

# Turkey's Neighborhood Policy: An Emerging Complex Interdependence?<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*In this paper, I argue that a fuller understanding of the recent activism in Turkish foreign policy, and in particular the changing nature of relations with its neighbors, requires us to engage in the study of the increasing economic interdependence and the analysis of broadly redefined national interests. Therefore, this paper aims to explain Turkey's relations with its neighbors through the neo-liberal theory model put forth by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, which underlines the importance of interdependence and cooperation among states. I argue that recent developments in Turkish foreign policy, particularly Turkey's relations with its neighbors, resemble the characteristic features of complex interdependence. The new activism in Turkish foreign policy facilitates international cooperation among regional actors and creates a "complex interdependence".*

Turkish foreign policy is by no means immune to either the influence of the international system or the effects of its neighborhood's transformations. Given this background, after the end of the Cold War, the neglected historical and geographical reality of interconnectedness between Turkey and its environs resurfaced. Interconnectedness did not only open up new horizons and create opportunities but also posed new problems and conflicts for Ankara. With the turn of a new century, Turkey became more able and willing to benefit from increasing interconnectedness in its vicinity. Hence, this paper emphasizes the significance of the interplay between domestic and regional dynamics and the effects of the unprecedented level of economic interdependence in contemporary Turkish foreign policy.

The paper starts from the proposition that Turkish foreign policy went through two concomitant yet conflicting transformations after

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the Cold war. The first transformation is defined in this paper as the "renationalization"<sup>2</sup> of Turkish foreign policy led by security concerns, which arose from regional turmoil and domestic conflicts. The renationalization of foreign policy refers to the revival of nationalism in the

political discourse and the rise of security concerns regarding the preservation of the territorial integrity and national unity of the Turkish state in the new world order. Owing to renationalization, we witnessed the predominance of a security-first "assertive new activism"<sup>3</sup> in Turkish foreign policy throughout the 1990s. The second transformation, which Turkish foreign policy vaguely underwent in the 1990s, was the rise of "internationalism"<sup>4</sup> due to the concerns about Turkey's new role in international politics. Starting with the Helsinki summit in 1999 but perhaps even more profoundly after the twin economic crises of 2000 and 2001, internationalism was accompanied by economic liberalization and surpassed the renationalization process. This economic orientation already towards a liberal economy began in the late 1980s under the leadership of Turgut Özal. Since the end of the 1990s Turkey has been pursuing liberal international policies based on commerce, cooperation, and soft power. In this paper, it is mainly argued that in the Turkey of the 2000s, an economy-oriented "new activism"<sup>5</sup> has prevailed over the security-first activism of the 1990s. This is due to the changes in domestic political structures and the increasing importance of economic growth and trade not only for Turkey but also for its neighbors. Hence, instead of finding conflict with its neighbors, recently at the top of Turkey's foreign policy agenda is a move to promote interstate cooperation.

Against this historical background, this paper aims to explain mainly Turkey's relations with its neighbors through a liberal framework, which underlines the importance of interdependence and international cooperation among states. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye put forward three defining characteristics of complex interdependence: i) the absence of a hierarchy among issues, ii) increasing use of multiple channels of interaction between states, and iii) declining primacy of military force. I argue that recent developments in Turkish foreign policy, particularly Turkey's relations with its neighbors resemble the characteristic features of complex interdependence. I further argue that the new activism in Turkish foreign policy seems, at least to me, to facilitate international cooperation among regional actors and to create a complex interdependence between Turkey and its neighborhood.

The paper proceeds as follows: The first part is devoted to the description of the main premises of the liberal model put forward by Keohane and Nye. The second part gives a brief overview of the main determinants of Turkish foreign policy and the relationships between Turkey and its neighbors directly after the sudden end of the Cold War. In the third part, I apply the analytical framework to the Turkish case and try to explain to what extent the characteristic features of complex interdependence can be observed within contemporary Turkish foreign policy. In the concluding part, I discuss the analytical deficiencies of complex interdependence and the practical handicaps in Turkish foreign policy's new activism.

### **Complex Interdependence and International Cooperation**

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, in their seminal book *Power and Interdependence*, took interdependence seriously and brought forth a new liberal model that would help the students of international relations to explore the transforming relationship among Western democracies.

First and foremost, Keohane and Nye challenged the realist assumption that states are unitary and the major, or rather the only actors in the international arena. The authors pointed to the rise of multilateralism in interstate relations and the emergence of new interaction channels.<sup>6</sup> Keohane and Nye's pluralist conviction of domestic politics attaches a paramount importance to nongovernmental actors. These new actors have gained a greater voice not only with regard to issues falling under low politics such as trade but also regarding issues at the level of high politics such as decisions to send troops abroad.

Second, Keohane and Nye viewed the high politics-low politics divide of the realist school incompatible with today's highly complex and diverse political agendas. The authors argued persuasively that military security does not necessarily occupy the top of the foreign policy agenda anymore.<sup>7</sup> Looking through a liberal prism, contemporary students of international relations are able to observe that the protection of citizens from fluctuations in the world economy and the promotion of the welfare of societies are nowadays regarded as the top priorities of democratic governments.

In line with the second argument, Keohane and Nye also cast doubt on the realist assumption that anarchy in international relations inclines states to use military force whenever necessary. For them, power has evolved from brutal military force to "soft power,"<sup>8</sup> which implies political persuasion and cultural and social

attraction. Keohane and Nye suggested two analytical concepts, namely *sensitivity* and *vulnerability* to comprehend how power politics works between mutually dependent states. The authors explained that *sensitivity* is the “liability to costly effects imposed from outside before policies are altered to try to change the situation,” whereas *vulnerability* refers to “an actor’s liability to suffer costs imposed by external events after policies have been altered.”<sup>9</sup> The main conclusion drawn by the authors is that “less vulnerable states will try to use asymmetrical interdependence in particular groups of issues as a source of power.”<sup>10</sup> In this respect, power is not one dimensional and material power is useful only if it reinforces an actor’s ability to swiftly adapt to the new circumstances. Furthermore, power is not considered fungible because possession of military power does not automatically give leverage in every issue since the application of force among issue areas is too complex in interdependence. Of course, this does not mean that there is no room for power politics in their model. Military force can still be useful as a “bargaining tool” and an instrument for deterrence.<sup>11</sup>

Keohane, in another ground-breaking book, defines international cooperation as a reciprocal process which “takes place when the policies actually followed by one government are regarded by its partners as facilitating realization of their own objectives, as the result of a process of policy coordination.”<sup>12</sup> Cooperation is, thus, intrinsically reciprocal and highly political. In order for cooperation to flourish, a few conditions need to be satisfied. First, the perceptions of policymakers ought to shift from “myopic national conceptions of self-interest”<sup>13</sup> to an enlightened and far-sighted use of national interests. The logic of a zero-sum game should be replaced by the logic of a positive sum strategy. Furthermore, uncertainty about other states’ behavior should be alleviated by enhanced coordination and effective communication between states. What makes the political setting conducive to coordination and communication is each state’s “reputation for reliability”<sup>14</sup> and the consistency between their words and deeds. In summary, changes in the perceptions of policymakers, reduction in uncertainty, and building a reputation or a new image in the eyes of others are prerequisites for effective international cooperation.

It should be noted that the neoliberal school of international relations does neither overlook the role of state nor disregard anarchy in international relations. Nonetheless, unlike realism it puts emphasis on the possibility of long-lasting cooperation among states under anarchy and underlines the role of a myriad of actors and new kinds of interaction in international relations. Prior to the empirical analysis done in the remainder of the paper, the main characteristics of

Turkish foreign policy in the early post-Cold War period are outlined in the next section.

### **The Post-Cold War Era in Turkish Foreign Policy**

The euphoria which spread among some Turkish politicians owing to the collapse of the Soviet Union vanished quickly when it was ascertained that their grandiose and political romanticism to make Turkey a regional superpower was at best yet to be accomplished, at worst an illusion.<sup>15</sup> After the initial disappointment there came the reinstatement of the type of geopolitical thinking blended with power politics, which had overwhelmingly dominated Turkish foreign policy since its foundation. To put it differently, in the 1990s increasing sensitivity of Turkey to its neighborhood forced Turkish policymakers to “regionalize” their policies, whereas increasing vulnerability of Turkish society and particularly the Turkish state led to the “renationalization” of its foreign and security policies. Thus, the vulnerability of Turkey mounted in the early 1990s up until it reached a peak when Ankara resorted to the coercive diplomacy to deal with Greece over the Kardak/Imia Crisis in 1996 and Syria over its support for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in 1998. The main driving force behind the assertive activism of Turkey during the 1990s was the renationalization of Turkish foreign and security policies. It is argued that due to the security-first approach and distrustful attitudes of the Turkish hardliners,<sup>16</sup> good neighborly relations could never be maintained even though there was a political will to do so in some circles of Turkish politics. As a result, some scholars defined Ankara’s attitude in the 1990s as one of a “coercive regional power,”<sup>17</sup> which was poised to confront its neighbors with unilateral and military measures.

From a neoliberal institutionalist point of view, throughout the 1990s, states in the region found themselves in a situation of political market failure. Keohane defines market failure as “situations in which [...] agreements that would be beneficial to all parties are not made.”<sup>18</sup> The optimal outcome for Turkey as well as for other states in the region would be enhancing interstate relations and facilitating cooperation as much as possible. Because of myopic self interests, deep mistrust and a lack of effective communication, any commitment to international cooperation from Ankara waxed and waned quickly. The initiatives which had succeeded in forming institutional entities such as the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Organization eventually proved futile throughout the 1990s.

Two main reasons for the failure to achieve an optimal outcome in the region should be highlighted. First of all, there was an uncertainty across the region and

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giving political support to secessionist and fundamentalist terrorist organizations in Turkey but also clandestinely supplying them arms, hosting terrorist training camps, and even providing refuge to militants. In an era of great uncertainty and recurrent hostilities, and even though the political aspirations to become a regional leader were floating around, Turkey pursued an extremely cautious, if not paranoid, foreign policy that favored a security-oriented heavy-handed approach over a welfare-oriented cooperative approach.

Secondly, myopic self-interests shaped by a zero-sum mindset were predominant among Turkish policymakers. The repercussion of myopic self-interests was the resurgence of security concerns and the reinforcement of the high politics versus low politics divide inherited from the Cold War. In the parlance of complex interdependence, because of the widely-held perception of a rigid hierarchy between military and political issues on the one hand and economic and social ones on the other Turkey lacked linkage strategies that might incorporate several issues into one package. Had the states in the region diversified their priorities and been more prone to sealing package deals by making trade-offs, the ultimate outcome could have been the development of a cooperation on solid and even institutionalized foundations.

According to Keohane, states are able to redefine their self interests so as to associate their own well-being with other states.<sup>20</sup> However, Keohane is also cognizant of the fact that “Commerce by itself does not ensure peace, but commerce on a nondiscriminatory basis within an orderly political framework promotes cooperation on the basis of enlightened national conceptions of self-interest that emphasize production over war.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, without suitable milieu conditions trade and interdependence would not result in cooperation. The capture of the leader of a terrorist organization, the PKK, the influence of the European Union (EU) on Turkish domestic political structures since Turkey was granted candidate status in 1999, and the coming of a new ruling elite to power are the key factors that initially eased the psychological state of emergency and the feeling

of insecurity prevalent in Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s.<sup>22</sup> This eventually rendered the Turkish state less vulnerable and paved the way for the advent of new actors, new channels of interaction, and new strategies in the making of foreign policy.

### **Restructuring Domestic Politics and Repositioning Turkey in Regional Politics**

Turkey has been undergoing two complementary transformations. One of them is democratization and the other is economic liberalization. Both had their inception and were put in place during the Özal era but were disrupted in the 1990s and apparently gained new momentum in the early 2000s.<sup>23</sup> As free trade and democracy became the main pillars of Turkish politics soon after Turkey was granted candidacy status by the EU in 1999, Ankara replaced its long-standing security-driven objectives of foreign policy with ones stemming from an economy-oriented pragmatic mindset. The remainder of the paper will analyze the effects of free trade and democratization on Turkish foreign policy and its repositioning in the center of regional politics.

#### *Variation of actors and issues*

A very significant dilemma for Turkey has long been how to become more influential in regional politics while putting her own house in order. The candidacy status given by the EU at the Helsinki European Council in 1999 helped Turkey out by heralding a new phase of transformation in Turkish politics. Thus, democratization during the EU accession process altered the roles of several political actors in the domestic arena. Of these actors, it was most of all the military that had to relinquish its power. The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) was indeed considered by many observers to be the most influential institution in setting the pace and direction of Turkish foreign policy since the Cold War. The military's hard-line approach impinged on foreign policy and manifested itself through an increase in the military budget and an enhanced role of the National Security Council (NSC) throughout the 1990s. The primary reason behind the erosion of the military's clout is without doubt the reforms demanded by the EU regarding the civilian control of the military. The reforms inevitably curbed the military's power in the foreign policymaking process as well. This paved the way for an increasing civilian influence in the field of foreign policy.<sup>24</sup> As a matter of fact, the Europeanization process in the post-Helsinki era has belatedly transformed the civil-military relations in accordance with the socio-political dynamics of the post-Cold War.

The change in civil-military relations, the transformation of the interaction between state and society, and the division of labor and authority among different state institutions infused a new vigor and enthusiasm into Turkish foreign policy. This opened up new windows of opportunities, which domestic actors availed themselves of in order to be better heard on the national stage. Seldom had non-governmental organizations (NGOs) played a significant role in the policymaking of Turkey. The non-state actors could only exert trivial influence on the decision-making process since the national interest was very strictly defined and solely articulated by an exclusive circle of foreign policy elites within the state. The formerly excluded actors of civil society and a new middle class willing to interact with neighboring countries much more than ever slowly but steadily have gained leverage in foreign policy, as Turkey's democratization and liberalization processes have been furthered. A new class of businessman no longer buys the overselling of threats by hardliners. Indeed, they tend to establish close economic ties and then perhaps social bonds with the neighboring countries.

The highly defensive and cautious approach of the traditional foreign policy elite in the foreign ministry and the military was abandoned by the Justice and Development Party (JDP), which came to power with a landslide victory in 2002. The JDP's avowed intent is to increase economic growth and trade with the country's neighbors.<sup>25</sup> In this new era of Turkish foreign policy the meaning of security, welfare, and democracy are inextricably intertwined. The ultimate dominance of high politics over low politics was challenged, with the outcome being the abandoning of hierarchy among issues and an increasing variation in foreign policy preferences, as assumed by the complex interdependence model. Ahmet Davutoğlu, the foreign minister of Turkey, also underscores the prominent role of private sector firms in driving the country's foreign policy and strategic vision.<sup>26</sup> An example of this new perspective in practice is the "Industry for Peace" initiative proposed by the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, which aimed to revitalize industry in Gaza, Palestine in order to provide jobs and livelihood for the people of Gaza.

The second transformation is observed in the transformations in Turkey's economic structures and a new mentality in economic policy making. The twin economic crises in 2000 and 2001 urged Turkish statesmen to stabilize the economy and find new markets so as to expand trade volume which would yield the economic growth that Turkey desperately needed. Having been an "emerging market economy," Ankara was left with no choice but to enhance trade relations with its neighbors. Thus, Turkey has evolved into a "trading state"<sup>27</sup> and its quest

for new markets and new business partners has continued since then. It is noteworthy that the Customs Union between Turkey and the EU contributed to the liberalization of the Turkish economy more than anything else. Several sectors of the Turkish economy have virtually reached the standards of the EU and have become ready and eager to find new trading partners elsewhere. Consolidation and stabilization of the economy encouraged good relations with Turkey's crucial environs.

The trade statistics in table 1 and table 2 give strong evidence of the crucial role of trade for the Turkish economy in general and in particular of the importance of trade with the neighbors. Table 1 highlights the openness of the Turkish economy and its integration in international trade. More than one fourth of the gross domestic product of Turkey came from international trade in 2008, whereas the share of international trade was approximately 17.5 percent in the mid of the 1990s.

**Table 1:** International trade in goods and services as a percentage of GDP

<b>Year</b>	<b>Share</b>
1995	17.5%
1996	19.5%
1997	21.8%
1998	20.8%
1999	19.4%
2000	21.6%
2001	25.4%
2002	24.4%
2003	23.5%
2004	24.9%
2005	23.6%
2006	25.1%
2007	24.9%
2008	26.1%

Source: OECD Factbook 2010.

Retrieved December 15, 2010, from [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/oecd-factbook\\_18147364](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/oecd-factbook_18147364)

Table 2 depicts the details of Turkey's trade volumes with its neighbors plus with Africa, the EU, Israel, the Middle East, and Russia for the years between 1999 and 2008. The data for 2009 is deliberately excluded from the table as the international trade volumes fell dramatically owing to the recent recession in the world economy. The trade volume in some cases has increased more than ten

times since 1999. The volumes of trade with Greece, Iran, Iraq, Russia, and Syria in 2008 are respectively around five, ten, four, and three times higher than in 1999. In addition, Turkey as a foreign direct investor has increasingly financed various infrastructure and engineering projects in its neighborhood. According to a report published in April 2010, "As of September 2009, 500 Turkish companies had invested in Iraq, and Turkey as a country was among the top ten foreign investors."<sup>28</sup>

**Table 2: Trade volumes with selected countries (US dollar at current prices billions)**

Year		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Partner country</b>	Flow										
<b>Armenia</b>	Export	n.a									
	Import	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	0.391	0.400	0.560	1.489
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	Export	0.248	0.230	0.225	0.231	0.315	0.403	0.528	0.695	1.046	1.667
	Import	0.440	0.956	0.780	0.646	0.122	0.135	0.272	0.340	0.329	0.928
<b>Bulgaria</b>	Export	0.233	0.252	0.299	0.380	0.621	0.892	1.179	1.567	2.060	2.151
	Import	0.295	0.465	0.393	0.508	0.689	0.955	1.190	1.661	1.949	1.840
<b>Georgia</b>	Export	0.114	0.131	0.144	0.103	0.155	0.199	0.271	0.407	0.645	0.997
	Import	0.932	0.155	0.127	0.137	0.273	0.302	0.302	0.344	0.289	0.525
<b>Greece</b>	Export	0.406	0.437	0.476	0.590	0.920	1.166	1.126	1.602	2.262	2.429
	Import	0.287	0.430	0.266	0.312	0.427	0.592	0.726	1.044	0.950	1.150
<b>Iran</b>	Export	0.157	0.235	0.360	0.333	0.533	0.810	0.912	1.066	1.386	2.029
	Import	0.635	0.815	0.839	0.920	1.860	1.961	3.469	5.626	6.613	8.199
<b>Iraq</b>	Export	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	829	1.815	2.748	2.589	2.811	3.916
	Import	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	112	0.467	0.458	0.375	0.644	1.320
<b>Syria</b>	Exports	0.232	0.184	0.281	0.266	0.410	0.393	0.551	0.609	0.797	1.115
	Import	0.307	0.545	0.463	0.506	0.413	0.357	0.272	0.187	0.376	0.639
<b>Russia</b>	Export	0.588	0.643	0.924	1.172	1.367	1.858	2.377	3.237	4.727	6.483
	Import	2.374	3.886	3.435	3.891	5.451	9.027	12.869	17.806	23.506	31.364
<b>Israel</b>	Export	0.585	0.650	0.805	0.861	1.083	1.309	1.466	1.529	1.658	1.935
	Import	0.298	0.505	0.529	0.544	0.459	0.714	0.803	0.782	1.081	1.447
<b>EU</b>	Export	15.420	15.664	17.545	20.416	27.397	36.524	41.365	47.930	60.406	63.394
	Import	22.529	28.526	19.823	25.688	35.140	48.077	52.629	59.338	68.589	74.803
<b>Africa</b>	Export	1.049	0.901	1.031	1.203	1.527	2.150	2.558	3.365	4.429	6.558
	Import	1.075	1.787	1.879	1.823	2.075	3.012	3.786	4.714	5.702	6.490
<b>Middle East</b>	Export	2.225	2.031	2.575	2.735	4.511	6.797	8.986	9.881	13.186	23.330
	Import	2.299	3.543	3.221	3.310	4.861	6.194	8.836	11.790	12.017	16.003

Source: Compiled from the IMF and WTO databases by the author.

*Multiple channels of interaction*

The democratization process coupled with liberalization and internationalization in the Turkish economy made certain that at the international level, Ankara is no longer able to pursue a heavy-handed policy with a security-first mindset. In addition, the failure of the Turkish Grand National Assembly to ratify a motion that would give permission to the U.S. to use Turkish military bases during the Iraq War on March 1, 2003 can arguably be considered as a turning point where credibility of Turkey as a reliable partner increased significantly in the eyes of its southern neighbors.<sup>29</sup> These two complementary processes and the significant historical event gave the boost to a new activism in Turkish foreign policy and provided ample room for repositioning Turkey at the center of regional politics.

To Turkish politicians, the only way to improve welfare and maintain security in the region seems to be the development of long-lasting stability and peace through advancing collaboration with various political actors, and the enhancement of political cooperation with neighboring states via different channels of interaction. Ankara has been trying to reduce uncertainty and alleviate the distrust that overshadows its relations with Turkey's neighbors by forming transgovernmental relations between the state institutions of Turkey and their counterparts in other states. These new channels reinforce and complement interstate relations, even if they also challenge the power of the traditional foreign policy elites. In this paper, it is not possible to give every detail of Turkey's relations with each neighbor. A few examples should suffice to illustrate the change in the conduct of foreign policy.

Greek-Turkish relations entered a new phase with the lifting of the Greek veto over Turkey's EU bid at the Helsinki European Council in 1999. From then on, confidence-building measures between Turkey and Greece were taken, and the interstate and societal interaction between the two countries developed further. A Turkish delegation visited Greece on May 14-15, 2010. The Turkish delegation included cabinet ministers, bureaucrats, and more than 100 businessmen.<sup>30</sup> During the visit a high level cooperation council between the cabinets of the two countries convened for the first time and several bilateral accords were signed. Similar meetings and high level strategic cooperation councils held between Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Russia exemplify the variety of interaction channels and different mechanisms for conducting foreign policy. In the council meetings, cabinet ministers, and bureaucrats from different ministries gather around a table to discuss several issues ranging from trade to agriculture, tourism, energy, and



Photo: A.A., Erhan Sevenler

*The driving objective for Turkey seems to be to cultivate a new image as a peace-promoting and security-providing country.*

transportation. The first meeting of the Turkey-Syria High Level Strategic Cooperation Council of Ministers was held on December 22-23, 2009.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon formed the “Quadripartite High Level Cooperation Council” (HLCC) and expressed their political will to create a zone of free movement of goods and persons.<sup>32</sup> As a result of these meetings, a series of agreements and protocols on cultural exchange, education, health, security, trade, and transportation were signed between Turkey and Syria, Iraq, Greece and Russia.

In addition to these transgovernmental yet bilateral mechanisms of foreign policy, Turkey organized and hosted multilateral meetings. The European Union-Organization of Islamic Conference summit, the Neighboring Countries of Iraq Conference, the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Pact, and the Trilateral Balkan summits are to name but a few. Of these initiatives, the Neighboring Countries of

Iraq Conference is very well-known. The initiative started in 2003 within a small group of countries neighboring Iraq and then expanded and included the representatives of the UN and G-8 countries. Alongside regional engagements, Turkey also aims to improve the relations between the East and the West. The Alliance of Civilizations, co-sponsored by Spain and Turkey, epitomizes Turkey's efforts to enhance dialogue and cooperation between different cultures and religions. The primary aim of the Alliance is to "improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions, and to help counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism."<sup>33</sup> To this end, the Alliance of Civilizations facilitates interaction among different social groups from different countries through several projects on civil society, youth, migration, and media.

Turkey is also intent on fostering relationships between societies. İbrahim Kalın, adviser to the Prime Minister, underlined this objective in an interview by stating that "Rather than state to state relations, it is more a question of improving people to people relations."<sup>34</sup> In line with this approach the visa exemption protocols signed between Turkey and Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Libya, exhibit Turkey's resoluteness to facilitate transnational activities in the region. Furthermore, in order to increase the level of interaction among societies and between economies of the region new transportation projects were undertaken. For instance, the railway line built before the First World War to connect Istanbul and Baghdad was re-opened in February 2010.<sup>35</sup>

These various bilateral and multilateral meetings and other initiatives underpin the agenda-setting power and facilitator role acquired lately by Turkey in regional politics. As a result, Turkey has become more connected to its environs and more able and willing to benefit from the peaceful interactions in its neighborhood.

### *Primacy of soft power*

The third characteristic feature of complex interdependence is the minor role of military force. The change in Turkish strategic thinking and its perception of regional politics rendered the use of military force inappropriate on the way to realizing the new strategy envisaged by former scholar Ahmet Davutoğlu.

Even though Turkey remains a state preoccupied with regional turmoil in the Middle East and the Caucasus recently, it has been pursuing soft power policies that are more multilateral, cooperative, and diplomatic than ever before

Foreign Minister Davutoğlu, in his book called “Strategic Depth,”<sup>36</sup> draws up the blueprints of a new doctrine for Turkish foreign policy. The Davutoğlu doctrine conceives Turkey as a central country, comparing it to Germany, Russia, and Japan. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey had not been wielding influence on the regional politics as she should be.<sup>37</sup> Starting with this assumption, he puts forth a new strategic framework, which helps Turkey’s bid in playing a major role in the post-Cold War international system. The Davutoğlu doctrine incorporates the principles of protecting and widening civil liberties, a zero-problems policy with neighbors, a proactive and preemptive peace diplomacy, a multidimensional foreign policy, and a rhythmic diplomacy.<sup>38</sup> All together, this aims to enhance Turkey’s presence and influence, and ultimately redress its image on the international stage.

Even though Turkey remains a state preoccupied with regional turmoil in the Middle East and the Caucasus recently, it has been pursuing soft power policies that are more multilateral, cooperative, and diplomatic than ever before.<sup>39</sup> President Gül, for instance, envisages a Turkey which is “responsible to take care of the region around us. Some problems are directly related to us. With some we don’t have a direct link. We want to contribute to a resolution of them all.”<sup>40</sup> President Gül’s statement underscores that Turkey has turned into a responsible power, which not only possesses military strength but is also able to use political, diplomatic, and cultural instruments to create a favorable environment in which cooperation can last longer.

At this point it should be noted that the secondary role for military force does not mean that security is no more one of the top priorities of Turkey. On the contrary, security maximization is still a dominant concern for Turkey; however, the way to maximize security is now the creation of relations of interdependence. For Davutoğlu, Turkey has to find the balance between security and democracy. The use of military force in any occasion should be the last resort, should conform to the soft power of Turkey and not impair civil liberties and human rights.<sup>41</sup> A strong army is, thus, not an end in itself; it is rather one of the means that helps Turkey to maintain its international image and credibility.

The implications of this change in the use of military force are twofold, namely a decrease in the military expenditure/gross domestic product ratio and transformation of military strategy. Table 3 illustrates the steady decline in military expenditure since 1999. Whereas Turkey spent approximately four percent of its GDP on the military in 1999, the allocation of GDP to the military was virtually halved in 2008.

**Table 3:** Military Expenditure/Gross Domestic Product ratio for the period 1990-2008

<b>Year</b>	<b>Value%</b>
1990	3.5%
1991	3.8%
1992	3.9%
1993	3.9%
1994	4.1%
1995	3.9%
1996	4.1%
1997	4.1%
1998	3.3%
1999	4%
2000	3.7%
2001	3.7%
2002	3.9%
2003	3.4%
2004	2.8%
2005	2.5%
2006	2.5%
2007	2.2%
2008	2.2%

Source: SIPRI database

Retrieved December 15, 2010, from <http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>

Apart from the military budget cuts, another implication of Turkey's new understanding of power is the transformation of its military strategy. Turkey today tends to establish flexible alliances. The country's new civil and economic power needs more room to maneuver easily in regional politics. This is why the principle of collective security was reevaluated and the dominance of the concept of alliance, which originates from the Cold War, was challenged. A new understanding of the notion of collective security as cooperative rather than conflicting fully conforms to the current priorities of Turkish foreign policy because "Collective security arrangements are inclusive, since they are designed to deal with threats among members; alliances are exclusive because they deter and defend against external threats."<sup>42</sup> Ankara's willingness to play a mediator and a peace-maker role

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in the Middle East in the talks between Syria and Israel, and its contribution to the negotiations between the West and Iran over the Iranian nuclear proliferation, are the highlights of Turkey's inclination towards collective-cooperative se-

curity arrangements and flexible alliances. Nevertheless, NATO and the relations with the U.S. per se will most probably remain vital to Turkey in the future, due to instrumental reasons (i.e. modernization of the military) and political reasons (i.e. Western support for Ankara's international image as a mediator and security-provider). Thus, it remains to be seen whether Turkey can achieve complete flexibility without alienating itself from the West.

Turkey's new political-military strategy partly accounts for the deterioration of relations with Israel too. It is argued that Turkey no longer needs Israel as an ally against imminent threats coming from its neighbors.<sup>43</sup> Besides, the Israeli government's attitude on the Palestine question fuels domestic outrage against its policies in Turkey, and the heavy-handed approach to addressing the issue of Iran's nuclear proliferation collides with Turkey's priority of promoting collective security that encompasses every state in the region. These changing dynamics of Turkey-Israel relations notwithstanding, Israel remains a strong economic partner of Turkey and a key actor in the regional equation for the establishment of enduring peace and continuous economic development across the region.

Overall, Turkey and its neighbors have found themselves in economic interdependencies. Through this Turkey wields greater influence in different issue areas such as trade, energy policy, foreign direct investment, and transportation. All of the initiatives and new mechanisms of state to state relations strive for the promotion of interaction and cooperation across the region. The driving objective for Turkey seems to be to cultivate a new image as a peace-promoting and security-providing country. The new preferences, or rather redefined national interests, of Turkey correspond well to the liberal school's emphasis on the importance of reputation and image in today's world politics and the vital role of credible information and enhanced interaction in reducing uncertainty and forging cooperation among states. As Wallander and Keohane put it succinctly "being able to provide credible information to others is a source of influence."<sup>44</sup> Turkey, to a certain extent, gives the right signals and provides credible information, which in turn increases the chances of arriving at an optimal choice through the correction of market failure across the region. All in all, with the assistance of those initiatives and new mechanisms of foreign policy, Turkey has earned credibility and a new

image in the international arena, which can be turned into economic, diplomatic and political capital.

### Conclusion

Turkish foreign policy has lately transposed to a liberal and cooperative standpoint owing to the transformation of domestic politics through the process of democratization and the assumption of power by a new political elite espousing neoliberal ideas and a conservative interpretation of modernization. Dialogue with, rather than deterrence of, neighbors has become the primary objective of contemporary Turkish foreign policy. Hence, Turkey has evolved from a coercive power into a non-aggressive and cooperative state, or rather a soft power.

Of course, it is better not to jump to the conclusion that complex interdependence between Turkey and its neighbors has been achieved. Nor has Turkey become a regional hegemon. The purpose of this paper was to show that the neoliberal perspective of Keohane and Nye can shed light on the change in recent years of Turkey's relations with its neighbors. However, this economy-oriented neoliberal analysis is best seen as a snapshot of Turkish foreign policy from one angle, rather than a comprehensive analysis.

As for the analytical handicaps of complex interdependence, it should be kept in mind that complex interdependence was proposed at first as a model and an ideal type that gave a liberal account of the changing relations between Western democracies. Thus, complex interdependence grows to maturity if and only if pluralist democracy is institutionalized with all its aspects. Second, the complex interdependence model is heavily economy-oriented and neglects ideological and cultural factors. However, it is generally argued that Turkey's new activism in the region has cultural-religious motivations too. The JDP's conservative democratic political ideology, supported by a new middle class whose social and economic values and beliefs are a mixture of Islamic interpretation of modernization and globalization, is considered by many to be the foremost catalyst behind Turkey's policies vis-à-vis its neighbors.

The new activism in foreign policy has deepened interdependence between Turkey and its neighborhood. However, there may be some drawbacks of and impediments to the promotion of complex interdependence in the region. Of these, the most important is the interplay between the future of Iraq and the prospect of a solution for the Kurdish issue in Turkey exemplifies how a domestic issue can

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perseverance of Turkey is commensurate with the political will of Turkish politicians and the economic capabilities of the state to back activism in foreign policy. Thirdly, the policy of making friends even with erstwhile adversaries such as Armenia and Iran has the potential to deteriorate relations with closed allies such as Azerbaijan and Israel.<sup>45</sup> Lastly, Turkey is still cautiously welcomed by quite a few regional actors. The neighbors remain wary of Turkish intentions and the new activism in foreign policy might generate unintended results and a backlash against the country's dynamic policies.

In conclusion, it seems that Turkey has gained a strong foothold in regional politics through the new mechanisms of interaction and its soft power. Nonetheless, being a soft power is a much more burdensome task and at times frustrating than is widely believed. Keohane points out that any state which aspires to be a soft power needs not only to attract "the desire of people in one country to imitate the institutions and practices prevailing in another, but also [to enhance] their ability to do so."<sup>46</sup> If Turkey wants to wield a power within the region, it needs i) to assist other countries to develop their democratic institutions, and ii) to increase economic growth and promote fair distribution of welfare across the region. This could be done by eliminating "public bads" such as terrorism, fundamentalism, and proliferation of nuclear weapons as well as providing "public goods" such as economic assistance, conflict free environment and regional institutions that can reach out to every actor in the neighborhood.

### Endnotes

1. Previous drafts of this paper were presented at the Graduate Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research held in Dublin, August 30-September 1, 2010 and at the Annual Conference of the University Association for Contemporary European Studies held in Bruges, September 6-8, 2010. I would like to thank anonymous referees for their useful comments.

2. On this point I draw on Jan W. Honig. Jan W. Honig, "The 'Renationalization' of Western European Defense," *Security Studies*, Vol.2, No.1 (Autumn, 1992), pp.122-138.

3. For instance, see Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy," *SAIS Review*, Vol.19, No.1 (1999), pp.92-113; Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: The Challenges of Multi-Regionalism," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.54, No.1 (Fall, 2000), p.170.

4. Internationalism is generally defined as "a set of beliefs to the effect that if there is more law, organization, exchange, and communication among states, this will reinforce peace and security."

Kjell Goldmann, *The Logic of Internationalism: Coercion and Accommodation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.2.

5. For the new activism during the Justice and Development Party era, see Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era," *Turkish Studies*, Vol.10, No.1 (March, 2009), pp.7-24.

6. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman and Co., 1989), 2nd Edition, pp.24-25.

7. *Ibid.*, pp.26-27.

8. Joseph, S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

9. Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, p.13.

10. *Ibid.*, p.32.

11. *Ibid.*, p.28.

12. Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp.51-52 (italics original).

13. According to Keohane, "Myopic self-interest refers to governments' perception of the relative costs and benefits to them of alternative courses of action with regard to a particular issue, *when that issue is considered in isolation from others.*" *Ibid.*, p.99 (italics original).

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15. Mustafa Aydın, "The Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy, and Turkey's European Vocation," *The Review of International Affairs*, Vol.3, No.2 (Winter, 2003), p.323.

16. Sevgi Drorian, "Turkey: Security, State and Society in Troubled Times," *European Security*, Vol. 14, Issue 2 (June, 2005), p.262.

17. Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and the Middle East after September 11: The Importance of the EU Dimension," *Turkish Political Quarterly*, Vol.2, No.3 (Winter, 2003), p.2.

18. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, p.82.

19. William Hale and Ergun Özbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 120.

20. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, p.111.

21. Robert O. Keohane, "International Liberalism Reconsidered," Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Power and Governance in Partially Globalized World* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), p.49

22. Philip Gordon and Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey on the Brink," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.29, No.3 (2006), p.60.

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25. Hale and Özbudun, *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey: The Case of the AKP*, p.121.

26. Ahmet Davutoğlu cited in Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints, International Crisis Group Europe Report No.203 (April, 2010), p.10.

27. Kemal Kirişçi, "Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State," p.42-52.
28. Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints, p. 10.
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30. Helena Smith, "Turkish Prime Minister in 'revolutionary' visit to Greece," *The Guardian*, May 13, 2010.
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32. The details of the High Level Cooperation Council are available on the official website of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, retrieved December 15, 2010, from [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-political-declaration-on-the-establishment-of-the-high-level-cooperation-council-among-turkey\\_-syria\\_-jordan-and-lebanon.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-political-declaration-on-the-establishment-of-the-high-level-cooperation-council-among-turkey_-syria_-jordan-and-lebanon.en.mfa).
33. See the official website of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. Retrieved December 15, 2010, from <http://www.unaoc.org>.
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44. Wallander and Keohane, "Risk, Threat, and Security Institutions," p.95.
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