accessed 15 February 2011

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Nasuh Uslu, 116

<sup>193</sup> İlhan Uzgel, “The Balkans: Turkey’s stabilizing role” in *Turkey in world politics: an emerging multiregional power*, Barry Rubin, Kemal Kirisci (eds.), 84-85

of view, the EU is the most important partner for both the Balkans and Turkey, limiting thus the leverage that Turkish investments could have in the area. At the same time, “the major Turkish investments are focused in the Middle East” and the volume of trade with the Balkans is much lesser than with the Middle Eastern countries.<sup>194</sup>

### **2.3. Turkish foreign policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia**

#### *2.3.1. From the end of the Cold War until 2002*

Relations with the Soviet Union, as with the Russian Empire before it, have been largely adverse, not least due to geostrategic concerns and the East-West confrontation of the Cold War. Consequently, Turkey’s relations with some populations of common ethnic ancestry in the Soviet area have basically been non-existent up until the 1990s, since Ankara was focusing on relations with Moscow.<sup>195</sup> Turkey has pursued such a policy because of fears that she might be accused of irredentism, pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism<sup>196</sup>, which Ataturk has identified as dangerous for the Turkish Republic.<sup>197</sup>

The breakup of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of new independent states in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Therefore, opportunities as well as challenges were brought forth for Turkish foreign policy. Out of the eight countries that were created in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia, five of them, namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, are considered Turkic states because of their common linguistic, cultural, historical, ethnic and religious ties with Turkey.<sup>198</sup> The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs points out that relations between those states and Turkey

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<sup>194</sup> Fadi Hakura, expert on Turkey’s EU bid, as quoted in “Turkey’s Balkan shopping Spree”

<sup>195</sup> Duygu Bazoglu Sezer, “Turkey in the new security environment in the Balkan and Black Sea region”, in *Turkey between East and West*, Vojtech Mastny, P. Craig Nation (eds.), 84

<sup>196</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, “The Ottoman rule in Europe from the perspective of 1994”, in *Turkey between East and West*, Vojtech Mastny, P. Craig Nation (eds.), 2

<sup>197</sup> Duygu Bazoglu Sezer, “Turkey in the new security environment in the Balkan and Black Sea region”, 73

<sup>198</sup> Zurcher, *Turkey, a modern history*, 335

developed rapidly, since Turkey was the first country to acknowledge their independence.<sup>199</sup>

It is regarded that apart from considerations for the “lost cousins” of Turkestan, Turkey was keen to play a leading role in Central Asia partly as a response to “what was perceived as rejection by the West”.<sup>200</sup> While not fundamentally challenging the consequences of the deterioration of relations with Europe, Duygu Bazoglu Sezer further asserts that Turkey was not driven by Pan-Turkic or Pan-Turanian aspirations, but was basically trying to “expand the liberal, democratic and secular belt” through the promotion of the Turkish model.<sup>201</sup> Moreover, Turkey has suggested the establishment of a common market and the introduction of the Turkish lira as a common currency.<sup>202</sup> It can be sustained that Ankara was basically aiming to increase her influence in the region in order to profit both politically and economically.

Apart from common ties, economic and political considerations also played a role in Turkish strategies towards the newly established countries. As a result, Turkey sought the improvement of her relations with non-Turkic Georgia, for example, which is an important actor in the energy-rich Caspian Sea and a significant transit route for oil and gas pipelines.<sup>203</sup>

It is noteworthy that Turkey has developed her ties with these states amid American and generally western encouragement. The idea of Turkey’s posing as a role model was convenient for Western politicians that desired to prevent these new countries to follow the example of extremist Iran.<sup>204</sup> For the West, Turkey had adopted the western values of democracy and free economy and could act as a model for these new states. Turkey’s significance as a role model has been stressed not only by Western politicians but also by leaders of Central Asian

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<sup>199</sup> “Turkey’s relations with Central Asian Republics”, [www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey\\_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa), accessed 14 February 2011

<sup>200</sup> R. Craig Nation, “Preface”, in *Turkey between East and West: new challenges for a rising regional power*, Vojtech Mastny, P. Craig Nation (eds.), xi

<sup>201</sup> Duygu Bazoglu Sezer, “Turkey in the new security environment in the Balkan and Black Sea region”, 86-87

<sup>202</sup> Hakan Fidan “Turkish foreign policy towards Central Asia”, *Journal of Balkan and Near East Studies*, 12:1, March 2010, [www.informaworld.com/smpp/section?content=a919373181&fulltext=713240928](http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/section?content=a919373181&fulltext=713240928), accessed 20 March 2011

<sup>203</sup> Gareth Winrow, “Turkish Policy toward Central Asia and the Transcaucasus”, in *Turkey’s new world, changing dynamics in Turkish foreign policy*, Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari (eds.) 116

<sup>204</sup> Gareth Winrow, “Turkey and the newly independent states of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus” in *Turkey in world politics*, Barry Rubin, Kemal Kirisci (eds.), 235

states.<sup>205</sup> For that reason, Turkey undertook, for example, the task to train their diplomatic personnel and guide them in their diplomatic representation in multinational organizations.<sup>206</sup>

Moreover, Turkey has considered herself an intermediate between these countries and the rest of the world and has assisted them in their effort to integrate with international organizations. According to Winrow, there were even some Turkish officials that in the beginning of the 1990s were envisioning “making Turkey a leading actor in the post-Soviet Central Asia”.<sup>207</sup> In accordance with this view, Turkey has claimed between 1993 and 1995 a “seat on the Security Council of the United Nations” on the grounds that she was the representative of Turkic populations in Asia.<sup>208</sup>

Generally, Turkey, considers herself as acting as an advocate of resolving the problems of Central Asian countries in international fora and at the same time as acting as a consultant of these countries, as it can be concluded by the internet site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>209</sup> At the same time, Turkey until today proclaims her support for the integration of the South Caucasus countries in the Euro-Atlantic structures.<sup>210</sup>

Not only Turkey, but also the Central Asian and Caucasus countries sought to advance their relations with Ankara, in pursue of their political and economic needs.<sup>211</sup> The newly found states at the first stages of their independence have tried to take advantage of their cultural and linguistic affinity with Turkey in order to consolidate their sovereignty. Official visits between high level politicians of Turkey and the Central Asian republics was a common trend in the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>212</sup> Besides, representatives of Turkey and the Turkic countries also held multilateral meetings resulting to cooperation

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<sup>205</sup> Gul Turan, Ilter Turan, “Οι σχέσεις της Τουρκίας με τις τουρκογενείς δημοκρατίες (Turkey’s Relations with the Turkic Republics)” in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans), 543

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 538

<sup>207</sup> Gareth Winrow, “Turkey and the newly independent states of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus” in *Turkey in world politics*, Barry Rubin, Kemal Kirisci (eds.), 235

<sup>208</sup> Zurcher, *Turkey, a modern history*, 338

<sup>209</sup> “Turkey’s relations with Central Asian Republics”, [www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey\\_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa), accessed 14 February 2011

<sup>210</sup> “Turkey’s relations with Southern Caucasus countries”, [www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey\\_s-relations-with-southern-caucasus.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-southern-caucasus.en.mfa), accessed 14 February 2011

<sup>211</sup> Duygu Bazoglu Sezer, “Turkey in the new security environment in the Balkan and Black Sea region”, in *Turkey between East and West*, Vojtech Mastny, P. Craig Nation (eds.), 73

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 85

agreements, such as the creation of the ‘Eurasian Chamber of Commerce and Industry’ in 1993.<sup>213</sup>

Demirel’s government sought to create an association of the Turkic states in the early 1990s.<sup>214</sup> The leader of Uzbekistan proclaimed that they could consider an institutional formation among the Turkic republics and Turkey that would resemble the Commonwealth of Independent States.<sup>215</sup> Summits of the leaders of the Turkic states were convened annually after 1992, but a permanent council was founded only in 2009.<sup>216</sup>

In addition, Turkey created a special bank, named Eximbank, set up the Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TIKA) and appointed a State Minister for Turkic Affairs in order to boost cooperation with the new countries of South Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>217</sup> The funding through Eximbank was less than initially envisaged and the Turkish businessmen soon realized that investments in Central Asian countries were not free of problems.<sup>218</sup> It became evident that Turkey did not have the required economic power to support the new states in their transition period.

Furthermore, relations in the cultural field were developed with the establishment of schools in Central Asia, not only by the Turkish Foreign Ministry but also by the followers of Fethullah Gulen, and by granting scholarships for studying in Turkish universities<sup>219</sup>. In the cultural field, an international organization was created in 1994, the International Organization for Turkish Culture (TURKSOY), in order to support Turkish culture in its members, which expanded also to some Turkish populations in Russia and in Moldova.<sup>220</sup> Solidarity groups and cultural associations have also been created from Turkish citizens with northern Caucasian origin and have tried to affect Turkish foreign

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, “Turkish policy toward Central Asia and the Transcaucasus”, in *Turkey’s new role, changing dynamics in Turkish foreign policy*, Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari (eds.), 117

<sup>215</sup> Hakan Fidan “Turkish foreign policy towards Central Asia”

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, “Turkish policy toward Central Asia and the Transcaucasus”, in *Turkey’s new role*, Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari (eds.), 117

<sup>218</sup> Gul Turan, Ilter Turan, “Οι σχέσεις της Τουρκίας με τις τουρκογενείς δημοκρατίες (Turkey’s relations with the Turkic Republics)” in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans), 552

<sup>219</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, “Turkish policy toward Central Asia and the Transcaucasus”, in *Turkey’s new role*, Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari (eds.), 119

<sup>220</sup> [www.turksoy.org.tr](http://www.turksoy.org.tr), accessed 20 January 2011

policy towards the Transcaucasus countries, as for example in the case of Chechnya or frozen conflicts such as Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh.<sup>221</sup>

The Central Asian states that attracted more Turkish attention were Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, mainly because of the Caspian resources. Due to economic concerns, states in the Transcaucasus also are high in the Turkish foreign policy agenda. Besides, countries of South Caucasus are important for the security of Turkey, since they are directly neighboring it. The establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation in 1992 was an initiative that helped Turkey foster closer relations with the countries involved, while at the same time gave Turkey a leading role in developments in the region.<sup>222</sup>

Russia has been considered an enemy of the Ottoman Empire because of its territorial claims over Ottoman soil. In the republican era the same perception was prevailing, accompanied by fears of spread of communism in Turkey. Turkey's neighboring with Russia has played a major role in Turkish foreign policy and her inclusion in NATO and generally in the 'western camp'. However, relations continuously improved as the strategic importance of Turkey to the United States declined and the US-Turkish relations were experiencing hardships, not least because of the Cyprus issue.<sup>223</sup>

According to Kemal Karpaz, Russia has been suspicious of Turkey's endeavors in Central Asia and has been engaged in the subversion of the pro-Turkish regime in Azerbaijan, so as to hinder what she perceived as a form of Pan-Turkism and at the same time to undermine Turkey's model role for the countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States.<sup>224</sup> Moreover, Nasuh Uslu maintains that Turkey's aspirations to be considered a link between Asia and Europe are contradictory to Russia's desire to exert control over this region.<sup>225</sup>

Despite the initial period of euphoria created by the warming of relations with Central Asian states soon the limits of cooperation and Turkey's role in the region became apparent. Already from the mid 1990s it was apparent that

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<sup>221</sup> Gareth Winrow, "Turkey and the newly independent states of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus" in *Turkey in world politics*, Barry Rubin, Kemal Kirisci (eds.), 232-233

<sup>222</sup> Nasuh Uslu, 123

<sup>223</sup> Bruce R. Kuniholm, "Turkey and the West since World War II", in *Turkey between and West: a new challenge for a rising regional power*, Vojtech Mastny, P. Craig Nation (eds.), 55-57

<sup>224</sup> Kemal H. Karpaz, "The ottoman rule in Europe from the perspective of 1994" in *Turkey between and West*, Vojtech Mastny, P. Craig Nation (eds.), 39-40

<sup>225</sup> Nasuh Uslu, 67

Turkey's ambitions were too high, not least because of limited economic funding and internal problems in the South-eastern part of Turkey. One of the reasons was that the Central Asian's were not very eager to be subjected to the leadership of Turkey, especially after being under the leadership of Russia for almost half a century. The subsequent economic dependence from Russia could also not be easily lifted, putting thus a strain in economic relations with Turkey.<sup>226</sup> Because of their subjection to Russia, the new republics were more eager to develop policies different and sometimes with opposite objectives than the ones of Moscow. Turkey, on the other hand, was interested in maintaining good relations with Russia, which revealed the differences in policies between the Turkic republics and Turkey. Moreover, after the early years of their independence, Turkey could no longer be considered their mediator with the West, since these states have established their own connections and relations directly with the western countries. Finally, it can be maintained that Turkey's own turn to Islamism during the Refah party's government, made the Central Asian states more skeptical to the secular model of Turkey as a role model for their own polities.<sup>227</sup>

Besides, Turkey's relations with the states in Central Asia and Transcaucasus are affected by the relations of these countries with Russia and Iran, which also seek to influence and play a leading role in the region. Turkey may have taken advantage of the power vacuum that had been created by the collapse of the Soviet Union, but Russia seems to have redefined her role in the region and reacquired a predominant role in South Caucasus and Central Asia. For that reason, Turkey's relations with Moscow are the main determinants of Turkey's policies in the region.

After fluctuations in Ankara's policies towards the Transcaucasus and Central Asian countries, a pragmatic stance prevailed and Turkey focused primarily on the South Caucasus countries, where the security stakes and the

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<sup>226</sup> Gul Turan, Ilter Turan, "Οι σχέσεις της Τουρκίας με τις τουρκογενείς δημοκρατίες (Turkey's relations with the Turkic Republics)" in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans), 546

<sup>227</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, "Turkish policy toward Central Asia and the Transcaucasus", in *Turkey's new role*, Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari (eds.), 119

economic potential were bigger, and sustained good cultural, economic and political relations with the Central Asian countries.<sup>228</sup>

The most important issue on the Turkish agenda in the region seems to be energy and the security concerns about the transit routes of oil and gas mainly from the Caspian Sea. Since Turkey has increasing needs in energy, the Caspian region is high on the foreign policy agenda and, according to the words of Gareth Winrow, “Turkish officials and entrepreneurs are determined to ensure that Turkey remains a major player in the Caspian region”.<sup>229</sup> Although it is true that Turkey has increased her influence in the region, it cannot disregard Russia’s strategic interests in the region, especially since Moscow has re-emerged as an important actor in South Caucasus and Central Asia and is attributing high importance to the region.

Summing up, it can be maintained that Turkey’s relations with her eastern neighbors have been affected not only by sentiments of kinship but also from geostrategic considerations and economic concerns. It seems that the most decisive factors in determining Turkey’s relations with these states are not the states themselves and their policies but mainly the interaction of policies and aspirations among Turkey, Russia, Iran and the United States. In the 1990s Ankara proclaimed that relations with the West, and especially the European Union were the main priority. As Zurcher puts forth, relations with the Central Asian states should also be seen under these parameters<sup>230</sup> leading therefore to the supposition that Turkey was trying to enhance her relations with the West through strengthening Turkey’s role in the region. However, statements made by Turkish leaders regarding the rise of “a gigantic Turkish world”, and the proclamation that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be “the century of the Turks”<sup>231</sup> can be used as counter-arguments to the above conclusions and be used as evidence to advocate for the willingness of Ankara to increase her power and positioning in world affairs.

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<sup>228</sup> Svante E. Cornell, “Regional Politics in Central Asia: the changing roles of Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and India” 2003, [www.silkroadstudies.org/pub/030720Sapra.pdf](http://www.silkroadstudies.org/pub/030720Sapra.pdf), accessed 16 March 2011

<sup>229</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, “Turkish policy toward Central Asia and the Transcaucasus”, in *Turkey’s new role*, 129

<sup>230</sup> Zurcher, *Turkey, a modern history*, 338

<sup>231</sup> Gareth M. Winrow, “Turkish policy toward Central Asia and the Transcaucasus”, in *Turkey’s new role*, Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari (eds.), 117

### 2.3.2. *From 2002 until today*

It is recognized that the region of Central Asia regained the attention of western powers and especially the United States after September 11, 2001 and American involvement in Afghanistan.<sup>232</sup> As a result the area has also attracted a renewed interest from Turkish policy makers. Moreover, according to Bulent Aras, the new zero-problem policy pursued by the AKP government combined with a boost in self-confidence because of improvement of relations with the EU led to a more active role in Central Asia, among other regions.<sup>233</sup> This new approach gives emphasis to the cultural cooperation, with the long-term goal of political and economic integration, according to an article by the Deputy Undersecretary of the Prime Ministry of Turkey.<sup>234</sup> While in the early years of the 1990s Turkey tried to pose as a model and a bridge between the newly established states and the West, after the failure of these unreachable goals she has turned to a “more realistic and constructive policy”.<sup>235</sup> This new orientation stressed the economic potential of the region and was mainly focused on security, stability and energy affairs. Overall, Turkey is trying to strike a balance between her interests and those of other players in the area, such as Iran, Russia and the United States.<sup>236</sup>

Turkey is a kin supporter of the NATO program “Partnership for Peace”, which was designed to include these new states and of the further integration of these states in other regional cooperation schemes. Worth noting is the argument presented by Nasul Uslu who maintains that “Turkey is unwilling to have formal links with the GUUAM grouping as part of its policy of avoiding binding defense commitments in the Caucasus” under the fear not to upset the Russians.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Svante E. Cornell, “Regional Politics in Central Asia: the changing roles of Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and India” 2003, [www.silkroadstudies.org/pub/030720Sapra.pdf](http://www.silkroadstudies.org/pub/030720Sapra.pdf), accessed 16 March 2011

<sup>233</sup> Bulent Aras, “Turkish Policy toward Central Asia”, SETA Policy Brief No.12, April 2008, [www.setav.org/Ups/dosya/7295.pdf](http://www.setav.org/Ups/dosya/7295.pdf), accessed 17 March 2011

<sup>234</sup> Hakan Fidan “Turkish foreign policy towards Central Asia”

<sup>235</sup> Bulent Aras, “Turkish Policy toward Central Asia”

<sup>236</sup> Patrick Frost, “Turkey’s ‘New Policy’ in Central Asia”, 25 June 2008, <http://centralasia.foreignpolicyblogs.com/2008/06/25/turkeys-new-policy-in-central-asia/>, accessed 17 March 2011

<sup>237</sup> Nasuh Uslu, 73-74

Ankara has realized the limits of her influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asian Republics. It seems that the Central Asian states are nowadays attracting a far lesser interest than in the beginning of the 1990s. Turkey has not only failed to be a model for these states or their representative to the west, but she has also accepted that the relationship with Russia is much more important. However, the area still attracts considerable interest since it has important energy resources. Probably for that reason Turkey is “trying to limit Russian involvement in the area”.<sup>238</sup>

Lately, Turkish policies in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia have to assess not only the rivalry with Russia over influence in the area, but also the growing economic relations between the two countries as well as consideration over energy supplies and energy routes.<sup>239</sup> On the one hand in some issues Turkey and Russia find themselves antagonizing for influence but on the other hand, they have to strike a delicate balance so as not to damage their flourishing economic relations. According to Winrow, the commercial stakes of Turkey in Russia are more important than the trade with all the Turkic states combined.<sup>240</sup>

The conflict between Georgia and Russia in the summer of 2008 has reshaped the situation on the ground and subsequently the policies of important stakeholders. Turkey was also influenced by these developments since the outcome of the conflict heavily favored Russia and even facilitated to expand her influence. The United States were consequently alarmed and reoriented their policies towards further approaching Armenia in order to limit the expansion of Russian influence in the Caucasus. As Muharrem Eksi postulates, the US are at the same time aiming at the alignment of regional countries’ policies to their own.<sup>241</sup> Although Turkey’s rapprochement with Armenia in 2009 can be seen as a consequence of the ‘zero problems’ strategy proclaimed by the Turkish Foreign

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<sup>238</sup> Gareth Winrow, “ Turkey and the newly independent states of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus” in *Turkey in world politics, an emerging multiregional power*, Barry Rubin, Kemal Kirisci (eds.), 228

<sup>239</sup> Gareth Winrow, “Turkish policy toward Central Asia and the Transcaucasus” in *Turkey’s new world*, Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari (eds.), 122-127

<sup>240</sup> Gareth Winrow, “ Turkey and the newly independent states of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus” in *Turkey in world politics*, Barry Rubin, Kemal Kirisci (eds.), 232

<sup>241</sup> Muharrem Eksi, “From the Process of Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Platform to the Normalization of Turkish-Armenian Relations”, [www.bilgesam.org/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=209:from-the-process-of-caucasus-cooperation-and-stability-platform-to-the-normalization-of-turkish-armenian-relations&catid=86:analizler-kafkaslar&Itemid=145](http://www.bilgesam.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=209:from-the-process-of-caucasus-cooperation-and-stability-platform-to-the-normalization-of-turkish-armenian-relations&catid=86:analizler-kafkaslar&Itemid=145), accessed 18 March 2011

Minister, it can also be seen as the result of American willingness for warmer relations of the West with Armenia.<sup>242</sup> If the first argument is followed it can be maintained that Turkey has followed an active policy that could result in the better accommodation and promotion of her interests. But if the second point of view is accepted, it can be supported that Turkey is subordinating her policies to those of the Americans, even at the expense of her own interests, considering reactions of both public opinion and Azerbaijan's government.

There are even some who put forward that not only Turkey should move away from Pan-Turkic ideologies but should also keep away from an alliance with Russia and instead 'forge a strategic alliance with Islamic Iran'.<sup>243</sup> The writer of the specific article postulates that the aim for Turkey should be the assertion of a more independent role in Central Asia and the Caucasus, in contrast to past politics that were dictated by NATO and especially the United States. Furthermore, he considers the roots of Turkey, meaning Islam, to be source of strength and implies that Turkey will be better off with an alliance with Iran so that she can "pursue a purely Islamic agenda".<sup>244</sup>

According to Ertan Efegil, contemporary Turkish foreign policy towards Central Asia and Caucasus is not essentially very different from the ones followed by previous governments. However, resting on the concept of strategic depth, the AKP has turned to a more active policy toward the region aiming to "bolstering security, stability, welfare, friendship and cooperation around Turkey".<sup>245</sup> Despite cooperation in cultural and commercial affairs the writer proposes that Turkey should focus on more concrete objectives and projects, since these states do not accept Turkey's role as a model or guide, meaning hence the failure of Pan-Turkic movements, and the volume of economic relations does not justify Turkish claims for a leading role in the region.

In spite of the fact that Turkey's has downplayed her ambitions in Central Asia, her role in the region remains substantial, especially in the economic sphere

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> "Turkey's role in Central Asia and the Caucasus", *Crescent Magazine*, August 2010, [www.crescentic.com/component/content/article/2875-turkeys-role-in-central-asia-and-the-caucasus.html](http://www.crescentic.com/component/content/article/2875-turkeys-role-in-central-asia-and-the-caucasus.html), accessed 17 March 2011

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ertan Efegil, "Turkish AK Party's Central Asia and Caucasus policies: critiques and suggestions", *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, 2:3, Summer 2008, [http://aserbaidshchan-info.net/4\\_6.html](http://aserbaidshchan-info.net/4_6.html), accessed 17 March 2011

and with regard to energy issues. In the summer of 2010, the Turkish Foreign Minister has stated that “now we have established a more functional policy toward these countries” and has rejected accusations that the government is favoring closer relations with the Middle Eastern countries at the expense of the relations with Central Asia.<sup>246</sup>

Turkey has tried to assume a leading role in Central Asia and the Caucasus in the early 1990s and present herself as a bridge between the countries of the region and the West. In some cases Ankara has even tried to pose as a representative or ‘big brother’ of the newly established states. Nowadays, she is also posing as a facilitator of regional economic development and integration. In the previous years her initiatives had the backing of the United States but she was unable to assume a leading and decisive role in the area, not least because of the existence of Russian influence in the area.

The proposition of Turkey to establish a Caucasian Stability and Cooperation Platform,<sup>247</sup> soon after the Georgia-Russia crisis, is further evidence supporting the argument that Turkey is trying to assume middle power functions such as the establishment of international organizations, as put forth by Cooper et al.<sup>248</sup> The failure of such an endeavor can be seen as proof that Turkey has not yet reached the stage where a middle power functions as a manager, according to the categorization made by Cooper et al.<sup>249</sup>

## **2.4. Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East**

### *2.4.1. From the end of the Cold War until 2002*

A first approach with Middle Eastern countries was conducted, under Western inspiration in the mid-1950s, when Turkey entered into an alliance with Iran, Iraq and Pakistan, named ‘Baghdad Pact’, and later in 1958 when Turkey

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<sup>246</sup> Serkan Demirtas, “Central Asia plays central role in Turkish foreign policy, Davutoglu says”, Hurriyet Daily News, 3 July 2010, accessed 16 March 2011

<sup>247</sup> Muharrem Eksi, “From the Process of Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Platform to the Normalization of Turkish-Armenian Relations”

<sup>248</sup> Andrew Fenton Cooper, Richard A Higgott, Kim Richard Nossal, “Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a changing world order”, 25

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 24

“signed a secret accord with Israel and Iran, joining forces against the Arabs”.<sup>250</sup> During the 1970s the Turks tried to attract the support of Arabs concerning the Cyprus issue and to secure their economy in view of the oil prices crisis. Consequently, Ankara has followed a more pro-Arab policy while at the same time relations with Israel were degraded.<sup>251</sup> After not receiving the expected support, Turkey has returned to a non-interference policy in the Middle East. Nevertheless, Turkey was preoccupied with her image in the Middle East and the perceptions of Arabs towards her. According to William Hale, Ankara sought not to be seen “as America’s policeman in the Middle East” and convince her neighbors that “Turkey’s alliance with the West did not pose a threat to its Middle Eastern neighbors”.<sup>252</sup>

In the 1980s, under the leadership of Ozal, an effort was made to enhance economic relations with the Middle East, based on “the functionalist proposition that building economic links and networks would eventually promote the resolution of political problems”.<sup>253</sup> However, no major breakthrough has been realized in Turkey’s relations with her Middle Eastern neighbors in the 1980s.

A paramount shift in Turkish foreign policy was conducted after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with her participation in the Gulf War, and because of the subsequent fears about the decline of Turkey’s importance for the West. It was mainly the Turkish President, Turgut Ozal, who marked this new more active policy, sometimes even notwithstanding internal opposition, as shown by the resignations of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chief of the General Staff in October and December 1990 respectively.<sup>254</sup> In an attempt to reaffirm Turkey’s strategic value to the West, and especially to the United States, Ozal departed from previous policies of non-interference in Middle Eastern affairs and

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<sup>250</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints”, Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 7 April 2010, [www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/203%20Turkey%20and%20the%20Middle%20East%20-%20Ambitions%20and%20Constraints.ashx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/203%20Turkey%20and%20the%20Middle%20East%20-%20Ambitions%20and%20Constraints.ashx), accessed 8 September 2010, 2

<sup>251</sup> Lenore G. Martin, “Η εξωτερική πολιτική της Τουρκίας στη Μέση Ανατολή (Turkish Foreign policy in the Middle East)”, in *Ο ρόλος και η θέση της Τουρκίας στον κόσμο (Turkey’s role and position in the world)*, Δημήτρης Καιρίδης (Dimitris Kairides), Lenore G. Martin (eds.) (Αθήνα: Σιδέρης, 2006), 190-191

<sup>252</sup> William Hale, “Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf crisis”, *International Affairs*, 68:4, 1992, 682, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2622709>, accessed 20 December 2009

<sup>253</sup> Atila Eralp, “Facing the challenge, Post-revolutionary relations with Iran”, in *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey’s role in the Middle East*, Henry J. Barkey (ed.), (Washington; United States Institute of Peace, 1996), 98

<sup>254</sup> William Hale, “Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf crisis”, 686

dynamically participated in the Gulf War in 1991. As a result, Arab suspicions about irredentist policies in the Middle East rose once again and were best illustrated in Saudi Arabia's refusal of Turkish military assistance during the Gulf War.<sup>255</sup> Moreover, moving away from the norm of keeping neutrality and not interfering in local affairs, Turkey not only held military operations in Northern Iraq in the 1990s, but also engaged in dialogue with representatives of the Iraqi Kurds and later even supported one of the parties.<sup>256</sup>

Another turning point in Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East was the signing of military agreements with Israel in 1996. The reasoning behind the rapprochement was to further enhance relations with the United States, especially, to bypass the Congress' embargo regarding the transport of sensitive military hardware, and increase Turkey's leverage especially vis-à-vis Syria.<sup>257</sup> These agreements meant a close alliance with Israel and had as consequence countermeasures taken by the Arab states in the region. For example, Egypt and Syria reconsidered the purchase of Russian military equipment while, Egypt and Greece tried to affirm their alliance by performing common military exercises.<sup>258</sup> Moreover, economic cooperation between Israel and Turkey and the increasing influence of Turkey has caused concerns about potential losses in Egypt, both in economic level and in her role as the leader of the Arab world.<sup>259</sup>

Erbakan, when coming to power in 1996, tried to give a "new, religiously inspired posture" to Turkish foreign policy, with initiatives that included visits to Islamic countries, with his first destination being Tehran, and the inauguration of the 'Developing 8 (D8)'.<sup>260</sup> Although these moves slightly differed from previous policies, they have not challenged the core of Turkish foreign policy strategies and postulates. Moreover, this new 'opening' to Muslim countries has not been very successful, not least because of "resistance from the Turkish state

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<sup>255</sup> Dietrich Jung with Wolfango Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads, Ottoman Legacies and A Greater Middle East*, (London and New York: Zed Books, 2001), 148

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-149

<sup>257</sup> Henri J. Barkey, "Turkey and the new Middle East, a geopolitical exploration" in *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's role in the Middle East*, Henry J. Barkey (ed.), 38

<sup>258</sup> Lenore G. Martin, "Η εξωτερική πολιτική της Τουρκίας στη Μέση Ανατολή (Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East)", in *Ο ρόλος και η θέση της Τουρκίας στον κόσμο (Turkey's role and position in the world)*, Δημήτρης Καϊρίδης (Dimitris Kairides), Lenore G. Martin (eds.), 221

<sup>259</sup> Henri J. Barkey, "Turkey and the new Middle East, a geopolitical exploration" in *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's role in the Middle East*, Henry J. Barkey (ed.), 39

<sup>260</sup> Dietrich Jung with Wolfango Piccoli, 132

apparatus”.<sup>261</sup> Erbakan’s policies, which had not targeted the Middle East but the whole Muslim world, as the founding of the ‘D8’ reveals, have not hampered with Turkey’s warm relations with Israel.

Turkey’s involvement in the region in the 1990s has not always been free of tensions. For example, in 1998 relations with Syria reached their lowest point, when Turkey threatened with war, mainly because of the Kurdish issue and the support provided by Damascus.<sup>262</sup> The mere fact that Turkey has used such measures is evidence of the importance of the Kurdish issue for Turkish foreign policy. Moreover, it can be perceived as indicative of Turkey’s rising confidence about her position in the area, especially after the alliance with Israel. Turkey’s success to effectively limit Syrian support to the Kurdish cause may also be considered as proof of her strength in as far as Syria not only submitted to Ankara’s claims but also accepted the operation of an office in the Turkish embassy in Damascus that would be responsible for checking Syrian compliance with the deal for not supporting the Kurds.<sup>263</sup> The subsequent remarkable improvement in relations can be seen as a testimony of Turkey’s leverage in the Middle East.

Despite the strategic alliance with Israel, which has been mainly supported by the military establishment, the Turkish society has been deeply influenced by the violence in Palestine. As the public opinion was more and more involved in Turkish politics, the politicians could not totally disregard the negative sentiments of Turks towards Israelis. Taking this into consideration, in 2002 Ecevit, the Prime Minister at that time, accused the Israelis for “genocide”.<sup>264</sup> The ‘Davos incident’ in January 2009<sup>265</sup> has been broadly considered as indicative of a more ‘Islamist’ approach of the current AKP government, without taking into account that Ecevit, who also used harsh expressions against Israel, was a ‘secular’ politician.

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 133

<sup>262</sup> Lenore G. Martin, “Η εξωτερική πολιτική της Τουρκίας στη Μέση Ανατολή (Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East)”, in *Ο ρόλος και η θέση της Τουρκίας στον κόσμο (Turkey’s role and position in the world)*, Δημήτρης Καριίδης (Dimitris Kairides), Lenore G. Martin (eds.), 215

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints” Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 3

<sup>265</sup> Katrin Bennhold, “Leaders of Turkey and Israel clash at Davos Panel”, 29 January 2009, [www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/world/europe/30clash.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/world/europe/30clash.html), accessed 25 March 2011

Regarding the pending issues in the region, the former Turkish President Demirel has been appointed as a member of the ‘Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee’ or ‘Mitchell Committee’ that was formed in late 2000 so as to deal with the tensions in Israeli-Palestinian relations after the second Intifada.<sup>266</sup> The inclusion of a Turkish politician in this kind of Committee, along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union and two former members of the American Senate<sup>267</sup>, is indicative of Turkey’s importance for the region, acknowledged not only by the Israelis and the Palestinians, but most importantly by the European Union and the United States. To sum up, there is merit in the argument that Turkey was considered as an impartial actor and was accepted by both sides as a potential mediator.

Turkey’s involvement in developments and in mediation processes in the region has continued the next years. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ismail Cem has initiated joint meetings between the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and was instrumental in realizing the engagement between Israel and the Palestinians.<sup>268</sup> Cem’s activities can be seen as the signs of a more active policy followed by Turkey, a process that had already started after 1990. Moreover, these specific initiatives highlight the fact that Turkey was already from the mid 1990s trying to play a role in developments in the Middle East by engaging all relevant stakeholders. Finally, Turkey had already by then started to use her Islamic identity and her bonds with Muslim states as a way to improve her profile as a trustworthy mediator in the region.

It is argued that Turkey’s “historic legacy of the Ottoman Empire, links to Israel and NATO connections” have been responsible for the negative image of Turkey among the Arab world.<sup>269</sup> These elements that were considered a liability in Ankara’s foreign policy planning have been turned into an asset under the new doctrine of ‘strategic depth’ put forth by the new AKP government and especially the Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu.

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<sup>266</sup> [http://i-cias.com/e.o/demirel\\_s.htm](http://i-cias.com/e.o/demirel_s.htm), accessed 28 March 2011

<sup>267</sup> Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-finding Committee, 30 April 2001, [www.mideastinfo.com/documents/mitchell.pdf](http://www.mideastinfo.com/documents/mitchell.pdf), accessed 28 March 2011

<sup>268</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints” Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 1

<sup>269</sup> Henri J. Barkey, “Turkey and the new Middle East, a geopolitical exploration” in *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey’s role in the Middle East*, Henry J. Barkey (ed.), 36

#### 2.4.2. From 2002 until today

Although, throughout her existence, the Turkish Republic has shown a proclivity to neutrality and reactive policies, there have been some instances of more active approaches and foreign policy actions, such as thoughts of military action in Syria and Iraq in 1957-1958, the Cyprus embroilment and the most recent tensions with Syria in 1998.<sup>270</sup> These trends have become more frequent in the 2000s, mainly under AKP government. It can be maintained that the seeds for these pro-active policies have been placed during the last 50 years, but have never before been so numerous, highly prestigious or long in duration. For example, relations with Israel have had fluctuations but have never reached such a polemic rhetoric as under Erdogan's prime ministership.

Today's government seems to be emphasizing Turkey's Middle Eastern identity<sup>271</sup>, and even incorporating it in foreign policy planning, with the justification that Turkey has "close historical and cultural ties with this region".<sup>272</sup> It is even more interesting that in the foreign policy program of AKP it is explicitly stated that it "attributes special importance to Turkey's relations with Islamic countries" and apart from upgrading bilateral relations, it will seek to upgrade the role of the Organization of Islamic Conference.<sup>273</sup> Nevertheless, Turkey's attitude towards the OIC has changed to a more active stance as early as the 1990s, when Turkey tried to gather support for the Bosnian cause.<sup>274</sup> Therefore, the AKP government was not the one that changed strategy towards the OIC but rather continue a policy of active involvement and of efforts to utilize the organization to promote Turkey's interests. On the other hand, as Philip Robins puts forth, the AKP government used Turkey's position in the

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<sup>270</sup> Dietrich Jung with Wolfango Piccoli, 148

<sup>271</sup> "The AKP government has been putting more emphasis on Turkey's Islamic and Middle Eastern characteristics". Tarik Oguzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?" in *Turkish Studies*, 9:1, March 2010, [http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/125802\\_758064766\\_790493127.pdf](http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/125802_758064766_790493127.pdf), accessed 25 October 2009

<sup>272</sup> AKP Foreign Policy Program, <http://eng.akparti.org.tr/english/partyprogramme.html#6>, accessed 6 December 2009

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Sule Kut "Η Γιουγκοσλαβική κρίση και η πολιτική της Τουρκίας (The Crisis in Yugoslavia and Turkey's policy)" in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans.), 435-436

organization as a proof of her Islamic credentials and her determination to be seriously engaged in the Middle East and the Islamic world.<sup>275</sup>

Within the framework of a new approach to foreign policy, as indicated by the Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu, together with internal reforms, efforts were made to improve relations with neighboring countries, among them Syria and Iran. Moreover, initiatives were launched with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Libya to promote economic integration in the region.<sup>276</sup> These initiatives have resulted, among others, in the establishment of ‘High-level Strategic Cooperation Councils’ with Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon in 2009.<sup>277</sup> Apart from economic advantages expected by the aforementioned initiatives, the establishment of these cooperation schemes has the potential to have an influence in disputes with neighbors, such as the water issue and the Kurdish issue.

It is maintained that the ultimate aim of Turkey’s engagement in the Middle Eastern affairs and conflicts was to improve her position in the West by increasing her influence in the region through her participation in mediating efforts.<sup>278</sup> The long-standing good relations with Israel and the recent improvements in relations with Arab countries have facilitated Turkey’s aspirations.

Turkey has occasionally expressed her anti-Israeli sentiments, especially at times of tensions, as for example in early 2002, as mentioned above, without resulting, however, in a serious rift in relations with Israel. Hence, Turkey has attempted to act as a mediator in the summer 2006 crisis between Israel and Hamas, given the connections that she has established also with Hamas after their victory in Palestinian elections in the beginning of 2006.<sup>279</sup> Turkey, after

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<sup>275</sup> “The JDP government’s bid to run the OIC ..... enabled the government to show its core supporters that it was growing closer to the Islamic world..... enabled the JDP to argue that it was pursuing a more rounded foreign policy which takes the Middle East and the Islamic world seriously, and is not simply dominated by a westward orientation”, Robins, “Turkish foreign policy since 2002”, 301

<sup>276</sup> Didem Akyel, “What is Turkey doing in the Middle East”, 13 July 2010, [www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/akyel-what-is-turkey-doing-in-the-middle-east.aspx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/akyel-what-is-turkey-doing-in-the-middle-east.aspx), accessed 30 July 2010

<sup>277</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints” Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 12

<sup>278</sup> Ruben Safrastyan, “Turkey as a mediator and peacekeeper during Middle East conflict: analyzing events of summer 2006”, 13 June 2007, [www.globalpolitician.com/22934-turkey](http://www.globalpolitician.com/22934-turkey), accessed 2 April 2011

<sup>279</sup> Simon Feeman and agencies, “Exiled Hamas leader in Turkey for talks”, The Sunday Times, 16 February 2006, [www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle\\_east/article731454.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article731454.ece), accessed 4 April 2011

receiving the approval of the United States, Russia, Britain and the United Nations, has unsuccessfully tried to exert influence to Hamas, after Syria has declined to provide assistance.<sup>280</sup>

Turkey's first successful engagement in the region can be considered her role in the war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, when Ankara again expressed her willingness to be involved in mediation processes, and resulted in the participation of Turkish troops in the UN-led peacekeeping forces deployed in Lebanon. There was internal controversy over Turkey's role, with the President Sezer to oppose a Turkish interference, and Prime Minister Erdogan advocating that Turkey would not be able to protect her interests if she remained a bystander.<sup>281</sup> The incident can be seen as evidence of the difference in mentality between the then President, who was defending the traditional foreign policy postulate of non-interference in foreign disputes, and the Prime Minister, who was pressing for a more active stance, aiming at supporting Turkey's interests by more engagement in the region.

Turkey's participation, that was welcomed by the United Nations, the European Union and local actors such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, has boosted Turkey's standing in the region and elevated her importance for the United States and the European Union. It is asserted that Turkey expected American support in her fight against PKK and the softening of European attitudes towards membership in return for her constructive role in Lebanon.<sup>282</sup>

Given the good relations with Israel at the time, Turkey hosted indirect proximity talks between Israel and Syria from April 2008.<sup>283</sup> However, the renewed hostilities in Gaza at the end of 2008 have created a strain in Turkish-Israeli relations. The Turkish Prime Minister was extremely critical towards the Israeli President in a much quoted debate in Davos in January 2009.<sup>284</sup> This unprecedented incident reflected not only the personal sentiments of the Turkish Prime Minister, who felt a 'sense of betrayal' after his mediating efforts, but also

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<sup>280</sup> Ruben Safrastyan, "Turkey as a mediator and peacekeeper during Middle East conflict"

<sup>281</sup> Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey rediscovers the Middle East", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007, [www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/62649/f-stephen-larrabee/turkey-rediscovers-the-middle-east273d0cbb203f%40sessionmgr11&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=bth&AN=25610522](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/62649/f-stephen-larrabee/turkey-rediscovers-the-middle-east273d0cbb203f%40sessionmgr11&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=bth&AN=25610522), 06 December 2009

<sup>282</sup> Ruben Safrastyan, "Turkey as a mediator and peacekeeper during Middle East conflict"

<sup>283</sup> BBC News, "Israel-Syria confirm peace talks", 21 May 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7412247.stm>, accessed 20 March 2011

<sup>284</sup> Katrin Bennhold, "Leaders of Turkey and Israel clash at Davos Panel"

the sentiments of the wide Turkish public. Erdogan's open criticism to Israeli policies has both granted him political gains at home and "boosted popularity in the streets of the Middle East".<sup>285</sup> However, his remarks have damaged the good relations with Israel and resulted in the unwillingness of Israel to entrust Turkey with new mediation talks<sup>286</sup> despite Syria's explicitly expressed willingness to accept Turkish mediation.<sup>287</sup> Although the Turkish government has stated her readiness to re-launched the negotiations<sup>288</sup>, after the Israeli attack on the aid flotilla headed to Gaza, that resulted in nine Turkish civilians' death in May 2010<sup>289</sup>, relations have reached their lowest point, dissolving any chances for future mediation efforts by Turkey and degrading Turkey's standing as an impartial broker accepted by both sides. Although concerns about Turkey's degrading role as a mediator<sup>290</sup> have been raised even before the attacks at the aid flotilla, after which relations with Israel plunged even more, an American analyst maintains that "only Turkey can play ultimate mediator role in Islamic world".<sup>291</sup> According to Friedman, Turkey can bring together not only Hamas and Fatah, but also the United States and Iran. It is interesting to point out that he justifies this view based on the rising power and consequent confidence of Turkey and not on the Islamic character of AKP's government.<sup>292</sup>

Turkey's active participation in the region has not been limited to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Ankara has hosted meetings between Syria and Iraq and has claimed the credits for the rapprochement between Syria and Saudi Arabia.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Didem Akyel, "What is Turkey doing in the Middle East"

<sup>286</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, "Netanyahu says Turkey would not be 'honest broker'", 16 November 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=netanyahu-says-he-wants-honest-broker-with-syria-2009-11-16](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=netanyahu-says-he-wants-honest-broker-with-syria-2009-11-16), accessed 16 November 2009

<sup>287</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, "Assad rejects Israeli talks, calls for Turkish mediation", 13 November 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=sarkozy-meets-assad-on-mideast-peace-2009-11-13](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=sarkozy-meets-assad-on-mideast-peace-2009-11-13), accessed 14 November 2009

<sup>288</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, "Turkey ready to mediate Syria-Israel talks", 2 March 2010, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-ready-to-mediate-syria-israel-talks-2010-03-02](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-ready-to-mediate-syria-israel-talks-2010-03-02), accessed 2 March 2010

<sup>289</sup> BBC News, "Deaths as Israeli forces storm Gaza aid ship", 31 May 2010, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/10195838](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10195838), accessed 10 June 2010

<sup>290</sup> Cagil M. Kasapoglu, "Turkey's Mideast mediation role called into question", 21 October 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=is-turkey-jeopardizing-its-role-of-mediation-in-the-middle-east-2009-10-21](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=is-turkey-jeopardizing-its-role-of-mediation-in-the-middle-east-2009-10-21), accessed 21 October 2009

<sup>291</sup> Aras Coskuntuncel, "Only Turkey can play ultimate mediator role in Islamic world, US expert says", 20 June 2010, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=only-turkey-can-play-ultimate-mediator-role-in-islamic-world-expert-says-2010-06-18](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=only-turkey-can-play-ultimate-mediator-role-in-islamic-world-expert-says-2010-06-18), accessed 21 June 2010

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> "Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints" Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 7 April 2010, 14

Moreover, Turkey has also engaged in talks with various actors in Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>294</sup>

Although Turkey's increasing involvement in the wider Middle East has attributed her with greater visibility, her initiatives are not always welcomed from regional stakeholders. For example, Turkish activities have alarmed Egypt<sup>295</sup>, especially after Ankara's attempts to negotiate an agreement between the two Palestinian parties, Hamas and Fatah.<sup>296</sup> Currently, in April 2011, Turkey has not ceased to urge for mediations between the two parties and has proposed the realization of a meeting in Istanbul.<sup>297</sup>

Problems with Iraq have been mainly connected with the Kurds and their possible autonomy that could have implications for Turkey herself. Although Turkey has been instrumental in the first Iraqi War, she has followed a totally different policy during the Iraqi War in 2003. Seen as a blow in Turkish-American relations, the refusal of the Turkish Parliament to allow the use of Turkish facilities to attack Iraq can be partially explained by the inexperience of the recently elected government and her inability to convince her own parliamentarians about the criticality of the decision. Underlying causes can also be found in fears about a possible destabilization of Iraq after the American intervention and in objections of the Turkish public opinion.

Under the AKP government there has been an effort to improve relations with the Kurds in Turkey.<sup>298</sup> The ease in internal tensions has also helped Turkey to adopt a more constructive policy in the Iraq issue and in her relations with her neighbors. As Lenore G. Martin has foreseen in a chapter written in the mid 2000s, the addressing of the Kurdish issue resulted in a more realistic approach towards the Kurds in Northern Iraq.<sup>299</sup> The turning point was in late 2007 when,

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>296</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, "Turkish FM Davutoglu meets Hamas chief amid Israel row", 20 July 2010, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=davutoglu-meets-hamas-chief-in-damascus-2010-07-20](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=davutoglu-meets-hamas-chief-in-damascus-2010-07-20), accessed 21 July 2010

<sup>297</sup> Sevil Kucukkosum, "Palestine Summit bid for Istanbul", 7 April 2011, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-proposes-istanbul-summit-for-palestinian-groups-2011-04-07](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-proposes-istanbul-summit-for-palestinian-groups-2011-04-07), accessed 7 April 2011

<sup>298</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, "Erdogan defends Turkey's Kurdish initiative", 1 October 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=erdo-speech-2009-10-01](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=erdo-speech-2009-10-01), accessed 1 October 2009

<sup>299</sup> Lenore G. Martin, "Η εξωτερική πολιτική της Τουρκίας στη Μέση Ανατολή (Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Middle East)", in *Ο ρόλος και η θέση της Τουρκίας στον κόσμο (Turkey's role and position in the world)*, Δημήτρης Καιριδής (Dimitris Kairides), Lenore G. Martin (eds.) 225

under the pressure of the United States, Turkey came to an understanding with the Iraqi Kurds.<sup>300</sup> Relations improved hereafter and Turkey is now cooperating with Iraq in a variety of issues, recognizing that “Turkey is becoming Iraq’s door to Europe and Iraq is becoming Turkey’s door to the Gulf region”.<sup>301</sup>

The most innovative foreign policy that can be attributed to the present AKP government and constitutes an unequivocal departure from previous policies is the rapprochement with Iran. According to Henri J. Barkey, Turkey can improve her standing in the Arab world and enhance her importance for both Israel and the United States by adopting “anti-Iranian clout”.<sup>302</sup> Although this suggestion may have been the prevailing outlook in the mid 1990s, in the late 2000s there has been a remarkable change of conditions and attitudes, as it will be discussed in the following section.

It is in the wider Middle East that most of Turkey’s diplomatic efforts have been concentrated nowadays. Besides, these initiatives are trying to address chronic problems that are of utmost concern to the United States, the European Union and Russia. Due to the fact that the Middle East is predominantly Muslim, as Turkey is, some arguments have been raised that Turkey’s involvement and increasing interest in the region is directly connected with the Islamic roots of the governing party. Soner Cagaptay has been arguing that due to the AKP “Turkish foreign policy is becoming more Islamist”.<sup>303</sup> The rising interest of Turkey in her eastern neighbors in connection with the slowdown in accession talks with the European Union sparked the debate about Turkey’s orientation and a possible disassociation from the West.<sup>304</sup> Moreover, the recent deterioration in relations with Israel combined with closer relations with Iran has raised concerns, especially in Washington, about an ‘Islamization’ of Turkish foreign policy.<sup>305</sup> In counter arguing this proposition, professor Mustafa Kibaroglu is quoted as

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<sup>300</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints” Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 4

<sup>301</sup> Bulent Kenes. “Time to rebuild the Middle East, Davutoglu says in Arbil”, 1 November 2009, [www.todayszaman.com/news-191615-102-time-to-rebuild-middle-east-davutoglu-says-in-arbil.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news-191615-102-time-to-rebuild-middle-east-davutoglu-says-in-arbil.html), accessed 2 November 2009

<sup>302</sup> Henri J. Barkey, “Turkey and the new Middle East, a geopolitical exploration” in *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey’s role in the Middle East*, Henry J. Barkey (ed.), 39

<sup>303</sup> Soner Cagaptay, “Is Turkey leaving the West?”, *Foreign Affairs*, 26 October 2009, [www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65634/soner-cagaptay/is-turkey-leaving-the-west](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65634/soner-cagaptay/is-turkey-leaving-the-west), accessed 10 December 2010

<sup>304</sup> Tarik Oguzlu, “Middle Easternization of Turkey’s Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?”

<sup>305</sup> Stephen Larrabee, “Turkey rediscovers the Middle East”

supporting that the bad relations with Israel are not a result of the AKP's rise to power but rather are stemming from different visions about the Middle East and its stability.<sup>306</sup> In addition, it is put forth that Turkey's preoccupation with the Middle East is primarily serving her own security concerns, since if Turkey succeeds in stabilizing the region she could "secure her place within the West".<sup>307</sup>

The controversial issue of Ankara's rapprochement with Tehran will be discussed in the next section, while an attempt to unveil the reasons behind such a development will be undertaken, in order to ascertain whether Turkey's involvement in Iran's nuclear aspirations is compatible with middle power theory, as presented in the first chapter.

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<sup>306</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu quoted in Ayse Karabat, "Turkish-Israeli dispute unveils structural problems in vision", 13 June 2010, [www.todayszaman.com/news-212948-turkish-israeli-dispute-unveils-structural-problems-in-vision.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news-212948-turkish-israeli-dispute-unveils-structural-problems-in-vision.html), accessed 13 June 2010

<sup>307</sup> Tarik Oguzlu, "Middle Easternization of Turkey's Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?"

## Chapter 3: Iran as a case study for Turkey's rising power

### 3.1. Turkey's relations with Iran

Since a lot of attention has been drawn on the rapprochement between Turkey and Iran and especially Turkey's involvement in a deal concerning Iran's nuclear program<sup>308</sup>, it could be meaningful to examine Turkey's relations with Iran and the recent developments.

Turkey and Iran are both considered important actors in the Wider Middle East. According to Brzezinski, both of them are geopolitical pivots. This means that their geographical locations give them some geopolitical importance. Moreover, following the reasoning of Brzezinski, these two states can also be regarded as geostrategic players, since they have been engaged in some form of activism in the South Caucasus and Central Asia after the retreat of the Soviet rule in the 1990s.<sup>309</sup> It can be summarized that Brzezinski maintains that both Turkey and Iran are important players in Eurasia.

Although Iran and Turkey have not engaged in war with one another in the recent past, a latent rivalry had been the framework of their relations. After the Second World War both of them found themselves under the threat of the Soviet Union and have tried to upgrade their relations with the United States.<sup>310</sup> The United States have been instrumental in the improvement of relations between Turkey and Iran through the signing of the Baghdad Pact for military cooperation, in 1955, that also included Iraq, Britain and Pakistan.<sup>311</sup> Relations between the two countries were further boosted with the establishment, in 1964, of the Regional Cooperation for Development, in which Turkey, Iran and Pakistan participated. However, the Kurdish issue, and the Shah's support for

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<sup>308</sup> Yigal Schleifer, "Turkish-Iranian nuclear deal: triumph or tragedy?", 17 May 2010, [www.eurasianet.org/node/61082](http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61082), accessed 10 April 2011

<sup>309</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, 41-47

<sup>310</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Essential friends and natural enemies: the historic roots of Turkish-Iranian relations", *Meria*, 7:3, September 2003, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue3/cetinsaya.pdf>, accessed 15 April 2011

<sup>311</sup> William Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf crisis", 681

Kurds in Northern Iraq, had constantly been an issue of concern for Turkey.<sup>312</sup> Moreover, Turkey and Iran have always been engaged in a silent competition since both countries aspired to play a leading role in the region.<sup>313</sup> All of the abovementioned have posed some strains to the development of further cooperation between the two countries.

After the Iranian revolution in 1979 circumstances changed rapidly in the region. Although bilateral relations have not deteriorated considerably, the Central Treaty Organization, as the Baghdad Treaty was renamed, ceased to exist in March 1979.<sup>314</sup> The Iranian revolution meant the increase of Turkey's strategic importance since the US lost an important ally in the region. Moreover, Turkey has not openly opposed the new regime, an act which led to the flourishing of economic relations between the two countries.<sup>315</sup> Turkey has also committed to neutrality during the war between Iran and Iraq, maintaining trade relations with both countries and thus benefiting economically. Apart from economic interests, Turkey has maintained good relations with Iran in order to coordinate in "opposing Kurdish nationalism".<sup>316</sup>

Nevertheless, Turkey's concerns regarding the support of Iran to Kurdish groups in North Iraq and suspicions about support to Islamist groups inside Turkey were continuing.<sup>317</sup> At the same time, Turkey has been unsuccessfully engaged in mediation efforts between Iraq and Iran to end the war, mainly because it was threatening the flows of oil to Turkey and was facilitating the rise of influence of Iran among Kurdish population in the wider region.<sup>318</sup> The secular establishment has always been suspicious of Iran,<sup>319</sup> despite efforts by politicians, such as Ozal, to profit from closer economic ties in the 1980s.

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<sup>312</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Ιρανοτουρκικές Σχέσεις (Iranian-Turkish Relations)" in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans.), 435-436  
191-211

<sup>313</sup> Ilter Turan, "Strange bedfellows or new allies? Brazil and Turkey's nuclear adventure in Iran", *HLO Quarterly*, Winter 2011, vol 1, 41

<sup>314</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Ιρανοτουρκικές Σχέσεις (Iranian-Turkish Relations)" in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans.), 212

<sup>315</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Essential friends and natural enemies"

<sup>316</sup> William Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf crisis", 682

<sup>317</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Ιρανοτουρκικές Σχέσεις (Iranian-Turkish Relations)" in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans.), 217

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-219

<sup>319</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Essential friends and natural enemies"

The Iraqi attack to Kuwait in 1990 has brought the two countries closer, since both of them were concerned about a potential rise of the power of Iraq. Soon the Kurdish issue and the American involvement in the region revealed the different policies pursued in the region.<sup>320</sup>

Despite rivalry for influence in the Northern Iraq in the 1990s both countries feared of the creation of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq which could pose threats to the internal unity of both Iran and Turkey. Therefore, a number of security agreements were signed, with the participation of Syria, concerning the Kurdish issue and particularly the situation in Northern Iraq.<sup>321</sup>

In spite of ideological differences and a consequent rivalry in Central Asian and South Caucasus states after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey and Iran quickly engaged in mutually benefiting cooperation with the newly established countries. As a result, the new countries were included in the Economic Cooperation Organization in November 1992.<sup>322</sup> On the other hand, the creation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation after the initiative of Turkey had as a result the initiative of Iran to create the Caspian Economic Cooperation Organization.<sup>323</sup>

Apart from rivalry for regional leadership in the Middle East, South Caucasus and Central Asia and energy issues<sup>324</sup>, another issue of controversy was the situation in the South Caucasus. Iran has supported the Armenian positions in the Nagorno- Karabakh issue since Azerbaijani nationalism was turning against Iran, with the support of Ankara in 1992.<sup>325</sup> For Iran, the influence of Ankara on Azeris has always been a cause of concern, because of large concentration of Azeris in Northern Iran.

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<sup>320</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, “Ιρανοτουρκικές Σχέσεις (Iranian-Turkish Relations)” in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans.), 221

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Atila Eralp, “Facing the challenge: post revolutionary relations with Iran”, in *Reluctant neighbor: Turkey's role in the Middle East*, Henri J. Barkley (ed.), 108

<sup>323</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, “Ιρανοτουρκικές Σχέσεις (Iranian-Turkish Relations)” in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans.), 221-223

<sup>324</sup> Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu, “Changing dynamics in the Turkey-Iran relationship”, 4 November 2010, [www.balkananalysis.com/turkey/2010/11/04/changing-dynamics-in-the-turkey-iran-relationship/](http://www.balkananalysis.com/turkey/2010/11/04/changing-dynamics-in-the-turkey-iran-relationship/), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>325</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, “Ιρανοτουρκικές Σχέσεις (Iranian-Turkish Relations)” in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans.), 223

On the other hand, both countries have common interests in the stability of their neighboring regions and they are driven by their desire to take advantage of the new energy deals in the South Caucasus and Caspian Sea. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, both countries have tried to expand their influence in the newly established countries, but soon both of them realized the limits of their capabilities. Besides, the resurgence of Russia has limited the range of influence for both Turkey and Iran. For that reason the two countries have engaged in cooperation schemes in order to profit from the new situation in the region. For example, as of 1995 Iran has been engaged in talks to participate in an international consortium of companies that would build a pipeline carrying natural gas from Turkmenistan to Turkey.<sup>326</sup>

Turkey's relations with Iran have experienced an improvement in 1996, during Erbakan's tenure in office as a Prime Minister, when a deal to deliver natural gas from Iran to Turkey was signed.<sup>327</sup> Cooperation in the energy field was further promoted in 2007 with the signing of energy deals, following the 2004 signing of security cooperation agreement between Ankara and Tehran.<sup>328</sup> At the same time, patterns of rivalry are also present in Turkish-Iranian energy relations. In an attempt to increase her presence in Central Asia, Iran has been engaged in energy agreements with Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. According to Emrullah Uslu, although Iran has expressed her willingness to participate in the Nabucco pipeline, her bid to "convince Central Asian countries to support Iran's proposal to bring Caspian Basin gas to world markets through Iranian territory" can be antagonistic to the Western and Turkish backed project.<sup>329</sup>

Turkey and Iran have experienced some difficult periods that led to the expulsion of diplomats in 1989 and 1997, because Ankara proclaimed that Iran was interfering in Turkish internal affairs.<sup>330</sup> Moreover, new tensions in bilateral affairs have arise after the military and the Kemalist elite accused Iran of supporting the Islamic 'reactionary' movement and the Kurds in their effort to

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<sup>326</sup> Robert Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia, 1991-2000, The Kurdish and Islamist Questions*, (Mazda Publishers: Costa Mesa, 2001), 18

<sup>327</sup> Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey rediscovers the Middle East"

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Emrullah Uslu, "Turkey-Iran relations: a trade partnership or a gateway for Iran to escape international sanctions?", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 6:41, 3 March 2009, [www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=34653&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=27&cHash=55e241d245](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34653&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=27&cHash=55e241d245), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>330</sup> Robert Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia*, 48

downsize Erbakan's power.<sup>331</sup> The internal struggle between Islamists and Kemalists in Turkey and the Islamic character of Iran have been a source of controversy between the two countries. For example, in 1999 the way that Turkey dealt the issue of a parliamentarian who was wearing a headscarf, Merve Kavakci, was strongly criticized by Tehran,<sup>332</sup> while Turkey later on characterized Iran as an "outdated regime of oppression".<sup>333</sup> Despite low points in their relationship, Turkey and Iran have not experienced deterioration in their economic relations or ceased to cooperate on the Kurdish issue.<sup>334</sup> According to Robert Olson, Turkey was, and still is, facing an important internal threat, that of Kurdish nationalism, and therefore was more inclined to downplay external threats. For that reason Ankara was compelled "to deal somewhat cooperatively with Iran on a range of other interests".<sup>335</sup> Olson supports that the theory of omni-balancing, coupled with economic interests explains the relatively good relations between Turkey and Iran.

The Iraq War in 2003 has created instability in Northern Iraq and has increased Iran's influence in Iraq and in the region more broadly, as Stephen Larrabee maintains.<sup>336</sup> However, Turkey and Iran are both against the breakup of Iran and share an interest in preventing an independent Kurdish state to emerge in Northern Iraq.<sup>337</sup>

Since the Islamic Revolution Iran has experienced a weakening of her geostrategic importance, mainly because of opposition to US policies. In the eyes of the Western countries Iran has been more radical and is being listed among the countries of the axis of evil by the American governments already from 2002.<sup>338</sup> Moreover, Iran's recent efforts to develop a nuclear energy program have met severe opposition from Western powers and have resulted in UN Resolutions

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 40

<sup>332</sup> Robert Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia*, 51

<sup>333</sup> Bulent Ecevit quoted in Robert Olson, 55

<sup>334</sup> Gokhan Cetinsaya, "Ιρανοτουρκικές Σχέσεις (Iranian-Turkish Relations)" in *Ανάλυση της Τουρκικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής (Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis)*, Χρήστος Τσιβίτσογλου (μετ.), (Christos Tsivitsoglou, trans.), 220-224

<sup>335</sup> Robert Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel and Russia*, 3

<sup>336</sup> Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey rediscovers the Middle East"

<sup>337</sup> Ilter Turan, "Strange bedfellows or new allies? Brazil and Turkey's nuclear adventure in Iran"

<sup>338</sup> Tarik Kafala, "Analysis: Iran and the 'axis of evil'", BBC News, 11 February 2002, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/1814659.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1814659.stm), accessed 15 April 2011

imposing four rounds of sanctions that aimed to halt her nuclear program.<sup>339</sup> While Iran's international position has been compromised, mainly due to unwillingness to follow western policies, Turkey's geostrategic role and power has grown significantly over the last years. Turkey has a big, growing economy and is considered fairly democratized and westernized. In addition, in the late years she has exhibited an attitude towards assuming more active role in her neighboring regions, abetted by the single party government which has enabled internal stability and economic growth.

Although Turkey cannot afford to have Iran as her opponent, especially if she wants to assume a more important role in the Transcaucasus and Middle East, it would be equally detrimental to have Iran 'strangled' by UN imposed sanctions<sup>340</sup> because Iran is an emerging market for Turkish exports and an important partner in energy issues.<sup>341</sup> Hence, for Turkey it is of importance to have a neighboring Iran that will be neither too strong to challenge Turkey's policies, neither too weak to deal with the Kurdish issue in the wider area. There is merit in the argument that Turkey can profit economically from an internationally isolated Iran that would use Turkey as a passage to circumvent sanctions, but tough UN sanctions are in a position to damage the booming economic relations and minimize benefits for Turkey.

Even though the closer relations with Iran have been attributed to the current AKP government<sup>342</sup>, it is worth keeping in mind that the breakthrough to revive the relationship was done with the visit of the President Sezer to Iran in the summer of 2002<sup>343</sup>, that is, before AKP even came to power. It can be maintained that the AKP government has been responsible for the boom in cooperation, especially in the economic field, but the process has been under way long before the AKP became government.

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<sup>339</sup> BBC News, "UN sanctions against Iran", 26 July 2010, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-10768146](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-10768146), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>340</sup> "A potential embargo on Iran would badly damage the Turkish economy", Tarik Ogurzu as quoted in Ismail Duman, "Turkey-Iran relations: friends or foes?", World Bulletin, 17 November 2010, [www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=66298](http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=66298), accessed 10 April 2011

<sup>341</sup> Iler Turan, "Strange bedfellows or new allies? Brazil and Turkey's nuclear adventure in Iran", 41

<sup>342</sup> Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu, "Changing dynamics in the Turkey-Iran relationship"

<sup>343</sup> Ariel Farrar-Wellman, "Turkey-Iran Foreign Relations", 2 August 2010, [www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/turkey-iran-foreign-relations](http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/turkey-iran-foreign-relations), accessed 18 April 2011

Apart from convergence of economic interest, it seems that the rapprochement between the two countries has been aided by Turkey's position towards Israel. More specifically the critical stance on the Palestinian issue, has lead the Iranian President to express the opinion, in late 2009, that Turkey's firm position towards the Zionist state would have positive impacts on the international level and the Islamic world.<sup>344</sup>

### **3.2. Iran's nuclear program**

Although the Shah has tried to develop a nuclear program, the effort was abandoned after the Iranian revolution in 1979.<sup>345</sup> It was primarily in 2003 that the issue of Iran's nuclear program and her aspirations to obtain nuclear weapons started to occupy the international community. After Iran's revelation about an ongoing uranium enrichment program, the International Atomic Energy Agency set out to investigate the peaceful nature of this program. After American claims that Iran was striving to develop nuclear weapons, Iran signed an agreement in 2004 that allowed her to temporarily advert being indicted in the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.<sup>346</sup> Firstly in 2006 the UN Security Council adopted a resolution that called for the IAEA to "establish Iran's compliance with the terms of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty".<sup>347</sup> After IAEA's failure to provide sufficient supporting evidence for Iran's compliance, the first round of sanctions was imposed in December 2006, followed by the second and third round in March 2007 and 2008 respectively.<sup>348</sup> In 2009 the issue of Iran's nuclear program once again rose to the forefront of international affairs, and spurred talks in the IAEA about Iran's continuation to enrich uranium.<sup>349</sup> Although the Obama administration has demonstrated a more conciliatory policy and advocated for diplomatic solution, Iran's rejection of a deal reached in late 2009 has resulted in

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<sup>344</sup> "Στην Τουρκία ο Αχμαντινετζάντ για τη Σύνοδο της Κωνσταντινούπολης", 9 November 2009, <http://news.in.gr/world/article/?aid=1072862>, accessed 10 December 2009

<sup>345</sup> "Iran's nuclear program", *New York Times*, 18 January 2011, [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/iran/nuclear\\_program/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/iran/nuclear_program/index.html), accessed 18 April 2011

<sup>346</sup> Global Policy Forum, "UN sanctions against Iran", [www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/iran.html](http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/iran.html), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>347</sup> BBC News, "UN sanctions against Iran", 26 July 2010, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-10768146](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-10768146), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Global Policy Forum, "UN sanctions against Iran"

turning American policy to a more “confrontational” stance.<sup>350</sup> Despite suggestions by Russia that, in case of a stalemate, new sanctions were a possibility, Iran did not come to an agreement with the Western powers.<sup>351</sup> As a result, the United States have pressed for a new round of sanctions, which came after lengthy consultations with Russia and China, who were less polemic towards Iran’s nuclear program, and “major concessions by American officials”.<sup>352</sup> This fourth round of sanctions came after the US rejected the nuclear swap deal brokered by Brazil and Turkey, in April 2010, with the argument that this was only a tactical manoeuvre from Iran in order to avoid tougher sanctions.<sup>353</sup> Turkey and Brazil have voted against this fourth round of sanctions while Lebanon abstained.<sup>354</sup> Moreover, Turkey and Brazil expressed criticism towards this development since, in their view, it has struck a blow against diplomacy.<sup>355</sup> It is noteworthy that, amid sanctions, Iran has continued talks with the Turkish and Brazilian Foreign Ministers concerning possible negotiations with the European Union about her nuclear program.<sup>356</sup>

However, it was not until December 2010 that talks resumed between Iranians and Western diplomats in Geneva. Iran invited international experts from selected countries to inspect her nuclear facilities, ahead of a new round of talks in January 2011 in Istanbul, as an “attempt to demonstrate its transparency regarding its atomic program”.<sup>357</sup> Talks have no tangible results so far, while the Americans maintain that the sanctions have been successful in slowing down

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<sup>350</sup> “Iran’s nuclear program”, *New York Times*

<sup>351</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, “Head of IAEA suggests Turkey as solution to nuclear impasse with Iran”, 7 November 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=iran-set-to-reject-un-brokered-nuclear-plan-2009-11-07](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=iran-set-to-reject-un-brokered-nuclear-plan-2009-11-07), accessed 10 December 2009

<sup>352</sup> Neil Macfarquhar, “UN approves new sanctions to deter Iran”, 9 June 2010, [www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/world/middleeast/10sanctions.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/world/middleeast/10sanctions.html), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>353</sup> Barbara Plett, “Fourth Iran sanctions: last resort or lost opportunity?”, BBC News, 11 June 2010, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/10271316](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10271316), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>354</sup> UN Department of public information, “Security Council imposes additional sanctions on Iran, voting 12 in favour to 2 against, with 1 abstention”, 9 June 2010, [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9948.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9948.doc.htm), accessed 29 April 2011

<sup>355</sup> Neil Macfarquhar, “UN approves new sanctions to deter Iran”,

<sup>356</sup> “Iran-Brazil-Turkey trio nuclear summit in Istanbul, DHA Dogan Haber Ajansi, 26 July 2010, [www.dha.com.tr/haberdetay.asp?tarih=07.05.2011&Newsid=43872&Categoryid=10](http://www.dha.com.tr/haberdetay.asp?tarih=07.05.2011&Newsid=43872&Categoryid=10), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>357</sup> “Turkey absent from team of Iran nuclear site inspectors”, Today’s Zaman, 17 January 2011, [www.todayzaman.com/news-232678-turkey-absent-from-team-of-iran-nuclear-site-inspectors.html](http://www.todayzaman.com/news-232678-turkey-absent-from-team-of-iran-nuclear-site-inspectors.html), accessed 18 January 2011

Iran's nuclear program, although this can also partially be attributed to a computer virus that has infected the Iranian centrifuges.<sup>358</sup>

### 3.3. Turkey's involvement in Iran's nuclear program

Turkey is certainly concerned about Tehran's attempts to enhance her nuclear capabilities since this would have immediate repercussions for Turkey's own security. An increase in Iran's capabilities would disturb the balance of power in the region and is feared to probably lead to an arms race<sup>359</sup>, and, in any case, this would be at the expense of Turkey and her security interests. Davutoglu himself has been quoted as saying concerning Iran's nuclear program that "some developments may occur that would be in contradiction to our vision in the Middle East".<sup>360</sup>

Apart from consultations, in 2005, with Israeli officials about Iran's nuclear aspirations, which reportedly happened between the Chiefs of Turkish and Israeli Forces and the Turkish President Sezer, the United States have also "asked for Turkey's support against Iran's nuclear program".<sup>361</sup> Turkey has tried in the beginning of 2006 to advise Iran not to engage in confrontation with the West and to have "transparent and comprehensive cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency".<sup>362</sup> This was mainly an attempt to prevent a crisis that could bring military action against Tehran by Israel, the United States or both, and could put Turkey in the spot of choosing between her economic interests and her loyalty to the West and especially to her relationship with the US.

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<sup>358</sup> "Iran's nuclear program", *New York Times*

<sup>359</sup> "Iran's push for nuclear weapons... could prompt such regional powers as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey itself to develop a nuclear deterrent", Diana Gregor, "Turkey's relations with Iran", 28 October 2008, [www.realite-eu.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=9dJBLLNkGiF&b=2315291&ct=5829755](http://www.realite-eu.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=9dJBLLNkGiF&b=2315291&ct=5829755), accessed 16 April 2011

<sup>360</sup> Serkan Demirtas, "Turkey offers Tehran new nuclear formula", *Hurriyet Daily News*, 12 November 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-offers-tehran-new-nuclear-formula-2009-11-15](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-offers-tehran-new-nuclear-formula-2009-11-15), accessed 10 December 2009

<sup>361</sup> Jason Athanasiadis, "Turkey feels Iran chill", *Asian Times*, 24 January 2006, [www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/HA24Ak02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HA24Ak02.html), accessed 16 April 2011

<sup>362</sup> "Turkey urges Iran to pursue transparent cooperation with IAEA", *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, 11 March 2006, [www.turkishweekly.net/news/27607/turkey-urges-iran-to-pursue-transparent-cooperation-with-iaea.html](http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/27607/turkey-urges-iran-to-pursue-transparent-cooperation-with-iaea.html), accessed 16 April 2011

It is interesting to note that in the summer of 2007, Stephen Larrabee advocated that “a serious effort by Iran to develop a nuclear capability would undercut its rapprochement with Turkey and drive Ankara to strengthen its ties with the West, especially the United States”.<sup>363</sup> Judging from a 2011 perspective, it is noteworthy, that Iran’s nuclear entanglements have resulted in quite the opposite, in Turkey’s further rapprochement with Iran, in detriment of relations with the US and the West in general.

Taking for granted that Turkey would feel threaten by Iran’s nuclear ambitions, Larrabee maintains that the deployment of US missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic, would basically leave Turkey unprotected in case of an Iranian attack and therefore, this deployment could result in a “disenchantment with its Western allies”.<sup>364</sup> If this postulate is further elaborated, it can be assumed that Turkey, after perceiving this American move as a negative development for her security, has apparently reflected on possible courses of action and has decided that engagement with Iran would be more efficient than attempts to achieve external or internal balancing.

In addition, Turkey has considerable economic interests concerning not only bilateral trade and energy deals, but also Turkey’s trade with Central Asian countries, since “Turkish trucks carrying products and servicing Turkish businesses in Central Asia pass through Iran”.<sup>365</sup> According to the same report, Turkey’s bilateral trade with Iran “rose more than seventh-fold” between 2002 and 2009.<sup>366</sup> Kadri Kaan Renda proclaims that trade volume with Iran has been ten times higher in 2009 compared with 1999 figures.<sup>367</sup> According to data provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute, the trend of increasing trade has been present from 1996, year from when data are available online. It is worth mentioning that a boost seems to take place between 2002 and 2003, when exports rose from 333.962 millions to 533.786 millions and imports almost doubled from 920.927 millions to 1.860.683 millions.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Stephen Larrabee, “Turkey rediscovers the Middle East”

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints” Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 17

<sup>366</sup> Ibid, 16

<sup>367</sup> Kadri Kaan Renda, “Turkey’s neighbourhood policy: an emerging complex interdependence?” *Insight Turkey*, 13:1, 2011, 98

<sup>368</sup> Turkish Statistical Institute, [www.turkstat.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?tb\\_id=12&ust\\_id=4](http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?tb_id=12&ust_id=4), accessed 10 May 2011

Although Turkey and the West share a common interest of not allowing Iran to increase her nuclear capabilities, the approach adopted by Ankara has brought Turkey at odds with the Westerns, as it will evident in the subsequent section.

Following a visit to Turkey by the Iranian President in the summer of 2008 and the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, Turkey expressed her readiness to be a mediator between the two parties concerning Iran's nuclear program.<sup>369</sup> But, according to the Crisis Group Report, neither party was willing to grant Ankara the role of the main mediator.<sup>370</sup> Contradicting to this statement is the information provided by Emrullah Uslu, who puts forth that the Turkish Prime Minister has revealed in the beginning of 2009 that "Iranian authorities asked Turkey to be a mediator between the United States and Iran in order to normalize their relations".<sup>371</sup>

Despite Ankara's willingness to act as a mediator between Washington and Tehran, it was not until the late 2009 that her role gained significance after a proposal of the head of the IAEA to use Turkey as an intermediary state to receive Iran's low-enriched uranium.<sup>372</sup>

It is noteworthy that the proposal came from the IAEA after consultations with Iran, France, Russia and the US, and "Turkey had not received any formal proposal to help with El Baradei's offer".<sup>373</sup> It can be summarized that Turkey has not taken the initiative to make such a proposal, but the proposal was instead made from important stakeholders on the issue of Iran's nuclear program. There could even be merit in the argument that the suggestion that Turkey would be the destination for Iranian low-enriched uranium was not a sign of Turkey's importance or rising influence in the region, but was merely a reflection of

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<sup>369</sup> Sabrina Tavernise, "Turkey volunteers to mediate US-Iranian talks", *New York Times*, 12 November 2008, [www.nytimes.com/2008/11/12/world/europe/12iht-12turkey.17731395.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/12/world/europe/12iht-12turkey.17731395.html), accessed 16 April 2011

<sup>370</sup> "Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints" Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 17

<sup>371</sup> Emrullah Uslu, "Turkey-Iran relations: a trade partnership or a gateway for Iran to escape international sanctions?"

<sup>372</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, "Head of IAEA suggests Turkey as solution to nuclear impasse with Iran"

<sup>373</sup> Today's Zaman, "IEAE introduces proposal to Ankara for Iran's uranium", 13 November 2009, [www.todayszaman.com/news-192793-iaea-introduces-proposal-to-ankara-for-irans-uranium.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news-192793-iaea-introduces-proposal-to-ankara-for-irans-uranium.html), accessed 10 December 2009

Turkey's good relations with Iran and the acceptance she enjoys among Iranian officials.

Under these circumstances, Turkey also tried to take advantage of her position as a non-permanent member of the Security Council of the United States, and undertook diplomatic efforts to resolve the issue, "stepping into the driver's seat in the nuclear negotiations with Iran", as one columnist described it.<sup>374</sup> It can be suggested that Turkey's involvement in the nuclear program of Iran was a sign of middle power diplomacy, where Turkey tried to act as a mediator, considering herself an impartial actor and competent enough to create a valid settlement acceptable to both parties.

It is interesting that El Baradei's proposal in 2009 was put forth with the argumentation that both parties would agree, since "Iran has a lot of trust in Turkey" and the United States is "very comfortable with Turkey".<sup>375</sup> Besides, the United States also welcomed Turkey's mediating role in Iran's nuclear issue, although it was underlined that some tactical differences exist.<sup>376</sup> It can therefore be deduced that Turkey's role in the negotiations with Iran was considered as constructive by the US and was not discouraged. Nevertheless, a first deviation of Turkey's policy on the issue occurred when she has not voted together with the Western bloc in the IAEA in December 2009. Turkey's abstention from a resolution criticizing Iran for secretly building a second uranium enrichment plant was a disappointment for the United States that openly expressed their displeasure.<sup>377</sup>

The Turkish government seems to have continued defending Iran and her right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, as expressed by the Turkish Prime Minister himself during a visit in Tehran in October 2009.<sup>378</sup> Already in December 2009, there were articles about concerns raised "in Washington and Western capitals with its [Ankara's] defense of Tehran's nuclear

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<sup>374</sup> Serkan Demirtas, "Turkey offers Tehran new nuclear formula"

<sup>375</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, "Head of IAEA suggests Turkey as solution to nuclear impasse with Iran"

<sup>376</sup> Umit Enginsoy, "US welcomes Turkish intent to mediate between Iran, West", *Hurriyet Daily News*, 13 December 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=us-welcom-turkish-intent-to-mediate-between-iran-west-2009-12-13](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=us-welcom-turkish-intent-to-mediate-between-iran-west-2009-12-13), accessed 14 December 2009

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> "Erdogan rejects reports Turkey drifting from the West", 29 October 2009, <http://asbarez.com/72654/erdogan-rejects-reports-that-turkey-drifting-from-west/>, accessed 17 April 2011

program”.<sup>379</sup> Amid diverse opinions about the proper way to handle Iran, the Turkish government has continued and even accelerated her efforts for a diplomatic solution in the beginning of 2010.<sup>380</sup> The Turkish Foreign Minister also has proclaimed that Turkey’s position was against “tough sanctions on Iran or a military campaign to deter Tehran”.<sup>381</sup> Turkey materialized this policy in late March 2010 when she “refused to support additional sanctions on Iran”, with the result of infuriating Western diplomats.<sup>382</sup>

### 3.4. Deal with Iran and implications for Turkey

With the engagement of Brazil, and after the Turkish Prime Minister and the Brazilian President have also been involved in the mediation process, the Tehran Agreement was signed on 17 May 2010. Under the deal, Iran agrees to send 1.200 kg of her low-enriched uranium to Turkey, where it will be kept but would still be property of Iran, and Iran would receive an equal amount of nuclear fuel for her research reactor.<sup>383</sup>

Both countries were at that time non permanent members of the United Nations’ Security Council, which gave their involvement a legitimizing mantle. Still, lots of questions were raised considering the reasons behind Turkey’s involvement.

In the case of Brazil, according to President da Silva, the support for Iran stems primarily from Brazil’s aspirations to develop nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes.<sup>384</sup> Therefore, Brazil is an advocate of the unhindered use of nuclear power to product energy. Secondly, Brazil is also significant member of

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<sup>379</sup> “Obama: Turkey ‘important partner’ in resolving Iran crisis”, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 7 December 2009, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-important-partner-in-resolving-iran-crisis-obama-2009-12-07](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-important-partner-in-resolving-iran-crisis-obama-2009-12-07), accessed 10 December 2009

<sup>380</sup> “Gov’t speeds up diplomacy for solution to Iran row”, *Today’s Zaman*, 13 February 2010, [www.todayszaman.com/news-201426-govt-speeds-up-diplomavy-for-solution-to-iran-row.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news-201426-govt-speeds-up-diplomavy-for-solution-to-iran-row.html), accessed 15 February 2010

<sup>381</sup> Ayse Karabat, “Davutoglu: Quartet, road map irrelevant for Mideast peace”, *Today’s Zaman*, 4 March 2010, [www.todayszaman.com/news-203266-102-davutoglu-quartet-road-map-irrelevant-for-mideast-peace.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news-203266-102-davutoglu-quartet-road-map-irrelevant-for-mideast-peace.html), accessed 15 April 2011

<sup>382</sup> Burak Ege Bekdil and Umit Enginsoy, “Turkey rejects more sanctions on Iran”, 25 March 2010, [www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=4555173](http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=4555173), accessed 21 April 2011

<sup>383</sup> BBC News, “Iran signs nuclear fuel-swap deal with Turkey”, 17 May 2010, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8685846.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8685846.stm), accessed 10 May 2011

<sup>384</sup> Jay Solomon, John Lyons, “New hurdle for Iran sanctions, US fears Brazil, Turkey may weaken action at the UN Security Council; talks in China”, 4 March 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704541304575099972132770104.html>, accessed 17 April 2011

the ‘nonaligned’ developing countries and, taken also into consideration her campaign to acquire a permanent seat at the Security Council of the UN, it can be deducted that her involvement with Iran’s nuclear program is part of a tactic to claim a bigger role in international affairs.<sup>385</sup> The involvement of Turkey can also be seen under the same prism. According to Ilter Turan, Turkey and Brazil “desire to be recognized as having a say in world governance”<sup>386</sup> and therefore, Turkey has taken a leading role regarding Iran’s nuclear program in an effort to include herself in the discussion of world affairs.

After the signing of the Tehran Agreement in April 2010 some Americans welcomed it as a first step to solve the issue. A former member of the US National Security Council stated that “to have Brazil and Turkey actively working to develop a different approach to Iran’s nuclear situation was a huge advantage for the US”<sup>387</sup>, signaling that Turkey’s role was considered constructive by some Americans.

Nevertheless, the United States pressed for a new round of sanctions. In the relevant resolution voting on 9 June 2009, Turkey’s negative vote caused reactions, since Ankara’s “failure to cooperate in the economic sanctions against Iran undermines the West’s policy”<sup>388</sup>, and is considered to easing the isolation of Iran. It is interesting to note that only Turkey and Brazil voted against, while Lebanon abstained, and all other members of the Security Council, including Russia and even more China that were reluctant in the past to back further sanctions,<sup>389</sup> voted in favor.<sup>390</sup> It seems that Turkey’s response to a proposal for tougher sanctions on Iran was so unpredictable, that in the Crisis Group Report released in April 2010 it was put forth that “Turkey would probably vote with the

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<sup>385</sup> “Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is seeking to position his government as a leader of the developing world”, Colum Lynch, “Key UN Security Council nations hedging on calls to sanction Iran”, *Washington Post*, 4 March 2010, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/04/AR2010030403775.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/04/AR2010030403775.html), accessed 29 April 2011

<sup>386</sup> Ilter Turan, “Strange bedfellows or new allies? Brazil and Turkey’s nuclear adventure in Iran”

<sup>387</sup> Barbara Plett, “Fourth Iran sanctions: last resort or lost opportunity?”, *BBC News*, 11 June 2010, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/10271316](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10271316), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>388</sup> Efraim Inbar, “Turkey’s changing foreign policy and its international ramifications”, 24 February 2011, [www.eurasiareview.com/turkeys-changing-foreign-policy-and-its-interanational-ramifications-24022011/](http://www.eurasiareview.com/turkeys-changing-foreign-policy-and-its-interanational-ramifications-24022011/), accessed 29 April 2011

<sup>389</sup> David E. Sanger and Michael Slackman, “US is sceptical on Iranian deal for nuclear fuel”, *New York Times*, 17 May 2010, [www.nytimes.com/2010/05/18/world/middleeast/18iran.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/18/world/middleeast/18iran.html), accessed 28 April 2011

<sup>390</sup> UN Department of public information, “Security Council imposes additional sanctions on Iran, voting 12 in favour to 2 against, with 1 abstention”, 9 June 2010, [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9948.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9948.doc.htm), accessed 29 April 2011

West on sanctions”.<sup>391</sup> Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu maintains that the reasoning behind Turkey’s refusal to back up the American plea for tougher sanctions had to do with “protecting its bargaining power, and moreover to adhere to the Tehran Agreement”.<sup>392</sup>

David E. Sanger and Michael Slackman maintain that the response of the United States to this nuclear swap deal was not positive, especially after Obama personally advised the leaders of Turkey and Brazil “not to give the Iranians a pretext to avoid complying with United Nations demands”.<sup>393</sup> Concerns were raised about the fact that Iran not only retained the right and ambition to proceed to new efforts of enriching uranium at a higher level, but also claimed that the deal “effectively confirmed Iran’s right to enrich uranium”.<sup>394</sup> On the other hand, Marc Champion advocates that the Turkish-Brazilian effort was supported by the Americans.<sup>395</sup> Notwithstanding the initial support for mediation efforts, the Americans became suspicious of Turkey’s role and possible “shifting in strategic orientation” because of Turkey’s opposition to the UN Resolution for new sanctions and deteriorating relations with Israel.<sup>396</sup>

It is reasonable to support that the insistence of the United States for more sanctions despite the agreement brokered by Turkey and Brazil was a serious blow to Turkish foreign policy, and perhaps even a vote of distrust towards the Turkish Prime Minister and his Foreign Minister, both of who were instrumental in realizing this deal. It can be maintained that the Americans either did not think that the Turks were capable to have such leverage in Iran so as to reach this agreement, or were suspicious of Tehran’s commitment to the deal.

According to Newsweek, the mere fact that Turkish officials were engaged in the process testifies that “Turkey is prepared to do its part to keep the region peaceful and safe”.<sup>397</sup> The stalemate of the deal for a nuclear-fuel swap is not considered by George Friedman to be a failure of Turkish foreign policy,

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<sup>391</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints” Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 18

<sup>392</sup> Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu, “Changing dynamics in the Turkey-Iran relationship”

<sup>393</sup> David E. Sanger and Michael Slackman, “US is sceptical on Iranian deal for nuclear fuel”

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> Marc Champion, “Turkey asks Iran to return to negotiating table”, 30 June 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703374104575336853114123616.html>, accessed 24 April 2011

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> Owen Matthews, “Triumph of the Turks”

since “the US did not reject the Turkish proposal; it was unenthusiastic about it”.<sup>398</sup> But according to his reasoning, Turkey is on the right track since, for Friedman, only Turkey can be an efficient mediator between the United States and Iran.<sup>399</sup> Ilter Turan, also points out that “the Brazil-Turkey initiative continues to be the only major available channel for communication”<sup>400</sup> between Iran and the West, and therefore the mediating effort should not be considered a failure.

However, the deal itself, even if it would be accepted by Western powers, can not be considered a success, since it was not addressing all problems stemming from Iran’s nuclear program. Most importantly, Iran has agreed to ship half of her low-enriched uranium to Turkey, but has refused to stop her enrichment program<sup>401</sup> as the Security Council’s past resolutions were calling for.

The Israelis have been alarmed by Turkey’s rapprochement with Iran, in addition to the warming of relations with Syria. They assert that Turkey is moving away from the European Union and has a “tendency for an Islamic alliance”.<sup>402</sup> Concerns about Ankara’s links with Tehran are also shared among American and Israeli commentators.<sup>403</sup> George Friedman disagrees with the claims of Turkish policy’s shift towards Islamic countries and the Middle East and postulates that it is Turkey’s power that has changed, compared to the rest of the region, and has resulted in different policies.<sup>404</sup>

Turkey’s arguments in defending her ties with Iran include the aim to “counter-balance the rise of Iran’s influence in the Middle East”, hence allowing Syria to lessen her dependence and even break away from Iran’s alliance.<sup>405</sup> However, in counter arguing this line of thought, Efraim Inbar maintains that “Turkey’s shift in foreign policy will undoubtedly strengthen Iran’s grip over

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<sup>398</sup> Aras Coskuntuncel, “Only Turkey can play ultimate mediator role in Islamic world, US expert says”

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> Ilter Turan, “Strange bedfellows or new allies? Brazil and Turkey’s nuclear adventure in Iran”

<sup>401</sup> David E. Sanger and Michael Slackman, “US is sceptical on Iranian deal for nuclear fuel”

<sup>402</sup> Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor quoted in *Today’s Zaman*, “US praises Turkey’s role in Mideast in wake of crisis with Israel”, 16 January 2011, [www.todayszaman.com/news-198675-102-us-praises-turkeys-role-in-mideast-in-wake-of-crisis-with-israel.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news-198675-102-us-praises-turkeys-role-in-mideast-in-wake-of-crisis-with-israel.html), accessed 17 January 2011

<sup>403</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints” Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 18

<sup>404</sup> Aras Coskuntuncel, “Only Turkey can play ultimate mediator role in Islamic world, US expert says”

<sup>405</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints” Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 17

Syria and Lebanon”.<sup>406</sup> It can be concluded that along this reasoning it is believed that instead of Turkey helping these countries to approach the West, Turkey will approach them with the consequence of adhering to the ‘radical camp’ along with Iran and Syria. The same line of thinking can be found in Soner Cagaptay, who points out to the fact that Turkey discussed with Iran, Syria and Sudan the issue of the 2009 Gaza War, and not with “Washington’s moderate Arab allies”, as expected.<sup>407</sup> So there are two contradicting propositions about the results that Turkey’s engagement with Iran might mean for the region, none of which can be testified for the time being.

Furthermore, Ankara seeks to profit from the energy contracts that she signs with Tehran and aims to enhance her “energy security by reducing its dependency on Russian oil and gas”.<sup>408</sup> Turkey proclaims that she is the only one of the Western world that has good relations with Iran and can thus influence or even dissuade Iran relating her nuclear aspirations. Thus, on the one hand there are plausible arguments put forth by Turkish officials and academics, maintaining that it is in Turkey’s interest to be on friendly terms with Iran. Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu maintains that Ankara is driven by her desire to “promote regional stability”.<sup>409</sup> Moreover, an attack in Iran from the US would have negative impact on Turkey and the region and is therefore unwanted, according to Soli Ozel.<sup>410</sup> On the other hand, there are concerns that the Islamic roots of the governing party in Turkey could be seen “as a driving force behind its efforts to avoid the confrontation with Iran”.<sup>411</sup>

In the Crisis Group Report concerns are raised whether the rapprochement between Ankara and Tehran is to the benefit of “global stability, Turkey’s image as a regional actor or the agenda of the Iranian regime”.<sup>412</sup> Questions concerning the more favored part from Turkey’s involvement in Iran’s nuclear issue are also

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<sup>406</sup> Efraim Inbar, “Turkey’s changing foreign policy and its international ramifications”

<sup>407</sup> Soner Cagaptay, “The AKP’s foreign policy: the misnomer of ‘Neo-ottomanism’”, *Turkey Analyst*, 2:8, 24 April 2009, [www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/turkey/2009/090424B.html](http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/turkey/2009/090424B.html), accessed 10 May 2011

<sup>408</sup> Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu, “Changing dynamics in the Turkey-Iran relationship”

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> “Turkey treads fine line as mediator in Iran nuclear issue”, *Voice of America*, 16 February 2010, [www.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Turkeys-Treads-Fine-Line-as-Mediator-in-Iran-Nuclear-Issue--84492297.html](http://www.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Turkeys-Treads-Fine-Line-as-Mediator-in-Iran-Nuclear-Issue--84492297.html), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>412</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints” Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 18

raised by Zerin Elci and Ibon Villedabeitia that write that “some diplomats and analysts are skeptical Ankara can persuade Iran to abandon any ambitions it might have for a nuclear bomb, and some believe Iran is using Turkey to her advantage in her standoff with the West”.<sup>413</sup> In this point it is noteworthy, that the Iranian Foreign Minister has been quoted as saying that Turkey “can help others understand Iran better”.<sup>414</sup> From this statement one may deduct that Iran seeks to use Turkey as a channel to make her voice heard to the rest of the world with the intention to appease objections to her nuclear program. This thesis can be further sustained by the request Iran made in order to sign the nuclear swap deal of April 2010. According to a senior Turkish diplomat, “to keep Iran at the table, one of their conditions was [for Brazil and Turkey] to vote no, instead of abstaining” in the UN Security Council.<sup>415</sup> The fact that Iran has later on sought to delay further talks can be seen as supporting the argument that Iran used Turkey and her involvement so as to avoid new sanctions and appease the international criticism. Finally, it is put forth that Iran adhered to the nuclear-swap deal because she has trust in Turkey and “senses that it has some leverage over its Western neighbor”.<sup>416</sup> From that statement it can be concluded that Iran believes she can manipulate Turkey according to her needs and not that Turkey can have leverage on Iran.

Turkey’s belief that Iran is an important actor in the region that cannot be ignored was recently exhibited when, during the crisis in Lebanon after the collapse of the government, Erdogan engaged in consultations with the Iranian President and discussed ways to address the crisis.<sup>417</sup> Already in mid 2010, President Gul has maintained that “Turkey attaches high importance to strong

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<sup>413</sup> Zerin Elci and Ibon Villedabeitia, “Turkey minister’s Iran visit tests Ankara Influence”, *Reuters*, 14 February 2010, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2010/02/14/idINIndia-46152320100214>, accessed 20 April 2011

<sup>414</sup> “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints” Crisis Group Europe Report No 203, 17

<sup>415</sup> Unnamed senior Turkish diplomat, as quoted in Marc Champion, “Turkey asks Iran to return to negotiating table”

<sup>416</sup> Trita Parsi, “The Turkey-Brazil-Iran deal: can Washington take ‘yes’ for an answer?”, *Foreign Policy*, 17 May 2010, [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/05/17/the\\_turkey\\_brazil\\_iran\\_deal\\_can\\_washington\\_take\\_yes\\_for\\_an\\_answer](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/05/17/the_turkey_brazil_iran_deal_can_washington_take_yes_for_an_answer), accessed 10 April 2011

<sup>417</sup> Fulya Ozerkan, “Turkey’s leaders head to summit on Lebanese crisis”, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 16 January 2011, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-leads-regional-lebanon-summit-in-damascus-2011-01-16](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-leads-regional-lebanon-summit-in-damascus-2011-01-16), accessed 16 January 2011

relations with Iran and is eager to have consultation with Iran about regional and international developments”.<sup>418</sup>

It is worth mentioning that not only the government but also the military establishment seems to be in favor of good relations with Iran because of the cooperation regarding the Kurdish issue. According to Nuray Mert, “the Turkish army made it very clear Turkey does not want any kind of confrontation with Iran”.<sup>419</sup>

According to Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu, relations with Iran have improved under the AKP government because of the changing world view in Ankara, affected by Davutoglu and trying to deploy Turkey’s soft power in the context of a “pre-emptive approach to ‘peace diplomacy’”.<sup>420</sup> Moreover, he maintains that Turkey’s engagement in Iranian nuclear program has been a “constructive approach”<sup>421</sup>, while, at the same time, Efraim Inbar puts forth that it is detrimental not only to Western interests but also for the Central Asian countries.<sup>422</sup>

### **3.5. Turkey’s involvement in Iran’s nuclear program and middle power theory**

After the brief presentation of Turkey’s relations with Iran and her involvement in Tehran’s nuclear program as well as the debate around the April 2010 deal, the following section will attempt to evaluate Turkey’s role under the middle power theory prism.

As already pointed out in a previous chapter, Turkey can be considered a middle power if her material capabilities are taken as criteria. As far as the behavioral criteria are concerned, Turkey took mediating efforts in order to address the issue with Iran’s nuclear program, which is one indication of middle

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<sup>418</sup> “Strengthening Turkish-Iranian relations risk UN sanctions against the Islamic Republic”, 28 April 2010, [http://righttruth.typepad.com/right\\_truth/2010/04/strengthening-turkish-iran-relations-risk-un-sanctions-against-the-islamic-republic.html](http://righttruth.typepad.com/right_truth/2010/04/strengthening-turkish-iran-relations-risk-un-sanctions-against-the-islamic-republic.html), accessed 17 April 2011

<sup>419</sup> Nuray Mert as quoted in “Turkey treads fine line as mediator in Iran nuclear issue”, *Voice of America*, 16 February 2010

<sup>420</sup> Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu, “Changing dynamics in the Turkey-Iran relationship”, 4 November 2010

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Efraim Inbar, “Turkey’s changing foreign policy and its international ramifications”

power behavior. Moreover, according to Cooper et al., middle power have the tendency for multilateral and compromise solutions to international problems.<sup>423</sup> In the situation in question, Ankara has been cooperating with Brasilia in order to find a compromise solution in the deadlock between the Vienna Group and Tehran. The solution was also advocating the use of diplomatic channels instead of sanctions and possible confrontation.

Proclamations about Turkey's interest in regional stability<sup>424</sup> correspond to middle power theory's proclamations that middle powers play the role of the stabilizers in the international system.<sup>425</sup> Besides, the deal signed in April 2010 can be seen as an attempt to avoid a possible military confrontation between the United States and Iran that could result in the changing of the status-quo in the region, which Turkey is trying to maintain, as put forth also Reid.<sup>426</sup>

Turkey's involvement in Iran's nuclear program with the view to enhance her role in world affairs<sup>427</sup> is also consistent with middle power theory that accepts that the assumption of middle power functions is a means "to exercise leadership"<sup>428</sup>. Furthermore, Turkey's continued involvement in the issue, with the hosting of Iran talks in Istanbul in January 2011, is reinforcing the idea that Ankara is trying to acquire a bigger role in international affairs.

Moreover, taking into consideration the words of a Turkish minister that "the biggest 15<sup>th</sup> economy in the world, Turkey cannot ignore world problems"<sup>429</sup>, it can be presumed that Turkey sees herself as more than a regional actor. Based on this wording, the presumption can be made that Turkey feels a moral sense of duty or kind of an obligation to meddle in international affairs and ease tensions. Davutoglu also referred to morality, when, in defending the deal with Iran, he has appealed to the commitment Turkey had undertaken as a

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<sup>423</sup> Cooper et al., 19

<sup>424</sup> Mehmet Efe Bireselioglu, "Changing dynamics in the Turkey-Iran relationship"

<sup>425</sup> Jordaan, 165-166

<sup>426</sup> Reid, referred in Flemes, "Conceptualizing regional power in international relations", 9

<sup>427</sup> Iltter Turan, "Strange bedfellows or new allies? Brazil and Turkey's nuclear adventure in Iran", 44

<sup>428</sup> Flemes, "Conceptualizing regional power in international relations", 9

<sup>429</sup> Egemen Bagis, Turkey's State Minister and EU Chief Negotiator, quoted in "Turkey's mediation between Iran and US crucial for world peace, minister", *Today's Zaman*, 28 October 2009, [www.todayszaman.com/news/191286-turkeys-mediation-between-iran-and-us-crucial-for-world-peace-minister.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news/191286-turkeys-mediation-between-iran-and-us-crucial-for-world-peace-minister.html), accessed 10 December 2009

member of the UN Security Council to deter tensions and the threat of war.<sup>430</sup> This characteristic of perceived moral superiority is another common pattern in middle power diplomacy.<sup>431</sup> In fact the aforementioned statement, along with Davutoglu's proclaims about Turkey's potential as a global actor can be seen as testament not only to the self image but also to Turkey's aspirations to enlarge her role in the international system. In Davutoglu's words "Turkey's aim is to intervene consistently in global issues using international platforms, which signifies a transformation for Turkey from a central country to a global power".<sup>432</sup>

However, middle power theory postulates that the coalition-building activities of middle powers usually deal with the second and third agenda, comprising of economic and social issues.<sup>433</sup> Iran's nuclear issue can without doubt be considered a high politics issue, which could partially explain Turkey's failure to promote the deal signed with Iran instead of tougher sanctions from the UN Security Council. Additionally, the fact that Americans, and the West in general, have not wholeheartedly supported the Tehran Agreement of April 2010 and have pressed for new sanctions can be considered as invalidating Turkey's aspirations for middle power diplomacy.

To sum up, Turkey's relations with Iran have improved during the AKP government and have been driven mainly by economic interests. Turkey's engagement in Iran's nuclear activities can be seen as both an attempt to protect her economic interests and an effort to project herself as a considerable power that is capable of handling international problems. Although it can be sustained that Turkey has acquired middle power functions during her engagement in Iran's nuclear program, the negative reaction of the Western powers and the lack of follow-up of the April 2010 deal can be considered as failure of Turkish foreign policy. Moreover, questions can be raised, not only considering Ankara's influence in Tehran or vice-versa but also, whether Turkey or Brazil was the determining power that exerted leverage on Iran.

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<sup>430</sup> Blake Hounshell, "Mr. 'Zero Problems'", *Foreign Policy*, December 2010, [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/11/29/mr\\_zero\\_problems](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/11/29/mr_zero_problems), accessed 10 December 2010

<sup>431</sup> Black referred in Solomon

<sup>432</sup> Ahmet Davutoglu, "Turkey's foreign policy vision: an assessment of 2007", 83

<sup>433</sup> Cooper et al., 21

## Conclusions

From the first chapter it can be concluded that although there are difficulties in defining what middle power is and how to differentiate from regional power, there are some common characteristics that most scholars adhere to. For the purposes of this study, as it was presented in the first chapter, a combination of considerable capabilities and an active foreign policy with an inclination to multilateralism in favor of the stability of the international system, are considered the minimum prerequisites for a state to be labeled as middle power.

From the analysis of Turkey's relations with her neighboring regions, which was the subject of the second chapter, it can be maintained that Turkey has ever since the end of the Cold War displayed foreign policy activism in her neighboring regions, especially in Central Asia and the Balkans. Active Turkish foreign policies in the 1990s, mainly focused in Central Asia and the Balkans, were most of the times in line with Western and American policies, or even guided by Westerns and their interests, as was the case of Turkey's posing as a model to Central Asian states for example, and therefore, have not attracted considerable criticism.

Turkey's power rose both as a result of economic growth and as a result of internal modernization and democratization dictated by aspirations to join the European Union. This rise in capabilities, coupled with a renewed self-confidence and fluidity in the international system created by end of the Cold War and the rearrangement of power constellations, allowed Turkey to follow policies that were prioritizing her national interests.

A controversial issue about Ankara's present activism is the involvement of Turkey in the negotiations of Iran with the Western powers concerning her nuclear aspirations. Turkey's attempts to take the role of the negotiator as well as her inclination to defend Iran has raised concerns in Western capitals, as it is presented in the third chapter, mainly regarding an Islamisation of Turkish foreign policy.

Concerns were also raised in regard to bad relations with Israel. Turkey has suggested that she is considering “further action against Israel”<sup>434</sup>, which signals that, firstly, Turkey feels secure enough in her neighbourhood and after the improvement of relations with neighbouring states, and does not stand in need of the strategic alliance with Israel. Secondly, she appears ready to withstand American requests for the easing of tensions with Israel<sup>435</sup> and world scepticism about a shift in orientation. Both of these remarks are suggesting an effort for a policy more independent from American policies.

Turkey’s efforts towards acquiring a bigger role in regional and global affairs are also expressed through the claim of positions in international institutions, as for example the bid of a Turkish candidate for the position of the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>436</sup> The fact of Turkish officials being elected or appointed in high posts of international organizations, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, NATO and the United Nations, can be seen as evidence of Turkey’s growing importance and influence.<sup>437</sup> Apart from a seat in the United Nations Security Council, Turkey has succeeded in electing in 2005 a Turkish citizen as Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.<sup>438</sup> Most recently Turkey proposed Kemal Dervis to be the head of the International Monetary Fund.<sup>439</sup> An even more significant sign of Turkey’s effort to assume great role in international affairs is the recent candidacy bid for a non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council.<sup>440</sup> The announcement of such candidacy, in such a short period of time after Turkey’s term in the Security Council in 2009-

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<sup>434</sup> Marc Champion, “Turkey asks Iran to return to negotiating table”

<sup>435</sup> Hurriyet Daily News, “Israel, Turkey must overcome tensions, US senator says”, 9 November 2010, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=sen.-kerry-israel-turkey-must-overcome-tensions-2010-11-09](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=sen.-kerry-israel-turkey-must-overcome-tensions-2010-11-09), accessed 9 November 2010

<sup>436</sup> Alakbar Raufoglu, “OSCE top job is Turkey’s next target”, 19 April 2011, <http://world-countries.net/archives/118565>, accessed 10 May 2011

<sup>437</sup> Today’s Zaman, “Turkey displays its ‘soft power’ through key int’l posts”, 28 December 2010, [www.zamanusa.com/us-tr/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action;jsessionid=897D15DAE290EC294952E01CF4ECF2FF.node1?pageNo=7&category=164&dt=2011&newsId=45112&columnistId=0](http://www.zamanusa.com/us-tr/newsDetail_getNewsById.action;jsessionid=897D15DAE290EC294952E01CF4ECF2FF.node1?pageNo=7&category=164&dt=2011&newsId=45112&columnistId=0), accessed 29 December 2010

<sup>438</sup> Organization of the Islamic Conference, [www.oic-oci.org/page\\_detail.asp?p\\_id=58](http://www.oic-oci.org/page_detail.asp?p_id=58)

<sup>439</sup> “Τον Κεμάλ Ντερβίς προτείνει επίσημα η Τουρκία ως επικεφαλής του ΔΝΤ (Turkey officially proposes Kemal Dervis as Head of the IMF)”, 18 May 2011, <http://news.in.gr/world/article/?aid=1231108995>, accessed 18 May 2011

<sup>440</sup> “Turkey announces bid for UN Security Council seat in 2015-2016”, *Today’s Zaman*, 18 May 2011, [www.todayzaman.com/news-244310-turkey-announces-bid-for-un-security-council-seat-in-2015-2016.html](http://www.todayzaman.com/news-244310-turkey-announces-bid-for-un-security-council-seat-in-2015-2016.html), accessed 19 May 2011

2010, is indicative of Turkey's self image as a growing power. Moreover, it highlights that Turkey is constantly taking initiatives that indicate her strive for a role in global affairs that would characterize her as a country more than a regional power. These claims for a role in global affairs, accompanied with the relevant rhetoric,<sup>441</sup> are differentiating her from a mere regional power.

Turkey can be considered a typical case that is using the middle power concept in order to establish herself in a category that distinguishes her from the majority of states but is in any case subordinate to the great powers category. In general, if criteria of the behavioral model that relate with the foreign policy behavior of states are taken into consideration, Turkey could again fit into the concept of middle power.

Perhaps it would be more suitable to use Jordaan's concept of emerging middle states. Turkey could fit under this description since it is "a semi-peripheral, materially inegalitarian" state that "demonstrates regional influence" and "exhibits a strong regional orientation favoring regional integration"<sup>442</sup>.

Moreover, Jordaan while analyzing the differences in the behavior between traditional and emerging middle powers highlights the role of leaders and their initiatives in the first years of claiming to be a middle power. According to him, "statesman-like interventions from leaders in emerging middle powers aim at raising the international profile of their countries along with seeking domestic legitimization by gaining international approval for foreign policy initiatives".<sup>443</sup> In the case of Turkey, the Prime Minister's efforts to achieve an agreement concerning the Iranian nuclear program can be taken as a testament to this argumentation.

Additionally, Jordaan advocates that emerging middle powers also seek to gain international approval to "legitimize the democratic project".<sup>444</sup> In general, it can be maintained that governments in emerging middle powers may use initiatives in international affairs in order to gain political influence or legitimization in their country. Triantaphyllou also points out to the link between internal and external politics, and maintains that the Turkish government is

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<sup>441</sup> Kerim Balci, "President Gul: Turkey plays active role in shaping new world order", Today's Zaman, 9 November 2010, [www.todayszaman.com/news-226716-president-gul-turkey-plays-active-role-in-shaping-new-world-order.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/news-226716-president-gul-turkey-plays-active-role-in-shaping-new-world-order.html), accessed 9 November 2010

<sup>442</sup> Jordaan, 165

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 175

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

expected to produce results that would satisfy its electorate.<sup>445</sup> A link can be established between this argument and Turkey when the Prime Minister's behavior in Davos in 2009 towards his Israeli counterpart is taken into account. While criticizing Israel for its behavior in the Gaza Strip, Erdogan not only gained in internal politics but also regarding his international profile.

Turkey seems to be taking on the cause of the Palestinians and is aspired to play the role of their spokesperson. The proposition put forth can be substantiated by the foreign minister's appeal for "a clear vision of a Palestinian state".<sup>446</sup> Moreover, when, talking about Arab reconciliation and the road map for the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Davutoglu was quoted as saying "we should not allow individual conflicts to harm a sacred cause like the Palestinian cause".<sup>447</sup> Turkey's proposal in April 2010 to host a meeting between the leaders of Palestinian groups Hamas and Fatah in Istanbul<sup>448</sup> can also be seen as an attempt by Turkey to take up the role of the promoter of the Palestinian cause and the facilitator of a resolution. Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu maintains that, after the incident with the aid flotilla headed for Gaza, Israel's repression and Turkey's fierce criticism, "Turkey has started to be seen as the leading voice of the Muslims, including the Arabs".<sup>449</sup>

Moreover, connected to the abovementioned argument, in a United Nations Conference about the Least Developed Countries that took place in Istanbul in May 2011, the deputy Prime Minister of Somalia has been reported to support the argument that Turkey could serve as "a mentor, a patron that speaks on their behalf [and] Turkey is taking that role".<sup>450</sup> The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs has been quoted in the same meeting to proclaim that Turkey is "the voice for the least developed countries" and will act likewise in the future also.<sup>451</sup> Therefore, the argument can be made that Turkey is seeking to assume

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<sup>445</sup> Interview with Assistant Professor Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, Kadir Has University, Istanbul, 17 May 2011

<sup>446</sup> Ayse Karabat, "Davutoglu: Quartet, road map irrelevant for Mideast peace"

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> Sevil Kucukkosum, "Palestine summit bid for Istanbul"

<sup>449</sup> Mehmet Efe Biresselioglu, "Changing dynamics in the Turkey-Iran relationship"

<sup>450</sup> Sevil Kucukkosum, "Turkey could be a mentor for least developed countries", *Hurriyet Daily News*, 10 May 2011, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-could-be-a-mentor-for-least-developed-countries-somalia-says-2011-05-10](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-could-be-a-mentor-for-least-developed-countries-somalia-says-2011-05-10), accessed 11 May 2011

<sup>451</sup> "Turkish Foreign Minister says his country is voice for poor countries", *Today's Zaman*, 13 May 2011, [www.todayzaman.com/news-243768-turkish-foreign-minister-says-his-country-is-voice-of-poor-countries.html](http://www.todayzaman.com/news-243768-turkish-foreign-minister-says-his-country-is-voice-of-poor-countries.html), accessed 13 May 2011

middle power functions, through taking the lead in negotiating efforts, as was the case with Syria, Israel, Iraq and Iran, and through posturing as a spokesperson of groups, such as the least developed countries, or the supporters of the Palestinian cause.

Turkey's aspirations for a bigger role are in line with the current strategic thinking in the government. According to the present Foreign Minister, the aim is to successfully "claim a global strategic role" for Turkey, through stabilization of internal affairs and elimination of problems with neighboring countries.<sup>452</sup> Since Turkey is not just a regional power but a 'central power' it should, therefore, not be restricted to an increased role in the Balkans and the Middle East.<sup>453</sup>

There is merit in the argument that Turkey's clout has been enhanced by her good economic performance and increasing trade volumes with the Muslim world.<sup>454</sup> Arguments about the rise of economic interdependence imply that Turkey's growing economic relations with her neighbours have led to a political rapprochement as well. For example in the cases of Greece, Syria and Iran, the political will to improve relations preceded the boost in economic relations and, in all cases mentioned, it even preceded the rise of AKP to power. Moreover, it is being sustained that the drive for increased trade volumes with Muslim countries is in compliance not only with globalization but also with Turkey's interests and need for an economic space and should not be attributed to a change of axis or a disassociation from the West.<sup>455</sup>

Turkey's activism is not confined to the Middle East or the Balkans. In the recent years, Ankara sought to enhance her relations also with the African countries. New embassies are being opened in Africa<sup>456</sup>, with the aim to promote Turkish economic interests. Turkey's involvement in regions far away from her

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<sup>452</sup> Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "The Davutoglu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy", ELIAMEP Working Paper, Nr 8/2010, [www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/KEIMENO-EPΓΑΣΙΑΣ-8\\_2010\\_IoGrigoriadis1.pdf](http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/KEIMENO-EPΓΑΣΙΑΣ-8_2010_IoGrigoriadis1.pdf), accessed 18 August 2010

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

<sup>454</sup> Selvi Ozturk, "Increasing trade with Muslim countries becomes Turkey's economic 'oxygen'", Sunday's Zaman, 30 January 2011, [www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?newsId=233904](http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=233904), accessed 2 February 2011

<sup>455</sup> Hasan Koni referred in Selvi Ozturk, "Increasing trade with Muslim countries becomes Turkey's economic 'oxygen'"

<sup>456</sup> "A special report on Turkey. The Davutoglu effect, All change for foreign policy", The Economist, 21 October 2010, [www.economist.com/node/17276420?story\\_id=17276420](http://www.economist.com/node/17276420?story_id=17276420), accessed 10 April 2011

own neighbourhood can be considered a sign of Ankara's willingness not only to boost her economy but also to enhance her standing in global affairs.

Since Turkey started, for whatever reasons, to pursue active policies with only consultant her national interests, it was a reasonable consequence that this change would raise suspicions in the West. Turkey's aspirations for a bigger role in regional and global affairs contradict with US preference for a 'controllable and reliable' Turkey that would unquestionably serve the American vision and interests in the wider Middle East. Therefore, the Americans as well as the Europeans are some times critical of Turkey's initiatives.

From what has been presented in this paper so far it is evident that Turkey has been engaged in active policies in her neighbouring regions for more than 20 years. These active policies cannot be attributed solely to the current government, but are rather the result of a long process that started after the end of the Cold War. Turkey has steadily increased her capabilities and can now be considered an important actor in all of her neighbouring regions. This rise of power and influence in a regional level induced Turkey to seek for a bigger role in global affairs as well. Turkey's involvement in negotiation talks and her engagement in international organizations and global problems is a sign of her behaviour as a middle power in the global level. Although Turkey's categorization as middle power is an expected outcome of her increased capabilities in connection with her foreign policy behaviour, it cannot be left unnoticed by other global actors, who react to Turkey's rising significance. Unless extraordinary events that will change the order of the international system take place, Turkey will more and more be considered as a significant middle power and will be taken into account in global affairs.

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