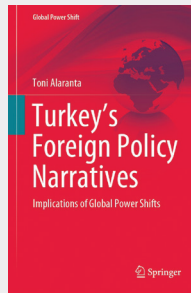

Turkey's Foreign Policy Narratives: Implications of Global Power Shifts

By Toni Alaranta

Springer Nature, 2022, 176 pages, €93.08, ISBN: 9783030926489

Reviewed by Fatma Çakır, Selçuk University

Toni Alaranta's book, which deals with how the ongoing global power shift is reflected in the recent narratives of Turkish foreign policy (TFP), was published in January 2022 as part of the "Global Power Shift" book series conducted by Springer Nature. The author describes this book as a continuation of his previous work, *National and State Identity in Turkey: The Transformation of the Republic's Status in the International System* (2015). The researcher, who wrote his doctoral thesis on Türkiye, also has other works about Türkiye.



The book consists of 8 chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. The chapters contain the discussions and analysis of historical processes that need to be addressed on the way to the main argument, in this sense the chapters are interrelated. As the author states, the book contributes to the literature by providing the needed context about Turkish foreign policy, which has undoubtedly become more active and sometimes confusing in recent years (p. 10). The main argument of the book is that the ongoing global power shift coincides in time with the change in Turkish foreign policy narratives. However, the relationship between the liberal international order (LIO) and the change in narratives cannot be explained only with a structural approach, the changing Turkish foreign policy narratives also encourage

global power shifts and may play a role in building the post-LIO era. The author uses analysis of historical processes and narrative analysis as a method. In this context, Alaranta primarily benefits from articles in "newspapers (pro-government, opposition supporters and several others), then benefits from official party programs, statements by Turkish officials, articles and briefings published by Turkish think tanks and independent analysts" (p. 7). The book provides an analysis starting with the founding of the Turkish Republic, however, the author's focus is the last twenty years of Turkish history.

Looking at the content of the book, after summarizing the historical course and institutions of the LIO, Alaranta questions the basis of dissatisfaction with the LIO and includes its internal contradictions. The determinations here make the distance to the LIO more understandable in the Turkish narratives that he deals with in the following parts of the book. However, the author feels the need to add that these criticisms do not refute the LIO and require minor corrective actions. The author also clarifies here the current debate on how to name the post-LIO era. Alaranta says that the global power shift has undoubtedly taken place, but the new era can be called the "new multipolarity." The author supports this determination with the argument that unipolarity is challenged by non-state actors as well

as great and rising powers (p. 27). Considering that the sovereignty of states is gradually eroding, and the contexts of transnational interaction are diversifying and becoming more complex, the author's definition seems appropriate.

Afterward, Alaranta analyzes the history of Türkiye in terms of the main political developments and the interaction between ideological patterns. The author questions the extent to which Kemalism, the official modernization ideology in Türkiye, shares the liberal philosophy of history. Alaranta finds that Kemalist ideology is liberal in mentality (modern, liberal, secular, etc.) but not liberal in practice. He explains this situation with the early developments of the republic and the policies of the Republican People's Party (CHP), which adopted Kemalism (p. 32). However, he argues that the CHP adopted a social democratic identity after the 1960s and abandoned its early corporatist vision (p. 43). Alaranta aims to go beyond the Post-Kemalist paradigm that connects the problematic democracy in Türkiye to Kemalist authoritarianism (p. 63). He says that authoritarianism in Türkiye did not start with Kemalism, nor did it end with it, and that the authoritarian tendency continued during the periods when Turkish-Islamic thought came to power.

The narrative change mentioned by the author in his main argument points to the narratives produced by the Islamic conservatives, which started to gain strength after the 1980s, especially in the last 10 years. Alaranta gives an example of how the AK Party acted with an "Islamist political agenda" after the 2010 referendum (p. 58). Indeed, the AK Party's foreign policy narratives, which aim to be anti-Western, independent, multi-vector, and regional leaders, deviate from the past narratives.

Alaranta finds it remarkable that Erdoğan's foreign policy, carried out with the slogan "The world is bigger than five," coincided with a period when the LIO weakened and powers such as Russia and China were challenging the Western order, in other words, the global power shift took place. However, it should be noted that this point has not been reached all of a sudden. It should be kept in mind that there was a tendency to diversify Turkish foreign policy in the 1980s-1990s when the liberal international order was active. Özal's efforts to change the Western-oriented TFP by seeking new maneuvering areas since the 1980s, and Türkiye's search for an alternative role for the regions emptied from Russia since the 1990s can be evaluated within this framework. Different Turkish foreign policy narratives seem to converge on the goal of more frequent and stronger cooperation with Russia and China. However, this should not be interpreted as an axis shift. As the author states, this is related to the independent, multi-vector foreign policy goal that Türkiye has been pursuing for a long time.

Alaranta's book also includes two crises, namely the Syrian war and the pandemic, where the changing Turkish foreign policy narratives and targets can be clearly observed. He draws attention to the fact that the AK Party sees new opportunities in these times of crisis, which secular nationalist narratives are generally concerned about. In official government narratives, the Syrian war is presented as a success story in which Türkiye has increased its power and ability to shape its region. Likewise, the pandemic is evaluated as an opportunity to criticize the LIO, change the current order, and show the power of Türkiye to the world. The accuracy of these narratives is not discussed here, the points emphasized in the narratives and their purposes are questioned.

The book is addressed to anyone interested and working in International Relations, Middle East politics, Turkish history, and politics. It deserves positive comments in many ways. First of all, it should be noted that the content is very well constructed. The theoretical background, the historical process analysis, and discussions on the subject are well distributed in the sections. The author supports his main argument well with the right questions and

observations. It is a sincere determination by the author that the texts that need to be analyzed on the subject are constantly being produced (p. 5) and it is important in terms of accepting the limitations of his own work. In addition to these positive aspects, the analysis of TFP narratives through two dominant ideological camps may be functional for the author, but it has drawbacks for a full understanding of reality.

Turkey-Russia Relations in the Twenty-First Century: Cooperation and Competition amid Systemic Turbulence

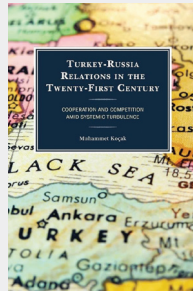
By Muhammet Koçak

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Reviewed by Ahmed Asmar, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University

The relation between Türkiye and Russia is an active topic that attracts many scholars and writers to attempt to shed light on such developing relations. Both countries have a significant amount of interest over important regions and share a mutual engagement in resolution efforts to solve conflicts, which the Western powers have failed to solve or address in a proper way. The successes of both countries in addressing hot conflicts, especially the one in Syria and the 3-decade-long Nagorno-Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia, have given an international dimension and recognition to their relations.

The relations between the Republic of Türkiye and the Russian Federation are not new, as it goes back nearly seven centuries, since the establishment of the Ottoman and Russian Empires where they engaged in a severe rivalry over the domination of areas in the Balkans



(Eastern Europe), the Caucasus and the Black Sea regions. Thus, making the historical dimension an important factor in shaping their relations and foreign policies towards multiple regions of common interest.

Under the title *Turkey-Russia Relations in the Twenty-First Century:*

Cooperation and Competition amid Systemic Turbulence, Muhammet Koçak highlighted the developments in the relations between the two countries during the 20th century. This period saw a dramatic change in the course of their relations as of the end of the First World War where two new entities emerged; the modern Republic of Türkiye (the heir of the Ottoman Empire) and the Soviet Union (the heir of the Russian Empire). While the book goes back to link history and their former bilateral relations, the author also puts the spotlight on the developments in their relations at the beginning of the new millennium. Both