Turkey's New Foreign Policy: Becoming a Regional Power During EU Accession

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Turkey’s New Foreign Policy: Becoming a Regional Power During EU Accession

Tristan Karyl Hicks

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for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Turkey’s New Foreign Policy: Becoming a Regional Power During EU Accession

Tristan Karyl Hicks

Since the 1990s, Turkey’s role in the international arena has transitioned from one of a relatively weak state into one of a significant regional power. The bulk of this transition has taken place concurrent with economic and political changes, driven largely by Turkey’s accession process to the European Union. This thesis uses New Institutionalisms theory to examine the relationship between the EU accession process and Turkey’s rise to regional power, highlighting Turkey’s high economic growth, its foreign policy shift towards soft power and its increased democratization. This new regional power is then analyzed with New Institutionalisms theory through three case studies focused on Turkey’s regional neighbors: Iraq, Iran and Russia. This thesis expands the current literature on Turkish regional relations through its comparative analysis with a highly diverse group of states. The usage of New Institutionalisms theory beyond its usual realm of application – that of European integration – demonstrates its flexibility and benefits as an analytical tool.
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Introduction: Becoming a Regional Power During EU Accession

Since the end of the Cold War, the Republic of Turkey has transformed from a poor and relatively non-influential state into the world’s seventeenth-largest economy and a leading regional power in the Middle East. This thesis will examine the causes of that transformation.

There are several research questions which enable further insight on this issue. Although the accession process to the European Union has stalled, Turkey’s increasing connections to the EU and attempts to align with the *acquis communautaire* did not occur in a vacuum. How has the accession process influenced Turkey’s foreign relations and domestic situation? What changes occurred, both within and beyond Turkey, which caused this rise to regional power status? Realistically, what capabilities and limitations does Turkey now possess with its role as a regional power? This thesis examines these questions by looking at Turkey’s changing relationship with the European Union, as well as with three of its neighbors. This author claims that comparatively high economic growth, a new foreign policy focus on soft power combined with instability in its neighborhood, particularly in the Middle East, have allowed Turkey to become a regional power.

The first chapter is a review of several dominant theories in international relations. After a discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of each theory, the “New Institutionalisms” – Rational-Choice Institutionalism, Sociological Institutionalism and Historical Institutionalism – are selected as models of analysis due to their descriptive rather than prescriptive natures, as well as their ability to situate even drastic changes within a rational historical narrative.

The second chapter is a brief look into the Justice and Development Party, otherwise known as the AKP (Turkish: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi). The AKP has maintained control of the presidency and the parliament of Turkey since 2002. Therefore it has been holding the reigns
of the republic as Turkey has risen to regional power. The AKP’s involvement in this process as well as the roles of the opposition parties are examined in order to explain the significance of the AKP in recent Turkish international relations.

The third chapter will look to Turkey’s relationship with Europe. Their shared history, Turkish attempts at Europeanization since the Tanzimat era under the Ottoman Empire, and Turkey’s (as of 2013) unsuccessful attempt to become an EU member state are analyzed. While Turkey’s current chances of EU accession appear slim, to use a popular idiom, “the journey is more important than the destination.” The process of EU accession has had significant influences on Turkish society and politics, both domestically and internationally. One cannot discuss Turkey’s role as a regional power without acknowledging the process by which it was achieved, which is largely due to the effects of the accession process.

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters examine Turkey’s relations with three of its neighbors – Iraq, Iran and Russia. Iraq was chosen because it is both an unstable state and one that is significantly less powerful than Turkey. Moreover, the increased distance between the central Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Governments (KRG), coinciding with a deepening of relations between Turkey and the KRG, allows one to observe Turkish relations in which Ankara is clearly the dominant player.

Iran was selected due to its similarities with Turkey in terms of historical culture, population, geographic and economic size. Politically the two countries are quite different – Iran is an anti-Western Shiite-led theocracy under strict international sanctions and Turkey is a well-connected, pro-Western, secular and democratic trading state. Yet, as influential neighbors they

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1 In terms of historical culture, Iran and Turkey have many commonalities in music, literature, poetry, etc. The two neighboring states were once directly linked by the Silk Road, facilitating the exchange of ideas and cultural values with one another. Their shared cultural influences, even though their political systems are nearly polar opposites, cannot be discounted.
are rivals in an ongoing competition for political and economic control in the region. If Turkey is able to maintain its role as a dominant power and prevent Iran from retaking its position as a regional power in the Middle East, this could help to further democratize the region and counter the growth of religious radicalism in the long-term. This chapter presents this balance of power, and investigates the prospects for the future of Turkish and Iranian influence.

Russia was selected as the final case study because its competition with Turkey for power is not limited to the Middle East. Although Russia is currently the main source of international support for Bashar Al-Assad in the Syrian civil war, Russia is generally more concerned with its influence in the post-Soviet states. Both Turkey and Russia have strong interests in the republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the Southern Caucasus, as well as in Central Asia. For now, Russia and Turkey are working as close partners, cooperating on energy transit, international security and trade. Yet, several ongoing sources of tension exist between the two states: the Syrian civil war, the Nagorno-Karabakh territorial dispute and mutual interest in increasing their individual control over the energy transit sector. Russia is much stronger than Turkey in terms of hard power, so this case study will emphasize what methods (and to what level of success) Turkey is able to balance Russia’s hard power with its soft power. This is of specific importance to the post-Soviet states located between Russia and Turkey, as well as to the future of the energy transit sector connected to Europe and the Middle East.

There are several reasons behind the significance of this study in relation to existing literature. Some of the included areas of focus, such as Turkish relations with the European Union, have been covered extensively in the literature and from nearly every conceivable perspective. In
direct contrast, there has been only one comprehensive book written about Turkish-Iranian relations since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, published in 2011.

The existing literature on the topics discussed in this text is as sundry and various as the countries themselves. To the best of this author’s knowledge, this work is one of the first to analyze the means of Turkey’s rise to regional power by looking at its relations with such diverse neighbors as Russia, Iran, Iraq and the European Union. This breadth provides a wider-scope of focus than many existing articles and books, enabling a birds-eye view on the current state of Turkish regional power. This is needed in order to understand the actual extent and limitations of the new Turkish power.

The use of such a diverse range of case studies is also important in helping to stimulate further research on Turkey. During the most promising years of Turkey’s accession process, a tremendous amount of literature was produced concerning Turkey’s relations with the EU. Since the accession process has stalled, the creation of new literature on Turkey has declined dramatically. A Eurocentric bias in Western scholarship is largely responsible for this. The decline in publications does not mean that Turkey is any less relevant in the study of International Relations, even for Western-based scholars. It is wrong to assume that Turkey’s reduced chance of accession means that Turkey is any less important to Europe. As a counterbalance to Iran, a mediator in Middle Eastern affairs, a future energy transit state, a growing labor-pool and a robust economic player, Turkey’s role as a regional power has already demonstrated its value. By studying Turkey now, even with its slim chance of EU accession, scholars can help to better understand the benefits and drawbacks of Turkish regional power.

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This can help to better create a prosperous and secure EU, while facilitating Turkey’s ability to achieve its goals as well.

Finally, to the best of this author’s knowledge this thesis is the first to apply New Institutionalisms theory to Turkish relations with Iraq, Iran and Russia. A substantial literature exists using the New Institutionalisms in reference to Turkish relations with the European Union, but these theories are not often used beyond the scope of European Union integration. New Institutionalisms theory is more robust and versatile than often given credit. Expanding its usage beyond its typically integration-focused realm contributes to the understanding of the importance of this theoretical body. The versatility of New Institutionalism is often ignored, in this author’s opinion, and wrongfully so. Its ability to recognize and include aspects of state, social, organizational and individual influence in the study of International Relations and Political Science gives it a distinct advantage over many other theories. Particularly in the study of quickly-changing states such as Turkey, New Institutionalism’s breadth of inclusiveness as well as flexibility of theoretical usage is quite important.

In terms of source materials, books are used whenever possible, but gaps in the literature as well as the delays involved with academic publishing mean that many books relevant to this topic are outdated or unavailable. The bulk of the sources used in this thesis are comprised of academic articles, which are generally able to reach publication more quickly and therefore stay abreast of the changing situation in Turkey’s neighborhood.

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Numerous online news sources have also been analyzed, including sources from Europe, the Middle East and Asia. A strong attempt has been made to balance domestic and international news sources in reference to each country’s case study. All reporting comes with a certain degree of bias and any questionable statements made by these journalists were double-checked before inclusion.

From within Turkey, Today’z Zaman and Hürriyet Daily News tend to dominate domestic media coverage. Both of their websites are fairly reliable in their accuracy, considering the self-censorship that is common among Turkish journalists. It is important to note that the English-language versions of these websites tend to lean more towards the political left than the Turkish-language versions of the same publications.

Primary sources materials were also used when available, including official statements given by political figures as well as those created by state and organizational bodies. Treaties and international agreements are included as well.

I. The Importance of the Justice and Development Party (AKP)

In discussing Turkey’s relationship with the European Union, as well as Turkey’s rise to regional power, it is essential to discuss the role of the AKP. The AKP has maintained control of the presidency and the parliament of Turkey since 2002. Currently, it holds 327 of 550 parliamentary seats. Other parliamentary seats are filled by members of the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP, 134 seats), the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP, 53 seats) and the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP, 29 seats). The dominance of the AKP at the highest levels of Turkish government and the failure of the opposition to form effective coalitions have enabled the AKP to essentially govern the country single-handedly without giving much regard to the opposition.
The party is led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has held the position since 2003. Abdullah Gül serves has served as President since 2007, following a position as Foreign Minister from 2003 to 2007 and a short stint as Prime Minister in 2003. Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu is the current Foreign Minister, holding office since 2009. He is the father of Turkey’s “zero problems with neighbors” foreign policy which has encouraged the shift away from a realist, security-focused foreign policy to a more liberal-idealist one.

The AKP is officially a conservative democratic party, although it is often depicted in media and academia as a moderate or (some claim) secretly Islamist organization. Their voter base is largely from central Anatolia, a region that is generally more conservative and Islamist than western Anatolia and Turkey’s Thrace region. The AKP’s close cooperation with the “Anatolian tiger” business organizations and the rapid growth of the Turkish economy under their policies has helped the AKP to maintain power.\(^4\)

Nationwide protests across Turkey during the summer of 2013 highlighted many issues of concern for Turks about the state of their country, drawing over 2.5 million protestors according to the Turkish interior ministry.\(^5\) The weakness of opposition parties to the AKP has left much of the politically-liberal population feeling disenfranchised. A protest against the proposed destruction of Taksim Gezi Park on May 28\(^{th}\) was crushed by Turkish police using what many viewed to be excessive force. In response, Turks across the country rose up in protest, expanding their focus beyond the fate of Gezi Park to include complaints about a supposed lack of government transparency, authoritarian trends in the government, restrictions

\(^4\) “Anatolian tigers” is a term used internationally to describe small and medium business enterprises which have risen to prominence in Turkey’s Anatolian region. Their rise began under the economic liberalization reforms in the 1990s but they have gained much more influence since the AK Party, which is very pro-business, gained power.

on freedom of speech and the press, as well as a general rise in religious conservatism. These protests were put down by the police, often violently, resulting in eight thousand injuries, several thousand arrests, and six deaths.\(^6\)

While the AKP has the support of approximately half of the country by popular vote and an absolute majority in the parliament, these protests show that there is widespread opposition to its policies by political minorities. Participation in civil society is on the rise, although it is often ignored by those in power as an illegitimate form of participation in politics.\(^7\)

Due to the wide lens of focus cast in this paper, it may appear that Turkey is being portrayed as a unitary, homogenous actor akin to those described by realism. This is certainly not the case, and particularly due to the increasing influence of civil society on Turkish politics, the lack of a unified opposition is an issue that is slowly eroding.

If Turkey appears to be treated as a homogenous political unit in this text, it is for two reasons. First, as the primary focus of this thesis is on Turkey’s rise to regional power since the beginning of its EU accession process, the preceding historical background has been abridged. This is a necessary evil in order to dedicate as much space as possible to supporting the thesis statement. Second, since the election of the AKP in 2002, Turkey has been governed by a single, highly unified political party. The AKP has possessed tremendous influence in determining the scope and direction of Turkish foreign policy. In the international arena, to a great extent Turkey does behave rather unitarily. Turkish NGOs and businesses are also international players, and they are described in greater detail where relevant. Yet, as the overall focus is on Turkish foreign policy, they are not the primary emphasis of this text.

\(^7\) Ibid., 11.
CHAPTER 1: Theoretical Background – The Three Institutionalisms

This chapter will provide an explanation of the theoretical background which will be used in the analysis of Turkey’s changing foreign policies since the beginning of its attempts at accession to the European Union. The academic community has already analyzed the Republic of Turkey through the lens of nearly every significant international relations theory, so in a sense this author is not necessarily covering new theoretical ground. While every theoretical framework has merit, this author believes that many of the dominant theories—realism (specifically neorealism, in contrast to “classical realism”), liberalism and neofunctionalism—are inadequate in their ability to properly describe the changes that have taken place in recent Turkish international relations.

For the purposes of this study, the author has concluded that the most meritorious theories which can be applied towards Turkey’s case are a mix of three main bodies of the “New Institutionalisms”: Rational-Choice Institutionalism, Sociological Institutionalism and Historical Institutionalism. These theoretical frameworks have been chosen because of their flexibility. A major drawback of most theoretical models is their inflexibility and their attempts at being predictive devices. While specialists in Turkish politics can easily look back and piece together how Turkey’s international relations have changed, it is doubtful that any scholar can claim to have predicted the broad and significant changes which have occurred in Turkey’s relations over the past decade or so.

There are many reasons why mainstream theoretical models tend to fall short when applied to Turkey. Later in this chapter each theory will be discussed in more detail to analyze specific strengths and weaknesses, as it is a fool’s errand to generalize too greatly about these very divergent theories. Yet there are a few overarching reasons which can be said to contribute
to their weaknesses. Specifically, one can refer to the *origin* of the theories as well as their claims to predictability.

In terms of the origin of the theories, nearly all scholars contributing to Western theories of international relations are, unsurprisingly, from Western countries. This body of scholarly work tends to wallow in a perspective rife with dualities: there are “democratic” countries and “non-democratic” countries. There are “Western” countries and “non-Western” countries. The state system is either anarchic or organized (around whatever principle each theory submits). These models are exceptionally useful as tools for analyzing states which are fairly stable, but few theories do well in explaining transition. Those that do, such as neofunctionalism, have other flaws which reduce their applicability in terms of the Turkish story, as will be discussed later.

The problem with applying most mainstream theories to Turkey comes from the dichotomies found within the country itself. It is a secular country but its population is overwhelmingly Muslim. It has been a democracy for over half a century but it has undergone four military coups and suffers from a constantly fluctuating undercurrent of authoritarianism. Turkey sits culturally between Western culture and the cultures of Western Asia and the Middle East. Turkey is not ethnically homogenous, and in terms of lifestyle there are tremendous differences between rural and urban, between the formally and less educated, and between culturally liberal and conservative members of society.

The combination of these factors working together mean that in recent history, Turkey’s international as well as domestic policies and behaviors have changed drastically, and they continue to do so. Turkey has been and remains a country in transition, and there are problems in trying to fit its behavior into mainstream theoretical models which were created by Western scholars discussing relatively stable countries.
The second overarching problem many theories face when confronting Turkey’s recent behavior comes from their attempts at providing predictions for the future, which is overly prescriptive. Theoretical models which are too prescriptive are limited by their structured assumptions about political behavior. In this sense, using a combination of the New Institutionalist theories when looking at Turkey is useful because the more prescriptive theories discussed below have major weaknesses in any given attempts at prediction. Rather than trying to predict Turkey’s future changes in international relations, Institutionalisms theory can better serve as tools to frame how, why and to what extent there have been changes in Turkey’s behavior. Therefore the Institutionalisms can be used as descriptive frameworks which can to better explain the changes in Turkish international relations.

The following sections offer a highly abridged explanation of five major international relations theories: realism, liberalism and neofunctionalism. Their main tenants are outlined and their weaknesses in application to the study of Turkish international relations are discussed. As these theories should be well-known to most practitioners in the field of International Relations and much has been written about them elsewhere, the detail is kept brief. Following the summary of these theories, a longer explanation is given describing Rational-Choice Institutionalism, Sociological Institutionalism and Historical Institutionalism, focusing specifically on why these theories are beneficial for the analysis of Turkish international relations.

I. Realism

Realism is based on a number of assumptions. The root assumption of realists is that states are the primary actors within an inherently anarchic international state system. The survival of a state and its sovereignty is of the utmost importance, which puts states into constant
competition against one another with maximizing state power (and thus state security) as the paramount goal.\(^8\)

Realists also operate on the assumption that states are unitary actors which act rationally to maximize their chances of future survival. States with the most economic and military power are best able to be decisive actors on the world stage. Cooperation between states can exist, but this only occurs to the extent that it can be enforced by the existence or threat of state power.

There are merits to the realist argument in regards to Turkey’s behavior. Turkey has a long history of perceiving its neighbors as threatening, as reflected in the expression taught to Turkish schoolchildren during the Cold War, “Turkey is a country surrounded by seas on three sides, and by enemies on four.”\(^9\) Another example is the common idiom that that “for a Turk only a Turk can be a friend”. In its recent history, Turkey has had many political conflicts with neighboring states which have threatened to turn into violence: with Greece, Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Israel and Syria to name a few. Yet, since the early 2000s many of these conflicts have disappeared due to a changing international system, Turkey’s democratic liberalization efforts since the beginning of its accession process to the European Union, and the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or “AKP” for short).

Under the rule of the AKP from 2002 until present, Turkey has gone from a country surrounded by enemies to one characterized by AKP Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu’s foreign policy of “zero problems with neighbors”.\(^10\) It is an oversimplification to claim that this is entirely due to the AKP’s actions – the normalization of Turkey’s relations with its neighbors

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\(^10\) Although the extent to which Turkey is actually able to maintain zero problems with its neighbors is arguable, since the introduction of this policy there have been intentional efforts on the part of Turkish government to reduce its conflicts with neighboring countries.
started in the late 1990s under Foreign Minister İsmail Cem İpekçi – but the AKP has continued and expanded this process. Turkish international relations have, in general, moved from an aggressive and security-focused coercive approach to one that is based more substantively on cooperation and liberal benign power. The country has even built close relations with regimes which it formerly viewed with considerable suspicion, such as the Kurdistan Regional Government in Northern Iraq. Continuing to use realism as a primary descriptor of Turkish state behavior is feasible, but it would involve downplaying the massive changes the country has undergone politically since the early 2000s. While a realist can argue that this softening of power was designed to better serve the aim of gaining “competitive advantage” over its neighbors, it does not conclusively explain why this shift took so long to occur.

II. Liberalism

Liberalism is a much more multi-faceted theory than realism, and tends to be interpreted with greater breadth by the academic community. Its assumptions are much more complex than that of realism. Based on Andrew Moravcsik’s theoretical arguments, individuals and private groups are the fundamental actors in international politics.\(^\text{11}\) In this sense, liberalism differs greatly from realism which assumes that states are unitary actors – essentially, realism downplays the importance of society in influencing state behavior.\(^\text{12}\) This can be easily demonstrated in Turkey’s case, considering the major changes in Turkey’s approach to its neighborhood policy since the AKP’s coming to power.


\(^{12}\) Realist versus liberalist views about states are commonly explained with two metaphors. For realists, states are billiard balls: the states themselves are the most influential actors, which bounce off one another and compete for power. In the liberalist tradition, state relations are more of a cobweb, with many different levels of interlinked state and non-state actors interacting with one another.
The second of Moravcsik’s assumptions is that for liberalists, states represent subsets of domestic society and act to represent these subsets. State preferences are therefore generated from domestic society, with institutions helping to transmit these preferences from the bottom up.\(^\text{13}\)

In this sense, liberalist theory holds up when applied to Turkey’s behavior under the AKP government, as individuals and private groups have had great influence over state behavior. One perfect example of this is MÜSİAD, the “Independent Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association” (Turkish: Mustakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği). Founded in 1990, this organization has maintained close ties with the AKP since its creation in 2001. In general, they have very similar worldviews and goals, and ideological changes within MÜSİAD and the AKP tend to align with one another. As the business community grew closer and closer to the AKP government, an umbrella organization called the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (TUSKON, Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu) was formed. This private organization works closely with the state and functions alongside the state-created Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK, Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu) to organize most of the AKP’s official state visits.\(^\text{14}\)

The final major assumption of liberalism is that “the configuration of [state] preferences across the international system determines state behavior.”\(^\text{15}\) It is in this sense that liberalism has problems in describing the Turkish situation, due to the precedence state preferences are given over state capabilities. The desire to increase friendly relations with neighboring countries did not appear suddenly and without antecedents. The efforts of Turgut Özal (Prime Minister and

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\(^{14}\) Özlem Tür, “Economic Relations with the Middle East Under the AKP-Trade, Business Community and Reintegration with Neighboring Zones,” Turkish Studies 12, no. 4 (December 2011): 591–592.

later President from 1983-1993) to expand Turkey’s economic and diplomatic influence in the region can be seen as early groundwork for future AKP policies. Yet, Turkey’s overall success and actual rise to regional power status did not occur until the country underwent tremendous growth, increasing in population by approximately 30 million and experiencing a total GDP growth from $62 billion in 1983 to $774 billion in 2011.\textsuperscript{16} While Turkish state preferences have of course changed significantly since Özal’s rule, its increasing capability to exert influence has changed even more. It is worth mentioning that the cooperative soft power methods now preferred by the Turkish state were not always so: Turkey’s historically realist preference for focusing on hard power options lasted for decades and the reorientation towards a more liberalist foreign policy is of great importance.

III. Neofunctionalism

Neofunctionalism is a body of theory initially spearheaded by the work of Ernst B. Haas. At its root, it is a theory of regional integration rather than one of general international relations. In this sense it is applicable for this paper’s analysis of Turkey’s changing relations with its neighboring countries.

A key tenant of neofunctionalism is “spillover”, typically into several categories. Political spillover is the creation and increased role of supranational government institutions. As these institutions gain more power, loyalty transference supposedly occurs as groups and elites shift their attention to the supranational level. Functional spillover is a description of the pressure for increasing integration which occurs between areas related by economic or issue-areas. For example, as Turkey has increased trade with its non-EU neighbors, pressure from the business community has encouraged the country to decrease or lift visa restrictions for travel and help

ease tariffs and trade barriers. This in turn has encouraged regional and international business organizations to expand their membership base beyond those to which they were previously geographically constrained.

Of course, “any comprehensive theory of integration should potentially be a theory of disintegration” and integration does not necessarily have to move forward.\( ^{17} \) Thus, the concept of “spillback” must be considered, in which integration may halt or retreat. As detailed by Catherine Macmillan, neofunctionalist theorists believe there are three causes of spillback: the role of leaders “wary to [hand over] sovereignty to supranational institutions (…), the constraining effect on governments of domestic groups (…) and diversity between the Member States (…)” which would may require states to depart from strongly-held beliefs about existing customs, policies or structures.\( ^{18} \)

While this theory helps to explain the near-halt of Turkey’s progress towards EU accession, it does not adequately explain the behavior of Turkey in regards to its non-EU neighbors. A plurality of Turks interviewed for Transatlantic Trends in 2013, 38 percent of respondents, stated the desire that their country should act alone in international affairs. This is nearly double the amount given to the second most popular response, that Turkey should cooperate most closely with the countries of the European Union (21 percent). Even as the desire of the Turkish public to cooperate on international matters with the EU and the Middle East has eroded, the Turkish government continues to invest its resources in attempting to accede


to the European Union as well as to increase integration with its Middle Eastern neighbors.\textsuperscript{19}

From a neofunctionalist perspective, either the government has undergone “capture” by domestic organizations in support of further integration, or the theory is inadequate to explain state behavior, particularly in reference to the Middle East.

IV. Three Institutionalisms

While there are quite a number of different forms of institutionalism, this thesis will focus on three of the “New Institutionalisms”: Rational-Choice Institutionalism, Sociological Institutionalism and Historical Institutionalism. It is important to note that unlike theories such as realism, the institutionalisms\textsuperscript{20} do “not constitute a unified body of thought. Instead [they represent] at least three different analytical approaches”.\textsuperscript{21} Rather than serving as a structure with which to categorize relations and attempt to predict future actions, these three theories can be better used as a lens of analysis through which one can observe the relationships between seemingly unrelated state behaviors.

Institutionalism shares several assumptions about international relations with the realist school. For both institutionalists and realists, states are rational actors existing in an anarchic system laced with uncertainty. However, institutionalists believe that nations are not governed exclusively by security maximization and thus international cooperation is possible. With the establishment of reliable institutions, uncertainty can be greatly decreased. “Institution” in this sense is not limited to physical organizations, but can be applied much more broadly. Within these theories “institutions” are also “a set of rules, norms, practices and decision-making

\textsuperscript{19} From 2004, domestic support for Turkey joining the European Union has decreased from 73% to 44%. Only 8% of Turks believed Turkey should cooperate more closely with the Middle East, down from 20% in 2010 and 2011. Transatlantic Trends, \textit{Key Findings 2013} (German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2013), 46.

\textsuperscript{20} For the sake of simplicity, for the rest of this study “the institutionalisms” will refer exclusively to rational-choice institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and historical institutionalism.

procedures that shape expectations.” Institutions also increase the efficiency and decrease transaction costs of international relations because well-established institutions increase known information about state behavior.

V. Rational-Choice Institutionalism

Rational-Choice Institutionalism assumes that actors have fixed preferences and will behave instrumentally within existing institutions to maximize their ability to achieve these preferences. This field tends to focus on calculated potential outcomes, a la game theory. Politics are seen as collective action dilemmas in which actors are only able to strive for the best possible outcome within the context of the institution, rather than the best possible outcome itself. These institutions involve not only rules and norms, but the ‘cognitive system’ which frames how preferences are approached. Thus, as institutions evolve (through changing perceptions), new frameworks change the ability of actors to achieve desired outcomes. This can be reflected in the intensification of relations between Turkey and its neighbors and Turkey’s increasing power in the region. As Turkey became more densely populated and wealthier, the situation changed to enable Turkey to better pursue its preferences. Beyond population and wealth, the potential for membership in the European Union has also increased the country’s value in the eyes of its neighbors, although doubts over the accession process may have a negative influence.

A major advantage of Rational-Choice Institutionalism is the emphasis on how strategic action is involved in the pursuit of preference goals. By knowing an actor’s preferences and

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23 Hall and Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” 945.
24 In 2011, 51% of Middle Eastern respondents in the “Perception of Turkey in the Middle East” survey supported Turkish EU membership. In 2012 this dropped to 39%. According to the report, this is “probably a reflection of the economic crisis in the EU, questions about its internal integrity and the stalled membership process.” Nonetheless, 70% of respondents say that Turkey has become more influential in Middle Eastern politics, 70% state that the government of Turkey is a friend of the respondent’s country and 71% believe Turkey should play a greater role in the Middle East. Mensur Akgün and Sabiha Senyücel Gündoğar, The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2012, trans. Jonathan Levack, TESEV Foreign Policy Programme (Istanbul, Turkey: Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), December 2012), 22.
understanding the institutional structure within which the actor operates, including the actor’s expectations of the behavior of other actors, one can develop certain expectations about the range of potential behaviors of the actors.

VI. Sociological Institutionalism

Sociological Institutionalism, in contrast to Rational-Choice Institutionalism, gives greater heed to the evolution of actor preferences. It assumes that, if actors have predetermined preferences, participation in institutions has a profound effect on these preferences and can alter them within this framework: in effect, preferences are not necessarily fixed. Thus institutions both limit options and have a role in the discovery of an actor’s preferences in the first place.25

Sociological Institutionalism’s benefit to analysis is its ability to look at actors of varying sizes, from an individual’s behavior to a state’s behavior. For example, on an organizational level, initial organizational behaviors are determined from society at large. As an organization interacts with other similar organizations in its sector, it will adopt certain structures, beliefs, routines and procedures from this sector.26 For a macro-level example one can look to Turkey, which has noticeably increased its rhetoric on the importance of human rights as it interacts and attempts to join the European Union. This behavior, which seems to be an entirely “rational preference” is socially generated. That is not to say that valuing human rights is not rational, but to emphasize the importance of the socialization of institutions and their effect on preferences.

VII. Historical Institutionalism

Out of the three New Institutionalisms, Historical Institutionalism has the greatest emphasis on formal organization. Since institutions both provide the framework in which

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preferences are formed and give structure to how calculated behaviors are rewarded or punished, institutions themselves resist change.

This concept is known as “path dependency”. As states, organizations or individuals move forward over time, every choice made and every action taken generates unintended consequences which often continue through history. A common (but overly simplistic and deterministic) example given is the popularity of the QWERTY keyboard. QWERTY is not the most efficient keyboard layout, but its early adoption propagated greatly over time. As more and more devices began to use QWERTY, the alternatives faded to the point that QWERTY is nearly universal for English-language devices. The path has become “locked in”.

Institutional pathways are altered in two ways: “critical junctures” and “developmental pathways”. Critical junctures are foundational moments: moments of great change which offer departure from prior paths. The Ottoman Empire’s “Tanzimat” period and Atatürk’s reform period are perfect examples of this: moments in history in which existing institutions were altered to the extent that they drastically changed the course of a state. Developmental pathways, on the other hand, are less drastic. Institutions change over time as a response to changing environmental conditions, yet they are constrained by their previous iterations. This helps to explain why Turkey has not completely given up on membership in the European Union, even though its current prospects of accession are slim. Turkey is institutionally locked-in with its centuries’ old Europeanization project: sans critical juncture-inducing events, a few years of slow progress are not enough to cause an abandonment of this path. Yet, new pathways are

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27 Hall and Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” 941–942.
29 The departure from the traditional millet system of governance to governance by the bureaucracy was a massive change in the path of the Ottoman Empire. More detail is given in the EU Accession chapter.
30 Thelen, “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics,” 387.
developing which enable Turkey to make efforts towards bolstering its role as a regional power among the emerging markets and changing political situations in its neighborhood.

With the framework of the New Institutionalisms in mind, the next four chapters will focus on Turkey’s changing foreign policy, emphasizing how recent developments fit into the framework of established institutions. They will also demonstrate, how these underlying institutions can help explain large shifts in foreign policy, especially under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002. While many of these new foreign policy initiatives differ significantly from Ankara’s past policies, at the core Turkey’s recent developments are extensions of preexisting institutional preferences.
CHAPTER 2: The European Union and Turkey

Turkey has been attempting to accede to the European Union since its recognition as a candidate for membership on 12 December 1999. Many pro-accession supporters, though, make the argument that Turkey’s attempts at accession go back much further, beginning with Turkey’s application for associate membership with the EEC (the EU’s predecessor) in 1959. There was another attempt by President Özal to join the EEC in 1987, which was rejected two years later. Regardless of these arguments, Turkey has been undergoing the longest process of accession for any prospective or current EU member state in history. In the past few years, there has been little forward progress made in Turkey’s quest to become a member state.

This chapter is intended to explore several themes and act as a foundation for analysis in regards to how the accession process has changed Turkey’s relationship with neighboring states. It will discuss why Turkey’s accession process is taking such a long time, and what the sticking points are which have slowed Turkey’s progress. As will be made more concrete in later chapters, some of the changes in Turkey’s policies during the accession process have greatly influenced Turkey’s relations with its non-EU neighbors.31

Turkey has undergone massive changes in its journey towards EU membership. Its economy, population and political power are at the highest levels that Turkey has experienced since the founding of the Republic in 1923. The argument will be made that Turkey has finally ‘come into its own’ as a state, and accession to the European Union is no longer the only way for Turkey to secure a prosperous future for itself both domestically and in the international arena – this can be seen as one of the major reasons as to why Turkey has significantly increased its focus on its non-EU neighbors in recent years.

31 To provide one example, changes in Turkey’s Kurdish policies over the past decade have led to drastic changes in its relationship with Iraq, particularly in regards to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) which governs the autonomous Kurdish region of Northern Iraq.
I. Theoretical Analysis: Why Does Turkey Seek Membership?

The Republic of Turkey’s international agreements with the (now called) European Union have been ongoing for nearly half a century. The ‘official’ beginnings of these relations are typically denoted by Turkey’s application for associate membership to the European Economic Community in July of 1959 (which was later modified by the Ankara Agreement to become an application for full membership). During the time in which Turkey began its application to the EEC in 1959, one oft-overlooked fact is that, at that point, the European Union did not exist. While that may seem obvious to many, the manner in which Turkey’s relations with the current European Union are being presented imply that Turkey began its application in 1959. Turkey has been building relations with Europe for quite some time, yes, but the European Economic Community was much more limited in scope regarding which policy areas were within its *acquis communautaire*. The EEC focused strongly on creating a common market among states, but it had little to do with non-economic policies.

The EEC was absorbed into one of the “three pillars” with the establishment of the European Union under the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. The relevant pillar was titled the “European Community”, greatly adding to the policy areas in which this supranational organization found weight. This new incarnation included not only economic policies, but topics such as environmental law, healthcare and EURATOM (the European Atomic Energy Community).

Therefore, to maintain that Turkey’s *true* path to accession began in 1959 is a bit misleading, although it is often framed in such a way. Although the EEC is the predecessor of the European Union, its breadth of focus has changed significantly enough to view them as separate institutions. As the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims, “a new period began in
the four decade long relations between Turkey and the EU after Turkey was given “candidate status” during the Helsinki Summit on 10-11 December 1999.”\textsuperscript{32} The latter half of this quotation is more accurate than the former.

Regardless of the mild amount of myth-making that surrounds Turkey’s process of accession to the European Union, the fact remains that the Republic of Turkey has been creating close diplomatic relations and linkages with supranational European organizations for decades. This has come at great expense, both in direct economic costs and massive opportunity costs. Turkey has had to alter significant amounts of its own domestic legislation and reduce the level of sovereignty it once held over its own internal policies. Public and official opinions have greatly vacillated over the previous decades on Turkish membership in European organizations. Yet, the Republic continues slowly to draw itself closer to Europe, even if it does so in a staccato fashion.

Addressing first the Rational-Choice perspective, there are numerous reasons as to why both Turkey and the European community have sought to increase their ties with one another. It is important to emphasize that both Turkey \textit{and} the European Union have been courting one another: it is not a one-sided affair. The Rational-Choice emphasis on cost/benefit analysis can explain many of the historical interactions between the two parties.

The period of time in which European states and Western\textsuperscript{33} organizations most strongly pushed for linkages with Turkey took place during the Cold War.\textsuperscript{34} Turkey joined NATO only three years after NATO’s founding, in 1952. As an ally in the Cold War, democratic European


\textsuperscript{33} “Western” as a term is loosely applied here, generally meaning countries which fell under the American sphere of influence during the Cold War.

\textsuperscript{34} Müftüler-Baç, Meltem, “Through the Looking Glass: Turkey in Europe,” \textit{Turkish Studies} 1, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 21–35.
states had much to gain from a close relationship with Turkey. The Republic was a large country with a strong military. Moreover, it could serve as a strong southeastern flank, bordering the Soviet republics of Georgia and Armenia. Turkey’s geography was also of benefit to the Western states: the Bosphorus Strait is the only navigable waterway between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, which flows into the Mediterranean. Through Turkey’s control of the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul and the Dardanelles Strait, the states of Bulgaria, Romania and the Soviet republics of Ukraine, Georgia and Russia could be denied access to the Mediterranean. Of these countries, only Russia had an alternative path to the Atlantic Ocean, through sea routes in Northern Europe, the Arctic regions and its Pacific coast.

Turkey’s security alliance with the West was also due to its political structure. Since the Republic had been founded in 1923 as a democratic, secular state, the Cold War had created a ‘natural’ alliance between Turkey and the democratic states within Europe. This alliance became official with the Turkish abandonment of neutrality in 1945 due to Soviet military threats during the Turkish Straits crisis, Turkey realized what a perilous position it had in trying to maintain neutrality while under Soviet pressure: the crisis led to Turkish acceptance of US economic aid and to Turkey’s joining of NATO.

Further cooperation with the West was due to increasing economic ties. These economic ties were not so much a result of a functionalist “spill-over”, but were created by deliberate decision-making and diplomacy. The ties were seen as being mutually beneficial to both the

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35 Access was governed by the Montreux Convention of 1936, which gave Turkey the legal right to close the Straits in wartime or times of threat to all foreign warships.
36 To call Turkey’s foundational years as “democratic” is an overstretch – more accurately, one can say that Turkey was founded as a democratically inclined state in 1923.
European Economic Community and Turkey, and further support the Rational-Choice model argument. As can be seen in a reprint of the Ankara Agreement,

“DETERMINED to establish ever closer bonds between the Turkish people and the peoples brought together in the European Economic Community; RESOLVED to ensure a continuous improvement in living conditions in Turkey and in the European Economic Community through accelerated economic progress and the harmonious expansion of trade, and to reduce the disparity between the Turkish economy and the economies of the Member States of the Community; (...) RECOGNIZING that the support given by the European Economic Community to the efforts of the Turkish people to improve their standard of living will facilitate the accession of Turkey to the Community at a later date;”

This institutionalization of economic relations accelerated the growth of trade through decreasing transaction costs and providing a framework to facilitate economic planning. Continuing into the present day, these economic ties to Europe have greatly boosted the Turkish economy, enabling Turkish foreign policy to have greater weight in relations with its neighbors.

To expand upon the extent of the country’s economic growth, for all but one year in the past decade, Turkey’s GDP has been growing faster than that of the 28 current EU member states taken as a whole. Economic projections have predicted that the economies of the European Union will decline relative to the global share of GDP by 2050. The addition of Turkey into the EU, a continuation of its historical relations, will help boost the EU’s role as a global economic powerhouse.

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39 See “Table 1” below.
Much of Turkey’s economic growth can be linked to domestic economic policy improvements facilitated by the ruling Justice and Development Party, which has maintained control of the central government since 2002. All things considered, the quest for accession into first the EEC and the EU has significantly helped in boosting the Turkish economy through internationally oriented improvements: 42% of Turkish foreign trade takes place with the European Union states. Yet, the story of Turkey’s accession is too complex to be limited to just observable cost/benefit economic analysis favored by Rational-Choice Institutionalism.

The Sociological Institutional approach helps to elaborate why Turkey has been seeking to affiliate itself so strongly with Western Europe rather than other surrounding countries in the

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Middle East, the Mediterranean or Eastern Europe. The roots of the Europeanization of Turkish culture precede the existence of the Republic. Although it is difficult to put a specific date on the beginning of Ottoman Europeanization, a notable turning point can be found in the late seventeenth century. As the military superiority of the Ottoman Turks began to decline in comparison to their European neighbors, the Ottomans undertook the process of “modernization” to enhance their power. This consisted of borrowing of European administrative, military and cultural ideas. Many Ottoman scholars and diplomats were educated in Europe, and they began to import many of these ideas into the administration of the Empire. Not only did this affect the top levels of Ottoman society, through the introduction of European cultural ideas such as patriotism or service to the nation, but it altered the structure of the empire as well. Meritocracy was introduced to the field of public service, as well as a number of other changes.

The most important period of late Ottoman reforms are known in Turkish historiography as Tanzimat (literally, “reform”), dating from 1839-1876. “The main difference was that the centre of power now shifted from the palace to the Porte, the bureaucracy. In order to create a strong and modern apparatus with which to govern the empire, Sultan Mahmut initiated the transformation of traditional scribal institution into something resembling a modern bureaucracy.”

Nationalism and science became guiding principles in place of the “Ottoman legitimating ideology of tradition, dynasty and religion.”

The increased focus on Europe was the beginning of a Westward shift in Turkish political thinking. Rather than focusing internally, Turks began looking to Europe as a way to judge their

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42 This decline in Ottoman military power notably lined to the defeat of the Ottomans at the Battle of Vienna in 1683.
43 Müftüler-Baç, “Through the Looking Glass: Turkey in Europe.”, p. 28
own success or failure. This method of self-evaluation through comparing themselves to others has created a sort of “underdog complex” that could still be seen in Turkey until very recently.\(^4^6\)

The largest project of Europeanization in Turkey came with the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a secular democracy was founded. In order to modernize the country, Atatürk redefined Turkey in two ways. First, Atatürk attempted to cut all ties with the previous Ottoman Empire, and create a new European-Turkish culture. Secularism and democracy were heavily emphasized to legitimize the new government. Religious tradition was discouraged and the Caliphate was abolished, as the Ottomans had found legitimacy through their relationship with Islam. It was mandated that Turks adopt surnames, as previously Turkish people had only used a first name and a title under Ottoman rule.\(^4^7\) Some of the more nationalistic common names, such as “Öztürk” (translated loosely as “the essence of the Turk”) or “Şentürk” (“happy to be a Turk”) are still prevalent. Atatürk went so far in trying to break the continuity of the past that he even outlawed the fez, a traditional form of headwear, pushing for the Westernization of everyday attire.\(^4^8\)

Furthermore, European institutions were introduced, such as a parliamentary system of rule. Western educational, medical and civil society institutions were adopted. The Arabic alphabet was discarded and replaced by the Latin alphabet. All of these changes were designed to bring Turkey closer to Europe.\(^4^9\)

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\(^{4^6}\) On an entirely personal note, since this author’s first in-depth contact with Turkish culture in 2007, the “underdog complex” has been greatly reduced. There seems to be a tangible change in how Turks perceive themselves – instead of trying to compare the extent to how well Turkish culture does or does not match the frame of “Europeanness”, Turks are increasingly judging themselves by their own self-made standards.

\(^{4^7}\) “Atatürk” is another example of an adopted name that literally means “Father of the Turks.”

\(^{4^8}\) The desire to break from the past was so serious that, after it was made illegal, several Turks were executed for continuing to wear the fez.

\(^{4^9}\) Müftüler-Baç, “Through the Looking Glass: Turkey in Europe.” p. 28-29
The second major reform was a redefinition of Turkish geography itself. Atatürk did not want the new Republic to be seen as the small remainder of a failed empire. To prevent the desire for irredentism, Atatürk emphasized the integrity of the Republic’s new borders. Turkey was framed as a state that was not multi-ethnic (as it had been under the Ottoman Empire’s Millet system), but linguistically, culturally and ethnically homogenous. Of course, this ideology has caused many problems for minority groups residing in Turkey, and continues to do so to this day.

This desire for a new territorial integrity was also deeply intertwined with the European integration process. Atatürk sought to emphasize the importance of the new Turkish identity, totally breaking from Ottoman history. Instead, there were several attempts to link a Turkish identity with a pre-Ottoman past, looking to ancient Anatolian civilizations. One potential explanation is that:

“The Ottoman empire, of course, had come to an end at the hands of the European powers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. From this perspective, once Turkey became a truly European country, (…), no one, at home or abroad, would dare challenge the indivisibility of Turkish borders and the homogenous/secular character of the Turkish state.”

50 The Millet system was a pluralistic approach to government which allowed ethno-religious confessional communities to rule themselves in terms of “personal law” for acts committed within their own communities. For example, Jews were under the jurisdiction of Ottoman law and Halakha law, Muslims fell under Ottoman law and Sharia law, etc.

51 For a long time after the establishment of the Republic, Turkey sought to “Turkify” all of its newly consolidated citizens. The Kurdish people, who live primarily in the southeast of Turkey, bordering Iraq, Iran and Syria, make up one of Turkey’s largest minority groups. For decades, the Kurds were referred to as “Mountain Turks” in an attempt to enforce the idea of an ethnically homogenous state. It was also illegal to create Kurdish-language media or to use Kurdish in schools. This is highly significant, as approximately fifteen to twenty five percent of citizens are Kurds. The wide variation in the amount of Kurds in Turkey is affected by the stigma which continues to be attached to Kurdishness. Many Kurds or mixed-race Kurds choose to conceal their ethnic identity, a practice common among many of Turkey’s minority groups.

The goal of accession to the European Union is therefore a continuation of this construction of identity according to the Sociological Institutionalist Approach. In actually becoming a member of the European Union, Turkey would finally be recognized as a true European state, rather than a non-European “other”. As the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs website states, “Europe is our common home that we have built by uniting around common norms, principles and values.”\(^5\) Turkey perceives itself very much to be a European state, and accession would represent a completion of Atatürk’s European-oriented goals. This is certainly something with a deep-rooted meaning for the Turks, as Atatürk is still revered for his role in founding the Republic.

As presented so far, both the Rational-Choice and Sociological Institutionalist approaches can explain Turkey’s desire to join the European Union. Turkey continues to seek EU accession even after major delays and the numerous barriers put in place to its membership -- very little progress has been made forward in the past few years. From a Rational-Choice perspective it can also be argued that this stagnation has led Turkey to turn more towards its neighboring countries as an alternative which supports Turkey’s desire for growth. Yet, large amounts of resources are still dedicated to seeking EU membership. From the sociological approach perspective, one would assume that the general European rejection of Turks as non-Europeans, their status as “the Other” in Europe, and decreasing Turkish public desire to join the EU would lead to a redefinition of Turkish self-identity away from something that is largely European.\(^5\) An explanation is needed as to why Turkey continues this Sisyphean path to EU membership and the Historical Institutionalist model can help fill in this gap.

\(^5\) Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Relations Between Turkey and the European Union.”
\(^5\) Camyar and Tagma, “Why Does Turkey Seek European Union Membership?”.

Tristan Hicks
From the lens of Historical Institutionalism, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I as well as Turkey’s abandonment of political neutrality in 1945 are the critical junctures when Turkey decided to go beyond simply modeling its institutions after the West, to having a full political and military alliance with the West. These decisions were reinforced by Turkey’s receipt of Marshall Plan aid to modernize its economy after the war, even though Turkey’s participation in the war only began very late in the conflict. With ever-increasing positive interactions, this new diplomatic orientation was repeatedly strengthened, beginning with Turkey’s joining the Organization for European Economic Development (predecessor to the OECD) in 1948.

What is important to note is that Turkey could have easily oriented itself economically in another direction with countries to its south and east. There were even some minor attempts at doing so but Turkey remained largely Western-facing. The interactions with Europe strengthened the security and economy of the Turkish state significantly, making it increasingly difficult for Turkey to change paths diplomatically due to the already deeply-established relationship with European states.55

Of course, the idea of path dependency is useful in explaining why Turkey has gone to such great efforts to join the EU, but those efforts will only continue with positive reinforcement. As will be discussed in more detail later, the difficulty of entering the EU as well as the numerous obstacles which have slowed down accession to its current crawl serves as a form of discouragement on this path. An archived record of a previous statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shows the manner in which the Ministry saw Turkey in this Historical Institutional approach.

55 Ibid.
“Turkey is the only pluralist secular democracy in the Moslem [sic] world and has always attached great importance to developing its relations with other European countries. (...) Turkey began “Westernizing” its economic, political and social structures in the 19th century. Following the First World War and the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, it chose Western Europe as the model for its new secular structure. Turkey has ever since closely aligned itself with the West. (...) It was therefore only natural for Turkey to complete her close political cooperation with Western Europe in the economic area.”56

Turkey’s recent attention has increasingly turned to its Middle Eastern neighbors, especially Iran, Iraq and Syria. This may affect future efforts in Turkey’s attempt at accession into the European Union. Primarily, the Turkish government may begin to see EU accession as a ‘sunk cost’, particularly with the stagnation of the accession process. A new era of increased diplomacy with the Middle East has already been shown to be highly beneficial, as Turkey is in a position to be a regional leader, rather than one state among 28 other EU member states.

II. Sticking Points

There have been numerous sticking points in Turkey’s quest to be recognized as a European state. The European Union’s constitutional crisis of 2005, the Cyprus issue, the state of the Turkish economy, issues due to the Republic’s massive population and concerns over mass immigration are all major issues in the accession process. Turkey’s questionable record on human rights, including women’s rights, minority rights, freedom of speech and the Armenian question are concerns as well. There are also many non-diplomatic issues, such as Turkey’s

European (or non-European) identity, and public opinion across the European Union that opposes Turkish membership. These will all be discussed in detail.

In the early 2000s, the “Convention on the Future of Europe” met to help solidify and unify the relations between European states. On 29 May 2004, a treaty establishing the Constitution of Europe was signed by the governments of all EU member states and three candidates. The purpose of the Constitution was to officially declare the functions and purpose of the EU, reaffirm basic human rights, and determine the policies and methodology of European Union actions.\(^{57}\)

After the treaty was officially approved, it had to be taken individually to each country and approved in the manner required to modify each respective country’s constitution. A great shock came when Dutch and French voters voted down the proposed Constitution of Europe, locking the EU in stalemate.\(^{58}\)

The “crisis” came from concerns that many needed reforms would not be made, and worries about disharmony within European populations concerning European integration. Expansion was one of the major concerns of “no” voters, as many countries (particularly Austria, Germany, Greece, Cyprus and France) do not want to see Turkey enter the EU.

The status of Cyprus is also major issue in the European Union, particularly for the member states of Greece and Cyprus. For the unacquainted, the Republic of Cyprus is a small island nation in the easternmost expanse of the Mediterranean Sea. The population is less than one million people, if both sides of the island are included. The island is approximately four-fifths Greek Cypriot and one-fifth Turkish Cypriot. Officially, the entire Cyprian territory

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belongs to the Republic of Cyprus, an EU member state since 2004, although the northeastern third of the island is under the possession of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Since Northern Cyprus is under control of a regime that is claimed to be illegitimate by the European Union, the north does not actually abide by EU rules (although Turkish Cypriots are considered EU citizens).  

Cyprus remains an international zone of conflict, with UN peacekeepers patrolling the “Green Line” which separates north from south. The issue is highly contentious – Turkey will not allow Cypriot aircraft and vessels to go over Turkish airspace or into its waters, and it blocks trade with the island nation. On the other hand, the European Union refuses to see Northern Cyprus as a legitimate state, which prevents it from trading freely with the EU member states. Turkey continues to prop up Northern Cyprus despite EU demands, while the EU has so far seemed unwilling to allow Northern Cyprus to normalize economic relations with Europe.

Cyprus joined the EU on 1 May 2004, and its accession has been an issue of great contention with the Republic of Turkey. Cyprus is now able to use its potential EU veto power to gain various concessions from the Turks. The speed at which Cyprus acceded, as well as its geographical location is offensive to many Turks. Primarily, Turkey has been forging relationships with European supranational economic organizations for nearly half a century, while Cyprus is fairly new to the game in that regard. Turkey is a massive country, but Cyprus now holds veto power over Turkish entry into the EU. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan once complained to the EU that "You prefer 600,000 Greeks above 70 million Turks. You really do not understand us." Second, Turkey’s right to membership is often disputed by right-wing politicians and citizens in Europe who claim that Turkey is “not European”. Turkey is located

partially in continental Europe. Cyprus lays so far east in the sea that it is directly north of Israel, yet its “Europeanness” is not questioned. This is in part due to Cyprus’ historical association with Greece.61

Turkish politicians, even if they desire to do so, cannot openly support the dissolution of Northern Cyprus or the official Turkish recognition of the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey is unfortunately locked into path dependency in its support of Northern Cyprus, which is not internationally recognized as a legitimate state. Regardless of the original reasons contributing to the creation of Northern Cyprus, the mythos created around the continued Turkish support of Turkish Cypriots is so strong that it has created ideological inflexibility. It is related to pan-Turkish, Grecophobic institutions, as well as a willingness to act unilaterally on issues of national concern.

Northern Cyprus is a classic and one of the clearest examples of Historical Institutionalism for Turkey. Path dependency in this case is not only related to hazy ideas surrounding nationalist ideology, but the literal material support of the institution that is the Northern Cypriot government and territory. A critical juncture on the Cypriot issue is unlikely, given that it would necessitate abandoning decades of socialization that have convinced Ankara of the righteousness of its unilateral support of the Northern Cypriot state. On the other hand, developmental pathways opening towards a “soft solution” to allow resolution of the conflict without having to contradict decades of Turkish political posturing could offer hope.

61 Particularly in 19th and 20th century historiography, Greece has seen much more recognition as being the ‘founding civilization’ of Europe and European democracy. Cyprus’ relationship with Greece seems to cause people to perceive the island to be inherently European. Yet, throughout history there have been many definitions of Europe.: social constructivists would argue that this identity is, of course, invented. Yet, without a ‘critical juncture’, Cyprus will continue to be seen as European. It has been interesting to observe the economic crisis in the Eurozone, because those in economically powerful European states have been increasingly recognizing Greece, Spain and other failing economies as “Southern European”, and thus inherently different from Western and Central European states. This definition does have an existence in history, but it has not been heavily emphasized since the Cold War, which divided Europe into distinctive “Western” and “Eastern” camps.
The Turkish economy, combined with its population, also proves to be an area of concern for membership in the European Union. Although the Turkish per capita GDP growth rate has outpaced the average growth rate of the EU-28 states for all but one year in the past decade, the actual GDP per capita ranks as the fourth lowest among EU member or candidate states. If it would successfully accede to the European Union, Turkey would make up approximately 13% of the EU’s population. Turkey would become the second largest country in the EU with nearly 74 million citizens. The only larger country is Germany, with approximately 82 million – for the moment. Projections show that the population of Turkey will be increasing while the populations of most Western states will be decreasing, enabling Turkey to become the most heavily populated country in the European Union.

The primary fear is that Turkey’s size would enable it to greatly influence decision-making processes in EU institutions. Moreover, there is a belief that Turkish immigration would take away jobs from European citizens. Turkey has a very young population by European standards, and Europe is faced with an aging labor force with low replacement rates. Erhan states that “this fear is baseless for the decisions of the EU regarding Turkey already include strong permanent safeguard measures. Long transition periods give each member state the right to prevent immigrant flows from Turkey for several years after membership is granted.”

The fear is likely compounded by the fact that the largest proportion of non-EU citizens living in the EU-28 is comprised of Turkish nationals. Germany itself has approximately 3 million Turkish nationals within its borders. This may be the reason for such heavy resistance by Germany

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towards Turkey’s accession to the EU: there is a tendency of many German citizens to view Turks as unassimilated outsiders.⁶⁵

Beyond the Constitutional crisis, the Cyprus debate, and population/economic concerns, human rights and minority rights play a dramatic role in Turkey’s perception by other European countries. Human rights are the area in which Turkey’s image is darkest. Although Turkish women have had the right to vote and run for election for nearly eight decades, they are still far from equal with men in Turkey. Turkey is ranked 92⁶⁶th in gender equality, out of 187 states surveyed by the United Nations Development Program. The ranking is calculated by accounting for the maternal mortality ratio, adolescent fertility rates, seats in the national parliament, differences in secondary education levels, female labor force participation, contraceptive prevalence, prenatal visits, attended births and total fertility rate. Turkish women have a lower rate of labor force participation than Iran and Oman.⁶⁶

Domestic abuse is also disturbingly high, with 42% of women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence at some point during their lives. Only around one percent of women who are abused seek help with shelters or the child protection services.⁶⁷ This may be partially influenced by the shortage of women’s shelters, as well as social taboos and fears of retribution.

Freedom of speech and the right of assembly are also weak in Turkey. “Article 301” is an infamous section of Turkish law which makes it illegal to “insult Turkishness”. What is

⁶⁵ Racism against Turkish nationals or Germans of Turkish descent is quite common in Germany. Nearly fifty years ago, the gastarbeiter or “guest worker” program caused the initial influx of Turkish workers into Germany, in order to provide labor for Germany’s growing economy. For various reasons, many Turks are perceived to be as outsiders who have no interest in Germany, and are just interested in ‘freeloading’ from Germany’s welfare system.


“Turkishness,” exactly? With such a vague definition, the law could be broadly interpreted by the government to suppress dissent. Those punished under the law could receive up to three years in prison. The punishment would be increased by one-third for any Turkish citizen who insults Turkishness beyond the borders of the Republic.

The law was amended in 2008 under guidance of the EU Enlargement Strategy. Maximum penalties have been reduced to two years, the punishment for violation abroad has been removed, and the Turkish Ministry of Justice now has to approve cases before prosecution. There are still numerous other ways that the Turkish government is able to persecute dissent, especially among journalists. Under Article 285, violating the confidentiality of an investigation is punishable by one to three years in prison. This was used widely to persecute journalists during the “Ergenekon” trials. Ergenekon is a conspiracy that is believed to have the intention to overthrow the Turkish government by spreading chaos throughout Turkey. Investigative journalists were some of the initial researchers on the case, uncovering much of the information before the police did. Yet, for publishing this information, they were sentenced to jail, a sentence that automatically increased by fifty percent if the information reached publication.

“Unauthorized demonstrations” are also illegal, and this law is often used to squash anti-government demonstrations. Anti-terrorism laws are often used to silence dissent as well.

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69 To date, over 300 individuals have been charged by the Turkish government as a part of this conspiracy to destabilize the Turkish state. The Ministry of Justice has been using Ergenekon as essentially a blanket term – those who were prosecuted have belonged to a large number of different organizations. Ergenekon’s actually existence as a unified organization remains up for debate. Supporters of the current AKP government claim that Ergenekon is a real organization, while many of those in the political opposition parties see the Ergenekon conspiracy as something invented by the AKP as a means to persecute its enemies.
71 One example: eighteen students from Istanbul Technical University were sentenced to fifteen months in prison for protesting against Prime Minister Erdoğan’s visit in 2008. “Turkish Police Clamp down on Student Protest,”
Journalists can be accused of spreading terrorist propaganda for even speaking positively about Kurdish political parties (parties which are often accused of being involved with the PKK, the “Kurdistan Workers’ Party”, a terrorist organization). Many of these prosecutions seem nearly unbelievable to Western observers. In 2010, a twenty-one year old male was sentenced to nine years and nine months in prison for “‘resisting an officer,’ ‘making propaganda on behalf of a terrorist organization’ and ‘committing a crime in the name of a terrorist organization.’” The primary evidence held against him was that he was found on a side-street near a dispersed PKK demonstration with *half a lemon in his pocket*.72

Human rights should be the most important issue to be solved in accession to the European Union, and Turkey’s ongoing human rights violations stand out distinctly in the white-washed and well-marketed European Union. These violations contribute to the historically recurring stereotype that Turks are “barbarians” and “non-European”.73 The sentiment has increased with the end of the Cold War upon the removal of the West’s bogeyman: the Soviet Union. Relations are changing, as many begin to see Turkey as the newest “Other” in Europe.74 This perception is found across the full spectrum of European societies, from ordinary people to former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who claimed that Turkey is a “Middle Eastern country.”75 European popular support for Turkey’s accession is also quite low: from 1996 to

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72 The police claimed that the lemon was used to reduce the effects of pepper spray. Nine years and nine months was a significantly reduced sentence from the original prosecutor’s recommendation of forty-eight years in prison. Gökçer Tahincioğlu, “Weapon for Terrorism: Half a Lemon,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, July 7, 2010, http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=terrorism-gear-half-a-lemon-2010-03-07.

73 The idea of what is “Europe” and what is not “Europe” is in a state of constant flux, and has been for as long as the idea of a Europe has existed. With a constantly changing definition of Europe comes a constantly changing definition of the “Other”. For a deeper insight into this process, read Chapter 1 of Selcen Oner, *Turkey and the European Union: The Question of European Identity* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2011).


2008, EU citizens in favor of Turkish accession averaged between 28% and 36%. On the other hand, those not in favor of accession average between 44% and 59%, a proportion that has been slowly increasing over time.\textsuperscript{76}

Unfortunately, Turkey is less likely to solve its human rights violations and thus be seen as more European country without pro-human rights pressures created by the accession process. If the accession process continues to be deadlocked, it may remove the incentives for increased support of human rights and Turkey may continue to be perceived as the ‘barbarian’ Other.

Further socialization in European institutions as well as pressure from Turkish society towards democratization and the support of human rights does offer hope in reforming non-democratic tendencies found within certain aspects of the current administration. The AKP and particularly Erdoğan have been relatively inflexible in expanding Turkish democracy, offering up only small concessions to the general public.\textsuperscript{77} Yet, these concessions show that the administration is now more greatly aware of public opposition to its policies. A rational institutionalist perspective argues that, should the AKP wish to maintain power (particularly if a successful opposition party manages to be formed before the next elections), it must seek to fulfill its preferences of maintaining its power by being more inclusive of society. Moreover, greater exposure to liberal-democratic ideals can alter the preferences of the AKP from the grassroots, reorienting it with its changing base of support.\textsuperscript{78} Still, the widespread summer protests of


\textsuperscript{77} One such consolation was the September 30 “democratization package” (which was created unilaterally by the AKP without consultation with any opposition parties). This package made some small steps towards democratization, such as legalizing the use of the Kurdish language in private schools and re-legalizing Kurdish names which include the letters Q, W and X. These are small but important steps towards reducing the policy of forced assimilation. On the other hand, no rights were given to improve the situation of the Alevis: the only change concerning that group was the renaming of a university after an Alevi hero.

\textsuperscript{78} Sociological institutionalism assumes that preferences are capable of evolution. Since this theory looks at all aspects of society from macro to micro, should Turkish society change, the AKP will naturally change with it. Of
2013 show that if the AKP is becoming more democratic, it is happening too slowly for political minorities.

III. Is Turkey on target to join the EU?

It appears that Turkey’s accession process is currently at a standstill. Since 2009 the Republic has only opened one new chapter of the acquis. The Cyprus standoff is certainly having an effect, as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, backed heavily by Turkey, and the Republic of Cyprus have been largely unwilling to cooperate with one another. There is also less incentive to fast-track membership due to the significant changes required in Turkish law and society, as well as the fact that the EU remains unsure about how much budgetary support will be available for the accession process. The global economic crisis as well as the parliamentary elections in Turkey during June of 2011 did much to distract attention from the accession process. New political leadership in the EU and potentially new leadership in Turkey after the 2014 Presidential elections are unlikely but potential opportunities to free up Turkey’s status in the accession process.

Turkey’s new role as a regional power may also have the effect of reducing the urge of Turkish state authorities to align with Europe. Although Turkey has had ever closer relations with Europe over the last two centuries, its citizens still identify themselves as Turkish first, not European. In this sense, Turkish nationalism is focused more internally than externally. The “zero-problems with our neighbors” policy of Turkey’s Foreign Minister, Prof. Ahmet
Davutoğlu, has done much to create positive regional relations – and generate Turkish national pride *beyond* an orientation to the West.\(^{82}\)

In general, public opinion in Turkey seems to be turning away from the European Union. In a 2011 survey, only 19\% of Turks interviewed believed that Turkey should work closest with the European Union on international matters, while 20\% believed it should work with the Middle East. The result was even more anti-EU in the preceding year: for 2010, only 13\% of Turks sought an EU relationship as the best answer to international matters, while 20\% wanted an orientation toward the Middle East. Desire to work with the Middle East doubled between 2008/2009 and 2010/2011. This seems to coincide with the time in which the global economic recession hit hardest.\(^{83}\)

**IV. The Accession Process’ Effects on Turkey**

Since the 1990s, Turkey’s move towards accession has resulted in countless changes in the Republic’s political and legal structure. Numerous reforms in promotion of democratic institutional and human rights have been initiated. While many of these reforms are on shaky ground, or are slow to find implementation, they are still positive measures.\(^{84}\) Many of the archaic and discriminatory laws against ethnic minorities have been removed (resulting in the tenuous introduction of minority language usage into the media). The political power of the military has been greatly reduced, a particularly important measure for Turkish democracy.\(^{85}\)

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\(^{82}\) Interestingly, the "zero problems" policy is rooted in Turkish nationalism as well. This policy seeks to reverse the thinking of the old Turkish expression, "Turkey has water on three sides and enemies on four." By creating positive relations with former enemies and former colonial subjects, Davutoğlu’s policies have been fairly effective. Since 2012 there have been some setbacks, leading to an increased Turkish isolation in the region, but these are reversible if handled effectively. Davutoğlu, Ahmet, "Turkey’s Zero Problems Foreign Policy," *TurkishPress.com*, June 9, 2010, http://www.turkishpress.com/news.asp?id=352745.

\(^{83}\) Transatlantic Trends, *Topline Data 2013* (German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2013). Q33, P. 53

\(^{84}\) Erhan, "The Role of Turkey-EU Relations in the ‘New’ Turkish Foreign Policy," 7.

\(^{85}\) The military has held three coups in the past century, overthrowing the Turkish government when it was deemed to have become undemocratic or anti-secular. Holding a military coup in the name of democracy may seem strange to an outsider, but it is nearly a Turkish tradition at this point. After each coup, the military never
persecution of opposition intellectuals, artists and politicians has decreased as well. There is still quite a way to go in order to bring Turkey into line with the acquis in order to be considered a European democracy, yet Turkey has been doing quite well in improving its system of governance. The path towards greater democratization has had a positive impact on Turkish politics and its relations with its neighbors because it is creating more transparency and slowly turning Turkey into a more open society.

Furthermore, Turkey now has more economic connections to the European Union than it ever had in history. Its economy is expanding at an unprecedented rate and its per-capita GDP growth is competitive. When the Soviet Union was dissolved, Turkey was a relatively impoverished state clinging on to the borders of Europe. Now it has an increasingly well-educated workforce, strong domestic and export industries as well as trade connections that span the globe.

Finally, in terms of diplomacy, the process of participating strongly in European affairs has done much to raise the confidence and foreign policy skills of the Turkish leadership, and the connections generated through these interactions will continue for decades, barring some sort of major fall-out in relations. The experience these leaders have gained in diplomacy is being put to good use in relations with other countries beyond the borders of the European Union.

The following three chapters will focus on the changes in Turkish foreign policy towards three of its geopolitical neighbors: Iraq, Iran and Russia. Turkey’s changing approach to these individual countries has expressed itself very differently in each case. In all of these relations, Turkey’s desire to increase its significance on the world stage and its role as a regional power is

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held power for any extended period of time, and held free elections to restore democracy, yet some of the more authoritarian laws implemented under military rule have remained. Additionally, in 1997 the military initiated a process forcing the resignation of the Prime Minister, although this was done without suspending the constitution or dissolving the parliament – therefore this is considered in Turkish historiography to be a “postmodern coup”. 

Tristan Hicks
readily apparent. Many of the changes in Turkey’s foreign policy towards these countries have occurred in the past few years, broadly concurrent to Turkish doubts about its ability to enter the European Union.

While it is tenuous to claim that there is a direct cause-and-effect between accession-minded modifications in Turkish policies and changes in Turkey’s relations with non-EU neighbors, the indirect effects have been plentiful. To this, Rational-Choice Institutionalism can provide some insight. Assuming that Turkey has fixed preferences – the desire to enhance its power and influence – then decreasing political efforts towards a stalled accession process are completely rational. Within the changing institutional framework of the Turkish desire to elevate the country’s status, what once seemed a very attractive option (EU membership) now seems untenable; thus, developing greater relations with neighboring countries and competing against other regional powers for influence becomes the best possible means for goal-attainment within the institutional preferences of the Turkish state.86

86 Some effects of the EU accession process on Turkey’s relations with its non-EU neighbors can be demonstrated more clearly than others. For example, increasing the political status and rights of Kurds within Turkey was largely influenced by external demands from EU member states. As Kurds grew in status, Turkey became more willing to work with Kurds in Northern Iraq, which has influenced (both positively and negatively, as will be detailed in the following chapter) its relations with Iraq. On the other hand, can one truly claim that if Turkey had successfully gained EU member status it would not have taken advantage of the tremendous economic opportunities offered by trade with Iraq? Accession may have made trade with Iraq less attractive to Turkish businessmen compared to the wealthier economies to the north. Many of the new foreign policy developments are viewed positively by the European Union, as Turkey’s actions somewhat reflect the EU’s own neighborhood vision. The European Commission has gone so far as to openly praise Turkish regional action. Nathalie Tocci, “Turkey’s Neighbourhood Policy and EU Membership: Squaring the Circle of Turkish Foreign Policy,” International Journal: Canada’s Journal of Global Policy Analysis 67, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 78.
CHAPTER 3: Iraq, Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government

This first case study is focused on Turkey’s relations with Iraq, which have changed drastically since the early 2000s, particularly since the onset of the Iraq War in 2003. Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire Turkish-Iraqi relations have gone from a long period of cordial to moderate contact during the Cold War, followed by military conflict with terrorist forces within Iraq, ending with highly positive cooperation between Turkey and the Iraqi government. This chapter will provide greater insight into this history, focusing primarily on their post-2003 relations: the level of cooperation between Turkey and Iraq, particularly the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), is truly surprising given the historical background.

Turkey and Iraq share a long and ancient history with one another due to geographical proximity. Both countries are part of the Tigris and Euphrates river basins and their populations have been intermingling for ages before the creation of the modern nation-state system. In more modern history, Turkey and Iraq are both offspring of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, created at the end of World War I.  

After the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres which led to creation of Iraq, both Turkey and Iraq fell into a sort of ‘natural bond’ over their shared interests. This does not mean that the countries were natural allies *per se*, but it implies that their commonalities lead to shared perspectives on a number of issues concerning their geopolitical and economic interests. Furthermore, for much of the 20th century both were politically secular states headed by Sunni leaders opposed to the spread of political Islam. They also experienced some mutual threats, such as the intrusion of political influence from Syria and Iran. Finally, they both had security threats to their safety and territorial sovereignty due to their large Kurdish populations, concentrated along the border.

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87 The countries were divided in 1920 under the Treaty of Sèvres. There was some turmoil following this treaty and the official border between these countries was not fully finalized until 1925 under the League of Nations.
between southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq.⁸⁸ Due to the results of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, the Kurds remain one of the world’s largest ethnic groups that do not have their own state. The threat of secession and irredentism has been a constant pressure on states in the transnational ‘Kurdistan’ region since the end of World War I.

The decades between 1932 and 1958 were probably the most friendly period of relations between Turkey and Iraq since their creation. After sufficient time had passed to allow the dust to settle over the Turkish and Iraqi border dispute of the early 1920s the countries found themselves in an alliance, codified by the Saadabad Treaty and the Baghdad Pact.

The Saadabad Treaty was signed in 1937 between Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. It was an agreement designed to preserve peace in the region through the pursuit of several policies which would help solidify the territorial integrity and sovereignty of these newly formed states. Signatories agreed to pursue a policy of non-intervention in one another’s domestic affairs and respect the inviolability of their borders. It was also a multilateral non-aggression pact and an agreement to work together to resolve any international disputes without the use of military forces between the signatory states. Ratified in 1938, the treaty was automatically extended in 1943 as none of the signatories sought to repeal it.

The Baghdad Pact of 1955 was a defensive organization created between Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran and Great Britain. Similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the goal of the Pact was to ensure peace, mutual military defense and to prevent communist intrusion into the Middle East.⁸⁹

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⁸⁹ Great Britain’s participation in this pact stemmed from the desire not only to prevent communist intrusion into the Middle East but to maintain British influence in the region.
The Suez Crisis in 1956 led to the downfall of the Baghdad Pact. The British and French invasion in response to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal was perceived negatively in the Middle East. Due to the Pact, Iraq was required to support British military action, a highly unpopular move in the eyes of the Iraqi populace. The Baghdad Pact was discontinued with the 14 July Revolution, the coup d’état which overthrew the government of Iraq. The revolution occurred, in part, due to the desire of Iraqis to resist the intrusion of Western imperialism. At the time Pan-Arabism was a highly influential ideology (and continues to be in certain respects – such as the pan-Arab support of a free Palestine). The reigning Hashemite monarchy had been installed by Great Britain, and thus was a symbol of Western imperialism from the Pan-Arab perspective.

The 14 July Revolution led to the installment of General Abdul Karim Qasim as Prime Minister of Iraq. Qasim’s rise to power marked the beginning of Soviet influence in Iraq. One of Qasim’s first actions was to withdraw Iraq from the Baghdad Pact and establish relations with the Soviet Union. Iraq remained under Soviet influence for the following decades. As Turkey was aligned with the West, this created moderate tensions between Turkey and Iraq.

I. From the Persian Gulf War to the 2003 Invasion

The aftermath of the Persian Gulf War (1990-1991) created strong tensions between Iraq and Turkey. During the conflict, Turkey had allowed United Nations’ forces to use Turkish airbases to fly missions into Iraq as a response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The conflict was short-lived and a ceasefire was quickly signed. After the end of belligerence, internal uprisings in the Kurdish north and the Shiite-dominated southern communities led to violence between rebels and the Iraqi Republican guard. Hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees fled towards the

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90 After the dissolution of the Pact, remaining members reformed under the new moniker of CENTO, the Central Treaty Organization.
91 Hasan Turunc, Turkey and Iraq, Turkey’s Global Strategy (London School of Economics, May 2011), 40.
relatively safe borders. A “safe haven” zone was created to protect refugees under the military support of France, the US and the UK along the latitudinal line of the 36° parallel. This line ran just south of Arbil. This area was filled predominantly with Kurdish refugees, further concentrating the Kurdish population in the area.

This safe haven for refugees also quickly became a safe haven for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, commonly known as the PKK (Kurdish: “Parti Karkerani Kurdistan”), an organization which led an armed struggle against the Turkish state in pursuit of an independent Kurdish state. Northern Iraq was a prime environment for recruiting, training and hiding the PKK.

The power vacuum left by the Gulf War in northern Iraq forced Turkish officials to reluctantly deal with Iraqi Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq. An inability of the central Iraqi government to maintain power in the Kurdish regions forced Turkey to deal directly with Kurds, which was particularly onerous from the Turkish perspective due to the PKK’s use of this mountainous region as its base. In the following decades, tens of thousands of Turks and Kurds would be killed along both sides of the border from terrorist attacks led by the PKK and the ensuing Turkish military retaliation. Needless to say, relations between Turkey and Iraq were negative, particularly with northern Iraqi government officials. Attacks led by Turkish military forces against the PKK were not limited to Turkish territory. Under a hot pursuit agreement Ankara made with Saddam Hussein in 1984. Turkish military forces were allowed to strike PKK forces within Iraq. This was used dozens of times over the following decades. The most recent strike by Turkish forces on PKK forces came as late as the autumn of 2011.  

Constant threats to the safety and integrity of the Turkish state have institutionalized Kurdophobia within Turkish society and the Turkish political elite. This has been a very difficult

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92 Tocci, “Turkey’s Neighbourhood Policy and EU Membership: Squaring the Circle of Turkish Foreign Policy,” 71.
habit to break: while relations between Turkey and its Kurdish citizens have greatly improved, a constant undercurrent of distrust and hostility still remains.

Beyond military involvement with terrorists within Iraq and Turkish frustrations over Iraq’s perceived uselessness in quelling terrorism, there were other conflicts as well. Turkey lies upstream from Iraq in the Euphrates and Tigris river basins, and due to the presence of numerous hydroelectric dams in southeastern Turkey, Ankara has control over water flows into Iraq. This puts Iraq in a weak position in terms of power dynamics, occasionally requiring diplomatic intervention on the part of the Iraqis to attempt to increase vital water flow. As Turkey has been experiencing a period of positive relations with Iraq over the past decade, water issues have changed from an area of conflict to one of cooperation.

II. The Iraq War Period

During the years prior to the American invasion, economic restrictions against Iraq put Turkey in a difficult position. Iraq was an emerging market to which Turkey wanted access, yet it was under heavy sanctions, restricting Turkey’s ability to trade with Iraq. A prospective war would destroy much of the infrastructure needed for future economic cooperation. Moreover, the regional instability which war could cause was seen as a dangerous possibility on Turkey’s doorstep. Not wanting to become directly involved in the conflict, Ankara conceded to allow its airspace to be open to Coalition air traffic.

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Domestic support for any military action against Iraq was extremely low, with approximately 90\% of Turks opposed.\textsuperscript{96} Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu was aware that Turkey would be unable to stop the invasion, but felt the need to protect its interests in the region while avoiding alienation of its Western allies. Therefore, although the Turkish parliament rejected the opening of a northern front to the war, it allowed US air access to help control the PKK threat and to balance out Kurdish ambitions. Besides simple strategic interests, Kumral argues that northern Iraq was also a “matter of identity for AKP officials.” “Even though [Erdoğan] was morally against the war, the government would do whatever necessary in order to protect Turkey’s interests. (…) He opted for a mixed approach in order to achieve economic and security interests without frustrating socio-political and ethno-religious concerns.”\textsuperscript{97}

The refusal of Turkey to succumb to American pressure to join the “Coalition of the Willing” and invade Iraq was a somewhat unexpected policy decision and an early overture of the more independent foreign policy in Turkey under the rule of the AKP. In contrast to its behavior during the Cold War, Ankara’s politicians felt much less pressure to behave as “yes-men” to American requests. The Turkish economy had grown enough and Turkey’s regional relations were stable enough that it was sufficiently confident to act independently. From a Historical Institutionalist perspective one can see the slow growth of a new “developmental pathway.” The Turkish \textit{confidence} to pursue preferences which opposed those of longtime allies may appear as new, but it had been growing slowly since the end of the Cold War. Originating in the Tanzimat period, Turkey and its defunct Ottoman predecessor have generally tried to meet the desires of their Western allies. As Turkey has “come into its own” following the Cold War, it

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 93.  
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 95.
has been moving away from a strictly Western-seeking orientation to one that is more reflective of self-interest.

The rejection of America’s request to join the Coalition of the Willing is one of several moves Turkey has made as it demonstrates its new role as a regional power. One important aspect of any regional power is that a country must have influence in shaping the regional order; in this regard Turkey has become more proactive in its dealings with its neighbors and has taken a position of promoting regional dialogue. For example, preceding the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Turkey created the Iraq’s Neighbors Initiative forum with the states of Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria. The purpose of this forum was to discuss concerns about the Iraq war and exhaust any possible options that could be found to prevent belligerence.98 As an added benefit, this forum also served to build relations between countries as well as to help offset the chance of the United States ‘redrawing’ the Middle East.99 Turkey also hosted the fifth meeting of the Conference International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq in Istanbul in 2007. Therefore, Turkey has begun planting the institutional seeds of a more proactive and involved neighborhood policy.

Furthermore Turkey is also pursuing its role as a regional power through economic integration and the “promotion of the idea of comprehensive and indivisible security for the entire region. Turkey believes in and promotes a nonhierarchical understanding of security (…) in the sense that the security of a Palestinian should have the same value as the security of an Israeli.”100 Turkey has made, with some exceptions, honorable attempts to ensure security and an

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99 Sevilay Kahraman, “Turkey and the European Union in the Middle East: Reconciling or Competing with Each Other?,” Turkish Studies 12, no. 4 (2011): 702.
equal voice for countries in its neighborhood, as well as giving equal consideration to divergent groups within their respective countries.\textsuperscript{101} Ankara’s supposed neutrality has led it to establish itself as a relatively benign regional power. This works to bolster Turkey’s influence which has largely been sustained through ‘soft power’ measures since the rise to power of the AKP.

\textbf{III. A New Direction After the Iraq War}

Since the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, there have been many changes within Iraq, affecting also its neighboring countries. The fall of the Baath regime has upset the Sunni/Shiite balance of power in the Middle East which has allowed Shiite Iran to gain influence in Iraq, creating a sort of proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the country.\textsuperscript{102}

Turkey has come out strongly in support of Iraqi democratization and national reconciliation between Iraq’s Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds. To bolster this image, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu stated during a diplomatic meeting in 2009 with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari that “for Turkey, Iraq is a brotherly country whose stability is our own stability, whose welfare is our own welfare and whose security is our own security.”\textsuperscript{103}

One of the most important steps Turkey has taken in promoting positive bilateral relations along with the stability of Iraq is through the creation of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) in 2009. The HLSCC is a joint council between Turkish and Iraqi cabinet members which helps to coordinate Turkish and Iraqi policy initiatives.\textsuperscript{104} A preliminary meeting was led by Turkish and Iraqi foreign ministers reaffirming both countries commitment to cooperate based on mutual interests before the HLSCC fully went into effect. In its quest to

\textsuperscript{101} Most recently exceptions to this policy have been made in Syria.


\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
enhance its relations with neighbors, Turkey has also created similar councils with Azerbaijan, Greece, Russia, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

In the HLSCC mechanism, regular communication between governments is institutionalized. The Prime Ministers of both countries host a joint ministerial meeting at least once every year. Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Public Works, Defense, Transportation, Internal Affairs, Trade and Energy also meet at least twice yearly and create a plan which is discussed at Ministerial Council meetings. The results of these meetings are then brought before the two Prime Ministers for consideration.105

Beyond increased diplomatic ties with Iraq, the two states have also been drawn closer due to the increasing volume of trade between them. In the Kurdistan Regional Government’s jurisdiction alone Turkey has significant involvement. 1,085 out of 2,241 companies in northern Iraq are Turkish. In 2011 Turkish companies exported $8.3 billion worth of products to Iraq, increasing by 29 percent to $10.7 billion in exports in 2012.106 To date, Iraq is Turkey’s second-largest export partner after Germany, both facilitating positive relations with Iraq and making their maintenance a necessity.107

IV. The Kurdish Problem and the Kurdistan Regional Government

The Kurdish question in Turkey and Iraq has been a source of constant pressure since the creation of these states. In Turkey, because of an ongoing state policy of the rejection of Kurdish identity and the Kurdish refusal to fully assimilate into Turkish culture, the process of a

105 This has influenced the socialization process of Turkish and Iraqi diplomats, leading to much closer bilateral cooperation. These steps have been important due to the unstable nature of Iraq following the 2003 war, and the need for Turkey to build rapport with Iraq’s new regime. Tür, “Economic Relations with the Middle East Under the AKP-Trade, Business Community and Reintegration with Neighboring Zones,” 596.


resolution is still ongoing. Kurdish rights have historically been very restricted in Turkey, including language bans on the use of Kurdish in politics, broadcasting, education and the judicial system. Thanks to pressures from the European Union, under the AKP Turkey has been reforming these policies. In June of 2012 the teaching of the Kurdish language in public schools was legalized.\textsuperscript{108} January of 2013 saw the first legal defense given in a court in the Kurdish language (through a translator).\textsuperscript{109} As of September 1 2013, the Turkish state broadcast organization, Anadolu Agency, even began broadcasting in Kurdish.\textsuperscript{110}

This is a massive shift in the status of Kurdish rights in Turkey. Since the creation of the Republic of Turkey many attempts have been made to fight Kurdish identity, with state officials refusing to even refer to Kurds as Kurds, calling them instead “Mountain Turks.” Until very recently, even referring to a “Kurdistan” region was taboo – the autonomous region in Iraq was called “northern Iraq” or “the north of Iraq” for those who even refused to acknowledge it as a legitimate region. As late as 1995 a Kurdish lawyer was sentenced to three years imprisonment for using the word “Kurdistan” in a published article.\textsuperscript{111} In contrast to the past, Turkey now actively pursues positive relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (although they still show a preference for referring to them as “KRG” rather than directly using the word Kurdistan).

Economic ties between Turkey and the KRG began developing strongly as early as 2006, when the volume of Turkish trade with northern Iraq was expected to reach $3 billion.\textsuperscript{112} This relationship between Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government began to truly blossom

\textsuperscript{112} Kumral, “Denaturalizing the Deep Dilemma,” 106.
over the last five years. Until 2008 Turkey dealt with Iraq in a unitary fashion, going through central government channels for all political and economic measures. Turkey’s ties to the KRG were all facilitated through Baghdad, a measure of Ankara’s support of a unified Iraq.\textsuperscript{113}

The new focus of Ankara on the KRG has been driven by several domestic and international changes. The increased status of Kurds within Turkey due to the seeds of the “Kurdish opening” made Ankara more willing to deal with Kurdish groups.\textsuperscript{114} The reduction of the role of the PKK as a formidable threat to Turkish security was another. The capture of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 and the decline in security threats against Turkey made relations between Turkey and Iraq much more cordial.\textsuperscript{115} Finally, the high level of stability in Iraqi Kurdistan was an inviting situation compared to the uncertainties faced by a struggling regime throughout the rest of Iraq.

While the drastic shift in Turkey’s policy towards the Kurdish question and the KRG were quite surprising to many observers, the change is quite logical when viewed with a Rational-Choice institutionalist perspective. Since Turkey’s inception its institutional preference, above all, has been to maintain territorial control and security along its borders. In this regard, Kurdish rebellion has always been the biggest potential threat.\textsuperscript{116} The weakening of the PKK (an organization which, conveniently for Turkey, managed to concentrate many anti-Turkish Kurdish terrorists) greatly reduced this threat. Seeing the advantage of cooperative rather than


\textsuperscript{114} It seems that the Turkish state finally realized that ignoring or repressing the Kurds would not bring about a solution to the Kurdish question, so enhancing dialogue and Kurdish rights was a much more reasonable policy. Tocci, “Turkey’s Neighbourhood Policy and EU Membership: Squaring the Circle of Turkish Foreign Policy,” 71.


\textsuperscript{116} The perception of Kurdish separatists as a threat is very justifiable. Since 1923 there have been more than thirty separate uprisings across the Kurdish areas in Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq.
combative means to solve the Kurdish question, Turkey has changed its behavior towards Kurds drastically while still maintaining its long-term preferences.

The AKP’s engagement with northern Iraq has had positive effects on Kurds in Turkey and the domestic policies regarding the socio-cultural significance of Kurdish identity have also been reflected back positively in Turkey’s northern Iraq policies.\textsuperscript{117} It has also proven beneficial to Turkey’s relationship with Iraq as a whole. The 2003 Iraq War brought Turkey much closer to Iraq through a common interest in the desire to maintain a united Iraqi state. This is markedly different to the end result of the original Gulf War, which had left a power vacuum in the north of Iraq and enabled the PKK to gain a stronger foothold in the territory, leading to greater security measures and tensions between the two countries.\textsuperscript{118}

In 2007, Iraqi President Talabani made steps forward with Turkey by recognizing its concerns over the PKK and, citing the Iraqi constitution’s ban on independent armed groups, claimed that the PKK either had the option of laying down its arms or leaving Iraq. True cooperation between Turkey and Iraq removed many of the security concerns between both countries.

High-level diplomatic ties have also been on the rise since the 2003 invasion. In 2007, President Abdullah Gül made the first Turkish presidential visit to Iraq since 1967, meeting with the Iraqi President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government.\textsuperscript{119} In 2009, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan and President Gül all visited Iraq. In the same year Iraqi President Talabani came to

\textsuperscript{117} Kumral, “Denaturalizing the Deep Dilemma,” 107.
\textsuperscript{118} Kahraman, “Turkey and the European Union in the Middle East: Reconciling or Competing with Each Other?,” 701.
\textsuperscript{119} Özcan, “Turkish Policy Towards Iraq in 2009,” 115–116.
Istanbul. Turkey has also hosted Shiite leaders Muktada al-Sadr and Ammer al-Hakim, among many other leaders.

The 2010 election process in Iraq became a minor stumbling point for relations due to Turkey’s closer relationship with the Iraqiya list, opponents of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. This led to a temporary cooling of relations with Iraq’s central government.\(^{120}\)

Meanwhile, Turkish relations with the KRG continued to flourish. The opening of Arbil General Consulate on March 29, 2011 marked the end of Turkey’s post-war Iraq policy by expressing Turkish capacity to cooperate with all willing parties. The main principles of Turkey’s Iraq policy remain the same, however, and Turkey still emphasizes the importance of a unified Iraq.\(^{121}\)

Turkish involvement with Iraq is not limited to high-politics, security and economic concerns. Since the end of the Iraq War, Turkish NGOs have been increasingly involved in Iraq. NGOs regularly transport Iraqis to Turkey for medical treatment, assisting orphans within Iraq and helping to rebuild the lives of those who were affected by war. These activities have been well-covered by the Iraqi press, doing much to bolster the Turkish public image – particularly since these NGOs do not limit themselves to Turcoman and Sunni areas but rather have spread out through the entire country.\(^{122}\)

Regardless of Turkish belief in Iraqi territorial unity, its willingness to deal independently with the KRG has ruffled some feathers in Baghdad. One particularly damaging event has been Turkey’s role in offering refuge and residency for Tariq al-Hashimi, the Sunni leader of the Iraqi Islamic Party and opponent to al-Maliki. Al-Hashimi was accused of coordinating paramilitary attacks and was tried in-absentia for murder. In response, al-Maliki expelled the Turkish

\(^{120}\) Duman, “From Crisis to Prospects for Future Cooperation in Iraq.”

\(^{121}\) Ibid.

\(^{122}\) Özcan, “Turkish Policy Towards Iraq in 2009,” 120.
Petroleum Company from Iraq (further shifting Turkish interests to the KRG) and declared Turkey an ‘enemy state’ on April 21, 2012.123

Acting pragmatically under the changed circumstances, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu began organizing talks and meetings with KRG officials in Arbil without the permission of the central Iraqi government.124

Turkey’s closeness to the KRG seems threatening to the central Iraqi government, but thanks to a September 2013 meeting between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdoğan, Turkish Speaker of the Parliament Cemil Çiçek and his Iraqi counterpart Osama al-Nujaifi, Turkey and Iraq have agreed to reinstate bilateral ties. As Ankara reestablishes its links with Baghdad, Turkey is again restoring itself to a unique position: it is the only country in the region with equal access to all major ethnic groups in Iraq.125

Iraqi-Turkish relations appear to be back on track. As the two countries become more politically and economically interdependent, speaking from a Sociological Institutionalist perspective, it is expected that bilateral relations will continue to improve and they will start to adopt common structures, beliefs and procedures which will have a deepening effect on connectivity. While close Turkish-Iraqi relations do not have a strong institutional history, the ‘new’ Iraq has greatly increased the chance of these norms becoming ingrained. At the moment, working with the KRG is the easiest and most Rational-Choice for Turkey, considering the instability in the rest of Iraq. What is essential now is that Turkey continues pursuing its stated preference for Iraqi unity and stability. In this way, Turkey and Iraq’s preferences and therefore

125 This is in contrast to Turkey’s pre-war policy focus which was primarily revolved around Turcoman and later Sunni groups; Aras and Akarçeşme, “Turkey and the Arab Spring,” 48.
goals can converge, rather than comprise separate agendas. Turkey can derive greater long-term benefits from developing institutions of stable and trustworthy political and economic relations with the *entirety* of Iraq, rather than if it just focuses on the Kurdistan region.
CHAPTER 4: Iran and Turkey

This chapter will analyze the ever-changing relations between Iran and Turkey. Iran is Turkey’s most similar neighbor in terms of its geographic features, population and economic status. There is a millennia-old relationship between various incarnations of these states and they have had strong historical influences on one another in terms of culture and geopolitics.\(^\text{126}\) Since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, bilateral relations have run the gamut from strong political and economic alliances to tensions and direct threats.

Little comprehensive literature exists concerning Turkish-Iranian relations since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. That which does mostly focuses on “the Kurdish question and ideological competition.”\(^\text{127}\) One notable exception is Suleyman Elik’s book, *Iran-Turkey Relations 1979-2011*. This book takes a much deeper look at issues of conflict and convergence between Turkey and Iran than constraints allow for the present text. At the risk of oversimplifying a complex topic, the changing relations between Turkey and Iran during Turkey’s rise to regional power status are observed with a broad lens in this study.

There are several ongoing areas of conflict between Turkey and Iran, Iran’s pursuit of a nuclear program being the most significant. The Kurdish question and cross-border Kurdish terrorism have been another source of tension. Turkey’s alliances with Western states, particularly Israel, are another continuing source of contention, especially since the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979.

Turkish secular democracy and the Iranian theocratic semi-democracy act as an ideological backdrop to all Turkish-Iranian relations, although in the past decade ideological differences have been somewhat relieved since the AKP’s rise to power in 2002 and the election

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of moderate Hassan Rouhani to the office of the Iranian presidency on August 3, 2013. Through all of Turkey and Iran’s relations over the past century, one current has remained constant: Sunni Turkey and Shiite Iran are part of an ongoing competition to establish dominance as the main regional power in the Middle East.

I. Modern Historical Background

Relations between Turkey and Iran (then Persia) began on a positive note soon after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. In 1926 the first “Treaty of Friendship” was signed between both states to help ensure one another’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. Unlike Turkish relations with Iraq, there was no border dispute to be settled after the fall of the Ottoman Empire; the border between both states has remained more-or-less unchanged since the Battle of Chaldoran between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires in 1514. The Treaty of Friendship also included proposals to work together in case of internal or cross-border strife caused by non-state actors. Turkey and Iran were both economically impoverished countries and cooperation was seen as a means to help raise themselves out of poverty and to help modernize their societies.

Much like Iraq, Iran was a signatory to the Saadabad Treaty and the Baghdad Pact (which later became the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)). Ultimately CENTO failed in reaching a high level of credibility in reaching its goals. Dissatisfied with CENTO, in July 1964 Iran, Turkey and Pakistan met in Ankara and agreed to set up an organization to promote cooperation between the three countries in cultural, technical and economic fields --beyond the realm of CENTO. The organization was called the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD). Pakistan initially used the organization to try to express its frustration with the Western supply of arms to India, but the other two members sought to tone down its rhetoric. Turkey and Iran were

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128 This was most likely created with the unresolved “Kurdish question” in mind.
129 The Baghdad Pact was originally proposed as Middle Eastern answer to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. See the previous chapter on Iraqi-Turkish relations for greater detail.
reluctant to use the RCD as an organization supplanting CENTO. Rather, they framed their participation in the organization as a means to build common bonds between the three RCD members which could further strengthen CENTO. This tactic was used (rather unsuccessfully) to avoid raising fears or objections from the British.\footnote{It certainly did not help Turkey and Iran’s argument that they forgot to inform Great Britain of their intention to form the RCD until it was already created. \textit{Behçet Kemal Yeşilbursa, “The Formation of RCD: Regional Cooperation for Development,” Middle Eastern Studies 45, no. 4 (July 1, 2009): 640.}}

The RCD in many ways followed the lines of a typical regional cooperation agreement: goals included the free movement of goods, improving rail and air linkages, implementing joint proposed development projects and the abolishment of visa restrictions, etc. Furthermore, the hope was that regional integration would enable Iran, Turkey and Pakistan to prevent Soviet influence and to bolster their independence from Western interference.

Ultimately, the RCD failed – only 17 out of 81 planned economic projects were ever implemented. The fall of the Shah to the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran neutralized any further efforts by the RCD until 1985, when the organization was replaced by the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). ECO was later expanded upon the fall of the Soviet Union. The desire among many of the newly independent states to open themselves up to trade and solidify their sovereignty led to the inclusion of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan into ECO in 1992 alongside its founding members.\footnote{Ibid., 657.} The Economic Cooperation Organization has been much more successful than its predecessors, and ECO members are currently pursuing a strategy of regional integration through the establishment of a common trade market by 2015.

The Islamic revolution of 1979 led to a negative turn in bilateral Iranian-Turkish relations. Iran and Turkey’s relationship has been stymied because of the hard-line religiosity of
the Iranian theocracy as well as Turkey’s (typically) positive relations with Israel. This has resulted in the overturning of decades of institutionalized cooperation and friendship. The Islamic revolution was so thorough that it removed from influence many of the leaders with whom Turkey had developed relationships. Since 1979 the Iranian administration has possessed a strong tendency to view the world through its very distinctive ideological lens; any involvement with the West is seen as tacit or active support of what it views as an oppressive and discriminatory world system led by the United States. Any alliance with the West is also seen as support of the Zionist movement and Israel, Iran’s greatest enemy.

Following the revolution of 1979, relations cooled between Iran and Turkey but did not deteriorate into active conflict. Turkey remained relatively neutral during the Iran-Iraq war, which prevented any further erosion. Until the mid-2000s, there was an “asymmetry of interest” between the two states due to differing levels of importance Iran and Turkey ascribed to one another. While Iran has always been an important state for Turkey due to its potential as a security threat, Iran largely ignored Western-facing Turkey until the state began to rise in prominence as a regional power.

Turkish-Iranian rapprochement began soon after the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1998, which led Iran to begin suppressing PKK operations on its own soil. The establishment of a terrorist organization, the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK – a PKK equivalent which seeks to liberate Kurdish territories in Iran rather than Turkey) led both countries to sign a series of bilateral anti-terror cooperation agreements. The Turkish-Iranian relationship

\[132\text{In terms of sociological institutionalism this can be seen as a major upending of the institution of Turkish-Iranian cooperation. Some common ties remain – Turkish and Iranian cultures have been heavily influenced by one another – but the complete regime change in Iran broke the institutional ties between the two governments in terms of shared norms and values.}\]
was still prone to disagreements, as Turkey continued to claim that Iran supported the PKK and Iran accused the Turkish military of actions on Iranian soil.\textsuperscript{133}

Turkish-Iranian relations further improved with the election of the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP), whose Islamist slant was more palatable to Iranian authorities – this narrowed ideological conflicts but did not completely eliminate them.\textsuperscript{134} Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu’s “zero problems with neighbors” foreign policy set off a charm offensive in Iran as Turkey tried to enhance bilateral relations, increase economic interconnectedness through free trade zones and loosen visa restrictions. Turkey has also beneficially asserted itself in the role of a mediator between Iran and its enemies.\textsuperscript{135} The 2003 Iraq War has also contributed to positive Turkish-Iranian relations as the conflict generated a convergence on strategic interests, particularly in the danger of an independent Kurdish state with irredentist desires in northern Iraq.\textsuperscript{136}

The Turkish willingness to act independently on key issues and move further from the influence of the United States was received positively in Iran. Prime Minister Erdoğan’s furious rhetoric against Israel following the “Gaza flotilla raid” incident and the related souring of Turkish-Israeli relations strongly affected Tehran’s views on Turkey. Ankara’s behavior demonstrated to Iran that Turkey was not a puppet of the West (and by extension a puppet of Israel, or the “Zionist government” as Iranian sources prefer to call it).\textsuperscript{137} This has raised

\textsuperscript{133} Aaron Stein and Philipp C. Bleek, “Turkish-Iranian Relations: From ‘Friends with Benefits’ to ‘It’s Complicated’,” \textit{Insight Turkey} 14, no. 4 (2012): 138.
\textsuperscript{134} Islamic hard-liners in Iran generally disapprove of Turkey’s non-Sharia democracy.
\textsuperscript{135} Stein and Bleek, “Turkish-Iranian Relations: From ‘Friends with Benefits’ to ‘It’s Complicated’,” 139.
\textsuperscript{136} Kahraman, “Turkey and the European Union in the Middle East: Reconciling or Competing with Each Other?,” 703.
\textsuperscript{137} The Gaza flotilla raid was an attack on six ships in the “Gaza Freedom Flotilla” by the Israeli military on May 31, 2010. The ships were attempting to break the military blockade of the Gaza Strip and bring in humanitarian supplies in support of Palestinians. For Israelis this was an illegal intrusion on their blockade. Nine Turkish citizens were killed by Israeli soldiers in the action.
Turkey’s status significantly with authorities in Tehran as well as with the Iranian public in general.

As the EU accession process has slowed down, Turkey increasingly sees the post-Iraq War and post-Arab Spring state of the Middle East as an opportunity to expand its influence in a direction that is not inherently Western-oriented. Turkey and Iran’s perspectives on the Arab Spring are largely written by their respective ideologies. From the viewpoint of Turkey, the Arab Spring was a pro-democratic uprising driven by domestic forces. This caused a flurry of scholarship debating the “Turkish Model” following the popular uprisings. For Iran, the Arab Spring was a reawakening of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and a protest against US and Israeli influence in the region. The overthrow of secular dictatorships provided an opportunity for Iran to attempt to exert influence and spread the “Iranian Model” of governance throughout the region.  

By building and maintaining power in the Middle East, Turkey arguably has achieved a comparatively greater voice in regional affairs than it would have as a single member state in the European Union. Still, diplomacy is not necessarily a zero-sum game, and it is feasible that Turkey could join the EU while simultaneously maintaining its role as a regional power.

Of course, given accession to the European Union, Turkey would have to reign in some of its actions in the Middle East. The desire to have an independent foreign policy towards its neighbors would be constrained by Turkey’s obligation to hold itself up to the behavioral standards and norms of other EU member states. For example, Turkey’s agreement to host Iranian nuclear materials stood in stark opposition to the political desires of the West.  

138 Unsurprisingly, the “Turkish Model” received much more detailed coverage in the Western media and academia than the “Iranian Model”, which was generally ignored.; Özüm S. Uzun, “The ‘Arab Spring’ and Its Effect on Turkish-Iranian Relations,” Ortadoğu Etütleri 4, no. 2 (January 2013): 150–154.

139 See “Nuclear Ambitions” section below.
Furthermore, Ankara’s willingness to lend a friendly ear to the new Iranian regime under Rouhani and to continue the subversion of trade embargos with Iran would be far less tenable for Turkey were it a member of the European Union.

Turkey is under great domestic pressure from the “Anatolian Tigers” to remove trade barriers and increase the flow of trade with Iran. Ankara hopes that its relationship of cordiality with Iran will help open up new markets for expanding Turkish exports, as Iran continues to limit imports due to Tehran’s policies and international sanctions. Iranian markets are highly regulated and heavily protected from foreign competition. There are a few clear examples of this: Türk Telecom was unable to secure permission to operate in Iran; TAV Aviation was allowed to build Tehran’s new airport – but after its completion the Turkish firm was not given the right to manage it. 140

Even with Iran’s internally and externally-imposed restrictions on trade, it has a very close economic and cultural relationship with Turkey. Turkey continues to push for Iranian membership in the World Trade Organization, despite the difficulties created by trying to represent Iran to the West. 141

Iran is Turkey’s fifth largest trading partner. Between 2000 and 2010, Turkey’s trade volume with Iran increased tenfold: from 1.05 billion dollars to 10.7 billion. Even factoring for the rapid growth of the Turkish economy, trade increases with Iran have been disproportionately high. In comparison, during the same time period trade with Egypt increased sixfold, trade with Lebanon increased fourfold and trade with Israel and Syria only tripled. 142 In the energy sector,

141 Ibid.
142 Tür, “Economic Relations with the Middle East Under the AKP-Trade, Business Community and Reintegration with Neighboring Zones,” 595.
Turkey gets approximately 20% of its gas and 45% of its oil from Iran.\textsuperscript{143} Much of this trade is done through loopholes in international sanctions on Iran that enable indirect payments to be made in gold.\textsuperscript{144}

These increasing linkages have also spilled over into cultural sectors. Due to a lifting of visa requirements between Turkey and Iran, 1.9 million Iranians visited Turkey in 2010—an increase of 439% since 1995. The number of Iranians to visit Turkey is nearly equivalent to the number of foreign tourists in Turkey from the entire Arab world combined.\textsuperscript{145} Cross-border travel is helping to build an institution of friendship between the two nations once again, helping to repair ties severed after the Iranian revolution of 1979. This grass-roots socialization may move upwards and have a positive effect on high politics—President Rouhani’s election may be one of the first demonstrable signs of this change.

II. Nuclear Ambitions

In the recent past, one issue over all others has tarnished Iran’s international reputation, and that is of course Iran’s nuclear ambitions. Iran’s argument for expanding its nuclear capacity takes two threads. The first is the claim that Iran simply wants to enrich uranium for nuclear power in the country as a source of cheap energy. The other thread is Iran’s argument that it has a right to defend itself against a nuclear Israel. This rhetoric about the desire to acquire nuclear weapons has changed since harsh sanctions from the European Union and the United States have


\textsuperscript{144} In the first financial quarter of 2013 alone, Turkey exported 499 billion dollars of gold to Iran. For more information, see the following report: Gary Clark, Rachel Ziema, and Mark Dubowitz, Iran’s Golden Loophole (Foundation for Defense of Democracies, May 13, 2013), http://www.defenddemocracy.org/stuff/uploads/documents/FDD_RGE_Iran_Gol_Report__May_2013_FINAL_2.pdf.

\textsuperscript{145} The number of Iranian and Arab visitors to Turkey – 1.885 million and 1.893 million, respectively – does not even begin to come close to the number of tourists from the European Union. In 2010, 14.7 million European tourists visited Turkey, making up 51.51% of total tourists. Kemal Kirişçi, “Turkey’s ‘Demonstrative Effect’ and the Transformation of the Middle East,” Insight Turkey 13, no. 2 (2011): 45.
injured Iran’s economy. The West remains highly suspicious of Iran’s nuclear ambitions, despite an Iranian opening to international nuclear inspectors and its claims that Iran does not pursue a nuclear missile program. Under the new direction of President Hassan Rouhani elected in August 2013, Iran now claims the desire for full disarmament in the region to achieve a nuclear-free Middle East. More importantly for Iran, this would be a nuclear-free Israel.

The past seven years have also seen a marked decrease in Middle Eastern support for Iran’s nuclear program. In 2006, of eight countries surveyed (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Pakistan and Turkey) on Iran’s nuclear issue, all respondents except for Turkey believed that Iran’s nuclear program was for peaceful purposes. In 2012, none of these countries believe that Iran wanted a peaceful nuclear program. Twelve additional countries were surveyed in 2012, and among them only Lebanon believed that Iran’s nuclear program was peaceful in intention.\textsuperscript{146} 87 percent of Turks responded that they believe Iran’s nuclear programs are not peaceful and that Iran’s goal is to build a nuclear bomb.\textsuperscript{147}

As mentioned previously, one of the ways in which Turkey has been asserting itself as a regional power is by taking on the role of a mediator in international disputes. Iran’s nuclear program has been a source of tension with the West for the past few decades. Turkey itself is highly suspicious of Iran’s nuclear ambitions, but in 2010 Ankara became quite proactive in attempts to mediate a solution to the Iranian nuclear problem.

Beyond using mediation as a means to demonstrate its newfound soft power, there were several other reasons Turkey chose to pursue a solution for Iran. For one, Turkish foundation ideology defends the right to sovereignty and national self-determination – therefore, Turkey

\textsuperscript{146} The only groups surveyed who tended to think highly of the Iranian nuclear program were Shiites scattered around the Middle East.

generally supports the rights of countries to develop their energy infrastructures. Participating in
the mediation process had the possibility of decreasing an Iranian nuclear threat if a solution
could be found that would allow Iran a nuclear power program while reducing its chances of
manufacturing nuclear weapons. Finally, the AKP had been under constant pressure from the
Anatolian Tigers to help lift sanctions in order to facilitate the expansion of cross-border
business interests. As the Anatolian Tigers represent a strong base of AKP support, fulfilling
their ambitions is a top priority.

During negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program, both Turkey and Brazil emerged
as key leaders. Working together, they managed to convince Tehran to sign an agreement for a
low-enriched nuclear fuel swap. In this fuel swap, Iran agreed to send 1,200 kilograms of low-
enriched uranium (3.5% enriched) in exchange for 20% enriched fuel for a research reactor.\footnote{148}
This agreement was signed by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and his Brazilian and Iranian
counterparts: Celso Amorim and Manuchehr Motaki, respectively. While this was a positive step
forward, Iran said that it would also continue to enrich 20% uranium independently. Therefore,
the United Nations Security Council maintained course and approved another sanction package
on Iran.\footnote{149}

The Iran nuclear issue is ongoing and may see some resolution in the following year due
to steps towards a more moderate nuclear policy under President Rouhani. Although Rouhani
still supports the idea that Iran’s nuclear rights are “non-negotiable”, he has emphasized the
importance of building mutual trust with other countries.\footnote{150} Rouhani has reorganized Iran’s

\footnote{148} “Iran Signs Nuclear Fuel-Swap Deal with Turkey,” \textit{BBC News}, May 17, 2010, sec. Middle East,
\footnote{149} Ziya Önis, “Multiple Faces of the ‘New’ Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique,” \textit{Insight Turkey} 13, no. 1 (2011): 52.
\footnote{150} “President Rohani: Iran Nuclear Right Non-Negotiable,” October 2, 2013,
nuclear program by appointing the US-educated Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif as Foreign Minister and transferring Iran’s nuclear dossier to the Foreign Ministry, away from the hawkish Supreme National Security Council (SNSC). Rouhani also replaced hardliners with moderates in the positions of secretary-general of the SNSC, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and the ambassadorship to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).\textsuperscript{151}

Still, the ability of Rouhani to find a solution to the nuclear issue remains unclear, as the presidency still falls under the authority of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. If Khamenei feels threatened by Rouhani’s cooperation with the international community, the Supreme Leader’s control over the armed forces and his role as provisional Chief of State can be used to stymie Rouhani’s efforts.\textsuperscript{152} Rouhani was elected with a mandate to solve the nuclear issue and lift international sanctions to boost the economy, but it may be difficult for Khamenei to agree to such a distinct policy change from the post-1979 tradition of a hardline foreign policy, particularly towards the West.

III. NATO Missile Shield Crisis

Even after the friendly nuclear mediation Turkey offered to Iran in 2010, it was not long before another crisis formed. In this case, it came in September 2011 when Turkey publicly agreed to host a part of the NATO missile defense system. Doubtless this move was a signal from the AKP that it was continuing to pursue its own national security policies: even in the


climate of warm Turkish-Iranian relations, Turkey maintained its suspicions over the Iranian nuclear program.  

Tehran threatened to attack NATO missile defense shields in Turkey if Israel or the United States attacked Iranian nuclear facilities. In Iran’s eyes, the NATO early warning radar station is designed to protect Israel from Iranian attacks. Thus Turkey’s willingness to allow the defense system in its country was a sure sign of a military alliance with Israel under the direction of the United States. The Turkish Minister of National Defense responded that the NATO missile defense system was put in place instead to protect the security of Turkey and Europe. What remained unsaid by Ankara is that the NATO missile shield project acted as a means to reduce Iran’s relative military power in the region. If Iran should acquire nuclear weapons, this would shift the balance of power towards Iran.

IV. Syria

Out of all the countries sent into upheaval by the Arab Spring uprisings, Syria has undoubtedly suffered the most. Protestors’ demands for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad were unsuccessful. In April of 2001 al-Assad mobilized the Syrian Army to quash the protests – which quickly devolved into a full-blown civil war. As of July 2013, sixty percent of the total population lived within territories controlled by the Syrian government, while the opposition forces control sixty to seventy percent of the physical territory of Syria. To date, there have been approximately one hundred thousand casualties.

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After Syrian protests turned into civil war, the AKP decided to lend logistical and political support to rebels fighting al-Assad. Iran and its Lebanese ally Hezbollah fall on the other side of the war, supporting al-Assad’s regime. Al-Assad is Iran’s only true remaining ally in the region, so it is in the interest of Iran to support his regime because any successor who gains power through al-Assad’s ousting is likely to be staunchly against Iran in his or her foreign policy.

From the Iranian perspective the Syrian civil war is playing as a continuation of the struggle between the Islamic revolution and the West. Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei explained that “the Americans and certain Western countries want to take revenge on Syria for their recent defeats in the region. The main purpose of the United States’ plot in Syria is to deal a blow to the resistance front in the region because Syria is supporting the resistance of Palestine and the Islamic Resistance of Lebanon.” Supreme Leader Khamenei and his supporters believed that the fall of secular dictatorships in the Arab Spring was caused by the lack of adherence to Islamic law. On the other hand, Syria’s Personal Status Law 59 (1953), Law 34 (1975) and the 1973 constitution declare Islam as the main source of Syrian law, essentially a localized version of Sharia law. Therefore it is in the interest of theocratic Iran to help prop up its ideological ally.

The war has turned into a proxy war including Turkey and Iran. It has been a major test of Ankara’s “zero problems with neighbors” policy – al-Assad did not fall as easily as Turkey

158 From an Iranian perspective al-Assad’s regime is an ideological ally, even though it is a markedly more secular regime than the one in Iran. Iranian opposition parties fail to see the Syrian civil war in the same way. From their perspective, the uprising is a revolution against al-Assad’s dictatorship in support of a free Syria; Ibid., 51–52.
expected and its soft power diplomacy had been unable to stop the conflict. Turkey has accepted
400,000 Syrian refugees.

President Rouhani claims that although Turkey and Iran approach the Syrian conflict
differently, they both want to see an end to bloodshed in country. Yet, neither side seems willing
to withdraw support from the warring sides.¹⁵⁹

The Iranian position towards al-Assad has soured since learning of al-Assad’s use of
chemical weapons on August 21, 2013. Iran was attacked with chemical weapons during the
1980-1988 war with Iraq, which makes it a natural ally against those who use chemical weapons.
Nonetheless, Iran is as of yet unwilling to withdraw full support of the al-Assad regime, and it
has not signed the Geneva Declaration of 2012 in support of a transitional Syrian government.
Sources say that Iran may be currently rethinking its Syrian policy “because Iran’s leaders either
believe Syria is out of control or no longer worth supporting.”¹⁶⁰

V. Rouhani, Turkey and the World

The beginning of President Hassan Rouhani’s term on August 13, 2013 was met with
hesitant optimism in Ankara. In what may be perceived as either a snub or a “precautionary
approach,” neither Turkish President Gül nor Prime Minister Erdoğan attended the inauguration
– sending Foreign Minister Davutoğlu instead.¹⁶¹ As of September 30, 2013 there have been two
high-level meetings between Turkish and Iranian officials.

Rouhani’s election symbolizes an attempted “Iranian opening”. The new president is more moderate than former presidents Rafsanjani and Khatemi, and seems to be influenced by the Turkish “zero problems” foreign policy. His cooperative tone has possibly been adopted in an attempt to cut the country of Western economic sanctions. Rouhani has been very clearly seeking to mend ties with the world.162 One of his first actions as president was to nominate Mahmood Sariolghalam as a foreign affairs advisor, known as “Iran’s Davutoğlu.”163 How Rouhani’s administration is able to change Iran’s trajectory has yet to be seen. In regards to Turkey, if Rouhani continues on his current moderate path, he may be able to have some of Iran’s sanctions removed and increase trade between the two states. On the other hand, resolving the nuclear stalemate and bringing Iran to good terms on the global stage could threaten Turkey’s influence in the region. This is especially significant among Shiites, who form a more ‘natural alliance’ with Shiite Iran than the predominantly Sunni Turkey.

VI. Balance of Power

Throughout all of its interactions with Iran, Turkey continues to struggle to maintain a role as the top regional power. Iran is heavily Shiite, and Turkey is mostly Sunni. These religious divisions have created natural alliances along religious lines throughout the Middle East.

Although Turkey remains a secular country, the 2002 rise to power of the Islamist-rooted AK Party has made Turkey increasingly popular in the Muslim world, particularly among Sunnis.

Since the early 2000s, Turkey and Iran have been vying for position as the dominant power in the Middle East. Egypt and Saudi Arabia have also been contenders but have fallen in

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162 For example, as a gesture of goodwill in preparation for Rouhani’s visit to New York, Iran released a dozen political prisoners. “Nuclear Breakthrough or Diplomatic Deception?,” Al Jazeera Inside Story, September 20, 2013, http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2013/09/2013919145137928913.html.

status since the Arab Spring. For Egypt, this was due to the domestic chaos which erupted during the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak soon followed by the July 2013 coup d'état which ousted the democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi. For Saudi Arabia, its role as a regional power was reduced due to its diminished influence in Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq – voids which were filled by Turkey and Iran. For now, the Saudis have refocused on the other Gulf Cooperation Council states of Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

Turkey has achieved the top position as a regional power in the Middle East, although it is certainly not a hegemon. Surveys of public opinion in 2012 found that Iran is now viewed unfavorably in 14 out of 20 countries surveyed. It is seen positively only in Yemen, Libya, Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon and Kuwait. Only four countries agreed that “Iran is working to promote peace and stability in the region”, while sixteen countries stated that Iran is “contributing to sectarian division in the Arab World.”

One major factor in the increasingly negative views on Iran, according to the poll, is the rise of Turkey. Looking at attitudes concerning the roles of Turkey and Iran across the Middle East, there is a strong negative correlation between Turkey’s rising popularity and Iran’s falling status. Turkey’s role as a mediator in the 2010 nuclear transfer and its vote against the United States in the UN Security Council demonstrates the diminished role of Iran in the new status quo.

Since President Rouhani’s election, Iran has been making attempts to bolster its relations with the US. President Rouhani recently visited New York, and there was an official phone call between Rouhani and Obama: the first direct contact between American and Iranian leaders since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Why is this important? As Mahir Zeynalov claims, this is an

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165 Ibid.
attempt to reverse the decline of Iranian influence in a region that has increasingly unfavorable attitudes toward Iran.

“When Arabs and Turks recently started to realize that Iran is supporting Syria’s Assad and Hezbollah, Iran’s popularity significantly plunged. With Hamas turning away from Iran and Fatah aligning with the West, there was not chance much left for Iran [sic] to exploit the Palestinian cause to garner Arab support. Iran had only a single choice: aligning with Washington.”

For now, Turkey has assumed the leading role as a regional power in the Middle East, and Iran is scrambling for allies. Iran has few allies in the Middle East, an economy hindered by six different levels of sanctions and an antiquated form of theocratic government which has gained it little support in the region except from conservative Shiites. President Rouhani’s attempts to improve Iran’s public image through a strategy similar to Davutoğlu’s “zero problems” foreign policy may help increase Iran’s role through soft power – but for now, Turkey remains the regional player to watch.

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CHAPTER 5: Russia and Turkey

For such diverse countries, Turkey and Russia share many similarities. Both are home to civilizations dating back thousands of years and the successor of former empires. Both are situated on the periphery of Europe. In terms of identity, they are Eurasian: not purely European, not purely Asian in nature – they have their own cultural characteristics that have developed over the ages. This makes them simultaneously outsiders and key influences on ‘Western civilization.’

Geopolitically they have even more in common. They are both adjacent to the Black and Caspian Sea regions which they see as their areas of influence. Separated by the South Caucasus, Russia and Turkey are both instrumental actors in the energy transmission sector.

In the two plus decades since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation have seen many ups and downs in their bilateral relationship, from open antagonism (although without directly fighting one another) to close cooperation in trade. Russia is Turkey’s number one trade partner, and Turkey is Russia’s seventh largest. Even though Russia’s population is nearly double that of Turkey’s, if the energy sector is excluded, Turkey’s economy is larger.168 This has encouraged high levels of bilateral cooperation, with Russia exporting energy to Turkey and Turkey exporting its goods and services to Russia.

Russia and Turkey have several areas of conflict with one another that act as sources of friction. Both are vying to increase their control over the energy transfer sector. They are in competition for influence over the southern Caucasus. Finally, they find themselves as the main foreign actors on opposing sides of the Syrian civil war. Although the long history of animosity between these states has been set aside under the AKP’s “zero problems” policy and Russia’s economically-driven desires, it is hard to predict how long this era of close cooperation will

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continue. Both Turkish and Russian cultures have strong institutions of interpreting modern events through a historical lens.\textsuperscript{169} Old disagreements may once again be reawakened.

I. Historical Background

The history of Turkish and Russian relations is a history of the competition between empires. Conflict between them began as early as 1568 and resulted in twelve wars between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{170} The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918 signaled the end of the last “hot war” between the former Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic and Ottoman Empire (part of the Central Powers in World War I). The treaty signaled the return of Ottoman territory taken during the Russo-Turkish War in 1887-1878; specifically, the cities of Ardahan, Batumi and Kars.\textsuperscript{171} The territory was still under de-facto occupation by Armenian volunteers until the Soviet invasion of Armenia in 1921.

The Bolsheviks and the Soviet government under Lenin supported Mustafa Kemal Pasha in the Turkish War of Independence. Committed to working together to fight imperialism, Lenin bankrolled the Turkish struggle and provided Mustafa Kemal Pasha (now known as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) with gold bullion. The Soviets also sent thousands of light arms and projectiles as well as millions of bullets and their support was key to the military success of Atatürk. The Soviets also agreed to give up traditional territorial claims to the Turkish Straits. The RSFSR was the first country to recognize Turkish independence.

\textsuperscript{169} Of course, this is true for every state – but in Russia and Turkey it seems more pronounced, more observable. No one is surprised when Russia meddles in its neighbors’ affairs because they are “post-Soviet states” and therefore they are considered to be – naturally – under Russia’s influence. The fall of the Ottoman Empire is much more distant than the fall of the Soviet Union, but the term “neo-Ottoman” is still often used by international commentators when Turkey becomes involved in regional issues.


\textsuperscript{171} Ardahan and Kars are currently provinces in northeast Turkey. Batumi is now in the territory of the Republic of Georgia.
While these actions appeared to heal the traditionally hostile relations between Turkey and Russia, they did not last long. The Montreux Convention of 1936, to which Turkey and the USSR were signatories (among others) was not positively viewed by the Soviets. This was because the convention gave Turkey full control over the Turkish Straits, although the USSR did successfully achieve exceptions for its Black Sea marine interests.

In 1945, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov told the Turkish ambassador to Moscow that the Soviet Union intended to withdraw from the 1925 non-aggression pact unless Turkey returned former Russian Empire territorial claims in northeast Turkey and allow Soviet bases to be built in the Straits. This brought to light Turkey’s relative weakness compared to the Soviet Union and helped to push the Republic into NATO.172

Relations between Turkey and the USSR would remain tense until Stalin’s death in 1953. This was followed by a period of relatively warm diplomatic relations, featuring several large public sector projects in Turkey supported by Soviet financial and industrial assistance.173 These projects were not even disrupted by the Turkish military coup of 1971.174

Over the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Turkish and Russian/Soviet relations have followed a sinusoidal trajectory, moving from tense to cordial and back again. In each occurrence, Turkey has drawn itself closer to the Soviet Union [or Russia] during its attempts to assert greater independence from the West. Such examples can be found in Turkish foreign relations from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, as well as during the current AKP regime.

173 Even though Turkey began to have positive relations with the Soviet Union, it maintained its cooperative role with the United States and in NATO.
Rational-Choice Institutionalism explains this behavior of Turkey maneuvering within the extant international system in attempts to achieve its preference goals. Turkey is generally willing to cooperate with Russia because this enables it to pursue some of its goals which may not directly align with the preferences of NATO or the United States. Yet, Turkey’s institutionalized role in Western organizations enables it to return to the protective umbrella of the West in times of external threat, such as the Turkish Straits Crisis or the period of potential conflict following the Cold War.

II. Post-Soviet Years

The fall of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Russian Federation was followed by a flurry of official displays of mutual recognition and friendship. Turkey officially recognized Russia during a visit of the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs to Moscow in 1992. On May 25 of the same year the “Treaty on the Principles of Relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation” was signed.\(^{175}\)

Regardless of the public declarations of friendship, the mid 1990s were a black mark on Russo-Turkish relations. Russia had fears of Turkish promotion of pan-Turkism in Central Asia, which Moscow still considered within its special area of influence. During these years Turkey allowed its resident North Caucasus diaspora to actively support Chechen rebels. At the same time, Russia snubbed Turkey – which was then extremely concerned about Kurdish irredentism – by hosting a “History of Kurdistan” event in Moscow which was organized by groups affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers Party, the PKK.\(^{176}\)

\(^{175}\) The treaty formed the basis of the development of further Russo-Turkish relations. It is very similar to other bilateral agreements Turkey has signed, featuring sections on mutual recognition of independence, sovereignty, respect for territorial integrity, mutual cooperation, etc. Turkey has dozens of similar agreements with other countries but it is usually more of a diplomatic formality than the start of new relations.

Russia was also upset by Turkey’s NATO membership and NATO’s proposed expansion into Eastern Europe – including potentially the Caucasus. Relations eventually improved when Russia realized that Turkey was not a significant threat to its influence in Central Asia. The new Central Asian republics were more concerned with economic development and asserting their independence than in entering an alliance with Turkey. This was demonstrated by Turkey’s inability to get any of the Central Asian countries to recognize the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The new republics were obviously not interested in becoming Turkish proxies.177

In the late 1990s Turkey and Russia began increasing levels of cooperation. Then Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit of Turkey visited Russia in 1999 and signed the Joint Declaration on the Fight Against Terrorism and also made an agreement for close cooperation in the energy field.178 In 2001 the “Joint Action Plan for Cooperation in Eurasia” was signed, establishing a Joint Working Group between the Turkish and Russian Ministries of Foreign Affairs which facilitates regular bilateral cooperation.179

III. AKP Years

The greatest improvement in Turkish-Russian relations has occurred since the electoral success of the AKP in 2002. This has been greatly influenced by Turkey’s proactive soft power foreign policy under Davutoğlu’s “zero problems” policy, increasing economic interdependence as well as a convergence of mutual interests.

177 Korepin, “Turkey and Russia: A New Friendship.”
Turkey and Russia are opposed to Iranian nuclear armament, but they have publicly come out in support of the development of Iranian civilian nuclear projects. In Turkey’s case, this is rooted in a long-term ideological stance on sovereignty and the right to national self-determination. For Russia, offering international support for Iran serves Russia’s anti-American agenda.

Russia and Turkey also found themselves in agreement in opposition to the 2003 Iraq War. For Russia, its notable oil contracts under Saddam Hussein would be endangered in the event of a regime change. Turkish reasons were much more varied. Turkey’s denial of America’s request to open up a northern front in Iraq was received positively in Moscow. It was seen as a signal by Russia that Turkey would not allow itself to be an American vassal state.

Ever happy to work with states that it perceives as resistant to American influence, Moscow increased efforts to grow the Russo-Turkish friendship. Turkey, seeking to expand its bilateral contacts due to the slow pace of the European Union accession process, was glad to comply. Russian President Vladimir Putin made an official visit to Turkey in December of 2004, the first visit by a Russian president to Turkey in the history of their relations. The visit resulted in the Joint Declaration on the Intensification of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership. The following year, President Putin and Prime Minster Erdoğan agreed to “support each other’s positions on Chechnya and the Kurds--expressing similar fears of terrorism and separatism.” Russia, with Turkish support, joined the Organization of Islamic Cooperation with observer status.

180 Korepin, “Turkey and Russia: A New Friendship.”
181 In summary: regional instability, the possibility of Kurdish irredentism, security concerns and potential economic effects. See “Iraq” chapter for more information.
182 “Turkey’s Political Relations with Russian Federation.”
183 The Organization of Islamic Cooperation is composed of 57 member states coming together under to be the “collective voice of the Muslim world.” Korepin, “Turkey and Russia: A New Friendship.”
The warming of Turkish-Russian relations after centuries of animosity is largely a result of a bilateral willingness to emphasize mutual economic benefits over national disagreements. For example, during the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia, Turkey maintained a neutral stance. Prime Minister Erdoğan stated in a Milliyet interview that "it would not be right for Turkey to be pushed toward any side. Certain circles want to push Turkey into a corner either with the United States or Russia after the Georgian incident. One of the sides is our closest ally, the United States. The other side is Russia with which we have an important trade volume. We would act in line with what Turkey's national interests require." This connection is very easy to see. In the same year as the Russia-Georgian War, Russia became Turkey’s top trading partner with a trade volume of $38 billion.

2010 saw even further strengthening of bilateral relations. Turkey modified its “Red Book” (officially the “National Security Policy Document”), removing Russia from the list of recognized state enemies. It also lifted visa requirements for Russia’s citizens and quickly became the most popular destination abroad for Russian tourists. In 2012 Turkey hosted over 2.5 million Russian travelers.

At present, Russia remains Turkey’s largest trading partner (although Turkey is only Russia’s seventh largest trade partner, which means Turkey has more to lose if bilateral relations sour). Turkey exports vehicles, textiles, agricultural products and chemical products to Russia. Russia exports metals and chemical goods to Turkey, although the majority of Russian exports are in the energy sector.

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184 Ibid.
186 Mark M. Katz, “Russia and the Conflict in Syria: Four Myths,” Middle East Policy 20, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 41.
187 Flanagan et al., The Turkey, Russia, Iran Web, 13.
188 Korepin, “Turkey and Russia: A New Friendship.”
Turkish energy, construction and tourism sectors have all benefitted from increasing trade ties. In 2011, Turkey exported $831 million of vehicles, $942 million of produce and $1.09 billion of textiles to Russia. Turkish foreign direct investment was $7.3 billion.\textsuperscript{189} Russia is also the biggest market for Turkish contractors. Turkey is anxious to continue this economic relationship with Russia, as it is responsible for a large portion of Turkish economic growth over the past decades.\textsuperscript{190} The two countries boast that two-way trade will triple to some $100 billion in the coming years, although this figure is most likely greatly exaggerated.\textsuperscript{191}

IV. Energy Relations

Relations between Turkey and Russia in the field of energy have been an area of push and pull. Both countries have the desire for positive bilateral energy relations, but this does not surpass either country’s awareness of the political value of energy dominance. Their self-interests simultaneously encourage them to work together while strategically trying to expand their energy sectors beyond the other’s influence. This is a classic Rational-Choice institutionalist balancing-act: within the context of the current international situation they have much more to gain by working together than competing against each other, but both states are trying to actively diversify their options to modify regional frameworks to their benefit.

Russia is trying to control the flow of energy from the Caspian Basin and the Black Sea regions in order to maintain dominance in the energy sector. Turkey, on the other hand, is trying to become an East-West energy transit state. To do this, it needs to expand its ability to meet domestic demand as well as international commitments. The Turkish Straits are the transit route

\textsuperscript{189} Flanagan et al., The Turkey, Russia, Iran Web, 4.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid.
for approximately 3.7% of the world’s daily oil consumption.\textsuperscript{192} Turkey is already host to the Baku-Tbilisi- Ceyhan (BTC) oil and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) natural gas pipelines, making it a key east-west transit route. Still, Turkey needs to expand pipeline capacity and garner more oil contracts to transport Caspian natural gas to Europe if it hopes to become an energy transit power. Moreover, enhancing Turkey’s role as an energy transit state will increase its energy security. Turkey produces very little crude oil and natural gas, importing 10% of its crude oil and approximately 60% of its natural gas from Russia. Approximately 60% of Turkish natural gas consumption is used to generate electricity, making Turkey heavily dependent on the continued importation of Russian natural gas.\textsuperscript{193}

V. Areas of Conflict: Armenia, Syria, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus

There are several ongoing conflicts between Turkey and Russia which have the potential to derail future bilateral relations should any changes occur in the current regional stalemate. This includes Turkish relations with Armenia, the Syrian civil war and the struggle for influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia.\textsuperscript{194}

From 1988 to 1994 a civil war raged in Nagorno-Karabakh, a region in southwestern Azerbaijan that was mostly populated by ethnic Armenians. The war killed tens of thousands of people and continued until a Russian-brokered ceasefire in 1994. Russia was in support of the Armenian side, and Turkey the Azerbaijani.

\textsuperscript{192} Babali, “Turkey at the Energy Crossroads.”
\textsuperscript{194} It is worth mentioning that Russia also opposes Turkey on the status of Northern Cyprus, due to an affinity for its Greek Orthodox residents. Since Turkey is the only country that recognizes Northern Cyprus’ independence, the point is essentially moot. Hill and Taspinar, “Turkey and Russia: Axis of the Excluded,” 90.
In solidarity with their Turkic confederates in Azerbaijan, Turkey closed its border with Armenia in 2009. Turkish relations with Armenia remain cold due to the border closing, which has hurt Armenia’s economy, and because of Turkey’s refusal to call the “Armenian question” the “Armenian genocide.”

Under the “zero problems” policy, Turkey attempted to improve relations with Armenia, but has largely failed due to the “Armenian question”. Moreover, Azerbaijan threatened to stop gas subsidies and seek different export routes if Turkey improved its relations with Armenia prior to a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

Russia, although it considers all post-Soviet states to be within its sphere of influence, continues to oppose Turkey and maintain its support of the Armenians on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Once the Syrian civil war is finished and the Middle East stabilizes following the Arab Spring, Moscow fears that Turkey will once again turn its attention to the Southern Caucasus. Turkey hosts large diaspora populations from all three countries and has positive relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia. Should Turkey resolve its dispute with Armenia it will be in a position to replace much of the Russian influence in the region.

Resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute may ultimately prove to be against both Turkish and Russian interests. Russia would lose its influence in Armenia as its support would no longer be needed against Turkey. Improved relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan could result in a trans-Caucasus gas pipeline through Turkey, circumventing Russia. For Turkey, the end of Azeri-Armenian tensions may spell the end of their gas subsidies, because Azerbaijan would no longer be as dependent on Turkish support. Nonetheless, Moscow continues to see

195 Flanagan et al., The Turkey, Russia, Iran Web. VII.
196 Korepin, “Turkey and Russia: A New Friendship.”
197 Flanagan et al., The Turkey, Russia, Iran Web, 16.
198 Korepin, “Turkey and Russia: A New Friendship.”
any forward action in Turkey’s relations with the Southern Caucasus as an equivalent reduction in Russian influence in the region.

Regarding Syria, both Turkey and Russia are entrenched in their views on the ongoing civil war, as they are the principal arms suppliers to the rebels and the Syrian government, respectively. Russia has been backing al-Assad since the beginning of the conflict, for a number of reasons. While some are ideological, such as a Russian predisposition against revolutionary and Islamist movements, the others are more substantive. Al-Assad is an ally of Russia which makes Syria a point of Russian influence in the Middle East. Moreover, Russia’s only naval facility outside of the former Soviet Union is located at the Syrian port of Tartus – and it is the only place Russia can use to repair military vessels in the Mediterranean basin without returning through the Turkish Straits to the Black Sea. Along the same lines, the Federation’s largest electronic eavesdropping facility abroad is less than an hour north of Tartus at Latakia. The fall of al-Assad could result in a loss of these military posts for Russia.

Turkey has been attempting to use its newfound international influence to sway Moscow, but to no avail. Unlike the 2008 war in Georgia, Ankara has been unwilling to remain neutral in the Syrian conflict. Russia continues to maintain its support of al-Assad regardless of international pressures. Nonetheless, Moscow is aware of the negative image engendered by its support, particularly after al-Assad’s troops’ use of chemical weapons. Putin’s prompting of

199 Flanagan et al., The Turkey, Russia, Iran Web, 20.
al-Assad’s forfeiture of the Syrian chemical arsenal was a successful face-saving and stop-gap measure to prevent an American air strike and potential international invasion.

*If* Syria is attacked by outside forces, Russia has pledged to increase its military assistance to al-Assad.\(^{203}\) Otherwise, “Russia does not intend to expand the current volume of [military-technical assistance] (…) there is no question about any new projects or contracts”, according to Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.\(^{204}\) This is an adept example of realpolitik. Without withdrawing its support publicly, Moscow is slowly distancing itself from al-Assad. In the event that the Syrian government is overthrown, Russia wants to be in a position to build positive relations with whatever new government may come.\(^{205}\)

**VI. The Struggle for Influence in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus**

Thus far, deeply interdependent bilateral energy and economic ties combined with close relations between Turkish and Russian heads of state have managed to maintain cordial relations. This situation could easily change. If Turkey decides to engage its forces in Syria, Russia has obligated itself to become involved. The immediate costs of Russia becoming a belligerent in Syria almost definitely outweigh the direct benefits offered by their involvement. Al-Assad’s victory will allow them to maintain their military sites and give them an advantage in securing new economic and energy commitments – but much of this could be achieved through diplomacy. Rational-Choice Institutionalism assumes that actors have fixed preferences and will strive for the best possible outcome *within the context of the institution*. In Russia’s case, it has a

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\(^{205}\) Katz, “Russia and the Conflict in Syria: Four Myths,” 39.
very strong historically-derived institution of seeking to be perceived as a ‘strong man’ which is willing to go to war to defend its interests.\textsuperscript{206}

Russian overstretch in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus could also put a strain on the policy of friendly disagreement with Turkey. It must not be forgotten that although Turkey remained neutral in the 2008 Georgian war, it immediately began supplying weapons to Georgia for rearmament after the end of fighting.\textsuperscript{207} Turkey is not afraid to take sides, as demonstrated in Syria, but it must move cautiously. Russia is more powerful militarily and economically than Turkey. Still, the potential for developing pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic movements to the republics south of Russia is viewed with alarm by Moscow. Russia already has enough problems with its Muslims in the republics of Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria, Dagestan, and Ingushetia. Luckily for Turkey, Moscow seems to prefer soft power methods in Central Asia and the Caucasus for now, its action against Georgia aside.\textsuperscript{208}

Turkey certainly has become a regional power, especially in regards to the Middle East. Yet Turkish influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus, while unable to be completely disregarded by Russia, cannot compete with Russia’s hard power capabilities. “Russia is our number one trade partner and has risen to the first rank in tourism…,” Erdoğan stated in 2008, “We are supplying two-thirds of our energy needs from them. Two-thirds of natural gas comes from them… Otherwise, we would be kept in the dark.”\textsuperscript{209} Turkey has a lot of support from its Islamic and Turkic allies in Central Asia and the Caucasus, but not enough to challenge Moscow.

\textsuperscript{206} For example, the Russo-Georgian War of 2008, or the decade long war with Afghanistan under the Soviet Union.
\textsuperscript{207} Igor Torbakov, The Georgia Crisis and Russia-Turkey Relations (Washington DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2008), 14.
Although Turkey’s growth in soft power under the “zero problems” policy has been very successful, it will only remain effective as long as Turkey and Russia both recognize the importance of cooperative bipartisan relations. The historical legacy of hundreds of years of antagonism between these two states will be a difficult institution to break.
Conclusions

Over the past twenty years, Turkey has changed tremendously. What once was a poor, relatively unimportant country has transformed into a regional power that is now the seventeenth largest economy in the world. This thesis explained how the European Union accession process influenced Turkey’s foreign relations and domestic situation. Using New Institutionalisms theory and case studies of Turkey’s relations with the EU, Iraq, Iran and Russia, this thesis has demonstrated how and why Turkey rose to its role as a regional power, as well as the breadth – and limitations – of its power. This author has shown that comparatively high economic growth, a new foreign policy focus on soft power and instability in its geopolitical neighborhood have allowed Turkey to become a regional power.

Although Turkey’s goal of accession to the European Union seems unlikely at the moment, the process has not been without benefit. The changes wrought in Turkey with an eye to the West have been significant, to say the least. Turkey’s economy is now deeply embedded in European trade structures. Excluding the current administration’s miscalculated response to nationwide protests this summer, human rights and the quality of life have generally improved.

The benefits wrought by an increasingly liberalized Turkey will likely prove to have positive impacts on its regional neighbors. As discussed in the preceding chapters, the human rights, democratic and economic institutions found within the Turkish state and its population are changing for the better. If these institutions continue to develop towards liberalization, they may be able to successfully ingrain themselves within Turkey and move into neighboring countries. That is not to say that the “Turkish Model” of democracy will be exported in the region: Turkey’s institutional preference for democratization (at least in terms of self-identity

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210 Once again, this is referring to institutions beyond actual organizations. This usage includes preferences, rules, norms, decision-making processes, etc.
and rhetoric) is too historically developed to be easily exported to newly-democratic states. What is more likely to occur is a slow trickle of ‘value transfer’ which will nudge societies towards liberalization.

The lens of the New Institutionalisms has allowed a look the changes occurring in Turkey in ways that other prominent theories do not. Realism’s assumption of the state as a unitary is far too general to explain, for example, the importance of the “Anatolian tigers” within Turkey. These organizations of small and medium-sized businesses organize and participate directly in the international visits of the Turkish government, yielding great influence within the AKP’s administration. This example alone makes it clear that Turkey is no homogenous actor.

Liberalism also poorly explains the rise of Turkey as a regional power due to liberalism’s prioritization of state preferences. The Turkish preference for increasing friendly relations with its neighbors is definitely not a new one, dating back twenty years to President Turgut Özal’s rule from 1983-1993. Yet, without increased state capabilities, these preferences were unable to be actualized. On the other hand, Rational-Choice Institutionalism can more properly explain this situation: actors will strive for the best possible outcome within the context of the institution, rather than the best possible outcome itself. Therefore, when Turkey had fewer state capabilities the institutionalized Turkish distrust of its neighboring countries had a very strong effect on state behavior. Once Turkey rose in wealth and influence, it was able to behave more diplomatically instead of emphasizing hard power, having finally had the capability to influence its neighbors through economic and diplomatic means instead of needing to focus such a large amount of its capabilities on the security of the state.

Finally, neofunctionalism falls short because of the way in which Turkey has deviated from the prescriptive concepts of “spill-over” and “spill-back” behavior. Even as the desire of
the Turkish public to cooperate on international matters with the EU and the Middle East has eroded, the Turkish government has continued to invest its resources in attempting to accede to the European Union as well as to increase integration with its Middle Eastern neighbors. The Turkish public wishes to “spill-back” and decrease integration, yet the Turkish state continues to move forward. This can be better explained by Sociological Institutionalism than by neofunctionalism: the institutions of Europeanization and outward expansion are long-held in Turkey. Although the Turkish public and much of the government oppose it, the institutional structures are still in place which encourage further integration. Thus, Turkey continues to attempt to accede to the European Union even though it has not made any significant progress in the past few years, most of the Turkish public does not desire EU membership, and the weak state of the EU make it a much less attractive organization than it was prior to the financial crisis.

Turkey’s newfound confidence and independence as a regional power are evidenced in this study’s analysis of Turkey’s relations with Iraq. Turkey maneuvered politically prior to the invasion – both standing up to American requests for the opening of a northern front and using this stance to enhance Turkish prestige in the Middle East. Turkey has also used its new opportunities under a sanction-free Iraq to greatly increase trade, and it is moving towards a solution to the Kurdish question which has been plaguing the Turkish republic since it was founded.

Turkey has also used its position as a Western-friendly moderate Islamic country to become a bridge between Iran and the rest of the world. For now, Turkey has overcome its historically most even-matched competitor and has risen greatly in influence. Rouhani’s moderate-reformist administration may sway the Middle East back towards Iran, but Turkey is poised to benefit from this as well. If President Rouhani can prove to the world that Iran is not
developing nuclear weapons and have sanctions lifted, the developed Turkish economy is ready
to take advantage of a newly open market. Moreover, Turkey will no longer face the threat of a
nuclear Iran, which will allow it to maintain relative military dominance over its neighbor.

Finally, Turkey’s relationship with Russia provides an example of how Turkey has been
able to leverage its “zero problems” foreign policy to promote close bilateral relations with a
state which has been one of Turkey’s enemies for the better part of five hundred years. Although
Russia has significantly greater hard power capabilities than Turkey, clearly demonstrating the
limits of Turkey’s soft power policies, Turkey has still been able win the cooperation and respect
of this former superpower. Although institutionalized Russo-Turkish mutual enmity is well
established, this too may be fading from a grass-roots level as 2.5 million Russians are visiting
annually to see their neighbor firsthand.

Turkey’s new role as a regional power has signaled to some that Turkey is shifting away
from the West. On the surface this may appear so, but this assumption is misleading. While some
of its actions may go against Western desires, such as its nuclear fuel swap deal with Iran, in
general Turkey’s behavior is in accordance with Western standards. Nearly all of its foreign
policy goals, from economic liberalization to a more stable Middle East, will ultimately benefit
Turkey-EU relations. The intermingling of Turkish politicians and diplomats with their European
counterparts has seen tangible results, which can be seen in Ankara’s shifting foreign policy.
While deep-rooted Turkish preferences have remained relatively unchanged, the approach has
changed dramatically. Few things demonstrate Turkey’s modernization, Westernization and
confidence as a regional power more clearly than this: by and large, Turkey has abandoned its
former foreign policy based on distrust and security for one of mutual cooperation, regional
stability and positive-sum power relations.
This thesis has used the theoretical base of the New Institutionalisms to analyze and explain this change. Historical institutionalism has helped to demonstrate the continued necessity for Turkish politicians to prop-up Northern Cyprus even though it detracts from Turkish international standing. It has also helped to demonstrate the origins of the Western-oriented system of governance under which Turkey still lives. Sociological Institutionalism has been used as a model to show how Turkey has been able to significantly alter its foreign policy: how its preferences change with the increasing modernization and democratization of the country, as well as how grass-roots changes can influence international relations. Rational-Choice Institutionalism further bolsters this demonstration by showing that actions which may seem unpredictable or surprising can be explained as attempts to best achieve desired preference goals within the context of changing institutions. The Turkish partnership with the Kurdistan Regional Government, of which Ankara was extremely suspicious only a few years prior, is another such example.

As stated in Chapter 1, concerning the theoretical background of this thesis, the true benefit of the New Institutionalisms is their ability to explain seemingly unconnected political behavior through a logical framework. On their own, each of the three New Institutionalisms have some difficulty in explaining certain types of state behavior. To a certain extent, it is necessary to cherry-pick among the three. This is not so unusual, as it is found elsewhere in the literature: it is well established that the theories work better in complement to one another than individually. Furthermore, although the institutionalisms make no claim to be predictive theories, they \emph{can} be used to better understand changes in International Relations as they occur. Should relations with Russia sour, for example, based on what has been previously explained it is likely that Turkey will once again draw closer to the West. Should northern Iraq seek to gain
independence, Turkey will likely resume its old fear of irredentism and once again see the Kurdish diaspora as a security threat. The New Institutionalisms build a framework for understanding behavior, with the ability to focus on any range from the macro to the micro level, without being too prescriptive. Using this theoretical base to analyze Turkish state behavior towards such a varied range of neighboring states helps to further expand the usage of the New Institutionalisms as well as contribute to the better understanding of Turkey’s transition to and role as a regional power. Still, as the New Institutionalisms are not meant to be predictive theories, the question remains to be seen: what will be the long term effects of Turkey’s regional power, and will it be able to maintain its position?
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