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# TURKEY'S POWER CAPACITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

## LIMITS OF THE POSSIBLE

*AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS*



INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC RESEARCH ORGANIZATION  
USAK Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies

Osman Bahadır Dinçer  
Mustafa Kutlay

USAK REPORTS NO: 12-04

June 2012

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The aim of this study is to assess Turkey's capacity as a regional power in the Middle East. Within this context, emphasis has been placed on the structural components of Turkey's growing regional influence.*

The arguments about whether Turkey is a role model in the Middle East or has attained the level of an “order establishing actor” are frequently voiced in print and visual media, but no systematic empirical analysis of these claims seems to have been carried out. This study sets out to fill this gap. Turkey's capacity as an international player is examined empirically on the basis of data regarding its diplomatic, economic, and soft power components. This study concludes that Turkey is a country suffering from an “expectations-capabilities gap” in the Middle East, and that until the deficiencies identified in the study are remedied, Turkey will be unable to become a regional leader.

- The first parameter which needs to be given priority in studying Turkey's influence in the Middle East is its **diplomatic strength**.
  - ◆ According to the data for 2011, the Turkish Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs employs a total of 5,533 personnel of whom 1,146 are career officers.
  - ◆ Personnel are deployed first and foremost in the Ministry's headquarters in Ankara, and then in 114 embassies, 11 permanent delegations, and 71 consulates general.
  - ◆ The statistics suggest a partial improvement when 1990 and 2000 are compared, but most of the increase is simply in line with the general growth of the country.
  - ◆ A comparison between the economic and human infrastructure of the Turkish Foreign Ministry and those of other selected countries (U.S., Russia, UK, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, and Spain) puts it at the bottom with approximately €436 million. A comparison of numbers of personnel



puts Turkey (5,533) ahead of India (3,414) and Brazil (4,150), but behind European countries like France (15,008), Germany (12,437), and the UK (17,100).

- ◆ Turkey had 91 embassies in 2000, a number which had risen to 114 by 2011. The 12 Turkish embassies in Africa at the start of 2009 had grown to 28 by 2011, and will reach 33 in the first half of 2012.
- ◆ The number of Turkish missions in Arabic-speaking countries is 25. The number of career staff in these missions is 135. That is, Turkey conducts its activities in Arabic-speaking countries with 5 employees per diplomatic mission. Furthermore, only 6 of these employees out of 135 can speak Arabic. In the Ministry, the number of Arabic-speaking personnel was 10 in 1990 and reached 26 in 2011.
- A second dimension of the debate on Turkey's growing influence in the Middle East relates to **economic strength**.
  - ◆ The Turkish economy has achieved rapid growth over the last decade. During this period, GDP increased threefold and the annual volume of exports rose about fourfold from \$36 billion to \$135 billion in 2011. Between 1980 and 2000, \$10.4 billion of foreign direct investment entered Turkey. In the period 2000-2010, this rose to \$100 billion.
  - ◆ With a population of 73 million, Turkey ranks second in the region for population size after Egypt, and it also has the largest economy in the Middle East thanks to its record of growth. During the period 2002-2010, the share of Middle East exports in total exports rose from 6% to 16% and the share of the Middle East in the total volume of trade went up from \$3.9 billion to \$23.6 billion. Turkey has managed to achieve a large trade surplus in its overall trade with the countries of the Middle East, with exports rising in this period from \$2.2 billion to \$18 billion.
  - ◆ But there are two restrictions which stand in the way of Turkey's economy making a sustainable contribution to its foreign policy goals for the region. The first of these is related to the composition of its foreign trade in terms of technology and the structure of production. In 2002, the share of goods relying on natural resources and low technology in Turkey's total exports to the Middle East was 63%, but in 2010, it had fallen to 56%. Simultaneously, the share of medium and high technology goods rose from 37% in 2002 to 44%. But the share of high technology goods exported by Turkey to the Middle East out of the total amount exported dropped from 4% in 2002 to 3.5% in 2010.
  - ◆ The basin of countries with which Turkey can have potential economic cooperation is responsible for about 41% of the world's economic output and 21% of its population. The second restriction we mentioned is that should Turkey be unable to establish itself as a heavyweight player, all of its potential

strengths could be transformed into obstacles causing its strength to be dissipated. Although Turkish foreign trade is growing, the fact that the Turkish economy is not being transformed through a comprehensive industrial strategy shows that Turkey has problems in identifying its target markets and designing policies for the sectors in which it can achieve competitive superiority. This is because the goods which Turkey sells in Middle Eastern markets are ones which can be easily replaced by domestic manufacturers. The present pattern of relations between the government and businessmen could risk further deepening this obstacle, because Turkey does not have properly institutionalized dialogue between the government and businessmen and so coordinated proactive economic and diplomatic policies are not being designed.

- **Soft power** is the third parameter used for measuring Turkey's strength in the Middle East.
  - ◆ The relevant government institutions do not keep systematic data about the number of Middle Eastern students studying in Turkey and so no reliable studies are being conducted about the past.
  - ◆ A study that has been conducted using the figures for the last four years as a basis reveals that there are very few students coming to Turkey from the Gulf countries. In 2011, there were a total of 9,374 students in total received residence permits for studying in Turkey, and of these 1,123 were Arabs -or about 12% of the total. The number of citizens of Middle Eastern countries receiving education in Turkey is fairly limited. A further important point here is that there is no institutional mechanism to maintain contact with these people, who return to their own countries when they complete their education.
  - ◆ Several things have made Turkey an important tourist center for the citizens of Arab countries. They include the foreign policy that Turkey has recently formulated and which has generated sympathy among the Arab peoples, Turkish TV series which have created a sense of interest, and the improvement in Turkey's cultural policies. The number of visitors from Middle Eastern countries who came to Turkey in 2002 was 975,000, but by 2010, this figure had risen to 3.6 million. Middle Eastern visitors as a percentage of all Turkey's visitors rose in the same period from 7.3% to 12.6%.
  - ◆ There are a number of radio and television broadcasts in Arabic from non-Arab countries to the Arab world. These include Russia (Rusiya al-Yaum); UK (the BBC Arabic Service); U.S. (Sawa Radio, al-Hurra, and CNN Arabic); France (France 24, Monte Carlo Radio); Germany (Deutsche Welle Arabic); and Iran. Turkey began transmitting TRT Türkiye (TRT Arabic) in April 2010. This was an important step forward in establishing direct communications with the region. When TRT Arabic is compared to broadcasts from the countries above, it is still relatively backward as a competitor because of deficiencies arising from it being new.

- ◆ The figures for the viewing of Turkish TV series in Arab countries are very high. *Silver* (Gümüş) was followed by 85 million Arab viewers while *Under the Lime Trees* (Ihlamlar Altında) captured 67 million Arab viewers. *Silver* was the first Turkish series to enter the Arab world, but the number having done so has currently reached 42.
- ◆ A Jordanian study shows that 83% of Jordanians watch Turkish series. The figure reveals the important potential that Turkish series possess in the formation of perceptions of their country.
- ◆ There is a variety of opinion in the Arab countries regarding Turkish TV series. In the study based on the people of Jordan, 51% thought that the series were a “cultural” onslaught and that they concealed secular values underneath dramatic excitement. 47% thought that Turkish TV series had a negative effect on the youth. Similarly, there was also a high proportion -54%- who stated that the Turkish series crossed some red lines.
- ◆ Then there is the important issue of Turkey’s ability to set the agenda. Here, Turkey lags somewhat behind other regional players. For example, events during the tension between Turkey and Israel over the Mavi Marmara flotilla demonstrated for all to see that Turkey had shortcomings in terms of its power to set the agenda and also to decide which topics would not be brought to the negotiating table.
- ◆ The precise qualities which make Turkey a role model or an enviable country are also debatable. The particular values which Turkey projects to the Middle East in its foreign policy and the identification of its role are not sufficiently sharply defined. In addition to this, its current policies, opaque as they are, are far from being systematic because of their potentially polarizing effects in Turkish domestic politics. The fact that Turkey has not been able to achieve social reconciliation in its domestic politics and that resolute steps have not been taken to resolve structural issues like the Kurdish problem leads to conflicting moves in its foreign policy and unprofitable discussion.
- ◆ Regional players, whether small or large, can hardly be said to be followers of Turkey. The interest shown in Turkey seems to exist for the present only at the level of outward sympathy. Misperceptions in the Arab world of certain policies directed toward it have the potential to cause the positive views of Turkey to disappear rapidly.

In conclusion, this study has argued that there is a discrepancy between the role which Turkey wishes to play and the capacity it possesses. Turkey’s foreign policy strategy over the last decade has demonstrably been deployed on the right side of history. But rhetoric in foreign policy can be a means of creating credibility as long as it is supported with action. If a state can only achieve a little of what it guarantees or if it is unable to increase its capacity in step with ambitious goals, results may be produced which are exactly the opposite of what was intended. These are the assumptions from which this study proceeded and its basic message is that Turkey needs to urgently start a discussion on how to increase its capacity. In this connection, there is an overwhelming need for empirical studies supported with factual data.

# INTRODUCTION

*The transformation of Turkey's political economy over the last decade has attracted the attention of many analysts. Parallel to its extensive domestic transformation, activism in Turkish foreign policy has also brought about new research topics, contentious issues of discussion, and challenges.*

Turkey's philosophy of proactive and pre-emptive foreign policy, which substituted Turkey's non-interventionist and pro-status quo approach with its neighbors, corresponds to the "demand for a new status," in the words of some scholars.<sup>1</sup> Foreign policy makers, most notably Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, have openly expressed their dissatisfaction regarding Turkey's role in the past in its relations with neighbors and its dichotomic approach to East-West conceptualization. Therefore, the new government aimed to develop an inclination toward formulating policies based on an Ankara-centered, alternative geo-political and geo-cultural vision in comparison to Turkey's previous foreign policy behavior.<sup>2</sup> As the Middle East is at the center of this new vision, the issue of Turkey's capacity lies at the heart of discussions on how to read its recent foreign policy activism. In this respect, it is a quasi-certain fact that Turkey is making efforts to increase its regional power capacity as well as its global activism. However, especially in the past year (2011), we also observe an "expectation-capability gap" in certain aspects of Turkish foreign policy in fulfilling this ambiguous goal.

The question of whether Turkey has the capacity to obtain the new status it demands is the prime subject of the ongoing debate regarding Turkey's Middle East and North African policy, especially amid the upheavals and reshufflings in this region. In this

1 Ersel Aydın, "Bölgesel Güç Olmak ve Türk Dış Politikasında Yön Arayışları," in Bahadır Dinçer and others (ed.), *Yeni Dönemde Türk Dış Politikası*, USAK Publications, Ankara, 2010, p. 58

2 Şaban Kardeş, "Türk Dış Politikasında Eksen Kayması mı?," *Akademik Orta Doğu*, Volume 5, No 2, 2011, pp. 19-42. See also: Erşad Hürmüzlü, "Türkiye Batı ile Doğu Arasında Bir Köprü Değil Bizatihi Bir Merkezdir," in Habibe Özdal and others (ed.), *Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası 4*, USAK Publications, Ankara, 2011, pp. 157-171.

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Turkey's philosophy  
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debate, it is fair to argue that sufficient academic literature has emerged to allow us to clarify the two poles on Turkey's capacity. One of these poles comprises of the thesis supporting Turkey gaining the status of a "central country" or "order-establishing actor," and this thesis is officially defended by the relevant foreign policy staff of the Turkish government.<sup>3</sup> According to it, Turkey pursues an active approach in order to contribute to the increase in regional peace, stability, and welfare, and "puts itself in the virtuous position of order-establisher in the flow of history" in this crisis-based transition period in which "a new world is established."<sup>4</sup> Contrastingly, the other pole argues that Turkey has "delusions of regional power," and even makes inferences that the perspective constructed and acted upon by Davutoğlu is a sum of "fantastic ideas."<sup>5</sup> In a further elaboration on this view, Turkey entered into foreign policy activism beyond its capacity and punching above its weight<sup>6</sup> without sufficiently taking its economic constraints, domestic political polarizations, and conflicts of interest with other regional and global actors into consideration.

Both of these two approaches directly focus on "power" discussions, and make different inferences and projections regarding Turkey's capacity in the Middle East. Despite this basic difference, Turkey demanding a new status is the main common point of almost all academic works regarding the issue. However, the main concern of these debates is whether Turkey has the political, economic, and cultural tools and human capital to realize this demand for an elevated status. At this point, it is observed that there is a gap regarding the issue within the existing literature. Likewise, while there is particular emphasis on the question of power, there has been no thorough research measuring the "capacity deficit" in Turkish policy in the Middle East. This study aims to contribute to the research conducted thus far in pursuit of a further understanding of the issue. In this context, in the first part of the study, the parameters of "power" and "regional power" will be discussed with reference to the existing literature, and based on these parameters, an empirical analysis of Turkey's power in the Middle East will be conducted in the second part. In the conclusion, recommendations on policies to increase Turkey's capacity will be made within the framework of findings from the analysis.

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3 Suat Kınıklıoğlu, "Dış Politika Yapımında da İcraatında da Dönüşüm Var," in Özdal and others, *Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası 4*, pp. 243-4; İdrisBal, "Türkiye Kabuğuna Çekilerek Çevresindeki Sorunlardan Uzak Duramaz," in Özdal and others, *Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası 3*, USAK Publications, Ankara, 2010, p. 50.

4 Bülent Aras, "Düzen Kurucu Aktör," *Sabah*, September 30, 2009.

5 For other works on the statements see also İlhan Uzgel, "Türk Dış Politikasında Bölgesel Güç İllüzyonu," in Dinçer and others (ed.), *Yeni Dönemde Türk Dış Politikası*, pp. 61-66; İlhan Uzgel, "Dış Politikada AKP: Stratejik Konumdan Stratejik Modele," in İlhan Uzgel and Bülent Duru (ed.), *AKP Kitabı: Bir Dönüşümün Bilançosu*, Phoenix yayınları, Ankara, 2010, p. 362.

6 Morton Abramowitz and Henry J. Barkey, "Turkey's Transformers: The AKP Sees Big," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 88, No. 6, 2009, pp. 126-127.

# 1 “POWER” AND “REGIONAL POWER DISCUSSIONS: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

*Discussions regarding the concepts of “power” and “regional power” have a determinant significance in measuring the foreign policy activities of states.*

In political science and international relations “power” constitutes one of the central concepts. How the framework of the concept is drawn and more importantly how it is made the variable of an empirical analysis, however, is a topic of intensive methodological and theoretical discussions.<sup>7</sup> This study examines the concept of power in three categories concerning the emphases on its different aspects in the literature.<sup>8</sup>

## Realist Approaches: Material and Relational Aspects of Power

It is possible to examine the first dimension of power within the framework of a realist approach. The realist paradigm, as one of the dominant and even determinant paradigms in the establishment of the international relations discipline, became the main approach in disciplinary discussions on the concept of power, especially during the Cold War period.<sup>9</sup> Realist theory, taking Edward Carr’s advice into consideration, always emphasized that power is a concept that cannot be neglected in international politics,<sup>10</sup> and even Hans Morgenthau defined international politics

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7 John A. Vasquez, *The Power of Power Politics: From Classical Realism to Neotraditionalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998; Mark Haugaard, “Power: A ‘Family Resemblance’ Concept”, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Volume 13, No. 4, 2010, pp. 419-438.

8 In this work, the “power” concept will be discussed within the framework of a foreign policy analysis of the international relations discipline without intervening in the political science aspect of it. However, it should be noted that international relations is intertwined with political science regarding many topics as well as the power concept while also borrowing a large portion of its conceptual apparatus from political science.

9 In his significant work, John Vasquez shows that the power concept is one of the main topics of debate of the international relations discipline, and he looked into how realism could establish its dominant position despite its facile views on the power concept. In the same way, Brian Schmidt emphasized the “power concept’s close relation with realist theory.”

10 Edward H. Carr, *The Twenty Year Crisis, 1919 -1939, An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Perennial, New York, 2001, p. 97.

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.....

as “interest defined in terms of power.”<sup>11</sup> The realist approach’s definition of power is based on famous political scientist Robert Dahl’s conceptualization. According to this, “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.”<sup>12</sup> The realist paradigm which brought a relational approach to the concept of power is grounded in (i) military, (ii) and although fewer, economic parameters. Accordingly, in an anarchical international system, state power is determined by military capacity while, as realist political economists like Gilpin put it, economics is also counted in the parameters of power.<sup>13</sup>

## Liberal Approaches: Non-material Aspects of Power

The second dimension of power can be analyzed within the framework of liberal interdependence theories, which emerged as the changing international system made the old concepts obsolete and as a reaction to realist theory’s limited focus on material aspects of power.<sup>14</sup> With the end of the Cold War, which could not be predicted by realist theory, approaches concentrating on “security-based high politics” started to lose their priority in the literature. Arguments about whether the United States won the Cold War thanks to power elements beyond its military and economic power occupied the center of discussions regarding power in academic literature. In this sense, Joseph Nye contributed to the visibility of other aspects of power with his “soft power” research program. Nye examines the concept of soft power with an approach emphasizing that power is not only about what is being made by whom and how, but that it is also related to the capacity to determine which topics are kept away from the discussion agenda. Nye, extending the “agenda-setting power” approach developed and coined by Bachrach and Baratz,<sup>15</sup> defines the concept of power as the “ability to influence the behavior of others to accomplish the outcomes one wants,” and states that there are three main ways of “influencing others”: (i) coercion, (ii) persuasion, and (iii) attraction.<sup>16</sup> “Soft power,” accordingly, “can rest on the attraction of one’s ideas or on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences that others express.”<sup>17</sup> Nye states that the soft power capacity of a state is based on its (i) culture, (ii) political values, and (iii) foreign policy, and is shaped on an equation in which state and non-state actors take part.<sup>18</sup> Nye,

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11 Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1962, p. 5.

12 Robert Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” *Behavioral Science*, Volume 2, 1957, pp. 202-203.

13 Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1998.

14 For the two pioneer works on this topic, also see Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Transnational Relations and World Politics*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1973; Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984.

15 Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, “Decisions and Non-decisions: An Analytical Framework,” *American Political Science Review*, Volume 57, No. 3, 1963, pp. 632-642.

16 Joseph S. Nye, “Notes for a Soft-power Research Agenda,” in Felix Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams (eds.), *Power in World Politics*, Routledge, London, 2007, pp. 162-172.

17 Joseph S. Nye, “The Changing Nature of Power,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 105, No 2, 1990, pp. 177-192.

18 Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, 2004, p. 11.

saving power from being a concept monopolized by states, also made a significant contribution to the literature by unraveling the non-material and non-state sources of power.<sup>19</sup>

## Eclectic Political Economy Approaches: Structural Aspects of Power

The third dimension of power is shaped by the eclectic political economy approaches which take both material and non-material elements into consideration, yet analyze these elements as integrated parts of the same structural system and with reference to distributional dynamics of the international political economy system.<sup>20</sup> Within this framework pioneered by Susan Strange, “structural power” is emphasized instead of “relational” or “bargaining power.” Structural power is the “power that shapes and determines the structures of world political economy within which the states, institutions, groups or individuals have to operate.”<sup>21</sup> In this manner, structural power is the power that determines how things shall be done, and is the power that shapes frameworks within which states, institutions, and individuals are interrelated.<sup>22</sup>

Strange categorizes structural power into “primary structures” and “secondary structures.” In primary power structures, security, production, finance, and knowledge pillars are examined while transformation, trade, energy, and welfare structures are analyzed in secondary power structures.<sup>23</sup> All in all, structural power focuses primarily on structural dynamics organizing a web of relations (security, finance, knowledge, etc.) in power structures in many fields rather than economic and political power based on relational bargaining ability. On the other side, structural power separately runs its course in each and every single power field. That is, a state can be a “playmaker” actor in trade structure while being a “follower of the leader” in knowledge structure. In this respect, Strange points out that power is operationalized through different channels, but by interrelated mechanisms rather than being locked into one channel with a narrow understanding. Accordingly, an actor can claim to be a power and more importantly a playmaker to the extent of how wide its area of authority in each structural power field is.

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.....

19 For a work on non-material power elements regarding the development levels of states in parallel to this conceptual framework, see also Peter Evans, “In Search of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Developmental State,” *Center for Global Political Economy*, Working Paper No. 4, December 2008.

20 In fact, Nye, in his following works, emphasized that “soft power” and “hard power” concepts together take place in realpolitik, and even stated that elements of soft power can also be operationalized similar to that of hard power.

21 Susan Strange, “An Eclectic Approach,” in Craig N. Murphy and Roger Tooze (eds.), *The New International Political Economy*, Lynne Publishers, Boulder, 1991, p. 34.

22 What is meant to be here are not only material institutions or bureaucratic mechanisms, but at the same time unwritten norms, rules, and customs as well.

23 Susan Strange, *States and Markets*, Pinter Publishers, London, 1988.



.....  
The regional power concept points to a more complicated one comprising of the two unclear concepts of “region” and “power.”  
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## Geographic Dimension: The Concept of “Regional Power”

There needs to be a location or geography in which states project their power, and this need requires the typologies of a “regional power,” which is a sub-category of power debates to be discussed. In fact, the regional power concept points to a more complicated one comprising of the two unclear concepts of “region” and “power.”<sup>24</sup> As the power concept mentioned above, at this point, the place of the region and regional power concepts in the literature will be discussed. Likewise, as Buzan states, “the concept of region is frequently used but rarely described openly.”<sup>25</sup> Despite the ambiguity related to the nature of the concept and difficulty in providing a full-fledged definition of it, William Thompson’s accepted definition counts three main features of regional sub-systems: (i) geographical proximity, (ii) the intensity and regularity of interaction between actors being of such a depth that it causes a change in one part of the sub-system to influence the other parts, and (iii) the consciousness of at least two states of the region and other actors of the international system with regard to the distinguishing features of the region.<sup>26</sup> The actors claiming to be the primary leading players in these geographical clusters which measures up these criteria are called “regional power.” In the context of this study, “regional power” will be defined in terms of Stefan Schirm’s criteria.<sup>27</sup> According to those:

- The actor claiming to be the regional power should have a “role definition” in parallel with this intention, and it should make it felt in its relations with other actors of the region.
- It should have material power resources, and in addition to military power, should also have economic, diplomatic, and organizational capacity within this framework.
- The role definition of the actor claiming to be a regional power should be accepted by the other actors of the region, and should even also be accepted by the actors which are determinant in the functioning of the global system.
- Power projection based on material and soft power elements could be able to yield results.

In summary, in order to be able to determine whether an actor is a “regional power” in a certain region, military, economic, and soft power elements should be pos-

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The concepts of both power and regional power are multi-dimensional, multi-layered, and context-based.  
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24 Detlef Nolte, “How to Compare Regional Powers: Analytical Concepts and Research Questions,” *Review of International Studies*, Cilt 36, 2010, pp. 881-901.

25 Barry Buzan, “The Asia-Pacific: What Sort of Region in What Sort of World?” in Christopher Brook and Anthony McGrew (ed.), *Asia-Pacific in the New World Order*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 68.

26 William Thompson, “The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explanation and a Propositional Inventory,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 17, No 1, 1973, p. 101.

27 Stefan A. Schirm, “Leaders in Need of Followers: Emerging Powers in Global Governance,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Volume 16, No 2, 2010, pp. 197-221.

sessed as realist and liberal theories emphasize. Furthermore, as social constructivist theories point out, the actor in question should also have a “role definition” and this definition should also hold true in the eyes of other countries of the region.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, projections of power, based on different power elements, yielding results are another important factor.

As the literature discussed illustrates, the concepts of both power and regional power are multi-dimensional, multi-layered, and context-based.<sup>29</sup> This point should be taken into consideration in any analysis of Turkey’s regional power in the Middle East, and a multi-dimensional analysis should be made based on not only means and potential but also results as well. In this manner, three of the power dimensions discussed above should be included in the equation. This condition, for us, requires an analytical eclecticism which does not totally ignore epistemological and methodological sensitivities.<sup>30</sup> In this work, taking this concern into consideration, an analytical framework comprising of power’s three dimensions will be chosen. An emphasis on the “military” and “economic” power of the realist school will be considered, the “soft power” emphasis of liberals will be included in the equation as it has an empirical basis, and the “structural power” concept of eclectic political economy will be utilized as a macro-frame to determine the “limits of the possible” while trying to measure Turkey’s regional capacity in the Middle East. Therefore, the parameters to be examined in this work are Turkey’s diplomatic, economic, and soft power capabilities. These parameters will be analyzed in terms of the opportunities and constraints provided to Turkey by the international political economy structure, Turkey’s “role definition,” and the reaction of the countries of the region to this role conception.<sup>31</sup>

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28 For a comprehensive work on this issue, also see Miriam Prys, “Hegemony, Domination, Detachment: Differences in Regional Powerhood,” *International Studies Review*, Volume 12, No 4, 2010, pp. 479-504. For the place and importance of social constructivist theories in regional power debates, see also Andrew Hurrell, “Some Reflections on the Role of Intermediate Powers in International Institutions,” in Andrew Hurrell et al., *Paths to Power: Foreign Policy Strategies of Intermediate States*, Latin American Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center, Working Paper No. 244, Washington, DC, 2000.

29 For a detailed analysis of the topic see also David Baldwin, “Power and International Relations,” in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risseve Beth A. Simmons (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, Oxford University Press Oxford, 2002, pp. 177-191.

30 “For a debate on this topic, also see Peter Katzenstein and Rudra Sil, “Eclectic Theorizing in the Study and Practice of International Relations,” in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp. 109-130.

31 Turkey’s military power will not be examined in this work for two reasons. First, the recent discussions on Turkey’s capacity in the Middle East are not on military power. That is, the topic of discussion is not how much capacity Turkey has in this field. For us, the main debate topic is about Turkey’s “soft power” capacity and “economic potential.” The second reason is related to the field of expertise of the writers, and based on more personal reasons. As a measurement of military capacity and collecting data is more difficult and requires expertise, it is kept out of the scope of this work.



# 2

## MEASURING TURKEY'S POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

*Discussions regarding the concepts of “power” and “regional power” are of significant importance in terms of measuring states’ foreign policy activities.*

Recently, there have been many discussions concerning Turkey being an inspiration to the Arab world. According to many experts, Turkey has gained the courtesy of peoples of the region by “being an actor who is only living” what and how things should be done rather than dictating them. What is more, it could do this as an actor who also managed to expand its relations with the West. Likewise, Turkey has a unique foreign policy characteristic as a member of NATO, founding member of the Council of Europe, and a candidate country negotiating with the EU. There is no doubt that Prime Minister Erdoğan’s Weberian style of charismatic leadership was a significant factor in Turkey winning the sympathy of many Arab countries. However, considering that the influence of individuals makes sense when coalesced with structural dynamics, structural elements of Turkey’s recently increasing regional influence and the sustainability of these elements will be the focus of this work. In this respect, Turkey’s capacity will be examined in terms of diplomatic power, economic power, and soft power elements within an empirical framework.

### a) Diplomatic Power

In terms of measuring Turkey’s effectiveness in the Middle East, the first parameters to be examined are elements of diplomatic power. Above all, the logistical infrastructure of foreign policy is provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and is relatively independent of the activism of forefront actors. The sufficiency of the Ministry’s personnel and its capacity as an institution is of key importance in foreign policy maneuvers yielding results.<sup>32</sup> In this context, first the material infrastructure

<sup>32</sup> Interaction, synchronization, and coordination between different state institutions directly affect the effectiveness of the decisions and need to be examined. However, the measurement of the interaction between the ministry of foreign affairs, prime ministry, presidency, parliament, military, intelligence agencies, and other institutions and measurement of their effect on the foreign policy-making process is beyond the scope of this work. It would be useful to examine this topic in detail in more comprehensive studies.

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 .....

of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereinafter, Ministry) will be examined with comparative data, and then the human capital of the Ministry invested in the Middle East will be analyzed in order to measure the diplomatic power of Turkey.

5,533 personnel, 1,146 of which are career employees, are serving in the Ministry. The personnel are distributed across 114 embassies, 11 permanent missions, and 71 consulates general, with Ankara holding the most. According to these numbers, even though it is possible to state that there was a partial improvement between the years 1990-2010 (also see Table 1), this improvement is a reflection of the general growth process of the country.<sup>33</sup>

**Table 1. Institutional Infrastructure of Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

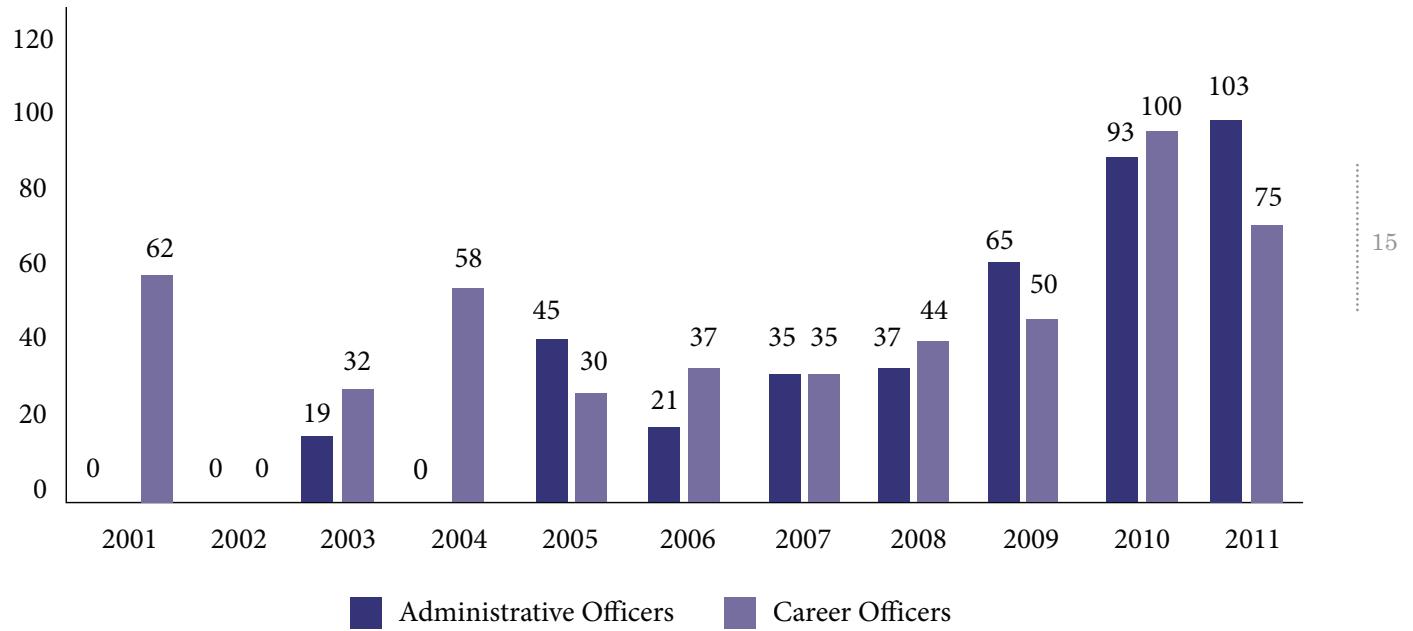
NUMBER OF MISSIONS	1990	2000	2011
Embassies	73	91	114
Consulates General	53	59	71
Permanent Representatives	8	11	11
NUMBER OF PERSONNEL	1990	2000	2011
Career Employees	712	882	1146
Administrative/Communication/KİM	394	510	800
Center Employees	632	612	733
CENTER EMPLOYEES	1990	2000	2011
Department Chiefs	0	0	3
Computer Manager (Experts/Chiefs etc. included)	352	400	454
Translators and Interpreters (contracted included)	10	29	51
Contracted Employees Abroad	1857	2138	2557

<sup>33</sup> The source of the data in tables in this section is the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs unless indicated otherwise. At this point, we would like to thank Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Deputy Minister Naci Koru for his help in this issue.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from time to time, expresses that its operational constraints are due to a lack of human potential and institutional fatigue caused by a heavy workload. However, the lack of personnel became serious in the last ten year period when Turkey began to act with a “multi-dimensional” foreign policy strategy. As retired Ambassador Şükrü Elekdağ puts it, “It is a long-term critical necessity that the institutions and duties of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be subjected to an extensive restructuring.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, legislative amendments were made on the document accepted on June 24, 1994, and remained in force until July 2010 in order to overcome the difficulties brought by expanding diplomacy in a wide area with few and unspecialized personnel.<sup>35</sup> With the approval of the legislation, in 2010 there was a significant increase in personnel appointed by the Ministry for the first time (also see Figure 1).<sup>36</sup>

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 The lack of personnel became serious in the last ten year period when Turkey began to act with a “multi-dimensional” foreign policy strategy.  
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**Figure 1. Personal Recruitment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**



34 For the parliamentary speech of retired Ambassador Şükrü Elekdağ regarding the draft law on the establishment and duties of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, TBMM 23. Dönem, 4. Yasama Yılı, 127. Birleşim, July 1, 2010.

35 For the parliamentary speech of Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu regarding a draft law on the establishment and duties of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, TBMM 23. Dönem 4. Yasama Yılı, 127. Birleşim, July 1, 2010. In the context of this legislative amendment, radical and significant changes have been made in the Foreign Affairs Ministry. For the full text of legislations, also see “6004 Sayılı Dışişleri Bakanlığı Teşkilat Kanunu,” *Resmî Gazete*, Number: 27640, July 13, 2010. Additionally, for the criticisms by former President of the Foreign Affairs Commission Vehbi Dincerler on the Ministry’s structure and functioning, also see Vehbi Dincerler, “Dış Politikayı Millet Tayin Etmeli,” in Özdal and others, *Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası 4*, pp. 55-68.

36 “We were having so many difficulties in preparing decrees due to the limited number of personnel. Yet as we hired a hundred career employees and a hundred administrative officers, we feel that we are more comfortable in preparing the decree of this year that is a 2012 decree.” Interview by the authors of Deputy Minister of the Foreign Affairs Ministry Naci Kuru, December 12, 2011, Ankara.

In order to draw a more concrete framework to enhance the sufficiency of the Ministry's material and human infrastructure, a comparative analysis of its numbers with those of other actors' may be useful. Due to the difficulty in gathering data on foreign affairs ministries, Turkey's capacity will only be compared to the main regional and global powers. In the table below, there are the countries listed as the world's foremost powers, middle to large-scale countries, and developing countries as well as Turkey at the bottom of the table (see Table 2). Accordingly, Turkey has the lowest budget in the list at approximately 436 million euros. Considering its number of personnel, Turkey is in a better position compared to regional powers like Brazil and India, while being second from the bottom of the list just above Brazil in terms total number of missions abroad.

**Table 2. Comparative Infrastructure of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Countries	Embassies	Permanent Representatives	Consulates General	Cultural Institutes	Total	Number of Personnel	Budget (millions €)
Brazil	125	5	64	...	194	4 150	986
France	162	21	98	132	413	15 008	2 625
Germany	151	13	61	...	225	12 437	3 194
India	124	3	48	24	199	3 414	674
Italy	126	9	97	92	324	8 101	1 706
Japan	133	8	63	22	226	11 363	1 925
Russia	149	13	90	57	309	9 500	915
Spain	119	11	100	74	304	7 908	1 503
England	...	...	...	...	261	17 100	2 324
U.S.	168	9	89	...	266	66 591	39 336
Turkey	114	11	71	14	202	5 533	436,4

**Source:** For data on the other countries, Darragh Henegan, Daniela Di Prima, Pietro Prospero (eds.), *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy in Numbers: Statistical Yearbook 2011*, pp. 84-96, [www.esteri.it](http://www.esteri.it). For data on Turkey also see T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı 2010 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu (2010 Annual Report of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs), pp. 6, 9, 20.

Although a comparison with the diplomatic power of Turkey’s neighboring countries regarding their potential to be “regional powers” is needed for more extensive analysis, it is not possible to do so with the existing data.<sup>37</sup> However, the data in the table enables us to make a significant inference: Turkey’s current institutional and human infrastructure is not sufficient enough for it to be an “order-establishing” actor or “central country.” Likewise, compared to other “order-establishing countries,” Turkish foreign affairs is in a weak position. What is more, these numbers does not reflect more vital variables like specialization, technical sophistication, and operational capability.<sup>38</sup> However, it should be noted that important steps have been taken to increase the capacity in recent years. For instance, Turkey’s number of embassies, which was 91 in 2000, increased to 114 in 2011. The number of its embassies in Africa, which was 12 at the beginning of 2009, reached 28 by 2011 and is expected to be 33 in the first half of 2012.<sup>39</sup>

It would be of use to examine the human capital of Turkish diplomacy in the Middle East in order to review its knowledge in foreign policy and to analyze Turkey’s condition with regard to having healthy perception management. It is clear that the Middle East region has become a center of gravity in Turkish foreign policy and Turkey is building its foreign policy strategy with the aim of becoming a regional power in the Middle East. In this regard, determining the Foreign Affairs Ministry’s capacity in the Middle East became a necessity in logistical terms. The number of Turkish missions in Arabic-speaking countries is 25. The number of career staff in these missions is 135. That is, Turkey conducts its activities in Arabic-speaking countries with 5 employees per diplomatic mission. Furthermore, only 6 of these employees out of 135 can speak Arabic. When the ratio of Arabic-speaking personnel to the whole Ministry is taken into consideration, it is almost the same as the previous example. In the Ministry, the number of Arabic-speaking personnel was 10 in 1990 and reached 26 in 2011.<sup>40</sup>

In summary, Turkey’s infrastructure and diplomatic capacity, compared to the width of the geography in which Turkey is interested as well as to other actors aiming to

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37 It is quite tough to gather data especially on Iran. It should also be noted that a comparison between these two countries is very difficult as their instruments and main aims are almost totally different from each other. Likewise, even though official data on Iran could have been obtained, it would be illusory to make an effectiveness measurement between Turkey and Iran, as Iran uses various kinds of foreign policy tools such as secret operations, fifth column activities, etc. all of which are not used by Turkey. While Turkey tries to increase its influence in the region through its economy and soft power, Iran produces sectarian strategies via proxy wars based on a Cold War mentality. In this regard, it can be said that Turkey formulates policies and is just at the beginning of its potential whereas Iran uses its power to its maximum and represents a foreign policy school on the decline. We would like to thank Prof. Dr. İhsan Bal for bringing our attention to this point. See also İhsan Bal “İran Neden Geriyor ve Geriliyor,” *Haber Türk*, April 9, 2012.

38 For example, Altunışık, who knows the region and its dynamics well, states that Israel is more successful in specialization and operational capabilities. Also see Meliha Altunışık, “Ne İslam Dünyası Ne Türk Dünyası Bir Lider Arayışı İçindedir,” in Özdal and others, *Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası 2*, USAK Publications, Ankara, 2010, pp. 21-22.

39 Interview with Naci Kuru. In the words of Kuru, “no country in the world has ever increased its number of foreign missions to this extent.”

40 Special thanks to Foreign Ministry Deputy Minister Naci Kuru for supplying this data for us. In spite of this negative scene, as a result of encouraging the diplomatic newcomers in the Foreign Ministry to learn Arabic recently, 66 of 100 new career employees began Arabic courses in 2010.

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“establish order” or “maintain the current situation,” remains very insufficient. The data related to the Middle East, the center of Turkey’s claims to being a regional power, seems more problematic compared to the general data. Turkey cannot embrace the geography due to the lack of diplomats, and cannot penetrate into local information channels because of the lack of linguistic knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

Another important point to mention regarding the improvement of Turkey’s diplomatic power is Turkey’s capability to have closer contact with the peoples of the countries in which it has diplomatic missions. A changing foreign policy philosophy suggests coalescing with the local people, yet Arabs, with which we also consulted within the framework of this study to emphasize the necessity of attaching importance to this topic, have stated that they are able to enter into other countries’ embassies and contact their ambassadors much more easily, expressing their “discomfort with the cold face of Turkish missions.”<sup>42</sup> For example, al-Hafidh says:

*Turkey’s windows opening abroad (like its diplomatic missions) remain dry and plain, which are far from attractive to its potential work partners and related groups. To put it another way, they have the view of flowers with no smell. And they still continue to be perceived as not too inviting places, appealing only to Turkish citizens.*<sup>43</sup>

## b) Economic Power

The second dimension of discussions on Turkey’s increasing effectiveness and regional power potential is based on economic parameters. The Turkish economy has seen rapid growth over the last ten years, a disciplined financial system and public finance, and has experienced an extensive economic transformation by utilizing the opportunities that emerged from the 2001 crisis as well as the effect of political stability. In this period, its GDP tripled and the volume of its exports increased to 135 billion dollars in 2011 from 36 billion dollars, nearly quadrupling its trade volume (also see Table 3). What is more, in this period, Turkey’s chronic problems in attracting direct foreign investment were also eased with the impact of the global liquidity surplus. The influx of foreign capital, which Turkey managed to attract 10,4 billion dollars between 1980 and 2000, reached 100 billion dollars in the 2000-2010 period.<sup>44</sup>

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Turkey’s infrastructure and diplomatic capacity, compared to the width of the geography in which Turkey is interested as well as to other actors aiming to “establish order” or “maintain the current situation,” remains very insufficient.  
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41 Regardless, interviews conducted with many bureaucrats in the Foreign Ministry reveal that they are aware of this deficiency, and this can be read as a sign that future human investments will be much healthier. For instance, there had been significant openings concerning Iraq which is of vital importance for Turkey. In addition to the Baghdad mission, missions in Mosul, Basra, and Erbil also started functioning. In spite of obstacles, efforts of the Turkish diplomats working in these missions are praiseworthy. Acceptance of the local people shows that these efforts are yielding results. However, there is a need to increase human capital capacity in order to be able to penetrate information sources. For instance, while Turkey, with its two to three diplomats, tries to obtain more space in Basra, the Iranian Consulate, on the other hand, functions with approximately 1,000 diplomats, educators, religious functionaries, intelligence units, and experts as stated by the local people. At least this is the perception of the people. Observations of the authors in Erbil, Mosul, Basra and Baghdad (2009-2010).

42 See also Ahmet Uysal, *Ortadoğu’da Türkiye Algısı: Mısır Örneği*, SDE, Ankara, 2011, p. 44.

43 Authors’ interview with Rabee al-Hafidh, Secretary General and head of the Arab-Turkish Relations Unit, Forum of Muslim Thinkers, March 6, 2011, Ankara.

44 For a comprehensive work on the transformation of the Turkish economy after 2001, including the foreign

**Table 3. Turkish Economy, Main Indicators (2002-2010)**

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>GDP (billions of dollars)</b>	232.7	304.6	393.0	484.0	529.9	655.9	742.1	617.6	735
<b>GDP per capita (dollars)</b>	3,403	4,393	5,595	6,801	7,351	8,984	10,745	8,950	10,067
<b>GDP growth (%)</b>	6.2	5.3	9.4	8.4	6.9	4.6	0.7	-4.7	9
<b>Import (billions of dollars)</b>	51.5	69.3	97.5	116.8	139.6	170.1	201.0	140.9	185.5
<b>Export (billions of dollars)</b>	36.1	47.3	63.2	73.5	85.5	107.3	132.0	102.1	113.9
<b>FDI (billions of dollars)</b>	1.08	1.75	2.79	10.03	20.19	22.05	18.27	7.66	9.3
<b>Budget Balance (% of GDP)</b>	-11.47	-8.84	-5.22	-1.06	-0.61	-1.62	-1.97	-4.88	-3.6
<b>Public Debt (% of GDP)</b>	61.4	55.1	49.0	41.6	34.0	29.5	28.2	32.5	42.2

Source: TÜİK

Growth performance based on globalization increased Turkey’s “trading state” potential by contributing to Turkey’s characteristic of being a reference country in terms of the regional political economy balances.<sup>45</sup> Turkey is now the country with the second-highest population in the region by the end of 2011, as well as having the biggest economy in the Middle East (also see Table 4). Furthermore, this economic dynamism transformed into a soft power component as it contributed to Turkey becoming a center of attraction in the eyes of Middle Eastern people. For example, according to TESEV’s recent public opinion poll, 32 percent of participants saying that Turkey can be a model point to Turkish democracy while 25 percent of them point to the Turkish economy.<sup>46</sup> Lebanese politician al-Ahdab expresses this situation as follows:

*Turkey made an internal development that is considered very highly...in our part of the world because they think that one could shift into better living standards, having a higher GDP, better economy, having this affect all people.*<sup>47</sup>

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**Economic dynamism transformed into a soft power component as it contributed to Turkey becoming a center of attraction in the eyes of Middle Eastern people.**  
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capital issue, also see Ziya Öniş and Fikret Şenses, (eds.), *Turkey and the Global Economy: Neo-liberal Restructuring and Integration in the Post-crisis Era*, Routledge, Oxon, 2009.

45 Kemal Kirişçi, “The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No. 40, 2009, pp. 29-57; Mustafa Kutlay, “Economy as the ‘Practical Hand’ of ‘New Turkish Foreign Policy’: A Political Economy Explanation,” *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2011, pp. 67-89.

46 Mensur Akgün and Sabiha Gündoğar, *Ortadoğu’da Türkiye Algısı 2011*, TESEV, İstanbul, 2012.

47 Authors’ interview with Lebanese politician Misbah al-Ahdab, October 27, 2011, Ankara.

**Table 4. Turkey's 'Regional Power' Potential (Selected Indicators, 2010)**

	Population (million)	Age Composition (16-64, total percentage)	GDP (billion dollar)	GDP Per Capita (SGP, dollar)	Human Development Index	Global Competition Index
Egypt	81.1	63.4	219	5,840	0.62	81
Israel	7.6	62.3	217	28,292	0.872	24
Iran	74	71.8	357	11,891	0.702	69
Turkey	73	67.1	735	13,359	0.679	61

Source: TÜİK

Within the framework of interdependence theories, it is expected that economic enlargement will contribute to Turkey's potential to become a regional power in the Middle East through three channels. First, increasing trade connections provide for the enlargement of areas of common interests and may create motivation to use the dynamics of economic gains as a "practical hand" in terms of solving the regional problems. Therefore, even if problems in the field of high politics cannot be solved in the first place, communication channels can be kept open with the increasing cooperation mechanisms in the field of low politics.<sup>48</sup> Second, it is expected that the effectiveness of non-state actors increases, which saves them from the consuming effects of the bureaucratic mechanisms of mutual relations as well as from the instability of politics. Third, as emphasized by the neo-functional theories, increasing connections in mutual relations and the expectation of an increase in material welfare allows the countries with an advantage in trade to project their soft power elements on other countries, as well as bring the possibility of using new mechanisms to affect other related actors' preferences.<sup>49</sup> This way, it might be possible to internalize the identity of the "regional community" with the help of the "common interest" perception within the process as stated by Ayoob, and form a basis for settling the "cognitive regionalism" notion as defined by Hurrell.<sup>50</sup>

The aforementioned political economy dynamics have contributed to Turkey's claims of having been an actor in the Middle East within the period between the 2001 crisis and the beginning of the Arab revolutions. Turkey's domestic political

48 Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye., "An Introduction," in Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (eds.), *Transnational Relations and World Politics*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1973.

49 This situation is explained as unintended consequences in neo-functional theories. Related to this topic, see also Ernst B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces 1950-1957*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1968. For a comprehensive examination of Ernst Haas' approach, see also Philippe C. Schmitter, "Ernst B. Haas and the Legacy of Neofunctionalism," *Journal of European Public Policy*, Volume 12, No 2, 2005, pp. 255-272.

50 For the concept of "regional community" see also Mohammed Ayoob, "From Regional System to Regional Society: Exploring Key Variables in the Construction of Regional Order," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 53, No 3, 1999, pp. 247-260. For the concept of "cognitive regionalism" also see Andrew Hurrell, "Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective," in Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell (ed.), *Regionalism in World Politics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995.

economy transformation as well as the transformation in the global system positively influenced the trade and investment potential of its neighboring environment and increased the depth of regionalism in the Middle East.<sup>51</sup> In this context, as expressed by Davutoğlu, Turkey's goal has turned out to be the integration of neighboring countries with the Turkish economy.<sup>52</sup> For Turkey, the Middle East has also become a region with increasing importance in terms of market diversification for Turkey. In the 2002-2010 period, the share of the Middle East in Turkey's total exports increased to 16 percent from 6 percent, and the total trade volume with the Middle East increased to 23.6 billion dollars from 3.9 billion dollars. Turkey managed to obtain a trade surplus in its total trade with the Middle East, and in this period, its export rose to 18 billion dollars from 2.2 billion dollars. (See also Table 5).

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**In the 2002-2010 period, the share of the Middle East in Turkey's total exports increased to 16 percent from 6 percent, and the total trade volume with the Middle East increased to 23.6 billion dollars from 3.9 billion dollars.**  
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51 At this point, many countries expressed their willingness to improve their economic relations with Turkey. Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon can be counted among these countries. Sedat Laçiner, "Ortadoğu Kapıları Açılırken: Gül'ün Ürdün Ziyareti," *USAK Stratejik Gündem*, December 2, 2009.

52 See also endnote 36.

Table 5. Turkey - Middle East Export and Import Data

EXPORT	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
UAE	457	703	1 144	1 675	1 986	3 241	7 975	2 897	3 333
Bahrain	17	29	54	42	35	77	308	114	172
Palestinian National Authority	5	6	9	9	21	21	21	30	40
Iraq	0	829	1 820	2 750	2 589	2 845	3 917	5 123	6 036
Qatar	16	16	35	82	342	450	1 074	289	163
Kuwait	139	166	266	210	219	221	493	211	395
Lebanon	187	148	234	196	241	393	665	689	618
Egypt	326	346	473	687	709	903	1 426	2 599	2 251
Oman	31	22	29	40	71	92	216	106	129
Syria	267	411	395	552	609	798	1 115	1 422	1 845
Saudi Arabia	555	741	769	962	983	1 487	2 202	1 768	2 218
Jordan	117	150	229	289	322	389	461	455	571
Yemen	119	156	204	197	198	274	354	379	330
<b>GENERAL SUM</b>	<b>36 059</b>	<b>47 253</b>	<b>63 167</b>	<b>73 476</b>	<b>85 535</b>	<b>107 272</b>	<b>132 027</b>	<b>102 143</b>	<b>113 883</b>
<b>Middle East Export/General Export (Percentage)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>
IMPORT	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
UAE	101	114	183	205	352	470	691	668	698
Bahrain	19	15	18	19	45	119	96	24	72
Palestinian National Authority	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
Iraq	0	84	468	459	376	645	1 320	952	1 354
Qatar	11	8	18	51	66	30	159	86	177
Kuwait	27	16	26	42	56	90	81	184	215
Lebanon	42	72	147	145	127	116	179	109	229
Egypt	118	189	255	267	393	681	943	642	926
Oman	1	1	1	4	2	24	11	17	39
Syria	506	413	358	272	187	377	639	328	663
Saudi Arabia	794	969	1 232	1 889	2 252	2 440	3 322	1 687	2 437
Jordan	18	17	14	28	9	12	25	20	42
Yemen	0	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	1
<b>GENERAL SUM</b>	<b>51 554</b>	<b>69 340</b>	<b>97 540</b>	<b>116 774</b>	<b>139 576</b>	<b>170 063</b>	<b>201 964</b>	<b>140 928</b>	<b>185 544</b>
<b>Middle East Import/General Import (Percentage)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>MIDDLE EAST TRADE VOLUME</b>	<b>3 872</b>	<b>5 622</b>	<b>8 383</b>	<b>11 075</b>	<b>12 191</b>	<b>16 196</b>	<b>26 372</b>	<b>20 798</b>	<b>23 601</b>
<b>TURKEY GENERAL TRADE VOLUME</b>	<b>87 613</b>	<b>116 593</b>	<b>160 707</b>	<b>190 251</b>	<b>225 111</b>	<b>277 334</b>	<b>333 991</b>	<b>243 071</b>	<b>299 428</b>
<b>Middle East Trade/General Trade (Percentage)</b>	<b>4,42</b>	<b>4,82</b>	<b>5,22</b>	<b>5,82</b>	<b>5,42</b>	<b>5,84</b>	<b>7,90</b>	<b>8,56</b>	<b>7,88</b>

Source: TÜİK

## Problematic Side of the Coin in Economic Parameters

If we conduct an evaluation based on the economic power parameters determined in the first section, it is seen that Turkey meets the regional power criteria of demographic elements, GDP, and trade structure. However, it is noteworthy that there are three main limits to Turkey's economy providing a sustainable contribution to its regional foreign policy aims. The first of these constraints is related to the technological composition of foreign trade shaped by the composition of Turkey's production. While the share of goods based on natural resources and low-technology in Turkey's total exports in 2002 was 63 percent, this ratio declined to 56 percent in 2010. Additionally, the share of middle and high-technology goods rose to 44 percent, which were 37 in 2002. However, the share of high-tech goods in Turkey's total exports has only increased to 3.5 percent from 2.5 percent. The same situation applies to Turkey's trade with the Middle East. The share of high-tech goods in Turkey's total exports to the Middle East even decreased to 3.5 percent in 2010 while it was 4 percent in 2002 (also see Table 6).

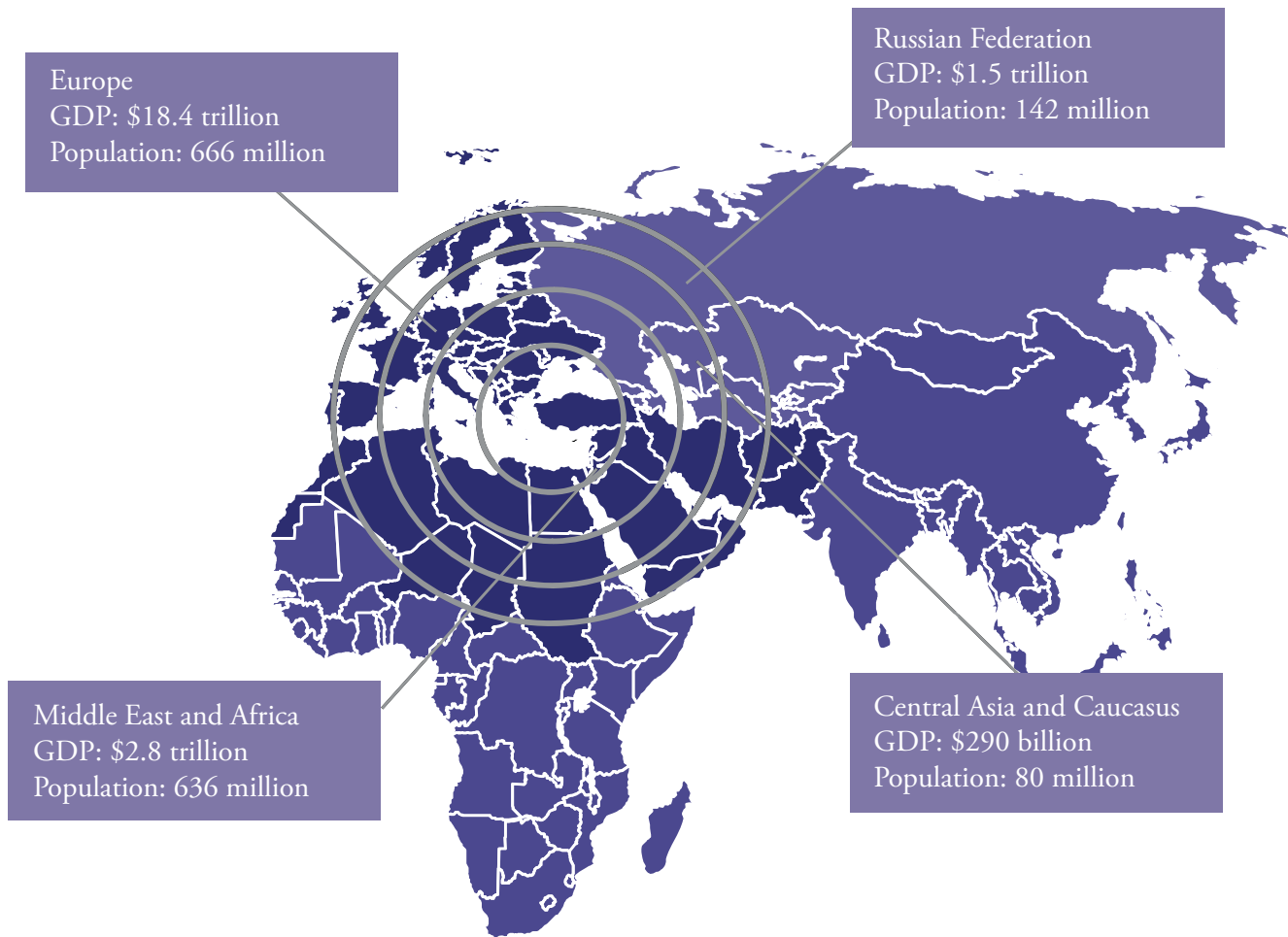
.....  
 The share of high-tech goods in Turkey's total exports to the Middle East even decreased to 3.5 percent in 2010 while it was 4 percent in 2002  
 .....

**Table 6. Technological Structure of Turkey's Exports to Middle Eastern Countries\***

	2002 (dollars)	Share of total (percent)	2010 (dollars)	Share of total (percent)
<b>High-tech Goods</b>	124,203,142	4.0	724,700,725	3.5
<b>Intermediate Technology Goods</b>	871,290,703	28.1	6,163,416,350	29.4
<b>Low Technology Goods</b>	1,167,368,921	37.6	6,783,982,605	32.3
<b>List Total**</b>	2,162,862,766	69.7	13,672,099,680	65.2
<b>Turkish Exports to Middle East</b>	3,105,136,360	100.0	20,975,107,488	100.0
<b>Source:</b> TÜİK and EB Information System				
*In accordance with Lall categorization, the table was prepared taking into account the Middle Eastern countries of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman and Yemen.				
**5 different technological goods categorizations are used in Lall classification. Regarding this fivefold differentiation, there are high-tech, intermediate technology, and low-technology goods. In addition to these, there are the classifications of natural resource-based products such as processed food, oil products, etc., and basic products like fresh fruits and vegetables, coffee, and crude oil. In this table, there is only a list of technological products; the 30% (2002) and 35% (2010) figures included in the actual total of exports to the Middle East but not in this table total are a result of natural resource-based and basic products.				

Related to our discussion, the meaning of these numbers and table is as follows: Turkey's increase of exports to the Middle East develops on easily substitutable goods. Therefore, Turkey needs to increase its quality of export with goods which provide a sustainable superiority over the competition as well as have the power to shape value judgments. In this regard, along with confirming that Turkey's export performance makes a positive contribution to its increasing regional power potential in the Middle East, it is seen that more progress is required in terms of sustainability and influence.

**Figure 2. Turkey's Potential in its Socio-Economic Basin**



.....  
**Turkey's increase of exports to the Middle East develops on easily substitutable goods. Therefore, Turkey needs to increase its quality of export with goods which provide a sustainable superiority over the competition as well as have the power to shape value judgments.**  
 .....

There is also a second limitation that can emerge as a side effect of Turkey's geopolitical and geo-economic potential. As shown in the illustration above, Turkey's potential basin of economic cooperation corresponds to almost 40 percent of the world's economic output and approximately 21 percent of the world's population.<sup>53</sup> At this point, it is necessary for Turkey to be able to construct a hierarchy of well-ordered priorities, and determine a "center of gravity" based on strategic regional and country analysis. Otherwise, each aspect with potential may turn into a power-collapsing obstacle with undesired diversification.

Furthermore, we need to underline that state-businessmen relations in Turkey do not have a pro-active character. Turning the economy into an outlet of regional power cannot be accomplished only by increasing production, trade, and investment channels. It is necessary to define target sectors determined by an extensive industrial strategy and to establish cooperation between the companies which entered

<sup>53</sup> The illustration on potential economic cooperation basins for Turkey above is calculated according to reasonable flight distances.

the region via these sectors, and state and financial capital. First of all, it is necessary for related state departments to supply systematic diplomatic<sup>54</sup> and material support to companies investing in the Middle East. Second, developing areas of cooperation between finance capital and these companies, with the moderation of the state and providing capital or loans to private sector is necessary. If we examine the political economy of Turkey's Middle East policy within the framework of the "proactive state" discussions it is seen that the Turkish economy has not been transformed by an extensive industrial policy, and there is fragmented, unproductive, and limited dialogue between different economic interest groups.<sup>55</sup> This, along with many other variables, has a negative impact on Turkey's competitive capacity. For instance, in the 2011 Global Competitiveness Report published by the World Economic Forum, Turkey ranked 59<sup>th</sup> among 142 countries.<sup>56</sup> As emphasized by Öniş and Şenses, Turkey, at this point, is evaluated within the "weak states" category in comparative terms.<sup>57</sup>

The third limitation is economic dynamism not being in parallel with social and cultural interaction. Economic developments increase the attraction; however, a parallel increase in other social and cultural connections between parties is necessary for this attraction to be permanent. Unless society-to-society relations can be established or economic, social, and diplomatic bonds can be supported by social and cultural contacts, bilateral dialogue channels cannot be consistent. Furthermore, if the relations only consist of state-to-state negotiations, economic relations can fail as a result of political changes. In particular, economic bonds can suddenly become fragile in changing security environments, and economic gains can be lost. Experiences in the Syrian, Libyan, and Lebanese cases are examples of this situation.

.....  
**Turkey's potential basin of economic cooperation corresponds to almost 40 percent of the world's economic output and approximately 21 percent of the world's population.**  
 .....

54 Considering the current situation, it can be said that Turkish ambassadors, who had stayed away from the business world, are leaving this stance. In this regard, Naci Kuru indicates that "until 30-55 years ago, our diplomats were at equal distance to all of our businessmen. Businessmen were not acting in cooperation with ambassadors. There were no efforts to help businessmen. Now, in contrast to the past, our embassies and consulates general keep close contact with our businessmen. When businessmen or their representatives say that they are coming, we arrange their appointments and welcome them. What is more, we make the meetings together. We are promoting our companies and make initiatives. If we did not do it in the past, no one would call it into account. But now if you do not do that you cannot be a good ambassador." Also see the interview with Kuru.

55 This point has been reiterated several times in one of the authors' interviews with Prof. Dr. Ziya Öniş. Special thanks to Ziya Öniş as he drew our attention to this very important political economy problematic.

56 World Economic Forum, *The Global Competitiveness Report 2011-2012*, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-2011-2012/>.

57 Ziya Öniş and Fikret Şenses, "Küresel Dinamikler, Ülke içi Koalisyonlar ve Reaktif Devlet: Türkiye'nin Savaş Sonrası Kalkınmasında Önemli Politika Dönüşümleri," in Fikret Şenses, der. *Neoliberal Küreselleşme ve Kalkınma: Seçme Yazılar*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2009, p. 736. Other works can be read for the details of the concepts of reactive state and weak state capacity.

.....  
**It is necessary to define target sectors determined by an extensive industrial strategy and to establish cooperation between the companies which entered the region via these sectors, and state and financial capital.**  
 .....



.....  
Turkey being the  
“black swan” in  
disproving the  
polarizing thesis  
that Islam is anti-  
democratic is what  
distinguishes Turkey  
from others. At the  
same time, Turkey  
being a NATO  
member, founding  
member of the  
Council of Europe,  
and a candidate  
country negotiating  
with the EU also  
establishes the  
basis of the “role  
definition” of Turkey  
in the Middle Eastern  
geography.  
.....

### c) Soft Power

The third parameter related to debates on Turkey’s increasing influence in the Middle East and regional power potential is soft power. As discussed in the first section, soft power “rests on the attraction of one’s ideas or on the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences that others express.” In this sense, soft power is related to how principles are applied in terms of (i) culture, (ii) politics, and (iii) political values, and how the other actors perceive these practices. Recently in Turkey, various studies have been made on soft power.<sup>58</sup> In this respect, the attraction provided by Turkey’s commonalities with the countries of the region such as a common religion, history, culture, and system of values are emphasized in different studies. According to many experts, Turkey being the “black swan” in disproving the polarizing thesis that Islam is anti-democratic is what distinguishes Turkey from others.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, Turkey being a NATO member, founding member of the Council of Europe, and a candidate country negotiating with the EU also establishes the basis of the “role definition” of Turkey in the Middle Eastern geography.<sup>60</sup> In addition to culture, political values, and economic dynamism, Turkey’s recent perception of foreign policy, which is centered on the Middle East, comprising of a region based on geo-cultural components and relatively more independent in comparison to the past, expanded Ankara’s soft power in the eyes of the Middle Eastern people.<sup>61</sup>

It is impossible to be able to consider this Turkish foreign policy change distinct from its identity transformation. The dynamics of this identity should be taken into account when considering all social, political, economic, and cultural transformation in Turkey. The transformation in domestic politics and the economy is defined as “de-elitization” by Ersel Aydınli, a prominent Turkish international relations scholar. Aydınli states that the elite perspective in Turkey’s relations with other countries is being replaced by a structure in which relations between societies, similarities, common culture, and heritage come to the fore. What is more, this transformation in Turkish foreign policy, when read in parallel to identity transformation in Turkish society, can be defined as “re-elitization” following a process of “de-elitization.”<sup>62</sup> This approach provides a wide frame for understanding the impact of the center’s internal transformation in Turkey with regard to creating a new foreign policy perception.

58 Meliha Altunışık, “The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey’s Soft Power in the Middle East,” *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2008, pp. 41-54; Uysal, *Ortadoğu’da Türkiye Algısı...*; Tarık Oğuzlu, “Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 1, pp. 81-97; Meliha Altunışık, “The Turkish Model and the Democratization in the Middle East,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 1 and 2, 2005, pp. 45-63.

59 Authors’ interview with retired Ambassador Özdem Sanberk, November 23, 2011, Ankara. According to American Ambassador Michael Lemmon, “Turkey challenges orientalist arguments.” One of the authors’ interviews with Ambassador Lemmon, December 16, 2011, Washington DC. See also Meliha Altunışık, *Turkey: Arab Perspectives*, TESEV, İstanbul, 2010.

60 Altunışık, “Ne İslam Ne de TürkDünyası,” p. 15.

61 Altunışık, “The Possibilities and Limits,” p. 49; Uysal, *Ortadoğu’da Türkiye Algısı*, p. 40. Also see: F. Stephen Larrabee, “Turkey’s New Geopolitics,” *Survival*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2010, pp. 157-180.

62 Opinions of Ersel Aydınli expressed in a conference at USAK on February 25, 2011.

This change in the social, political, and economic structures directed Turkey to behave pragmatically instead of following a traditional statist and status quo-pursuing foreign policy. Turkey's pragmatic foreign policy and changing domestic structure provided the basis of a more inclusive and constructive structure, and attracted the attention of peoples of the region. All this brought about a more constructive understanding by replacing the threat perception in foreign policy. There is no doubt that this foreign policy understanding, going far beyond threat perception, symbolizes an understanding supportive of an increasing role for Turkey in the region and the world, in parallel to Turkey's inclusive and constructive politics.<sup>63</sup>

However, whether these elements provide a material utility to Turkey is another topic of discussion. It is important to state that soft power is not easy to measure. The measurement of soft power is still problematic in the literature, although Joseph Nye uses variables like the numbers of foreign students and foreign visitors, and the power of the media in a country. In this context, the numbers of Arab students in Turkey, Arab citizens visiting Turkey, the power of Turkish media, and the Arab perception toward Turkey will be used to examine soft power in this study.

### A Brief Overview of Turkish Soft Power

Regarding the number of foreign students in Turkey coming from the Middle East, obtaining older data is not possible as the relevant state institutions do not maintain sets of systematic datasets.<sup>64</sup> Although the data over the last four years does not provide a timeframe adequate enough to make a comparison, it may still be informative as it provides the absolute numbers.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, it is seen that very few students are coming to Turkey from the Gulf countries in particular. Table 7 tabulates that 9,374 students in total received residence permits for studying in Turkey in 2011, and 1,123 of them are Arabs (approximately 12%). Therefore, the number of Middle Eastern people studying in Turkey is quite limited, and more importantly, an institutional dialogue mechanism for keeping in contact with these people when they go back to their countries has not been developed.<sup>66</sup> This situation shows that Turkey does not make enough effort to achieve concrete outcomes from its soft power.

63 Bahadır Dinçer and Dilek Aydemir, "Türk Dış Politikasında Kimlik Dönüşümü," *Analist*, No. 3, Mart 2011, pp. 32-5.

64 A high-ranking official we interviewed for the data set, while explaining why the state does not have sufficient data regarding the past, stated "Our nation is generous. It did not keep the accounts of opportunities it provided." These statements reveal that the bureaucratic staff, which is of strategic importance in preparing healthy data sets, does not have the necessary equipment. In the same way, for example, TİKA reports being published in different formats almost every year and the differentiation of regional categories each year make it difficult to make a comparison, which is also another indication that the strategic mentality is not mature enough yet.

65 Quite different numbers are being mentioned in various sources regarding the topic. So it should be noted that the numbers of foreign students are controversial in this regard.

66 The bureaucrats we interviewed state that related activities have begun under the auspices of the Turkish Republic Public Diplomacy Coordinator. Furthermore, President of the Yunus Emre Institute Prof. Dr. Ali Fuat Bilkan also discussed the significant work done under the auspices of the institute in detail in his interview with the authors. Interview with Prof. Dr. Ali Fuat Bilkan, February 1, 2012, Ankara.

.....  
Going far beyond threat perception, symbolizes an understanding supportive of an increasing role for Turkey in the region and the world, in parallel to Turkey's inclusive and constructive politics  
.....

.....  
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.....

**Table 7. Foreigners Having Residence Permit for Education**

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Bahrain	2	-	-	-
UAE	140	7	5	1
Palestine	232	287	210	290
Iraq	784	743	507	477
Qatar	3	-	-	9
Kuwait	4	-	-	1
Lebanon	97	42	30	22
Egypt	17	10	11	13
Syria	157	209	173	164
Saudi Arabia	3	2	3	8
Oman	-	-	-	1
Jordan	188	85	75	85
Yemen	38	54	34	52
Total Arabs	1665	1439	1048	1123
<b>General Total</b>	11832	9557	8469	9374
Arab Percentage	14.07	15.06	12.37	11.98
<b>Source:</b> Security General Directorate and Ministry of National Education				
<b>Note:</b> The data comprises of students from all levels of education.				

Turkey's magnetism can also be measured with the change in the number of foreign citizens coming to Turkey. Turkey, in this regard, has recently become an important tourism destination for Arabs thanks to its foreign policy line which gained the sympathy of Arab people, curiosity created by Turkish television series,<sup>67</sup> and improvement in Turkey's cultural policies.<sup>68</sup> For instance, while the number of visitors coming from the Middle East was 975 thousand in 2002, it exceeded 3.6 million in 2010. The ratio of visitors coming from the Middle East to total visitors in the same period increased to 12.6 percent from 7.3 percent. Considering these numbers, it is possible to say that Turkey has become an increasingly important route for the countries of the region.

<sup>67</sup> *Middle East Online*, "el Siyaha tui'd el Etrak ile el hudn el Arabi" (Tourism brings Turks closer to Arabs), February 7, 2012; *el Ray News*, "el müselselet el müdeblece cezbet el elef el siyah el Arabi ile Türkiye" (Turkish series attract many Arab tourists to come to Turkey), August 14, 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Turkey's recent cultural openings have been continuing. However, it is seen that more time is needed to make an impact. What is more, Turkey does not have even one cultural center while even Scotland, Argentina, and South Korea have their own cultural centers, schools, homes for orphans, etc. in important places like Jerusalem. See also Bahadır Dinçer and Gamze Coşkun, *İhmal Edilmişliğin Adı: Kudüs*, USAK Publications, Ankara, 2010. On the other side, it is seen that Iran, one of the effective powers of the region, has been making great efforts for years. For concrete data on Iran's activities through its education and culture centers, also see Kasım Kasir, "Men yasna' el akl el şii fi dahiyetil cenubiye?" (Who produces the Shia mind in the southern regions?), October 26, 2010, [http://alshiraa.com/print.php?id=5773&fb\\_source=message](http://alshiraa.com/print.php?id=5773&fb_source=message). The Lebanese journalist and writer, in his aforementioned work, provides comprehensive information on Iran's activities both in Lebanon and in other Arab countries via Hezbollah. The Arab Homeland journal offered an important analysis with its specific issue on Iran's efforts to penetrate into the Middle East and Africa. "Hel seyekuun Sudan İran Afrikiye" (Will Sudan be the Iran of Africa?), <http://wadmadani.com/vb/showthread.php?t=32479>.

**Table 8. Increasing Trend of Number of Middle Eastern Countries' Citizens Coming to Turkey**

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<b>UAE</b>	4 977	6 717	7 213	8 814	12 153	13 005	19 676	22 051	30 480
<b>Bahrain</b>	4 569	4 133	3 154	4 201	4 254	5 829	8 081	9 090	9 375
<b>Iraq</b>	15 765	24 727	111 475	107 968	123 118	180 217	250 130	285 229	280 328
<b>Iran</b>	432 282	497 282	628 725	957 244	865 941	1 058 206	1 134 965	1 383 261	1 885 097
<b>Israel</b>	270 263	321 152	299 172	393 943	362 501	511 435	558 183	311 582	109 559
<b>Qatar</b>	824	1 210	1 414	1 955	2 585	3 783	4 862	4 902	6 043
<b>Kuwait</b>	6 989	8 210	7 198	11 086	11 823	12 589	22 084	26 801	27 281
<b>Lebanon</b>	31 298	35 285	36 298	41 074	35 995	45 461	53 948	71 771	134 554
<b>Egypt</b>	21 583	30 556	34 454	43 149	42 686	52 946	57 994	66 912	61 560
<b>S. Arabia</b>	25 657	23 676	25 197	36 328	38 890	41 490	55 636	66 938	84 934
<b>Syria</b>	126 323	154 447	193 961	288 625	277 779	332 840	406 935	509 679	899 494
<b>Jordan</b>	33 130	37 449	39 985	43 700	46 518	61 002	74 340	87 694	96 562
<b>Yemen</b>	1 810	2 141	2 221	2 529	2 931	4 027	4 971	6 181	6 344
<b>ME Total</b>	975 470	1 146 985	1 390 467	1 940 616	1 827 174	2 322 830	2 651 805	2 852 091	3 631 611
<b>Gen. Total</b>	13 256 028	14 029 558	17 516 908	21 124 886	19 819 833	23 340 911	26 336 677	27 077 114	28 632 204
<b>ME citizens as percentage of total</b>	7,36	8,18	7,94	9,19	9,22	9,95	10,07	10,53	12,68

**Source:** Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Third, the media sector especially emphasized by Nye is of critical importance to Turkey managing perceptions and exporting its own values. At this point, the media as a component of soft power can be examined in three categories: Arabic-broadcasting TV channels, print media, and show business (television series and movies).

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**While the number of visitors coming from the Middle East was 975 thousand in 2002, it exceeded 3.6 million in 2010. The ratio of visitors coming from the Middle East to total visitors in the same period increased to 12.6 percent from 7.3 percent.**  
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There are no Turkish  
channels that reach  
Arabs through their  
own language other  
than one or two news  
sites and personal  
blogs in limited  
numbers.  
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## TRT Arabic as a Soft Power Element

Recently, TRT Arabic, which started broadcasting in April 2010, has been one of the most significant Turkish openings toward the Arab world. With this channel, Turkey took an important step to communicate directly with the region. Likewise, many actors have been doing the same for years. For instance, many non-Arab countries such as Russia (Rusiya al-Yaum), Britain (BBC Arabic, London Radio), the U.S. (Radio Sawa, al-Hurra, CNN Arabic), China (CCTV Arabic), France (France 24, Monte Carlo Radio), Germany (DW Arabic), and Iran<sup>69</sup> have their Arabic broadcasting radio and television channels.

Compared to these channels, TRT Arabic falls behind in this competition as it is also a brand new channel.<sup>70</sup> Apparently, there are disappointments and worries concerning TRT Arabic. In this regard, apparently research on how TRT Arabic is perceived in the Arab world and to what extent it is influential needs to be conducted. A broad public opinion poll conducted within this framework would provide crucial feedback about the deficiencies and positive sides of TRT Arabic broadcasts and what need to be done for better and healthy broadcasting policies. The other non-Arab countries' Arabic broadcasting channels have been conducting polls, conferences, and symposiums in order to increase their popularity and obtain the opinions of Arab people. For example, the Iranian Research Center in Syria conducts polls to determine the television-watching trends of Syrian people, and follows the ratings of Iranian channels<sup>71</sup> while Rusiya al-Yaum, one of the most-watched Arabic channels in the Arab world, similarly makes "efficiency tests."<sup>72</sup>

In print media, just two Arabic magazines are published in Turkey. One of these magazines with more of a religious slant belongs to the Gulen group (Hira), while the other is published by the İstanbul Science and Culture Foundation (İstanbul İlim ve Kültür Vakfı / En Nur liddirasat). Apart from these, there are no Turkish channels that reach Arabs through their own language other than one or two news sites and personal blogs in limited numbers. Thus, Arabs read about Turkey through mostly English sources or Arabs proficient in the Turkish language.

69 The number of Arabic-broadcasting channels in the region is almost thirty. The most popular of these are as follows: Taha Kids Channel, al-Ālem News Channel, al-Zehra, al-Kevser, al-Manar 1, al-Manar 2, Ehl-i Beyt, al-Īman, al-Mehdi, Kerbela, al-Selam. For more detailed information, also see Kasir, "men yasna' el akl el ŗii fi dahiyetil cenubiye?"

70 Some of the people interviewed are as follows: Rabee al-Hafidh (Iraq), Sayyar al-Jemil (Qatar), Ali Hussein Bakeer (Lebanon), İbrahim Bayyoumi Ghanim (Egypt), Mouayed Alwindawi (Jordan), Samir Budinar (Morocco), Fouad Ferhaoui (Morocco). Discussion programs are not liked in particular and it is stated that these programs harm Turkey's image in the eyes of the people.

71 <http://www.spraweb.com/images/1%20pdf.pdf>.

72 Russian al-Yeum's 2010 "Arab Audience's Stance Toward Foreign Arabic Channels Discussing the Events in the Middle East" symposium made within the framework of Dubai Media and Marketing Fair can be given as an example for this.

## Turkish Television Series

Lately, one of the most debated issues has been the critical influence of Turkish television series in establishing cultural relations with Arab countries. In the words of Naci Korum, who served as Turkish Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, “a publicity campaign, which could have required millions of dollars, has been made by two or three TV series.”<sup>73</sup> For instance, while the “Gümüş” series reaches an Arab audience of about 85 million, “İhlamlar Altında” reaches 67 million.<sup>74</sup> The number of Turkish series entering the Arab market with “Gümüş” has now reached 42.<sup>75</sup>

The ratings of these series in the Arab world are quite high. For example, according to a poll, 83 percent of Jordanians watch Turkish programs.<sup>76</sup> This illustrates that they have significant potential in shaping the perceptions toward Turkey. However, it should not be disregarded that Arabs have a variety of opinions on Turkish programs.<sup>77</sup> In other words, Turkish series drive Turkey’s image in the Arab world in different directions. Uysal, in his comprehensive research, makes this observation:

*Turkish series reflect Turkey’s developed side with its modern structure while also causing Turkey to be seen as a little more Westernized country with its Western lifestyle and focus on freedom in the eyes of Arab societies. Historical, natural, and high-tech scenes in the series contribute to Turkey being perceived as a developed country. These series critically promote the advertising of Turkey. By these means, the number of tourists coming to Turkey has been increasing.<sup>78</sup>*

These perceptions, at times contrasting one another, show that Turkish series, which have been accepted as one of the important elements of soft power in the region, bring about some risks regarding perception management. In this manner, Jordanian people’s points of view toward Turkish programs provide important clues. For instance, 51 percent of the participants in Mazahera’s study think that these series are “a cultural attack” and that “secular values are hidden under the exciting drama.” 47 percent of the participants think that Turkish series have a negative impact on the youth. Similarly, 54 percent of the participants assert that Turkish series cross some red lines.<sup>79</sup>

73 Interview with Korum.

74 *Al-Haya Al-Cedide*, No. 5822, January 19, 2012.

75 The interesting point is that some of these series (like “Fatmagul’un Sucu Ne?”) are uploaded to YouTube by being unprofessionally dubbed into Arabic or having Arabic subtitles added without being purchased by any channels. Scenes from these series have especially become favorite videos at YouTube.

76 For research conducted by a sociologist from Petra University between January 15-April 15, 2009, also see: Manal Mazahera, “Eser el müselselet et Türkiye, elleti turad ala kanavatil fedahiyye el arabiyye ale müctemeal Ürdüni” (Effects of Turkish serials broadcast in Arab satellite channels on Jordanian society), <http://dr-mmazahera.com/?cat=25>.

77 *Radikal*, “Arap Dünyasında Türk Dizileri Ses Getirdi” (Turkish series resound the Arab world), January 14, 2010.

78 Uysal, in his work, tries to understand the effect of Turkish series on shaping perceptions toward Turkey. See also Uysal, *Ortadoğu’da Türkiye Algısı...*, pp. 41, 82-6.

79 Mazahera, “Eser el müselselet et Türkiye...” In some countries, series are even seen to be against Islamic

.....  
While the “Gümüş” series reaches an Arab audience of about 85 million, “İhlamlar Altında” reaches 67 million. The number of Turkish series entering the Arab market with “Gümüş” has now reached 42.  
.....

The following incentives are discovered when the reasons behind Arabs watching Turkish programs this frequently are examined: physical attractiveness of the characters, setting, romanticism, dramatic scenarios, and seeing something they find in themselves. The advantageous side of Turkish programs is their increasing attention toward Turkey with the help of beautiful views (the Bosphorus) and visuals provided by the Turkish historical heritage and geography. Another reason for this is the audience finding these series to much more closely address their values than Western ones. For example, sociology professor Hussein al-Khozai, in his interview with Jordanian newspaper *al-Ghad*, expressed that the Arab audience can identify itself with characters in the *Gümüş* series, due to its portrayal of respect for elders and more importantly, for values like household centralism based on the head of the family unit (in this case Mr. Fahri).<sup>80</sup>

### Turkey's Agenda-Setting Power

.....  
**Soft power is not only about creating a center of attraction but also about the power to determine what will be discussed and what topics will be kept away from the negotiating table or agenda.**  
 .....

Agenda-setting power as emphasized by Joseph Nye should also be examined in terms of “soft power” discussions. It is because soft power, as highlighted in the first section, is not only about creating a center of attraction but also about the power to determine what will be discussed and what topics will be kept away from the negotiating table or agenda. At this point, it is necessary to analyze how and to what extent Turkey influences the course of the discussions and shapes the agenda related to the Middle East. For example, the recent developments during the Mavi Marmara crisis between Turkey and Israel give an idea on the deficiencies of Turkey in terms of agenda-setting and determining the issues to be kept away from the negotiating table. Although the duty of the U.N. commission established after the Mavi Marmara attacks was to shed light on the killing of the Turkish citizens on May 31, Israel’s maneuvers laid the basis for these discussions to be held on the basis of the Gaza issue. Israel featured only the arguments in favor of itself by leaking the report before it was announced, and in this way, prevented the real context of the report from being discussed.

Since then, the main agenda of the discussions has concerned questions over whether there could there be a direct skirmish between Turkey and Israel or the meaning of freedom of navigation in the east Mediterranean. Accordingly, a negative international public perception of Turkey is being created, and policies are being made via this perception. Even in Turkey, this report has been discussed in the context of these issues. However, it is seen that there are many arguments against Israel in the report when its content is analyzed.

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principles by religious authorities. For example, in June 2008, Saudi Sheikh Salman al-Avde, at a program in MBC, suggested that the owner of MBC reevaluate the *Nour* (Gumus) serial and impose censorship. Also see *el Raya*, “Selman el Avde yensah MBC bi tehzib el müselsel et Türki Nur” (Salman al-Avde Suggested MBC Reevaluate the *Nour* Series), June 30, 2008.

80 *Al-Ghad*, “El drama el müdeblece testei’ duhudurahe bi tatarrukihe li vaki karib min el bi el Arabiye” (dubbed [Turkish] series again attract attention as they touch upon realities close to Arabs), July 25, 2011.

The last point to be tackled concerning regional power discussions is related to “role identification” as emphasized by social constructivists and the other regional actors’ reactions toward this identification. As stated in the first section, a country should declare its intention and desire to be a regional leader. After this point, the country should conduct a “role identification” based on a “values system” which gives it a competitive superiority in order to make others follow itself. Within the framework of this identification, the country should develop “discourses of difference” which will highlight its difference from the other actors as indicated by Prys.<sup>81</sup> As Altunışık expresses, discussions on foreign policy issues are healthy at this point, yet “some sort of reconciliation is also needed. There cannot be a policy without reconciliation; if there can, it cannot be effective.”<sup>82</sup> This point lies at the heart of the message foreign policy analysts are trying to convey, emphasizing that foreign policy is made domestically.<sup>83</sup>

What is more, regional leadership is a constructed social phenomenon and depends on the conscious acceptance of other actors. That is, there needs to be a mass of regional followers having emerged in Gramscian terms which will provide the basis for a regional power and leadership claims of an actor, internalize the values projected by the actor, and consent to the country’s leadership within the framework of its role identification.<sup>84</sup> From this perspective, Turkey has critical problems in the Middle East. First of all, it is not clear enough which values Turkey projects toward the Middle East and what kind of role identification it adheres to.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the policy applied, although ambiguous, cannot be marketed as a product of alliance between the elites due to the polarizing effect of Turkish domestic politics. Turkey being over-fragmented and over-polarized, and its incapability of building a social consensus on principles to solve structural problems like the Kurdish issue bring about inconsistent foreign policy moves as well as unproductive discussions.<sup>86</sup> As a matter of fact, there are many academicians highlighting this point. Aydınlı summarizes this situation as follows:

*The only condition for Turkey making great progress in foreign policy, being a regional power, and pursuing a consistent foreign policy is resolving the unfinished domestic issues. It is very tough for Turkey to become a regional power in an environment in which society, the elite, and various social segments do not trust one another. Even dreaming about it is unrealistic.*<sup>87</sup>

81 Prys, “Hegemony, Domination, Detachment...,” p. 491.

82 Altunışık, “Ne İslam Dünyası Ne de Türk Dünyası...,” p. 21.

83 For a work emphasizing the virtuality of domestic politics and foreign policy dichotomy, also see M. Fatih Tayfur, “Dış Politika”, in Atilla Eralp, der, *Devlet ve Ötesi*, İletişim, İstanbul, 2007, pp. 73-105. Furthermore, for a work on the way internal differences influence the foreign policy-making process and effectiveness of decisions made, also see Hasan Kösebalaban, “Torn Identities and Foreign Policy: The Case of Turkey and Japan,” *Insight Turkey*, Volume 10, No. 1, 2008, pp. 5-29.

84 Hurrell, “Some Reflections on the Role of Intermediate Powers in International Institutions.”

85 Altunışık, “Ne İslam Dünyası Ne Türkiye...,” p. 22.

86 Interview of the authors with head of the USAK Science Committee Prof. Dr. İhsan Bal, January 10, 2012.

87 Ersel Ersel Aydınlı, “Türkiye’nin NATO’nun Dönüşümüne Katkıda Bulunması Gerekir,” in Özdal and others, *Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası 1*, USAK Publications, Ankara, 2009, p. 151.

.....  
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.....  
Regional openness illustrates to what extent a region coincides with the field of interests of a global hegemon and big powers, and with what frequency these actors intervene in the regional balances. In this regard, the Middle East region is at the center of global power politics, and therefore its level of regional openness is very high.  
.....

Furthermore, currently, it is not possible to say that the regional actors, small or large, are followers of Turkey. It is seen that the attention toward Turkey cannot progress beyond being “dry sympathy” for now. Possible mistakes not yet committed or Arab actors misunderstanding some rhetoric and policies can easily erode the sympathy toward Turkey. Therefore, it needs to be careful about the binding nature of any words to be said and steps to be taken. Otherwise, it is possible that some Arabs favoring Turkey might become bothered and distance themselves from it at the end of the day.<sup>88</sup> At this point, one of the most important determinants is the importance of “regional openness,” to use the expression from the literature, in the Middle East.<sup>89</sup> Regional openness illustrates to what extent a region coincides with the field of interests of a global hegemon and big powers, and with what frequency these actors intervene in the regional balances. In this regard, the Middle East region is at the center of global power politics, and therefore its level of regional openness is very high. In this environment, regional actors prefer to synchronically move with the global hegemon or big powers, and this creates an effectiveness problem in the policies of actors like Turkey if these policies are in conflict with those of a hegemon or big power. Turkey’s incapability of being effective, despite global powers like the U.S., EU, and Russia and regional powers like Iran and Israel recently experiencing problematic periods, is a telling example of that.

The insufficiently institutionalized notions of “cognitive regionalism” or “regional community” as defined by Ayoob in the Middle East also aggravate the aforementioned problem. At this point, the insufficient institutionalization of the Arab League as the most important organization of the region brings about the inability to create togetherness between countries of the region. It is seen that the Arab League, referring to Arab nationalism and an anti-Israeli stance as the main factors of its foundation, is in a divided situation and far from achieving a consensus and common policy target.<sup>90</sup> In Hudson’s words, “The League is so weak in providing Arab integration.”<sup>91</sup> When all these elements are evaluated together, it is better to analyze Turkey’s soft power and potential for regional leadership cautiously.<sup>92</sup>

88 Likewise, the authors’ interview with a senior diplomat from Gulf countries reveals that this risk exists.

89 Prys, “Hegemony, Domination, Detachment...,” pp. 496-499.

90 Mehmet Şahin, “ArapBirliđi Örgütü,” in Ş. Çalıř, *Uluslararası Örgütler ve Türkiye*, Çizgi Kitapevi, Konya, 2006, p. 548. It can be said that this organization, which has serious problems in its decision-making mechanism, is not sufficient enough to provide Arab integrity. See also Wanli Chen and Jun Zhao, “The Arab League’s Decision Making System and Arab Integration,” *Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2009, pp. 59-66.

91 Micheal Hudson, *The Middle East Dilemma*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1999, pp. 8-25. For a comprehensive analysis on this topic, also see Michael Barnett and Etel Solingen, “Designed to fail or failure of design? The origins and legacy of the Arab League,” in A. Johnson and A. Acarya, *Crafting Cooperation: Regional Institutions in Comparative Politics*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007.

92 However, stably maintaining the positive steps compared to estimations to be made based on material elements makes it much easier for Turkey to progress. As stated by President of the Yunus Emre Institute Prof. Bilkan, the recent steps can be expanded quickly if no mistakes have been made. There is “a subconscious positive energy toward Turkey in the region which cannot even be compared to that toward France, England, Germany and other countries.” In short, no matter what important steps were taken by Turkey in regional issues in the recent past, Turkey has to develop a sensibility in this region which shares common values.

# 3

## CONCLUSION: 'REGIONAL POWER' DISCUSSIONS TURKEY IN LIMBO

*In this study, discussions on Turkey's capacity and recently-increasing foreign policy activism are attempted to be empirically analyzed.*

The “central country” or “order-establishing actor” role claimed by Turkey in the Middle East is attempted to be analytically examined with reference to power discussions in relevant literature and by operationalizing variables used in “regional power” discussions. In this context, it is possible to reach three main conclusions. First of all, although the main question in current debates concerns Turkey’s power potential, it is seen that there is no comprehensive research based on data on this issue. In other words, Turkish international relations and foreign policy literature do not or cannot utilize quantitative methods in order to measure Turkey’s power. It is possible to say that there has been a remarkable increase in publications regarding Turkish foreign policy in recent years. The number of books on foreign policy in Turkish literature as well as the number of articles published in peer-reviewed international journals has reached a very high level. However, when these published books are examined, it is seen that most of them are miscellanea and comprised of different articles collected in one volume, far from having a “dialogue” in terms of epistemology and methodology. This yields two results: First, a compilation of many articles with no theoretical and methodological concerns causes readers to be directed to an “undesired eclecticism” as expressed by Thompson.<sup>93</sup> Second, these texts do not provide a concrete contribution to the production of scientific knowledge. Likewise, as indicated in the works of King, Keohane, and Verba, the “content is the method” principle, which is one of the main criteria in determining whether a social science product is scientific, is violated.<sup>94</sup> In fact, various works on Turkish foreign policy with no theoretical or conceptual framework or appropriate methodology do not present a “testable, rep-

93 Kenneth Thompson, “The Study of International Relations: A Survey of Trends and Developments,” *Review of Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1952, pp. 433-467.

94 Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, p. 9.

licable, and falsifiable” claim necessary for the production of scientific information, although they provide “material content” for researchers of the field. The natural repercussion of this deficiency is Turkish international relations and foreign policy becoming “both everything and nothing” at the same time.<sup>95</sup>

Second, considering the data at hand, the main issue to be discussed regarding Turkish foreign policy is increasing its capacity.<sup>96</sup> This work also shows that there is an extensive inconsistency between the role that Turkey wants to play and its capacity, to the extent that its policies become unsuccessful. In other words, there are weaknesses despite positive developments in creating influence proportional to the Turkish population. In this regard, Turkey suffers from an expectation-capacity gap. In spite of a significant increase in Turkey’s political economy structure, foreign trade composition, and direct investment performance, there is the problem of depth, quality, and sustainability. Quick recovery and reform is needed in this issue. What is more, the coordination between the state and private sector in Turkey is far from being systematic and transparent, and in this respect, Turkey could not achieve a proactive state structure which will enable it to utilize its economy as a practical hand. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare a comprehensive road map on the political economy of foreign policy, to determine centers of gravity in terms of a priority hierarchy, and to put these into practice with state and civil society cooperation.<sup>97</sup> Kardaş’s findings are of crucial importance at this point:

*Turkey should be able to rank its priorities for its foreign policy initiatives. In an environment in which the “strategic” cooperation concept is used to define any kind of initiative, Turkey, in realizing its own interests, should not be in a condition where it cannot define its policies with strategic priority.<sup>98</sup>*

Third, it is necessary to conduct an impact analysis of the results of Turkey’s policies toward the region and to permanently maintain systematic sets of data on the perceptions of the peoples of the region.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, obtaining systematic macro-data to measure Turkey’s soft power potential and the influence of works carried out in this context is very problematic, although these are frequently mentioned. In this regard, this work reaches the conclusion that Turkish foreign policy experts should utilize other disciplines like political economy and quantitative analysis, while state institutions should cooperate with academic and research institutions in the sharing of the data they have and make them easily readable. On the other hand, as indicated while measuring diplomatic capability, knowing foreign languages is of vital importance in

95 For a seminal work on this topic, also see Ersel Aydın, Erol Kurubaş, Haluk Özdemir, *Yöntem, Kuram, Kompo: Türk Uluslararası İlişkilerinde Vizyon Arayışları*, Asil Yayın Dağıtım, Ankara, p. 22.

96 This point has been reiterated by Prof. Dr. Fuat Keyman in many workshops which the authors also participated in. See also Fuat Keyman, “2012: Dünya ve Türkiye için Çok Zor Bir Yıl,” *Analist*, No. 11, January 2012, pp. 60-61.

97 Authors’ interview with retired Ambassador Özdem Sanberk, April 24, 2011, Ankara.

98 Kardaş, “Türk Dış Politikasında Eksen Kayması mı?,” p. 37.

99 Recently, there has been much research and many polls conducted. However, it is necessary to make them more comprehensive and to take Arab elites’ opinions into consideration.

order for Turkey to be able to follow developments in the Middle Eastern geography, make unmediated contact with local constituents, and to control the information channels regulating the flow of ideas and knowledge. In this context, an increase of capacity is needed in terms of diplomats, experts of the region, and representatives of civil society.<sup>100</sup> Likewise, as far as remaining within the current knowledge structures, for Turkey, analysis on the region can serve to help better understand the opinions of English-speaking parts of the world on the region. In this regard, it is necessary to increase the number of people from the region studying in Turkey and to keep in touch with them when they return to their countries, along with expanding the knowledge of Arabic in Turkey.<sup>101</sup>

In conclusion, Turkey is a country in limbo when it comes to discussions concerning regional leadership. Regarding its material power components, Turkey is a country which can influence the regional balances and needs to be taken into consideration in regional strategies. In this respect, the argument that Turkey has a “regional power delusion” is not valid. On the other hand, it is necessary to state that Turkey is not yet a regional leader with regard to its material power components and particularly non-material power elements (capability of controlling information structures, agenda-setting power, role perception, and regional acceptance). In this context, Turkey is neither an “order-establishing actor” nor a “central country.” In the final analysis, the priority should be to focus on debates concerning the expanding of the capacity of Turkish foreign policy.

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100 Bahadır Dinçer, “Yeni Ortadoğu’ya Yeni Nesil Uzmanlar,” *USAK Stratejik Gündem*, February 16, 2011.

101 According to the numbers, there are hundreds of Arab friends of Turkey who had come to Turkey from Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, etc. to receive education in Turkey, who are speaking Turkish, yet have not kept in touch after returning to their countries of origin.

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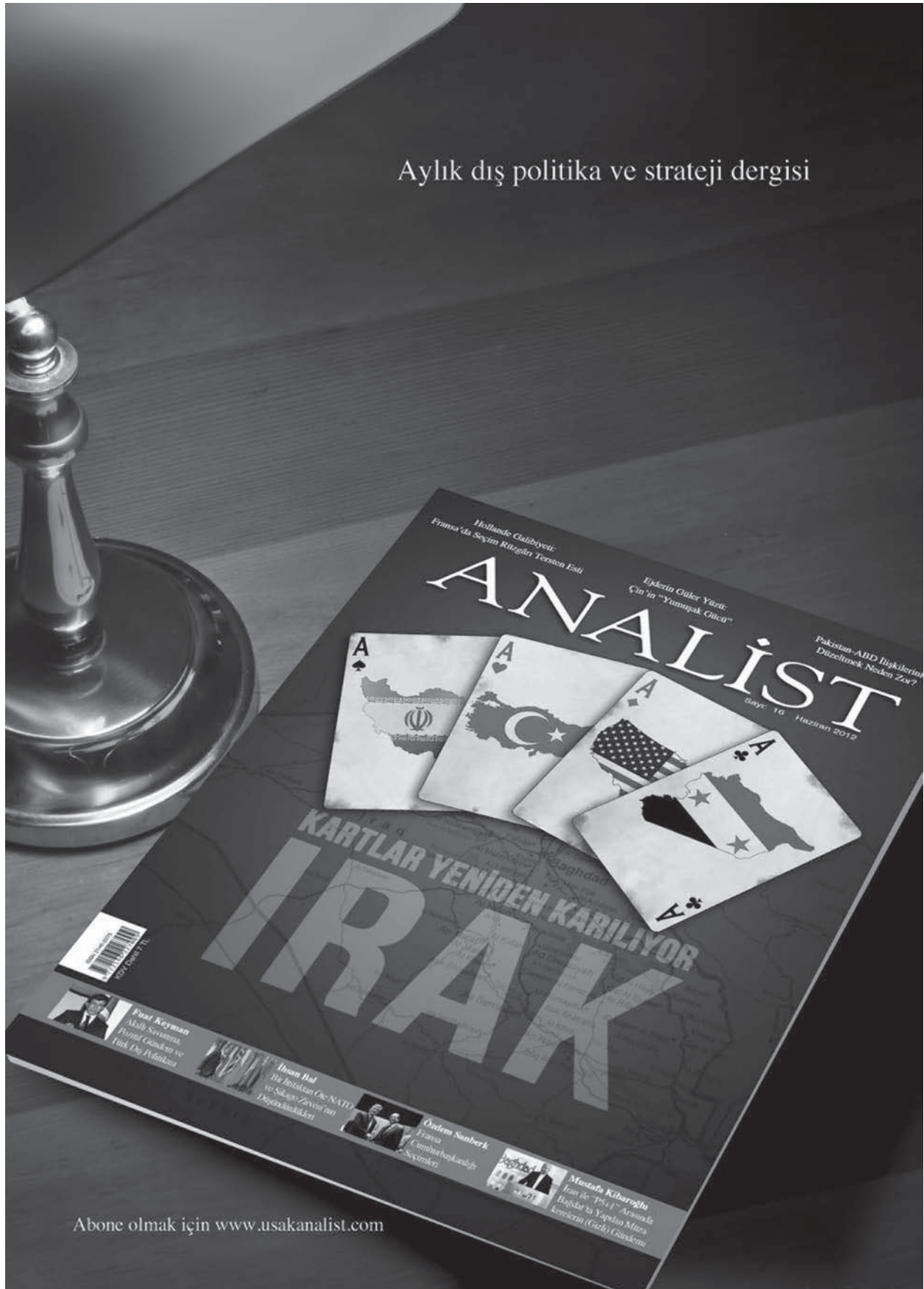
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