The Grand Strategy
Of the
Republic of Turkey

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May 21, 2012

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University for offering a wonderful undergraduate honors program. It has been an honor to be a member of the CISAC community and certainly the highlight of my undergraduate education. Many thanks are due to the program’s coordinators, Dr. Coit Blacker, Dr. Martha Crenshaw and David Blum, for their tireless efforts towards making the program a success as well as to Dr. Tom Fingar who acted as a wonderful tour guide for the students in Washington, D.C. I would also like to thank all the other honors students for making senior year enjoyable and full of learning.

I owe a great deal of gratitude and thanks to my advisor, Dr. David Holloway. Thank you for taking such a high interest in my thesis and donating more time than you had towards reading, editing and encouraging me to grow as a thinker and writer. My thesis and my mind are much improved because of your guidance. I would also like to thank Dr. Bert Patenaude who, without any prompt on my part, offered his services as a second reader of my thesis. Last but most certainly not least, I would like to thank my loving family. The going got tougher than any of us expected and I would not have made it through this thesis or my four years at Stanford without you.

There were countless other students, professors and professionals that were a part of my journey that are not included here and for that I am sorry. Be sure that though your names are not written, the memories of all your help remain intact.
Abstract

Turkey’s foreign policy has garnered an increasing amount of attention and interest from media outlets and academics worldwide. From this increasing coverage academics, public intellectuals and policymakers have asserted that Turkey’s foreign policy has undergone a shift. “Newly activist”, “confident”, and, most interestingly, “neo-Ottoman” are descriptors that have lately lined pages of editorials and analyses describing Turkish foreign policy. What is not so obvious, and what this thesis will be attempting to unearth, is discerning what, or who, is crafting Turkey’s “new” foreign policy.

This thesis will attempt to solve this puzzle by viewing Turkey’s foreign policy through a grand strategy narrative, the coordination of means to reach a defined end. Thus, Turkey’s shift has been a process that began in the early 1990s rather than a singular event. Turkey had a cohesive grand strategy that evolved throughout the late and post-Cold War period. The greatest structural changes to Turkey’s foreign policy have been its economic liberalization, the removal of the military from power and ultimately the paradigm shift in Turkish identity in their region and their relationship with history. Thus, what is on the surface a shift in foreign policy is, in a deeper level, a shift in Turkish identity and their relationship with their history and their region.

In sum, Turkey is operating on a wholly different paradigm than any of its Western counterparts. American and European policymakers must understand this to manage their relations with Turkey and capitalize on shared strategic interests. The current American administration, in stark contrast to its European peers, has grasped Turkey’s importance exceptionally well. It is the hope that this thesis will contribute to the conversation in America’s chattering classes and policy circles in Europe.
### Comparative Outline of Turkey’s Grand Strategies

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Maps

The Ottoman Empire, Territorial Acquisitions¹

¹ Map found using Google Images, linked to this website: http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum213/Maps/Maps1.htm.
The Republic of Turkey, Cold War

Map found using Google Images, linked to this website: http://users.humboldt.edu/ogayle/hist111/coldwar.html.

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2 Map found using Google Images, linked to this website: http://users.humboldt.edu/ogayle/hist111/coldwar.html.
The Republic of Turkey, Present Day

Image found using Google Images, linked to this website: http://www.map-of-turkey.com/.
Chapter I. Introduction and Literature Review

“Once again, Turkey is at the center of everything.” - Ahmet Davutoglu, Foreign Minister, The Republic of Turkey. 2011.

Introduction

Turkey demands deep study and attention from today’s policymakers and intellectuals. Turkey will be a defining player in geopolitics and thus a state that will be of paramount importance for the strategies of other states around the world. A quick survey of the past few years provides ample evidence of Turkey’s importance.

Economically, Turkey is one of the most promising high-growth states in the world today. It is often mentioned in the same context as the BRIC countries. Additionally, Turkey is a darling of BRIC skeptics like Jack Goldstone, who offered an alternative acronym, TIMBIS, insisting on the inclusion of Turkey in the club of emerging global economies.4 Jim O’Neill, the creator of BRIC, has since created a new acronym of next-tier growth economies that includes Turkey, MIST.5

Politically, Turkey’s internal and external affairs are consequential to the security and geopolitical maneuverings of states near and far. Domestically, it is one of few examples of a dominantly Muslim society with fairly stable liberal institutions including representative government and free market policies. Turkey’s exemplary status as a modern Muslim state has become hugely significant with the advent of the Arab Spring.

The newly elected government of Tunisia, site of the first Arab revolution in late 2010,

has openly conveyed its admiration for the Turkish model of democracy. “Democracy, within the identity of Turkish people, that is what we want to implement to Tunisia,” declared Tunisia’s foreign minister, Rafik Abdessalem, at a recent think tank conference. “The success of Tunisia is the success of Turkey,” responded Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey’s foreign minister. A seismic shift in the domestic balance of power occurred in 2011, when Turkey’s top military brass resigned en masse. The military, once a very proactive “guardian” of Turkish principles, has essentially removed itself from the immediate political landscape.

Abroad, developments such as Turkey’s collaboration with Brazil in 2011 to strike a nuclear deal with Iran and halt UN sanctions, its rapidly cooling relationship with Israel, its decreasing enthusiasm in pursuing EU membership and its foot-dragging in supporting the NATO mission in Libya seem to demonstrate a coordinated, unified strategy that is leading it towards objectives that are less and less in line with Western interests. Perhaps the most crucial foreign policy shift has been Turkey’s fervent re-engagement with the Middle East. Though Turkish policymakers, like all others, were taken completely by surprise by the Arab Spring, they have since capitalized on the phenomenon by declaring their support for protesters across the Middle East even at the expense of now former allies like Syria and Libya. The result has been astounding; the most popular figure in the Arab world is not only a non-Arab, but also a descendant of the loathed Ottomans: Turkey’s Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. His state visits to post-Mubarak Egypt and post-Ben Ali Tunisia, and the publicly stated intention of creating an axis with Egypt have, in the words of Turkey’s Foreign Minister Ahmet

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Davutoglu, “placed Turkey at the center of everything.”7 In 2009 the newly elected US president, Barack Obama, made Turkey the first Muslim country he visited as president. Even more revealing is that, according to a variety of reports and despite existing tensions between American and Turkish foreign policies, President Obama has logged more phone call hours with Prime Minister Erdogan than with any other world leader with the exception of the UK’s David Cameron.

Policymakers and intellectuals who discount Turkey’s immense strategic importance or misinterpret Turkey’s trajectory do so at their own peril. No less than former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice has characterized Europe as making that mistake. “They missed an opportunity. Turkey for some time sincerely pushed hard for accession into the EU. By not accepting them, Europe missed an opportunity” to strengthen the Union’s strategic capability. Europe, rather unwittingly, weakened the strength of the EU experiment by assuming that “Turkey would change Europe when in fact it was Europe that would have changed Turkey.”8

Turkey’s foreign policy has garnered an increasing amount of attention and interest from the media and academics. Especially with the advent of the Arab Spring, Turkey’s importance in determining the future of the Middle East has become increasingly obvious and has thus warranted increased scrutiny. What is not so obvious, and has thus become a common topic of investigation, is discerning the forces behind Turkey’s foreign policy. The puzzle that this thesis aims to answer is what or who is

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8 Quoted during a seminar she offers as a professor at Stanford University titled “Dilemmas and Decision-making in US Foreign Policy,” Stanford University, February 28 2012.
shaping Turkey’s foreign policy? More specifically, what explains Turkey’s shift in its foreign policy?

Four discernible answers have emerged from the myriad media and academic investigations. First is that Turkey’s current foreign policy is the product of its current foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu. Many point to his book Strategic Depth as the intellectual foundation for Turkey’s current foreign policy doctrine. Second is that Turkey’s foreign policy is a product of its maturing democracy that has been helped along by reforms induced by the European Union accession process. Turkish foreign policy is a product of domestic pressures that have become more clearly articulated through Turkey’s increasingly robust democracy. Third is that Turkey is filling the vacuum being left by the United States as it withdraws from the region to focus more of its efforts in East Asia. Turkey, in other words, is vying for regional supremacy. Fourth is that Turkey’s foreign policy is a product of its adaptation to its post-Cold War environment.

Turkey is a dynamic power. The amount of media attention directed at Turkey over the last decade is astonishing and the pace of coverage has only quickened. From this increasing coverage academics, public intellectuals and policymakers have begun to grasp that Turkey’s foreign policy has undergone a fundamental shift. “Newly activist,” “confident,” and, most interestingly, “neo-Ottoman” are descriptors that have lately lined pages of editorials and analyses describing Turkish foreign policy. However, what is on the surface a shift in foreign policy is, at a deeper level, a shift in Turkish identity, specifically Turks’ relationship with their history. This thesis will therefore use a grand strategy framework to analyze and explore this shift.
Grand strategy as a concept is meant to provide a lucid vision for policymakers and thinkers vis-à-vis the operations and motivations of states. At its core, a grand strategy is the long-term commitment of resources, or means, towards achieving a defined objective, or ends. The classic grand strategic tools are diplomacy, military power and intelligence. Turkey’s grand strategy is interesting because, in addition to using the classic tools, it uses the country’s culture and historical identity to achieve foreign policy objectives. Turkish statesmen use identity as one of the resources of a larger grand strategy. Identity is not allocated like diplomatic or military resources, but rather it is interpreted. Like grand strategy itself, Turkish identity is not static and is subject to change and adaptation.

This thesis is meant to, first and foremost, offer a distinct perspective on Turkey’s foreign policy strategy, its goals and constraints. This thesis is intended to encourage policymakers and serious thinkers, especially Westerners, to reevaluate an increasingly pervasive narrative of suspicion with regard to Turkey’s “orientation”, specifically the charge that Turkey is turning its back on the West. This thesis will demonstrate that Turkey operates according to a wholly different paradigm from that of its Western allies. Understanding this paradigm has the real potential to reveal shared interests, attitudes and thus opportunities for Western policymakers to act upon.

This thesis is structured in the form of a historical narrative. After this introduction and literature review a chapter is dedicated to surveying and defining grand strategy and then tying it to Turkey’s historical experience. Having established grand strategy as a useful and relevant model to analyze Turkey’s foreign policy, the third chapter of the thesis will use it to analyze Turkey’s foreign policy from the state’s
founding in 1923 to the end of the Cold War. The fourth chapter will look at the post-Cold War period and the collapse of the Kemalist grand strategy in the face of a paradigm shift both in Turkish identity and Turkey’s regional neighbors. Finally, chapter five will put the observations of the past in their present context and explain Turkey’s current trajectory.

**Literature Review**

**Introduction**

There is certainly no shortage of literature about the topic that this thesis will explore. Interest, both scholarly and public via the media, in Turkey’s foreign policy orientation and strategy seems to be at an all-time high. The discussion that this thesis is entering is becoming increasingly noisy, as it is relevant. Most of the literature is focused on characterizing or defining Turkey’s foreign policy. Almost all of the literature refers to a recent “shift” in Turkey’s foreign policy. This implies that Turkey’s current foreign policy strategy is different from what it was at some earlier point. Yet, not much literature is devoted to comparing and contrasting these two strategies or explaining the sources of this shift and when in fact it did occur. Instead, in the literature devoted to charting Turkey’s new foreign policy trajectory, implicit assumptions are made about the sources of this shift without much exploration. Thus, this literature review is mostly an exercise in extracting the commonly implied or assumed sources of Turkey’s shift in foreign policy. That is not to say that there is no literature that attempts to articulate the sources of Turkey’s foreign policy shift. Both the literature that directly attempts to
address the sources and the extracted assumptions from other literature can be grouped into four categories.

The first category of literature argues that Turkey’s shift in its foreign policy is due to Turkey’s current foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu (pronounced Da-woot-o-loo), and his “Strategic Depth” doctrine.

The second category of literature argues that the end of the Cold War had an impact on Turkey’s orientation towards its transformed regional neighborhood and its ties to the West, and that this explains Turkey’s current foreign policy.

The third category of scholars attributes Turkey’s shift in foreign policy strategy to political and economic liberalization reforms enacted in the 1980s.

The fourth category of scholars argues that America’s waning influence in the Middle East as a result of its failed policies, troop withdrawal and its increasing attention to East Asia is leaving a power vacuum that Turkey is competing to fill.

Overall, there is an abundant amount of literature about Turkey’s foreign policy orientation and strategy. However, few observers have attempted to view Turkey’s foreign affairs through the lens of grand strategy. Most of the literature that does attempt to articulate the sources of Turkey’s shift suffers from two shortcomings. Either it attributes the shift to one event, or it mentions a variety of trends but does not show how they fit together. This thesis seeks to fill this gap by offering a grand strategy narrative as a way to situate Turkey’s trajectory in a cohesive narrative.

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9 Dr. Joshua W. Walker is the only scholar who has offered grand strategy as a method of analyzing Turkey’s orientation. However, he places heavy emphasis on the role of Turkey’s foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, claiming him to be the architect of Turkey’s grand strategy. Additionally, he does not offer a definition of grand strategy in any of his writings about Turkey. See: Joshua Walker, “Learning Strategic Depth: Implications of Turkey's New Foreign Policy Doctrine,” Insight Turkey, 2007.
Ahmet Davutoğlu and *Strategic Depth*:

The first hypothesis would characterize Turkey’s current grand strategy as a product of the views of Turkey’s current foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu. A significantly large number of scholars and journalists have attributed Turkey’s foreign policy strategy to Mr. Davutoğlu’s academic work, specifically his theories of international relations as applied to Turkey, which were articulated in his 2001 book, *Strategic Depth*. Shockingly, no English translation exists of *Strategic Depth*, and so reliance on multilingual scholars\(^\text{10}\) and English-language interviews with Mr. Davutoğlu (himself an almost fluent English-speaker) discussing his perspectives on Turkey’s foreign policy has been paramount. Despite the non-existence of an English translation, the book and its author are often cited as the architects of Turkey’s current foreign policy.

In *Strategic Depth*, Davutoğlu offers a theory of international relations whereby the strategic value of states is determined from a combination of their geographical location and their history. Dr. Alexander Murinson supplies the intellectual lineage of Davutoğlu’s *Strategic Depth* doctrine. He claims that the doctrine’s origins can be traced to the neo-Ottoman doctrine of Turgut Özal, a former prime minister of Turkey. Dr. Ioannis Grigoriadis disputes this, saying neo-Ottomanism is a mischaracterization of the strategic depth doctrine.\(^\text{11}\) Using Davutoğlu’s theory, Turkey is a central strategic power rather than a peripheral power. Its highly strategic geographical location coupled with the

\(^{10}\) Joshua W. Walker in particular along with Ioannis N. Grigoriadis and the myriad Turkish journalists and scholars who have offered commentary and analysis. However, the book is described as “600 pages long, very dense and almost certainly more known than read” by James Traub (Traub, James. "Turkey’s Rules." *The New York Times*, January 20, 2011) and a number of other journalists.

historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire connects it to a variety of geopolitical areas of influence, including the Caucasus, Balkans and the Middle East. *Strategic Depth* advocates that Turkey diversify its foreign relations and strive for independence. In fact, Davutoglu argues that it is the responsibility of Turkey to grasp an independent role and that “to contribute actively towards conflict resolution and international peace and security in all these areas is a call of duty arising from the depths of a multidimensional history for Turkey.”

Grand strategy is not the product of one individual’s thought, though some individuals have been exceptional in articulating, characterizing and ultimately executing grand strategy. Ahmet Davutoglu belongs in this context. This thesis will argue that Davutoglu’s “Strategic Depth doctrine” articulates a Turkish grand strategy that was already in development prior to its writing and Davutoglu’s political emergence. Dr. Joshua Walker attempts to temper his heavy emphasis on the role of Davutoglu in Turkey’s foreign policy, but to little effect. Davutoglu deserves credit for characterizing and executing Turkey’s grand strategy; however, as Davutoglu himself has said and written, the forces behind the crafting of Turkey’s current grand strategy are larger than any one man.

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12 For best descriptions of *Strategic Depth* see Walker and Grigoriadis.
13 Direct quotation from *Strategic Depth* found in Grigoriadis.
14 “Exaggerating Davutoglu’s influence and seeing ‘strategic depth’ in every Turkish foreign policy decision is problematic; however, seeing the quiet influence of the ideas and theories guiding Davutoglu are a key to understanding the AKP's foreign policy orientation. Therefore rather than arguing that the "strategic depth" doctrine is the sole guiding force in Turkish foreign policymaking, the remainder of this article will examine Turkey's newfound activism in its regional neighborhood in comparison to its traditional Western-orientation. As will be demonstrated in these interactions and maneuverings, the imprint of Davutoglu's influential doctrine on Turkey's foreign policy is unmistakably clear.” Walker, Joshua. "Learning Strategic Depth: Implications of Turkey's New Foreign Policy Doctrine." *Insight Turkey*, 2007.
If Davutoglu is to be accepted as the chief architect of Turkey’s grand strategy, then the shift in Turkey’s foreign policy would have occurred in 2002. Additionally, Davutoglu would have to have an exceptional amount of influence within the Turkish government. Indeed, Dr. Walker describes Davutoglu as having “largely been given a free hand to shape Turkey's foreign policy in light of his own strategic depth doctrine.” Ultimately, Dr. Walker’s conclusions come up short. First, accepting Davutoglu as the chief architect discounts the very factors that *Strategic Depth* emphasizes, specifically geography and history. Additionally, it discounts important trends that existed before the AKP was elected in 2002. As will be shown later, a large amount of literature exists that describes Turkey’s foreign policy as “changing,” “having a new orientation” (less Western), or being “activist” as early as 1993. Additionally, assigning Davutoglu an exceptional amount of influence over policymaking underestimates the domestic pressures that Turkish politicians may be under.

**Post-Cold War Geopolitical Shift:**

Turkey’s current foreign policy trajectory is often described as “newly assertive,” “rediscovering the Middle East,” and “turning away from the West” but

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15 Walker and Grigoriadis argue this precisely.
16 Further evidence of this is an article written by Namik Tan, the current ambassador of Turkey to the United States, who essentially regurgitates *Strategic Depth*. Tan, Namik. “Turkish-U.S. Strategic Partnership.” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (2010): 13-21
17 In other words, the end of the Cold War set in motion trends of which *Strategic Depth* is a product.
18 Davutoglu himself characterized Turkey’s foreign affairs as also being domestic issues and thus of interest to the Turkish voter in a TV interview. You can watch the interview at this web address: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AgLVaxRFL50](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AgLVaxRFL50)

scholars have offered these descriptions of Turkey’s foreign policy as early as 1993.22 This category has a relation to the first in that Mr. Davutoglu places geography, along with history, as a permanent tenet of foreign policy strategy in his book. Turkey’s geography placed it in NATO’s southern flank, bordering the USSR on almost all sides, the Black Sea and Mediterranean providing the only buffer. After the USSR collapsed, Turkey suddenly found itself sharing borders with three new states: Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. The Balkans was entirely transformed and in Central Asia, Turkic peoples suddenly had their own independent states.23

This huge transformation of the geopolitical landscape forced Turkey to reexamine its role in the region. At the same time, the strength of its ties to NATO was weakened.24 It was during this time of change that Turkey began experiencing a renewed interest in its Ottoman heritage. Coupled with the neoliberal transformation of its economics beginning in the early 1980s, the end of the Cold War proves to be a watershed moment for the transformation of Turkey. The trends that were accelerated and set in motion led to the election of the AKP party in 2002.25 Thus Erdogan and Davutoglu’s attitudes are actually a continuation of those of their predecessors, whose attitudes in turn were a product of the geopolitical upheaval created by the end of the

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23 Ibid.
Cold War. 26 The late Ismail Cem, Turkey’s foreign minister from 1997 to 2002, wrote “Turkey’s specific historical development –its cosmopolitan characteristics, its civilization melding Western and Eastern values, a multitude of beliefs and ethnicities–bestowed on Turkey a unique identity. We consider ourselves both European (which we have been for seven centuries) and Asian and view this plurality as an asset. Our history was molded as much in Istanbul, Edirne, Tetova, Kosovo and Sarajevo as it was in Bursa, Kayseri, Diyarbakir, and Damascus.” This is a clear precursor to Davutoglu’s “strategic depth” doctrine. 27

This hypothesis suggests that the real shift in Turkey’s grand strategy occurred at the end of the Cold War. The AKP, Davutoglu and his Strategic Depth doctrine do not provide a shift in strategy, but rather should be seen as a further progression in Turkey’s process of adapting to its environment and honing its strategy. In sum, Turkey’s current grand strategy is a process that began in 1991 rather than a doctrine created by Davutoglu. Davutoglu’s strategic depth doctrine should be seen more on the operational level than the grand strategic level.

The following category, political and economic liberalization, has some overlap with the Post-Cold War hypothesis, but it takes it a step further by looking at the effect economic and political liberalization, accelerated by the end of the Cold War, has had on Turkey’s domestic front and thus on elected officials who make foreign policy.

26 Other scholarly work that demonstrate an uninterrupted transformation of Turkish foreign policy include: Malik Mufti, “Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy,” Middle East Journal 52, no. 1 (1998): 32-50. And: Kemal Kirisci.
27 Quoted in Nas. Ismail Cem also wrote an article that advocates for a foreign policy that resembles Turkey’s current one. Ismail Cem, “Turkish Foreign Policy: Opening New Horizons for Turkey at the Beginning of a New Millennium,” Turkish Policy Quarterly 1, no. 1 (2002).
Political and Economic Liberalization:

Literature in this category argues that political liberalization has shifted foreign policymaking into the hands of civilian politicians who in turn are pressured by voters. Simultaneously, Turkey’s diverse economic interests and clout relative to its Eastern neighbors has been a primary driver for Turkey’s active engagement in the Middle East and the Caucasus. These economic and private sector interests feed into the domestic pressure that influences Turkish foreign policymaking. From this group of scholars there are a number who argue that Europe’s continued rejection of Turkish accession has pushed Turkey away from its Western oriented foreign policy.

Scholars in this category argue that Turkey’s process of democratization, recently reaching new heights with the dismantling of the military’s political involvement\(^ {28}\), has forced its foreign policy-makers to heed the attitudes of its constituents. Even Davutoglu acknowledges that whatever happens in the Balkans or the Caucasus or the Middle East becomes a domestic issue for Turkey because it has people with lineage or a cultural affinity for the region at hand.\(^ {29}\)

In sum, this category attributes Turkey’s shift in foreign policy to its political and economic liberalization beginning in the 1980s. Its liberalization combined with its continued rejection from the European Union, adds some other scholars, have led Turkey to shift its orientation away from the West.

Most scholarly work on the domestic sources of Turkish foreign policy attributes Turkey’s democratization to reforms it enacted in its pursuit of EU accession. This democratization in turn transferred the power of foreign policymaking to civilian

\(^{28}\) Tuysuz and Tavernise.

\(^{29}\) You can watch the interview at this address: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AgL.VaxRF50
politicians whereas before foreign policy used to be almost solely in the hands of the Turkish military. Thus, domestic pressures are increasingly becoming the primary driver of Turkish foreign policy.\textsuperscript{30} Another interpretation, best articulated by Carol Migdalovitz, asserts that the AKP has been using its assertive foreign policy to consolidate domestic power. She cites three patterns in Turkish foreign policy that seem to be entirely aimed at creating a strong domestic base. First is the championing of “Muslim” causes (Palestine), second the evocation of populist national pride and third mercantilist economic policies.\textsuperscript{31} Rather than the AKP being subject to the preferences of its citizens, it’s shaping voters preferences.

Turkey’s economic liberalization that began in the early 1980s with IMF-led reforms and continued in its efforts to join the EU has led it to establish economic and financial ties with not just Europe, but also the Middle East. Dr. Ken Dorsey articulates that, “As Turkey strived for much of its post-World War II history to be identified as European, Turks looked down on those they once ruled as the dominant colonial power. Perceptions of sustained European rejection of Turkey coupled with the country’s assertion of its diplomatic and economic weight across the region and an increased interest in its Ottoman past have changed those attitudes towards Arabs who now are


\textsuperscript{31} Migdalovitz, Carol. "AKP's Domestically-Driven Foreign Policy." \textit{Turkish Policy Quarterly} 9, no. 4 (2010): 37-45.
important markets and customers receptive to what Turkey has to offer politically, diplomatically, economically, and culturally.” 32 Shahin Vallee is one of few scholars to focus solely on the impact Turkish financial interests have on its foreign policy.

According to Mr. Vallee, Davutoglu’s strategic depth doctrine “gave relatively little importance to economic interests,” but Turkey’s foreign policymakers have been subject to pressure from Turkish business elites and international investors. He continues: “today’s Turkish foreign policy is only new in the sense that it mobilizes the diplomatic entrepreneurship of its new business elite, definitely more interested in economic progress than in Turkey’s standing in the Great Game of Nations.” 33

In sum, acceptance of the political and economic liberalization hypothesis would lead to the conclusion that Turkey’s shift in its grand strategy was a gradual process that began with the 1980 military coup that led to the liberalization of its markets. The return of a democratic regime coupled with the demise of Turkey’s greatest external threat, the USSR, accelerated the process of internal liberalization. As a result, Turkey’s foreign affairs establishment was demilitarized and became another realm in which domestic politics could play out.

**Waning U.S. Influence and a Middle East Power Vacuum**

Another possible explanation for Turkey’s activist foreign policy is waning US influence in the region. US withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan and its peripheral

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involvement in the Arab Spring has left a vacuum that Turkey is competing to fill along with Iran and Saudi Arabia.34

The Arab Spring has precipitated this trend since “the Turkish model”35 of governance has resonated with the Arab street more than the American model ever has despite 10 years of costly nation-building efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even a change in American leadership has elicited little gain on this front. Despite some initial hesitations Turkey reacted faster than Washington in its support for democratic reform, particularly in Egypt. As a result, President Obama’s popularity amongst Arabs sank even lower than George W. Bush’s after the Arab Spring whereas Turkey’s prime minister, Recep Erdogan, emerged as the most popular public figure in the Arab world.36 All this, scholars in this category argue, demonstrates that the United States has pushed itself to the periphery of the region while Turkey is becoming increasingly central.37 Even the Obama administration seems to be accepting this narrative. Turkey was one of the first countries President Obama visited in his first presidential tour in 2009. Additionally, he is reported to spend a significant amount of time in contact with Erdogan. In the September 2011 UN General Assembly meeting, Obama “gave more face time to Erdogan than any other world leader.” 38

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34 Vali Nasr in a lecture titled “The Middle East After the Arab Spring: Economics, Identity and Strategy,” given at Stanford University on October 18, 2011.
38 Lee Smith, “Middle Eastern Upheavals Weakening Washington’s Middle East Influence,” Middle East Quarterly, 2011: 3-10.
Also see Traub and Tan.
If this trend alone were responsible for Turkey’s current foreign policy there would be a noticeable difference between its foreign policy during the Bush Administration when America’s influence in the Middle East reached its peak with the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan and its foreign policy since the Obama administration has reduced troop levels and the Arab Spring toppled U.S.-friendly dictators. However, no such shift appeared to occur. Despite the deployment of American troops to the region in 2001 and 2003, Turkey was still actively involved in regional affairs. It was the primary mediator in talks between Israel and Syria\(^{39}\), as well as talks between Serbia and Bosnia\(^{40}\) and even established relations with Iraqi Kurdistan.\(^{41}\)

Conclusion

There is a bountiful amount of literature that investigates a variety of aspects of Turkey’s foreign policy. However, the majority of the current discussion is preoccupied in characterizing Turkey’s orientation. The fact that there has been a shift in Turkey’s foreign policy is often touted but seldom investigated. When the shift occurred and what was the driving force behind the shift are too often left to implied assumptions or unconnected trends.

Though each of the four categories above offers viable explanations for when and what led to Turkey’s shift, each has its shortcomings and contradictions. One conceptual framework has remained largely untouched: grand strategy. The following chapters will provide a definition for grand strategy and will show that Turkey has shifted from one grand strategy to another. This thesis will demonstrate that Turkey’s foreign policy can

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\(^{40}\) Traub

be best understood through a grand strategy narrative. When Turkey’s shift occurred and
the forces behind this shift will be revealed. Additionally, in order to best understand
Turkey’s grand strategy, this thesis will seek to articulate the strategic paradigm that
Turkey is working under. Too often, Turkey’s foreign policy is analyzed through a Cold
War East vs. West paradigm. This thesis will offer a different paradigm from which to
view Turkey’s grand strategy.
Chapter II. Defining grand strategy and applying it to Turkey

Defining Grand Strategy

Sir B.H. Liddell Hart coined the term “grand strategy” in his seminal work Strategy, a compilation of writings first published in 1929 and revised and republished up through 1954. In his chapter on the theory of strategy Liddell Hart evoked the image of “planes” of strategy where “tactics is an application of strategy on a lower plane” and “strategy is an application on a lower plane of ‘grand strategy.’” Scholars have repeatedly used the imagery of planes and levels to describe grand strategy’s relation to policy-making. Liddell Hart’s definition of strategy, closely resembling that of Carl von Clausewitz’s oft-cited “war is politics by other means”, is “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy.” Grand strategy or higher strategy, referring to the imagery of planes or levels of strategy, is the coordination and direction of “all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, toward the attainment of the political object of the war.” Fighting power; financial, commercial, diplomatic and ethical pressure are some of main resources and instruments available for the execution of a grand strategy. Indeed, the term ‘grand strategy’ “serves to bring out the sense of ‘policy in execution.’”

Liddell Hart’s definition of grand strategy is limited in its scope. For Hart, grand strategy is wholly dedicated towards achieving wartime objectives. Though he does write that grand strategy should look “beyond the war to the subsequent peace” to avoid a

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44 Ibid., pg. 322
“sorry state of peace”\textsuperscript{45}, he nonetheless views it as a primarily wartime phenomenon.

Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley asserted in \textit{The Making of Strategy} that Hart’s definitions are inadequate and that while economic, diplomatic and military resources are important so are geography, historical experience, ideology, culture and government organization.\textsuperscript{46} Paul Kennedy asserted “a true grand strategy [is] now concerned with peace as much as (perhaps even more than) war. It was about the evolution and integration of policies that should operate for decades.”\textsuperscript{47} Murray and Grimsley similarly described strategy as “a process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances.”\textsuperscript{48}

Edward Luttwak in \textit{The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire} defined grand strategy as “the level at which knowledge and persuasion, or in modern terms intelligence and diplomacy, interact with military strength to determine outcomes in a world of other states, with their own ‘grand strategies.’” Luttwak’s assertion is that “all states have a grand strategy, whether they know it or not…but not all grand strategies are equal.”

In the book \textit{Grand Strategies in War and Peace}, Paul Kennedy defines grand strategy as

\begin{quote}
the coherent integration of overall political, economic and military aims and thus their long-term interests. Grand strategy is the proper balancing of priorities, end and means. The crux of grand strategy lies therefore in policy, that is, in the capacity of the nation’s leaders to bring together all of the elements both military and nonmilitary for the preservation and enhancement of the nation’s long-term best interests…it is not a mathematical science in the Jominian tradition, but an art in the Clausewitzian sense—and a difficult art at that since it operates at
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{45} A clear reference to the post-World War I settlement. In fact, all of \textit{Strategy} is a critique of World War I military strategy. Hart expounds on using an “indirect approach” to achieving war objectives in place of direct, frontal approaches—the dominate dogma amongst World War I officers. Hart’s definition of strategy and grand strategy reflect the fact his life was dominated by the two world wars.

\textsuperscript{46} William Murray, Macgregor Knox, Alvin Bernstein. \textit{Making of Strategy}. (Cambridge University Press 1994)

\textsuperscript{47} Paul Kennedy. \textit{Grand Strategies in War and Peace}, (Yale University Press 1991), Pg. 4.

\textsuperscript{48} Murray, pg.1
various levels, political, strategic, operational, tactical, all interacting with each other to advance (or retard) the primary aim.\textsuperscript{49}

In this sense grand strategy is a descendant of what used to be called “raison d’état or ragione di stato--the idea that the state...transcended crown and land, prince and people; that objectives should never be sought in excess of capabilities; that it had its particular set of interests...and be willing to use the kinds of material and physical resources necessary to advance it.”\textsuperscript{50}

Strategy, and in turn grand strategy, has been explored and revisited by a variety of scholars throughout the last century. The concept of grand strategy has adapted from being a solely wartime concern to one of using all the tools of statecraft to guide a state during times of war and peace. However, there is a running theme across strategic literature. Grand strategy is the concept that connects a nation’s resources and coordinates them for the purpose of achieving the goals of policymakers. At its basic core, grand strategy connects ends to means. The classical resources of a nation are its military, economic resources and diplomats. However, in the case of Turkey, there are additional factors that weigh heavily into their grand strategy. First is its geography. The territory that Turkey occupies has a deep history and to this day is the cynosure of strategic historians, thinkers and practitioners. As will be demonstrated below, Anatolia, Istanbul, and the surrounding territories have a vast, remarkable history full of strategic lessons, insights and failures.

The second factor is the strategic culture inherited from the previous Anatolian empires. They that have held Anatolia the longest, namely the Ottoman, Byzantine,
Roman and Macedonian empires, have survived by strategy only. The Turkish Republic was born in the fire of this historical tradition. Thus, the third factor is the Turks’ awareness of their historical narrative. A strong historical identity has undergirded the success of previous empires and modern Turkey is no different. For Turkey strategy is an expression of an entire culture, not merely the interests of a particular state.

**Anatolia and Istanbul: the cradle of strategy**

Having a successful grand strategy is, for most states, not necessary for survival or prosperity in the international system. However, Turkey’s geographic location required it to have a grand strategy since its very beginnings—the Republic’s very existence rested on having a successful grand strategy. The region that Turkey inhabits, namely Thrace and Anatolia, has been continuously inhabited for the last 10 centuries by a myriad of nomadic peoples and powerful, massive empires. According to military historian John Keegan, the Turkish city of Edirne (formerly Adrianople) is the most contested piece of land in history, having seen “fifteen battles or sieges between 323 and 1913.” The Romans, Byzantines, Sassanians (Persians), Macedonians, Hellenes and countless others fought for, died in, and ruled parts of modern-day Turkey.

The history of the region is intertwined with strategic thought and events. The philosopher Heraclitus (Herakleitos of Ephesus), described by Edward Luttwak as “the first Western strategic thinker”, was born and raised in modern-day Efes, Turkey. The city of Troy, though its exact location remains a mystery, is widely accepted as having been located in the northwest corner of Turkey, near the Dardanelles. Sixty-six miles west of Ankara lie the ruins of Gordium, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Phrygia.

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52 Luttwak, 413.
where King Midas ruled, and the legend of the Gordian Knot was born. It is said that a
temple in Gordium housed the ox cart that pulled Midas and his father Gordius to the
Phrygian capital and that whoever could untie the knot that fastened the cart to the ox
harness would rule Asia. When Alexander the Great began his conquest into Anatolia, he
went to Gordium and, according to Plutarch, cut the Gordian knot and claimed the rule of
Asia as his destiny.\textsuperscript{53} After the fall of Alexander’s empire, Anatolia came under the full
control of the Roman Empire by 25 BC.\textsuperscript{54} Almost 300 years later, Ephesus was site for
another dramatic event when the invading Goths sacked the city during one of its many
invasions of Anatolia.

The Roman Empire crumbled and was officially split in 395 with the East Roman
Empire, today known as Byzantium, based in Constantinople—modern day Istanbul, a
glorious city that overlooks the intersection of the Bosporus River, which leads north to
the Black Sea, and south to the Sea of Marmara, which opens up to the Aegean and
Mediterranean Seas through the Dardanelles strait—the epitome of a strategic vantage
point, and thus a highly desirable piece of real estate for aspiring empires and peoples.
The long, besieged history of the Byzantine Empire is testament to the strategic allure of
the territory it controlled. Compared to its western counterpart, the East Roman Empire
faced more, and more powerful, enemies. Thus, its strategic location became a
disadvantage because it attracted hostility from all sides. Yet, despite this overwhelming
disadvantage in comparison to the West Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire outlasted
it by about 800 years and became the longest lasting empire in human history.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{54} Stephen Mitchell, \textit{Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor}, (Oxford University Press 1995), pg. 41.
\textsuperscript{55} Luttwak, pgs. 1-5.
Part of Byzantium’s success is due to the institutions it inherited from the Roman Empire, namely its tradition of highly professionalized military training and its tax collection system. However, the Western Roman Empire also inherited the same institutions. The real difference, according to Dr. Luttwak was that the Byzantines “possessed a strategic culture” because of its “lack of strategic depth.” The West Romans had strategic depth because their entire western front was an ocean and their only real threat, the Germanic barbarians, came from the north. The East Romans served as a buffer for the West Romans against invading eastern hordes and the Sassanian Empire, the only other contemporary superpower in the region. The collapse of the West Romans left the Byzantines without a partner from which it could call on for reinforcements. They faced an “unending succession of enemies” from all sides. This pushed them to react by inventing a grand strategy that was composed from their clear sense of “harmony between intelligence, diplomacy and force.” Finally, they had an expansive view of the world, looking beyond their borders and deep into Asia, the Middle East and Europe, while also maintaining a strong identity based on the moral strength of their piety to Christianity and their deep appreciation of their historical roots.\(^{56}\)

In 1204 the Fourth Crusade sacked Constantinople. Though Byzantium reemerged afterwards, it resembled more of a city-state with Constantinople being essentially all that was left of a once expansive empire. Finally, in 1453, the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople and established it as the seat of the Muslim Caliphate and of a new empire that would last for almost 500 years.\(^{57}\)

The Ottomans’ strategy during their empire’s rise and climax resembles that of

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\(^{56}\) Edward Luttwak in an interview with Harry Kreisler, February 8, 2010. The interview can be watched at: http://www.intelligencesquared.com/talks/edward-n-luttwak-on-the-grand-strategy-of-the-byzantine-empire

\(^{57}\) Ibid.
Alexander the Great and is an example of the paradoxical logic of strategy; while their tactics were “hard”--rapid expansion led by the fearsome Janissaries--their diplomacy was “soft”--religious diversity was tolerated and the cultural heritages of the conquered were left untouched. Jews and Muslims fleeing persecution in Western Europe were granted safe haven in Istanbul. Internal peace freed the Ottomans to conquer more abroad. Like the Byzantines before them, the Ottomans’ strategic culture was firmly rooted in their piety, there was, however, one major difference. Whereas in Byzantium the emperor was a secular figurehead whose rule was legitimized by religious leaders, the Ottoman sultan was both leader of the state and the religion, Islam. Thus the Ottoman strategy was empowered, but also constrained, by religion. Internal reform was met with hostility from religious leaders. Such monumental inventions like the printing press and the advancement of military technology like artillery did not penetrate the empire until much after the Europeans embraced and mastered them. Additionally, emerging external threats in the form of the Hapsburg Empire and the expansionist Russian Empire put the Ottomans on the defensive. Finally, the policy of political autonomy for conquered provinces combined with the sheer expansiveness of the empire led provinces and their leaders to act independently with impunity. One such Ottoman leader, Muhammad Ali, is often credited for being the founder of modern Egypt. He openly plotted against the sultan in Istanbul and achieved significant concessions like hereditary rule over Egypt.

The most devastating blow to Ottoman strategy was the rise of nationalism during the nineteenth century. Internal ethnic strife and successive nationalistic wars for independence completely undermined the core tenet of Ottoman grand strategy; internal insecurity destroyed the capability for empire. All these factors led to the eighteenth and
nineteenth century becoming characterized largely by successive military defeats at the hands of rising European powers, internal rebellion and precipitous ceding of territory.

Thus, when its military supremacy was cast in serious doubt at the hands of territorial losses to Europeans and internal uprisings in the Balkans throughout the mid and late 19th century, the Ottoman sultanate sent its military officers to the West to try to understand why Europe had become, at least militarily, superior.\textsuperscript{58} Ottoman statesmen “assumed that if the military were reformed the decline of the empire would be arrested.”\textsuperscript{59} However, cadets not only received training in the military sciences, but also the social sciences including “ideas of freedom and constitutional government.” Thus, the late Ottoman military “emerged toward the end of the century as the most fervent supporters of modernization.” A new generation of officers, with pedigrees of Western education and liberal ideas and beliefs, climbed the ranks. To them, and to other Westernized political elites, modernization meant Westernization and the evocation of ideas like democracy and secularism. It is from this emergent culture that the Turkish Republic’s eventual founder, Mustafa Kemal (also known as Atatürk, father of all Turks), rose to prominence and power.

**Turkey as a case for grand strategy**

The Republic of Turkey is a descendant of a deep, strategic tradition. The history of the territory that it inhabits and the myriad of powerful, successive empires and peoples that have traversed its waters and plains can alone supply an entire canon of

\textsuperscript{58} Metin Heper, “The European Union, the Turkish Military and Democracy,” *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 1, April 2005, Pg. 33-44.
strategic history. The founding of the Republic of Turkey did not change the precariousness of its location. Though World War I ended in defeat for the Ottoman Empire, the Turks did not stop fighting after the armistice of 1918. Invading British, French and Greek forces remained an existential threat. It took years of bitter struggle for the Turks to finally receive international recognition of its borders in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Modern Turkey was born amidst insecurity in a hostile environment and suspicion of the motives and machinations of its neighbors. Therefore, and much like the former empires of Anatolia, having a cohesive grand strategy has been a necessary condition for Turkey’s survival in the international system since its creation.

Therefore, a historical grand strategy narrative provides the most thorough framework from which to analyze and understand the Republic of Turkey’s recent shift in its orientation vis-a-vis its role in the region and the international system as a whole. This thesis will be entirely unique in this respect. Over the past two decades, and especially over the last few years, an enormous body of literature has come into existence grappling with the concept of Turkey’s new foreign policy outlook, what it means for the country and the region, where it came from and what forces are driving it. This thesis’ embrace of grand strategy will offer a distinct perspective that will add to the ongoing conversation and debate.

Turkey’s foreign policy is best understood by taking into account its deeply rooted strategic culture, the region’s historical strategic narrative, and the relationship between Turkey’s use of the tools of force and statecraft and its ability to shape outcomes in the region. Only a grand strategy perspective can accomplish this.
Chapter III. Turkey’s Grand Strategy 1923-1991: Kemalist Europeanization

Introduction

Turkey’s grand strategy from 1923 to 1991 was defined by its internal struggle to establish a viable national government and a new, post-Ottoman national identity based on European values and norms. This translated into its external struggle to join the European community as a purely European state.

The post-World War I era was uncertain and dangerous for the newborn Republic. The nascent republic had to fend off invading Western European armies, most notably the Greeks, from 1919-1922. The Greco-Turkish conflict was especially chaotic and would be forever seared into the national memories of both countries. In 1923, while Turks and Western European powers were negotiating peace in Lausanne, Switzerland, Greece and Turkey agreed to a population exchange. The result was a chaotic, painful forced migration of millions of Christian Greeks from Turkey to Greece and millions of Muslim Turks from Greece to Turkey. The ethnic and religious cleansing of Anatolia signaled the end of the cosmopolitan unity that had once dominated the region under Ottoman rule. In its place stood a largely homogenous Turkish nation. The Treaty of Lausanne was signed in July 1923, establishing international recognition of the Republic of Turkey.

With the Republic established, the new government headed by Ataturk set about creating a nation-state completely divorced from its Ottoman past. Turkey’s grand strategy was defined by Ataturk’s vision. At home, Kemalism—the ideology named after the principles of Mustafa Kemal—led to a series of radical reforms including the

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60 Resat Kasaba, Lecture titled “From movable empire to immovable state: migration and state formation at the end of the Ottoman Empire”, given February 15, 2012 at CISAC, Stanford University.
replacement of the Ottoman Arabic alphabet in favor of the current Latin alphabet in 1928; Islamic call to prayers were required to be spoken in Turkish, not Quranic Arabic; Sharia courts were abolished in 1924; the Gregorian calendar was adopted in 1925; the Ottoman fez cap was banned in favor of the Western brim hat in 1926; and by 1930 “the entire legal system had been stripped of any religious references and resembled that of secular Western European countries.”

The late Ottoman Empire: the path to reform and modernity

The Republic of Turkey rose from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Once a vast empire whose legendary military reached as far into Europe as Vienna, stretched across North Africa beyond Algiers, enveloped the Red Sea and bordered the Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf, it experienced a long, slow decline that was precipitated by the rise of powerful European nations and their militaries.

The importance of the military in Ottoman culture and prestige cannot be overstated. The Ottoman state was a warrior state. In fact, although “the ruling institution was made up of the palace (sultanate), the religious and civil bureaucracies, and the military, it was referred to solely as ‘The Military.’”

Thus, when its military supremacy was cast in serious doubt at the hands of territorial losses to Europeans and internal uprisings in the Balkans throughout the mid and late 19th century, the Ottoman sultanate sent its military officers to the West to try to understand why Europe had become, at least militarily, superior.

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62 Abbas Milani, Lecture in class titled “Islam and the West.” Stanford University. Winter, 2009-2010
Ottoman statesmen “assumed that if the military were reformed the decline of the empire would be arrested.”65 However, cadets not only received training in the military sciences, but also the social sciences including “ideas of freedom and constitutional government.”66 Thus, the late Ottoman military “emerged toward the end of the century as the most fervent supporters of modernization.”67 A new generation of officers, with pedigrees of Western education and liberal ideas and beliefs, climbed the ranks. To them, and to other Westernized political elites, modernization meant Westernization and the evocation of ideas like democracy and secularism. It is from this emergent culture that the Turkish Republic’s eventual founder, Mustafa Kemal (also known as Atatürk, father of all Turks), rose to prominence and power.

Atatürk, and his followers (the Young Turks and the Westernized elite), “perceived a close relationship between the demise of the Ottoman Empire” and political Islam obstructing modernization efforts.68 The roots of Kemalism and the founding of the Turkish Republic, therefore, lie in the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Kemal gained distinction first as a military hero on the battlefield during World War I. After the fallout of the war, Turkey gained its independence in military rebellion, led by Atatürk, against the victorious European powers (and a complacent sultanate) that were attempting to partition the remains of the empire. During his rule, the cabinet was staffed entirely by military officers. The Ottoman military legacy, and its involvement in the running of the state, transferred seamlessly to the Republic. However, where once there was an Islamic sultanate that resisted the liberal, Westernized ideas that were

65 Demirel, “Soldiers and civilians,” pp. 136
67 Demirel, “Soldiers and civilians,” pp. 139
propagated by the late Ottoman military, there was a vehemently pro-Western, pro-
democracy, and emphatically secular military hero at the helm of a developing republican
government. Under Atatürk, the state readily accepted and implemented the ideas
transmitted by the military with special emphasis on secularism. Atatürk himself was a
“non-believer” and he placed particular importance on secularism as essential for the
survival of the Republic:

I have no religion, and at times I wish all religions at the bottom of the sea. My
people are going to learn the principles of democracy, the dictates of truth and
the teachings of science. Superstition must go. Let them worship as they will;
every man can follow his own conscience, provided it does not interfere with
sane reason or bid him against the liberty of his fellow-men.

Kemal felt that Islam obstructed the path to modernity. He saw Islam as an
archaic practice that had to be cast aside in exchange for republican virtues. Turkey had
to embrace modernity by becoming Western, specifically European. He pushed hard on
incorporating European ideas like democracy, republicanism and secularism. He felt it
was necessary to limit and restrict Islam in order to push the Turkish people into
identifying themselves as a nation and to embrace Western, modern values. Ultimately,
Atatürk felt that Islam is only good if it was compliant to the state and the virtues of the
Republic. In his view, Islam could only be tolerated in a liberal, republican context if it
were relegated to the private sphere. Essentially, he was attempting to purge political
Islam, which based on the demise of the Ottoman Empire was completely incompatible
with liberal governance, from the politics and culture of the Turkish people. Atatürk
accomplished a great deal in this regard. “He took a society in which religion had played
a dominant role and led its transformation into a society administered by a strict scientific

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69 Turkey was not fully democratic because Atatürk held power until his death in 1938, and there was only
one political party, the Republican People’s Party, permitted to participate in national politics.
70 Andrew Mango, Atatürk: The Biography of the founder of Modern Turkey, (John Murray 1999), pg
secular ideology. The major shortcoming of this exceptional accomplishment—unparalleled anywhere else in the Islamic world outside the Muslim territories of the Soviet Union—was its limited penetration of the masses.\(^71\)

**The Durability of Turkish Identity: Resistance to the Kemalist Vision after 1945**

Atatürk diagnosed that “society’s support for the Republican project was not strong” and so found a natural ally in the pro-secular military. Atatürk and the single-party regime that included senior military officials made emphatic efforts to engrain into the fabric of the military the idea of being the ultimate guardian of the Republic and secularism. Meanwhile, the single-party regime implemented its own measures to attempt to guarantee that Islam would not interfere and obstruct the Republic, most notably with the establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. It had the power to oversee and regulate mosques, appoint and dismiss preachers, print “official” versions of the Koran and decide the curriculum in public schools. Students were required to study a state-approved version of Islamic morality, specifically Sunni-Hanefi, in elementary and high school.\(^72\)

The State, through the Directorate, implemented other, more stringent laws specifically targeting Islam including prohibition of religious ritual dancing, brimless hats and Islamic clothing.\(^73\) Until recently it was illegal for government employees to wear religiously affiliated clothing in government buildings. The early Republic’s hostility towards Islam was best represented by the implementation of an official Turkish

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\(^71\) Hanioglu, 159
\(^72\) Ihsan Dagi, *Turkey between democracy and militarism: post Kemalist perspectives*, (Orion Publications 2008).
language that used Latin characters rather than Arabic, the language of Islam. In fact, for a time, the call to prayer could only be recited in Turkish.

However, after Atatürk’s death and the introduction of the multi-party system in 1945, civil-military relations changed drastically. Atatürk’s “diagnosis” of Turkish society and citizenry was proven correct with the successive election of center-right parties, beginning with the Democrat Party (DP), to the Grand National Assembly. Included in the DP’s platform, and what would consistently reappear through the subsequent center-right parties’ platforms, is a re-emphasis on Islam’s importance and, as some parties would later argue, its compatibility with the Turkish Republic. As a result, the more stringent, anti-Islamist laws were repealed through the 1950s. Meanwhile, Turkey’s relations with its neighbors, especially the Soviet Union, were marked by tension. Turkey’s military perceived itself, and Kemalism, under threat both internally, by anti-secular Islamist politicians, and externally from hostile neighbors. Thus, the military reinforced its own image of the “sole protector of the secular-democratic state in Turkey.”

**Grand Strategy: Kemalist Europeanization**

The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) was the most powerful institution in the Turkish Republic, perhaps the most ironic outcome in the Kemalist experiment--ironic in the sense that the dominance of the military in the Republic was an Ottoman trait and thus directly in contradiction to the anti-Ottoman principles of Kemalism. Nonetheless, the TSK dominated Turkish domestic and foreign policy and could therefore be considered as the conductors of Turkish grand strategy during this period.

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74 [see note, Ottoman ruling institution was referred to as “the Military” because of the dominant role of the armed forces]
Grand strategy is the connection of means to an end. The TSK determined that the ultimate end was the achievement of the Kemalist vision: a modern, secular nation-state considered as an equal member of the European community. Thus, the execution of Turkey’s grand strategy had a domestic and foreign front. As for the means, the execution of the Kemalist grand strategy relied on three resources: the strength of the TSK, the use of the Republic’s diplomatic resources, and a strongly unified national identity and culture based on Kemalism. The course of history would ultimately open up an opportunity for the first two resources to make great strides towards the Kemalist vision of Turkey as a European power. The latter resource however would turn out to be the most troublesome. Despite the best efforts of Ataturk and his party, Kemalism failed to penetrate a large portion of the Turkish masses. As a result, the TSK had to compensate by extending its power into the domestic political realm by broadly interpreting its endowed role as the guardian of Kemalism and the Republic.

Abroad, the Kemalist grand strategy led to Turkey turning its back on the former Ottoman Empire in the Middle East; Arab culture was held in contempt as backwards and Turkey displayed little interest in engaging the region after the establishment of the Republic. The Arabs also displayed contempt and suspicion for the Turks ever since their British-sponsored revolts during World War I.75 Turkey’s decision to remain neutral during World War II was a function of its weakness. It was a signatory of the Tripartite Alliance with Britain and France, but declared itself a non-belligerent after the fall of France and signed a deal with Hitler whereby Turkish borders would be respected. German forces never breached Turkey’s borders. Turkey came under substantial pressure by the Allies to enter the war, but stubbornly refused; the state’s weakness and fear of

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75 The Arab revolts are best captured in T.E. Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. 
German reprisal made Turkey’s neutrality non-negotiable for much of the war. As the German threat began to subside in late 1943 and 1944, Turkey perceived, in a precursor to the Cold War, that the USSR was its biggest threat. Stalin’s loud and incessant demands that Turkey enter the war was perceived as a Russian machination to further weaken Turkey and therefore make it more susceptible to Russian domination after the war. As a result, Turkey did not openly declare its allegiance to the Allies until seven months before Germany’s surrender.

Turkey’s suspicion of the USSR made it a natural ally of the United States and Western Europe in the post-war period. Thus Western and Turkish grand strategies converged in 1952 when Turkey joined NATO, establishing it as the crucial “Eastern flank” of the alliance. Massive amounts of military and economic aid quickly made Turkey a formidable NATO ally; it was a significant participant in the Korean War where its forces earned exceptional admiration from American generals. The implications of joining NATO were very consequential for Turkey’s grand strategy. It was a founding member of the United Nations; it was the first Muslim-majority country to recognize Israeli statehood; and its leaders made clear their intention of joining the European community, which translated into Turkey’s candidacy for European Union ascension. The Kemalist dream, at least with regards to Turkey’s foreign affairs, seemed to be on a path towards becoming reality throughout the Cold War.

At the same time, Kemalism posited that peace abroad was derived from strength at home. Strength at home required national unity on a number of principles including a

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76 General Douglas MacArthur was quoted saying “The Turks are the hero of heroes. There is no impossibility for the Turkish Brigade.” Turkish forces are also credited for saving the American Eighth Army from what looked to be complete encirclement. This feat earned Turkey enormous amounts of international praise. It remains to this day a huge source of Turkish national pride.
strict adherence to modernization, acceptance of European norms and a thorough rejection of Ottoman identity and culture. The creation of such a culture was a core pillar of the Kemalist grand strategy, however it was the most difficult and troublesome one to accomplish.

Throughout the Republic’s history, the TSK lived up to and acted on their endowed, and self-promoted, image of guardianship by intervening in three coups (1960, 1971, and 1980) and forcing another government to resign (1997). In each instance, the military felt that the principles of Atatürk, especially secularism, were being threatened, and that it was their right and duty, as outlined in constitutional law to restore the Republic to its Kemalist fundamentals.\(^\text{77}\) Throughout the decades and even to this day, the military has constantly cited the looming existence of political as an existential threat to the Republic. In fact, with each coup, the Turkish military carved out a more significant role in the running of the government by making the MGK, Turkey’s National Security Council, equivalent to the United States’ Joint Chiefs of Staff, a more decisive body. Consequently, “while in the wake of the 1960 military intervention the MGK was to ‘offer information to government’” by the time of the end of the 1980-1983 coup, “the government had to give top priority to the recommendations made by the MGK.” The military became less reluctant to intervene in politics because of its growing mistrust of civilian governance.

Yet, in every instance, the military returned to its barracks and restored power to the civilian government. Nonetheless, there grew within the military an inherent mistrust of civilian government especially with regards to its perceived inability to avoid Islamization of politics. In sum, the TSK acted in accordance to Kemalist principles even

\(^{77}\) Internal Service Act of the Turkish Armed Forces. See Heper.
at the expense of the sovereignty of the Turkish people; Ataturk’s lack of confidence in the willingness of the Turkish people to carry on his vision was shared by the TSK.

**Conclusion**

Turkish grand strategy from the founding of the Republic in 1923 to the end of the Cold War in 1991 is best described as “Kemalist Europeanization.” Turkish domestic and foreign policy was dominated by the Turkish Armed Forces, which were entrusted by Ataturk as the guardians of Kemalism and thus the Republic. The objective of the grand strategy was to transform Turkey into a modern, secular, powerful European state. The means to such an end were the Republic’s armed forces, its diplomatic resources and, most importantly, the acceptance of Kemalism as the national ideology by the Turkish masses. The establishment of a Turkish identity based on Kemalist principles was meant to underwrite a continuous progression towards modernity by providing popular support to policies in line with the goals of Kemalism. Ataturk, however, observed that attaining a new and widely accepted national identity was a process that was not going to be completed in his lifetime. The failure of Kemalism to take hold among a majority of Turks would severely constrain elected politicians from continuing along the Kemalist path. Thus the TSK was endowed with special powers to ensure that the Kemalist process continue uninhibited as well as to create as few constraints as possible on Turkey’s execution of its grand strategy in the international arena.
Chapter IV. The collapse of the Kemalist grand strategy and the end of the Cold War, 1980-2002

Introduction

It is important that the reader take note of the order of events in the title. The process of the collapse of the Kemalist grand strategy did not occur after the end of the cold war. If it did, the title of this chapter should be in the opposite order. Rather, the Kemalist grand strategy that so dominated Turkish foreign policy since the founding of the Republic began to come apart long before the Berlin Wall did and continued to do so as the cold war came to a close. The 1980 coup was the third coup in thirty years, all of them almost ritually timed at the beginning of every decade (1960, 1971, 1980), but it stands out as the most severe and transformational in Turkey’s history. Over the course of three years 180,000 people were detained and nearly 65,000 taken before the courts, which handed down 42,000 sentences, including 326 death sentences. The coup produced a modified constitution and elections were held in 1983. The constitution carved out a larger political role for the military—directly in line with the Kemalist grand strategy—by requiring new political parties to be approved by military leadership in addition to the placement of General Kenan Evren, chief of the general staff, as president for a seven-year term. When elections were held and a new government elected in 1983, Turkey’s grand strategy came up against new trends for which it was not suited. Turkey was not only experiencing changes around it, but also within the country itself. One clear sign of these changes was that unlike in every decade before, the beginning of the 1990s saw no military coup in Turkey (the next, and last coup would not occur until 1997). In

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78 Andrew Mango, *Turkey: the challenge of a new role*, (CSIS 1994), 24. Most of the death sentences were commuted.
short, Turkish grand strategy was in a process of reformation. New tools or means would emerge and so would competing ends.

**The Rise of Turkish Economic Depth**

Until the 1980s, Turkey’s economy was a reflection of its Kemalist grand strategy. One of the main pillars of Kemalism was a strong nationalistic political identity. Economically, this translated into tight state control over industries and economic development programs. For Kemalism, nationalism meant a strong state and thus the confinement of Turkish economic behavior to within its borders. Despite Turkey’s membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) beginning in 1961, Turkish firms were strongly protected with stiff import barriers. The experiences of the 1920s and the Great Depression informed the Kemalist establishment to pursue “inward-oriented economic development” and to be suspicious of Western economic liberalism.79

By 1980, economic stagnation and social turmoil forced Turkish policymakers to reevaluate Turkey’s economic policies. As a result, economic policy since 1980 emphasized decontrol and openness, realistic exchange rates that brought Turkish currency to practical convertibility, exports and decontrol of imports, competitiveness in world markets—and consequently quality and productivity in industry, and privatization. The 1983 elections accelerated this process when Turgut Ozal, a former finance minister, was elected prime minister. He immediately set about liberalizing Turkey’s economy and the results would lay the groundwork for the “Turkish economic miracle”.

GDP growth averaged 5 percent per year for the 1980s with 1990 topping the

decade with almost 10 percent. Growth fell almost to zero in 1991 in large part from the Gulf War’s direct and indirect costs to Turkey. GDP per capita rose from $1,287 to $2,595, and according to the OECD, PPP rose from $2,482 to almost $5000 over the decade. Turkey’s economy became less reliant on agriculture. The share of agriculture in GDP declined from 22.6 percent in 1980 to 16.3 percent in 1991. Industry accounted for 27.7 percent of GDP in 1991 and services 55.9 percent.

Exports totaled only $2,910 million in 1980 with agricultural products constituting 57 percent. Exports rose to $13,598 million in 1991—a 367 percent increase—with agriculture’s share falling to 19.7 percent. Turkey became strikingly successful in becoming an exporter of industrial goods during the 1980s. Imports rose from $7,909 million in 1980 to $21,032 million in 1991. Finally foreign investment rose from an average of less than $100 million per year from 1980-1988 to $783 million in 1991.80

Turkey’s economy not only diversified internally, but so did their trade partners. Based on OECD surveys of Turkey’s economy, Dr. Selen Sarisoy Guerin81 calculated that Turkish exports to the Middle East rose from 14% of total exports in 1979 to 41% in 1985.82 Nonetheless, though exports to OECD countries dropped from 64% to 52% during the same period, they remained Turkey’s primary trade partners. The surging benefits of economic liberalization led to Turkey formally applying for full membership in the European Community in 1987 and committing itself to further reductions of trade barriers. By 1999, the European Council officially recognized Turkey as a candidate state for accession to the European Union.

81 Dr. Sarisoy is a researcher at the Institute for European Studies.
Turkey’s economic reorientation from an inward, nationalistic economy to the beginnings of an open, outward-looking liberal economy would lay the groundwork for the dissolution of Kemalism and the creation of a new grand strategy. Turkey’s new openness would coincide with the collapse of the USSR and the creation or re-emergence of over a dozen independent countries throughout former Ottoman lands in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Caucasus. Turkey’s economy would ultimately outpace and diverge from its political outlook during the 1990s. While Turkey’s economy liberalized and began to favor cooperation, Turkey’s politics remained entrenched in a Kemalist, security-oriented Cold War paradigm. However, the massive geopolitical changes following the end of the Cold War, coupled with Turkey’s economic internationalization, would erode the pillars of Kemalism and the Kemalist grand strategy.

**The end of Kemalism and the Cold War Paradigm**

The end of the Cold War amounted to a paradigm shift internally and externally for Turkey. First and most obvious was the erasure of Turkey’s largest external threat, the USSR. Turkey was born with the Soviet Empire dominating its northern and eastern flanks. As a member of NATO and host to strategic nuclear weapons Turkey was politically, and more crucially, geographically on the front lines of the Cold War. If the Cold War were to have ever turned hot, the Republic’s literal existence would have been at stake. The dissolution of this existential threat removed the dominating structure in Turkey’s grand strategic tapestry. In its place emerged a conglomerate of newly born (and reborn) nation states each with their own unique ethnic communities, cultures and political outlooks. For the Turks, relief at the collapse of the USSR was quickly
overtaken by uncertainty, suspicion, and the fear of new threats like terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and instability in the Balkans. The Republic entered a new geopolitical landscape and in the following ten years it would learn that its grand strategic tools of the past were either evolving away from its old grand strategy or less applicable to the world around it.

During the Cold War, Turkey’s grand strategy was based on the following means: the strength of the TSK, the use of the Republic’s diplomatic resources in unambiguously aligning itself with the West, and a strongly unified national identity and culture based on Kemalism. As previously mentioned, the lattermost proved to be the most problematic; Kemalism failed to penetrate the Turkish masses. However, the 1990s would demonstrate that even the other two resources were changing, most notably the TSK. The TSK remained the most dominant institution in Turkey during this period, however the disparity of power between it and the civilian establishment dramatically lessened after 1991. In 1997 the TSK staged what would be its last coup, once again claiming that the elected Welfare Party, led by Necmettin Erbakan, government threatened the secular ideals of the Kemalist state. Though tanks appeared on the streets, the parliament was not dissolved and the constitution remained as it was.

The TSK was the creator and conductor of Turkey’s grand strategy throughout the Cold War. The 1980s and 90s saw the beginning of a shift of foreign policymaking away from the military establishment to become more a function of the civilian government. As will be shown in chapter five, it would finally become the people, through their elected representatives and their appointees, that would manage the Republic’s grand strategy.
The emerging economic ties with the Middle East and other former Ottoman territories trickled down to Turkish academics who began to reexamine Ottoman history. The term neo-Ottomanism, today often treated as a new, innovative term to describe Turkey’s foreign policy outlook actually emerged during the late 1980s and early 1990s in Turkish academia. While it most certainly was not a mainstream academic interest at the time, efforts by intellectuals in Turkey during these times laid the groundwork for today’s existing and sprouting Ottoman Studies programs throughout Turkish and other Western institutions. The end of the Cold War freed Ottoman history and Turkish identity from the Kemalist bind. Thus Kemalism itself was threatened and at a much deeper level than any action by the military could counter. More so than ever before Turkish academics and businessmen began to rediscover Turkey’s Ottoman past and rekindle ties to Turkic lands in the Caucasus and Arab Muslims in the Middle East. The seeds of the death of Kemalism were laid, as were those of a new grand strategy.83

The 1990s: New Paradigm, Old Grand Strategy

The end of the Cold War had an immediate effect on the strength, and ultimately the relevance, of NATO, the most concrete institutional link between Turkey and the Europe. Turkey’s membership was a key milestone on the Kemalist road to Europeanization. The end of the Cold War dramatically reduced the strength of these ties. With no threat or enemy, NATO members largely turned in upon themselves and their immediate neighbors. Thus, the idea of an integrated European Community, what would become the European Union in 1993, overtook NATO as the preeminent European

By 1993, Turkey found itself surrounded by eight countries: Iraq, Iran, Syria, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Greece, and Bulgaria—the majority of which were either unstable or had a long history of hostility towards Turkey, or a combination of both. On top of that, a stateless Kurdish population flowed between Syria, Iraq and Turkey’s borders the primary threat of which manifested itself as the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). Iraq under Saddam Hussein was pursuing regional hegemony; Iran, under theocratic rule since 1979 was still considered as the antithesis of the Turkish Republic; Syria actively funded PKK activities in Turkey; Georgia remained in civil unrest through much of the 1990s; Armenia, embittered by the treatment of Armenians at the hands of the Turks during the first world war, was in favor of any measure that would weaken Turkey; Azerbaijan, a Turkic state and thus a natural ally of Turkey, almost immediately upon independence from the Soviet Union entered into a costly war against Armenia over territorial disputes; Bulgaria stands out as the only non-Turkic neighbor that had no disputes with Turkey and remained relatively stable, though poor, during the 1990s; and of course there was Greece which quickly sought to reinforce diplomatic relations with all of Turkey’s new and largely hostile neighbors.

All this occurred as Europe and the United States, Turkey’s strongest allies, were shifting away from security and towards economic cooperation. Much like in the years leading up to the founding of their Republic, the Turks found themselves encircled. The Kemalist grand strategy informed Turkey to approach its regional conflicts by aligning itself with Europe and the United States and confronting hostility with strength. Though this grand strategy served Turkey well for most of its history, it was ultimately
unsuitable for the new situation Turkey found itself in the 1990s.

There is no better example of the Kemalist grand strategy, acting in a new situation that it was not suited for, producing results that were against Turkey’s national interest than the First Gulf War. The 1991 Gulf War gave some respite to Turkish foreign policymakers because it seemed that Turkey had once again become strategically relevant to the West. However, their avid support of the Gulf War, in line with the Kemalist grand strategy, came with significant, negative consequences. Unlike all the years previous, Turkish economic growth ground to a halt—in fact to almost zero percent. UN sanctions on Iraq severely damaged Turkey’s ties with the Middle East. Turkish exports to the region “dropped from 23 percent of its overall exports just before the Gulf War to under 14 percent in 1996.” In 1998, the Turkish Foreign Ministry estimated a $35 billion loss in revenue and trade. Support of the American-led coalition in Iraq made perfect sense in the Kemalist, Cold War paradigm while Turkey’s economy was closed, but became near economic suicide in 1991. The Kemalist grand strategy was not constructed to account for Turkey’s foreign economic ties and it cost Turkey dearly. It would not make the same mistake again.

The end of the Cold War dramatically transformed the world’s geopolitical landscape. However, not all states interpreted the new situation the same. Though the USSR was no more, the world was not without threats. The Middle East became the largest threat to the West with the 1991 Gulf War and terrorist incidents in 1993, 1997, 2000 and most dramatically in 2001. Thus the West operated in a paradigm favoring security and stability. Turkey attempted to apply the same strategy, but ultimately paid

too high a cost. Turkey’s foreign policy had yet to catch up to its economics. Despite its creating an open, liberal economic regime, Turkey’s foreign policy remained securitized and favored defense over cooperation. This created a contradiction that could not be sustained. In terms of grand strategy, there were two competing ends: securing Turkey against the perceived machinations of its neighbors or expanding Turkey’s economic ties that were bringing to its people wealth and development while also creating ties to those very neighbors. Thus the 1990s was largely a process of reorientation and a reexamination of Turkey’s position, resources and objectives--in short, a reassessment of its grand strategy. A new crop of Turkish policymakers including an obscure academic that would publish a book titled Strategic Depth would enter Turkish national politics in this context.

**Conclusion: 2001 economic collapse and towards a new grand strategy**

The 2000-2001 economic crisis devastated Turkey’s economy. GDP tumbled from 588.6 billion in 2000 to 561.2 billion in 2001. Real GDP growth contracted 5.7 percent. Unemployment rose from 6.4 percent to 8.4 percent during the same period and continued to rise until 2003 when it hit 10.5 percent. It was time for a change in government. The 2002 national elections would bring monumental change to Turkey. A new government led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan would dramatically alter Turkey’s internal and external dynamics by characterizing a new grand strategy.

For Turkey, the Cold War paradigm of East vs. West became obsolete even while the USSR was in existence. Its ultimate dissolution was one of the last milestones of

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Turkey’s cold war. Turkey, and its original Kemalist grand strategy were founded on this paradigm. Though it largely served Turkey’s interests, the 1990s showed that Turkey’s grand strategy was no longer best serving the interests of the state.
Chapter V. Turkey’s Grand Strategy 2002-Present: Economic Ottomanism

Introduction

The 1990s was a sour time for Turkey’s Kemalist Europeanization grand strategy. Turkey found itself in a completely new situation following its economic liberalization and the end of the Cold War. Its grand strategy had grown inadequate to deal with the new realities of Turkey’s region and the internal transformations. Turkey almost found itself at war against Syria in 1998 and relations with many of its neighbors were cool. For the average Turkish citizen, the 2001 economic crisis dried up whatever patience they had left with their government and in 2002 elections were held. The Justice and Development Party (AKP), led by a former political prisoner Recep Tayyip Erdogan, emerged as the winners.

A decade later, the AKP is still in power having won its third election in a row in 2011. Bolstered by a humming economy that pushed through the 2009 global financial crisis, the AKP has been very popular with the Turkish electorate. Even more significantly, the Turkish military’s Kemalist establishment has collapsed. It is no longer the dominant structure in domestic and foreign politics. Kemalism is dead and the grand strategy that guided Turkey since its founding, obsolete. Today, Turkey operates with a new grand strategy, one that has been in the making since Turkey’s economic liberalization beginning in the 1980s. The 1990s plagued Turkish grand strategy because the paradigm from which Turkey’s foreign policymakers operated had fallen behind economic and geopolitical trends. Turkey’s economic liberalization coupled with the collapse of the Soviet Union rendered Turkey’s Kemalist Europeanization grand strategy
obsolete. The election of the AKP government in 2002 put into place leaders and thinkers like Ahmet Davutoğlu who recognized Turkey’s new situation and its obsolescent political establishment, particularly the military institution. Kemalism was weakened, but the military old guard was its last, powerful vestige. Their downfall would remove the final obstacle between Turkey and its new grand strategy.

**Final throes of Kemalism: Ergenekon and Sledgehammer**

What began in 2007 as an investigation into an armed clandestine extreme right-wing nationalist group has turned into one of the most consequential trials in Turkish history. AKP officials and their prosecutors claim to have uncovered a deep state. Prosecutors describe the “deep state” as a secret political entity with members in the Turkish media, academy, military and political elites that collude to steer Turkish domestic politics. They stand accused of, among other things, conducting false-flag operations where its members would pose as radical terrorist organizations and conduct attacks with the purpose of legitimizing military intervention in the government. Prosecutors have claimed that the deep state has existed for decades and was used in the 1980 coup. By 2009, 142 people had been charged with membership in the Ergenekon terrorist group with the intention of toppling the Turkish state. By the end of 2011, the number reached over 300. In 2010, a new investigation was opened alleging that elements within the military were plotting a 2003 coup to overthrow the AKP government in an operation code-named “Sledgehammer.” Despite allegations that the AKP has exploited the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials to punish and incarcerate political opposition, the pressure on the TSK was too much. On July 29, 2011 all of the
military chiefs, including the chief of staff, resigned en masse. As of the writing of this thesis, General Kenan Evren, the leader of the 1980 coup and subsequent president of Turkey, has been arrested and is on trial for his role in the 1980 coup and the subsequent illegal arrests, disappearances, executions and torture of Turkish citizens.

The resignation of the top military brass and the trial of General Kenan Evren is the final nail in the coffin of Kemalism. After being the most dominant governmental institution for almost 90 years--nearly the entire history of the Turkish Republic--the military finally abdicated its role as the guardian of the Kemalist republic. This is even more astounding in a larger historical context. As mentioned in chapter three, the military was also the dominant institution in the Ottoman Empire. The central government was simply referred to as “The Military.” In this sense it was the first time in 900 years that Turks and Anatolia are not dominated by a military institution. Kemalism, eroded by over twenty years of economic liberalization, the emergence of Ottoman studies, and the persistent electoral victories of Islamic oriented parties, finally collapsed. The civilian government remains as the dominant government institution.

On the whole, the resignation of the military’s Old Guard is beneficial to Turkish democracy. The process of depoliticizing the TSK has begun to open the way for the possible creation of a new civilian constitution that will keep the Turkish military in their barracks and away from politics. As of the writing of this thesis, a parliamentary committee has convened to begin deliberating and drafting a new constitution. However, what has not been so obvious is the state of Turkish secularism. The TSK was made up of

steadfast secularists, opposing any religiosity in politics. Yet, despite their attempts at blocking and intimidating political parties with any trace of Islamic identity or sympathies, Turkish voters went in the exact opposite direction in their overwhelming election of the Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s AK Party in 2002 and twice more since then. The AKP is not the first Islamic oriented party to be elected by the Turkish people. The Welfare Party, an Islamist party led by Necmettin Erbakan, became the largest party in Turkey in 1996 but was forced out by the military in 1997. In fact, the 1960 coup, the first of Turkey’s four coups, was staged in response to the election of the Democratic Party and their platform of attempting to relax Turkey’s strict secularism laws. It was disbanded but re-emerged as the Justice Party only to be once again disbanded in the 1980 coup. It reestablished itself in 1983 under Suleyman Demirel, who would later serve as president of Turkey, and it remains in action today as the Democratic Party.

The behavior of the Turkish electorate, repeatedly electing religiously conservative parties to national offices, displayed the durability of Turkish Islamic identity and the inability of Kemalism to penetrate the masses. Indeed, it is the case that Kemalist secularism is in danger. However, it is important to understand that Turkish secularism does not take the same form as what is typically found in the West especially in the United States. In the United States and in most parts of Europe secularism is a two-way street: religion shall play no role in government and in turn government shall play no role in religion (i.e., separation of church and state, freedom of worship/conscience). In contrast, Kemalist secularism is a one-way street. For most of the Republic’s history, religion was not allowed to play any role in government, but the state had extraordinary powers to regulate and limit religious expression. Take for example the banning of
Muslim headscarves in universities and public buildings, restrictions on religious schools and the constant surveillance of mosques and religious leaders. In the United States, these policies would be considered a severe curtailment of basic civil liberties. Thus, the AKP’s efforts to limit the scope of the state vis-a-vis its relations with religion should be seen as a development in securing of personal freedoms for Turkish citizens. The AKP is a conservative political group that supports piety and religious life. Thus far it seems that the AKP has striven to release religion from the clutches of Kemalist secularism, not to transform Turkey into an Islamic state.

**Davutoglu and Strategic Depth**

Grand strategy is not the product of one individual’s thought, though some individuals have been exceptional in articulating, characterizing and ultimately executing grand strategy. Ahmet Davutoglu belongs in this context. Davutoglu is one of the most remarkable Turkish foreign ministers in recent memory. His 2001 book Strategic Depth propelled his climb up the political ladder from being a professor in international relations to chief foreign policy advisor to the prime minister and finally to foreign minister in 2009. Alarmingly, no English translation yet exists, a testament to the feeble amount of serious attention and understanding being paid to the minister and Turkey by Western academics. Fortunately, some multilingual scholars have read it and written English articles on it, and Davutoglu speaks fairly good English and has attended a number of English-speaking conferences and interviews to discuss his ideas. What has been revealed is that Davutoglu and his strategic theory—best known as “strategic depth”,
the title of his 2001 book--articulates a Turkish grand strategy that was already in
development prior to its writing and Davutoglu’s political emergence. As Davutoglu
himself has said and written, the forces behind the crafting of Turkey’s current grand
strategy are larger than any one man.

When I wrote Strategic Depth, I was not minister or chief advisor. It was
published in 2001, when I was a professor at the university, and the purpose of
this book was to reinterpret Turkish geography and history in the new situation of
post-Cold War politics. To be frank, I did not imagine at that time that I would be
asked to implement these theories. But because of the political change in Turkey,
I was asked to help first as an advisor, then as a minister. And now that I am in
this position, it is like a test for me...In general, I’m really surprised by how well
theory and practice match up. But in practice, you learn even more than you do
from books sometimes.88

In Strategic Depth, Davutoglu offers a theory of international relations that
predicates the strategic value of states on a combination of their geographical location
and their history. Using these criteria, Turkey is a central strategic power rather than a
peripheral power. Its highly strategic geographical location coupled with the historical
legacy of the Ottoman Empire connects it to a variety of geopolitical areas of influence
including the Caucasus, the Balkans and the Middle East. Strategic Depth advocates that
Turkey diversify its foreign relations and strive for independence. In fact, Davutoglu
argues that it is the responsibility of Turkey to grasp an independent role.

Turkey enjoys multiple regional identities and thus has the capability as well as
the responsibility to follow an integrated and multidimensional foreign policy. The
unique combination of our history and geography brings with it a sense of
responsibility. To contribute actively towards conflict resolution and international
peace and security in all these areas is a call of duty arising from the depths of a
multidimensional history for Turkey.89

In Strategic Depth and in almost every speaking engagement he has attended, Davutoglu

88 Ahmet Davutoglu quoted in an interview conducted by Foreign Policy Magazine’s Blake Hounshell,
2012.
89 Grigoriadis, 5. Direct translation of an excerpt of Strategic Depth.
has stressed the internationalism of Turkish geography and historical identity.

Turkey’s strategic depth rests on its geographical and historical depth. Our long history provides us with a unique set of relations with countries and communities all around us. Our geostrategic location in the midst of a vast geography, on the other hand, places us in a position to relate to and influence the developments that are key to the future of the world. So the question is not achieving the strategic depth, but using it for regional and global peace. This requires us to engage with the countries with which we share a common past and geography in a way that will promote our shared interests and create a mutually beneficial framework for cooperation and dialogue. Today, with its strong democracy, vibrant economy, and active foreign policy, Turkey has more opportunities to capitalize on its strategic depth. And we have been working very actively to this end.90

Turkey is a country with a close land basin the epicenter of the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus, the center of Eurasia in general and is in the middle of the Rimland belt cutting across the Mediterranean to the Pacific.91

Turkey [has] geographic continuity. Turkey is right at the center of geopolitics. Turkey is a European, Asian, Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Mediterranean and Caspian country.92

Based on his writings and speeches, it is clear that Davutoglu is a product of the revolution in Ottoman studies, best known as neo-Ottomanism, in the Turkish academy that emerged in the early 1990s and is once again experiencing a surge today. It was termed neo-Ottomanism, best defined as a reengagement of Ottoman history and understanding Turkish heritage in a deeper historical sense.93 Graham Fuller, a participant in the neo-Ottoman academic wave described it as “a renewed interest in the former territories and people of the Empire, which includes Muslims who were part of that Empire,” that arose due to the disappearance of Cold War conditions and that helped Turks “to see themselves once again at the center of a world reemerging around them on

91 Walker. Direct translation from an excerpt in Strategic Depth.
92 Direct quotation of Ahmet Davutoglu from a lecture he gave at the Council on Foreign Relations. Transcribed by me. The lecture can be watched here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGXU7933ta8.
all sides rather than at the tail-end of a European world.” However, with the rise of Davutoglu, neo-Ottomanism has become a politically charged term both within and without Turkey. Despite denying that he is a “neo-Ottoman”, Davutoglu constantly offers an optimistic “golden age” characterization of the Ottoman Empire.

I am not a neo-Ottoman. Actually there is no such policy…We cannot act as if the Ottomans never existed in this region. My perception of history…is that we have to focus on the positive aspects of our common past. We cannot create a better future by building on a negative view of history.

We need to build a better future for the next generations that is based on common history, shared values and a joint vision. To this end, we wholeheartedly support the Euro-Atlantic orientation of all Balkan countries. We believe in the importance of securing the entire region under the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

...as a matter of fact, the Balkans had its golden age of peace during the Ottoman reign. This is a historical fact. Those who blame the Ottoman period for the region’s economic backwardness and internecine fights are under the influence of historical prejudices and stereotypes...It will be enough to travel only a few hundred kilometres to identify the patrimony created during the Ottoman rule.

Certain circles accuse us of pursuing a neo-Ottoman agenda. These allegations are baseless. Common geography and historical relations with the region certainly dictate Turkey to follow an active policy in the face of developments in the region. Turkey simply looks for the establishment of security, peace, and stability on the basis of democracy in the region. Turkey has no hidden agenda toward the region. Our goal is working toward the creation of a belt of peace, stability, security, and wealth along its borders. The key word defining Turkey’s relations with the Arab countries is not ‘hegemony,’ but ‘mutual cooperation.’ Therefore such fears are baseless.

Clearly Davutoglu sees Turkey as a state endowed with unique assets that, properly employed, can make Turkey into a world power. For Davutoglu, Turkey’s most important unique characteristics are its history and geography. What is needed is a

94 Quoted in Lerna Yanik’s article. Graham Fuller, Turkey faces east: new orientations toward the Middle East and the Old Soviet Union, (Rand Corporation 1992), Pg. 13.
“reinterpretation”, as he said himself, of these characteristics and their role in creating Turkey into a powerful, independent and strategic global player; what is needed, in other words, is a new paradigm through which to perceive and operate Turkey’s grand strategy.

**Turkey's current grand strategy: Economic Ottomanism**

Today, Turkey operates on the basis of a different paradigm than that of its Western counterparts. Many in the West are still coming to grips with this phenomenon that has been 20 years in the making. The most recent years have seen an upwelling of breathless accounts of Turkey “turning its back on the West.” Turkey operated in the same paradigm as that of Europe and the West for most of its history. The world was split between the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact and the United States and NATO. The USSR was Turkey’s gravest existential threat. Turkish grand strategists saw the world from the same paradigm as their Western allies and behaved accordingly.

The collapse of the Soviet Union pushed Turkey into an entirely new situation. For Turkey the seeds of its transformation lay in economics; its liberalization beginning in the 1980s opened previously closed venues for Turkish economic and political interests in the Middle East and the Caucasus. Through the frustrating experiences of the 1990s, it became apparent to Turkish policymakers that in order to thrive in this new environment Turkey had to reorient itself. Turkey had to approach its grand strategy from a new paradigm. For Turkey, seeing the world as East vs. West, or seeing the East and West as two separate entities would undercut Turkey’s potential to take advantage of its unique geographic position and cultural heritage.

Thus, the Kemalist paradigm has been replaced with a new one. The Kemalist
Europeanization paradigm posited that a clean break from Ottoman history would place Turkey on the path to modernity and integration with the West. The new paradigm sees Ottoman history not as a blemish that should be rejected and forgotten but rather as a guide to Turkish identity and a reminder of the Turks’ important role in world history. The Ottoman Empire is being remembered as a time when diverse cultures and religions were able to live in harmony, when the Turks were the vanguard of civilization and modernity. This was a time when the center of the world was not in the capitals of Europe but in the walls of Constantinople. This new paradigm pushes Turkey to reclaim its historical endowment. The result is a grand strategy of re-engagement, rediscovery and confidence in the positive impact Turkey can have in the world around it. This does not mean, as some alarmists would claim, a reemergence of the empire lead by the caliphate and spread by the spear of a Janissary. The Janissary and his spear have been replaced with the investor and his checkbook.

Turkey’s grand strategy employs two formidable means: Turkey’s economic clout and a deep historical identity. The goal of its grand strategy is to place Turkey as a central strategic power with strong diplomatic and economic ties to a variety of regions, thereby making Turkey an independent, rather than dependent, variable in international relations. This grand strategy is best termed as Economic Ottomanism. The “Economic” part refers to the spreading of Turkey’s economic ties. The “Ottomanism” refers to Turkey’s aspiration to become a centerpiece in the former Ottoman region, but also Turkey’s ambition to establish itself as a model of governance. In the Ottoman Empire it was hard power led by centralized imperial government that spread its model. Turkey, in turn, is using soft power to trumpet and spread ideas about liberal economics and
governance. The new post-revolutionary government in Tunisia, which has openly embraced the Turkish model of governance and economics, is a telling example of the impact of Turkey’s grand strategy.

Prime Minister Erdogan’s visit to post-Mubarak Egypt in September of 2011 provides another example of Turkey’s grand strategy in action.

Thousands of cheering Egyptians greeted Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan at about midnight in Cairo, where he arrived to establish a strategic partnership.

The crowd waved Egyptian, Libyan and Turkish flags, as well as those of the premier’s governing Justice and Development Party, while chanting, “Egypt-Turkey: one fist” and “brave Erdogan welcome to your second home.”

However, Erdogan was not alone. With him were six ministers, including Davutoglu, and most dramatically, a delegation of 260 Turkish businessmen, entrepreneurs and financiers. In a single day, the delegation announced $853 million worth of business deals were signed. This same delegation visited Tunisia and Libya. A similar episode was repeated in April of 2012 when Erdogan visited China with about 300 business leaders in tow.

After visiting Beijing and meeting with Xi Jinping, China’s future president, Erdogan made a controversial stop at Xinjiang, an ethnically Uyghur, Turkic-speaking, and Muslim region controlled by China. It was the first time in 27 years that a Turkish head of government visited Xinjiang, which was historically linked to Turkey via the Silk Road. It is the combination of economics and identity that is driving Turkey’s grand strategy.

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Constraints and shortcomings of Turkey’s Grand Strategy

Grand strategy is policy in action and with every challenge a grand strategy comes up against constraints and at times failures. Turkey’s grand strategy is no exception. As previously mentioned, Turkey’s Kemalist Europeanization grand strategy had a significant shortcoming: the failure of Kemalism to penetrate the masses and become a viable alternative to Ottoman Muslim identity. Turkey’s current Economic Ottomanism grand strategy has its own set of constraints and possible shortcomings.

When working in cohesion/coordination, Turkey’s economic clout and Ottoman identity are powerful grand strategic tools that propel Turkey towards the center of geostrategic affairs. However, these two tools can lead to conflicting outcomes. Turkey’s recent experiences with Libya and Syria are two such cases.

Additionally, on the economic side, Turkey’s participation in the international marketplace has led it to prosperity and extraordinary growth. At the same time, there is growing fear among economists and investors about Turkey’s willingness or ability to control its current account balance and inflation.

The Arab Spring: Economics versus Ottomanism

Turkey, like every other country at the time, was completely taken by surprise when enormous protest movements surfaced in Tunisia, then Egypt and throughout the Arab world. A grand strategy is meant to be a long-term approach to navigating a fluid geopolitical landscape. The true test of a grand strategy is time--its ability to be able to adapt and be flexible to the forever changing nature of the world around it. Up through
the winter of 2010, Turkey had been closely following a doctrine coined by Davutoglu as “zero problems with neighbors.” Its purpose was to resolve any and all existing disputes with its neighbors and create a proactive diplomatic strategy that “also [tries] to help them solve any domestic, bilateral or international problems they might have—to the extent [Turkey] can.”

In a 2010 interview, Davutoglu claimed zero problems a success. In 2003, when I became chief advisor [to the prime minister], in one of the first interviews I gave I said, “We have to have zero problems with our neighbors.” Many people thought, “Typical utopian academic. How, given the reality of Turkey’s relations with its neighbors, can you achieve this?” And, in the last eight years, under the leadership and political stability of Prime Minister Erdogan, it has been proven that it’s not a utopian idea. It is a reality today; nobody expects any crisis between Turkey and any neighbor.

However, its biggest challenge was yet to come. When protests in Tunisia and Egypt erupted, Erdogan and other cabinet officials like Davutoglu were quick to voice their support for the protestor’s and publicly called for Ben Ali and Mubarak’s resignation from power. However, Turkey was not so quick, in fact openly reluctant, to do the same for Libya. The reason: Libya had just decided to give $15 billion worth of construction projects to Turkish companies. Throughout the 2000s, Turkish policymakers had been hard at work establishing economic ties with Libya. In 2009 trade between Turkey and Libya hit $2.2 billion dollars. Libya was a case where Economic and Ottomanism came into conflict. Ultimately, Turkey gave support (albeit minimal) to the NATO mission against Gadhafi. In Turkey’s estimation, the diplomatic, military and economic

ties it had established with the countries and multilateral institutions standing against Libya outweighed its unilateral strategy of accessing the Libyan market. Economics and Ottomanism, in this case, were in competition. This strategic calculus is a constraint on Turkey’s ability to be an independent playmaker on the global stage. Libya was not the last such case that Turkey would have to face. Syria, which shares an 877-kilometer border with Turkey, is currently embroiled in a bloody civil war with tens of thousands of Syrian refugees taking shelter inside Turkey’s borders. Dealing with Syria has placed Turkey’s grand strategy in the most uncomfortable position yet.

Turkey and Syria almost went to war in 1998 largely because of Syria providing arms and sanctuary to PKK leaders and operatives. However, throughout the 2000s, Turkish policymakers had made extraordinary gains in their relations with their historically hostile neighbor. In 2008, Turkey almost successfully mediated a treaty between Israel and Syria, but talks collapsed after Israel invaded Gaza. Most significantly, Turkey and Syria established official diplomatic channels and strong trade relations. In 2007 both states signed a free trade agreement. Trade between the two more than doubled in three years and hit $2.2 billion in 2010. The strong relations with Syria were touted as the greatest success of the “zero problems with neighbors” policy. However, the Assad regime’s crackdown on Syrian citizens beginning in early 2011 once again placed the two tenets of Economic Ottomanism at loggerheads. Understanding Economic Ottomanism as Turkey’s grand strategy, it was no surprise that it was Turkey that held out their diplomatic tools the longest.

Looming economic decline?
In 2010, Turkey’s economy grew by 9%. In 2011, it grew 8.5%. These astounding numbers makes Turkey one of the fastest growing economies in the world. However, its hot economy comes with some warning signs, particularly inflation and dependence on foreign capital. Inflation climbed above 10% in March 2012 and its current-account deficit averaged 10% of GDP in 2011. Additionally, Turkey is too reliant on foreign capital to fund its current-account deficit. All these variables may lead to an economic collapse driven by the flight of foreign capital.\(^{103}\)

Additionally, political cronyism and patronage remain an enormous, incalculable problem.\(^{104}\) Finally, Turkey still sends half its exports to Europe; many of Turkey’s banks are exposed to weak European ones. If the economy does collapse, the most immediate effect would be the destruction of AKP and Erdogan’s popularity. New elections would probably occur and a new party would be elected. Even under a new government, Economic Ottomanism would remain Turkey’s grand strategy. Turkey’s economic model of liberal, diversified trade has brought it enormous dividends; it is too successful to be abandoned or transformed.

**Erdoganism?**

Finally, there is Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey’s increasingly autocratic prime minister. Erdogan is first and foremost a populist. He is a political firebrand known for his passionate speeches and emotional outbursts. His ten years in power, however, have come to engender a new threat to Turkey’s democracy. In a maneuver emulating Russia’s Vladimir Putin, Erdogan has made clear his desire to stand for the presidency of Turkey

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after the end of his third term as prime minister. His hyperbolic populism and uninterrupted political popularity seems to have infected Erdogan with hubris. A personality cult surrounding Erdogan seems to be emerging, something that has only been reserved for the Republic’s founder, Mustafa Kemal. Erdogan’s insatiable appetite for political power grows at an especially dangerous time for Turkish democracy. A commission made up of members of all four major political parties and presided over by the parliamentary speaker has started drafting a new constitution. There is justified suspicion that Erdogan and the AKP could steamroll the constitutional committee and create the constitution to their liking. When it comes to Erdogan and the AKP, it is not their conservative religious views that make them dangerous. Too often, Western media and analysts are distracted by this feature of Erdogan and miss the larger threat: his increasing authoritarianism.

Conclusion

Turkey’s Economic Ottomanism grand strategy coupled with the elimination of the Kemalist establishment in the military has, ironically, brought Turkey closer than ever to Ataturk’s vision of a modern state. Additionally, it has achieved what Kemalism could not: unite large segments of the population behind a national identity and mobilize it towards a unified goal. Kemalism attempted to create a new state and culture completely divorced from its Ottoman past, but it was unable to penetrate the Turkish masses. In turn, Ottomanism has struck a chord with a critical mass of Turks. Kemalism tried to deny then break this identity, but to no avail. The weakening of the Kemalist grip has led to the

election of leaders that more closely resemble the electorate they are representing. Turks of all walks of life, academics, businessmen and artists, are reexamining their history and finding a part of their identity that they can believe in and have pride. Thus Turkish identity has been revived, not recreated, and it is taking life on the international stage. Unlike before, Turkey’s grand strategy is the expression of an entire culture.
Chapter VI. Conclusion

“Turkey’s new foreign minister conducts his mission in style by combining personal charm with an imaginative foreign policy. As a case in point, in 2009, when Haris Silajdžić, the leader of Muslim-dominated Bosnia refused to accept the apology of the Christian-dominated Serbia for the Srebrenica massacre of Bosnians, Davutoglu offered to help broker an agreement. Flying back and forth between the capital cities of both the nations several times, he chose the right words and diplomats to seal the deal. During the final stages of the truce, Silajdžić nervously finished packet after packet of cigarettes, fretting over whether to accept the terms. Davutoglu, a pious Muslim who shuns smoking, made an exception that moment and shared a smoke with Silajdžić to show Turkish solidarity with Bosnia. Silajdžić accepted the apology and hands were shaken.” 107

Davutoglu compromised his piety for the demands of Turkey’s grand strategy. This is the limit of Turkey’s “Islamization” that so many in the West express with rhetoric ranging from superficial concern to fatuous alarm.108 The AKP is indeed a conservative Muslim party vis-à-vis the Turkish political spectrum. Its origins can be traced back to previous conservative parties that had been targeted and disbanded by the Turkish military. Erdogan served a jail sentence for his political activism in the 1990s. There is little doubt that Erdogan and the AKP’s leaders think and operate as pious Muslims, but there exists no evidence that their piety defines or limits their worldview. Rather, their piety and proud self-identification as Muslims has served as a useful political tool for executing a larger grand strategy. Islam is a means to an end, not an end in of itself.

108 One of the more recent, and unfortunate, examples being Rick Perry, a candidate for the US Republican presidential nomination, who called Turkey a “terrorist state” citing its support of Hamas. He suspended his campaign within a week of making those comments. Felicia Sonmez, “Rick Perry defends criticism of Turkey, charges that leaders ‘allow for honor killings,’” The Washington Post, 1/17/12. http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/election-2012/post/rick-perry-defends-criticism-of-turkey-charges-that-leaders-allow-for-honor-kil/2012/01/17/glQAr0PV6P_blog.html.
Those that claim or insinuate that Turkey, a majority Sunni country ruled democratically by a Sunni political party, is turning to Islamism would have a hard time explaining why it has strained itself to maintain strong diplomatic channels with Iran, a theocratic Shia power actively vying for regional hegemony. Turkey is certainly seeking to be a leader of the Muslim world, but as a model of modernity not theocracy. Erdogan and Davutoglu are not going on diplomatic missions gushing about the grandeur of the Hagia Sophia or the memory of the caliphate. They are constantly, unendingly—and much to the annoyance of members of actual Islamist groups like Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood—espousing the necessity for democracy, secular government, and pluralism.109

Focusing on Turkey’s “orientation” ignores or at least mischaracterizes Turkey’s foreign policy. Turkey is not just facing East or West, it is facing outward. Asking which way Turkey faces is the wrong question to ask. Answering it leads to unhelpful conclusions about Turkey’s means and ends, and about the possibility for cooperation and convergence with Turkey. This is why grand strategy provides the best lens from which to view and understand where Turkey is coming from, where it is and where it is going.

On February 16, 2012 a film titled Conquest 1453 was released with much hype and fanfare. Its $17 million budget was huge by Turkish standards. It has since shattered records becoming the most viewed and highest grossing film in Turkish history. The film

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is styled as an epic telling of the Ottoman sacking of Constantinople. Meanwhile, Turkey and the Netherlands have begun a yearlong series of events celebrating 400 years of diplomatic ties. An art exhibition on display in an Istanbul museum shows depictions of Dutch and Turkish interaction during the golden age of Amsterdam in the 17th century. Pieter Roelofs, curator of the exhibit, describes the art as juxtaposing today’s state of affairs to that of the past. Istanbul and Amsterdam have switched places and, “the feeling you would have had in Amsterdam around 1650 is probably comparable to what is going on in Istanbul right now.”

Like the Janissaries who breached the walls of Constantinople over 500 years ago, Turkey is breaking into the future by reclaiming what belonged to it—a seat in the great game of nations. The seat once occupied by Mehmet II, and Osman before him and Constantine before him, has been gathering nearly a century’s worth of dust. Turkey is not running forwards by looking backwards. The stream of history is propelling Turkey towards a brighter future with the grandeur of the past.

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