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RECTOR DE LA UNIVERSIDAD EXTERNADO DE COLOMBIA

Hernando Parra Nieto

DECANO DE LA FACULTAD DE FINANZAS, GOBIERNO Y RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES

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Presentación*

Durante las últimas décadas, el sistema internacional ha experimentado un cambio sustancial en sus estructuras de poder. Cada vez más, la hegemonía de Estados Unidos y sus aliados occidentales como garantes del orden internacional es cuestionada, al tiempo que otros países como China y Rusia han surgido como alternativas a la reciente dominación occidental del mundo. Pero no han sido los únicos. Desde el Sur global, otros actores emergentes han incrementado su poder hasta convertirse en determinantes en el proceso de toma de decisiones internacional; India, Brasil, Sudáfrica, Indonesia, Corea del Sur, Nigeria, México o Turquía, entre otros, hacen parte de esta categoría. Incluso, el reciente ingreso de la Unión Africana como miembro pleno del G20, al mismo nivel que la Unión Europea, es una prueba clara de la importancia que ha adquirido el Sur global dentro de las estructuras internacionales de poder.

Este panorama de cambio y reorganización del poder internacional exige, entonces, un análisis profundo de los nuevos actores y sus dinámicas de relacionamiento con el resto del sistema internacional. Así, considerando que en 2023 se cumple el centenario de la fundación de la República de Turquía (Türkiye) por parte de Mustafá Kemal Atatürk, la revista *Oasis* decidió dedicar su edición número 39

al tema “Turquía, un actor fundamental en el sistema internacional del siglo XXI”. Con este énfasis en Turquía, desde *Oasis* pretendemos entender la política exterior turca en la actualidad, sus recursos de poder en el sistema internacional y su influencia real, no solo en temas específicos como la migración, la integración o el comercio internacional, sino también su inserción y liderazgo en regiones específicas como Europa, Medio Oriente, el Cáucaso, África, América Latina o Asia Oriental.

La edición número 39 inicia con Marcelo Macedo Rizo quien, desde el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Colombia, envía el artículo titulado “La gran estrategia de Turquía: elementos, desafíos y limitaciones de la política exterior turca en el siglo XXI”. Este texto sirve como introducción a nuestro número en la medida en que analiza la forma como el gobierno de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ha modificado la estrategia turca de inserción internacional, al tiempo que identifica los elementos de poder duro y blando que afectan el alcance nacional, regional y global de la política exterior del país. Macedo termina identificando las amenazas, los desafíos y las limitaciones a las que se enfrenta Turquía en su relacionamiento con el mundo.

Posteriormente, los textos se dividen en dos secciones. La primera ha sido titulada “Re-

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laciones bilaterales y regionales en la política exterior turca” y permite realizar un análisis del relacionamiento exterior turco desde una aproximación estrictamente geográfica. El primer texto de esta sección, titulado “Génesis, presente y futuro del vínculo Colombia-Turquía: de economías emergentes a aliados estratégicos”, llega desde la Universidad del Rosario con Mauricio Jaramillo Jassir y la Universidad Externado de Colombia con Nur Sezek en Bogotá, Colombia. Ambos autores presentan un análisis de la evolución del relacionamiento Turquía-Colombia durante los últimos años y argumentan que Ankara y Bogotá, obteniendo provecho de una estructura internacional que avanza hacia la multipolaridad, se han proyectado como economías emergentes a partir de cambios internos fundamentales que han fomentado el acercamiento colombo-turco.

Desde la Universidad Federal de Río Grande do Sul en Porto Alegre, Brasil, Guilherme Ziebell de Oliveira y Raquel Zaffari Losekann envían el segundo texto de esta sección titulado “A Turquia enquanto potência regional: uma análise da estratégia turca para o continente africano a partir dos anos 2000”. El artículo analiza cómo el incremento de las relaciones de Turquía con África en términos de flujos comerciales, presencia diplomática, mediación en conflictos y asistencia humanitaria ha ayudado al país a consolidarse como potencia emergente en el sistema internacional.

La aproximación regional continúa en Iraq con el texto “The Turkish diplomatic strategy in Iraq: Shifts and continuities (2003-2023)”, de Mohamed Badine El Yattioui del National Defence College en Dubái, Emiratos Árabes Unidos, y Yassine El Yattioui de la Uni-

versidad de Salamanca en Salamanca, España. El artículo explica cómo los aspectos económicos y los temas de seguridad fronteriza han marcado la aproximación turca a Iraq desde la llegada del Partido de la Justicia y el Desarrollo (AKP) al poder en 2003.

Veysel Tekdal, de la Eskişehir Osmangazi University en Eskişehir, Turquía, envía el último texto de esta sección titulado “Greater autonomy through closer relations with China? Revisiting the Turkey-China engagement”. El artículo analiza el posible impacto de una relación más amplia entre Turquía y China sobre la autonomía del gobierno de Ankara frente a Occidente. Aún así, el documento sugiere que la cooperación con China se mantendrá en niveles bajos en el futuro próximo gracias a una mezcla de los lazos históricos de Turquía con Occidente y la naturaleza más parcial y menos profunda del poder global de China.

En este punto, nuestra edición especial sobre Turquía da paso a la segunda sección titulada “Una aproximación temática al relacionamiento de Turquía con el mundo”. Abandonando el énfasis geográfico de la sección anterior, el análisis gira ahora en torno a temas relevantes del relacionamiento internacional de Ankara como la migración, la democracia, el transregionalismo y la conectividad.

El primer artículo de esta sección se titula “New approaches to conditionality in EU-Turkey relations: Assessing the role of irregular migration”. Escrito por Müge Dalkıran, de la Universidad Sabancı en Estambul, Turquía, el texto identifica cómo las respuestas de la Unión Europea y Turquía a la migración irregular han creado una interacción compleja que ha afectado la cooperación bilateral. Más aún,

el documento cuestiona la continuidad de la condicionalidad de la Unión Europea sobre Turquía y presenta una nueva aproximación con la introducción del concepto de “condicionalidad inversa”.

En segundo lugar, Sinem Cengiz, del Gulf Studies Centre en la Universidad de Qatar, envía el artículo “Voting behavior of Turks in the GCC States within the context of Turkish-Gulf relations”. El texto se aleja de los estudios históricos que se centran en la diáspora turca en Europa para analizar la relación existente entre la política exterior turca hacia los Estados del Golfo Pérsico y los resultados electorales de la diáspora turca en la región desde 2014.

Gurol Baba, de la Universidad de Ciencias Sociales de Ankara, Turquía, continúa con su artículo “Türkiye’s transregionalism with South Asia: Geoculture-boosted multifaceted bilateralism”, en el cual afirma que las afinidades geoculturales entre las comunidades del sur de Asia y Turquía actúan como el principal impulso de un relacionamiento enmarcado en la iniciativa “Asia Anew” y que está basado en el bilateralismo transregional multifacético.

La sección termina con el texto “Analyzing the convergence of transport network connectivity: Case for Türkiye and its neighbours” de Abdullah Açıık de la Universidad Dokuz Eylül y Can Atacan de la Universidad Ege en Esmirna, Turquía. El artículo utiliza el Índice de Conectividad de Transporte Marítimo (LSCI) para determinar la competitividad turca en el comercio internacional en los mares Mediterráneo, Egeo y Negro, frente a otros Estados como Bulgaria, Egipto, Georgia, Grecia, Israel, Líbano, Rumania, Rusia y Ucrania. El texto concluye que, para beneficiarse ampliamente

del incremento en el comercio entre Europa y China, Turquía debe fortalecer sus rutas marítimas y mejorar su infraestructura de transporte marítimo.

Esta edición de *Oasis* incluye, además, dos reseñas de libros. La primera es presentada por Jorge Mario Gómez Lara de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana en Medellín, Colombia, sobre el libro *El no-alineamiento activo y América Latina: una doctrina para el nuevo siglo* publicado en 2021 y editado por Carlos Fortín, Carlos Ominami y Jorge Heine; y la segunda por Tunahan Yıldız de la Middle East Technical University en Ankara, Turquía, sobre el libro *Re-imagining International Relations: World Orders in the Thought and Practice of Indian, Chinese, and Islamic Civilizations* de Barry Buzan y Amitav Acharya.

Desde *Oasis* esperamos que este número contribuya a la generación y divulgación del conocimiento sobre Turquía, no solo como potencia emergente, sino también como uno de los actores determinantes en las dinámicas de poder en el sistema internacional actual. Quiero terminar agradeciendo a los autores que desde Colombia, Brasil, Emiratos Árabes Unidos, España, Qatar y Turquía hicieron sus invaluable aportes para la realización de este número especial de *Oasis*. Así mismo, un reconocimiento especial al comité de árbitros y al comité editorial que han permitido garantizar la calidad de los textos aquí presentados. Nuestros agradecimientos también a Hernando Parra, rector de la Universidad Externado de Colombia; Gonzalo Ordóñez, decano de la Facultad de Finanzas, Gobierno y Relaciones Internacionales, y a Patricia Herrera, directora del Centro de Investigaciones

y Proyectos Especiales (CIPE) por su apoyo constante a la publicación de la revista *Oasis*. Esta edición tampoco hubiera sido posible sin las contribuciones de Adriana León, asistente editorial del CIPE; María José Díaz Granados M., correctora de estilo, e Ingrith Lorena Fajardo Hernández, asistente editorial de la revista *Oasis*. Mis más sinceros agradecimientos para todas ellas.

Concluyo haciendo un reconocimiento especial a nuestra editora invitada, la doctora Meliha Altunışık del Departamento de Relaciones Internacionales de la Middle East Technical University quien, desde Ankara, Turquía, tomó esta revista como suya y desde

el inicio y de manera desinteresada realizó sus invaluables aportes para garantizar el éxito de nuestra publicación. Ha sido el mayor de los placeres y el mayor de los honores haber trabajado con ella. Doctora Altunışık, muchas gracias por estar, apoyar, ilustrar y compartir sus vastos conocimientos con nosotros... y, para que no haya confusión, también en turco: Dr. Altunışık, bizimle olduğunuz, bizi desteklediğiniz, aydınlattığınız ve engin bilgilerinizi bizimle paylaştığınız için çok teşekkür ederiz!

JERÓNIMO DELGADO-CAICEDO, Ph. D.
Editor

Introduction*

In 2023, Turkey is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic. As with all such important turning points, this is a time for both reflection on what has happened since, but also a discussion of what could and should happen next. Turkey was established as an heir to one of the greatest empires of its time, the Ottoman Empire. When the empire, already highly weakened, was ultimately defeated in the First World War and disintegrated, an Anatolian-based national liberation movement under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and his friends fought a war of independence and succeeded in negotiating a new treaty, the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923, that is considered as the founding document of the country. Soon after, a new republic was proclaimed on 29 October 2023. Foreign relations of the new republic in those early years of state formation were summed up by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as “peace at home, and peace in the world”.

Devastated by years of war and trying to consolidate the new state, Turkey was able to stay outside of the Second World War. Yet, faced with the Soviet threat right after the War, it joined the Western bloc and became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1952. Being a member of NATO, however, was not only a security guarantee for

Turkey, but it was also an affirmation of its foreign policy direction since the establishment of the Republic. Still, especially once opportunities emerged in the shifting global context, Turkey did not hesitate to establish a multi-dimensional foreign policy and improved its relations with several countries, including the Soviet Union.

The end of the Cold War was another turning point for Turkey’s foreign policy. In the 1990s, Turkey did not enjoy the so-called peace dividend like many other NATO members, as it began to face new instabilities and threats, especially in its immediate neighbourhoods. Turkey faced conflicts spreading in the Middle East, Caucasus, and the Balkans, and yet tried to deal with them playing the role of a stabiliser and proposing several regional initiatives for peace. This was a time when, despite the end of the Cold War, Turkey and the US renewed their partnership and cooperated in Turkey’s neighbourhoods. The decade ended with the Helsinki Summit where the European Union accorded Turkey candidate status.

In the first decade of the 21st century, Turkey enjoyed economic growth and political transformations that were reflected positively in its foreign policy. Turkey-EU accession negotiations started in 2004. Turkey began to focus on developing its economic relations

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with different countries and on its soft power to gain status, power, and influence. Since the 2010s, however, the opportunities have largely been replaced by challenges. Domestically facing increasing economic problems and political polarisation, Turkey also faced new foreign policy challenges. The Arab Uprisings in 2011-12 eventually created new instabilities in the Middle East and limited Turkey's influence. Especially the Syrian civil war exposed Turkey to an immense refugee crisis as well as various security threats. Turkey's EU process stalled due to reasons emanating from both Turkey and the EU. This period also witnessed increasing problems in Turkey-US relations characterised now by diverging interests and strategic outlooks. All these developments led to questions about whether Turkey was changing its international orientation.

Thus, Turkey celebrates its centenary at a time of great challenges and opportunities in global politics as well as in its neighbourhood. It is generally accepted today that global politics are in a period of transition. The US, which emerged as the only superpower after the end of the Cold War, has engaged in increasing competition with rising China. The US-led international order has also been challenged by Russia. As with other middle powers, Turkey has been trying to find itself a place in these shifting global politics. What makes Turkey interesting is that on the one hand, it is a member of many Western institutions. It has been a member of NATO since 1952, a founding member of the Council of Europe, and a member of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Furthermore, although its 65 years

old relations with the European Union have come to a standstill since it is still officially a candidate country. Yet, on the other hand, in a shifting global context and with claims of a post-Western world, Turkey under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) has been increasingly adopting a policy of "strategic autonomy." In that respect, it has been developing its relations with Russia and China, despite experiencing limitations in its relations with them as well. Thus, one of the big challenges Turkey faces in the coming years will be to position itself in the fast-evolving global order, using opportunities to increase its importance and influence.

Turkey has also been quite active in its neighbourhoods. Having several regional identities and sitting across different regions, Turkey has been involved in the Middle East, the Balkans, South Caucasus, and Central Asia. Its increasing military power as well as economic potential have made Turkey a regional power in all these regions. Yet at the same time, Turkey is located in quite an unstable neighbourhood where frozen or active conflicts continue to create new challenges. Turkey's response to these conflicts has ranged from playing the role of a facilitator and mediator to active involvement as in the case of the Syrian conflict. Turkey has also become active in other parts of the world in recent years, especially in Africa and Latin America. This relatively new characteristic of Turkey's foreign policy attests to its rising capabilities and interest.

Today, international relations are characterised by uncertainty and instability. In such a context, the transformations of Turkey's foreign policy, its choices and positions will

have far-reaching consequences in its neighbourhood and also in global politics. Parallel to this, the scholarship on Turkey's foreign policy has become much more sophisticated and diversified in recent years. As the debates of Turkey's foreign policy both in Turkey and abroad continue, it is exciting to have this special issue of *Oasis* with contributions from

truly international scholars. I hope that this issue will contribute to a better understanding of Turkey's foreign policy, its characteristics, debates, opportunities, and challenges in Colombia, Latin America and beyond.

MELIHA ALTUNIŞIK, Ph. D.
Guest Editor – Revista *Oasis*

La gran estrategia de Turquía: elementos, desafíos y limitaciones de la política exterior turca en el siglo XXI

Marcelo Macedo Rizo*

RESUMEN

Con el declive del sistema unipolar y de la hegemonía estadounidense, Turquía, al igual que otras potencias medias y los grandes poderes mundiales, ha venido buscando un reposicionamiento en el orden multipolar emergente y reclamado por un nuevo sistema internacional. La orientación y naturaleza de esta búsqueda de autonomía ha sido fuertemente influida por la prominente figura de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, quien como líder del partido islamista AKP, ha gobernado Turquía durante casi todo el siglo XXI. Este largo periodo ha producido grandes cambios sociales, políticos, económicos y culturales en Turquía, que han

repercutido también en su política exterior. En los últimos veinte años, Turquía ha modificado su estrategia de inserción internacional, tanto desde el punto de vista teórico-doctrinal como de los recursos disponibles y sus objetivos. Si bien no ha establecido oficialmente una gran estrategia geopolítica, a partir de las acciones del gobierno turco y de la literatura de análisis reciente es posible identificar sus principales componentes. Uno de ellos es su pretendido alcance a distintos niveles: nacional, regional (con la determinación de nuevas zonas de influencia) y global, acudiendo a una mezcla de elementos de *soft* y *hard power*, con mayor re-

* Master of International Public Policy, Johns Hopkins University – SAIS (Estados Unidos). Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Colombia (Colombia), Primer Secretario - Diplomático de Carrera. [jmmacedor@unal.edu.co]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5920-8848].

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levancia de la fuerza en la última etapa, debido a circunstancias que Turquía considera como amenazas. En todo caso, para hablar de una gran estrategia es necesario tratar primero de delimitar este concepto en general e identificar sus características para Turquía en particular, así como sus desafíos y principales limitaciones, al cumplirse cien años de la República.

Palabras clave: Turquía; gran estrategia; potencia media; AKP; Erdoğan.

TURKEY'S GRAND STRATEGY. ELEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN 21ST CENTURY

ABSTRACT

With decline of the unipolar system and US hegemony, Turkey, just like other middle powers and the great world powers, has been seeking a repositioning in the emerging multipolar order and claimed by a new international system. The orientation and nature of this quest has been strongly influenced by the prominent figure of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of Islamist AKP party that has ruled Turkey for most of the 21st century. This long period has produced big social, political, economic and cultural changes in Turkey, which have also had an impact on its foreign policy. In the last twenty years, Turkey has modified its strategy of international insertion, both from the theoretical-doctrinal point of view as well as from the available resources and objectives. While it has not officially established a Grand Strategy, however, based on the recent actions by the Turkish government and analytical literature, it is possible

to identify its main components. One of them is its intended reach at different levels: national, regional (with the determination of new areas of influence) and global, resorting to a mixture of elements of soft and hard power, with greater relevance of force in the last stage, due to circumstances considered as threats by Turkey. In any case, speaking of a grand strategy, it is necessary to try first to delimit this concept in general and identify its characteristics for Turkey in particular, as well as its challenges and main limitations, at the 100th anniversary of the Republic.

Key words: Turkey; grand strategy; medium power; AKP; Erdoğan.

INTRODUCCIÓN

Con la caída del socialismo real y el fin de la Guerra Fría, el sistema internacional sufrió una aparente realineación alrededor de los valores liberales que, bajo la hegemonía de Estados Unidos, supuso la formación de un orden unipolar con sentido de permanencia. Sin embargo, como consecuencia de conflictos recientes y actuales, la correlación de fuerzas, el acomodamiento de los grandes poderes (especialmente por el ascenso de China) y las potencias medias, e incluso el relacionamiento estratégico de pequeños Estados, se está formando un nuevo sistema multipolar. Este nuevo orden se caracteriza por la falta de un liderazgo a nivel mundial, tanto de personalidades como de países, por lo que el referido predominio estadounidense no solo ha sido cuestionado, sino también abiertamente desafiado.

En tal escenario de emergencia de poderes regionales que plantean un nuevo sistema

internacional, Turquía¹, al igual que otras potencias medias, está buscando su reposicionamiento a partir del despliegue de una política exterior que obedece a la visión que el Partido de la Justicia y el Desarrollo (AKP) y su líder, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, tienen sobre el lugar y el rol que debe ejercer Turquía en los órdenes regional y global durante el siglo XXI. No en vano, Erdoğan ha hablado del “Siglo Turco”, en el que busca hacer de su país “uno de los diez más grandes del mundo en los campos político, económico, tecnológico, militar y diplomático” (Daily Sabah, 2022). El año 2023, en que se cumple el primer centenario de la República, marca un punto de quiebre en ese propósito, porque al completar dos décadas al frente de Turquía (de 2003 a 2014 como Primer Ministro y de 2014 en adelante como Presidente, desde 2017 bajo un régimen presidencialista), Erdoğan ha sido reelegido para un nuevo periodo que va hasta 2028, tiempo en el que espera consolidar varios de los objetivos trazados durante los años previos y dejar las bases para la política exterior turca de los siguientes, bajo la denominada *Visión 2053*.

Tales objetivos hacen parte de una estrategia, sobre la que se discutirá si puede atribuírsele el epíteto de “Gran” y que obedece fundamentalmente al enfoque que Erdoğan y, por extensión, el AKP, tienen sobre lo que Turquía debería ser y hacer con el fin de alcanzar

una posición preponderante en el sistema internacional. Lo anterior implica, por lo tanto, una orientación islamista, dada por la naturaleza del partido y, en especial, por la personalidad del presidente turco, que busca proyectar así su propia visión de Turquía tanto a nivel interno como externo. Esta orientación, que ha traído consigo múltiples cambios a nivel político, económico, social y cultural en Turquía, contiene también un cambio en la política exterior, que ha tenido dos grandes periodos, los cuales, desde el punto de vista académico, pueden ser aparejados a las dos etapas que el extenso gobierno del AKP ha atravesado hasta el momento: la primera de ellas, de 2003 a 2011, época de reformas encaminadas al ingreso a la Unión Europea, con un desempeño económico impresionante y la reducción de la influencia militar sobre la vida política del país. La política externa en este segmento se fundamenta en la doctrina de profundidad estratégica y de cero problemas con los vecinos, expuesta por el exministro de Relaciones Exteriores y exprimer ministro, Ahmet Davutoğlu, quien “alegó que Turquía necesita convertirse en un centro geopolítico como lo solía ser en el pasado y ejercer su influencia en las regiones a su alrededor, incluyendo el Medio Oriente, los Balcanes, el Cáucaso y el mundo islámico en general” (Batashvili, 2017, p. 3). Por esta razón, con referencia a la política exterior de

¹ El 1 de junio de 2022, Turquía cambió oficialmente de nombre a Türkiye, que es su denominación original en idioma turco. Sin embargo, en el presente artículo se usará el nombre Turquía, por tratarse de su apelativo histórico en español, que no guarda connotaciones negativas como en inglés, y porque, en todo caso, la escritura en turco incluye un monema y fonemas que no existen en nuestro idioma, por lo que su pronunciación en español con base en las letras así escritas difiere de su dicción original.

estos primeros años y del gobierno del AKP en general, se suele hablar de un pretendido neo-otomanismo.

La segunda etapa, de 2011 en adelante, es un periodo en que la política interna se radicaliza, y en el plano de las relaciones exteriores, en parte como efecto de la Primavera Árabe y el alejamiento de Europa, Turquía intenta una estrategia de influencia de carácter islamista que malogra la mayoría de relaciones con su entorno. Es en esta fase que se presencia un “giro autoritario” por parte de Erdoğan, reflejado primero en la persecución a sus antiguos aliados del gülenismo², seguido por la fuerte represión de las protestas de Gezi Park³, el recrudescimiento de la guerra contra el Partido de los Trabajadores del Kurdistán (PKK) tras el rompimiento de los diálogos en 2015, y, más adelante, por las medidas que siguieron al intento de golpe de Estado en julio de 2016. A nivel externo, además del mencionado distanciamiento de Occidente y de sus vecinos en Medio Oriente, en donde Catar se convirtió durante un buen tiempo en su único aliado, se ha evidenciado una progresiva militarización,

con presencia de tropas e intervenciones turcas en varios países, especialmente en Siria, como respuesta a amenazas contra la integridad territorial de Turquía, tanto de fundamentalistas islámicos como de nacionalistas kurdos.

La forma en que estos desarrollos, además de otros elementos constitutivos de la política exterior, obedecen a una estrategia por parte del gobierno turco bajo el liderazgo de Erdoğan y su partido el AKP, es lo que este escrito pretende revisar, para lo cual se realizará, en primer lugar, un análisis del concepto de Gran Estrategia, con el fin de determinar, por un lado, si las potencias medias también pueden desarrollar tales estrategias o estas son exclusivas de los grandes poderes globales, y, por otro, cuáles serían sus componentes para Turquía en particular. Luego, se auscultarán los niveles de dicha estrategia a nivel nacional, regional y global. Por último, se pondrán de presente las mayores limitaciones y más importantes desafíos de la política exterior turca dentro de los próximos treinta años, para cumplir la visión del Siglo Turco de Erdoğan.

² Se conoce como gülenistas a los integrantes del movimiento *Hizmet* (Servicio), formado por el clérigo Fetullah Gülen en la década de los sesenta, colectivo que en un principio estuvo orientado a la fundación de instituciones educativas en Turquía y el exterior, pero luego realizó un proceso de infiltración y cooptación en varias entidades del Estado turco, incluyendo las fuerzas militares y el poder judicial. En un principio aliados del AKP, en 2013 empezaron a ser perseguidos, luego de que jueces pertenecientes a Hizmet abrieran procesos contra Erdoğan. De acuerdo con la evidencia recaudada, fueron elementos gülenistas dentro del ejército los que intentaron el golpe de Estado en 2016, por lo que el gobierno declaró al movimiento como un grupo terrorista, denominándolo FETÖ (*Fetullahçı Terör Örgütü*) y solicitando a Estados Unidos la extradición de Gülen, quien se encuentra en ese país desde 1999.

³ Las protestas de Gezi en 2013 empezaron como una queja en contra de un proyecto de infraestructura en un parque de Estambul, pero rápidamente se expandieron por todo el país, como manifestaciones de crítica al gobierno de Erdoğan.

LA GRAN ESTRATEGIA

Etimológicamente, el término estrategia proviene de la palabra griega *strategos* que significa general, en un sentido militar, esto es, el comandante de una unidad castrense. No es una coincidencia que el concepto de estrategia se relacione inicialmente con el arte de la guerra, en el que se asume como la “aplicación coordinada de todas las fuerzas de una nación para conseguir un objetivo” (Cohen, 2023). En un sentido amplio, estrategia hace referencia al “uso de los recursos disponibles para ganar cualquier objetivo” (Howard, 1983, p. 86), por lo que en definitiva el término denota una relación entre medios y fines, en particular la forma en que se utilizan los primeros para obtener los segundos. De allí que la estrategia sea “una actividad dirigida a objetivos que es determinada para transformar una potencialidad en una realidad” (Yükselen, 2021, p. 83). La utilización de los recursos al alcance implica el diseño y la aplicación de un plan, de manera que la estrategia obedece también a un esfuerzo organizado.

En el campo de las relaciones internacionales, el concepto de estrategia es recurrente en los enfoques realistas. Por ejemplo, en el realismo estructural de Waltz, la estrategia consiste en la forma como los Estados se adaptan al sistema internacional, en sus relaciones con otros Estados, con base en la distribución de capacidades (2010, p. 127). La diferencia en recursos lleva a que los Estados busquen desarrollar medidas para contrarrestar a otros, imitar a aquellos más poderosos, fortalecer sus propias alianzas o debilitar las contrarias, en una dinámica de balance de poder, que es

la constante del orden mundial en la visión de este autor. Tras haber desarrollado buena parte de su trabajo durante la Guerra Fría, para Waltz el modelo más estable para la seguridad internacional es el bipolar, que asegura el equilibrio estratégico global a partir de la interacción entre dos grandes potencias.

Ahora bien, el enfoque excesivo del realismo en los Estados como actores principales de las relaciones internacionales lo ha llevado a subestimar la importancia de los actores no estatales, cada vez más creciente en los análisis de la materia, a la vez que la atención se ha centrado tanto en la disponibilidad de recursos materiales o geoestratégicos, como en los procesos de toma de decisiones en política exterior. De acuerdo con Yükselen, esta perspectiva, además de desconocer la existencia de recursos no materiales (aquello que se denominaría *soft power*), parece convertir la estrategia en un ejercicio mecánico, “cosificando” la voluntad (*agency*) al desconectarla de su estructura (2018, p. 32). Por esta razón, el carácter volitivo de la estrategia no solo debe recuperar su aspecto subjetivo, sino también tener en cuenta el aspecto sociohistórico que influye sobre ella, caracterizado por tres estructuras principales: el sistema político internacional, el sistema económico global y la geografía. La comprensión de la estrategia como un acto volitivo (*agential*) permite convertirla en una praxis que “también puede ser concebida como una práctica posicionada o actividad situada. La voluntad produce su praxis a través de la interacción dialéctica con las estructuras mencionadas mediante el empleo de elementos situacionales, posicionales y disposicionales de estrategia” (2018, p. 33).

En cuanto al concepto de gran estrategia, también tuvo en sus inicios una connotación militar. Liddell Hart introdujo el término en 1967 para indicar que, si bien una gran estrategia es para “coordinar y direccionar todos los recursos de una nación hacia el éxito en el objetivo político de la guerra –el objetivo definido como política fundamental–” (1967, p. 321), también lo debe ser para alcanzar “un estado de paz y que la gente de uno esté mejor después de la guerra que antes” (1967, p. 322). Paul Kennedy sigue de cerca esta definición cuando aduce que una gran estrategia está “relacionada con la paz tanto como con la guerra. Se trata de la evolución e integración de políticas que deberían operar por décadas, o incluso por siglos. No cesa con el fin de la guerra ni inicia con su comienzo” (1991, p. 4). Por su parte, Barry Posen sostiene que una gran estrategia es “una cadena de medios y fines político-militares, una teoría del Estado acerca de cómo este puede generar seguridad para sí mismo” (2003, p. 13). Con base en estas últimas enunciaciões que, de acuerdo con Silove (2018, p. 32), pueden considerarse como las que más han persistido en el tiempo, es posible extraer preliminarmente algunos elementos que caracterizarían a una gran estrategia. En primer lugar, que no se circunscribe a la guerra o a lo militar (aunque este sea uno de sus pilares), sino que también envuelve otros aspectos de un Estado. En segundo lugar, que se compone de medios y fines a un nivel más alto que el de la simple estrategia. En tercer lugar, que involucra una visión de largo plazo. En cuarto lugar, que su propósito principal es la seguridad (en este caso, del Estado). Por último, que aplica en particular para el Estado de que se trate,

es decir, está orientada a favorecer o proteger sus propios intereses. Quizá la definición que ofrece van Hooft resume de mejor manera estas características de la gran estrategia, a la que entiende como “el nivel más alto del arte de gobernar una nación, que establece la forma como los Estados u otras unidades políticas, priorizan y movilizan su poder militar, diplomático, político, económico y de otras fuentes con el fin de asegurar lo que perciben como sus intereses” (2019).

Con estos presupuestos, Silove se da a la tarea de escudriñar en el concepto de gran estrategia, el cual considera se ha “puesto de moda” en las últimas décadas. Luego de una revisión de la literatura reciente sobre la materia, encuentra que dicho concepto puede tener tres significados. Primero, es posible entender una gran estrategia como un plan o mejor, como “una colección de planes y políticas que comprenden el esfuerzo deliberado del Estado para aprovechar las herramientas políticas, militares, diplomáticas y económicas para promover el interés nacional de ese Estado [...] Implica una acción intencional: lo que los líderes piensan y quieren” (Feaver citado por Silove, 2018, p. 38). Para esta autora, la concepción de la gran estrategia como un plan concede mayor protagonismo a los actores involucrados en el diseño de las políticas, por lo que se enfocaría en el denominado proceso de toma de decisiones, el cual, de acuerdo con esta concepción, estaría predefinido en un documento que condensa los objetivos de política exterior del Estado determinado.

Segundo, una gran estrategia puede entenderse como principio(s) organizacional(es), noción recurrente en dos tipos de análisis sobre

aquella. Por un lado, aquellos que se centran en las ideas de los líderes individuales, como por ejemplo la forma en que diferentes presidentes de Estados Unidos consideraban que se podía garantizar la seguridad del país, con unidad interna y neutralidad externa, como en el caso de John Quincy Adams, o la doctrina Monroe, concebida por aquel, y que rechazaba el colonialismo europeo de principios del siglo XIX. Por otro lado, se encuentra el “tipo de trabajo que utiliza el término gran estrategia para referirse a un principio organizador y que constituye literatura prescriptiva (sobre la misma)” (Silove, 2018, p. 41), es decir, se enfoca en la pretendida existencia de principios orientadores de política exterior, establecidos para lograr unos objetivos determinados y proteger el interés nacional.

Tercero, una gran estrategia puede entenderse como un patrón de comportamiento que “no evidencia la existencia de un plan o un principio organizativo, aunque en algunos casos un principio o plan es usado como evidencia para demostrar la existencia del patrón” (Silove, 2018, p. 43). Desde este punto de vista, una gran estrategia son las acciones que un Estado, en efecto, desarrolla para alcanzar los fines que persigue o para proteger sus intereses. Esto la convierte en una cuestión de hecho que, en consecuencia, podría ser aplicada por cualquier Estado. De todas formas, sin importar el significado de gran estrategia que se asuma, los tres propuestos comparten ciertas características: su alcance de largo plazo; su carácter holístico, en el sentido de que compromete todos los recursos de un Estado (no únicamente los económicos o militares); y la preocupación por la realización de negociacio-

nes, tratos o arreglos para asegurar los intereses más importantes de ese Estado.

El elemento de la permanencia lleva necesariamente a la discusión de si la gran estrategia obedece a una política de gobierno o de Estado, y si debe, entonces, privilegiarse la estructura sobre los aspectos coyunturales. Esto, a su vez, remite al enfoque revisado más arriba sobre la existencia de principios orientadores que trasciendan los gobiernos de turno y se establezcan como criterios para las políticas de largo plazo. Para Yükselen, las estrategias de corto plazo son trazadas en respuesta a desafíos emergentes, y las contradicciones que estos generan podrían obstaculizar objetivos más amplios. En cambio, “las estructuras pueden no siempre producir tales contradicciones [...] pueden generar nuevas aperturas para la realización de una visión de largo plazo” (2021, p. 85). De esta forma, mientras las primeras son estrategias orientadas a las amenazas (reactivas), las segundas lo están a la visión (activas), esto es, pensar a futuro y considerar los posibles escenarios venideros. En todo caso, la gran estrategia se necesita para lidiar con los nuevos desafíos internos y externos y, por lo tanto, debe ser adaptable a las coyunturas.

A su vez, la búsqueda de protección del interés nacional guarda una estrecha relación con la seguridad, la cual podría considerarse como el objetivo fundamental de una gran estrategia. Aunque a través de la ejecución de una estrategia de este tipo, un Estado puede buscar ejercer influencia o hegemonía a nivel regional o global, el fin primario es asegurar su propia supervivencia, tanto por la estabilidad interna como por la eliminación de amenazas o riesgos externos, y a partir de allí proyectar

una política exterior, aprovechando las oportunidades que le brinde el sistema internacional, sus recursos (incluida su geografía) y las condiciones de otros Estados con los que deba interactuar. La seguridad y la proyección se basan y a la vez permiten una mayor o menor autonomía del Estado en el escenario internacional, por lo que la existencia de autonomía parece ser, en últimas, lo que determina el paso de una estrategia convencional a una gran estrategia.

LA GRAN ESTRATEGIA DE TURQUÍA

Tal como se planteó líneas más arriba, una de las principales cuestiones es si una gran estrategia aplica solo para grandes potencias o también para poderes medianos como Turquía. Algunos autores defienden que solo los grandes poderes pueden tener gran estrategia. En este sentido, Balzacq y otros sostienen que “solo una superpotencia (en la práctica, únicamente EE. UU.) o mínimamente un gran poder (extendiendo la lista a China y Rusia) tiene los suficientes recursos institucionales y materiales para formular e implementar una gran estrategia” (2019, p. 2). Sin embargo, otros consideran que el colapso del sistema mundial unipolar, el declive de la hegemonía de Estados Unidos y la falta de liderazgo

global, han generado no solo un nuevo orden multipolar, sino también creado un vacío en el que las potencias medias⁴ pueden y deben establecer y desarrollar grandes estrategias de política exterior, enfocadas en la búsqueda de seguridad, autonomía e influencia dentro del sistema internacional, el cual está siendo cuestionado por estos mismos emergentes poderes medios. Como lo señala Müftüler Baç,

... parece haber una presionante necesidad por la reestructuración de la gobernanza global que puede llevar a posibles modificaciones en el comercio internacional, las reglas financieras internacionales, la movilidad de capital, la seguridad económica, la ayuda externa, las normas internacionales, la gobernanza migratoria, así como las estructuras de gobernanza de la seguridad internacional. (2020, p. 183)

En este nuevo orden global multipolar y caótico, actores como China, Rusia, India o Brasil están planteando nuevos escenarios que revalúan el orden establecido tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial, tanto en el ámbito del multilateralismo político como de la estructura económica y de seguridad. Es en este espacio vacío que Turquía busca posicionarse como un actor regional y global que goza de autonomía y que, además, puede ejercer influencia en su periferia y otras regiones.

⁴ De acuerdo con Pérez Gil, “el término potencia media se utiliza generalmente para hacer referencia a Estados de tamaño grande o medio, con una política exterior activa en determinadas áreas, regional o sectorial, y a los que se le supone una cierta capacidad de influencia, además de cierto prestigio internacional” (2001, p. 217). Aunque en ocasiones puede considerarse sinónimo de potencia regional, “se puede señalar que el contorno de una potencia regional es la región, como su nombre lo indica; mientras que el de una potencia media es mayor porque puede ascender al ámbito global” (Ardila, 2012, p. 297).

Tal reposicionamiento de Turquía en el sistema internacional se realiza a través de una gran estrategia. No obstante, Turquía no ha definido oficialmente una gran estrategia, por lo que diversos autores discuten, no tanto sobre lo que aquella es, sino respecto a lo que debería ser o en qué elementos debería fundamentarse. Aktürk, por ejemplo, desde un enfoque realista sostiene que “el imperativo primario de la gran estrategia de Turquía debería ser mantener a las fuerzas armadas de los grandes poderes fuera del [territorio] de sus vecinos inmediatos y establecer un núcleo de vecindario en el que ningún Estado [territorialmente] cercano represente una amenaza militar” (2021, p. 97). Esta proposición prescriptiva, con énfasis en la seguridad, es complementada con su propuesta de “Turquía como un tercer poder en los Balcanes, el Cáucaso, Medio Oriente y el Norte de África” (2020, p. 154), cuya tarea sea mantener la independencia e integridad territorial de los países en su vecindario, los cuales están siendo partidos y destruidos en diversas guerras, en las que Estados Unidos y Rusia se hallan indirectamente involucrados, como son los casos de Libia y, especialmente, de Siria.

Por su parte, Oğuzlu propone como gran estrategia para Turquía que esta sea una “potencia media resiliente”, lo cual incluye elementos realistas y liberales. Por una parte, considera que Turquía debe mantener buenas relaciones con los grandes poderes globales a la vez que puede beneficiarse de las discordias entre aquellos en búsqueda de autonomía que les impida a dichos poderes instrumentalizarla en sus interacciones entre sí y evitar que Turquía deba “alinearse” con alguno de ellos. Por otra parte, “el crecimiento de Turquía como

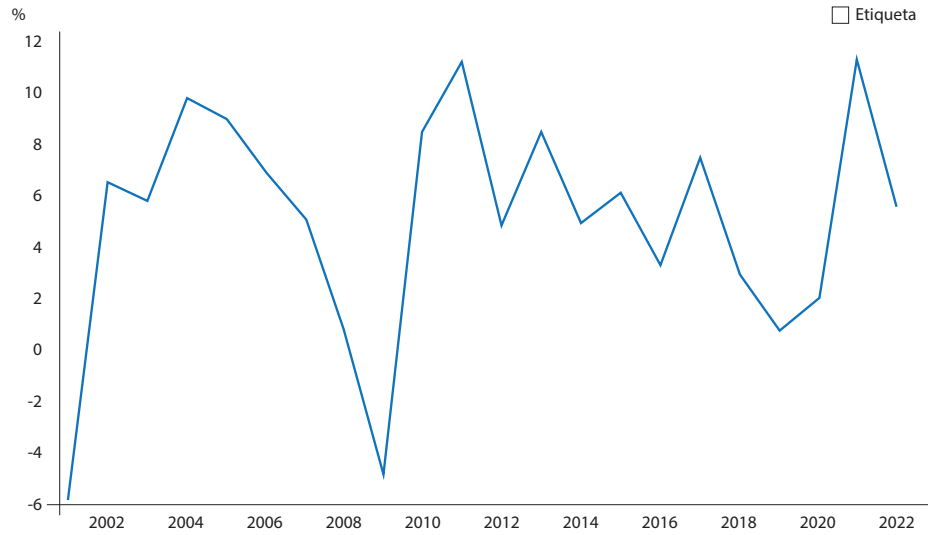
una potencia media respetable solo es posible si se convierte pronto en una economía desarrollada” (2021). Esto no solo le proporcionará autonomía respecto de potencias globales, sino que le permitirá un relacionamiento más favorable con otros poderes medios.

En este sentido, la posibilidad de afirmar que Turquía tenga o pueda desarrollar una gran estrategia está delimitada por su disponibilidad de recursos. En otras palabras, la existencia de una gran estrategia depende de que se cuente con los medios para realizarla. Dichos recursos pueden ser tanto físicos, reflejados en el tamaño de la economía, la capacidad militar, la disposición de recursos naturales o la posición geográfica —que en el caso de Turquía es particularmente estratégica—, como simbólicos, representados en el prestigio del país a nivel internacional o la capacidad de influencia cultural. En términos tradicionales, los recursos constituyen lo que se conoce como *hard power* y *soft power*.

Respecto del primero, resulta preciso revisar algunas cifras relacionadas con el crecimiento económico de Turquía en los últimos veinte años, así como el incremento en el gasto militar y los desarrollos tecnológicos en esta área (figuras 1 y 2).

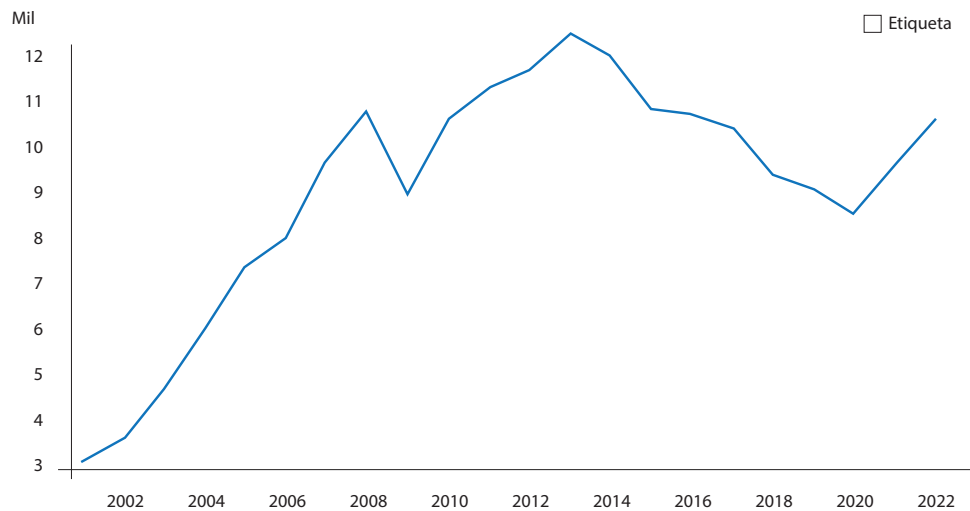
El desempeño económico de Turquía entre 2003 y 2013 fue impresionante, con importantes tasas de crecimiento, excepto por los años de la crisis financiera mundial. En el mismo periodo, el ingreso per cápita casi se cuadruplicó, pasando de USD 3.640 a 12.507, luego de lo cual entró en una especie de “trampa de ingreso medio”, aunque manteniéndose en niveles altos. En cuanto al tamaño de su economía, a nivel mundial, a partir de

Figura 1
Turquía. Tasas de crecimiento 2001-2022



Fuente: Banco Mundial (2023).

Figura 2. Turquía
PIB per cápita 2001-2022



Fuente: Banco Mundial (2023).

2002 ingresó al Top 20 de los países con mayor producto interno bruto (PIB), alcanzando el puesto 16 en 2013.

En materia militar, en número de efectivos el ejército de Turquía es el undécimo del mundo, con 425.000 personas activas en 2023 (Statista, 2023), siendo el segundo más grande de Europa, después de Rusia, y el segundo en la OTAN, después de Estados Unidos. De acuerdo con el Banco Mundial, si bien el gasto militar se redujo progresivamente del 3,8% del PIB en 2002 al 1,8% en 2015, luego de este año ha aumentado, llegando a 2,7% en 2019 y 2,1% en 2021 (BM, 2023). Su fuerza aérea comprende 33 escuadrones y casi 700 aeronaves de combate y apoyo, incluyendo aproximadamente 250 F-16 (TR Military, 2023). Aunque en 2019, Turquía quedó por fuera del programa de F-35 liderado por Estados Unidos, debido a que el gobierno turco compró a Rusia el sistema de defensa de misiles S-400, seguirá en programas de F-16 al tiempo que trabaja en sus propios prototipos:

Turquía ha estado desarrollando en los últimos años su propio caza TF-X KAAN, que según defiende la industria turca es capaz de competir con el F-35. El otro motivo de orgullo nacional turco es el Hurjet, un caza que podría reemplazar parcialmente a los F-16 estadounidenses. Las dos aeronaves son de fabricación nacional, con lo que Ankara espera ganar en autonomía en el sector de la aviación de combate. (Tejedor, 2023)

De igual manera, Turquía ha logrado desarrollar un dron militar, el Bayraktar TB2, que ha sido utilizado por fuerzas ucranianas para repeler la agresión rusa desde 2022 y ya ha sido

vendido a dieciséis países, incluida Polonia. En cuanto a su fuerza naval, Turquía cuenta con más de 300 naves (sin mencionar que la Armada tiene su propia flotilla de casi 100 aeronaves), incluyendo 14 submarinos avanzados, que convierten a la armada turca en “la más fuerte del Mediterráneo Oriental” (TRT, 2021). Al respecto, Turquía ha desarrollado la doctrina de “Patria Azul” (*mavi vatan*), sobre la que se volverá más adelante, que involucra a aquel y otros mares circundantes a su territorio.

La privilegiada posición geográfica de Turquía hace casi indispensable el paso de varios gasoductos por su territorio, incluyendo el denominado TurkStream (Turkish Stream), que transporta gas de Rusia a Turquía a través del Mar Negro, en funcionamiento desde 2018, y el Transanatolio (TANAP), que lleva gas de Azerbaiyán a Europa y opera desde 2019. A estos se suman el gasoducto persa que trae gas desde Irán, y el corredor Catar-Turquía que transporta gas licuado desde Doha hasta Bulgaria. La condición de *hub* gasífero se ha visto fortalecida por el descubrimiento en 2020 del “mayor yacimiento de gas de su historia” (DW, 2020) en el Mar Negro, lo que podría garantizar su autosuficiencia e incluso convertir a Turquía en exportador de gas. Esto al tiempo que continúa con la búsqueda de yacimientos en el Mediterráneo Oriental, en aplicación de criterios como las aguas territoriales, la plataforma continental y la zona económica exclusiva, lo cual le ha valido choques con Grecia, en especial por el establecimiento de zonas de jurisdicción marítima con base en los pretendidos límites de la República Turca de Chipre del Norte, a la que solo Turquía reconoce. “Con su reciente éxito en la explo-

ración en aguas profundas en el Mar Negro y su ubicación geográfica prominente para los oleoductos interregionales de hidrocarburos, Turquía puede desempeñar un papel material en la configuración del panorama geopolítico actual, especialmente en el sector del gas natural” (Ackerman, 2022).

La geoestratégica locación de Turquía, que le facilita ostentar múltiples “pertenencias” (país europeo, asiático, de Medio Oriente, musulmán, caucásico, mediterráneo, “puente entre el mundo árabe y Europa”, “bisagra entre Oriente y Occidente”, etc.), también le permite ejercer control sobre recursos naturales tan importantes como el agua. Su posición como país en donde nacen los ríos Tigris y Éufrates, le garantiza el acceso ilimitado a las aguas que fluyen dentro de sus fronteras, argumento que se conoce como la Doctrina Harmon (Hakki, 2007). En aplicación de esta doctrina, Turquía ha desarrollado el Proyecto Sudeste Anatolio (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi), mejor conocido como proyecto GAP, consistente en 22 represas a lo largo de la cuenca de dichos ríos en territorio turco, orientado a fortalecer la producción agrícola e industrial y a garantizar la producción de energía, la provisión de agua y la soberanía alimentaria del país. Estos proyectos de infraestructura afectan el suministro de agua a Siria e Irak como países ubicados “aguas abajo”. Además del gas y la energía hidráulica, en su propósito de garantizar su soberanía energética, Turquía inauguró en abril de 2023 la primera central nuclear en su territorio, llamada Akkuyu y construida por el consorcio ruso Rosatom, la que se espera empiece a producir energía a principios de 2024.

La disponibilidad de recursos materiales ha sido complementada con un estratégico despliegue de “poderes blandos”, representados en cooperación, materializada a través de ayuda humanitaria ofrecida por la Autoridad para el Manejo de Desastres y Emergencias (AFAD), fundada en 2009, o mediante proyectos financiados o ejecutados por la Agencia Turca de Cooperación y Coordinación (TİKA), creada en 1992 y reestructurada en 2011, año a partir del cual inició un proceso de expansión, por el que cuenta en la actualidad con oficinas en 60 países e implementa proyectos en 150. A esto se agregan las instituciones de promoción de la lengua y la cultura turcas, como el Instituto Yunus Emre, que data de 2007 y tiene presencia en 50 países fuera de Turquía, y la Fundación Maarif, creada en 2016, con sedes en 36 países. La cooperación académica también se desarrolla por medio de becas a estudiantes extranjeros, que son administradas por la Presidencia de Turcos en el Exterior y Comunidades Afines (YTB), dependiente del Ministerio de Cultura y Turismo, y que ofrece el programa de becas más integral a nivel mundial, pasando de 40.000 aplicaciones en 2012 a 165.000 en 2022, de las cuales 4.300 fueron concedidas a estudiantes de 171 países. En total, entre estudiantes becados o que han asumido los costos de su educación, en los últimos veinte años más de 150.000 extranjeros se han graduado de universidades turcas y, en la actualidad, hay más de 260.000 estudiantes foráneos en Turquía (YTB, 2023).

De igual manera, es importante mencionar el plan de crecimiento de Turkish Airlines, iniciado en 2003 (la compañía fue fundada en 1933), pasando de 54 aeronaves en ese mo-

mento a 421 en 2023. De hecho, en un solo año, 2013, realizó la compra de 250 aviones entre Airbus y Boeing. Hoy en día, la aerolínea bandera de Turquía es la octava a nivel mundial por número de aeronaves y ocupa el primer lugar en número de destinos (340) y países a los que llega (129) (THY, 2023), además de ser la séptima del mundo en ganancias, al reportar casi USD 20.000 millones en 2022 (Forbes, 2023). Más allá de las impresionantes cifras, Turkish Airlines sirve como punta de lanza para la promoción de la imagen de Turquía en el exterior, la cual también ha sido fuertemente impulsada por productos culturales, tales como las telenovelas (*dizi*), muchas de ellas de gran éxito en varias regiones del mundo.

Gracias a las ventas internacionales y espectadores globales, Turquía es segundo a nivel mundial en distribución de televisión –solo detrás de los Estados Unidos–, encontrando inmensas audiencias en Rusia, China, Corea y América Latina. Actualmente, Chile es el principal consumidor de *dizi* en términos de números de programas vendidos, mientras que México y Argentina son los que más pagan por ellas. (Bhutto, 2019)

Este fomento de la imagen del país se refleja en las cifras de turismo, que aumentaron de 30 millones de visitantes en 2009 a casi 40 en 2015, llegando a un pico de 51,19 millones en 2019, por poco alcanzado de nuevo en 2022, cuando se registraron 50,45 millones de turistas extranjeros (OMT, 2023). Esto hace de Turquía el cuarto país con más turistas en el mundo, siendo superado únicamente por Francia, España y Estados Unidos. El sector turismo generó más de USD 41.000 millones

en 2022 y aportó el 11% del PIB nacional en 2021 (EOS Intelligence, 2023).

Así las cosas, aunque se debe reconocer que los medios económicos y militares de Turquía son menores que los de grandes poderes globales, también es cierto que, en materia de abundantes recursos disponibles, como uno de los requisitos indispensables para el desarrollo de una gran estrategia, Turquía parece contar con la suficiente fuerza militar y económica para emprender su búsqueda de autonomía e influencia en el sistema internacional. Como se verá a continuación, este propósito se persigue a distintos niveles.

NIVELES DE LA GRAN ESTRATEGIA

Como se mencionó, la política exterior de Turquía, durante la primera etapa del AKP en el poder, estuvo fuertemente orientada por la obra de Ahmet Davutoğlu, quien pasó de ser un desconocido profesor universitario a convertirse, primero, en el asesor de política exterior del primer ministro Erdoğan, luego en su ministro de Relaciones Exteriores (2009-2014) y, finalmente, llegó a ser primer ministro, cuando Erdoğan se convirtió en el primer presidente de la República elegido popularmente. Su libro *Profundidad estratégica (Stratejik derinlik)*, publicado por primera vez en 2001, ejerció una notable influencia sobre el nuevo gobierno y representó un nuevo paradigma respecto de la forma en que Turquía debía relacionarse con su entorno, en congruencia con la naturaleza del AKP. Así, tal como lo señalan Yeşiltaş y Pirinççi, mientras que en los años noventa “el terrorismo del PKK y la cuestión kurda moldearon la integridad

territorial como la principal prioridad estratégica” (2021, p. 129), durante la primera década del AKP “el eje del discurso geopolítico se movió significativamente del Estado-nación a la civilización” (2021, p. 130). Este nuevo enfoque “civilizatorio” supera el meramente nacional, propio de las posturas republicanas, y aspira a una mayor convergencia sobre la base de intereses compartidos con otros Estados. De allí que la base de la doctrina sea tener “Cero problemas con los vecinos”, con el fin de desarrollar una mayor cooperación e interdependencia económica (Davutoğlu, 2004). Como resultado, durante los primeros años del AKP se tomó parte en iniciativas regionales en Medio Oriente, se lograron acercamientos con Irán, Siria, e incluso Armenia, al tiempo que Turquía intentó jugar un papel activo en la resolución de conflictos regionales, como cuando quiso servir de mediador entre Siria e Israel en 2008.

A nivel interno, la llegada del AKP al poder supuso una serie de reformas encaminadas a allanar el ingreso de Turquía a la UE, luego de que la Comisión Europea considerara en 2004 que cumplía con los llamados criterios políticos de Copenhague y que comenzaran formalmente las negociaciones en 2005 (Turquía había presentado su candidatura en 1987 y apenas en 1999 fue considerada oficialmente como candidata). Una de dichas reformas fue la modificación del Consejo de Seguridad Nacional, que supuso la disminución del poder y protagonismo de los militares en la política doméstica. Es importante recordar que, durante el siglo XX, Turquía vivió cuatro golpes de Estado (en 1960, 1971, 1980 y 1997), en buena parte bajo la acepción del ejército como

el guardián del orden secular de la nación. Esta transformación del Estado se observó también con la creación o reestructuración de muchas entidades del orden nacional, como en los casos de las mencionadas TİKA, AFAD, Turkish Airlines o el Instituto Yunus Emre. De este modo, Turquía se consolidó como país modelo para Medio Oriente pues demostraba que

... los partidos islamistas, a través de limitaciones institucionales, pueden ser moderados e involucrarse en el proceso democrático. El éxito del experimento democrático de Turquía y su modelo económico de alta productividad y crecimiento impulsado por las exportaciones han contribuido a mejorar la imagen del país en una región dominada por regímenes autoritarios y economías rentistas. (Tol, 2012)

Sin embargo, es posible afirmar que a partir de 2011 hubo un punto de quiebre que alejó a Turquía de Occidente, en particular de Europa, al tiempo que las relaciones con la mayoría de sus vecinos se malograron y, a nivel doméstico, el gobierno se radicalizó. La denominada Primavera Árabe fue percibida por Erdoğan como una oportunidad para exportar su modelo a otros países de la región, en donde hubo grandes movilizaciones en reclamo por más (o genuina) democracia. El ejemplo del AKP como partido islamista, esto es, una organización que participa en elecciones y busca introducir algunos elementos de la sharía en la ley y la vida seculares desde un gobierno democráticamente elegido (Leiken, 2011, p. 65), podía ser replicado en el mundo árabe a través de partidos con la misma orientación, por lo general, afiliados a la Sociedad de los Hermanos Musulmanes, originalmente

creada en Egipto, pero con ramificaciones en varios países de la región. Empero, el apaciguamiento de las protestas en Túnez, Bahreín y Marruecos, el golpe militar contra Morsi en Egipto y el estallido de guerras en Yemen, Libia y, especialmente, Siria (incluso, el incidente de *Mavi Marmara* con Israel frente a las costas de Gaza), no solo llevaron al traste los objetivos de relacionamiento de Turquía con su periferia, sino que crearon nuevos desafíos para su seguridad interna, lo que hizo reemerger la importancia estratégica de la integridad territorial y, a partir de ella, proyectar su pretendida influencia sobre su contorno regional. Como Yeşiltaş y Pirinççi lo resaltan:

Mientras la fragmentación en la arquitectura de seguridad regional causó la emergencia de nuevas fallas, el fin del proceso con el PKK, debilitado en 2015 debido a sus ataques terroristas, trajeron consigo la formación de un nuevo eje de inseguridad (junto con) los ataques de ISIS contra Turquía, así como los intentos de FETÖ (Organización Terrorista Gülenista) por derrocar el gobierno desde adentro [...] Turquía necesitaba de un reenfoque de su política externa y de seguridad. (2021, pp. 129, 130)

La respuesta a las anteriores amenazas, al igual que la fuerte represión de las protestas de Gezi Park, no solo supusieron un giro autoritario de Erdoğan, sino que dañaron la imagen de Turquía como modelo democrático para Medio Oriente. En especial desde 2013, las relaciones con Europa se tornaron tensas, algo que se vio reflejado en el acuerdo migratorio de 2016, por el que Turquía se comprometió a ejercer un control del flujo de refugiados a cambio de importante ayuda económica por

parte de la UE. En el plano interno, los cambios institucionales se orientaron hacia una mayor concentración del poder público en el AKP, especialmente en Erdoğan, quien fue elegido presidente en 2014, todavía dentro de un sistema parlamentario. Tres años más tarde logró una reforma constitucional, avalada mediante referendo, para transformar el sistema de gobierno en un régimen presidencialista, eliminando la figura del primer ministro y acaparando más amplias facultades, muchas de las cuales ya ejercía de facto, con mayor razón desde el estado de emergencia declarado luego del intento de golpe de Estado en julio de 2016. Erdoğan fue reelegido en 2018 y en 2023, por un periodo de cinco años, al comienzo del cual ha dejado claro que una de sus prioridades será el impulso de una nueva constitución dentro del Parlamento, como requisito indispensable para la construcción del Siglo de Turquía (Hurriyet, 2023)

Las nuevas preocupaciones en materia de seguridad han delimitado la estrategia de Turquía a nivel regional, con el lanzamiento de misiones militares en el exterior y abiertas intervenciones en Irak y Siria, país en donde, tras los levantamientos de 2011, Turquía respaldó grupos rebeldes que buscaban derrocar a Bashar Al Asad. Tras la intervención rusa en el conflicto, a partir de 2015, las cargas se revirtieron a favor del presidente sirio, mientras que la relación entre Moscú y Ankara se tornó tensa, especialmente luego del derribamiento de un avión ruso por Turquía en diciembre de ese año. Las relaciones se normalizaron en agosto de 2016, tras el respaldo de Putin a Erdoğan durante el intento de golpe de Estado. La reconciliación con Rusia se concretó con

la compra por parte de Turquía del sistema de defensa de misiles tierra-aire S-400, lo que llevó a la OTAN, por iniciativa de Estados Unidos, a marginar a Turquía de un programa de dotación de aviones F-35. A pesar de esto, Turquía y Rusia mantienen distintos intereses en los conflictos de Siria y Nagorno-Karabaj.

Por otra parte, desde 1984 se libra un conflicto contra la insurgencia del PKK, que tiene varios grupos satélites o aliados en Irak, Irán y Siria, encontrándose en esta última el más fuerte de ellos, las Unidades de Protección Popular (YPG), que en el contexto de la guerra en ese país y de lucha contra ISIS (para la que recibió apoyo militar y financiero por parte de Estados Unidos), conquistó un amplio territorio en el norte de Siria, colindante con Turquía, llegando a formar un protoestado llamado Rojava. Estos movimientos han motivado distintas operaciones militares turcas en territorio sirio (Escudo del Éufrates, agosto de 2016; Rama de Olivo, enero de 2018; Fuente de Paz, octubre de 2019) y el establecimiento de una zona de seguridad, negociada en su momento con Rusia. En enero de 2020, Turquía también desplegó tropas en Libia, en apoyo al gobierno internacionalmente reconocido, con el que suscribió un tratado a finales de 2019 para definir las fronteras marítimas entre ambos Estados y establecer una zona económica exclusiva. Actualmente, además de los países ya mencionados, hay tropas turcas desplegadas en Malí, Catar, Sudán, Somalia, Kosovo, Nagorno-Karabaj y Chipre del Norte.

Para 2021, diez años después de la Primavera Árabe, Turquía solo sostenía buenas relaciones con Catar, con los Hermanos Musulmanes y con Hamas, partido islamista

palestino que controla la Franja de Gaza. Por este motivo, además de recientes acercamientos con varios países de su periferia, Turquía ha intentado proyectar influencia en otras regiones. Por una parte, pese a su intento de ser un contrapeso para las potencias medias regionales, Erdoğan ha decidido iniciar un nuevo proceso de normalización de relaciones con Arabia Saudita, Irán e Israel, al tiempo que intenta rehacer los vínculos con Egipto. Además, ha tratado de jugar un papel mediador en conflictos como el de Siria, la crisis de Catar con el bloque saudí –embargo desatado en 2017 y resuelto en 2021–, o el acuerdo de granos entre Rusia y Ucrania. Por otra parte, Turquía pretende influir en el Cáucaso, principalmente por su apoyo a Azerbaiyán (con el que se considera “una sola nación”) en el conflicto de Nagorno-Karabaj; en Asia Central por la creación de alianzas con los países túrquicos (Kazajistán, Kirguistán, Uzbekistán, Turkmenistán) y solidaridad con los uigures en China; en los Balcanes, especialmente los países mayoritariamente musulmanes (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania) y África, en ambos casos con programas de cooperación.

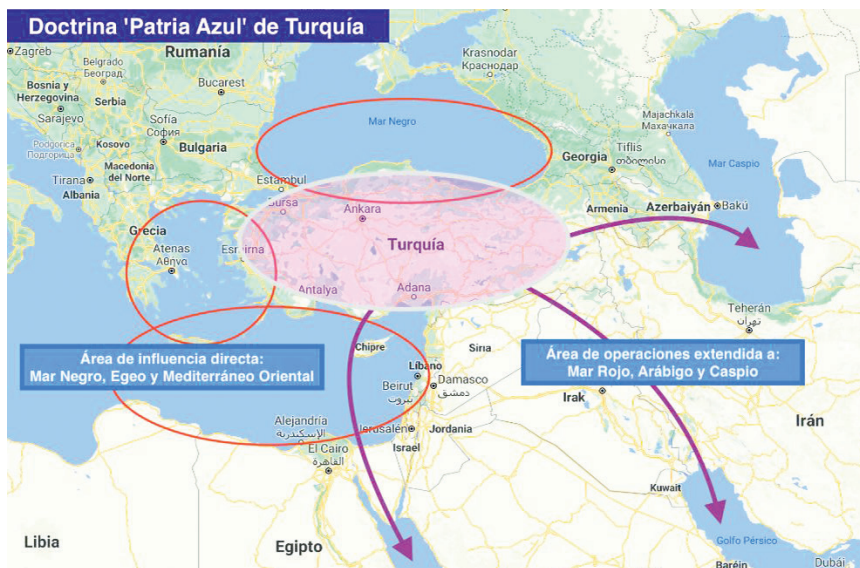
Con esta estrategia, por la cual Turquía busca garantizar su seguridad y que denota la falta de un claro hegemon en la región de Medio Oriente y norte de África en términos tradicionales de fuerza económica, militar o diplomática, busca además desplegar su influencia regional por medio de un pretendido liderazgo en el mundo islámico. Quizá en este sentido es que pueda entenderse el presunto neo-otomanismo que algunos advierten en la política exterior de Turquía y que parece hacerse más visible luego del alejamiento de

Occidente. No en vano, Erdoğan convocó a la Organización para la Cooperación Islámica (OCI) en Estambul, en diciembre de 2017, como respuesta al reconocimiento de Jerusalén como capital de Israel por parte del gobierno de Estados Unidos. En respuesta, en esa reunión la organización decidió reconocer a Jerusalén Oriental como la capital de Palestina. En el mismo sentido, puede entenderse la conversión del Museo de Aya Sofía en mezquita, que “fue un movimiento táctico bien calculado al servicio de la ideología de la Nueva Turquía, especialmente en su dimensión religiosa, porque indicaba una restitución del Califato, que podría reunir a los partidarios islamistas y nacionalistas de Turquía una vez más” (Stergiou, 2022, p. 64). Esta conversión también refrendaba el nuevo papel de Turquía y de Erdoğan mismo en

el mundo musulmán, en el que, como algunos afirman, aspira a convertirse en un nuevo sultán (Cağaptay, 2017), pero como lo fue el sultán otomano desde 1517, es decir emperador y califa, jefe político y religioso a la vez.

Desde luego, la estrategia de proyección e influencia regional de Turquía choca con las de otros Estados de la región, de su periferia y con los de las grandes potencias globales con intereses en ella. Tal sucede, por ejemplo, con la doctrina “Patria Azul” (*mavi vatan*), “término acuñado por el ministro de Defensa de Turquía, Hulusi Akar, al referirse a un área de 462.000 m² en los mares Egeo, Mediterráneo y Negro que actualmente se encuentran bajo la soberanía de otros Estados”, y que, de acuerdo con Stergiou, es un componente central de la gran estrategia de Turquía (2022) (figura 3).

Figura 3
Doctrina “Patria Azul”



Fuente: Universidad de Navarra. Global Affairs.

Propuesta originalmente en 2006, pero con mayor uso desde 2016, esta doctrina tiene como objetivo “lograr el control y la consolidación de Turquía en los tres mares que lo rodean, impartir su influencia regional e internacional y permitirle fuentes de energía, lo que permitirá apoyar su crecimiento económico y demográfico sin dependencia en otros países” (Pinko, 2020). Lo anterior se obtiene, bien por medio de relaciones estratégicas, como el acuerdo de delimitación con Libia o el irrestricto apoyo a Azerbaiyán, o bien por el desarrollo de una competente fuerza naval, en el caso turco en crecimiento, como se destacó en su oportunidad.

La consolidación de la seguridad y estabilidad internas, y la proyección en la región periférica, principalmente con base en elementos militares, culturales o religiosos, y con fundamento en un sostenido crecimiento económico y militar, son los puntos de partida desde los cuales Turquía busca posicionarse a nivel global, en medio de un sistema internacional multipolarizado. Es la autonomía, en tanto determinante y objetivo de una gran estrategia, la que le puede permitir a Turquía un papel más relevante a escala mundial. Sobre este particular, “el campo primario de actividad de Turquía en este nivel consiste en los intentos por dar sentido a las normas que existen a nivel global pero que han perdido su funcionalidad y (desplegar) esfuerzos por determinar nuevas normas o principios para afrontar los desarrollos actuales” (Yeşiltaş y Pirinçi, 2021, p. 143). En últimas, la obtención de autonomía hace posible el reclamo de un nuevo sistema internacional, con la reforma al sistema de Naciones Unidas, en especial, al

Consejo de Seguridad, en primer plano, para que las potencias emergentes tengan un rol más preponderante. Como el mismo Erdoğan lo ha defendido, “el mundo es más grande que cinco” (Aral, 2019).

Pero la proyección de una estrategia a nivel global también implica un relacionamiento con los grandes poderes mundiales. Al analizar los intereses de los cinco miembros permanentes del Consejo de Seguridad en la periferia de Turquía, y su participación directa o indirecta en conflictos en los que este país también está involucrado, Aktürk concluye que la gran estrategia turca es incompatible con la de Rusia (muy incompatible), Francia y China, mientras que puede ser medianamente compatible con la de Estados Unidos y muy compatible con la del Reino Unido (2021, p. 114). Con todo, como él mismo sostiene, “la aspiración de Turquía a forjar una red alternativa de alianzas que sea independiente y desafiante de los cinco grandes poderes [...] las relaciones amistosas de Turquía con numerosos poderes en África, Asia, Europa y América Latina apuntalan esa visión” (2021, p. 115). En todo caso, la definición de su espacio como un actor importante en el sistema internacional dependerá de la forma como Turquía se relacione con los grandes, medianos y pequeños poderes.

DESAFÍOS Y LIMITACIONES

La manera en que su gran estrategia choque con los intereses de otros poderes, especialmente los más grandes, constituye el más importante desafío de la política exterior turca, de cara al siglo XXI. La incompatibilidad de objetivos que tiene Turquía, por ejemplo, con Francia,

Rusia y Estados Unidos en Siria; el apoyo a dos gobiernos distintos en Libia por parte de Turquía y Francia; la diferencia de visiones sobre los uigures en Sinkiang, que enfrenta a Turquía con China, son contextos que no solo pueden disuadir el propósito de influencia turca, sino también pueden amenazar su seguridad, por la mayor disposición de recursos que tienen las grandes potencias. Este inconveniente también se presenta con poderes medios, en especial en la región de Medio Oriente donde, como se señaló, no hay un claro poder hegemónico, y en la que el conflicto entre Arabia Saudita e Irán se desarrolla en varias guerras proxy, en las que Turquía no tiene mayor incidencia (salvo en Siria).

Pero los desafíos no se limitan a actores estatales; también hay amenazas provenientes de actores no estatales e incluso de fenómenos naturales. Como lo señala Aktürk, “Turquía enfrenta numerosas amenazas de seguridad no convencionales tales como variadas formas de terrorismo, crimen organizado y brotes de enfermedades infecciosas y similares que florecen en situaciones de colapso estatal” (2020, p. 154). Además de las pandemias, también constituyen retos el cambio climático y la falta de seguridad alimentaria. En este punto es clave reconocer que “la guerra ha cambiado”, y el enfrentamiento en un escenario tradicional se ha trasladado al campo de la tecnología, por ejemplo, con el uso de drones de combate, la inteligencia artificial y los ataques cibernéticos, o incluso la guerra psicológica que hoy en día incluye elementos como la posverdad, las redes sociales y la construcción de narrativas e imaginarios a través de ellas. Así las cosas, puede afirmarse que hay un nuevo espacio de

la geopolítica, que supera el ámbito físico o territorial, “nuevos territorios” por conquistar en los que una gran estrategia también puede ser desarrollada, pero a la vez, amenazada.

Ahora bien, en el caso específico de Turquía, además de las amenazas externas, las limitaciones para el desarrollo de su gran estrategia pueden encontrarse a nivel interno. Si bien Erdoğan fue reelegido en 2023, tal como sucedió en 2018, obtuvo el 52% de los votos, lo cual denota un país dividido. Como lo resalta Çağaptay,

Erdoğan ha construido una base que ha constituido casi la mitad del electorado turco. Muchos de estos derechistas y partidarios conservadores, habiendo sido sacados de la pobreza por las políticas económicas del gobierno de Erdoğan —que han permitido la estabilidad fiscal y atraído grandes cantidades de inversión extranjera directa— prácticamente rinden culto al presidente de Turquía. Pero su estrategia también ha alimentado el resentimiento entre otras poblaciones [...] Esta trayectoria ha producido una profunda polarización social, que sumió a Turquía en una crisis prolongada [...] Turquía ahora tiene uno de los casos más agudos y avanzados polarización en el mundo. (2021, pp. 26, 27)

De allí que se hable de la existencia de “dos Turquías”, irreconciliables entre sí.

Por otra parte, la excesiva securitización de la agenda le ha valido a Turquía reportes negativos en materia de derechos humanos en los últimos diez años, tanto por parte de organizaciones internacionales, incluyendo instituciones de la UE, como de organizaciones no gubernamentales. El despliegue de acciones militares se concentra en el enfrentamiento

con el PKK y sus grupos satélite, pero la represión de las protestas de Gezi, así como la persecución a los miembros del gülenismo, luego del intento de golpe de Estado en julio de 2016 y que afectó a muchas otras personas no pertenecientes a dicha organización, bajo un estado de excepción que duró casi dos años, además de profundizar la división de la sociedad turca, le ha merecido fuertes reparos desde el exterior, lo que ha afectado en algunos casos sus pretensiones de influencia.

Pero, sin duda, el elemento más desafiante y que representa la principal amenaza para el desarrollo de una gran estrategia de política exterior de Turquía son sus problemas económicos estructurales, que acusa desde 2016. Asuntos como el alto endeudamiento, la caída en la trampa de la clase media, la falta de crecimiento, las altas tasas de desempleo (en especial, el juvenil), la inflación y la devaluación, son dificultades que pueden obstaculizar las intenciones de influencia de Turquía. Como se señaló oportunamente, la existencia de una gran estrategia depende de contar con los recursos para desarrollarla, y si bien Turquía ha acopiado los medios que le garantizan una relativa autonomía en el sistema internacional, sus problemas económicos pueden afectar seriamente sus proyecciones a mediano y largo plazo.

Finalmente, a los ya referidos conflictos en los que Turquía se ha involucrado, se suman otras cuestiones sin resolver, que eventualmente pueden representar amenazas a su seguridad, escenarios que demanden recursos o impedimentos a sus propósitos de influencia regional o global. Entre tales cuestiones se cuentan sus diferencias con países vecinos que no son parte de la región MENA (Middle East and North

Africa), siendo el más notable el conflicto con Grecia. Al respecto, el fracaso en 2005 del Plan Annan para reunificar a Chipre y la aceptación de este como entidad integral en la UE al tiempo que se le negó el ingreso a Turquía, radicalizaron las posiciones para una solución negociada. El reconocimiento (único en el mundo) de la República Turca de Chipre del Norte por parte de Turquía, además de aportar a exaltar el nacionalismo internamente, es una estrategia para proyectar geográficamente las pretensiones de Turquía en el Mediterráneo Oriental con el fin de hacerse a yacimientos de gas en esa región, en donde se superponen los intereses y las reivindicaciones territoriales griegas. También está Armenia, con el que las desavenencias datan de la Primera Guerra Mundial, en particular por los sucesos acontecidos en 1915 durante los intercambios de población. Para Armenia, lo sucedido fue un genocidio y su principal actividad diplomática alrededor del mundo ha sido buscar el reconocimiento. Por su parte, Turquía se niega a reconocerlo como tal. Las tesis varían desde la negativa total de una matanza hasta la aceptación de muertes de armenios, pero como fruto de la guerra y no como parte de un plan sistemático de eliminación étnica. Desde 2015, Turquía ha promovido la creación de una comisión histórica independiente para que se realice una investigación imparcial de los hechos.

Asimismo, con Europa hay muchas otras cuestiones sin resolver (crisis migratoria, xenofobia, islamofobia, frustrado ingreso a la UE), que además de ser una fuente de potenciales conflictos, reducen el margen de maniobra de Turquía, más allá de su periferia inmediata. A

esto se suma la debilidad de Estados cercanos, como en el caso de Siria, Irak y Líbano, que se convierten en fuentes de exportación de amenazas a la seguridad, como grupos terroristas o rebeldes, que ameritan un mayor control de fronteras. No se deben olvidar los desafíos que representan los desarrollos globales y regionales recientes, como las guerras en Siria, Ucrania, Libia, Yemen o Palestina, que debido al entrecruzamiento de intereses que diferentes poderes grandes y medianos tienen sobre ellos, pueden determinar las posibilidades de Turquía.

CONCLUSIÓN

La llegada al poder del AKP en 2002, y el liderazgo de Erdoğan, produjeron una serie de cambios internos en Turquía, que pasan por un impresionante desempeño económico, al menos hasta 2011, reflejado en un aumento de la calidad de vida de los turcos; cambios en la política, no solo por el ascenso y la consolidación de un partido islamista, sino por la reducción del ascendente militar, en un país donde las fuerzas armadas se habían arrogado históricamente el deber de mantener el orden secular del Estado (por eso, el intento de golpe de 2016 tuvo una naturaleza muy diferente a los del siglo XX); cambios sociales, por el mayor protagonismo de sectores piadosos y conservadores de la sociedad, en muchos casos provenientes del interior del país, que han sido la base de apoyo para Erdoğan; y también culturales, por las repercusiones que las otras esferas han tenido sobre el tejido social y el papel que el islamismo ha pretendido dar a la religión sobre la vida secular. Por ello, se habla

de la existencia de una “Nueva Turquía”, diferente a la laica y republicana fundada hace 100 años por Atatürk.

La gran estrategia que se ha venido analizando es la que esa nueva Turquía, liderada por Erdoğan, persigue y con la que espera para 2053 —cuando se cumplen 600 años de la conquista de Estambul por parte de los turcos— convertirse en una potencia global, ubicándose dentro de los diez países con mayor PIB a nivel mundial, y ser una “superpotencia logística” (Daily Sabah, 2022), como el mismo Erdoğan lo afirmó, además de otra serie de objetivos, condensados en la denominada Visión 2053 (TASAM, 2021). Su capacidad para lograr esas metas estará determinada, como se vio, por la disponibilidad de recursos y el relacionamiento estratégico con otros Estados, tanto grandes potencias como poderes medios, tanto en su región o periferia como en otras latitudes, y estará limitada por los desafíos, internos y externos, que se han puesto de presente. Un último aspecto para tener en cuenta es el excesivo personalismo en la política turca, por lo que cabe preguntarse si tal estrategia se mantendrá más allá de Erdoğan y del AKP. Por lo pronto, es preciso reconocer la existencia de una gran estrategia, cuyos resultados o retrocesos se empezarán a ver en el próximo lustro.

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**RELACIONES BILATERALES Y REGIONALES
EN LA POLÍTICA EXTERIOR TURCA**

**GÉNESIS, PRESENTE Y FUTURO DEL
VÍNCULO COLOMBIA-TURQUÍA: DE
ECONOMÍAS EMERGENTES A ALIADOS
ESTRATÉGICOS**

*Mauricio Jaramillo Jassir
Nur Sezek*

**A TURQUIA ENQUANTO POTÊNCIA
REGIONAL: UMA ANÁLISE DA
ESTRATÉGIA TURCA PARA O
CONTINENTE AFRICANO A PARTIR DOS
ANOS 2000**

*Guilherme Ziebell de Oliveira
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**THE TURKISH DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY IN
IRAQ: SHIFTS AND CONTINUITIES, 2003-
2023**

*Mohamed Badine El Yattioui
Yassine El Yattioui*

**GREATER AUTONOMY THROUGH CLOSER
RELATIONS WITH CHINA? REVISITING
THE TURKEY-CHINA ENGAGEMENT**

Veysel Tekdal

Génesis, presente y futuro del vínculo Colombia-Turquía: de economías emergentes a aliados estratégicos

Mauricio Jaramillo Jassir*
E. Nur Sezek**

RESUMEN

Turquía se ha proyectado como potencia media a través de un acercamiento al Sur global desde que a principios de la década del 2000 emprendiera una política exterior multifacética y desarrollara relaciones no solo con Europa, sino con el resto del mundo identificando a América Latina como una de sus prioridades. Las relaciones Bogotá-Ankara dan cuenta de una evolución en el accionar externo de ambas naciones y, completada más de una década en la profundización de relaciones políticas, económicas y culturales, es pertinente examinar el

nivel de compenetración logrado. El propósito del artículo consiste en observar de qué manera las naciones que hacen parte del Sur global tienen estímulos para nuevos acercamientos que dan cuenta del fortalecimiento de relaciones en la periferia. La hipótesis consiste en que Ankara y Bogotá, al obtener provecho de una estructura que avanza hacia la multipolaridad, se han proyectado como economías emergentes a partir de cambios internos fundamentales. La política exterior no siempre obedece a una estrategia planeada, sino que responde a estímulos externos y a cambios internos, tal ha sido el caso del acercamiento colombo-turco.

* Doctor en Ciencia Política. Profesor Asociado de la Facultad de Estudios Internacionales, Políticos y Urbanos de la Universidad del Rosario (Colombia). [mauricio.jaramilloj@urosario.edu.co]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6190-1054]

** Estudiante doctoral del doctorado en Estudios Políticos, Universidad Externado de Colombia (Colombia). Magíster en Relaciones Internacionales, Akdeniz University, Türkiye. [nur.sezek1@est.uexternado.edu.co]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3399-5721].

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El texto se divide en tres partes. Primero, se comparan sus trayectorias en la globalización, en particular desde 2010; segundo, se analiza la evolución de las relaciones comerciales para examinar su impacto en la profundización del vínculo político; finalmente, se ponen en perspectiva los desafíos presentes y futuros de una asociación en ciernes.

Palabras clave: Turquía; Colombia; relaciones bilaterales; cooperación; identidad.

FROM EMERGENT ECONOMIES TO STRATEGIC PARTNERS. COLOMBIA AND TURKEY PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE RELATIONSHIP

ABSTRACT

Türkiye has projected itself as a middle power through a rapprochement with the Global South since the early 2000s, when it embarked on a multifaceted foreign policy and developed relations not only with Europe, but also with the rest of the world, identifying Latin America as one of its priorities. From this point, Bogotá-Ankara's relations show an evolution in the external actions of both nations, and after more than a decade of deepening political, economic and cultural relations, it is pertinent to examine the level of rapprochement achieved. The purpose of the article is to observe how the nations that are part of the Global South have stimuli for new approaches that account for the strengthening of relations in the periphery. The hypothesis is that Ankara and Bogotá, taking advantage of a structure that is moving towards multipolarity, have projected themselves as emerging economies based on fundamental internal changes. Foreign policy

does not always obey a planned strategy, but rather responds to external motivations and internal changes, as has been the case with the Colombian-Turkish rapprochement. The text is divided into three parts. First, it compares their trajectories in globalisation, particularly since 2010; second, it analyses the evolution of trade relations to examine their impact on the deepening of the political link; and finally, it puts into perspective the present and future challenges of a budding partnership.

Key words: Türkiye; Colombia; bilateral relations; cooperation; identity.

INTRODUCCIÓN

El presente artículo aborda uno de los temas más incidentes para las relaciones internacionales en el último tiempo, la proyección de intereses de Estados del denominado Sur global que ven en las asociaciones, alianzas o acercamientos la mejor forma para encarar un sistema internacional donde la perspectiva de una estructura multipolar empieza a asomar de manera cada vez más pronunciada.

Colombia y Turquía son claros ejemplos de Estados que, en el último tiempo, han apostado por una proyección regional, antecedida de cambios internos significativos. La tesis que se pretende poner en evidencia en el presente artículo consta de tres argumentos: 1) el mundo está avanzando hacia una multipolaridad en la que se ofrecen estímulos para que Estados del Sur global se proyecten más allá de sus regiones tradicionales; 2) en determinados casos, la política exterior responde a procesos de reestructuración interna y cambios significativos que han terminado por condicio-

narla; 3) Colombia y Turquía se definen como Estados y economías emergentes que buscan el ejercicio del liderazgo regional aunque sus relaciones con los vecinos no sean siempre armónicas. Tanto Ankara como Bogotá comparten el hecho de pasar de relaciones cordiales a tensiones frecuentes con Israel, Rusia y Siria, y con Ecuador, Perú y Venezuela, respectivamente. Paradójicamente, su búsqueda de liderazgo regional tiende a generar tensiones con los vecinos.

Para llevar a cabo esta comparación se alude a lo que Arendt Lipjhart denomina la identificación de macrohipótesis con casos de estudio que se contrastan a partir de una serie de variables (1971, p. 685), en este caso, las siguientes: la trayectoria de ambas naciones en política exterior y, más específicamente, contrastando el punto de ruptura o de inflexión que lleva a un cambio drástico en sus relaciones con el mundo; el análisis de la relación entre las partes, cómo ha sido el vínculo entre Colombia y Turquía y, finalmente, la proyección de tres escenarios en los que se puede etiquetar la relación, un *estancamiento* que no supere mínimos en materia de intercambios y relaciones cordiales en el plano político; una *asociación* que crezca conforme se proyectan intereses de ambas acciones en regiones no tradicionales; y, una *alianza estratégica* en la que de manera irreversible avancen hacia una “relación especial”.

El enfoque teórico del artículo se apoya en la concepción de política exterior de Robert Putnam que la define como un juego en dos niveles, interno y externo (1988, p. 427). El autor recoge y responde a los avances teóricos de la disciplina de las Relaciones Internacionales dedicados a la dinámica compleja entre

lo doméstico e internacional, como ha sido el caso de: 1) James Rosenau pionero de la complejización de la dinámica interna-externa y del enfoque comparativo (1969, p. 41), 2) Karl Deutsch (1957) y Ernst Haas (1958) acerca de la forma en que el proceso de regionalización condiciona la política exterior, 3) Robert Keohane y Joseph Nye quienes acuñaron la noción de la interdependencia completa (en función de vulnerabilidad y sensibilidad) (1977), y 4) Graham Allison y Philip Zelikow que desarrollaron modelos de toma de decisiones en la política exterior poniendo de manifiesto la coexistencia de diversos actores más allá de los formales (1999).

En este texto, la política exterior no se entiende solamente como un proceso de toma de decisiones basado en estrategias para la defensa del interés nacional, sino como una reacción sobre la marcha frente a procesos internos y externos o, en palabras de Rosenau, a “estímulos” (1968, pp. 311-312). En el caso colombo-turco se trata de analizar de qué forma dos Estados que comparten ciertos rasgos, terminan por acercarse en un sistema internacional cambiante marcado desde hace varios años por la aparición de Estados de la periferia que buscan protagonismo sin necesariamente proponer un nuevo orden mundial como solía pensarse. Se trata más bien de aprovechar el evidente debilitamiento de la unipolaridad para la reacomodación de sus intereses.

Para la comprensión de la relación colombo-turca, y para entender sus respectivas proyecciones extrarregionales, se necesita un marco de análisis desde el Sur global que sobrepase las lógicas tradicionales de la teoría hegemónica liberal escrita y construida *desde* y para

el *norte* industrializado. Por eso es importante entender los factores internos de los Estados latinoamericanos que condicionan su accionar externo y la forma como se conectan con la realidad internacional y se repositionan de cara a los cambios del último tiempo. Esto mismo aplica para Turquía, pues sin la comprensión de la evolución de la política interna resulta imposible comprender su política exterior. Este texto tiene una suerte de enfoque híbrido en el que se retoman algunos elementos de las teorías tradicionales y hegemónicas, pero incluyendo las nociones de autores del Sur.

Tal como lo plantea Giacalone (2012, p. 335), en el centro de la reflexión latinoamericana ha estado la autonomía como ideal, sobre todo, en los casos de Argentina y Brasil desarrollados por Escudé (2012, p. 530) y Puig (1988), pero menos analizados para casos como el de Colombia. Esta búsqueda de autonomía no ha sido lineal ni constante, entre otras cosas, por las rupturas en el seno de los Estados, como ocurrió de manera fehaciente con los gobiernos militares en el Cono Sur. Aunque Colombia no hubiese entrado en la lógica de gobiernos militares, el conflicto armado interno terminó condicionando su autonomía.

Ahora bien, no toda la periferia tiene las mismas reivindicaciones autonómicas y, en esta cuestión, sobresale la atipicidad del caso turco que se puede identificar como un Estado que reclama cierta preeminencia sobre sus pares, pero preservando un vínculo con el Norte en el que se evidencia un intento por articular las relaciones Norte-Sur, más que sacar provecho de dicho clivaje como han hecho otras potencias emergentes como China o Rusia. Esto es lo que Jaguaribe (1979, pp. 91-92) denominaría

autonomía periférica y hegemonía céntrica, e inspirara a Escudé (1988, p. 20) a desarrollar el concepto de autonomía heterodoxa en la que el Estado periférico no confronta directamente a la o a las potencias dominantes, pero reivindica sus intereses nacionales, incluso si estos llegan a chocar con los del hegemón. Colombia y Turquía son el reflejo de Estados que, perteneciendo al Sur global, no tienen reivindicaciones disruptivas frente al sistema y, aunque privilegien sus intereses, su lógica de inserción las lleva a evitar la confrontación con las grandes potencias y a un acomodamiento estratégico.

TURQUÍA Y COLOMBIA, TRAYECTORIAS GLOBALES EN PERSPECTIVA

Desde 2010, tanto Colombia como Turquía han emprendido una política exterior agresiva en términos de acercamiento a lo que podría considerarse sus regiones naturales para corregir un aislamiento del pasado. Ambas buscaron una política de recuperación de liderazgo o incidencia en zonas que, por distintas razones, habían sido de algún modo descuidadas. La tesis central de la siguiente investigación reside en que Colombia y Turquía han apostado por recuperar influencia en lo que consideran su vecindario y, por tanto, pueden ejercer un liderazgo, lo cual ha marcado un punto de inflexión —o incluso de ruptura— respecto de las administraciones anteriores interesadas en la proyección extrarregional.

En el caso de Ankara, desde los albores de la posguerra insistió para convertirse en miembro pleno de la Comunidad Económica Europea (actualmente Unión Europea) y, de algún modo, eso significó un distanciamiento

respecto de Asia Central y Medio Oriente, dos regiones en las que buscó renovar su liderazgo tras la dilación indefinida de su ingreso al bloque europeo. Por su parte, desde 2010 Colombia cambió drásticamente de postura respecto de su región y se integró por completo a las dinámicas regionales tratando de liderar algunos temas que iban desde el diálogo político para la superación de crisis, hasta un nuevo enfoque en la lucha contra las drogas. Bogotá abandonó un alineamiento sin condiciones con los Estados Unidos que generó tensiones con sus vecinos, en especial desde la concreción del denominado Plan Colombia que implicaba ayuda militar para reforzar el control del Estado en la lucha contra el narcotráfico –y luego contra la subversión armada–. Posteriormente, con la doctrina de Seguridad Democrática (2002-2010), los *impasses* con los vecinos se multiplicaron hasta el punto de que se cerraron canales diplomáticos con Estados fronterizos como Venezuela y hasta cierto grado Ecuador. Al igual que Turquía, cambió drásticamente el sentido de su inserción. ¿Cómo y por qué los Estados emprenden esta serie de cambios y de qué manera inciden en su proyección internacional? ¿De qué forma esta transformación incidió en un acercamiento entre Colombia y Turquía?

Ankara apostó por equilibrar sus relaciones con el Oriente Medio y Asia Central, desde finales de siglo cuando se formalizó su candidatura a la Unión Europea y pareció volcar sus acciones y centrar sus intereses en la membresía. Desde 1987 había mostrado interés en hacer parte del bloque al que se habían incorporado varios Estados del sur de Europa que transitaban exitosamente hacia la democracia como Grecia (1981), España y Portugal (1986).

Sin embargo, aquello no dio resultado y la candidatura de Turquía terminó tensando en exceso la relación con Europa y como respuesta se produjo un nuevo equilibrio en las relaciones turcas con el mundo. Se trató de la candidatura al bloque que produjo más controversia en la historia europea. Desde 1959 se emprendieron las primeras acciones con miras a la adhesión, en 1987 se hizo expresa la candidatura, pero solo hasta 1999 el Consejo de Europa de Helsinki formalizó el pedido. Ninguna nación esperó tanto para acceder a la membresía (Kefyeke, 2006, p. 5).

Posteriormente, Europa empezó a enfrentar crisis financieras en Chipre, España, Grecia, Italia e Irlanda. Al tiempo que el bloque parecía debilitarse, Turquía fue ganando espacios y margen de maniobra tanto en Europa como en Oriente Medio. En 2015, no solo Europa estaba aparentemente debilitada por desajustes financieros, sino por lo que los medios catalogaron como la “crisis migratoria”. Esta coyuntura le permitió a Turquía reposicionarse en escenarios como Irak y Siria, e incluso recuperar prestigio en el mundo musulmán tomando distancia de Israel y acercándose a la causa palestina, un tema del que Ankara había estado al margen.

De igual forma, con los flujos migratorios provenientes del Magreb y del Oriente Medio, el poder de negociación de Ankara con Bruselas se modificó sustancialmente. En esta transformación no solo incidieron factores regionales, sino también internos. El triunfo del Partido por la Justicia y el Desarrollo (AKP - Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi), que fue ganando espacios, cambió significativamente la política exterior. Esta formación nació en 2001, entre otras cosas, para responder a la hegemonía de

valores occidentales que habían marcado la fundación de la República y que, en el contexto de la posguerra, se profundizaron con el alineamiento estratégico de Turquía con el bloque Oeste. La elección de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan en 2003 sería un hito, pues era la primera vez que un movimiento islámico moderno estuvo en capacidad de prevalecer en el sistema turco. En el orden impuesto a lo largo del siglo XX, la secularidad vigilada celosamente por militares dejó de lado formaciones islámicas. Por eso, tras ocho décadas de conformar “una identidad entre una población altamente diversa, se fueron creando fisuras dentro de la sociedad” (Yılmaz, 2021, p. 5).

El caso turco se puede entender a la luz de la teoría de que la política exterior responde a la lógica de una dinámica con dos niveles o tableros, el interno y el externo. Dicho de otro modo, la diplomacia o política exterior termina reflejando dinámicas internas.

La política en buena parte de las negociaciones internacionales puede ser concebida como un juego a dos niveles. En el nacional, grupos internos defienden sus intereses mediante la presión sobre el gobierno en aras de que este adopte determinadas políticas públicas, mientras que, los políticos o tomadores de decisiones buscan acumular poder bajo coaliciones o alianzas con estos grupos. En el plano internacional, los gobiernos aspiran a maximizar su propia habilidad para manejar

la presión interna, al tiempo que minimizan las consecuencias negativas de fenómenos externos. Los gobiernos y tomadores de decisiones no pueden permitirse ignorar ninguna de estas dos dinámicas por más que se reivindiquen como soberanos, pues aun así, están en la lógica de la interdependencia. (Putnam, 1988, p. 434)¹

Dicho de otro modo, la transformación interna de Turquía tuvo mucho que ver con su posicionamiento frente a Europa, que terminó redefiniendo su política exterior y condicionando su identidad para renovar sus relaciones con Asia Central y Medio Oriente. En medio de este conjunto de cambios, Ankara empezó a mirar hacia otras regiones del Sur global y a sentirse identificado con algunas de sus reivindicaciones para estimular un acercamiento con América Latina, una zona donde históricamente no ha hecho presencia significativa.

Producto de un desempeño económico y amigable para la inversión extranjera en algunos países de Asia, América Latina y África, el director ejecutivo del Banco HSBC, Michael Geoghegan, acuñó el término *Civets* para referirse a Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egipto, Turquía y Suráfrica. En la tabla 1 se presenta un extracto del perfil publicado en medios sobre las razones por las cuales ambos Estados contaban con atributos para proyectarse como emergentes (Allen, 20 de noviembre de 2011):

¹ Traducción libre de los autores, en el original: “The politics of many international negotiations can usefully be conceived as a two-level game. At the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments. Neither of the two games can be ignored by central decision-makers, so long as their countries remain interdependent, yet sovereign”.

TURQUÍA	COLOMBIA
<p>Durante la década pasada emprendió reformas estructurales a la economía y a la democracia. En 2005 comenzaron las negociaciones para la entrada a la Unión Europea y se percibían los réditos del comercio dinámico y de robustas inversiones con el bloque comunitario. En 2010, la agricultura representó casi un 10% de la economía, 27% industria y un 67% servicios. El crecimiento económico registrado en 2010 alcanzó el 8,2%.</p> <p>Su población llega a los 85 millones de habitantes con un 26,5% entre los 0 y 14 años y un 68,1% entre 15 y 64. La edad promedio se sitúa en 33,5 a diferencia de los 28 años de Colombia.</p>	<p>Se ha mantenido como un atractivo lugar para la inversión en buena medida jalonado por gobiernos amigables a la inversión foránea y libre comercio y porque, además, ha invertido las utilidades del petróleo en infraestructura. Colombia es el tercer abastecedor de petróleo de Estados Unidos. La principal industria aparte del petróleo son los textiles, comida procesada, ropa, calzado, bebidas, químicos, cemento, oro, carbón y esmeraldas. La economía registró una tasa de crecimiento de 4,3% en 2010.</p> <p>Su población llega a los 45 millones de habitantes, con un 27% entre los 0 y 14 años, y un 67% entre 15 y 64. La edad promedio se sitúa en 28 a diferencia de los 40 años cifra tanto del Reino Unido como de Estados Unidos.</p>

Fuente: elaboración propia.

Para el caso de Colombia, se puede identificar una corrección respecto del pasado que la llevó, tal como a Turquía, a encauzar sus intereses de política exterior, por razones vinculadas regionales y por cambios internos.

La política exterior también debe entenderse como una respuesta a estímulos internos e internacionales, tal como la define James Rosenau, y como una forma de acomodación de los países del denominado tercer mundo según la teoría del realismo subalterno que de acuerdo con Ayoob (1989, p. 69) buscan una gestión entre procesos internos incompletos y la necesidad de inserción regional e internacional. Rosenau define la política exterior en términos de reacción, no siempre como acciones deliberadas, sino como respuesta a estímulos internos o externos (1968, p. 312) a hechos que ocurren en el escenario interno, regional o global. A juzgar por la proyección de intereses colombianos y turcos queda en evidencia una acomodación de posiciones desde 2000 que tiene que ver con los estímulos internos que, como se ha mencionado, no responde necesari-

amente a un proceso planificado, sino a una respuesta a cambios.

El acercamiento colombo-turco debe entenderse como un acto contingente que se fue depurando por la voluntad de los gobiernos y que se ha mantenido porque las dinámicas internacionales empujan a los Estados del llamado Sur global a cooperar. Ayoob considera que estas naciones sufren de una suerte de “esquizofrenia”, pues al tiempo que deben insertarse en el sistema internacional, tienen la obligación de completar el proceso inconcluso de Estado-nación. Turquía es un ejemplo claro de inserción en ese sistema internacional pos-Primera Guerra Mundial, que junto a Japón y Rusia fueron de los primeros casos de “intrusos” en dicho sistema, que debieron adaptarse. No obstante, como consecuencia del proceso de descolonización, los Estados advenedizos, nuevos o periféricos se convirtieron en mayoritarios lo que generó una situación sin antecedentes en la política mundial: “Por primera vez en la historia desde la creación del sistema de Estados soberanos, los intrusos superaron

en número a los establecidos, que habían compartido cierta similitud civilizacional, religiosa, política-filosófica e incluso un prejuicio racial” (Ayoob, 1989, p. 69).

En este proceso de reacomodación al sistema internacional colombo-turco vale la pena recordar que el principal objetivo de estos Estados del Sur global no es un nuevo orden mundial, como se suele pensar sobre todo desde las teorías realistas. En concreto, Stephen Kransner y Robert Tucker plantean que estos al “llegar tarde” a una estructura en la que el liberalismo global ha marcado la pauta, buscarían una transformación más favorable a sus necesidades (Krasner, 1985). Como producto de lo anterior, Tucker cita el embargo de los Estados de la Organización de Países Exportadores de Petróleo (OPEP) a Occidente como respuesta a la guerra del Ramadán o Yom Kippur entre algunos árabes e Israel (Tucker, 1976).

Ayoob plantea lo opuesto: en realidad, los Estados tercermundistas o del Sur global son quienes más defienden el orden internacional posterior a Westfalia y al Congreso de Viena basado en el respeto por la soberanía y, más recientemente, en especial desde la posguerra, en la defensa del derecho internacional y el multilateralismo. “El Tercer Mundo ha interiorizado los valores paradigmáticos westfalianos a tal punto que exaspera a Occidente que emprende acciones franqueando el marco de valores del orden westfaliano” (Ayoob, 1995, p. 3).

En este orden de ideas, es relevante entender la forma cómo, a partir de las últimas décadas, Turquía ha defendido una política exterior enmarcada dentro de la idea de “una nueva política exterior para Turquía”, desarrollada por el exministro de relaciones exteriores

Ahmet Davutoğlu en un artículo publicado en febrero de 2004 en la revista *Radikal* (Bağcı *et al.*, 2013). En el escrito quedó consignada la filosofía de lo que sería la política exterior del AKP en los años venideros, y que consistía en un enfoque de las relaciones internacionales para dejar de privilegiar “la respuesta inmediata a las crisis” por una prevención estructural a partir del diálogo y el multilateralismo, una presencia renovada de Turquía en el mundo, y la adopción de un discurso que se articulara según los principios del poder blando, es decir, a partir de la atracción y no de la imposición (Parlar-Dal y Kurşun, 2017; Özcan, 2012, pp. 60-61).

Cabe recordar que desde 2010, Turquía ha incidido en la estabilización de Irak, donde goza de influencia (especialmente en la región norte); en la lucha contra el terrorismo en Siria, y como interlocutora en la prolongada crisis nuclear con Irán. Se trata de temas en donde Ankara se impone como un actor indispensable del sistema internacional para la superación de impasses, neutralización de amenazas y la proyección de poderes intermedios para la estabilización de algunas zonas que en los últimos años están marcadas por la convulsión o la violencia (Kaya, 2015). En palabras de Davutoğlu, se trataba de proyectarse a partir “de la cooperación y no de la competencia”. Para desarrollar esto último se pensó en principios articuladores, un equilibrio entre la seguridad y la democracia, cero problemas con los vecinos y una diplomacia reactiva, proactiva y multidimensional (Davutoğlu, 2010; Aras, 2009, p. 127). Esto último explica el interés por estrechar lazos con regiones como América Latina, donde aparecen temas de común

interés que no han sido del todo explorados en el último tiempo y que tienen por objeto lograr unas relaciones internacionales más equilibradas, en donde las relaciones entre los países del Sur global no pasen necesariamente o dependan del Norte industrializado.

En las últimas décadas, tanto Colombia como Turquía han sido fiel reflejo de lo anterior. No han buscado apoyar un nuevo orden mundial, una idea más propia de los “Estados revisionistas” como los denominaba Martin Wight (Bull, 1976, p. 105), sino de defender un orden basado en los principios westfalianos, de los que el sistema internacional se alejó, pero a los que regresa en el último tiempo como producto del desprestigios de las aventuras militares en terceros Estados (tanto las de Occidente en Medio Oriente y Asia Central como en Rusia y Ucrania). De esta manera, hay un papel preponderante para el Sur global en el que existe una motivación para acercarse a regiones no tradicionales, todo en el marco de la proyección internacional.

EVOLUCIÓN DE LAS RELACIONES ENTRE TURQUÍA-COLOMBIA

Relaciones políticas

Las relaciones o, en otras palabras, la profundización del vínculo Turquía y Colombia ha progresado paralelamente conforme al acercamiento del país con la región latinoamericana que es el otro resultado del cambio de la política exterior del país. Sin embargo, el verdadero inicio de las relaciones se remonta a finales

del siglo XIX. Estas primeras interacciones entre ambos países se produjeron en el marco de unas relaciones diplomáticas limitadas y comenzaron con la población que emigraba a Colombia con “pasaportes” otomanos desde los territorios del Imperio Otomano (especialmente las actuales Siria, Líbano y Palestina). Durante este periodo se pueden rastrear algunas correspondencias diplomáticas entre los dos países por parte de ciudadanos y, de esta forma, se forjaron las primeras interacciones entre los dos países (Türkiye-Dışişleri Bakanlığı Arşivleri, 2023) (trabajo de archivo y traducción de los autores).

Por otra parte, esta interacción, que comenzó a finales del siglo XIX, no pudo desarrollarse del todo por los problemas que ambos países enfrentaban tanto en el plano interno como en el exterior, y a la coyuntura internacional cambiante con el impacto de las guerras mundiales. Turquía, por su parte, ha seguido políticas más prooccidentales y proestadounidenses desde mediados del siglo XX. Bajo dicha lógica, estableció relaciones tanto políticas como económicas con Estados Unidos y los países europeos, potencias tradicionales de aquel periodo. Sin embargo, con la caída del Muro de Berlín y el fin de la Guerra Fría, la política exterior turca empezó a mostrar tendencias diferentes. Con esta transformación en ciernes, las relaciones con regiones distintas de Estados Unidos y Europa han cobrado mayor importancia. América Latina, y, por tanto, Colombia, ha sido una de las regiones donde se han incrementado las relaciones en ese nuevo periodo a partir de 2000.

Figura 1
Cronología de las relaciones políticas entre Turquía y Colombia (1995-2022)



Fuente: elaboración propia con datos de Türkiye Dışişleri Bakanlığı (2023a).

Los primeros pasos de estos cambios en la política exterior turca en América Latina se dieron en 1995, con la visita del entonces presidente Süleyman Demirel a la región. Esta visita duró 12 días e incluyó a Argentina, Brasil y Chile. Además del presidente, participaron en la visita diplomáticos y empresarios. Como se ve en la figura 1, fue la primera visita oficial de la República de Turquía a América Latina y, *a posteriori*, se preparó el “Plan de Acción para América Latina y el Caribe”, puesto en marcha en 1998 (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2023a).

Además, la iniciativa de estrechar relaciones, cuyos cimientos se sentaron con la visita de 1995, se siguió profundizando en los años siguientes con el objetivo de política exterior multilateral del AKP, que llegó al poder en 2002. En muy poco tiempo, el nuevo gobierno señaló que reforzaría las relaciones con nuevos socios fuera de sus esferas de influencia tradicionales. Así, en 2006, se revisó y amplió el “Plan de Acción para América Latina y el Caribe”, que se había elaborado en 1998. Al mismo tiempo, este año fue declarado de América Latina, y como muestra de la importancia que el nuevo gobierno le concedió a la región, el entonces ministro de Relaciones

Exteriores, Abdullah Gül, realizó una visita a la región en 2006 (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2023a).

Con el impacto de esta visita, las relaciones con la región comenzaron a incrementarse, especialmente en términos políticos, económicos y culturales. En el caso de Colombia, las relaciones se aceleraron en 2010, cuando Turquía abrió su embajada. Al año siguiente, Colombia hizo lo propio en Ankara y el entonces presidente Juan Manuel Santos se desplazó a Turquía. De igual forma, la agencia estatal colombiana ProColombia (antes Proexport) inició sus actividades en Turquía en los mismos años (Archivos del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1997-2017; investigación de los autores en los archivos). Especialmente con la apertura de embajadas y el aumento de las visitas mutuas, las relaciones Ankara-Bogotá empezaron a mejorar lentamente.

Posteriormente, en 2015, Turquía organizó su segunda visita presidencial a la región, que incluyó a Colombia, Cuba y México. Como resultado, Colombia y Turquía firmaron acuerdos en numerosos ámbitos, como la educación, las artes, el comercio, la política y la cultura (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı Ofisi, 2015). Ese mismo

año, la Agencia Turca de Cooperación (TIKA), organismo oficial de cooperación de Turquía, inició sus actividades en Bogotá. Desde su inauguración, TIKA ha contribuido a las relaciones entre los dos países llevando a cabo numerosos proyectos activos en Colombia, especialmente en los ámbitos de la educación, la salud y en el ámbito humanitario (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2023b). Además de TIKA, Turkish Airlines (THY), la aerolínea bandera de Turquía, abrió su oficina sudamericana en el país en 2016 e inició vuelos directos entre Estambul y Bogotá.

Tras el lanzamiento de vuelos directos entre ambos países, en 2017 se inauguró en Bogotá la sucursal latinoamericana de la Agencia Anadolu, que operará con el foco puesto en toda América Latina (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2023b). De este modo, Turquía empezó a recibir las noticias sobre la región directamente, y los países de la región, especialmente Colombia, empezaron a acceder a las noticias sobre Turquía en español. Ese mismo año, el entonces ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Colombia realizó una visita oficial a Ankara, muestra del dinamismo en la relación (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2023b).

Estas relaciones siguen desarrollándose en campos como la educación, la cultura y el deporte. Además del Centro Latinoamericano de Investigación (Lamer) de la Universidad de Ankara, en 2018 se inauguró el Centro de Estudios de Turquía y el Cáucaso en una universidad colombiana con el apoyo de la embajada del país (Carranza-Jiménez, 2019). Además, muchas universidades de Colombia,

especialmente la Universidad Externado de Colombia, han firmado acuerdos de intercambio de académicos y de estudiantes con universidades turcas.

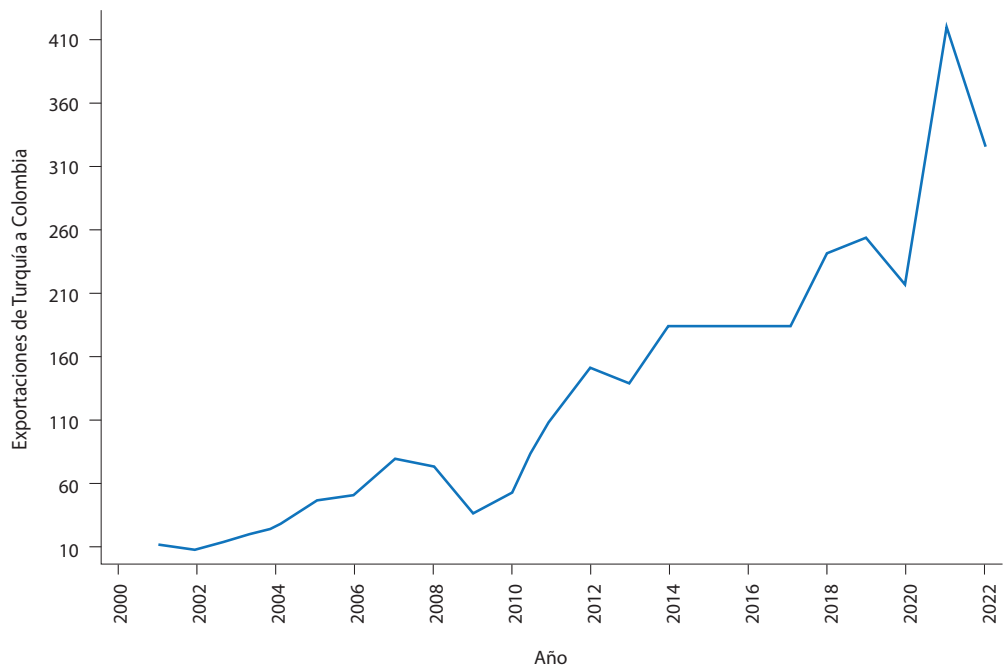
En los años siguientes, las relaciones se siguieron robusteciendo. Tanto es así que, en 2022, la Fundación Maarif de Turquía, que opera en el ámbito de la educación, abrió en Bogotá su segunda oficina en América Latina con la participación del entonces ministro de Relaciones Exteriores turco (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2023b). Además, el ministro asistió a varias reuniones en Colombia y fue pionero en la firma de nuevos acuerdos. Ese mismo año, Juan Valdez, una conocida marca colombiana de café, abrió su primera sucursal en Turquía con la participación del entonces ministro de Relaciones Exteriores colombiano (FoodinLife, 2022). De nuevo, antes de finalizar su mandato en 2022, el entonces presidente Iván Duque realizó una visita a Turquía (Aslan, 2022). Tras las visitas mutuas que continuaron en este año, a los acuerdos firmados entre ambos países se añadió un acuerdo de asociación estratégica. En el marco de este acuerdo, ambos países acordaron que las visitas oficiales a nivel presidencial se repetirían cada cierto tiempo, por otra parte, este acuerdo pretende desarrollar las relaciones económicas, culturales y políticas mediante el establecimiento de un mecanismo de consejo de cooperación de alto nivel (Küçük *et al.*, 2022) y aumentar las oportunidades de inversión mutua manteniendo así vivas las relaciones diplomáticas (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 2023b).

Relaciones comerciales

Por otra parte, las relaciones económicas entre Turquía y Colombia parecen comportarse al compás de los vínculos políticos y de cooperación. Al igual que las relaciones políticas, los intercambios comerciales han mostrado limitaciones. Este comercio ha cobrado impulso

especialmente desde principios de 2000, cuando Turquía empezó a buscar nuevas formas de participación en el sistema internacional y a desarrollar relaciones con nuevos países y regiones. Tras la llegada al poder del AKP en 2002, las relaciones políticas de Turquía comenzaron a transformar también las relaciones comerciales, como se puede ver en la figura 2.

Figura 2
Exportaciones de Turquía a Colombia (2000-2022) (millones de dólares)



Fuente: elaboración propia con datos de Trade Map (2023).

Las exportaciones y la diversidad de productos de Turquía a Colombia eran casi inexistentes hasta la llegada del AKP. Como puede verse en la figura 2, las exportaciones de Turquía a Colombia eran inferiores a diez millones de dólares en 2002, sin embargo, el volumen empezó

a aumentar a partir de ese año. En 2003, en solo un año, esta cantidad pasó de aproximadamente 8 millones a 16 millones de dólares. Este rápido incremento de las exportaciones continuó hasta 2009. De hecho, en 2008, las exportaciones de Turquía a Colombia alcanza-

ron aproximadamente 71 millones de dólares, no obstante, las exportaciones disminuyeron a 36 millones de dólares en 2009; una de las principales razones fue la crisis económica de 2008, que empezó a afectar profundamente a la economía turca a partir del último trimestre de 2008. En 2009, la crisis económica, cuyos efectos se dejaron sentir profundamente, afectó las exportaciones de Turquía no solo a Colombia, sino a todo el mundo, y el déficit de exportación del país se acentuó en 2009 (Afşar y Erkoç, 2018).

En la medida en que los efectos de la crisis económica de 2008 se superaron rápidamente, las exportaciones de Turquía a Colombia se recuperaron a partir de 2010. En efecto, las exporta-

ciones que llegaron a los 36 millones de dólares en 2009, aumentaron a 52 en 2010 y casi que se duplicaron a 110 millones en 2011. Posteriormente, las exportaciones siguieron aumentando hasta la pandemia de covid-19 de 2020. Las exportaciones, que aumentaron hasta 255 millones de dólares en 2019, disminuyeron hasta 216 millones de dólares en 2020 como consecuencia de la pandemia. Sin embargo, el impacto se superó rápidamente y las exportaciones aumentaron a 420 millones de dólares en 2021. Esta cantidad fue la más alta de las exportaciones de Turquía a Colombia, con un aumento del 94% en comparación con el año anterior. Sin embargo, volvió a contraerse en 2022 a aproximadamente 320 millones de dólares.

Tabla 2
Exportaciones de Turquía a Colombia (2022)

	PRODUCTO	VALOR DE LAS EXPORTACIONES (USD)	PORCENTAJE
1	Barras y varillas de hierro o acero sin alear	23.726	7,3
2	Ángulos, perfiles y secciones de hierro o acero sin alear	18.365	5,7
3	Remolcadores y empujadores	13.740	4,2
4	Conductores eléctricos, para tensión menores a 1.000V	10.325	3,2
5	Alambre de acero aleado distinto del inoxidable, en rollos (excepto barras y alambros y alambre de silico-manganeso)	9.663	3,0
6	Resto de productos	248.868	76,6
	Total	324.687	100,0

Fuente: elaboración propia con datos de Trade Map (2023).

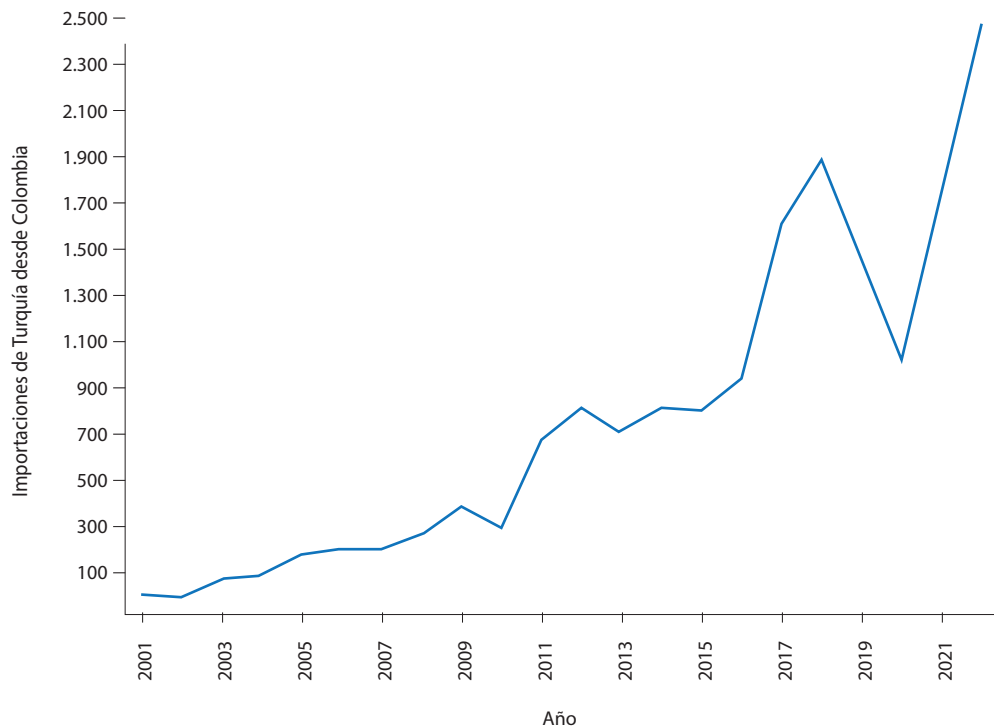
Como se aprecia en la tabla 2, en 2022 los productos exportados por Turquía a Colombia varían. La primera partida de exportación son las barras y perfiles de hierro o acero sin alear con un 7,3%. La segunda partida son

los ángulos, perfiles de hierro o acero sin alear con un 5,7%, mientras que el tercer producto son los remolcadores y empujadores. Como se observa en la tabla 1, los cinco primeros productos exportados por Turquía a Colombia

consisten generalmente en hierro, acero y derivados, así como productos como conductores eléctricos, que representan aproximadamente el 24% del total de las partidas de exportación. Sin embargo, otros artículos de exportación representaron el 76% de las exportaciones totales con aproximadamente 248 millones de dólares para 2022. Como puede deducirse de aquí, la mayor parte de las exportaciones de

Turquía a Colombia está compuesta por diversos productos que corresponden al 76% del total. Estos productos consisten generalmente en artículos de cobre, productos de hierro de diversas secciones, joyería, maquinaria y dispositivos mecánicos. De lo anterior se puede concluir que los productos que Turquía exporta a Colombia se distribuyen en diferentes tipos y son diversos.

Figura 3
Importaciones de Turquía desde Colombia
(2000-2022) (millones de dólares)



Fuente: elaboración propia con datos de Trade Map (2023).

Las importaciones de Turquía desde Colombia muestran un panorama diferente al de sus exportaciones. Como se observa en la figura 3, las importaciones han sido mayores desde principios de la década de 2000. De hecho, en 2003, cuando las exportaciones rondaban los 15 o 16 millones de dólares estadounidenses, las importaciones desde Colombia fueron de 75 millones de dólares. Además de ser superiores a las exportaciones, como puede verse, las importaciones de Turquía han aumentado rápidamente a lo largo de los años. No obstante, aunque hubo un ligero descenso de 2009 a 2010, empezaron a aumentar de nuevo después de 2010. En los años siguientes, las tasas de importación siguieron en general un curso similar aunque a veces se produjeron aumentos o disminuciones rápidos. Sin embargo, en

2017 y 2018, las importaciones de Turquía casi que se duplicaron en comparación con los años anteriores. Este súbito incremento se debió a un aumento de las importaciones de carbón, sus derivados, oro y café, que representan los principales productos en las importaciones del periodo en mención. Este nivel volvió a niveles más normales en el año siguiente, 2019. No obstante, las importaciones de 2019 seguían siendo considerablemente más elevadas que, por ejemplo, las de 2016, antes de este incremento. Aunque se produjo un descenso de las importaciones en 2020 debido a la pandemia, este se recuperó rápidamente a partir de 2021 y alcanzó casi los 1,7 mil millones de dólares. En 2022, este aumento continuó y las importaciones aumentaron a casi 2,5 mil millones de dólares.

Tabla 3
Importaciones de Turquía desde Colombia (2022)

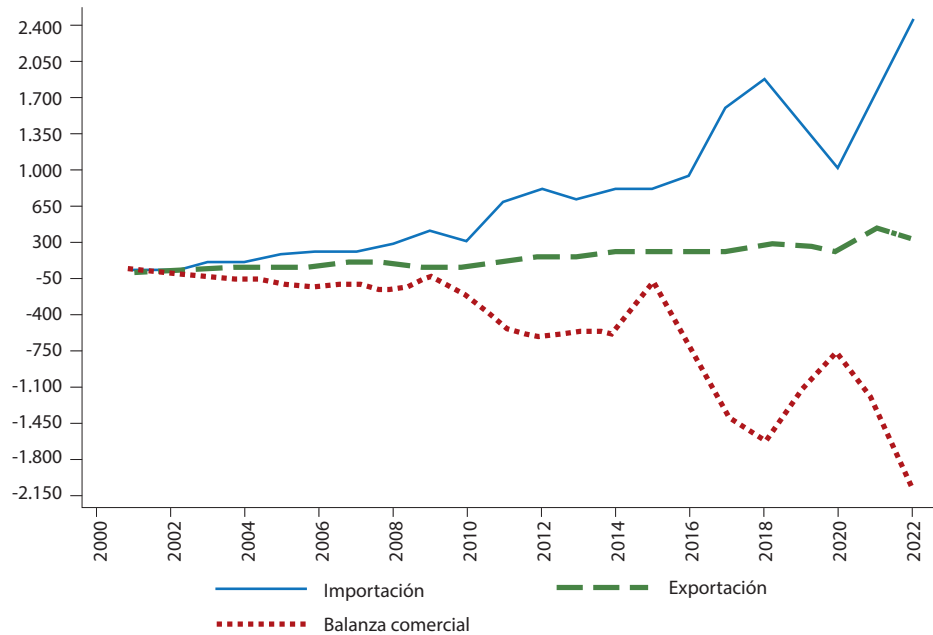
	PRODUCTO	VALOR DE LAS IMPORTACIONES	PORCENTAJE
1	Carbón, briquetas, ovoides y combustibles sólidos similares fabricados a partir de carbón	2.116.599	85,8
2	Coque y semicoque de hulla, lignito o turba	30.706	1,2
3	Café	12.383	0,5
4	Oro, incl. chapado en oro con platino, en bruto o sin trabajar	8.441	0,3
5	Aceite de palma y derivados	5.387	0,2
6	Resto de productos	294.620	11,9
	Total	2.468.136	100

Fuente: elaboración propia con datos de Trade Map (2023).

En 2002, los productos importados por Turquía desde Colombia eran menos diversos que aquellos de exportación. Como puede verse en la tabla 3, la principal partida de importación fue el carbón; briquetas, óvalos y combustibles sólidos similares fabricados a partir del carbón, con un 85,8%. El coque y semicoque de hulla, lignito o turba, que también incluye los derivados del carbón, seguido del coque y

semicoque de hulla, lignito o turba, con un 1,2%, ocupó el segundo lugar en las partidas de importación. Por su parte, la categoría de “otros productos” solo representó el 11,9% de las importaciones totales. Como se aprecia en la tabla, la diversidad de productos en las importaciones es bastante limitada y el principal producto importado por Ankara desde Bogotá es el carbón y sus derivados.

FIGURA 4
BALANZA COMERCIAL ENTRE TURQUÍA Y COLOMBIA (2000-2022) (USD)



Fuente: elaboración propia con datos de Trade Map (2023).

Por otro lado, cuando se analiza la balanza comercial entre ambos países, se observa que existe un saldo a favor de Colombia (figura 4). En este caso, se puede decir que las exportaciones de Turquía a Colombia son considerablemente inferiores a sus importaciones. De hecho,

mientras que en 2015 el saldo comercial fue de aproximadamente 615.000 dólares frente a Turquía, en 2019 este valor alcanzó aproximadamente los 1,2 mil millones de dólares. Finalmente, este valor aumentó aún más en 2022 a aproximadamente 2 mil millones de dólares.

Impacto en el vínculo político

Hasta ahora, se ha observado que las relaciones comerciales y políticas entre Turquía y Colombia se han desarrollado aceleradamente. Durante la Guerra Fría fueron limitadas pero desde 2002 empezó una profundización producto de la política exterior del AKP que contempló un acercamiento a nuevas regiones. Especialmente en 2006, con el efecto de las visitas de Turquía a América Latina, las relaciones comerciales empezaron a cobrar más impulso. El desarrollo de las relaciones comerciales también incrementó las relaciones diplomáticas y allanó el camino para la apertura de embajadas de los dos países (Archivos de Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 1997-2017; investigación de los autores en los archivos). Sin embargo, a medida que se desarrollaban las relaciones comerciales, también aumentaban los lazos políticos. Como puede verse, estos dos tipos de relaciones terminan por imbricarse, con lo cual es difícil determinar cuál se sobrepone, si lo político o lo comercial. Por ahora se puede concluir que la relación Ankara-Bogotá parece empezar a tener una dinámica en la que tanto el diálogo político como los intercambios son relevantes.

DESAFÍOS PRESENTES Y FUTUROS DE UNA ASOCIACIÓN EN CIERNES

Colombia y Turquía enfrentan serias limitaciones porque aun con los avances logrados en el último tiempo, sigue habiendo una distancia entre ambas naciones difícil de franquear, tal como le ha sucedido a Colombia con socios no tradicionales a los que se ha acercado con propósitos estratégicos, y con los cuales no ha

podido consolidar el diálogo político ni conseguir un aumento representativo de los intercambios. Tal ha sido el caso de Corea del Sur, con quien sostiene una relación especial forjada desde la guerra y que, más allá de un tratado de libre comercio (TLC) y la eliminación del visado no parece haberse capitalizado del todo. Es decir, a pesar de que existe un vínculo político profundo surgido desde el apoyo de Colombia en la confrontación armada de comienzos de los años cincuenta (contra la actual República Popular Democrática de Corea), esto no se ha traducido en una relación comercial dinámica o profunda y los intercambios bilaterales están lejos de ser representativos.

La relación Ankara-Bogotá podría tener tres escenarios de cara al futuro. El estancamiento de la relación actual, una asociación o cercanía con algunos picos de intercambios y cooperación dependiendo de la coyuntura, y una relación especial. En el escenario de estancamiento, los niveles de comercio se mantendrían en los márgenes actuales, sin grandes modificaciones, y el diálogo político no avanzaría más allá de las cordialidades diplomáticas, y ni Turquía ni Colombia estarían en capacidad de privilegiar este acercamiento por sobrepone su relación con otras zonas. En el primer caso, podría deberse a la búsqueda de influencia en el Cáucaso, Medio Oriente y renovar su influencia en Europa en especial en el contexto de la guerra en Ucrania. La reelección de Erdoğan para un tercer mandato en mayo de 2023 abre la posibilidad para que Turquía busque un liderazgo en temas internacionales acuciosos, en donde podría desempeñar un papel de alguna relevancia. Vale recordar su papel en la guerra contra el terrorismo en Siria, en la

guerra entre Armenia y Azerbaiyán –aunque claramente alineando su postura con Bakú–, en la estabilización iraquí y una mediación en la guerra en Ucrania. En esta ecuación América Latina y, más concretamente Colombia, podría perder el atractivo.

Colombia, por su parte, podría centrar sus intereses en la región latinoamericana y en sus socios tradicionales –Estados Unidos y Europa–, y “enfriar” en el corto y mediano plazo sus relaciones con el Sur global. Esto podría explicarse además por la necesidad de los gobiernos de centrarse en temas internos por la urgencia de abordar temas inaplazables, sobre todo aquellos ligados a la paz, en donde en el último tiempo se han visto las principales vicisitudes para las administraciones colombianas de distinto color político. También es importante recordar que la política exterior no es un campo que sea electoralmente rentable. Por ende, no todos los gobiernos ven en la relación con Ankara un tema de suficiente peso. Durante el mandato de Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010), en nombre de la austeridad, el gobierno clausuró 14 embajadas –una de ellas precisamente en Medio Oriente, Irán– y 10 consulados. No deja de ser significativo que una de las propuestas de campaña de Rodolfo Hernández, candidato que llegó a la segunda vuelta en las elecciones de 2022, haya sido el cierre de 27 embajadas, entre ellas la de Turquía (Holguín, 6 de junio de 2022).

Este escenario guardaría similitud con la relación que actualmente mantiene Colombia con Corea, que a pesar de tener una raíz histórica por el apoyo en la guerra en 1951, no ha podido concretarse en mayores resultados más allá de un TLC que, a juzgar por las cifras

parece suboptimizado con intercambios con exportaciones que apenas superan los 676 millones de dólares (Legis, 1.º de octubre de 2021) en contraste con los flujos a China que, sin TLC, superan los 2.500 millones (Rodríguez, 27 de febrero de 2023), es decir, casi cuatro veces más.

El segundo escenario consistiría en una asociación en la que por compatibilidad en cuanto a seguridad, intercambios y proyección global se profundizaría el vínculo, aunque no de una manera constante. Esto quiere decir que aunque Ankara y Bogotá puedan sacar provecho, por ejemplo, de procesos de paz que han derivado en retos en materia de seguridad, o de un comercio que no ha dejado de crecer desde 2012, y un atractivo internacional que los asocia en siglas como los Civets (aunque actualmente no tenga significada, no se puede descartar el surgimiento de nuevos acrónimos con la misma lógica) o en otros foros, las coyunturas internas pueden ralentizar la asociación. Esto es básicamente lo que le ha sucedido a los gobiernos colombianos con Israel. En la década de los noventa era una asociación con visos de profundización futura, pero en el último tiempo, los intercambios han caído drásticamente a pesar incluso haber firmado y ratificado un TLC (Legis, 24 de mayo de 2002). Esta relación tan promisoriosa hace unos años parecería haber entrado en un ciclo de intermitencia. A Colombia le ha costado en el último tiempo mantener asociaciones estratégicas en el largo plazo por carecer de una política de Estado y una política exterior afectada por los cambios drásticos de gobiernos.

Finalmente, se podría pensar en una relación especial entendida como un vínculo

excepcional en el que Ankara y Bogotá sigan profundizando los lazos y aumenten considerablemente el comercio y el diálogo político. Esto solamente podría ser posible en la medida en que los gobiernos colombianos apuesten por lo que en lenguaje de doctrinas de política exterior se entiende como *respice similia*, que consiste en un acercamiento a sus pares. Turquía podría ser vista como un modelo en materia migratoria a partir de la experiencia del gobierno de Erdogan, con la coyuntura migratoria de 2015. Esto podría surgir si Colombia se consolida como el líder y vocero regional de la gestión migratoria, y así como llegó a depender en extremo en materia de doctrina militar de Estados Unidos, podría tener una relación mucho más equilibrada con Ankara a propósito del rol geopolítico que esta juega en medio de Europa, Asia Central y Medio Oriente. Como decía el ministro de Relaciones Exteriores turco de paso por Colombia en abril de 2022:

Turquía y Colombia gozan de posiciones estratégicas en sus respectivas regiones, con entornos políticas estables y economías crecientes. Además, tienen enfoques similares frente a los desafíos como la crisis de refugiados. [...] aumentar nuestra cooperación en temas globales generará una sinergia que contribuirá al objetivo de establecer un orden mundial más igual, más justo y estable. (Çavuşoğlu, 26 de abril de 2022)

Detrás de este testimonio se observa un optimismo que, aunque no permita concluir si es del todo viable un acercamiento de estas características, resulta innegable que la relevancia del tema migratorio seguirá en aumento tanto en el corto como en el mediano plazo en

la agenda de la política exterior colombiana. Y es muy posible que termine convirtiéndose en un asunto de Estado.

APUNTES FINALES

En este estudio, las relaciones entre Colombia y Turquía se analizan con un enfoque diferente basado en el objetivo de observar de qué manera las naciones que hacen parte del Sur global tienen estímulos para nuevos acercamientos que dan cuenta del fortalecimiento de relaciones en la periferia. Para ello, en primer lugar, se analiza cómo Bogotá y Ankara se posicionan en el nuevo sistema internacional multipolar y el impacto de este reacomodamiento en sus relaciones. Siguiendo esta lógica, mediante una comparación se analizan variables económicas y políticas, los dos factores principales en la profundización de las relaciones entre ambos países, y las subsecuentes categorías (cultura, diplomacia, educación y flujos comerciales, etc.).

Dado que ambos países representan economías emergentes, aspiran al liderazgo regional y buscan tener voz en el sistema internacional y contribuir en la gobernanza global, en la comparación se hace hincapié en los factores económicos y políticos, así como en su posible posicionamiento futuro a través de la relación binacional. En el estudio se ha constatado que la participación de Turquía en dinámicas tanto regionales como internacionales es superior a la de Colombia. Esto también ha llevado a pensar que la búsqueda de Turquía de una posición en la gobernanza global es más efectiva que la de Colombia. De igual forma, se pudo constatar un comportamiento más asertivo de Ankara en la relación binacional, pues parece haber mayor

constancia en las acciones conducentes a su fortalecimiento, los cambios de gobierno en la segunda han hecho mella en su proyección. Como consecuencia, especialmente en las relaciones políticas, se puede observar que Ankara ha sido más activa que Bogotá y, en general, ha sido la parte que ha dado pasos importantes para allanar el camino para el desarrollo de las relaciones.

Sin embargo, para llevar a cabo este análisis y comparación, el estudio analiza primero teóricamente la estructura de los países que forman parte del Sur Global y que buscan cada vez más tener voz en el sistema internacional y, por supuesto, en la gobernanza global. En este sentido, se tienen en cuenta como punto de partida teórico tanto las concepciones tradicionales de las relaciones internacionales como las perspectivas del Sur global.

Por otro lado, buena parte de la literatura sobre la política exterior se basa en cálculos racionales y en la idea de que la diplomacia obedece a un proceso planeado y planificado a fin de alcanzar una serie de objetivos para defender el interés nacional. Si bien abundan las teorías que han puesto en tela de juicio la validez del término “interés nacional”, bien sea desde los enfoques liberales o burocráticos, la incidencia de las teorías que presuponen la racionalidad en torno a los intereses parece todavía preservar una hegemonía.

Este artículo buscó llenar dos vacíos. Uno sobre la literatura de la política exterior de Estados del Sur global que tienen una ambición de liderazgo (no necesariamente como potencias) y sobre la relación colombo-turca que empieza a perfilarse, pero que no necesariamente es analizada a profundidad en la literatura de ambos Estados. Para el caso colombiano, buena parte

de la producción científica se enfoca en las relaciones con América Latina y Estados Unidos a partir del narcotráfico y del conflicto como de forma lógica ha sido el caso de las obras a las que se podría considerar como fundamentales de la política exterior (Ramírez y Restrepo, 1997; Ardila *et al.*, 2002; Tickner, 2007; Borda 2007; Cardona y Tokatlian 1991; Drekonja 1983). Además, un sector representativo de dicha literatura suele abordar directa o indirectamente el aparente dilema entre la subordinación o autonomía frente a Washington.

Aun así, en el último tiempo los textos dedicados a regiones no tradicionales como el Medio Oriente o el África Subsahariana empiezan a aparecer con más frecuencia, pero sin ser representativos. De forma más reciente, en la literatura colombiana se pueden identificar textos que analizan la viabilidad de un eventual TLC (Gómez-Abella *et al.*, 2013, p. 159); la forma como el acercamiento a Turquía significa para Colombia un nuevo equilibrio en su política exterior, aunque sin ahondar en el caso turco, sino desde una óptica general (Palacio, 2013); y textos que comparan la ambición por una “neutralidad activa” (Guerrero y Jaramillo, 2015, p. 197).

A pesar del surgimiento muy tímido de esta literatura, no parece suficientemente voluminosa en comparación con las aspiraciones colombo-turcas, en buena medida porque los temas de la política exterior colombiana más evocados siguen estando condicionados por las variables de conflicto y narcotráfico. Este artículo es una invitación a asomarse a las nuevas formas de relacionamiento en el Sur global en un mundo en el que la multipolaridad parece irremediable.

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A Turquia enquanto potência regional: uma análise da estratégia turca para o continente africano a partir dos anos 2000

Guilherme Ziebell de Oliveira*
Raquel Zaffari Losekann**

RESUMO

O presente artigo tem como tema a política externa turca para o continente africano no século XXI. Com o fim da Guerra Fria e da ordem mundial centrada na lógica bipolar, a Turquia passou a contar com maior autonomia para gerir as suas relações internacionais, mantendo uma política externa mais ativa ao ampliar as suas relações econômicas, diplomáticas e securitárias para além do Ocidente. Nesse contexto, sob a direção do Partido para a Justiça e Desenvolvimento (AKP), o continente africano passou a ocupar lugar de crescente destaque nas relações exteriores turcas. Assim,

a partir do início dos anos 2000, verifica-se um incremento substancial da presença turca no continente, caracterizada, entre outros, pela intensificação dos fluxos comerciais bilaterais, pela expansão da rede diplomática no continente, pela sua participação na mediação de conflitos e na oferta de assistência humanitária a atores africanos, entre outros. Diante disso, o trabalho discute a intensificação dos laços da Turquia com os países do continente africano a partir do início do século XXI, compreendendo-a como parte de uma estratégia de projeção internacional mais ampla, a partir da Turquia enquanto uma Potência Regional. Para tanto, adota uma abordagem hermenêu-

* PhD, Universidad Federal de Rio Grande do Sul. Professor Adjunto, Universidad Federal de Rio Grande do Sul. [guilherme.ziebell@ufrgs.br]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0118-6279].

** Licenciada, Universidad do Vale do Rio dos Sinos. Estudante de maestría, Universidad Federal de Rio Grande do Sul. [losekannr@gmail.com]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0118-6279].

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tica, apoiando-se na revisão de literatura sobre as relações turco-africanas e na análise, a partir de dados quantitativos, do desenvolvimento dessas relações nos eixos político, econômico e securitário ao longo do período em questão.

Palavras-chave: Turquia; África; estratégia; Potências Regionais.

**TURQUÍA COMO POTENCIA REGIONAL:
UN ANÁLISIS DE LA ESTRATEGIA TURCA
HACIA EL CONTINENTE AFRICANO
DESDE LA DÉCADA DE 2000**

RESUMEN

Este artículo trata de la política exterior turca hacia el continente africano en el siglo XXI. Con el fin de la Guerra Fría y del orden mundial centrado en una lógica bipolar, Turquía ha tenido mayor autonomía para gestionar sus relaciones internacionales, manteniendo una política exterior más activa al ampliar sus relaciones económicas, diplomáticas y de seguridad más allá de Occidente. En este contexto, bajo el liderazgo del Partido de la Justicia y el Desarrollo (AKP), el continente africano ha pasado a ocupar un lugar cada vez más destacado en las relaciones exteriores turcas. Así, desde principios de la década de 2000, se ha producido un aumento sustancial de la presencia de Turquía en el continente, caracterizada, entre otros aspectos, por la intensificación de los flujos comerciales bilaterales, la ampliación de la red diplomática en el continente, su participación en la mediación de conflictos y la oferta de ayuda humanitaria a los actores africanos. Así, y basándose en la literatura sobre potencias medias y potencias regiona-

les, el estudio analiza la intensificación de los vínculos de Turquía con los países africanos desde principios del siglo XXI, entendiéndola como parte de una estrategia de proyección internacional más amplia. Para ello, el escrito adopta un enfoque hermenéutico, apoyándose en la revisión de la literatura sobre las relaciones turco-africanas y el análisis de datos cuantitativos de la evolución de estas relaciones en los ejes político, económico y de seguridad a lo largo del período en cuestión.

Palabras clave: Turquía; África; estrategia; potencias regionales.

**TURKEY AS A REGIONAL POWER: AN
ANALYSIS OF THE TURKISH STRATEGY FOR
THE AFRICAN CONTINENT SINCE THE 2000**

ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the Turkish foreign policy towards the African continent in the 21st century. With the end of the Cold War and the world order centered on a bipolar logic, Turkey has had greater autonomy to manage its international relations, maintaining a more active foreign policy by expanding its economic, diplomatic, and security affairs beyond the West. In this context, under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the African continent has come to occupy an increasingly prominent place in Turkish foreign relations. Thus, since the early 2000s, there has been a substantial increase in Turkey's presence on the continent, characterized, among other aspects, by the intensification of bilateral trade flows, the expansion of the diplomatic network on the continent, its

participation in the mediation of conflicts and the offer of humanitarian assistance to African actors. In this context, and based on the literature on Middle Powers and Regional Powers, this paper discusses the intensification of Turkey's ties with African countries since the beginning of the 21st century, comprehending it as part of a broader international projection strategy. To this end, the study adopts a hermeneutic approach, relying on the literature review on Turkish-African relations and the analysis, supported by quantitative data, of the developments of these relations in the political, economic, and security axes throughout the period in question.

Key words: Turkey; Africa; strategy; Regional Powers.

INTRODUÇÃO

Este trabalho tem como tema a política externa turca para a África no século XXI. A Política Externa da Turquia, a partir de sua estruturação, tem suas raízes na formação do Estado turco no período posterior ao encerramento da Primeira Guerra Mundial, da qual o Império Otomano saiu profundamente enfraquecido, acabando por se dissolver. A elite *kemalista* liderada por Mustafa Kemal “Ataturk”, nesse contexto, visava criar uma nação independente, soberana, secular e próxima ao Ocidente (Özkan & Akgün, 2010). Diante disso, de maneira geral, desde então, a Turquia manteve-se alinhada fundamentalmente ao Ocidente, tendo suas relações políticas, econômicas e, sobretudo, militares com as potências ocidentais como pilares fundamentais de sua política externa, realidade que se expressou com ainda

mais força ao longo da Guerra Fria (Aydin & Ismael, 2019).

As transformações internacionais provenientes do encerramento do conflito bipolar e, sobretudo, do colapso do bloco soviético, trouxeram um conjunto de novos desafios e oportunidades para a Turquia, desencadeando assim um processo de reflexão a respeito do papel do país no mundo e, conseqüentemente, de reformulação de sua política externa (Sözen, 2006; Özkan & Akgün, 2010).

Nesse contexto, as relações internacionais passaram a, progressivamente, ser marcadas não apenas pela redução da influência (e da presença) das superpotências do conflito bipolar em algumas regiões do mundo (resultado tanto do colapso da própria União Soviética quanto da reconfiguração geoestratégica global dele resultante), mas também (e em parte como resultado disso) pela progressiva emergência de novas potências, de caráter regional (Destradi *et al.*, 2018). Estas Potências Regionais, não mais constrangidas pelas amarras da disputa entre as superpotências, passaram a, cada vez mais, influenciar as dinâmicas políticas e securitárias de suas respectivas regiões a partir das suas próprias perspectivas (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Nesse conjunto de atores estariam incluídos, entre outros, países como Nigéria, Brasil, Indonésia, África do Sul, Irã e também a Turquia, que, dada sua posição geográfica, lograria exercer influência em mais de uma região, como os Balcãs, o Oriente Médio e o Cáucaso (Destradi *et al.*, 2018).

Nesse contexto de transformações, a partir do início da década de 1990, a Turquia passou a buscar diversificar suas relações diplomáticas e estreitar laços para além do Ocidente,

apresentando uma posição de maior projeção diplomática em diversas regiões do mundo (Monié, 2022). Isso ficou ainda mais evidente, especialmente, a partir do início do século XXI, com a política externa adotada pelo governo do Partido da Justiça e Desenvolvimento (AKP, sigla em turco) após sua chegada ao poder em 2002 (Bilgel *et al.*, 2020). Diante do fracasso da tentativa de ingresso no bloco europeu, reforçou-se, crescentemente, a busca turca por consolidar uma posição de protagonismo regional e de projeção global, percebendo-se como ator fundamental na conexão entre o Ocidente, a Ásia Central e o continente africano (Davutoğlu, 2008; Langan, 2016).

A África, diante disso, progressivamente se tornou um espaço prioritário para a atuação da política externa turca (Özkan & Akgün, 2010). O continente, que ao longo da década de 1980 experimentara uma profunda crise econômica – potencializada, em grande medida, pela fragilização dos Estados fomentada pela adoção dos Programas de Ajuste Estrutural impostos pelas Instituições Financeiras Internacionais (Banco Mundial e Fundo Monetário Internacional) – vivenciou, na década de 1990, um cenário complexo. Enquanto, por um lado, alguns atores experimentaram processos de estabilização, que lhes permitiram adotar uma posição de protagonismo em termos continentais (casos da África do Sul, da Líbia e da Nigéria, por exemplo), por outro, diversos países enfrentaram processos violentos de reconfiguração das relações de poder, mergulhando em intensos conflitos armados (casos de Serra Leoa, de Ruanda e da República Democrática do Congo, entre outros) (Chazan *et al.*, 1999).

Paralelamente a essas dinâmicas distintas, o continente, em seu conjunto, conheceu uma profunda marginalização nas relações internacionais. Destituída de relevância geoestratégica (dado o fim do conflito bipolar), e diante da consolidação da hegemonia do neoliberalismo em nível internacional (marcada, entre outros, pela ascensão de governos de viés neoliberal em espaços como a América Latina e o Leste Europeu), a África passou a receber ainda menos investimentos – não apenas econômicos, mas também políticos –, especialmente por parte das grandes potências das relações internacionais (Oliveira, 2019). Foi justamente diante desta realidade que outros atores internacionais, dentre os quais a Turquia, passaram a, crescentemente incrementar sua interação com os países do continente africano (Carmody, 2016).

Nesse contexto, em 1998, o governo turco lançou o *Opening to Africa Action Plan*, um plano que inaugurou uma política turca para a África, e que estabelecia as diretrizes para fomentar as relações econômicas, políticas e securitárias com o continente (Özkan, 2008; Siradağ, 2018). Desde então, e com maior ênfase a partir do século XXI, a política externa turca tem dado especial atenção para a África, que passou a ganhar destaque como mercado consumidor de produtos turcos, bem como espaço propício para acordos nos âmbitos militar, tecnológico e econômico. Com isso, os laços turcos com o continente têm experimentado um incremento substancial, o que tem se caracterizado, entre outros, pela intensificação dos fluxos comerciais bilaterais, pela expansão da rede diplomática no continente, pela participação turca na mediação de conflitos e

pela oferta de assistência humanitária a atores africanos, entre outros. O continente, nesse contexto, tem se mostrado como um espaço estratégico para a Turquia, indo ao encontro do interesse turco de ser um ator proativo em assuntos de relevância global, como o multilateralismo, a cooperação, o desenvolvimento e as questões humanitárias (Kardaş, 2013).

Diante disso, o presente artigo propõe uma análise desse processo de intensificação dos laços da Turquia com os países do continente africano a partir do início do século XXI, compreendendo-o como parte de uma estratégia de projeção internacional mais ampla. A pergunta de pesquisa que se busca responder é a seguinte: em que medida os movimentos de aproximação da Turquia com o continente africano contribuem para o fortalecimento da posição turca enquanto uma Potência Regional? Como hipótese de trabalho, tem-se que tal aproximação, que pode ser verificada nos âmbitos político/diplomático, econômico/comercial e militar/securitário, reforça o reconhecimento internacional de que a Turquia ocupa a condição de Potência Regional, além de contribuir para reforçar as capacidades materiais turcas (em termos políticos, econômicos, militares, diplomáticos, etc.). Tal realidade, por sua vez, também contribui para reforçar esse mesmo reconhecimento em nível regional, contribuindo para que a Turquia se consolide efetivamente como uma Potência Regional.

O objetivo principal do trabalho, destaque, é compreender como o estreitamento dos laços da Turquia com os países do continente africano no século XXI contribui para fortalecer sua posição de Potência Regional. De forma objetiva, busca-se compreender como

essa aproximação foi construída a partir de três dimensões fundamentais, a político/diplomática, a econômico/comercial e a militar/securitária, bem como quais seus impactos para a projeção turca para o continente africano como um todo. De forma a promover a análise proposta, o artigo adota uma abordagem hermenêutica, apoiando-se na revisão de literatura sobre as relações turco-africanas e na análise dos desenvolvimentos dessas relações ao longo do período em questão. Busca-se, a partir da análise proposta, compreender como tem se dado a aproximação turca com o continente africano no século XXI, bem como seus impactos para tais relações, tendo em vista que a condição de Potência Regional pressupõe não apenas a existência de capacidades materiais, mas também o reconhecimento de tal condição (seja pelos membros da região, seja por atores extrarregionais).

Para além desta introdução e da seção de conclusões, o artigo conta com quatro seções. Na primeira, apresenta-se uma breve discussão sobre o conceito de Potência Regional, central para a compreensão da questão aqui proposta. Nas três seções subsequentes, são analisados os desenvolvimentos das relações entre a Turquia e o continente africano no século XXI nas dimensões político/diplomática, econômico/comercial e militar/securitária, visando permitir a compreensão tanto de quais ações foram tomadas pela Turquia em sua busca por estreitar os laços com o continente africano no século XXI, quanto de seus impactos imediatos para as relações entre o país e seus pares no continente africano e de seus reflexos para a consolidação da Turquia enquanto uma Potência Regional.

A RELEVÂNCIA DAS POTÊNCIAS REGIONAIS E SUAS CARACTERÍSTICAS

Com o encerramento da Guerra Fria, tornou-se muito mais difícil definir a Ordem Mundial vigente. Embora os Estados Unidos permanecessem como a grande potência global, outras nações passaram a, progressivamente, ter um posicionamento destacado em suas respectivas regiões, projetando suas capacidades nessa dimensão e influenciando crescentemente as dinâmicas políticas, econômicas e securitárias de seu entorno a partir de suas próprias perspectivas (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Essas transformações, em conjunto com uma série de alterações nas dinâmicas de poder globais – as quais implicavam, entre outras, em uma retirada dos EUA de diversas regiões do mundo –, contribuíram para um aumento da importância de processos de governança regional, os quais se consolidaram como uma das principais características da política internacional no início do século XXI (Acharya, 2007; Destradi *et al.*, 2018). Nesse contexto, as diversas regiões passaram a ter maior autonomia do que aquela de que gozavam no contexto da Guerra Fria, e, diante da ausência de uma superpotência capaz de (ou disposta a) manter a segurança na região, houve um incremento na importância das dinâmicas de balança de poder regionais (Destradi *et al.*, 2018).

Diante disso, ganharam força as discussões a respeito do papel – e do potencial – que os atores de maior destaque nas diferentes regiões, a partir de então chamados de Potências Regionais, teriam para moldar os seus respectivos espaços regionais, bem como dos eventuais impactos que eles poderiam ter em termos da

definição das agendas políticas internacionais (Flemes, 2007; Nel & Nolte, 2010). Como parte dessas reflexões, fortaleceram-se também as discussões a respeito de quais seriam as características definidoras das Potências Regionais (Destradi *et al.*, 2018). Dentre elas, destaca-se aquela proposta por Daniel Flemes (2007), que busca compreender o espaço de poder das Potências Regionais nas relações internacionais, bem como seu sucesso em influenciar os processos e estruturas do Sistema Internacional.

De acordo com o autor, potências regionais seriam Estados que reuniram quatro características principais (Flemes, 2007). Em primeiro lugar, seriam atores que reclamariam para si uma posição de liderança, propondo-se a assumir a função de estabilizadores regionais – em termos securitários e econômicos. Em segundo lugar, seriam Estados dotados de recursos de poder materiais (em termos militares, demográficos, geográficos, econômicos e de desenvolvimento humano) e ideacionais (um conjunto de valores e objetivos políticos e sociais capazes de gerar credibilidade, legitimidade e autoridade moral em contextos de barganha) significativos. Em terceiro lugar, seriam aqueles atores com capacidade de empregar distintos instrumentos de política externa em suas interações internacionais, os quais lhes permitiriam exercer seu poder de distintas maneiras, em um *continuum* entre coerção e persuasão. Por fim, seriam Estados que gozariam da aceitação e do reconhecimento – tanto em nível regional, quanto em nível global – de ocuparem tal posição (Flemes, 2007). Nesse sentido, para além do engajamento regional, tais atores também teriam uma projeção global, isto é, a condição de mobilizar as

capacidades materiais e subjetivas da política externa a fim de contribuir para influenciar ou liderar os principais assuntos e problemáticas de determinada região ou regiões (Mesquita & Chien, 2021).

É interessante destacar que, enquanto as três primeiras características definidoras das Potências Regionais seriam primordialmente dependentes delas próprias, a aceitação e o reconhecimento, regional e global, desta condição não está sob controle direto desses atores. Nesse sentido, tal reconhecimento seria, ao mesmo tempo, uma característica das Potências Regionais e uma condição necessária para ocupar tal posição (Nolte, 2010; Destradi *et al.*, 2018). Tal consideração se faz relevante, entre outros, porque este reconhecimento não deriva, obrigatoriamente, da existência de condições materiais objetivas, podendo ser resultado de – ou ao menos influenciado por – percepções ideacionais.

É justamente por conta disso que a projeção internacional de um país também pode impactar na sua consolidação enquanto uma Potência Regional. O fortalecimento de laços com parceiros extrarregionais, nesse contexto, pode não apenas fomentar um reconhecimento externo de uma posição de Potência Regional, mas também, a partir disso, contribuir para a consolidação de tal imagem na própria região. Por um lado, isso se daria não apenas porque tais relações tenderiam a contribuir para fortalecer as capacidades do Estado em questão, mas também porque haveria uma tendência ao reforço do reconhecimento, pelos vizinhos, das capacidades desse ator (sejam essas efetivamente fortalecidas, ou não). Por outro, porque o reconhecimento externo da condição

de Potência Regional estaria acompanhado do reconhecimento da posição de representante da região. Diante disso, seria muito provável que também se incrementasse o reconhecimento desta condição por parte dos vizinhos, motivados pela expectativa de terem os seus interesses em nível internacional também representados pela Potência Regional (Nolte, 2010).

Tendo isso em conta, passa-se, a seguir, a uma análise das relações turcas com o continente africano a partir do início do século XXI com foco em três dimensões: a político/diplomática; a econômico/comercial; e a militar/securitária. Nesse sentido, busca-se discutir o fortalecimento dessas relações tanto em termos da sua dimensão material quanto de sua dimensão ideacional, elementos fundamentais para a caracterização da Turquia enquanto uma potência regional.

A DIMENSÃO POLÍTICO-DIPLOMÁTICA DAS RELAÇÕES TURCO-AFRICANAS

Ainda que ao longo do século XX a Turquia mantivesse relações diplomáticas com diversos países do continente, a África jamais ocupou um espaço de destaque na agenda internacional do país (Donelli, 2018). Nesse sentido, embora o continente africano tenha passado a fazer parte das possibilidades de relações diplomáticas da Turquia na década de 1980, com o presidente Turgut Ozal, foi durante os governos AKP que as relações entre os países africanos e a Turquia se intensificaram e contaram com iniciativas de grande investimento (Siradağ, 2018). Foi apenas com a adoção por Ankara, em 1998, do *Opening to Africa Action Plan*, que se inaugurou uma política externa

turca para o continente africano (Dodo, 2016). O plano estabelecia uma série de objetivos a serem alcançados, dentre os quais a intensificação do comércio e dos investimentos, a abertura de embaixadas, o fornecimento de ajuda humanitária aos países do continente, o fomento de viagens de negócios, e o estabelecimento da Turquia como doador do Banco Africano de Desenvolvimento (Bilgic & Nascimento, 2014).

Em linhas gerais, a adoção do plano era um reflexo da busca, do AKP, por direcionar a política externa turca a outros eixos que não o tradicional bloco ocidental. Sendo assim, o governo turco procurou ressaltar os laços identitários com os países africanos e países muçulmanos, considerando questões históricas e a população turca, majoritariamente muçulmana. O partido, com isso, procurava flexibilizar a ideia de que a Turquia era um país de identidade estritamente secular e ocidental, desenvolvendo relações diplomáticas para além do tradicional da sua política externa (Sıradağ, 2018). Nesse sentido, a construção de ligações políticas com a África foi perpassada pelo discurso turco de existência de laços históricos, religiosos e culturais com os países africanos, sendo estes apresentados como parceiros na construção das relações exteriores, e não apenas como “receptores de ajuda externa” (Pakin-Albayrakoglu, 2016). Diante disso, as iniciativas inauguradas a partir daí, relacionadas à abertura de embaixadas, à realização de visitas bilaterais, à promoção de projetos educacionais e culturais, ao incremento das relações comerciais e à assistência humanitária, entre outras, estiveram ligadas a uma política externa que buscava restabelecer estes laços,

principalmente os de caráter religioso (Pakin-Albayrakoglu, 2016).

Após a adoção do Plano de Ação, o governo turco lançou, em 2003, a Estratégia para o Desenvolvimento de Relações Econômicas com os Países Africanos, que visava estabelecer as ações a serem tomadas para garantir a consecução dos objetivos do Plano de Ação (Dodo, 2016). Essas ações, já a partir de 2004, passaram a demonstrar resultados efetivos, sendo possível verificar um incremento tanto dos laços comerciais quanto da criação de projetos bilaterais com países africanos (Donelli, 2018). A despeito disso, todavia, o Plano de Ação nunca chegou a ser plenamente implementado, em grande parte por conta de questões internas - políticas e econômicas - turcas (Sıradağ, 2018). Diante disso, foi apenas em 2005 que se verificou uma inflexão significativa no posicionamento turco com relação ao continente africano (Özkan, 2008; Langan, 2016; Donelli, 2018).

Naquele ano, o Primeiro-ministro Recep Tayyip Erdoğan realizou uma viagem ao continente africano, visitando a Etiópia e a África do Sul - naquela que foi a primeira visita oficial de um premiê da Turquia a um país ao Sul da Linha do Equador (Özkan & Akgün, 2010). Além disso, o governo turco anunciou aquele como o “Ano da África” para a Turquia, dando início a uma investida de aproximação com regiões estratégicas no continente para a projeção turca enquanto Potência Regional. Nesse sentido, o país passou a buscar se apresentar como um parceiro ativo no apoio ao desenvolvimento africano, ressaltando como um importante diferencial sua posição intermediária - não apenas entre o Ocidente e o

Oriente, mas também entre o Norte e o Sul (Donelli, 2018).

Além de buscar incrementar e expandir os laços diplomáticos com os países da África, por meio de um acelerado processo de abertura de novas embaixadas, o governo turco incentivou visitas bilaterais entre os representantes dos Estados e a organização de encontros entre as autoridades turcas e africanas, com o objetivo de formar parcerias principalmente a nível multilateral, como nas Nações Unidas e frente a outras Organizações Internacionais (Pakin-Albayrakoglu, 2016). Nesse sentido, enquanto em 2004 a Turquia possuía 12 embaixadas no continente africano, em 2013 estas já eram 34, atingindo a marca de 44 em 2023 (Donelli, 2021b; MFA, 2023b). Ainda, enquanto em 2008 eram 13 embaixadas residentes de países africanos em Ankara, em 2016 esse número já era de 30, atingindo a marca de 34 em 2023 (Dodo, 2016; MFA, 2023). Além disso, tanto enquanto Primeiro-ministro (2003-2014), quanto como Presidente (2014-presente), Erdoğan manteve uma ativa e regular agenda de visitas à África, tendo realizado visitas oficiais a mais de trinta países do continente (MFA, 2023b).¹ Nesse contexto, os países da África Ocidental, região de população majoritariamente muçulmana sunita, ganharam

destaque, o que se refletiu em uma priorização das relações e parcerias com a Comunidade Econômica dos Estados da África Ocidental (CEDEAO) (Monié, 2022).

Além da busca por incrementar as relações bilaterais com países africanos, a iniciativa turca também passou a visar o fortalecimento da cooperação institucional com o continente (Donelli, 2018). Diante disso, desde a criação da União Africana (UA), em 2002, a Turquia passou a participar como convidado nas reuniões da Organização, obtendo, em 2005, o *status* de observador da UA, além da acreditação de sua embaixada em Addis Abeba (Özkan, 2008; MFA, 2023a).

Em consonância com essas ações, foram realizados, desde o início dos anos 2000, diversos fóruns de cooperação, reunindo a Turquia e países do continente africano. O objetivo desses encontros era potencializar as relações entre Ankara e os pares africanos, não apenas assegurando maior harmonia nessas relações, mas também fomentando sua ampliação e seu aprofundamento. O primeiro desses, o I Fórum de Cooperação Turquia-África, ocorreu em 2008, em Istambul, contando com a participação de representantes do alto escalão de cinquenta países africanos (Özkan, 2008). Como fruto desse encontro, foram adotados

¹ Os países visitados por Erdoğan foram Marrocos (2005, 2013), Sudão (2006, 2017), Egito (2006, 2009, 2011, 2012), Argélia (2006, 2013, 2014, 2018, 2020), Etiópia (2005, 2007, 2015), Somália (2011, 2015, 2016), Tunísia (2011, 2013, 2017), África do Sul (2005, 2011, 2018), Gabão (2013), Senegal (2013, 2016, 2020, 2022), Guiné Equatorial (2014), Níger (2014), Djibouti (2015), Costa do Marfim (2016), Nigéria (2016, 2021), Gana (2016), Guiné (2016), Uganda (2016), Quênia (2016), Tanzânia (2017), Moçambique (2017), Madagascar (2017), Chade (2017), Mauritânia (2018), Mali (2018), Zâmbia (2018), Gâmbia (2020), Angola (2021), Togo (2021), Líbia (2021), República Democrática do Congo (2022) (MFA, 2023).

dois documentos a “Declaração de Istambul sobre a Parceria Turquia-África para um Futuro Comum” e o seu anexo, o “Quadro de Cooperação para a Parceria Turquia-África: Cooperação e Solidariedade”, estabelecendo um conjunto de áreas prioritárias para cooperação, dentre as quais a cooperação intergovernamental, a cooperação em comércio e investimento, a cooperação em infraestrutura, energia e transporte, a cooperação em saúde, e a cooperação em paz e segurança (MFA, 2023a).

O segundo Fórum de Cooperação Turquia-África ocorreu em 2014, em Malabo, na Guiné Equatorial, e contou com a participação de representantes de mais de 40 países africanos, dentre os quais Mauritânia, Etiópia, Argélia, Nigéria, África do Sul, Senegal, Líbia, Zimbábue, Quênia, Gana, Chade, República Democrática do Congo e Egito (Çelik, 2014). Assim como o primeiro, este encontro estabeleceu e acrescentou setores de cooperação estratégica entre a Turquia e a África, como cultura, educação, capacitação de jovens, segurança e paz, energia, transportes e transferência de tecnologia (MFA, 2023a). Além disso, a Declaração Final do encontro, intitulada “Novo Modelo de Parceria para o Reforço da Integração e Desenvolvimento Sustentável” (UA, 2014), destacava a necessidade de incremento nos investimentos externos diretos e de fortalecimento de uma cooperação voltada para o desenvolvimento econômico (Monié, 2022).

Em 2021, o III Fórum de Cooperação Turquia-África ocorreu em Istambul, e contou com a participação de 38 países africanos, sendo 13 representados por chefes de Estado e dois por primeiros-ministros, além de uma delegação da União Africana (Özkan & Orakçı, 2022).

O objetivo deste último encontro foi o reforço das atividades que já estavam sendo desenvolvidas, bem como a consolidação da cooperação comercial, econômica, securitária e cultural (Monié, 2022). No entanto, o foco do evento de 2021 foi a atividade econômica, principalmente aquela centrada nas atividades de negócios. Dessa forma, o Fórum contou com discussões sobre o setor industrial e tecnológico e sobre as atividades da iniciativa privada. A novidade trazida no Fórum de 2021 foi a preocupação e o compromisso da Turquia e dos países africanos em estabelecer diálogo e cooperação técnica entre governos e também entre as Comunidades Econômicas Regionais do continente africano (*Republic of Turkey Ministry of Trade (RTMT) & African Union (AU)*, 2021).

Esse esforço de projeção da Turquia enquanto uma Potência Média, no plano regional e internacional, também contou, desde o início do século XXI, com a participação de diversas agências estatais do país, atuando sobretudo nos campos de desenvolvimento e de auxílio humanitário. Dentre essas, destacam-se a Agência Turca de Cooperação Internacional e Desenvolvimento (*Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency*, TIKA) e a Direção de Assuntos Religiosos da Turquia (*Directorate for Religious Affairs of Turkey*, Diyanet). A TIKA é a agência oficial para a Cooperação para o Desenvolvimento do governo turco, sendo responsável por fornecer assistência ao desenvolvimento dos parceiros da Turquia por meio de projetos técnicos e atividades humanitárias. Seu primeiro escritório no continente africano foi aberto em 2005, em Adis Abeba, sendo seguido por outros dois em Cartum, em 2006, e Dakar, em 2007 (Özkan & Akgün, 2010).

Desde então, não apenas o volume de projetos desenvolvidos pela Agência aumentou, como também o número de escritórios no continente, que em 2023 já eram 22² (*Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency* - TIKA, 2023). De acordo com o Relatório de 2021 do Fórum Turquia-África, a TIKA atualmente está à frente, no continente africano, de 322 projetos de educação, 196 projetos na área da saúde e 73 projetos de água e saneamento (RTMT & AU, 2021). Outros projetos envolvem iniciativas no setor da agricultura e da agricultura familiar, moradia, conservação de patrimônios culturais, infraestrutura civil e administrativa e infraestrutura econômica e produtiva (RTMT & AU, 2021).

Já a Diyanet tem sido responsável por promover a abertura de escolas religiosas em diversos países do continente africano, além de organizar encontros entre lideranças religiosas africanas e seus pares turcos (Donelli, 2021a). O primeiro desses, o Encontro de Líderes Religiosos dos Países e Sociedades Muçulmanas do Continente Africano, foi realizado em 2006, em Istambul, e reuniu representantes de mais de vinte países africanos (Özkan & Akgün, 2010). Além destas, outras agências e ONG's turcas também passaram a atuar (ou incrementaram sua atuação) no continente africano, com destaque para a *Turkish Maarif Foundation* (TMF), integrada ao setor de educação, com mais de 144 centros educacionais espalhados pelos países africanos, a *Yunus*

Emre Foundation (YEF), atuante no setor de ensino da cultura e língua turca, presente em oito países africanos³ (RTMT & AU, 2021).

Ainda no setor da educação, outro elemento importante no esforço de estreitamento dos laços político-diplomáticos da Turquia com o continente africano foi o incremento do número de bolsas de estudo, financiadas pelo governo turco e concedidas a estudantes africanos, principalmente vindos da porção ocidental do continente. Para além de bolsas de graduação e pós-graduação em Istambul e Ankara, o governo turco passou a oferecer crescentemente bolsas para estudantes africanos de ensino básico, para que eles estudassem em escolas turcas financiadas no próprio território dos países africanos (Binaté, 2021). Conforme Binaté (2021), Costa do Marfim, Burkina-Faso e Senegal foram os países que ganharam destaque nas relações turco-africanas para a promoção da educação a partir de 2003. No caso da Costa do Marfim, destaca-se a criação do Grupo de Estudos em Matemática com bolsas financiadas pela Turquia, chamado *Şafak d'Abidjan*. O governo turco, por meio deste grupo de estudos, promoveu a Olimpíada dos Jovens Matemáticos e concedeu bolsas de estudos na Turquia aos alunos destaque do evento. Diante disso, o *Şafak d'Abidjan* passou a ser um centro onde estudantes da Costa do Marfim passaram a ter a possibilidade de concluir os estudos na Turquia, ou até mesmo iniciar a graduação e a pós-graduação (Binaté, 2021).

² Gâmbia, Senegal, Guiné, Níger, Camarões, Chade, Sudão, Sudão do Sul, Djibuti, Etiópia, Somália, Quênia, Uganda, Líbia, Egito, Argélia, Tunísia, Tanzânia, Comores, Namíbia, África do Sul, Moçambique (TIKA, 2023).

³ África do Sul, Argélia, Egito, Marrocos, Senegal, Somália, Sudão e Tunísia.

Como resultado desse esforço de aproximação da Turquia com a África, o país logrou consolidar uma posição de destaque junto ao continente. Nesse sentido, em 2008, a Turquia passou a integrar o Banco Africano de Desenvolvimento como membro não regional (Donelli, 2018) e foi declarada, no âmbito da União Africana, como parceira estratégica do continente (Özkan, 2008). Além disso, o país também ganhou o *status* de observador em diversas Comunidades Econômicas Regionais (REC) africanas, como a CEDEAO e a Comunidade da África Oriental (EAC), em 2010, a Autoridade Intergovernamental para o Desenvolvimento (IGAD) e o Mercado Comum para a África Oriental e Austral (COMESA), em 2012 (Dodo, 2016). Igualmente, como resultado dessa aproximação, em 2008, a Turquia contou com o apoio de 50 países africanos em sua candidatura a um assento não permanente no Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas - sendo eleita, em grande medida, por conta desse apoio, que representou cerca de 30% do total de votos recebidos (Korkut & Civelekoglu, 2012).

No plano multilateral e internacional, as relações com o continente africano são relevantes para a Turquia, ao passo que o país consegue apoio desses atores em órgãos multilaterais relevantes. Conforme Özkan (2011), a participação e o engajamento turco em organizações multilaterais fazem parte da estratégia da política externa nos anos 2000. Nesse sentido, a posição ativa da Turquia no G-20, bem como o *status* de membro não permanente no Conselho de Segurança entre os anos de 2008 e 2010, como já mencionado, são resultados diretos dessa maior aproximação

e do estreitamento dos laços com os países do continente africano (Özkan, 2011).

A DIMENSÃO ECONÔMICO-COMERCIAL DAS RELAÇÕES TURCO-AFRICANAS

Os esforços de aproximação e estreitamento dos laços político-econômicos turcos com a África foram acompanhados por um incremento nas relações econômico-comerciais entre a Turquia e o continente africano, os quais se mostraram de grande relevância para que o país conseguisse expandir a sua influência econômica na região. Como destaca Tepecikliogu (2017), a política externa executada por Ahmet Davutoğlu teria na busca pela cooperação econômica com o maior número de parceiros possível um de seus importantes pilares, sendo essa diversificação entendida como uma forma de proporcionar uma projeção global para a Turquia.

Nesse contexto, a partir do início do século XXI, a África, dotada de um expressivo mercado consumidor potencial, bem como de importantes reservas de recursos naturais, passou a ser entendida crescentemente como um espaço potencial para a cooperação turca, especialmente em termos de transferências tecnológicas, relações comerciais e de oportunidades de investimentos. Com isso, diversas empresas turcas passaram a investir no continente, gerando um aumento substancial tanto no número de empresas turcas instaladas em países africanos quanto no valor total investido – que saltou de cerca de US\$ 400 milhões, em 2007, para US\$ 5 bilhões, em 2013, e para US\$ 6,2 bilhões em 2016 (Tepecikliogu, 2017). Destaca-se, nesse sentido, a atuação,

no continente, de empresas turcas do setor de infraestrutura (Monié, 2022).

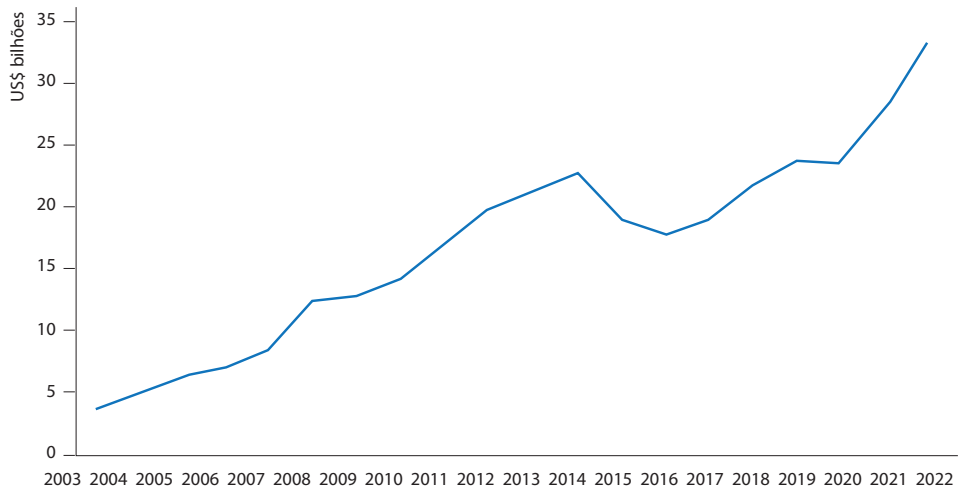
Em grande medida, esse incremento contou com significativo apoio do governo turco. Nesse sentido, é importante destacar que em todas as viagens realizadas por Erdoğan aos países do continente africano, tanto enquanto Primeiro-ministro, quanto enquanto Presidente, ele foi acompanhado regularmente por empresários turcos, com diversos acordos – de comércio, investimento, etc. – sendo assinados nessas ocasiões (Monié, 2022). Além disso, em 2016, a Turquia organizou o primeiro Fórum Econômico e Empresarial Turquia-África, que reuniu, para além de 50 chefes de Estado e de governo, mais de 3.000 empresários dos países africanos e da Turquia. O evento, que teve sua segunda edição em 2018, tinha como principal objetivo contribuir para potencializar as relações comerciais e de investimento entre a Turquia e os países africanos (e o continente, em seu conjunto), além de incrementar a presença de empresas turcas na África (Donelli, 2021b). Nele, o governo turco ainda se comprometeu a investir no Departamento de Comércio e Indústria da União Africana, apoiando as decisões do órgão a nível regional e internacional (MFA, 2023a).

Conforme Monié (2022), a presença econômica da Turquia na África crescentemente passou a se dar, também, por meio de empresas turcas que incentivam a criação de empregos e investem em infraestrutura e em serviços, principalmente da construção civil e de infraestrutura em transportes (Monié, 2022). No setor de infraestrutura, destaca-se o envio de engenheiros turcos que, atuando

em conjunto com trabalhadores somalis, criaram projetos de construção de estradas e ruas asfaltadas, tanto na capital do país, Mogadíscio, quanto entre Mogadíscio e outras regiões (Yusuf *et al.*, 2022). Além disso, no que diz respeito à indústria e à venda de produtos, o continente africano tem servido como um extenso mercado para os produtos manufaturados turcos, que por vezes possuem um preço mais competitivo do que os produtos europeus e uma qualidade melhor do que aquela dos produtos chineses. Em contrapartida, a Turquia se beneficiaria da compra de *commodities* fornecidas pelos atores africanos, necessárias, entre outros, como insumos para a sua produção industrial (Monié, 2022).

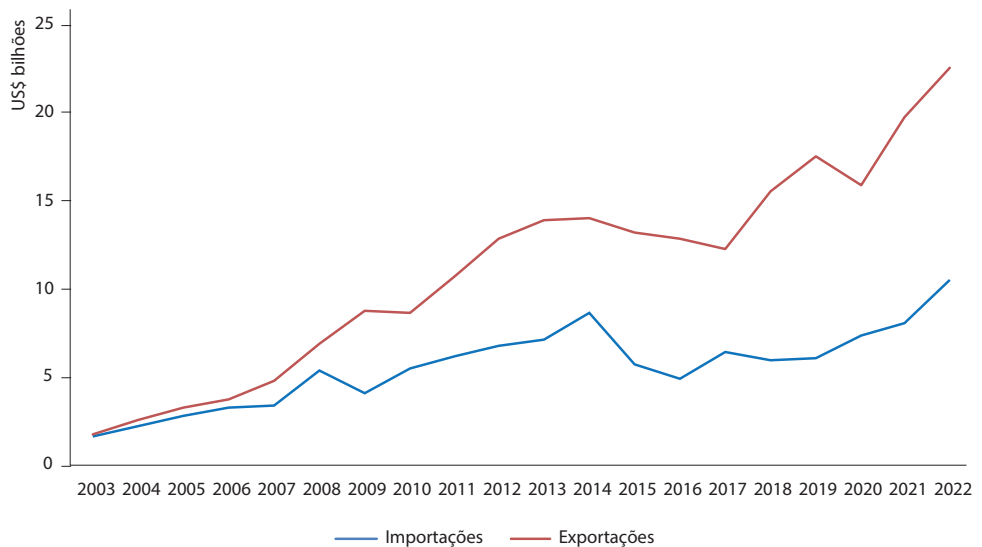
As iniciativas adotadas pela Turquia na esfera econômica, em conjunto com o incremento dos laços políticos verificado desde o início do século, tiveram como resultado um aumento significativo das trocas comerciais entre o país e os pares do continente africano. Enquanto em 2003 o volume de trocas comerciais entre o conjunto de países da África e a Turquia foi de cerca de US\$ 3,5 bilhões, em um período de uma década este experimentou um crescimento de mais de 500%, atingindo, em 2013, a marca de cerca de US\$ 21 bilhões. Após uma breve queda, entre 2014 e 2016, quando o volume de comércio foi aproximadamente de US\$ 17 bilhões, essas relações retomaram um ritmo acelerado de crescimento, ultrapassando a marca de US\$ 33 bilhões, em 2022 (*International Trade Centre (ITC)*, 2023). Com isso, no período 2003-2022, as relações comerciais entre a Turquia e o continente africano passaram por um incremento de mais de 850%.

Gráfico 1
Volume do comércio Turquia-África (US\$ bilhões)



Fonte: elaborado pelos autores com dados do ITC (2023).

Gráfico 2
Importações turcas de produtos africanos e exportações turcas para a África (US\$ bilhões)



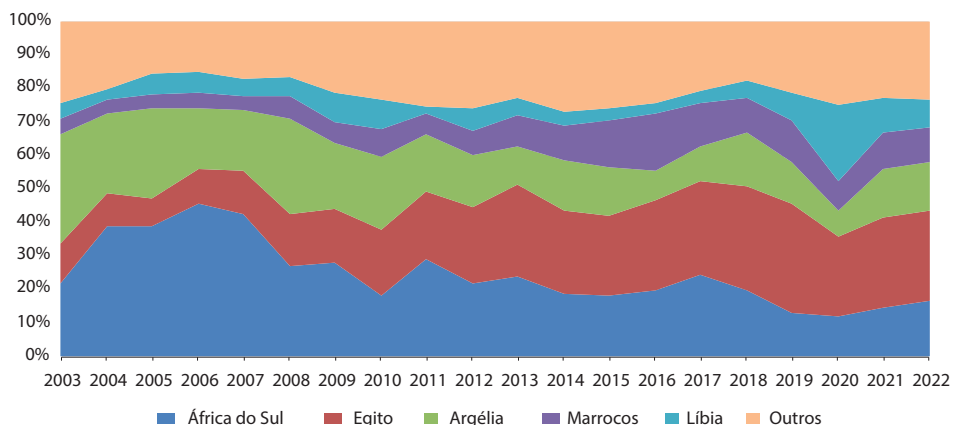
Fonte: elaborado pelos autores com dados do ITC (2023).

Esse crescimento foi resultado de um incremento sustentado tanto das importações turcas de produtos africanos quanto das exportações da Turquia para o continente. Nesse sentido, enquanto em 2003, a Turquia importou cerca de US\$ 1,67 bilhões em produtos exportados pelos países africanos, em 2014, esse número atingiu a marca de aproximadamente US\$ 8,6 bilhões e, em 2022, após um período de retração experimentado entre 2014 e 2016, alcançou a marca de US\$10,5 bilhões (ITC, 2023). As exportações turcas para os países da África, por sua vez, seguiram uma tendência semelhante, ainda que com um crescimento mais expressivo. Enquanto em 2003, um total de aproximadamente US\$1,79 bilhões em produtos turcos foram exportados para o continente africano, em 2014, o total foi de aproximadamente US\$14 bilhões, um crescimento de cerca de 680%. Entre 2014 e 2017, as exportações turcas para a África experimentaram uma retração – menos acentuada do que a ex-

perimentada pelas importações – retomando a partir daí um crescimento bastante acelerado, atingindo a marca de aproximadamente US\$ 22,6 bilhões, em 2022 (ITC, 2023).

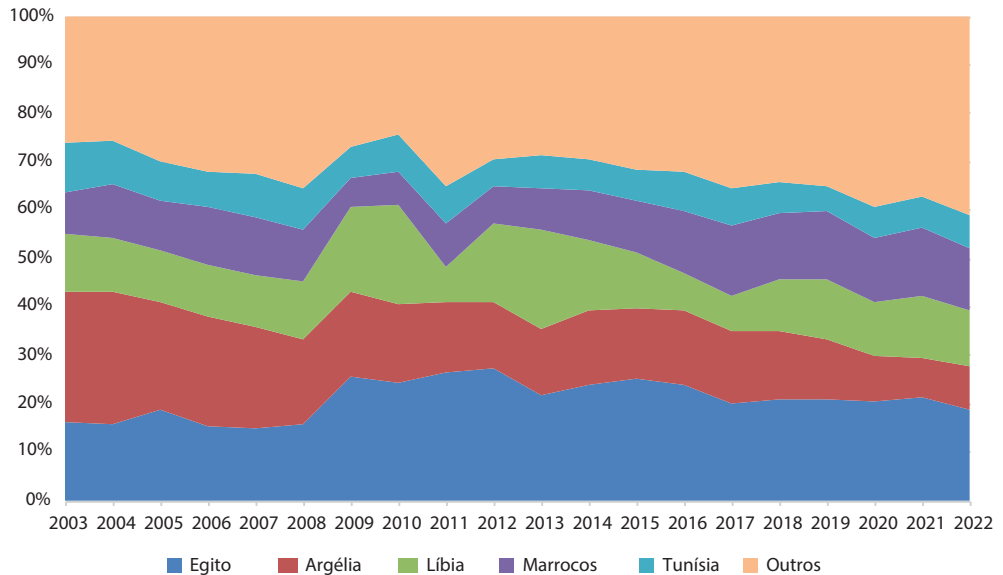
Entre os países do continente, cinco se destacam como os principais parceiros comerciais turcos ao longo do século XXI, tanto em termos de suas importações da Turquia quanto de suas exportações para o país: Egito, Marrocos, Argélia, Líbia e África do Sul (ITC, 2023). É interessante perceber, todavia, que enquanto estes cinco mantiveram, entre 2003 e 2022, relativa estabilidade no seu peso nas exportações do continente para a Turquia – oscilando entre cerca de 75% e cerca de 85% do total –, em termo das exportações turcas para o continente, é possível perceber uma diminuição relativa do peso desses atores, que em 2003 eram o destino de cerca de 74% das exportações turcas para a África e em 2022 cerca de 59%, indicando, assim, uma diversificação das parcerias comerciais da Turquia no continente.

Gráfico 3
Principais exportadores africanos para a Turquia (%)



Fonte: elaborado pelos autores com dados do ITC (2023).

Gráfico 4
Principais importadores africanos da Turquia (%)

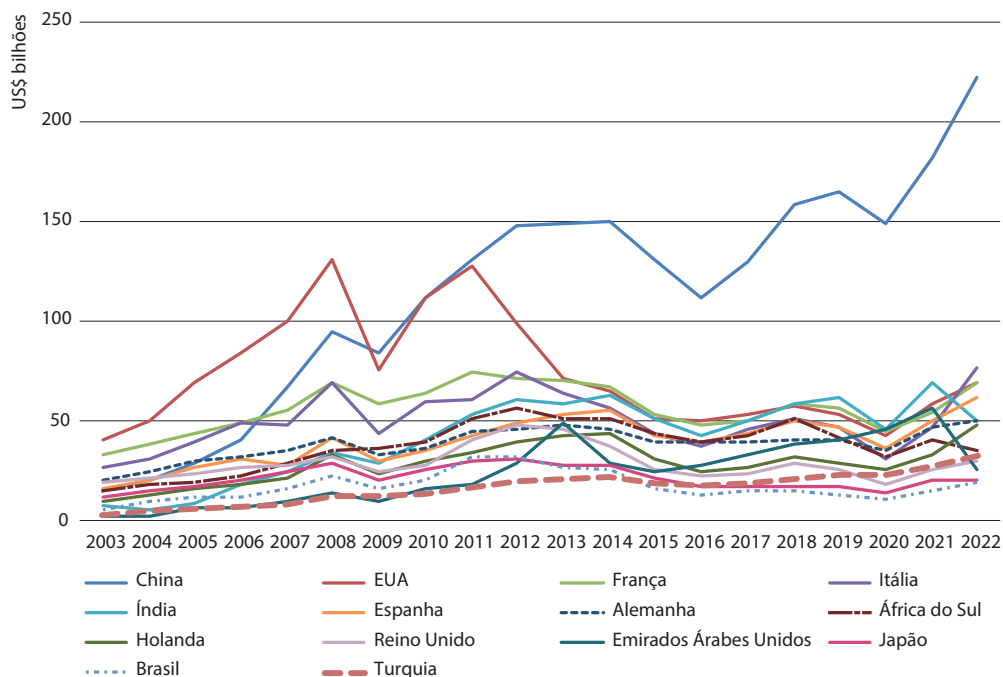


Fonte: elaborado pelos autores com dados do ITC (2023).

A despeito do significativo crescimento das relações comerciais turcas com o continente africano, é importante ressaltar que estas ainda são relativamente limitadas. Se tomarmos o acumulado de trocas comerciais entre 2003 e 2022, a Turquia fica apenas em 14º lugar no ranking de parceiros comerciais do continente africano, atrás de China, EUA, França, Itália, Índia, Espanha, Alemanha, África do Sul, Holanda, Reino Unido, Emirados Árabes Unidos, Japão e Brasil. Todavia, é importante destacar que ao longo desse mesmo período, o crescimento experimentado pelas trocas comerciais turcas com o continente, de mais de 850%, ficou atrás apenas daquele experimentado pela China (quase 1.400%) e pelos Emirados

Árabes Unidos (de cerca de 940%) – valores muito superiores ao crescimento das trocas da França (106,2%), dos EUA (70,3%) e do Reino Unido (56,8%) com a África, por exemplo (ITC, 2023). Vale ressaltar, todavia, que o crescimento sustentado das trocas comerciais turcas com a África garantiu que, a partir de 2014, a Turquia passasse, em termos anuais, a apresentar trocas comerciais mais volumosas do que outros parceiros africanos, ultrapassando assim o Brasil, em 2015, o Japão, em 2016, o Reino Unido, em 2020, e os Emirados Árabes Unidos, em 2022, o que garantiu à Turquia, naquele ano, o posto de 10º maior parceiro comercial africano (ITC, 2023).

Gráfico 5
Principais parceiros econômicos africanos (US\$ bilhões)



Fonte: elaborado pelos autores com dados do ITC (2023).

Entre os esforços de fortalecimento dos laços econômico-comerciais turco-africanos no século XXI, destacam-se não apenas o apoio financeiro dado pela Turquia à criação da Zona de Comércio Livre Continental Africana (MFA, 2023a), mas também os acordos de comércio e cooperação econômica entre Ankara e 45 países africanos, a promoção recíproca e proteção de acordos de investimento com 26 Estados do continente e a eliminação da dupla tributação com 11 países, a fim de estabelecer contratos sólidos para o estabelecimento das relações econômicas entre os Estados (MFA, 2023a). Destaca-se, ainda, a criação, em 2016, da plataforma *on-line* “*Turkey-Africa Agricultural*

Cooperation Platform”, juntamente com a plataforma dos Fóruns, que objetivou disseminar informações sobre dados e projetos desenvolvidos no setor da agricultura (Özkan & Orakçı, 2022). O site foi o principal resultado do encontro de ministros da agricultura da Turquia e de países africanos para discutir a cooperação neste eixo, servindo como uma base de dados para a cooperação técnica nos setores de produção de alimentos.

No setor de energia, destacam-se os incentivos dados pelos bancos turcos para investimento em infraestrutura de energia no continente (MFA, 2023a). Nesse sentido, destacam-se não apenas os investimentos

realizados em países como a Nigéria e a Argélia, os quais são importantes exportadores de petróleo e gás natural para a Turquia, mas também a prioridade dada pelo Ministério de Energia e Recursos Naturais do governo turco à realização de investimentos da empresa *Turkish Petroleum Corporation* (TPAO) para a extração de petróleo em Angola (Tepecikligu, 2017).

Vale ressaltar, ainda, que desde o início do século XXI, acompanhando o estreitamento dos laços políticos e econômicos, realizou-se um aumento substancial no número de rotas e destinos no continente africano operados pela companhia aérea *Turkish Airlines*. No início da década de 2000, a companhia voava majoritariamente para cidades da região do norte da África – tendo como destinos o Cairo, no Egito, Casablanca, no Marrocos, Túnis, na Tunísia, Argel, na Argélia e Trípoli, na Líbia –, tendo como único destino ao Sul do continente a cidade de Joanesburgo, na África do Sul (Turkish Airlines, 2005).

Já na década de 2010, a companhia apresentou um salto no número de cidades para as quais passou a voar, com diversas capitais africanas passando a integrar as rotas da empresa turca. Segundo o relatório da empresa do ano de 2015, para além dos destinos citados anteriormente, foram adicionadas às rotas de voo, cidades em outras regiões do continente, principalmente na região ocidental e oriental. Foram incorporados aos destinos da *Turkish Airlines* Ruanda, Chade, Mali, República Democrática do Congo, Camarões, Costa do Marfim, Mauritânia, Burkina-Faso, Niger, Tanzânia, Etiópia, Eritreia e Somália. Além destes destinos, foram adicionados novos da

porção austral do continente, como Moçambique (Turkish Airlines, 2015).

Segundo o relatório do ano de 2022, atualmente a empresa voa para 62 destinos no continente africano. Para a Ásia, este número é de 46, enquanto que, para o Oriente Médio, o número caiu para 37 (Turkish Airlines, 2022). Este aumento no número de rotas para países africanos reflete um incremento não apenas das relações (econômicas, de cooperação, políticas, etc.) turcas com a África, mas também da importância atribuída pela política externa turca para o continente, bem como de sua busca por expandir ainda mais sua presença e influência na África.

A DIMENSÃO MILITAR-SECURITÁRIA DAS RELAÇÕES TURCO-AFRICANAS

Além do incremento dos laços nas dimensões político-diplomáticas e econômico-comerciais, o século XXI também tem sido marcado por um incremento substancial da atuação turca no continente africano também nas dimensões securitária e militar. A principal ação turca, nesse sentido, materializou-se na interação de Ankara com a Somália. Em 2011, diante de um cenário em que o país africano experimentava uma forte seca, que arrasou seu território, intensificando ainda mais a fome e o caos experimentados no país, o governo turco foi o primeiro país a enviar recursos e ajuda humanitária à Somália (Dahir & Cismaan, 2021).

Naquele mesmo ano, o então Primeiro-ministro Erdoğan, acompanhado de uma delegação de quatro ministros e de membros da elite turca, realizou uma visita ao país africano – a primeira de um líder não africano em quase

duas décadas. Como resultado dessa visita, naquele mesmo ano, a Embaixada turca em Mogadíscio foi reaberta, contribuindo para que houvesse um fortalecimento progressivo nas relações entre os dois países (Özkan & Orakci, 2015). Por um lado, essa aproximação progressiva foi fortalecida também pela liderança do governo turco na realização, no âmbito da Organização para a Cooperação Islâmica, de rodadas de discussão sobre a situação somali, mediando acordos entre representantes da Somália e de *Somaliland*, em questões como segurança, combate à pirataria e pesca ilegal (Shinn, 2015). Por outro, ela possibilitou a abertura, em 2017, de uma base militar turca na capital somali, conhecida como *Camp TURKSOM*, estratégica para Ankara viabilizar a projeção de sua potência naval no Oceano Índico e no Mar Vermelho (Monié, 2022). Nesse mesmo contexto, a Turquia passou também a enviar soldados turcos para a Somália, para fornecer treinamento para forças policiais e tropas do exército do país – ação que já era realizada desde 2007, com mais de 20 outros países africanos (Siradağ, 2018).

O sucesso na aproximação com a Somália contribuiu para fortalecer a posição de protagonismo da Turquia em questões securitárias no continente africano. Nesse contexto, o governo de Ankara tem fortalecido sua cooperação em áreas como o combate ao terrorismo,⁴ a ajuda humanitária e o fornecimento de equi-

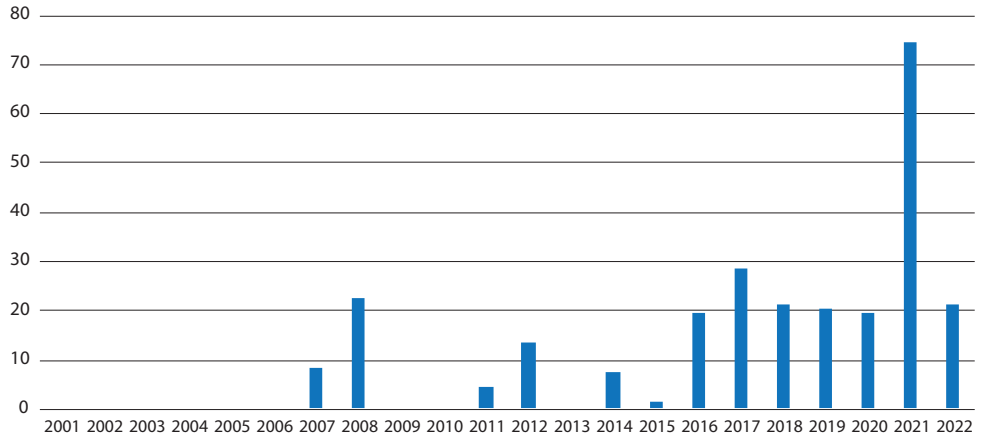
pamentos militares (MFA, 2023b), pautando-se por quatro aspectos principais: a busca por novos parceiros estratégicos do ponto de vista diplomático; a busca por novos mercados para os produtos das empresas turcas do setor de defesa; a expansão e desenvolvimento da indústria de defesa turca; e os treinamentos militares (Yaşar, 2022).

Com relação ao comércio de armamentos e ao desenvolvimento da Indústria de Defesa, entre 2003 e 2022, a Turquia vendeu aproximadamente US\$ 261 milhões em armas para 19 países africanos (Burkina Faso, Chade, Costa do Marfim, Djibuti, Egito, Etiópia, Gana, Líbia, Mali, Mauritânia, Marrocos, Níger, Nigéria, Ruanda, Senegal, Somália, Togo, Tunísia e Uganda) (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2023). O gráfico 6 indica o volume de armamentos vendido por ano pela Turquia ao continente africano.

De acordo com Yaşar (2022), diversos países africanos firmaram acordos dentro do escopo de cooperação na Indústria de Defesa. Dentre eles estão Nigéria, Etiópia, Gana, Mali, Argélia, Djibouti, Senegal, Tanzânia, Sudão, Egito, Uganda, República Democrática do Congo, Guiné, Somália, Quênia, África do Sul, Marrocos, Tunísia e Líbia. No gráfico 7, observa-se a venda de armamentos turcos por países, de 2003 a 2022, com destaque para a Tunísia e para a Nigéria (Yaşar, 2022).

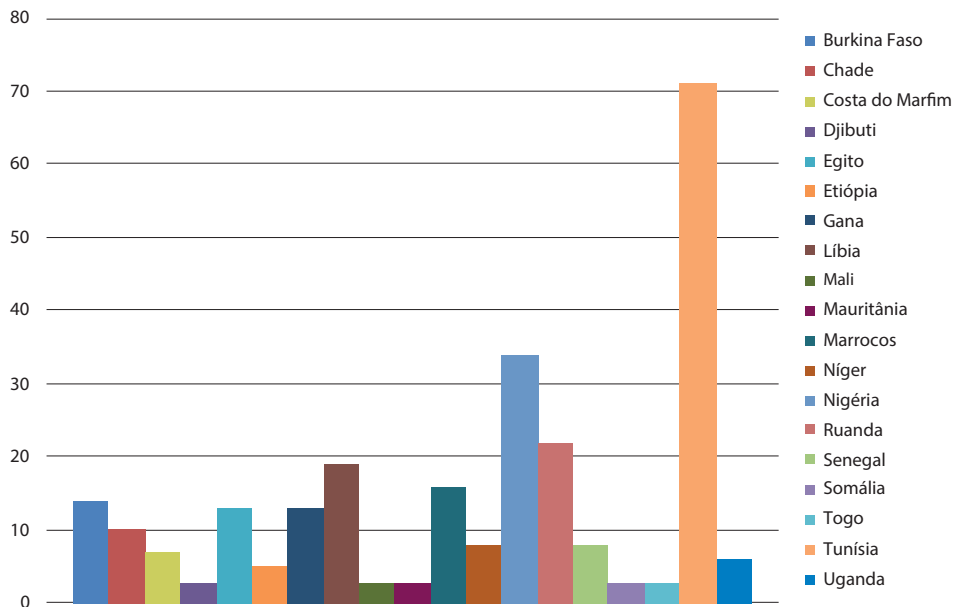
⁴ Nesse contexto, em 2018, frente aos desafios securitários encontrados pelos países do Grupo G5 do Sahel, Ankara anunciou que disponibilizaria US\$ 5 milhões para fomentar a cooperação entre os Estados da África Ocidental nas áreas de desenvolvimento e segurança (Siradağ, 2018).

Gráfico 6
Venda de armamentos da Turquia para a África (US\$ milhões)



Fonte: Elaborado pelos autores com dados do SIPRI (2023).

Gráfico 7
Venda total de armamentos da Turquia para o continente africano por país, entre 2001 e 2022 (US\$ milhões)



Fonte: Elaborado pelos autores com dados do SIPRI (2023).

Como fica claro pela análise do Gráfico 6, houve um aumento significativo na venda de armamentos da Turquia para países africanos a partir de meados da década de 2010. Esse aumento no volume de vendas de armas e equipamentos, ainda que menor se comparado às vendas chinesas e russas, por exemplo, representa uma tentativa tanto do governo turco quanto das empresas do país, de incorporar este mercado consumidor, criando oportunidades de negócios e de expansão industrial em um mercado pouco explorado pela Turquia ao longo da história (Kitio, 2020). Além disso, a venda de equipamentos tem sido acompanhada de treinamentos, o que denotaria uma ideia de desenvolvimento e aprendizado mútuo, e não apenas da venda dos produtos em si (Kitio, 2020).

Conforme Yaşar (2022), também merecem destaque em termos das relações na dimensão securitária, o Níger, com o qual a Turquia estabeleceu acordos militares, o Marrocos e, novamente a Tunísia, com a venda de drones e de Veículos Aéreos Não Tripulados (UAVs). Donelli (2022) chama atenção para os drones turcos que se mostraram bastante eficientes e possuíam um preço atrativo. Dentre os principais países que adquiriram estes equipamentos estavam a Nigéria, Ruanda, a Etiópia e Angola (Donelli, 2022). Além destes, dentre os principais produtos de defesa e segurança exportados para a África estão os veículos blindados, eletro-ópticos, sistemas de sensores, sistemas de vigilância e espingardas (Yaşar, 2022).

Os programas de treinamento de oficiais africanos mostraram-se bastante relevantes à Turquia e aos países africanos. Por meio destes

acordos de treinamento dos exércitos, foram feitos acordos de cooperação não apenas no campo militar, mas também nos campos científico, tecnológico, sanitário, cultural e de desenvolvimento humano (Kitio, 2020). Foi o caso dos acordos de cooperação de transferência de tecnologia de defesa, relevantes para os países africanos (Yaşar, 2022). Conforme Yaşar (2022), além da Tunísia e da Somália, a Turquia firmou, a partir da década de 2010, acordos de cooperação em defesa e transferência de tecnologia com países como Benin, Chade, República Democrática do Congo, Djibouti, Guiné-Bissau, Costa do Marfim, Quênia, Líbia, Mali, Níger, Nigéria, Senegal e Uganda.

Segundo Pakin-Albayrakoglu (2016), os treinamentos militares turcos de oficiais africanos se deram, principalmente, a partir de 2007, quando 500 soldados de Gâmbia viajaram à Turquia para receber treinamento militar. A partir daquele ano, juntaram-se oficiais de países como Costa do Marfim, República Democrática do Congo, Djibuti, Etiópia, Líbia, Mali, Nigéria, Sudão, Tanzânia, Tunísia e Zâmbia (Pakin-Albayrakoglu, 2016). Conforme o Ministério das Relações Exteriores da Turquia, entre 2017 e 2018, 290 oficiais africanos receberam treinamento em território turco (MFA, 2023a). Os treinamentos militares turcos se expandiram significativamente pelo continente, contando com centros especializados e escolas militares em países como Gana e Senegal. Para além de treinamentos no campo de segurança e defesa, estes centros passaram a oferecer cursos de idioma turco e combate ao terrorismo, compreendendo estratégias de combate, discussões sobre terrorismo no cyberspaço e na mídia, e

sobre infraestrutura de proteção contra ataques terroristas (Kitio, 2020).

No que diz respeito à diplomacia de defesa e segurança, estabelecida entre a Turquia e os países africanos, Sıradağ (2018) e Yaşar (2022) destacam as operações navais turcas na costa do continente. No ano de 2009, a força naval turca enviou 20 navios ao Golfo de Áden, na Somália, para combater a pirataria na região. Segundo Sıradağ (2018), estas atividades diminuíram em grande nível, principalmente a partir de 2017. Em 2014, a Missão Naval Turca de Navios “Barbaros”, composta por duas fragatas e um navio petroleiro da Força Naval Turca, navegou por quase todo o continente, visitando 25 portos africanos (Yaşar, 2022). Dessa forma, a Turquia tem estabelecido uma política de segurança marítima tanto no mediterrâneo quanto nos mares do continente africano (Sıradağ, 2018).

A participação expressiva da Turquia em missões de paz das Nações Unidas no continente africano, a partir do envio de armamentos e de tropas, ocupa um espaço de bastante relevância nas relações entre a Turquia e a África. Recentemente, o país contribuiu ativamente com as missões na República Democrática do Congo, em Darfur (UNAMID), na Libéria (UNMIL), no Sudão do Sul (UNMISS) e na Costa do Marfim (UNOCI) (Dodo, 2016). Ankara esteve em papéis de liderança e mediação em diversos conflitos no continente africano, na busca por soluções e resoluções de controvérsias. Como exemplo, em 21 de março de 2010, no Cairo, a Turquia copresidiu, juntamente com o Egito, uma conferência internacional de doadores, sob a égide da Organização da

Cooperação Islâmica, para a reconstrução e desenvolvimento de Darfur, tendo sido aprovado um investimento de US\$70 milhões para a reconstrução da região (Shinn, 2015; Dodo, 2016). Ainda, nota-se a extensa presença turca no auxílio humanitário direto a populações de países em conflito, com destaque para a Somália (Sıradağ, 2018).

Além da questão somali e sudanesa, diversos acordos de cooperação foram assinados com a Líbia e com a Tunísia, a fim de que a Turquia pudesse ter maior presença na região do Mediterrâneo. No caso da Tunísia, o governo turco ofereceu, a partir da Escola de Treinamento das forças armadas turcas, treinamentos militares para oficiais tunisianos (Kitio, 2020). Já no caso da Líbia, a Turquia passou a apoiar militarmente, em 2011, o exército líbio do Governo do Acordo Nacional (GNA), reconhecido pela ONU como o governo legítimo do país, com o objetivo de garantir acesso a recursos naturais, como o petróleo e o gás natural e, sobretudo, maior influência e controle nesta região do mar Mediterrâneo (Demircan, 2020). A Turquia visa garantir a possibilidade de explorar os recursos naturais descobertos nessa região do Mediterrâneo, a qual também é visada também pela Grécia e pelo Egito, que entraram em acordo para explorar a região, de acordo com suas fronteiras marítimas. A Turquia, dessa forma, passou a apoiar e a assinar acordos com o GNA, na tentativa de disputar com a Grécia este espaço no Mediterrâneo (Demircan, 2020).

Em linhas gerais, pode-se considerar que a expansão do eixo securitário da política externa turca ao continente africano foi intensificada, em grande medida, em função da ampliação

das capacidades materiais turcas, bem como pela busca de novos parceiros estratégicos. Nesse sentido, o continente africano se tornou um mercado estratégico para os armamentos produzidos pela indústria turca, cujas empresas passaram a oferecer produtos do setor de defesa e segurança a preços muito competitivos. Vale ressaltar o crescimento no número de empresas turcas do setor de defesa que passaram a operar e/ou vender para países africanos: enquanto no ano 2000 havia 56 empresas turcas deste setor em todo o continente africano, em 2020 este número chegou a 1.500 (Yaşar, 2022).

Para Donelli (2022), a expansão turca ao continente africano no setor securitário está ligada também a fatores internos da política doméstica, principalmente após a tentativa de golpe de 2016. Conforme o autor, o crescimento do interesse das empresas turcas no mercado africano se mostrou estratégico para que Erdoğan conseguisse se manter no poder, a partir do apoio deste setor ao partido (Donelli, 2022). Já para Kitio (2020), o continente africano mostra-se como um espaço alternativo para a estratégia de projeção internacional turca, enquanto potência regional. Nesse sentido, as ações turcas, principalmente na Somália, com a instalação da base militar turca no país, bem como o treinamento de oficiais, o apoio com armamentos ao governo da Líbia e a presença na Somália, denotariam uma tentativa da Turquia de se fazer presente em uma região bastante ocupada por outros poderes, conferindo ao país o *status* de “garantidora” da estabilidade e mediadora de conflitos, bem como um poder alternativo, em regiões que já contariam com a presença de outras grandes potências (Kitio, 2020).

CONSIDERAÇÕES FINAIS

Considerando as transformações nas relações entre a Turquia e o continente africano, no século XXI, bem como os elementos que caracterizam as Potências Regionais do mundo pós-Guerra Fria, é possível compreender o estreitamento das relações turco-africanas a partir da reformulação da política externa turca durante o período de governo do AKP, que buscou dar múltiplas dimensões às relações políticas, econômicas e securitárias do país. Antes da chegada do partido ao poder, em 2003, a Política Externa Turca voltava-se quase que inteiramente ao bloco ocidental. Durante a Guerra Fria, isso se percebeu no estreitamento das relações entre a Turquia e os países da OTAN, considerando a lógica do dilema de segurança do período.

O direcionamento da Política Externa turca é intensamente influenciado pelos movimentos e dinâmicas da política doméstica do país. Num primeiro momento, enquanto o AKP ainda procurava se consolidar no poder, considerando a sua inclinação política neo-otomana e fortemente simpatizante com as instituições muçulmanas turcas, a Política Externa turca se apoiava nas relações com o Ocidente, principalmente com a União Europeia. Isso se deveu à necessidade do governo de estabilizar as tensões políticas internas com os partidos de inclinação secular. A partir de 2005, o AKP passou a buscar novas possibilidades de relações econômicas, diplomáticas e securitárias, procurando reconstruir a liderança da Turquia em regiões de grande proximidade política e cultural com o país, nas quais poderia, de fato, exercer alguma liderança. É

o caso, por exemplo, dos países do Oriente Médio. Este redirecionamento é tratado na literatura como uma reformulação da Política Externa, baseada na estratégia formulada por Ahmet Davutoğlu, ex-Ministro de Relações Exteriores do país.

Davutoğlu buscou trazer maior autonomia para as relações exteriores turcas, principalmente no que diz respeito ao comércio e à economia. A Turquia é um país com uma população relativamente grande, um território extenso e uma economia com significativo nível de industrialização. Entretanto, o país não consegue competir com a indústria europeia e norte-americana, o que impõe a necessidade de busca por mercados consumidores dos produtos turcos, bem como por *commodities* e matérias-primas – espaço que, no século XXI, foi crescentemente ocupado pelo continente africano.

Isso se refletiu, de maneira geral, no crescimento da relevância da Turquia enquanto parceiro comercial dos países africanos, ainda que o país fique abaixo de outros parceiros tradicionais (como os EUA) ou “emergentes” (como a China) com relação ao volume de investimentos e de trocas comerciais. Entretanto, como visto, a Turquia, ao longo do século XXI, passou a galgar posições nos *rankings* de principais parceiros comerciais do continente, ultrapassando inclusive parceiros de maior tradição, como o Brasil.

De maneira geral, o eixo securitário das relações turco-africanas também ganhou maior destaque ao longo do século XXI. Para além da venda de equipamentos militares, notou-se o crescimento da presença militar turca no continente africano, principalmente com relação

ao auxílio humanitário a países em situação de conflito armado, com notório destaque para a região do Chifre da África. O treinamento militar de oficiais africanos também se mostrou bastante importante, bem como os treinamentos navais da Turquia na costa do continente e o combate ao terrorismo. Isso garante um espaço e uma oportunidade para a Turquia expandir tanto a sua influência, quanto as suas capacidades materiais, algo que se torna mais difícil nas interações com os países da OTAN, por exemplo. Além disso, a expansão da cooperação securitária turca com a África indica que, embora a Turquia não seja uma potência militar global, o país vem conseguindo exercer influência política e militar na região, contando com parceiros regionais estratégicos. A ajuda humanitária da Turquia aos países africanos também contribui, em certa medida, para alimentar a ideia basilar das relações turco-africanas. Através de ONG's e de agências como a TIKKA, bem como da participação e liderança em Missões de Paz, a Turquia consegue criar uma imagem de si própria bastante positiva a nível regional.

Considerando a pergunta inicial proposta e o objetivo deste trabalho, pode-se concluir que o objetivo da Turquia ao fortalecer sua presença no continente africano é a busca por projeção e liderança a nível regional, dentro do conceito teórico apresentado neste estudo e dentro dos aspectos que foram analisados. Isso pôde ser observado a partir da pesquisa acerca das iniciativas turcas nos eixos propostos, que demonstrou um real interesse do Estado turco, sob a liderança do AKP, de reconstruir e consolidar o papel da Turquia enquanto uma potência regional no âmbito econômico, político

e, sobretudo, securitário. Esse direcionamento também está ligado aos objetivos internos do Partido, de garantir uma base aliada para seus projetos e estabilizar a disputa por poder.

Em certa medida, o exercício deste papel de liderança foi legitimado pelos países africanos, principalmente por aqueles que possuem capacidades reduzidas e não se destacam em termos de poder em suas respectivas regiões, como é o caso da Somália e de alguns Estados da África Subsaariana, por exemplo. Nesse contexto, o reconhecimento externo da condição de Potência Regional recebido pela Turquia - sobretudo por parte de atores africanos mas, também, de outros atores internacionais que percebem nessa crescente projeção para o continente uma demonstração da capacidade destacada turca - contribui para consolidar tal reconhecimento também em sua própria região, fortalecendo a busca turca por expandir a sua influência e a sua participação a nível global, o que se verifica cada vez mais em suas interações com outras potências, tanto médias quanto grandes, como o Brasil, a Rússia e a China.

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The Turkish diplomatic strategy in Iraq: Shifts and continuities, 2003-2023

Mohamed Badine El Yattioui*
Yassine El Yattioui**

ABSTRACT

Relations between Türkiye and Iraq have gone through different stages between 2003 and 2023. The objective of our article is to analyze the constants and evolution of the relationship between the two neighbors from the Turkish perspective. We try to explain how economic aspects and border security issues are at the heart of Turkish diplomacy. Since the AKP and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan came to power, the Turkish vision and strategy in the Middle East, and in Iraq in particular, have passed through different moments which depended on the regional context or the Turkish domestic context – a complex bilateral relationship that depends on several factors.

Key words: Türkiye; Iraq; diplomacy; strategy; economy.

**LA ESTRATEGIA DIPLOMÁTICA
TURCA EN IRAK: CAMBIOS Y
CONTINUIDADES, 2003-2023**

RESUMEN

Las relaciones entre Turquía e Iraq han conocido diferentes etapas entre 2003 y 2023. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar las constantes premisas y los hechos cambiantes de la relación entre los dos vecinos desde el punto de vista turco. De esta forma, se busca explicar cómo los aspectos económicos y las cuestiones de seguridad fronteriza están en el corazón

* Doctor, Universidad Lyon III, Jean Moulin (Francia). Profesor, National Defence College (Emiratos Arabes Unidos). [mohamed-badine@hotmail.fr]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4714-0292].

** Magister, Universidad Lyon III, Jean Moulin (Francia). Doctorante, Universidad de Salamanca (España). [elyattiouiassine@hotmail.fr]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1669-1091].

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de la diplomacia turca. A partir de la llegada al poder del AKP y de su líder Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, la visión turca y su estrategia en el Medio Oriente, e Iraq en especial, han conocido diferentes momentos. Esto ha dependido del contexto regional o del contexto doméstico turco, que a lo largo de los años ha demostrado una relación bilateral compleja, dependiente de varios factores.

Palabras clave: Turquía; Irak; diplomacia; estrategia; economía.

INTRODUCTION

The relations between Türkiye and Iraq have always been complex; however, the goal of this paper is to focus on the different stages between 2003 and 2023. We analyze the constants and evolution of the relationship between the two neighbors from the Turkish perspective and its interests. The paper tries to explain how economic aspects and border security issues are at the heart of Turkish diplomacy during these two decades.

Since Recep Tayyip Erdoğan came to power, with the support of the AKP, his vision and strategy in the Middle East and in Iraq in particular, have taken distinct forms. Indeed, they have depended on the regional context or the Turkish domestic context in what was originally a bilateral relationship characterized by several factors.

It seems clear that Ankara is using the Middle East in general and Iraq especially to increase its regional power. As Ari & Munassar

(2020, p. 2) explained, “the concept of ‘regional power’ has prevailed among the IR studies of regionalism and regional power theorizing. This new wave of studies has emphasized the foreign policy behavior of regional powers, which contribute to regional and international order as good global citizens”. According to Aksu (2013, p. 12), “Turkey, a bridge between the East and the West, has emerged as a true regional power and a significant global player since the end of the Cold War. Especially after the 2000s, Turkey has become a success story in every aspect of the social, political, and economic spectrums”. The new status of this country during the first decade of this century gave rise to an “agential space and role in contributing to the international institutions and order” (Ari & Munassar, 2020, p. 2). Therefore, we ask the questions: What are the shifts and the continuities of the Turkish diplomatic strategy in Iraq?

The justification of the project to evaluate twenty years of relations can be explained in many ways. The first reason is that Iraq faced its invasion by a coalition led by the United States exactly 20 years ago. The second is that 2003 is also the moment that saw a big shift in Turkish political history when Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, took office in Türkiye as prime minister. The third is that 2023 is an election year in Türkiye, with crucial decisions (presidential and parliamentary) to be made as Erdoğan is still leading the country as president (since 2014) and hopes to be elected one more time in this symbolic year of the centenary of the Turkish Republic.

TURKISH DIPLOMACY WITH IRAQ SINCE 2003

Turkish diplomacy in Iraq: the result of permanent pragmatism and apparent contradictions in the Middle East

Since the foundation of the republic in 1923 and more specifically since the end of the Second World War, Turkish diplomacy has been organized around two principles. The first is to guarantee the security of the territory (strengthened through a strategic alliance with the United States and membership of the NATO in 1951), and support for the regional status quo, centered on the borders inherited from the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923. The second Türkiye principle was established to assume the westernization of the country, embodied by the desire to enter the European Union (Özge, 2013, p. 34).

Since 2002 and the coming to power of the AKP, “zero problems with neighbors”, has gradually replaced the old motto of diplomacy. A slogan coined by Ahmet Davutoglu (Özge, 2013, p. 34) presents a “good neighbor policy” and he suggests that Turkish diplomacy must have “strategic depth”, due to its geographical location, which must be amplified in order to derive the maximum benefit (Burdy & Marcou, 2013, p. 10).

According to Ahmet Davutoglu, the true designer of his country’s new doctrine, Türkiye must extend its influence beyond its borders, particularly in the Middle East. He highlighted the historical and geographical proximity stemming from the Ottoman Empire as a unifying element, but also religion. Istanbul was for many decades the capital of the Caliphate.

According to Davutoglu, this gave the Turks a specific role in the defense of Islam for centuries and it is time to continue with this project. If security is the main concern, Türkiye must become a leading diplomatic actor in the 21st century in order to increase its political and economic influence. Its vision focuses on five principles: the balance between security and democracy, zero problems with neighbours, radiating Türkiye’s influence from the Balkans to Central Asia via the Middle East (covering both the areas of Pan-Ottomanism and Pan-Turkism), adherence to a multidimensional foreign policy, and effective representation in international organizations (Özge, 2013, p. 39). Some speak of “neo-Ottomanism” (Parlar Dal, 2010, p. 35) due to the exaltation of Türkiye’s Ottoman past in symbolic places (Sarajevo, Kirkuk) by the AKP government. This can be seen as a way to signify its accession to the status of an emerging power.

Ahmet Davutoglu, in a book published in 2001, *Strategic*, put forward the claim that Türkiye’s international position was already developing a doctrine based on the pillars of: “Strategic depth”, “The concentric circles”; “soft power”; and “Zero problem with the neighborhood” (Kazancigil, 2016, p. 43).

According to Burdy & Marcou (2013, p. 10), it was necessary to wait for the second victory of the AKP (2007-2011), and the appointment of Ahmet Davutoglu as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009, to truly realize that a new Turkish foreign policy was taking shape. More specifically, this new policy was aimed at the Arab and the Islamic world, as part of a pan-islamist strategy. Between 2002 and 2007, the AKP sought to reassure the Kemalist estab-

lishment, which controlled many state sectors and especially the army. The latter has always kept a certain distance from the Arab world for ideological reasons (Burdy & Marcou, 2013, p. 10). The resignation of Ahmet Davutoglu from his post as Prime Minister and the coup attempt in 2016 have both had an impact on the conception of Turkish foreign policy.

According to Aurélien Denizeau (2021, p. 1), until the failed coup in 2016, the reference for Türkiye's diplomatic strategy was Ahmet Davutoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs (2009-2014) and then Prime Minister (2014-2016). Denizeau adds that it has become more difficult to determine its objectives and principles of action including when analyzing internal policy, because Erdogan's foreign policy no longer seems to reflect a long-term strategic vision. The author also mentioned that since 2016 and the purge that followed, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has moved closer to the military institution and appointed Hulusi Akar as minister of Defense in 2018. The consequence of these actions is that, as a result of the "new military-bureaucratic structure, critical leadership positions are allocated based on political loyalty, often at the expense of merit" (Ozkan, 2023, p. 1). The constitutional reform in 2018 increased the personalization of foreign policy, a further consequence of the *presidentialization* of the regime (Jabbour, 2020, p. 108).

This *presidentialization* of the regime is now clear. The 12 external operations, since 2008, in Iraq, Syria, and Libya allow the Head of State to clearly assert himself as the head of the armies (Yıldırım, 2022, p. 1).

According to Jana Jabbour (2020, p. 99), Turkish diplomacy seems aggressive,

anti-Western, even irrational, but she adds that the strategy is, in reality, based on a strategic doctrine and a clear objective, which is to make this country a major regional power and a fully sovereign state. Erdoğan has a desire for autonomy in the conduct of the country's international relations. As an emerging power, Türkiye aims to diversify its relations with antagonistic actors of the international system, a consequence of a multipolar world (Iran / Israel, NATO / Russia).

The 2023 elections (presidential and parliamentary) can explain the use of foreign policy for domestic policy purposes. As such, they represented symbolic scenarios for Erdoğan, after 20 years in power, and coincide with the centenary of the founding of the Turkish Republic (Cheviron & Pérouse, 2017). These regional ambitions are hiding domestic issues such as the economic crisis in the country. The consequence is that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is playing the nationalist card to mobilize his electoral base by claiming that enemies surround Türkiye (Jabbour, 2020, p. 105).

Long-term limits to Turkish ambitions exist. The country is present simultaneously in different countries (Iraq, Syria, and Libya) and a situation of overstretch would be difficult to maintain and could backfire. In Libya, the Turks are setting up an asymmetric and proxy war. While its hard power capabilities are important (it is NATO's second army), Türkiye is not used to asymmetric wars. The Turkish intervention in Libya at the end of 2019 made it possible to reverse the balance of power on the ground and encouraged the signature of agreements regarding security and economic and energy cooperation agreements

that allowed Turkey to extend its sovereignty in the eastern Mediterranean. The question of their viability will arise in the future. In Syria, Türkiye used terrorist groups to fight against Bashar al-Assad and the Kurds of the PYD / YPG. With Türkiye's expertise in proxy wars being limited, this game could turn against them at any time (Jabbour, 2020, p. 106).

The interconnection between domestic and foreign policy is clear in Turkish ambitions. Marcel Merle (1976) explained the theoretical reasons of this connection: "The heaviness of the restrictions of internal origin is such that any foreign policy decision must be evaluated according to a double rationality (internal and external), and that the irrationality or incoherence of external behavior often finds its explanation and its justification in the search for internal logic and coherence" (p. 420).

We will see that Turkish diplomacy in Iraq is not immune to these contradictions.

In 2003, the US-led coalition invaded Iraq without the approval of the UN security council (France threatened the United States to use the veto). Türkiye had hoped, since 1991, that the autonomy of the Iraqi Kurds was provisional and that total control of Baghdad would be restored (Lundgren, 2005, p. 81).

However, the situation is complex as the Turkish government and military were strongly opposed to an invasion, but favorable to the deployment of American troops on their territory, in order to open a northern front against Iraq. As conflict was considered inevitable, it was considered to be in Türkiye's interest to cooperate in order to secure a place in the post-war negotiations on the future of

Iraq. The priority was to obtain guarantees from Washington that the Iraqi Kurds would not be granted an independent state in northern Iraq (Lundgren, 2005, p. 80).

Turkish public opinion remained strongly opposed to this strategy. The Turkish Parliament voted against the government's proposal that would have allowed the United States to deploy around 60,000 troops on its territory (Lundgren, 2005, p. 80).

Throughout the 20th century, Turkish-Iraqi relations were complex and experienced many crises. Ankara set up a new deal when it forged direct ties with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Since then, a complex triangular game has been established and the Turkish government has often prioritized its relationship with the GRK for economic reasons (Iraqi oil and Turkish products) and security (fight against the PKK and its rear bases in this region) (Marcou, 2021, p. 147).

Since 2005, Türkiye has wished to participate in the economic reconstruction Iraq and to preserve its territorial integrity, distrusting potential federalism. The Turkish elites (government, army, intellectuals) considered the new institutional organization of Iraq as possible threat to their own country. They were worried about the fact that a part of the Kurds in Türkiye would start to push for a similar political system. For this, the two neighbors entered into a strategic partnership.

According to Gürsel (2013, p. 193), a paradigm shift has occurred in Türkiye's foreign policy and in its view of the autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Turkish army considered it a threat to Iraqi national unity and to that of Türkiye too, because autonomy in one part of

the region could have given ideas to the Kurds. From 2007, the KRG has been seen as a strategic partner and not a threat. Economic needs obviously played a role, but the redistribution of power relations between the AKP and the army seems to have been decisive.

Despite the attachment to the unity of Iraq, Ankara quickly established close relations with the KRG, to which it had initially refused the status of official interlocutor, for fear of seeing it disrupt the stability of the Kurdish provinces of Türkiye. This change, displayed from 2007, can be explained by the fact that Erdogan's government then enjoyed greater leeway vis-à-vis the army (thanks to a double victory in the presidential and legislative elections this that year) (Burdy & Marcou, 2013, p. 11).

Türkiye must import more than 90% of its oil and natural gas needs. It meets more than 70% of its energy demand by importing fossil fuels and coal from Russia and Iran. In 2011, imports from these two countries reached \$36.5 billion. As such, the country looked for alternatives, Iraq being the most obvious by proximity. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has governed the north of the country almost independently since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 (Gürsel, 2013, p. 192) and, as a consequence, Turkish exports in this region are increasing, from \$1.4 billion in 2007 to \$ 8 billion in 2013 (Cagaptay *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, a consulate is opened in Erbil in 2010. In 2009, Massoud Barzani, the president of the GRK, supported the “democratic opening” launched by Erdoğan, towards the Kurds of Türkiye and called on the PKK

to lay down their arms (Burdy & Marcou, 2013, p. 11).

In 2012, in Erbil, Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz and Oil Minister Ashti Hawrami announced that the KRG was going to build a pipeline allowing it to produce one million barrels per day and transport oil from the north of the Iraq to Türkiye. The reaction of Ali Al Moussaoui, Maliki's adviser, was clear when he declared that “any agreement had to respect the Constitution and the laws which govern relations between Baghdad and the Kurdish part of the country, in the north” (Kirdar, 2013, p. 112). The strong tensions between the three actors were visible with an Ankara-Erbil axis facing Baghdad.

In July 2012, Iraq banned Türkiye from entering its airspace, accusing it of “stirring up sectarianism in Iraq by supporting the country's Sunnis” and threatened to sever trade relations with Türkiye. The visit of Ahmet Davutoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Kirkuk and Erbil a month later provoked a strong reaction from Hoshiyar Zebari, the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, who stated that this visit was not “appropriate” and constituted “interference in the internal affairs of Iraq” (Kirdar, 2013, p. 114).

Ankara's desire to influence Iraqi policy

Strengthened by its economic weight, Türkiye is also making itself heard on the Iraqi political scene. It was therefore very involved in the negotiations for the formation of a government after the elections of March 2010. The two essential assets of the strategy of Turkish entry into Iraq are the Turkmen card and the

proximity with the Sunnis (Cécillon, 2011, p. 77), as we will see. But let's start with the Kurdish question which is the priority of the Turks.

For Turkey, preserving the territorial status quo and existing borders is considered a priority, as is fighting the PKK attacking from northern Iraq. To achieve this, since 1991 and the end of the Gulf War, Iraqi territory has faced incursions by the Turkish army. There have also been political factors, as Turkish governments have developed regular contact with the two main Iraqi Kurdish parties since 1991: the PDK (Kurdistan Democratic Party) of Massoud Barzani and the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) of Jalal Talabani. This is a break with the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a neighbor and the inviolability of borders, which had long been the main pillars of Turkish foreign policy. The paradox, according to Lundgren (2005, p. 89), is that Turkey's goal was to defend Iraq's territorial integrity by violating its sovereignty.

Between 1961 and 1975, the Iraqi Kurds had Iranian support both logistically and financially, with the blessing of Washington. The objective of the Shah and the Americans was to counterbalance Soviet support for Iraq. Therefore, during the Iran-Iraq war, there was a new paradigm since each of the governments sought to form an alliance with the Kurds of the neighboring state (Meier, 2002, p. 15). The end of the Shah regime in 1979 provoked important changes regarding these alliances and the stability of the region.

As early as 1984, the PKK had established rear bases on the border between the two countries, in the mountains of Qandil, in Iraqi territory. Over time, the two major

Kurdish movements in Iraq, the PDK and the PUK have welcomed PKK militants. The three then faced simultaneous operations by the Iraqi army and the Turkish army (Picard, 1991, p. 108). From 1988, Barzani and Talabani began discussions with Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal and the PKK then became the only Kurdish movement capable of deploying fighters in the Turkish-Iraqi border area (Gunter, 1990, p. 51).

The numerous clashes with the PKK show the transnational character of the confrontation that is being played out. Northern Iraq acts as a rear base for PKK militants and must be considered alongside the areas of Syria controlled by the PYD, an ally of the PKK. These two border regions have become areas of frequent intervention by the Turkish army. The transnationalization of the conflict between the PKK and Türkiye and its implications for Iraq require an understanding of its political dynamics (Meier, 2022, p. 88).

In 1991, the collaboration between the PKK and Saddam Hussein's regime was revealed. Since 1987, Baghdad has been supplying the PKK with weapons in exchange for information on the American bases in Incirlik and on the PDK (Cerny, 2018, p. 19). The PKK is isolated because the Kurds of Iraq will approach Ankara (Meier, 2022, p. 91).

In 2003, the United States offered to help create a buffer zone 40 km deep into Iraq for Türkiye to pursue the PKK, but the parliament's refusal to commit militarily offered the Iraqi Kurds an opportunity to assume the role of an ally of Washington in the area, which is a paradox, according to Cerny (2018, p. 101). Ankara therefore looked for allies among Iraqi

political actors and will do everything to diversify them, as we will see.

Another notable fact is that the Turks of Iraq are descended from Turks who remained in Iraq after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and number around 500,000 people. It was not until the 1990s that Ankara supported them and tried to co-opt them into defending its interests, particularly in Kirkuk, where they are most present. An Iraqi Turkmen Front (FTI) was created in 1995 with financial assistance from Ankara, but the divisions between Shiites and Sunnis and their marginal weight on the political level mean that the FTI won only 0.7% of the vote in the 2005 elections (Cécillon, 2011, p. 83).

Türkiye is also close to the Iraqi Sunnis. During the 2010 legislative elections, the country supported the list of the Al-Iraqiyya Movement, which brought together the main Iraqi Sunni movements and the Shiite Ayad Al-lawi, against Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki. In addition to shared membership in Sunnism, Turkish interest in the Al-Iraqiyya coalition is the result of complex political calculations. Türkiye feared that Al-Maliki, a Shiite who wanted to exclude the Sunnis from power, would provoke a return of violence with a possible contagion effect on Turkish territory. Al-Iraqiyya could also serve to reduce Kurdish ambitions in northern Iraq. In the province of Kirkuk, the movement won six seats in 2010, the same number as the Kurdish coalition. The close result of the 2010 elections, 24.7% of the vote for Allawi against 24.2% for Al-Maliki's list, prevented Al-Iraqiyya from forming a government, for lack of a majority. After seven months of negotiations, a government

led by Al-Maliki was formed. It was made up of members of the main lists in the running, including Al-Iraqiyya. Allawi took the head of a "strategic council" with unclear skills. Even if Türkiye saw its candidate fail, it nevertheless contributed to international pressure to allow the integration of certain members of the Al-Iraqiyya list into the government, which Al Maliki initially refused (Cécillon, 2011, p. 75).

Türkiye also tried to get closer to Moqtada Al-Sadr, known, with his Mahdi army, for his radical positions against the American occupation. If the Turkish method favored compromise and soft power, this rapprochement demonstrates the Turkish desire to play a role in the Iraqi political game because the Sadrists are opposed to too strong a federalization of Iraq, like Ankara. Turkish leaders received Moqtada Al Sadr in 2009 during a "Shiite summit" in Istanbul and Sadrist representatives even attended protocol courses in Türkiye (Cécillon, 2011, p. 85).

Since 2003, the Turkish strategy in Iraq has been motivated by its desire to find allies to fight against the PKK to prevent the independence of an Iraqi Kurdistan and block the annexation of Kirkuk to the GRK. To achieve this, the Turkish government is ready to discuss and negotiate with all the Iraqi political parties, which gives it an advantage over Riyadh and Tehran, which do not seem to want to go beyond religious divisions in the choice of their interlocutors.

That being said, tensions exist and persist between the two countries. Water management is an important topic for the neighbors. As proof, in 2009, the Iraqi Parliament refused to approve a free trade agreement with Türkiye

for lack of guarantees on the water supplies of the Tigris and Euphrates. An Iraqi law ensures that the question of water be raised during each official bilateral meeting (Cécillon, 2011, p. 75).

Since 2018, the Kurdish legislative elections have confirmed the weight of the two major parties and the election of Nechirvan Barzani as president of the GRK has further developed the relationship with Turkey, due to commercial interests (Marcou, 2019, p. 23). Between 2020 and 2022, Hakan Fidan, director of MIT, was personally involved in the Iraqi case. Türkiye has succeeded in bringing together several Sunni parties, within the “Sovereignty Alliance”. However, they were subsequently divided. The mediation of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in October 2021, between Mohamed Al Halboussi and Khamis Al Khanjar seemed to have worked and the president proposed that Al-Halboussi retain his seat as Speaker of Parliament, and that Al Khanjar become Vice-President of the Republic (Saadoun, 2022, p. 61).

A BILATERAL RELATION BETWEEN PERMANENT TENSIONS AND NECESSARY COOPERATION

Borders under permanent tensions: Turkish intrusions against the PKK

The border region between Türkiye and its southeastern neighbor has long been marked by tensions and conflicts, particularly regarding the presence of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). Türkiye has consistently pursued a policy of combating the PKK’s activities

within its borders, often leading to military intrusions into the neighboring country’s territory. This ongoing struggle against the PKK has created a state of permanent tension along the border, with significant implications for regional stability and security.

Moreover, as early as November 2001, the United States spoke of an intervention in Iraq, which meant that the PKK, for the first time in its history, no longer had any allies among the states of the region. The system of parallel diplomacy, highlighted by Hamit Bozarslan (1997), could no longer function. Added to this were genuine fears about the transnational character of the organization, since the European Union was threatening to include the PKK on its list of terrorist organizations, which would be effective from May 2002. The political context was therefore particularly restrictive for Abdullah Öcalan’s organization, which had to both rethink its strategy and adapt to this new environment.

At the same time, from 1996-1997 onwards, the PKK integrated more and more Kurds from Iran and Iraq, which can be explained in particular by the disappointment of certain segments of the Kurdish population with regard to the traditional parties: the KDP and PUK in Iraqi Kurdistan, and the KDPI and *Komalab* (Committee) in Iranian Kurdistan. If the PKK, hosted by Damascus between 1982 and 1998, had made it possible to channel Kurdish claims in Syria from the early 1990s, many Kurds in this country who had been victims of new repression would have joined Mount Qandil after 1998-1999. The first process of regionalization, something very novel in Kurdish history, can be included

within the gradual diversification of the origin of the Kurds within the PKK (Casier & Jongerden, 2011).

Finally, the beginning of the 2000s corresponds to a crucial moment in the redefinition of the PKK's political objectives and methods of struggle, following the capture of Öcalan in 1999. There was no longer any question of independence or autonomy for the Kurdish regions of Turkey: the demands articulated the concept of "democratic civilization" and the "Democratic Union of the Middle East", which became the project of the Democratic Confederation of the Middle East from 2003. These ideological adjustments accompany and make it possible to legitimize the renunciation of armed struggle, with the aim of moving to a strictly political struggle that would therefore go beyond the territorial borders of Türkiye and include all parts of Kurdistan.

The PKK, founded in 1978, is a Kurdish separatist group seeking greater autonomy or independence for the Kurdish population in Türkiye. Over the years, the group has engaged in various forms of armed resistance, including guerrilla warfare and terrorist attacks, targeting Turkish security forces and civilians. The Turkish government views the PKK as a terrorist organization and has taken significant actions to counter its activities.

In its efforts to combat the PKK, Türkiye has undertaken military incursions into neighboring countries, which has at times been met with international criticism and raised concerns about violations of territorial integrity. These incursions have targeted PKK bases, training camps, and supply routes, aiming to weaken the group's capabilities and disrupt its

operations (Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield, 2010, p. 25).

One notable example of Turkish intrusions is Operation Claw, launched in May 2019, which involved cross-border operations against PKK positions in northern Iraq. The operation aimed to deny the PKK a safe haven and to damage its infrastructure in the region. Similarly, Operation Olive Branch in 2018 targeted the People's Protection Units (YPG), an offshoot of the PKK operating in Syria, with the aim of establishing a buffer zone along the Turkish-Syrian border.

Turkey's military actions against the PKK have received mixed reactions from the international community. While some countries, particularly those facing similar security threats, have shown understanding and support for Turkey's efforts, others have expressed concern about the potential escalation of violence and the impact on civilian populations (Grojean, 2013, p. 21). Calls for restraint and diplomatic solutions have been made, emphasizing the need to address the root causes of the conflict.

The persistent tensions and military actions along the Turkey-PKK border have broader regional implications. The conflict has strained relations between Türkiye and its neighboring countries, as well as affecting the stability of the wider region (Quesnay *et al.*, 2013, p. 144). Additionally, the presence of the PKK has had repercussions for the Kurdish populations in the region, who often find themselves caught in the crossfire between the group and Turkish forces.

The Turkish intrusions against the PKK along the border have created a state of per-

manent tension in the region. While Türkiye considers these actions necessary for its national security, they have generated significant challenges in terms of territorial integrity, regional stability, and the protection of civilian populations. Achieving a lasting solution to the conflict requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying grievances and incorporates diplomatic efforts alongside security measures.

Ambitious Türkiye-Iraq Economic Cooperation: Turkish Trade and Investments

In the Turkish political imagination, Iraq evokes several dilemmas: security, identity and territory, the combination of which form a continuum that is both traumatic and familiar. The Turkish-Iraqi border itself exhibits to a certain conceptual vagueness due to the common presence of Kurds on both sides of the border (Library of Congress, 2006, p. 122) and partly maintains the idea of territorial continuity between Türkiye and Iraq, a myth that is also anchored at the heart of Turkish national history. At the time of the creation of modern Türkiye in 1923, Ankara claimed the former province (vilayet) of Mosul (McDowall, 1996, p. 33). Despite the Turkish-British agreement of 1926 by which Ankara abandoned its claims, some in Türkiye still consider northern Iraq as lost territory (Middle East Report, 2008, p. 93).

This new proximity between Ankara and the KRG has also allowed Türkiye to establish itself as a very powerful economic player on the ground. Within a few years, it became the KRG's largest trading partner and investor in the region. Most of the approximately \$6 bil-

lion in Turkish exports to Iraq in 2010 went to Iraqi Kurdistan (Kalkan, 2011, p. 88). Turkish companies built the airports of the two largest cities in the KRG, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. Two Turkish airlines, Turkish Airlines and Atlas Jet, operate regular flights between Erbil and Istanbul. Energy is also obviously at the center of the exchanges with many Turkish companies lining up to exploit the KRG's energy resources, both oil and gas (Tejel, 2009, p. 42). A quarter of Iraq's oil production passes through the pipeline between Kirkuk and the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. Türkiye is also present through the educational network of Fethullah Gülen, which gained a foothold in northern Iraq in 1993 and has opened many schools since 2003, and even a university in Sulaymaniyah (Grojean, 2013, p. 51).

The growing economic interdependence between Ankara and Erbil has important political effects. For Ankara, the more exchanges that develop, the more the hypothesis of an open confrontation – whose effectiveness has never been proven, neither to eliminate the PKK, nor to prevent the empowerment of the region – recedes. For the KRG, trade with Türkiye is vital, hence the appointment of Sinan Chalabi, a Kurd with dual Turkish and Iraqi nationality, as Minister of Trade and Industry.

For Ankara, this rapprochement brings other positive diplomatic benefits – starting with a strengthening of Turkish influence in Baghdad.

The industrial and manufacturing sectors remain embryonic in Kurdistan. On the other hand, the private sector, which is booming, is developing largely through import-export trade activities with neighboring countries

and China. Thus, the establishment of many import-export companies in Kurdistan is noticeable as soon as you cross the Iraqi border when leaving Turkey. The five or six kilometers of road linking Ibrahim Khalil's post to the entrance to the town of Zakho are flanked by warehouses for the storage of goods, offices of multiple trading companies and exhibition shops of companies specializing in this activity (Yildirim, 2008, p. 105). The Kurdish cities serve as a distribution platform for the autonomous region, as a relay to the rest of Iraq – because, as we have seen, Iraqi transport companies come to refuel there – but also as a place of supply for the Iranian market as we will see later.

The Turkish presence in Iraqi Kurdistan is impressive. Its companies are particularly active in the field of construction and infrastructure projects; as such, Türkiye is also the main provider of skilled labor to the KRG. In addition, Turkey, which remains the main producer of consumer goods in the region, is omnipresent in the commercial sector, and a large number of shops and shopping centers offer products made in Turkey. The border checks at the Ibrahim Khalil crossing are the only visible part of a cross-border economy that has far more distant ramifications on Turkish territory. Kurdish traders from Iraq have been coming here for decades, but the beginning of large-scale commercial activity dates to the early 1990s. When Saddam Hussein dominated Iraqi Kurdistan, the border was open and functioning normally. However, many constraints did not allow the development of trade. For example, the use of the dollar was prohibited and a policy of protectionism of Iraqi products

overtaxed imported products (Babacan, 2011, p. 44). Only a few large wholesale traders had managed to develop activity before 1991 in the shadow of the old regime. It was therefore after the “Revolution” of 1991 that the development of trade between Iraqi Kurdistan and Türkiye reached a first level.

The operation of Younis, one of Zakho's largest import-export companies, perfectly sums up the organization of cross-border trade between Türkiye and Iraq and its footprint. An entrepreneur from Zakho founded Younis Cie in 1991; it now employs more than two hundred workers and managers mainly from the Zakho region. Its activity consists in importing cosmetic and household products into Iraq. While 80% of purchases take place in Turkey, the rest are made in Europe or Dubai. This company has a transit warehouse in Gaziantep, which is used to collect products from major Turkish cities (Istanbul, Izmir ...), as well as goods arriving by sea at the port of Mersin. All these goods are then transported by road, via Ibrahim Khalil, using containers in large warehouses in Zakho, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, before being distributed to local Kurdish merchants (International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 54).

The Turkish-Iraqi border is a good example of regional integration that has rapidly evolved towards normalization between the two countries based on their commercial economic activity. Low taxes at the border have deterred the smuggling trade, which has been common in the past. Türkiye has a comprehensive and diversified economy that has found opportunities in a region of Iraq that is

rebuilding and has added liquidity (International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 66).

CONCLUSION

In 2023, Türkiye will celebrate one hundred years as a republic. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's victory on May 28th set him up for five more years in power, with an AK Party-led alliance holding a majority in the parliament. In 2028, he will have been leading Türkiye for 25 years (11 as prime minister and 14 as president).

Over twenty years, the leaders of Iraqi Kurdistan have forged close ties with the Turkish President. "The government of Kurdistan has always tried to have good relations with Turkey, which is their portal to the rest of the world" recalls Iraqi political scientist Mohamed Ezzedine. He underlines that "These reports were built on economic foundations" and "economically, there are mutual benefits" (L'Orient-Le Jour, 2023).

In addition, Iraq launched a \$17 billion project in May 2023 to link a major commodities port on its southern coast by rail and roads to the Turkish border. The Development Road will try to tie the Grand Faw Port in Iraq's south to Turkey. The goal is to turn the country into a transit hub for oil with two aims. The first one is to shorten travel time between Asia and Europe, while the second is to try to rival the Suez Canal (Azhari, 2023).

Border security, water security, diplomatic influence and economic strategy are the main topics that the Turkish government will need to manage seriously with Iraq. While "Turkey possesses ample material, ideational and foreign-policy

resources" (Ari & Munassar, 2020, p. 8), limitations still exist. For example, the borders could permit more regional integration through their active trade activity. However, the reality is that the control of the borders and the activity of the PKK will continue to be considered as the priority for Ankara. The "Kurdish question" is still a national security issue.

According to the researcher Kamel Omar, during Erdoğan's new five-year term, "the Turkish army will expand their military influence in Kurdistan and penetrate more deeply into the autonomous region". Despite the consequences, the regional government of Iraqi Kurdistan can only accept the Turkish military presence due to the economic ties. In 2022, trade with Ankara amounted to 12 billion dollars, more than 50% of trade balance between Türkiye and Iraq (L'Orient-Le Jour, 2023). The bilateral relations will face multiple challenges in the next years. A new competition is starting in Iraq with the increasing role of the Gulf countries in its economic development.

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Greater Autonomy through Closer Relations with China? Revisiting Turkey-China Engagement

Veysel Tekdal*

ABSTRACT

China has evolved into an important provider of resources for developing countries, encompassing capital, know-how and expertise. China has also actively worked to strengthen diplomatic ties with developing regions since the early 2000s. Against this backdrop, the governments in many developing countries have moved to incorporate China as a significant factor in their geopolitical and geoeconomic considerations. Under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP), Turkey has also sought to foster relations with China, particularly since the early 2010s. This pursuit has been further triggered by Ankara's strained relations with the United States and the European Union. Turkish political leadership envisions China as a potentially

crucial partner that could enhance the country's autonomy in relation to the West. While this expectation has not entirely materialized so far, there is an ongoing debate regarding the extent to which China can potentially be a transformative actor in Turkey's position within the international order. This paper contributes to this debate by locating Turkey-China engagement within a broader context of China's power and influence in the developing world. The paper suggests that the potential for Turkey's cooperation with China is likely to remain relatively limited for the foreseeable future. This is not only due to Turkey's deeply rooted ties with the West, but also because of the nature of China's global power, which is more partial and not as deep as commonly assumed.

Keywords: Turkey; China; autonomy; power; structural power.

* PhD, Middle East Technical University, Turkey. Assistant professor, Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Turkey. [vtekdal@gmail.com]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5991-2229].

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¿UNA MAYOR AUTONOMÍA A TRAVÉS DE UNAS RELACIONES MÁS ESTRECHAS CON CHINA? REVISANDO EL COMPROMISO TURQUÍA-CHINA

RESUMEN

China se ha convertido en un importante proveedor de recursos para los países en desarrollo, abarcando capital, conocimientos técnicos y experiencias. China también ha trabajado activamente para fortalecer los lazos diplomáticos con las regiones en desarrollo desde principios de la década de 2000. En este contexto, los gobiernos de muchos países en desarrollo han tomado medidas para incorporar a China como un factor importante en sus consideraciones geopolíticas y geoeconómicas. Bajo el gobierno del Partido Justicia y Desarrollo (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), Turquía también ha buscado fomentar las relaciones con China, particularmente desde principios de la década de 2010. Esta búsqueda se ha visto impulsada aún más por las tensas relaciones de Ankara con Estados Unidos y la Unión Europea. El liderazgo político turco veía a China como un socio potencialmente crucial que podría mejorar la autonomía del país en relación con Occidente. Si bien esta expectativa no se ha materializado del todo hasta ahora, hay un debate en curso sobre hasta qué punto China puede ser potencialmente un actor transformador en la posición de Turquía dentro del orden internacional. Este artículo contribuye a este debate al ubicar la relación entre Turquía y China en un contexto más amplio del poder y la influencia de China en el mundo en desarrollo. El documento sugiere que es probable

que el potencial de cooperación de Turquía con China siga siendo relativamente limitado en el futuro previsible. Esto no se debe solo a los vínculos profundamente arraigados de Turquía con Occidente, sino también a la naturaleza del poder global de China, que es más parcial y menos profunda de lo que comúnmente se supone.

Palabras clave: Turquía; China; autonomía; poder; poder estructural.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Turkey's relationship with China has become a more interesting subject for students of international politics. This is partly related to the transformation of Turkish foreign policy towards a more autonomous and less Western-oriented foreign policy line, particularly after the Arab Spring (Altunışık, 2022, p. 172). The evolving global context and the rise of China have also contributed to stimulating closer engagement between Turkey and China. A key relevant global transformation is the relative power shift to the disadvantage of the United States (US) and the global North, as well as the changing perceptions on the (durability of) US pre-eminence in the international order. Many observers agree on characterizing the emerging global power distribution in multipolar terms (for a good discussion see Roberts *et al.*, 2017, Chap. 2). The rise of China is arguably the most important factor behind the power shift and transition towards multipolarity. In the early 2000s, China's share of global GDP was about 5 per cent, but it has since surged to around 18 per cent (World Bank, n.d.). China

has evolved into an important source of crucial resources for developing countries, including capital, know-how and expertise. China has also worked to strengthen political and diplomatic ties with developing regions since the early 2000s. Against this backdrop, the governments in many developing countries have moved to incorporate China as a significant factor in their geopolitical and geoeconomic considerations (Kirshner, 2014, p. 15). Turkey is not an exception. China's increasing power and influence have provided a compelling incentive for Turkey, under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP), to pursue closer ties with the former, particularly since the early 2010s.

Yet, this pursuit has been further triggered by the partial withdrawal of the US, and to some extent, the European Union (EU), from regions where they are considered to be traditional security providers and/or trade partners. One such region is the Middle East, which underwent significant changes to its security complex, precisely when the US pivoted to Asia. The Arab Uprisings, the Syrian civil war and the following migration wave have dramatically altered the region, Turkey's foreign policy and even Turkey-EU relations. The relations with the United States shifted along a precarious path amid the diverging and sometimes conflicting priorities in the Middle East and beyond (Altunışık, 2023; Oğuzlu, 2020; Kutlay & Öniş, 2021). Given this context, the pursuit of greater autonomy from the Western powers on the global stage has become more pronounced during the late AKP era, which also coincided with the AKP's authoritarian shift. Ankara has seen fostering

relations with China as an opportunity to secure greater autonomy and "manoeuvring space" (Üngör, 2019, p. 73; see also Shichor, 2014; Özşahin *et al.*, 2022).

Beijing has also demonstrated an interest in deepening diplomatic engagement with Turkey. A major milestone in bilateral relations, which symbolically underscored both parties' interest in closer engagement, was the signing of a "strategic partnership" in 2010. Following this, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan showed clear support for China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and joined the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). On several occasions, he called upon the Chinese government and business community to make investments in Turkey. The coup attempt in Turkey, which occurred on July 15, 2016, paved the way for even closer relations, elevating bilateral relations to a new height. Ankara welcomed China's clear diplomatic support in the aftermath of the coup attempt, and under this favourable context, the AKP government began to see China as a potentially crucial partner that could enhance the country's autonomy in relation to the West.

Several insightful papers that analyse the geopolitical and economic aspects of Turkey-China relations have been published over the last couple of years (e.g., Atlı, 2019; Eliküçük Yıldırım, 2021; Ergenç & Göçer, 2022; 2023; Güneylıoğlu, 2022; Gürel & Kozluca, 2022; Kutlay & Öniş, 2021; Öniş & Yalikusun, 2021; Özşahin *et al.*, 2022; Üngör, 2019). This literature reveals the dynamics of Turkey's increasing diplomatic and economic engagement with China. In this literature, it is widely acknowledged that while fostering economic and dip-

lomatic relations with China is a significant endeavour, it does not serve as a substitute for Turkey's deep and longstanding political-economic connections with the transatlantic world. Yet, there is an ongoing debate involving various differing perspectives regarding the extent to which China can potentially be a *transformative* actor with regards to Turkey's position within the international order. Such differences in perspective are to be expected, especially considering the uncertainty observed in the international order and Turkish politics in recent years.

One way to contribute to this debate, as this paper aims to do, is to discuss China-Turkey engagement comparatively within a broader context of China's power and influence in the developing world. The paper approaches China's power by employing analytical distinctions related to different types or dimensions of power. In International Relations (IR), and particularly within the realist tradition, power is commonly understood as capabilities. Relational power, defined as a state's ability to influence another state's preferences and behaviour, is another widely referenced type of power in IR (Roberts *et al.*, 2017, pp. 26-27). A more subtle and perhaps overlooked form of power is referred to as structural power. This concept is primarily attributed to Susan Strange, who defines it as the power to shape the underlying mechanisms and frameworks (i.e., norms and regulations) of international political-economic relations (Strange, 1994, pp. 24-25; see also, Kitchen & Cox, 2019). By employing this distinction among various forms of power, the paper suggests that China's

power in global politics is more partial and less deep than is often presumed.

To make sense of the extent and depth of Turkey's engagement with China, this paper draws on official documents, leaders' speeches, statistical data on bilateral economic ties, and extant academic work. The paper concludes that the potential for Turkey's cooperation with China is likely to remain relatively limited for the foreseeable future. One reason, as highlighted by previous research, is Turkey's deep-rooted ties with the West, which cannot be easily replaced. Another important reason, as this paper contends, is the nature of China's global power and its limited complementarity with Ankara's needs and interests.

The rest of the paper is organized into three sections, followed by a conclusion. The first section outlines China's global power profile and its implications for Turkey. Following this, the second section provides a brief overview of Turkey's closer engagement with China over the recent decade. Then, prior to the conclusion, the penultimate section discusses the potential of China's power in Turkey's search for greater autonomy.

MAPPING CHINA'S POWER AND INFLUENCE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD: IMPLICATIONS FOR TURKEY

To provide context to the increased weight of China in Turkish foreign policy, this section aims to map out the contours of China's power and influence in the developing world. China's engagement with the developing world has dramatically expanded over the last few decades, spanning trade, investments, aid,

diplomacy, cultural exchanges, and military relationships. Jiang Zemin officially launched the “Go Out” policy in 2000, which aimed to promote the global expansion of Chinese companies. Hu Jintao, the successor of Jiang, fostered further engagement with different parts of the developing world. As Shambaugh (2020, p. 15) notes, it was during the 2000s that “China’s footprint became truly international for the first time”. In addition to the bilateral channels of engagements, Beijing initiated what is known as “forum diplomacy” with developing regions, exemplified by the establishment of the China–Africa Cooperation Forum in 2000 and the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in 2004 (Murphy, 2022, p. 6).

Beijing’s efforts to exert higher levels of influence in the developing world have increased under the leadership of Xi Jinping. As an expression of a proactive foreign policy approach, within his initial three years in office, Xi made more overseas visits than his predecessors (Markey, 2020, p. 36). He also devised new institutions and platforms to promote China’s engagement with the developing world. This included the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a global infrastructure campaign. Xi’s emphasis on being proactive in global platforms and reforming global governance has been received well by Erdoğan, who stressed the importance of less Western-centric global governance (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021, p. 1092). Similarly, China’s commitment to financing infrastructure projects aligns well with the AKP’s emphasis on infrastructure develop-

ment as a means to bolster electoral support (Güneylioğlu, 2022, p. 558).

Overall, during the 2010s, China’s influence began to grow, and its footprint extended, through loans, investments, aid, diplomatic outreach, and cultural flows in many parts of the world. Erdoğan’s rapprochement towards China can be seen as a reaction to this increasing footprint. Therefore, it is important to contextualise the debate about China’s strategies towards the developing world in order to locate the growing relations between Turkey and China.

For some, China has a deliberate strategy that aims to fundamentally reshape the international order. In a widely acclaimed and industrious book on China’s grand strategy, Rush Doshi (2021, p. 4) argues that China is “building efforts worldwide to displace the United States as the global leader”. Although this view is debated, in recent years, an increasing number of people have embraced such views, largely due to Xi’s more ambitious foreign policy vision. Xi’s foreign policy agenda, and particularly the BRI, is often regarded as a grand strategy that aims at “rewriting [the] current geopolitical landscape”, as Fallon (2015) writes in a highly cited article on the BRI. Conforming to these opinions, Nadege Rolland argues that Chinese elites harbour the intentions to exert hegemony in the global South — a partial and loose hegemony which would lead developing countries to endorse the norms that China championed as well as “respect the primacy of Beijing’s authority and interests” (2020, pp. 6-49).

When it comes to assessing the real power and influence of China on the world stage, not

everyone agrees on such portrayals. While not necessarily dismissing the aspirations of Chinese leaders that China assumes a more prominent global role, some scholars of Chinese politics emphasize the “defensive” motivations underpinning Chinese foreign policy. Accordingly, domestic concerns and challenges are as important, if not more important than global ambitions in China’s external engagement. For example, some scholars make a compelling case for understanding the BRI primarily as a response to domestic challenges, most notably overcapacity and falling profit margins in many construction-related sectors (Jones & Zeng, 2019, p. 1422; Lee, 2022, pp. 314-315). While the BRI is instrumental in expanding China’s global influence, as Min Ye (2020, p. 13) contends, “the domestic connection and priority to promote ‘internal growth’” remain as its essential goals. Also contested is to what extent China’s growing global footprint is directed solely by its central leadership. What may appear as a careful and coherent policy from the central government could have been shaped by a myriad of domestic actors and agencies. In the case of BRI, a range of actors, including ministries, state-owned companies (SOEs), banks, and local governments informed its design and implementation, often with competing interests and agendas (Jones & Zeng, 2019; Lee, 2022, p. 317). Furthermore, Chinese overseas infrastructure deals are more often than not initiated by Chinese companies, which identify potentially profitable projects and then approach Chinese banks for funding (Goodfellow & Huang, 2021). So, the view that Chinese overseas lending is primarily driven by geopolitical goals is highly contested.

Chinese power and influence in the developing world also vary significantly among different countries. For one thing, China’s relations with countries in its neighbourhood are “generally deeper and more complex” (Eisenman & Heginbotham, 2018, p. 230). Even in this region, Chinese influence varies significantly between countries. For a few Asian countries, China’s provision of key resources, such as aid, financing, arms, diplomatic support, and trade has become so crucial that it has attained significant relational power over these countries’ governments (Eisenman & Heginbotham, 2018, p. 246; Shambaugh, 2018, p. 100). As Eisenman & Heginbotham (2018, p. 246) explain, in some instances, these countries have been noted to align their behaviour with that of China, even when the stakes are high. As an example, Cambodia and Laos were criticized for acting as China’s “proxies” within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). They blocked the joint ASEAN statements that were critical of China’s actions in the South China Sea (Turton, 2020). Although it is open to debate which countries fit into this category, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Pakistan are among those that come closest (Eisenman & Heginbotham, 2018, p. 246; Shambaugh, 2020, p. 357). When it comes to “middle powers” and emerging countries in China’s neighbourhood, such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, they have, to varying degrees, been largely successful in balancing China’s power and influence. While benefiting from economic opportunities resulting from a closer engagement with China, they are, at the same time, willing to check China’s influence by

strengthening their ties with the US (Gilley, 2014, p. 248; Shambaugh, 2018).

China's relations with distant countries, such as Turkey, have primarily revolved around economic ties (Eisenman & Heginbotham, 2018, p. 230). The flow of foreign direct investment from China to developing countries has gained strong momentum since the 2000s, transforming China into a major investor in some developing countries (Jenkins, 2019). Similarly, Chinese loans to developing countries have expanded, making the Chinese policy banks comparable to the World Bank in terms of total lending volume (Global Development Policy Center, 2023). Yet, Chinese economic ties with the developing world are highly concentrated within some specific sectors and countries. China's exports from developing countries are dominated by raw materials (Jenkins, 2019). Most developing countries, including Turkey, do not have the chance to export billions of dollars' worth of oil, metal ores or other commodities to China each year. Chinese foreign direct investment in the developing world is also over-concentrated in energy, metals, minerals, and construction (for a nuanced analysis, see Wang & Li, 2017). Similarly, ten recipients alone account for more than half of Chinese overseas financing, indicating a significant concentration (Ray & Simmons, 2020).

These characterizations of geographical and sectoral over-concentration of Chinese outward capital flows and trade ties are not intended to downplay their significance for the developing world. The point here is that evaluating Chinese economic influence from aggregate values and indicators often leads to

misleading conclusions and an overestimation of China's relative importance for some developing countries, including Turkey. Indeed, this overestimation both politically and economically is the backbone for much of the critical literature on Turkey-China relations (e.g., Ergenç & Göçer, 2023; Güneylioglu, 2022; Gürel & Kozluca, 2022).

Notwithstanding such overestimation, it is evident that many countries have established strong economic ties with China, be it through trade, investment, or financing channels, granting China the ability to influence the behaviour of those countries' governments. Specifically, China leverages this relational power to garner diplomatic support from developing countries (Murphy, 2022, p. 214). For instance, during the UN General Assembly session in October 2019, China managed to secure support from 54 countries through a joint statement that endorsed China's "counterterrorism" and "deradicalization" measures in Xinjiang (Rolland, 2020, p. 42).

China has also strived to reform global governance, often by joining forces with BRICS and other "major developing countries" (Eisenman & Heginbotham, 2018, pp. 218, 235-36). China's cooperation with Brazil and India regarding the reform of the global governance of development finance is a case in point (de Renzio & Seifert, 2014). As Gilley & O'Neil (2014, pp. 11-13) maintain, "middle powers", which partly overlap with "major developing powers", have a general tendency to cooperate with China when it comes to reforming global governance. Additionally, China-led initiatives and institutions, such as the AIIB, are generally welcomed by those

countries as they prefer a multipolar world over the dominance of a single power or power bloc, which provides a more suitable environment for flexible and multidirectional foreign policies (pp. 11-13). In fact, as a leader emphasizing less Western-centric global governance (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021, p. 1092; Üngör, 2019, p. 70), Erdoğan welcomes both the AIIB and BRI (see below).

Considering this discussion, it is possible to argue that China undermines the structural power of the West as it emerges as a significant provider of resources (financing, aid, know-how, technical support, and market) for developing countries, and establishes parallel institutions (Breslin, 2015, p. 240; Tekdal, 2022). Yet, when it comes to exercising structural power, China's capacity is arguably more limited (Kitchen & Cox, 2019). For instance, despite operating with some differing preferences regarding favoured sectors and project management, the AIIB largely follows the World Bank's norms and practices (Wang & Sampson, 2021, pp. 13-14). To put this into perspective, China's capacity is not really comparable to the structural power wielded by the US, which is notably exemplified by the unmatched position of the US dollar as a reserve currency and its centrality in the global financial system, the Bretton Woods institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, and its military alliance systems formed around NATO and bilateral alliances in Asia (Hung 2022, p. 257; Kitchen & Cox, 2019). The EU similarly possesses significant order-making capacity through its structural power in broader Europe. By extending Hung's argument (2022, p. 57), it can be argued that the

West's structural power constrains China's geopolitical influence. This resonates well with Shambaugh's argument that "China has an increasingly broad 'footprint' across the globe, but it is not particularly deep" (2013, p.6). Thus, in comparison to the US, China still appears to be a "partial power" (Shambaugh, 2013, pp. 6-10).

The discussion in this section regarding China's global power and influence has intended to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics and potential of Turkey's engagement with China. The subsequent two sections delve further into this subject.

TURKEY-CHINA ENGAGEMENT: TRACING THE PROCESS

As discussed in the introduction, the 2010s witnessed some serious efforts to deepen and expand China-Turkey relations. An important initial step was the signing of a strategic partnership agreement between the two nations in 2010 (Eliküçük Yıldırım, 2021, p. 36). Nonetheless, China's strategic partnership agreements, by themselves, may not be special or exceptional. China has now such agreements with over 100 countries, and they often lack binding commitments for the parties (Cao, 2021; Li & Ye, 2019). That being said, this specific agreement between Turkey and China at least indicated their mutual interest in closer cooperation. In 2010 again, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) participated in the Anatolian Eagle, an aerial military exercise in Turkey, which was the PLA's first-ever participation in a military exercise of a NATO member country (Shichor, 2014, p. 205).

Turkey attained the status of “dialogue partner” within the China- and Russia-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2012. Subsequently, Erdoğan would, on multiple occasions, refer to the SCO as an alternative to the EU (Shichor, 2014, p. 200; Eliküçük Yıldırım, 2021, p. 36). In November 2016, for instance, while underlining that the EU should not be considered the only option, he asked reporters “why shouldn’t Turkey be in the Shanghai Five?” (Reuters, 2016). Around the mid-2010s, bilateral relations found new catalysts. One such catalyst was the BRI which stimulated a renewed interest in Turkey’s economic engagement with China. As one of the early participants in the BRI, Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding in November 2015 on “aligning the BRI and Middle Corridor Initiative”, Turkey’s own initiative to enhance railway connectivity with Caucasus, Central Asia, and China (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.; see also, Çolakoğlu, 2019).

Another catalyst, as Üngör (2019) elaborates in detail, came as a result of the July 15th coup attempt, in which military officers affiliated with the network of Fethullah Gülen, a self-exiled cleric residing in the US and the leader of a semi-clandestine socio-political organization, are accused of playing a leading role (see also, Özşahin *et al.*, 2022, p. 228). In the aftermath of the coup attempt, Russia, and China, unlike the US and some European countries, openly showed their support for the Turkish government (Üngör, 2019, p. 65). Furthermore, the US government was accused by pro-government circles of being involved in the coup attempt (Üngör, 2019,

p. 67). In contrast, China declared its support for the Turkish government’s measures, including those that were seen as extraordinary and legally controversial in the aftermath of the coup attempt. China’s vice foreign minister Zhang Ming visited Turkey in early August 2016 to “convey the message of solidarity and support... related to the coup attempt...” (MFA, 2016). In such a context, anti-Westernism was growing more influential and some pro-government pundits were advocating closer relations with China (see Üngör, 2019, p. 65; Özşahin *et al.*, 2022). A few months later, in November of that year, the Turkish-Chinese ministers of foreign affairs consultation mechanism was established, which would facilitate several ministerial meetings between the countries in the ensuing years (Yu, 2021).

Erdoğan attended and delivered a speech at the First BRI Forum in 2017. In his speech, he announced: “I believe there is a win-win project before us which will serve peace and stability. Therefore, this initiative of the People’s Republic of China is beyond all praise” (Erdoğan, 2017). The following year, Erdoğan met Xi twice, on the sidelines of the G-20 and BRICS summits (Yu, 2021). In July 2019, Erdoğan visited Beijing once more, along with several ministers. During that visit, the *Global Times*, a prominent newspaper affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party, published an article by Erdoğan in which he “call[ed] on the Chinese business community to invest in Turkey - the crossroads of Asia and Europe, and the heart of the BRI” (Erdoğan, 2019).

With the goal of forging closer ties and future economic advantages in mind, Erdoğan has refrained from publicly criticizing China’s

Uyghur policies in recent years. This stands in contrast to his previous stance as a vocal critic of China's oppressive measures against the Uyghur minority, including comparing the policies towards the Uyghurs to genocide (Alemdaroğlu & Tepe, 2020; Üngör, 2019, p. 72).

All of these developments suggest that Turkey-China relations were reaching new heights in the late 2010s. In this context, the Turkish political leadership arguably envisioned China as a potentially important partner that could enhance the country's autonomy in relation to the West. Yet, the extent to which Turkey's expectations have been realized is contested, as is China's potential role in Ankara's quest for greater autonomy. The following section discusses these topics.

DEBATING THE POTENTIAL OF CHINA'S POWER IN TURKEY'S QUEST FOR GREATER AUTONOMY T1

China's importance to Turkey has increased over the past decade, serving both as a provider of valuable resources, such as capital, know-how, and technology, and also as a crucial trade partner. Like many other countries, the volume of Turkey's trade with China has boomed over the last two decades. China has become a leading exporter to Turkey, consistently ranking among the top three in the last few years. Turkey has also received a few sizable direct investments from Chinese investors in recent years. One example is the acquisition of a 65 per cent stake in the Kumport container terminal in Istanbul for \$940 million by a Chinese consortium in 2016. The largest

Chinese investment in Turkey to date, with a total value of \$2.1 billion, went towards building and owning a thermal power plant, Emba Hunutlu, whose construction started in 2019 (CGIT, 2023; Atlı & Özbekli, 2023). Chinese financial support is also worth mentioning. After the currency shock that struck Turkey in August 2018, the Turkish government courted Beijing for financial support. In August 2019, the People's Bank of China, China's central bank, transferred the equivalent of \$1 billion in Chinese yuan to the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) (Karakaya & Kandemir, 2019). The transfer was realized as a part of the lira-yuan swap line agreed upon in 2012, which would renew every three years (Yu, 2021). This transfer helped to slightly improve the CBRT's reserves on paper. Moreover, the China-led AIIB has also become an important source of project finance in Turkey, providing over 3 billion USD from 2018 to 2023 (AIIB, 2023; Köstem, 2019).

Know-how and technology are also valuable assets that Chinese companies can offer, particularly in sectors where these companies have globally competitive capabilities. Telecommunications is one such sector. Huawei, for instance, has long provided services and equipment for Turkish telecommunications companies. And recently, Turkish companies have also entered into agreements with Huawei to collaborate on 5G networks (Atlı & Özbekli, 2023, p. 403; Demir, 2023). During the COVID-19 pandemic, China acted as a key provider of another valuable resource to Turkey: vaccines. Starting from December 2020, Turkey received millions of doses of CoronaVac vaccines developed by the Chi-

nese Sinovac company. Turkey was among the countries that received much-needed vaccines relatively early, which played a pivotal role in the initial stages of its vaccination campaign. This can be attributed to the cordial relations that had developed between the two countries over the preceding years. That said, the CoronoVac experience in Turkey is not considered a complete success due to the vaccine's relatively low success rate and the controversies about its delayed shipments in 2021 (Üngör, 2023). Nevertheless, the COVID-19 episode at least showed that China's enhanced technical capabilities could make it a potentially significant partner in times of emergencies.

While China's influence in Turkey is increasing, its overall significance for the latter is still not very substantial. First, Turkey's trade with China is quite imbalanced. While China has become a leading source of exports for Turkey, Turkey's exports to China have remained below 2 per cent in recent years (WITS, n.d.). China-Turkey freight train services, sometimes referred to as the "railway silk road", commenced operations in 2019 (MFA, n.d.), only to replicate the imbalance in the bilateral trade. As of April 2021, China's exports to Turkey by means of railway reached 2,164 containers, whereas in the other direction the figure remained as low as 216 containers (Şimşek & Ayvaz, 2021). It is also worth noting that Turkish exports to China are heavily concentrated in raw materials, such as marble, metal ores, and stones (Atlı, 2019, p. 81). This aligns with the pattern of China's imports from developing economies, which primarily focus on commodities and raw materials. Second, despite recent flows of investments,

China has not yet become a significant investor in the Turkish economy, lagging noticeably behind the traditional sources of investment, such as European countries, the United States and some neighbouring nations (see also Atlı, 2019; Öniş & Yalikul, 2021; Tekdal, 2019).

Third, the Turkish government's efforts to attract Chinese finance for some big-ticket infrastructure projects have been largely unsuccessful. Chinese funds were expected to finance the high-speed railway sections that would stretch along the Edirne-Kars axis, connecting north-western and north-eastern Turkey, as well as the construction of Çandarlı Port in the Aegean Sea (Atlı, 2019, p. 86; Çolakoğlu, 2019). As Ergenç and Göçer's (2023) fieldwork-based study demonstrates, the parties failed to reach an agreement for either of the projects. In the case of the railway projects, the inability to reach an agreement is partly attributed to disagreements over technical specifications as well as the high interest rates the Chinese demanded (Ergenç & Göçer, 2022, pp. 100-104). Furthermore, Chinese interest in those projects has apparently diminished due to Turkey's "volatile political and economic environment" (Ergenç & Göçer, 2023), a concern not unfounded considering Turkey's recent history which includes a coup attempt, currency shocks and enduring financial instability, and the transition to a presidential system all within a relatively short time. This uncertainty is compounded by the unpredictability stemming from Ankara's foreign policy "improvisations" and diplomatic manoeuvres in its interactions with the US, EU, Russia, and others in its own neighbourhood. What is more, these failed negotiations are in line with

our earlier suggestions that Chinese actors tend to prioritize profitability in their overseas ventures and that it is not quite accurate to view Chinese overseas financing as easy money primarily driven by geopolitical considerations, such as gaining influence.

In hindsight, this meagre outcome in terms of Chinese capital inflows is disappointing to many, with inflated expectations of the 2010s contributing to this sense of disappointment. Gürel and Kozluca (2022, p. 809) have warned against such inflated expectations: "...public discourse on the indispensability of China as an economic partner to Turkey could result in the potential exaggeration of its actual contribution...". Moreover, a widely held narrative in Turkey considers the country as an important bridge and hub between Asia and Europe. Consequently, the BRI, as an initiative focused on connectivity, resonates well with this narrative, amplifying the excitement about it. Furthermore, the Turkish government seems to have been influenced by this discourse and imagery.

On balance, it is fair to say that China's actual and *imagined* importance as a partner and resource provider to Turkey has somewhat increased over the past decade. This has enabled Beijing to exert some influence on Turkish foreign policy. Erdoğan's recent silence on the Uyghur issue is perhaps linked to the inducement of economic advantages that could result from closer relations with China. Also, the Turkish leader's diplomatic support for the BRI, which is arguably China's most important diplomatic campaign in a decade, can be seen as an outcome of the allure of Chinese power. Given these shifts and recent

economic deals with China, some characterize Turkey's position in bilateral relations as a form of dependency (e.g., Kraemer, 2021). In his analysis of Erdoğan's efforts to forge closer ties with China, David P. Goldman (2018) put forward a strong version of such a view. He argues that the "combination of mobile broadband, rail and sea logistics, e-commerce and e-finance will absorb Turkey into the greater Chinese economy", and he predicts that Turkey will become a "satrapy of China" (Goldman, 2018). In some analyses, Turkey was even referred to as a "client state" of China (Alemdaroğlu & Tepe, 2020).

The accuracy of these characterizations is questionable. As discussed earlier, the existence of some recent investments and financing from China has not really made China a major partner for the Turkish economy. Also, regarding the Uyghur issue, a core issue of concern in Beijing's diplomatic efforts in the international arena, Turkey's behaviour differs significantly from that of a client state. Turkey was among the 50 countries that issued a joint statement at the UN General Assembly's human rights committee on October 31st, 2022, condemning the human rights violations against Uyghurs (International Service for Human Rights, 2022). More recently, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the former foreign minister, openly stated in a press meeting in December 2022 that Turkey's support for Uyghurs' rights bothers China and that Turkey has no intention of abandoning this support (Ergin, 2023). Çavuşoğlu also noted Turkey's strong support for the report of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2022, p. 43) regarding the human rights concerns in the

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, which found “severe and undue restrictions on a wide range of human rights”. Therefore, describing Turkey’s position in bilateral relations as that of a client state or something similar clearly overstates China’s relational power over Ankara (for a similar view see Güneylioglu 2022, pp. 562-63).

Some recent academic papers tend to suggest that China is a potentially important contributor to Turkey’s search for strategic autonomy (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021; Öniş & Yalikhun, 2021). These papers offer a nuanced view, recognizing that ties with China are still relatively nascent while also taking the potential promises of relations with the “Russia-China axis” seriously amid the changing international order. This paper, however, contends that the potential for Turkey’s cooperation with China may remain relatively limited. This is in part related to the nature of China’s global power and its limited complementarity with Ankara’s needs and interests. From a comparative perspective, and considering China’s varying influence across the developing world, Turkey may not be regarded as a particularly special partner for China. First, Turkey lacks certain features shared by countries in China’s neighbourhood, with which China tends to develop closer and deeper relationships. More specifically, Turkey lacks close inter-societal ties with China (including a significant diaspora), it is not integrated into the East Asian regional value chains (unlike countries such as Vietnam and Malaysia), and it is less likely to gain “geopolitical rents” from China due to its competition with the US and Japan in its region. Second, again from a comparative

perspective, Turkey-China economic interdependence is not particularly strong. Unlike countries like Brazil, South Africa, Chile, and Argentina, Turkey is not an important commodity exporter to China. Relatedly, both countries lack a remarkable interdependence in any of Turkey’s major industries (e.g., electrical equipment, motor vehicles, textiles, or metals), which resembles, for instance, the interdependence observed between Germany and China in the automobile industry. China is not a major market or an investor in these sectors for Turkey. Third, there is not a particularly strong ideological attraction between China and Turkey, unlike China’s stronger ideological affiliations with countries like Russia and Iran.

Turkey’s special position for China can be attributed to a concern: the Uyghur issue. As Eliküçük (2021, p. 42) notes, Turkey may be the only Turkic and Muslim-majority country whose leaders openly criticized Beijing for its oppressive policies towards the Uyghurs in China. Erdoğan’s popularity in certain segments of the Muslim world may be a cause of concern in Beijing, as “his vocal criticism... could awaken anti-Chinese sentiment in other Muslim countries” (p. 42). However, giving importance to Turkey for this reason seems to stem from a defensive motivation on China’s part. More importantly, the ongoing tension surrounding this particular issue hinders the development of closer relations between the two countries (Atlı & Özbekli, 2023, p. 404).

Another factor that gives Turkey a special position in the eyes of Chinese leadership may be its membership in NATO. China seems to value distancing Turkey from the US-led alliance system (for a similar comment, see

Shichor, 2014, p. 204). This motivation aims to undermine the US-led order. While being an important way of exercising power for Beijing, it is certainly distinct and less ambitious than structural power associated with order-making. As discussed above, China's current capacity to exercise such structural power is questionable, and this has implications for the potential development of Turkey-China relations. Institutions such as NATO and the EU, including its single market, in which Turkey has participated since 1996 through the signing of the EU-Turkey Customs Union Agreement, can be seen as concrete manifestations of structural power. They still serve as the primary mechanisms and frameworks for Ankara's long-term security and economic considerations. As Oğuzlu (2020, p. 138) contends, despite the worsening relations with the West, Ankara still much values Turkey's membership in those institutions. On the other hand, China, as a recently rising power, can only be considered as a fledgling institution-builder. Examples such as the China-led AIIB and China- and Russia-led SCO may come to mind in this context. As previously discussed, the AIIB tends to follow the established norms in many respects. The SCO is characterized by thin institutionalization and a defensive agenda primarily focused on regime security concerns, not really comparable to the Western institutions mentioned earlier.

CONCLUSION

The rise of China has been changing the world. By emerging as a major provider of resources, such as financing, aid, know-how, technical

support, and demand creation, China has also been changing the relationships between developing countries and the global North. Thus, to some extent, it is undermining American and broader Western power and influence in global politics. Most developing country governments, including the Turkish government, have expectedly sought to establish stronger ties with China. Yet, when it comes to the question of how deep and transformative Chinese power and influence is, the above discussion has suggested that there are good reasons not to overstate it. China's influence in many developing countries does not appear to be particularly deep. The paper has argued that Turkey falls into this category. China's significance to Turkey as a resource provider and partner has been limited, partly due to the nature of China's global power. Also, as discussed above, from a comparative perspective, the factors that could substantially draw Turkey and China closer to each other do not seem particularly strong.

That being said, since we are going through a power shift and uncertainty with implications at both domestic and global levels, it is prudent to retain a degree of agnosticism. China may appear as a part of the dynamics of Turkish politics and foreign policy in surprising ways in future. Similarly, China's global power could develop into a more substantial and deeper shape, yet this would be a gradual process over the years. For instance, Chinese transnational companies are expected to expand and deepen overseas operations over time, which would potentially bring stronger ties in production and value chains with developing economies like Turkey.

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**UNA APROXIMACIÓN TEMÁTICA
AL RELACIONAMIENTO DE TURQUÍA
CON EL MUNDO**

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**ANALYZING THE CONVERGENCE OF
TRANSPORT NETWORK CONNECTIVITY:
CASE FOR TÜRKIYE AND ITS NEIGHBORS**

Abdullah Açıık y Can Atacan

New Approaches to Conditionality in EU-Turkey Relations: Assessing the Role of Irregular Migration

Müge Dalkıran*

ABSTRACT

This article explores the evolving dynamics of EU-Turkey relations in the context of irregular migration. The European Union has historically employed conditionality as a political tool to influence Turkey's policy decisions and national legislation in alignment with EU standards. However, the EU's quest for the prevention of irregular migration and re-shaping its cooperation with Turkey in this manner has brought significant changes in their bilateral relationship. Moreover, there is a growing body of literature on how the EU's cooperation with third countries for "migration management" has resulted in the instrumentalization of irregular migration and reversed the conditionality against the EU by these countries, including Turkey.

Based on a comprehensive analysis of policy documents and academic literature, this article identifies how the EU's and Turkey's responses to the irregular migration have created a complex interplay and affected the nature of bilateral cooperation, which raises questions about the continuity of the EU's conditionality on Turkey. Further, it critically explores the newly created concept of "reversed conditionality". This article claims that the concept of "reversed conditionality" is a reductionist approach to EU conditionality mechanism to a shift in bargaining power in EU-Turkey relations.

Key words: Turkey's migration and asylum policy; conditionality; EU-Turkey relations; europeanization.

* PhD. Post-doctoral Researcher at Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Sabancı University (Turquía). [mugedalkiran@gmail.com]; [<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7249-288X>].

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**NUEVOS ENFOQUES DE LA
CONDICIONALIDAD EN LAS RELACIONES
UE-TURQUÍA: EVALUAR EL PAPEL
DE LA MIGRACIÓN IRREGULAR**

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora la dinámica cambiante de las relaciones entre la UE y Turquía en el contexto de la migración irregular. Históricamente, la Unión Europea ha empleado la condicionalidad como herramienta política para influir en las decisiones políticas de Turquía y en su legislación nacional para alinearla con las normas de la UE. Sin embargo, la búsqueda por parte de la UE de la prevención de la migración irregular y la reconfiguración de su cooperación con Turquía de este modo ha provocado cambios significativos en su relación bilateral. Además, cada vez hay más literatura sobre cómo la cooperación de la UE con terceros países para la “gestión de la migración” ha dado lugar a la instrumentalización de la migración irregular y ha invertido la condicionalidad contra la UE por parte de estos países, incluida Turquía.

Basándose en un análisis exhaustivo de documentos políticos y bibliografía académica, este artículo identifica cómo las respuestas de la UE y Turquía a la migración irregular han creado una compleja interacción y han afectado la naturaleza de la cooperación bilateral, lo que plantea interrogantes sobre la continuidad de la condicionalidad de la UE sobre Turquía. Además, explora críticamente el concepto recientemente creado de “condicionalidad invertida”. Este artículo afirma que el concepto de “condicionalidad invertida” es un

enfoque reduccionista del mecanismo de condicionalidad de la UE a un cambio en el poder de negociación en las relaciones UE-Turquía.

Palabras claves: Política turca de inmigración y asilo; condicionalidad; relaciones UE-Turquía; europeización.

INTRODUCTION

Since the official recognition of Turkey’s candidacy status for the European Union (EU) membership at the Helsinki Summit of December 1999, the EU’s conditionality mechanism has been used as a political tool for the adoption and implementation of a series of legislation and policies in Turkey in alignment with the EU rules. Turkey’s migration and asylum policy and laws were among the areas that required reforms to harmonize with the EU standards. The “golden age” in Europeanization during the pre-accession period lasted only until 2005. Veto powers used by France and the Republic of Cyprus on opening new chapters, and then the EU’s suspension decision of the opening of the negotiations in 2006 due to the Cyprus issue, and increasingly volatile conditions in political conditions in Turkey after 2007, almost brought the Europeanization process to a standstill (e.g. Kalaycıoğlu, 2012; Özbudun, 2014; Aydın-Düzgit & Kaliber, 2016). Yet, the reform process in Turkey and the bilateral cooperation in the area of migration and asylum exceptionally remained (Aydın-Düzgit & Kaliber, 2016). Nevertheless, it was not exempted from complications caused by the domestic political conditions in Turkey, EU-Turkey relations with ups and downs, and drastic geopolitical developments in the region.

While the Europeanization is considered a *catalyst* in the transformation of Turkey's migration and asylum policy (Kale, 2005), various circumstantial changes, notably the political instabilities and conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) after 2011 have had direct impact both on Turkey's and the EU's migration and asylum policies. Following the Syrian Civil War, Turkey became the largest host country with more than 3,5 million Syrian refugees, in addition to over one million refugees¹ from other nationalities, notably Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan (UN, 2023). Together with its continued role as a transit country, this situation has placed Turkey in a critical position for the EU. In particular, in 2015, the sudden increase in irregular crossings with over 800,000 from Turkey to Greece and over 34,000 to Bulgaria (UNHCR/IOM, 2015) intensified the cooperation between EU and Turkey on migration with the primary aim of preventing further crossings from Turkey to the EU. For this purpose, the Joint Action Plan between the EU and Turkey was adopted on October 15, 2015 (European Council, 2015), which was followed by the notorious EU Turkey Statement of March 18, 2016 (European Council, 2016). The year 2016 is a landmark for two main aspects: (1) the adoption of the EU-Turkey Statement that directly affected the nature of the EU-Turkey bilateral cooperation on migration and asylum, and (2) the failed coup attempt in Turkey. Both developments

started a new phase in the literature by focusing on the ineffectiveness of the EU conditionality (e.g. Dimitriadi *et al.*, 2018), and the instrumentalization of migration as a foreign policy tool (e.g. Tsourapas, 2019; Kaya, 2020), and most recently "reversed conditionality" used by Turkey against the EU (e.g. Janvier, 2023).

Taking into consideration all these shifts in the EU-Turkey cooperation in the areas of migration and asylum, and consequently the approaches to the use of EU conditionality on Turkey in the literature, this article traces new approaches to conditionality in EU-Turkey relations, and critically explores the recently emerged concept of "reversed conditionality". In the first section, the literature on the EU's conditionality is re-visited. The second section explores the complexities in the relationship between the EU conditionality and Turkey's immigration and asylum policy. To develop a better understanding of the effectiveness and limits of the EU's conditionality on Turkey's migration and asylum policy that took place, this section is divided into two parts: the high impact of Turkey's candidacy for the EU membership in the period between 1999 and 2015; and the period of 2015 and onwards in which the reasons of the loss of effectiveness of the EU conditionality are discussed. Nevertheless, recent debates argue that the conditionality went beyond its ineffectiveness but turned into a "reversed conditionality" due to a shift in the bargaining power in bilateral

¹ There are different categories of protection under the Turkey's asylum law as explained in detail in the second section. Here, the author uses the term of "refugee" categorically rather than a "Conventional" status to address the displaced persons due to generalized violence in their countries of origin or of (former) habitual residence.

relations. Therefore, the last section questions whether the conditionality has changed hands and become a “reversed conditionality”, and whether the change in power balance can be conceptualized as “reversed conditionality”.

RE-VISITING THE LITERATURE ON THE EU’S CONDITIONALITY

The EU has been exercising political conditionality with third countries to establish democracy and to protect human rights since the end of the Cold War. As defined by Smith (1997, p. 6) “Political conditionality entails the linking, by a state or international organization, of perceived benefits to another state (such as aid, concessions, cooperation agreements, political contacts, or international organization membership), to the fulfilment of conditions relating to the protection of human rights and the advancement of democratic principles.” In alignment with the discourse on the EU being a “normative power” that promotes democracy, human rights, and rule of law, respecting these norms became an essential condition for EU membership (Manners, 2002; Withman, 2011). From this perspective, “democratic conditionality” has been used as a core strategy by the EU for the accession process (Schimmelfennig *et al.*, 2003). While the concept of political conditionality defined by Smith (1997) refers to broader relations and ties with third countries, Schimmelfennig *et al.* (2003) address the democratic conditionality applied by the EU during the accession process with the EU’s *would-be members*. Yet, both terminology is interchangeably used in the literature.

There are two types of conditionality: positive and negative. Positive conditionality refers to the promising benefits when the third countries fulfil the condition, whereas negative conditionality may terminate or suspend those benefits in the cases of violation of those conditions by the third countries (Smith, 1997, p. 6). Schimmelfennig *et al.* (2003, p. 496) conceptualizes the EU’s main strategy of conditionality as “reinforcement by reward” which involves the reaction of the EU to “the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of its conditions by granting or withholding rewards but does not engage in the coercion or large-scale support of non-compliant states.” At this point, non-usage of coercion appears as an important characteristic of the EU’s strategy of conditionality. Further, the corresponding reward changes depending on the success of the rule transfer with its size and speed (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2004, p. 673). Therefore, the EU offers to grant larger rewards -not only material but membership as an ultimate carrot- for faster and larger rule adoption in third countries.

Since the EU’s conditionality aims at successful rule transfers and institutionalization of norms, notably human rights, democracy, and rule of law, its primary purpose is having a longer impact on the third countries’ domestic policies and laws to become compatible with the EU’s formal and informal rules. Within this Europeanization process, the external incentive model, which is an actor-based, rationalist bargaining model, appears as a preferred model for the effectiveness of the EU conditionality in the theoretical study that Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier (2005) conduct-

ed. According to this model, the EU sets the rules as conditions with the expectation from the candidate countries to fulfil to receive the rewards. Therefore, this bilateral relationship is established on asymmetric power relations, in which the EU has usually more advantages for bargaining (Schimelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005; Kirişçi, 2007; Tittel-Mosser, 2018). Yet, four important factors affect the effectiveness of the EU conditionality: the determinacy of conditions, the size and speed of rewards, the credibility of threats and promises, and the size of adoption costs. From this point of view, for higher effectiveness, the conditionality should be composed of:

(1) the rules that the EU sets as conditions should be clear and formal (determinacy of conditions)

(2) the rewards should be proportionate with the steps taken for rule adoption and the payment of the rewards should not be delayed (the size and speed of rewards)

(3) the consistency of provision of rewards determines the credibility, which is the core element of the reinforcement by reward strategy

(4) the number of veto players (the actors different from the government and whose agreement for rule adoption is necessary) should be small (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005).

The EU's conditionality has been developed as a well-established strategic tool in the Europeanization process. The concept of "Europeanization" has been used in various ways from a process of institutionalization (e.g. Stone Sweet *et al.*, 2001) to a form of identification and "a strategy of self-representation" (e.g. Borneman & Fowler, 1997). In

this context, while the early examples in the literature referred only to the Member States while describing the relationship between the domestic and the European level policies and regulations, the second-generation Europeanization literature expanded the use of the concept towards the candidate countries and the third countries since the early 2000s (Lavenex & Uçarer, 2004; Grabbe, 2006; Kaliber, 2013; Alpan, 2021). Rather than simple bargaining on short-term interests in bilateral relations with the EU and the third countries, it refers to a transformative mechanism aiming at inducing the third countries to adopt norms and rules in compliance with the EU rules. Therefore, it can be considered as a vertical mechanism involving a structured rule transfer framework and a monitoring mechanism through annual progress reports (Freyburg *et al.*, 2009).

Different from the Europeanization process for the member states, the Europeanization process as part of the external effect of the EU on non-EU member states is not limited to juridical dimension but it can involve both formal regulations and informal dynamics (Lavenex & Uçarer, 2004). In this manner, the EU has influence on the domestic policy making in the candidate countries through "Europeanization" and the conditionality in both forms appear as modalities for policy transfer (Grabbe, 2006; Lavenex & Uçarer, 2004). Following the official candidacy of Turkey for the EU membership in 1999 did not only intensify the EU-Turkey relations but also Turkey's accession started to be analysed within the frame of the second-generation Europeanization literature (Alpan, 2021).

**A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP
STATUS: THE EU CONDITIONALITY
AND TURKEY'S IMMIGRATION
AND ASYLUM POLICY**

The EU's transformative role has been crucial for improving mechanisms for human rights protection and democracy. In that sense, Turkey with its complexities during the pre-accession and accession processes has been an intriguing case for scholars to examine for the effectiveness of the EU conditionality (e.g. Schimmelfennig *et al.*, 2003; Aydın & Açıkmeşe, 2007; Schimmelfennig, 2008; Tocci, 2007; Saatçioğlu, 2009). Alpan (2021) defines the period between 2000 and 2005 as a "Europeanization as democratic conditionality", in which a series of EU-induced reforms occurred in Turkey. Yet, the significant reforms and cooperation in the area of migration and asylum took place in the following periods, respectively characterized as "Europeanization as retrenchment (2006-2011)" and "Europeanization as denial (2011 and the present)".

From this perspective, this section focuses on the interplay between the EU conditionality and Turkey's immigration and asylum policy. While the first part explains the transformation in Turkey's immigration and asylum policy due to the large impact of the EU conditionality, the second part explores the developments that limit on the effectiveness of the EU conditionality. In this way, this section uses the duality between the asymmetrical and top-down characteristics of the EU conditionality and Turkey's perspective as a third-country agency.

**Turkey's candidacy for the EU
membership and its implications on
the immigration and asylum policy**

At the European Council Meeting in Helsinki on 10-11 December 1999, Turkey was declared as an official candidate for full membership to the EU. After this decision, a new phase for EU-Turkey relations started. In 2001, the "Accession Partnership" (AP) Document that launched a pre-accession process, addressed critical issues for Turkey to start negotiations. The AP document prepared by the European Commission in 2001 (the Council Regulation, (EC) 390/2001) was revised subsequently in 2003 (the Council Decision, 2003/398/EC), 2006 (the Council Decision 2006/35/EC), and 2006 (the Council Decision, 2008/157/EC). It was followed by the adoption of the "National Programme for Adoption of the *Acquis*" (NPAA) in 2001 (Resmi Gazete, 2001) and also revised subsequently in 2003 and 2008 (Resmi Gazete, 2003; Resmi Gazete, 2008). Accession negotiations started officially on October 3, 2005 with the adoption of the "Negotiation Framework" Document by the Council of the European Union, which consists of three fundamental components:

- (1) Fulfilling the political criteria set by the Copenhagen European Council (Copenhagen criteria) in 1993 and continuing the reforms for further improvements in the respect of the principles of liberty, democracy, rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms,
- (2) Adoption and implementation of the EU *acquis*,
- (3) Establishment of an intensive political and cultural dialogue between civil society.

The pre-accession and accession processes fundamentally involve the harmonization of Turkish legislation with the EU *acquis*, which generates a considerable impact of Europeanization on various domestic policy areas in Turkey. Turkey's immigration and asylum policy is one of these areas that have been largely affected by the Europeanization process (Kale, 2005; İçduygu, 2014; Kaya, 2021). Chapter 24 titled "Justice, freedom, and security" of the *acquis* lays out the rules on border control, immigration and asylum. Correspondingly, the AP set out the tasks and a time schedule for Turkey to complete the "rule adoption" process. In this regard, the following objectives for immigration and asylum policy were determined:

(1) Adoption of a comprehensive asylum law and establishment of a specialized agency on asylum procedures,

(2) Lifting geographical limitation in alignment with the *acquis*,

(3) Adoption and implementation of the *acquis* for prevention of irregular migration, notably taking measures for border management in alignment with the *acquis*,

(4) Completion of a readmission agreement with the EU,

(5) Visa legislation in alignment with the *Acquis*.

To draw a road map for reforms in this area, in addition to the NPAA, Turkey ad-

opted its National Action Plan for Asylum and Immigration in 2005 (DGMM, 2005). Both documents promised to make legislative changes to harmonize its migration and asylum laws with the EU *acquis*. These changes mainly focused on the areas of establishing reception centres for asylum seekers, building a database to keep track of asylum seekers and refugees' countries of origin, establishing an asylum system that would include new legislation and a new agency specialized in asylum, developing a social support system for refugees in the key fields such as education, health, employment, and interpretation services, a new legislation on visa for third country citizens, negotiations on readmission agreements with third countries (e.g. Russia, Ukraine, Egypt, Iran, and so on), and taking measures on combat against human trafficking (DGMM, 2005). Within the frame of the EU's conditionality, the AP was promising to finance projects through the pre-accession instrument if Turkey makes "concrete steps towards satisfying effectively the Copenhagen criteria and, in particular, specific priorities of this revised Accession Partnership" (the Council Decision, 2008/157/EC).

Despite the fact that lifting geographical limitation² on the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Refugee Convention) was a major requirement mentioned in the AP for the full membership of Turkey, its

² When the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted, there were geographical and time limitations as stated in article 1B(1)(a). The 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees lifted both limitations. Nevertheless, Turkey as one of the first signatory countries accepted to lift only the time limitation but not the geographical limitation, which allows Turkey to grant refugee status to those who flee Europe (Kirişçi, 1996).

achievement was planned for a medium-term time horizon (DGMM, 2005). Two main difficulties prevented it from being considered as a short-term priority. First, Turkey considered asylum and refugee-related issues as an internal security concern. Second, the geographical limitation formed the core of the Turkish asylum system. Therefore, lifting the geographical limitation would mean drastic changes in the asylum system, which would require a transformation process involving national, international, and non-governmental actors (Kale, 2005). In the National Action Plan for Asylum and Immigration, Turkey stated its main concerns including the increasing mass displacements since 1980 and its impact on Turkey due to its geographical location, the risks of becoming a buffer zone, and mistrust in the burden-sharing mechanism (DGMM, 2005). In addition, Kirişçi (2007) argues that the mistrust of the EU's credibility with regard to the membership as the ultimate reward was a considerable reason for Turkey not to fully harmonize with the EU *acquis*. Further, the EU's growing externalisation policy on migration was considered a rising risk for Turkey to become a buffer zone where the EU would keep the "unwanted" migrants (Kirişçi, 2007).

Notwithstanding this, there were other areas in which Turkey made reforms in its migration and asylum system, including the signing of the readmission agreement, introduction of new visa requirements for third-country nationals, adoption of new legislation on asylum, and establishment of a new specialized agency. Since this section focuses on the transformation within the Turkish asylum system, the readmission agreement between the

EU and Turkey will be elaborated within the frame of EU-Turkey cooperation on migration in the following chapter.

As stated in Turkey's 2004, 2005, and 2006 progress reports, Turkey introduced new visa requirements in alignment with the EU negative and positive visa lists. Yet, Turkey provides sticker visas at the Turkish borders; therefore, its visa regime is still more liberal than that of the EU (Tokuzlu, 2007). The changes in the visa regime were followed by the amendment to the Law of Residence and Travel for Foreigners (Law No. 5683) in 2011 which regulates the residence and work permit of foreigners in Turkey (Resmi Gazete, 2011).

With regards to the cooperation between the EU and Turkey in migration, the EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement (EURA) signed in 2013, which came into force in 2014 signifies a key document, which interlinked various issues in EU-Turkey relations. The process of the EURA negotiations took over a decade as it was mentioned for the first time in the AP in 2002 (The Council, 2002). The main purpose of the readmission agreements is to return irregular migrants. Within the frame of this agreement, third countries readmit their own nationals who crossed irregularly to the EU or third-country nationals who transited through their territory (Wolff, 2014). The readmission agreements with third countries (e.g. Bosnia, Serbia, Morocco) are considered as a core strategy for the EU for its externalization policy of migration and border management (Ott, 2020). In return for signing the readmission agreements, the EU offers or facilitates certain incentives to the requested states, including mobility partnerships, regional and trade part-

nerships, and visa liberalization agreements (Trauner & Kruse, 2008; Wolff, 2014). Yet, as rational actors, third countries make cost-benefit analysis for accepting the readmission agreements with the EU, which vary for each country depending on the geographical location and its institutional closeness with the EU (İçduygu & Aksel, 2014).

In the case of Turkey, its main reluctance was about readmitting the third country nationals since it was a period where the irregular migrants' crossings through Turkey was increasing, which would lead Turkey becoming a buffer zone for irregular migrants (Kirişçi, 2007; İçduygu & Aksel, 2014). In return for signing the Readmission Agreement, the EU proposed visa facilitation for Turkey in the scope of the EU's conditionality (Kirişçi, 2007). Nevertheless, there was no consensus among the EU member states to start a visa dialogue for Turkey. While Greece, Austria, Germany, and France were reluctant due to the possibility of increased migration from Turkey to the EU, Italy, Finland, Spain, the UK, and Poland disagreed with the opinion, and supported the opening of a visa dialogue (Bürgin, 2012). When the proposal of the EURA was finally signed in June 2012, it consisted of rights and obligations for both sides for the re-admission of Turkish nationals, third-country nationals who crossed irregularly to the EU via Turkish territory, and stateless persons. It also

involved a "Joint Declaration" on cooperation in visa policies. Consequently, the roadmap prepared in December 2012 included 72 criteria re-grouped under four blocks: document security, migration and border management, public order and security, and fundamental rights including ratification of some additional protocols to the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) (ESI, 2013; European Commission, 2013). In addition to the Readmission Agreement, Turkey was asked to fulfil these criteria for visa liberalization. The realization of visa liberalization was foreseen within three years after the EURA came into force. In this manner, the conditions put by the EU during the EURA negotiations overlapped with the Europeanization process of Turkey's migration and asylum policies, which led to the adoption of the LFIP and other developments in this area (Nas, 2015).

The major reform within the harmonization process was the adoption of the new Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) (Law No. 6458) in 2013, which came into force in 2014 (Dalkiran, 2016; Ineli-Ciger, 2018; Kaya, 2021; Şahin-Mencütek *et al.*, 2023). The LFIP has great importance since it is the first law with regard to refugee protection in Turkey. Before the adoption of the LFIP, the main legal document was the Asylum Regulation (1994/6169)³, which was a secondary legislation. Another importance

³ Full name: Regulation No. 1994/6169 on the Procedures and Principles related to Possible Population Movements and Aliens Arriving in Turkey either as Individuals or in Groups Wishing to Seek Asylum either from Turkey or Requesting Residence Permission in order to Seek Asylum from Another Country.

of the LFIP is to recognize the non-refoulement principle (Article 4). Nevertheless, Turkey still keeps the geographical limitation on the 1951 Refugee Convention. There are four distinctive categories in the new law that regulate the protection: refugee, conditional refugee, subsidiary protection and temporary protection (Articles 61, 62, 63, 91). While the refugee status is recognized as defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, the category of “conditional refugee” is created for non-European refugees due to the geographical limitation. According to Article 62, conditional refugees are allowed to reside in Turkey temporarily until their resettlement is completed. Therefore, it does not provide a permanent status for non-European refugees. Subsidiary protection is created for those who are not eligible for either refugee status or conditional refugee status, yet they cannot be sent back due to the risks that they may face in their country of origin or country of (former) habitual residence (Article 63). Subsidiary protection can be considered as an extension of the principle of non-refoulement. Finally, the temporary protection category is created to respond to the mass influx situations (Article 91). Yet, so far it has been granted only to those who fled the Syrian Civil War.

Another important dimension of the LFIP is the institutionalization of the Turkish asylum system. The lack of an effective asylum system was repeatedly stated by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decisions (e.g. *Abdolkhani & Karimnia v. Turkey* no. 30471/08; *Z.N.S v. Turkey* no. 21896/08; *Tehrani and Others v. Turkey* no.32940/08). In response to these criticisms, the Directorate

General of Migration Management (DGMM) was established under the Ministry of Interior, which put the asylum system under a civil authority.

Apart from reforms within the frame of harmonization, the increasing migratory pressure as a result of the uprisings in the MENA after 2010-2011 entailed Turkey to transform its migration and asylum system and to reconsider its migration policy. Nevertheless, lifting the 1951 Refugee Convention in the area of border and migration management, and certain reforms in the area of fundamental rights (e.g. definition of terrorism) remained as disputed issues between the two parties that delayed and/or prevented the visa liberalization. As argued in the conceptual framework, the delay of the reward hurts the EU's credibility, which may lead to the effectivity of the conditionality mechanism (Schimmelfennig *et al.*, 2003). In this case, incorporating additional conditions and delaying visa liberalization can be considered as the factors that shook the EU's credibility in upholding its promises as argued in detail in the following section.

**From conditionality to transactionality:
The Impact of the so-called “Refugee
Crisis” in 2015 on the EU-Turkey
Cooperation on Migration**

Gradually increasing cooperation between the EU and Turkey in the areas of migration and asylum coincided with a period of deterioration of relations in almost all other areas. After the suspension of the accession chapters by Sarkozy in 2006 and the general elections in Turkey in 2007, there has been a stagnation in

reforms process except in the areas of migration and asylum policy (Aydın-Düzgit & Kaliber, 2016). Notwithstanding this, while the cooperation between the EU and Turkey on migration before 2011 is described as “occasional” (Dimitriadi *et al.*, 2018, p. 5), a new chapter opened in bilateral cooperation on migration following the year 2015 due to the large-scale refugee movement. The new chapter in this bilateral cooperation has a complex characteristic involving convergences, divergences, and contradictions at the same time. The complex nature of this situation is attributed to several factors, including the shift in priorities of Turkey’s foreign policy to become a “soft power” in the Middle East, the EU’s externalization policy on migration and alienation from normativity in migration and asylum policies, broken promises, the developments in Turkey’s domestic policies with the failed coup attempt in 2016, and finally instrumentalization of migration by Turkey to “re-balance” the asymmetric relationship with the EU and to have leverage in bargaining (Tsourapas, 2017; Tsourapas, 2019; Kaya, 2020).

Lavenex & Uçarer (2004) argue that adaptation through conditionality in certain aspects of immigration and asylum policy occurs via bilateral cooperation between the EU and the third countries. In this context, institutional relationship between Turkey and the EU expanded during this period through bilateral agreements and statements. Unlike the early phase, which focused on reforms and normative changes, this period placed significant emphasis on external actions. Initially, EU-Turkey cooperation on migration before 2011 was limited to taking gradual measures

to patrol migration on the Eastern Mediterranean route between Turkey and Greece (Dimitriadi *et al.*, 2018). Yet, the uprisings in the MENA, particularly the Syrian Civil War drastically affected the migratory flows in the Eastern Mediterranean route and put Turkey under a critical position due to its geographical proximity to the region, and extensive borders with the EU member states, Greece and Bulgaria. Moreover, the Turkish government saw the uprisings in the MENA as an opportunity to become a “soft power” in the region, which led to the “open door” policy towards Syrians in the first years of the Civil War (Kaya, 2021). The Justice and Development Party’s (JDP) religious connotations on its policies aimed at playing a regional mediator role in the region and shifted its security-centred approach to a humanitarian approach in foreign policy (Dimitriadi *et al.*, 2018). While immigration was instrumentalized to have a greater role in the region in the early stages of the Syrian Civil War, it did not take long to use it as a bargaining chip in the relations with the EU.

The year 2015 was a pivotal year for both the EU’s and Turkey’s migration policy. Within a year, the EU faced the largest refugee movement since World War II with over one million refugees crossing from Turkey to Greece and Bulgaria (UNHCR/IOM, 2015). As a response, the European Commission adopted the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015, which was based on four elements: the reduction of incentives for irregular migration, the pursuit of effective border management, the establishment of a strong common asylum policy, and the development of a new policy

on legal migration (European Commission, COM/2015/0240 final). Therefore, strengthening cooperation with Turkey became essential to prevent further refugee movements.

The response given by the EU, together with the images of the humanitarian crisis at the sea borders led to heavy criticism against the EU (e.g. Amnesty International June 25, 2015; MSF, 2015). While the EU was perceived as an actor that has not complied with its own norms and values (Gozdziak & Main, 2020), Turkey sat on the negotiation table with an upper hand different from the previous negotiations. Yet, Turkey's position was creating complications for the negotiations. On the one hand, hosting 3,5 million refugees provided an upper moral ground against the EU; on the other hand, the growing authoritarianism in domestic politics raised a serious concern for the negotiations (Pierini, 2016).

The first step in migration cooperation was made with the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan of 15 October 2015 (European Commission, 2015). The Joint Action Plan involved two main pillars: support for Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, as well as the host community, and the strengthening of cooperation for the prevention of irregular migration (Council of the EU / 5845/16 2016). In return for Turkey's enhanced cooperation with the EU institutions, particularly JHA agencies and the deployment of a liaison officer to Europol, the EU allocated its Instrument for Pre-accession (IPA) funding and created an EU Trust Fund for the Syrian crisis. Within the frame of the financial promises, it was agreed to establish a refugee facility (the Facility) in Turkey in November

2015 that cost 3 billion euros. The financial aid was conditional based on the fulfilment of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan. In addition to these financial promises, the visa liberalization dialogue was attached one more time to the cooperation in migration (Council of the EU / 5845/16 2016).

Meanwhile, in November 2015 and onwards, the countries on the Balkan corridor began to refuse the entry of irregular migrants unless they were from Syria, Afghanistan, or Iraq (Kasperek, 2016). In such a conjuncture, the notorious EU-Turkey Statement (the Statement) was adopted on March 18, 2016, primarily aimed at preventing new irregular migrant crossings from Turkey to Greece. The Statement outlined nine key action points: the return of those who had crossed from Turkey to Greece as of March 20, 2016; the 1:1 resettlement scheme for Syrians; new measures taken by Turkey to prevent new sea and land routes for irregular crossings; the activation of a Voluntary Admission Scheme; the fulfilment of the visa liberalization roadmap; lifting the visa requirements for Turkish citizens by the end of June 2016; additional financial support of 3 billion euros to the Facility; efforts for upgrading the Customs Union; re-energizing the accession process; and making joint efforts to improve the humanitarian conditions in Syria, in particular in the areas close to the borders between Turkey and Syria (European Council, 2016).

The EU's inadequate response to the 2015 so-called "refugee crisis" and the Statement revealed the gap between the EU's norms and values, and its actions (Gürkan & Coman, 2021). This has led to growing literature on

how the EU's migration and asylum policy has ended up with a crisis in "European values" (Gozdziak & Main, 2020) and the negative impact of the Statement on the EU's normative identity (Lavenex, 2018). At this point, a crucial question has arisen regarding the effectiveness of the EU conditionality mechanism while its normative power suffers from erosion.

The EU's diminishing credibility to fulfil its own norms and values, together with the developments in Turkish domestic politics, notably the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, changed the course of EU-Turkey relations (Kale *et al.*, 2018). The radical changes in the political and administrative structure in Turkey, including passage to the presidential system and constitutional changes deeply affected the checks and balances in Turkish democracy (Adar & Seufert, 2021). Rather than the expected visa liberalization, the suspension of Turkey's membership came to the agenda in the last quarter of 2016 (BBC, 2016). The deterioration of Turkey's democratic track after the coup attempt came to the point of being classified as a "not free" country by the Freedom House in 2018 (Freedom House, 2018). All these generated discussions on the weakening of the EU's democratic leverage (Müftüleri-Baç, 2016), the ineffectiveness of the EU conditionality (Kale *et al.*, 2018), and even the de-Europeanization process of Turkey

(Aydın-Düzgüt & Kaliber, 2016; Alpan, 2021; Kaya, 2021) in the literature.

As mentioned earlier, the EU-Turkey cooperation in the areas of migration and asylum has created an exception after 2011 due to the deterioration of the EU-Turkey relations and gradual stagnation in the reform process (Kalaycıoğlu, 2012). Yet, after 2016, it became crystal clear that the relations were reduced to a transactional relation, in particular with the example of the Statement (Dimitriadi *et al.*, 2018). Kaya (2021) argues that the Statement demonstrates a strong motivation for cooperation, yet neither based on shared values nor the process of convergence, but only on mutual interests. In that sense, it appears that Turkey has transitioned from the category of pre-accession association to that of neighbourhood association. This shift entails a focus on more limited areas of cooperation and short-term interests rather than long-term transformation⁴. Within this category, the EU has lower leverage due to a weaker conditionality mechanism whereas its counterpart, Turkey in this case, gains more negotiation power. This changing dynamic sparked a recent debate on the concept of "reversed conditionality". The next section argues whether the new concept of "reversed conditionality" captures the essence of this new nature of cooperation.

⁴ In their research, Lavenex and Uçarer (2004, p. 428-433) categorize the dynamics of EU's external effects into four distinct groups: Comprehensive Association with Western European Non-EU countries, Accession Association with the New Member States, Pre-accession Association with Turkey and the Balkan Countries, and finally Neighbourhood Association with the Maghreb and Eastern European Countries.

INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF MIGRATION IN THE EU-TURKEY RELATIONS AND CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE EMERGING CONCEPT OF “REVERSED CONDITIONALITY”

In contrast to the early stages of the EU-Turkey migration cooperation where the impact of Europeanization was a focal point, there has been a growing literature delving into Turkish stakeholders' impact on the dynamics of the EU-Turkey relations in the field of migration and asylum (Alpan & Diez, 2014) and Turkey's new bargaining strategy through migration diplomacy (İçduygu & Aksel, 2014; Tsourapas, 2017; Kaya, 2020; Demiryontar, 2021) since the signing of the EURA. The analyses put forth by Tsourapas (2017) and Kaya (2020) assert that Turkey obtains new leverage in EU-Turkey relations by using migration as a diplomacy tool. At this point, Tsourapas (2017) identifies and categorizes two distinct forms of migration diplomacy—cooperation and coercion—employed by third-party nations.

Nevertheless, the threats used by Turkey, notably unilaterally opening borders for refugees' crossings to the EU were perceived as blackmail and received reactions (Reuters, 2020). Turkey is not the only party that has been receiving criticism but also the EU has been facing heavy criticism by reducing its cooperation with Turkey based on short-term mutual interests but not based on values (Yılmaz-Elmas, 2020; Demiryontar, 2021). In particular, following the adoption of the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016, the EU's increasing dependence on third countries for migration policies became a new dimension in these discussions, which led to the (re)emer-

gence of a new concept of “reversed conditionality” to describe the shift of the dominant hand in the bargaining process (Tittel-Mosser, 2018; Janvier, 2023).

In fact, the concept was used for the first time in 2007 by Jean-Pierre Cassarino. In his far-seeing article about the drawbacks of the informality of readmission agreements in the EU neighbourhood, he touches upon the conditions set forth by Morocco as a prerequisite for continuation of the readmission agreements with the EU and he states that this position can be considered a “reversed conditionality” (Cassarino, 2007). Therefore, the concept of reversed conditionality refers to a situation beyond the ineffectiveness of the EU conditionality but indicates that the third countries induce their conditions to the EU. More recently, “reversed conditionality” has been used as a conceptual framework while analysing the political implications of the mobility partnership with Morocco (Tittel-Mosser, 2018) and of readmission agreements between EU-Turkey in 2013 and EU-Pakistan in 2010 (Janvier, 2023).

In the studies mentioned above, the concept of “reversed conditionality” addresses a situation that re-equilibrates the position of third countries in the asymmetric relationship with the EU by “presenting their own conditions” (e.g. Tittel-Mosser, 2018). Therefore, the authors use the concept of “reversed conditionality” limited to the bargaining dimension of the EU conditionality, which has an eviscerating impact on the EU conditionality mechanism. Therefore, the use of “reversed conditionality” reduces the essence of conditionality mechanism to the exertion

of demands and it fails to fill the fundamental components of conditionality mechanism.

The first and foremost issue is the lack of a normative claim of reversed conditionality. As argued in the first section of this article, the EU conditionality mechanism aims at improving the protection of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy in third countries. Within the frame of the EU conditionality, the negotiations between the EU and the third countries involve the reforms in these areas as conditions. Yet, in the cases where the third countries use “reversed conditionality”, there is no claim for rule adoption or norm transfer, but the focus is more on the *ad hoc* gains.

Second, and in relation to the first difference, the EU conditionality targets long-term effects by triggering legislative, administrative, and institutional transformations in the third countries. However, from the examples given within the frame of “reversed conditionality”, the third countries like Turkey have short-term and/or strategic interests to accomplish rather than aiming at any transformation or long-term impact on the EU. For instance, the timing of Turkey’s unilateral border opening in 2020 indicates a strategic interest as the realm was to receive support in Idlib (DW, 2020).

The third issue is concerning the style of reinforcement. As mentioned earlier, the EU usually prefers to use positive conditionality by involving reinforcement by reward over negative conditionality. These rewards can be financial aid, some benefits in trade, visa liberalization or even accession negotiations. Nevertheless, the examples provided within the frame of “reversed conditionality” do not

go beyond blackmailing situations, bargaining hard or gaining leverage through coercion.

Finally, the sources of legitimacy represent a significant divergence between these two concepts. Smith (1997, p. 7) argues: “Multi-lateral conditionality can be considered more acceptable and legitimate than conditionality applied by a single state.” Here, the source of legitimacy is not only about presenting conditions by a single state but the content of conditionality far from any universal norms and values creates the questions around legitimacy. Having said that, the legitimacy problem, specifically around migration and asylum, has emerged primarily due to the EU’s reductionist approach to the third countries by following a transactional agenda and de-prioritizing the norms that give the essence of the EU conditionality mechanism.

CONCLUSION

The dynamics of the EU-Turkey relations surrounding the migration and asylum policy have evolved significantly since Turkey’s official candidacy for EU membership was announced in 1999. While the EU conditionality mechanism was effective in Turkey during the pre-accession period until 2005, substantial reforms in other policy areas in Turkey were witnessed in alignment with the *acquis communautaire*. The EU’s conditionality mechanism, initially seen as a catalyst for aligning Turkish legislation with European standards, entered a complex phase marked by both cooperation and challenges, except on migration and asylum. The EU-Turkey cooperation on migration intensified despite the deterioration

of the EU-Turkey relations. In particular, the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 and the resulting refugee movement propelled Turkey into a critical role for the EU.

The growing dependency of the EU on Turkey for migration management gradually set the stage for a transactional relationship centred on migration cooperation, rather than the usual mechanism of the EU's democratic conditionality. The EU-Turkey Statement of 2016 indicated a shift towards a more transactional approach, with both sides prioritizing mutual interests over shared values. The decline in the EU's credibility to uphold its norms and values regarding the migration and asylum policy, and its reductionist approach to having transactional relations with the third countries in this area challenge the effectiveness of its traditional conditionality mechanisms.

At this point, using migration as a leverage tool in Turkey's foreign policy and Turkey's short-term demands in return for "keeping refugees" in the country prompted discussions on the concept of "reversed conditionality," wherein the third country, Turkey, sets its own conditions altering the traditional functioning of conditionality mechanism. Even though this new concept of "reversed conditionality" emphasizes the re-calibrating of the asymmetric relations between the EU and Turkey and the shift in the bargaining power in favour of the third country, it neglects the other dimensions – norms and values, transformative and long-term impact, the style of the reinforcement mechanism, and the source of legitimacy- of the original concept of political conditionality. Therefore, there is still need for

further research to conceptualize the changing nature of cooperation between the EU and Turkey around migration and asylum.

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Voting Behavior of Turks in the GCC States within the Context of Turkish-Gulf Relations

Sinem Cengiz*

ABSTRACT

Recent years have seen a growing scholarly interest in the electoral participation of Turkish citizens living abroad. Despite an existing body of literature on the Turkish diaspora, which is predominantly Eurocentric in nature, there has been a noticeable lack of consistent research into the voting behavior of Turkish expatriates residing in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states with regard to their participation in home country elections. In this article, I delve into the voting patterns of Turkish expatriates living in the GCC states, with a specific focus on their political interests, party preferences, and ideological-religious perspectives within the context of Turkish-Gulf relations. Unlike Turkish expatriates in European states, who have tended to support conservative-nationalist parties, Turkish citizens residing in the

conservative GCC states exhibited a preference for left wing-oriented parties in elections held between 2014 and 2018. However, there has been a subtle shift in this trend in the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections, with some Turkish expatriates in the GCC states leaning toward the ruling alliance. What might be the potential factors influencing this change in voting behavior among certain Turks in the GCC states? I argue that the drivers behind this shift may be related to both the demographic profile of Turks residing in the GCC states as well as the impact of the Turkish foreign policy towards the broader Middle East, particularly concerning the GCC states.

Key words: Persian Gulf; Turkey; national elections; Turkish expatriates; voting behavior.

* Research Assistant, Qatar University - Gulf Studies Center (Qatar). [sinem.cengiz@qu.edu.qa]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9526-8728].

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COMPORTAMIENTO ELECTORAL DE LOS TURCOS EN LOS ESTADOS DEL CCG EN EL CONTEXTO DE LAS RELACIONES TURCO-GOLFOANAS

RESUMEN

En los últimos años se ha visto un creciente interés académico en la participación electoral de los ciudadanos turcos que viven en el extranjero. A pesar de que existe un cuerpo de literatura sobre la diáspora turca, que es predominantemente de naturaleza eurocéntrica, ha habido una notable falta de investigación consistente sobre el comportamiento electoral de los expatriados turcos que residen en los Estados del Consejo de Cooperación del Golfo (CCG) con respecto a su participación en elecciones de su país de origen. En este artículo se profundiza en los patrones de votación de los expatriados turcos que viven en los Estados del CCG, con un enfoque específico en sus intereses políticos, preferencias partidistas y perspectivas ideológico-religiosas dentro del contexto de las relaciones entre Turquía y el Golfo. A diferencia de los expatriados turcos en los Estados europeos, que han tendido a apoyar a los partidos nacionalistas conservadores, los ciudadanos turcos que residen en los Estados conservadores del CCG mostraron una preferencia por los partidos de izquierda en las elecciones celebradas entre 2014 y 2018. Sin embargo, ha habido un cambio sutil en esta tendencia en las elecciones presidenciales y parlamentarias de 2023, con algunos expatriados turcos en los Estados del CCG inclinándose hacia la alianza gobernante. ¿Cuáles podrían ser los factores potenciales que influyen en este cambio en el comportamiento electoral entre

ciertos turcos en los Estados del CCG? Se sostiene que los impulsores detrás de este cambio pueden estar relacionados tanto con el perfil demográfico de los turcos que residen en los Estados del CCG como con el impacto de la política exterior turca hacia el Medio Oriente en general, particularmente en lo que respecta a los Estados del CCG.

Palabras clave: Golfo Pérsico; Turquía; elecciones nacionales; expatriados turcos; comportamiento de votación.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, the topic of diaspora and their electoral participation has grown in interest both politically and scholarly. There is an ever-expanding body of literature on diaspora politics that focuses on state policies to engage with its citizens living abroad. In the Turkish context, the country has developed a proactive diaspora engagement policy during the last decade. Turkey has a population of over 80 million, while Turkish citizens living abroad number around 7 million, with the majority (90 percent approximately) living in European states. A considerable number of these people hold Turkish citizenship which gives them the right to vote in elections. The 2014 presidential elections, which replaced the country's parliamentary system with a presidential model, were the first elections in which expatriates were able to vote from the states they reside in. Even though the expatriate vote does not make a huge difference in election outcomes, their voting preferences tell us a lot about how Turks living outside think about Turkish politics and the future of their country.

The voting preferences of Turkish expatriates indicates a clear variation depending on their country of residence. The expatriate vote tends to favor the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in European states, while the case is totally different in the GCC states, which includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Turkish expatriates residing in the GCC states voted against the referendum in 2017, unlike the expatriates in Europe who voted in its favor. With a very large majority, Turkish expatriates residing in GCC states tend to vote in favor of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) in all the elections, with the exception of 2023 elections, which was the sixth time that Turks living abroad were able to cast their vote.

Transnational political behavior is complex, including differing interests in politics and partisan preferences. The diversity of the Turkish diaspora and the variations in its voting preferences indicate that it is not possible to speak of a monolithic and unified community. Though small in numbers compared to Turks living in Europe, analyzing the voting motivations of expatriates in the GCC states is important not only to understand contemporary Turkish electoral politics and provide insights about the profiles of the Turkish expatriates living in the GCC states, but also to highlight how those voting behaviors could affect Turkish foreign policy in the Gulf region. The results of the 2023 elections indicate a clear variation in the voting tendencies of expats living in GCC states, as their voting preferences were divided between the ruling People's Alliance and the opposition Nation Alliance.

While most voters living in Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia backed the ruling alliance and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, expats in Bahrain, Oman, and the UAE cast ballots in favor of the opposition alliance and its candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. These trends were notable and are worth analyzing.

This article aims to shed light on an understudied dimension of voting patterns of Turkish expatriates, with a special focus on those living in the GCC states. In doing so, it examines the factors that could have potentially influenced the voting behaviors of Turkish citizens in GCC states, while also shedding light on the potential impact of the Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East in general, and the GCC states in particular. Yet the study acknowledges the political behavior of Turkish expatriates in the Gulf region, and elsewhere, cannot be captured simply due to the complexity of the transnational political behavior.

It is essential to acknowledge that due to the small number of Turkish expatriates residing within GCC states, and the realities of temporary residency as dictated by these states' migration regulations, it is challenging to assert that Turks in the GCC states could have the potential to form a Turkish diaspora with a reality similar to those living within Western states, and that these populations could potentially have implications on the future of Turkish-Gulf relations. Consequently, in this article, the term "Turkish expatriates" is preferred over "Turkish diaspora" when referring to Turks residing in the GCC states.

The present article is comprised of six sections. Following this introductory section,

the next offers a brief overview of the current literature on external voting and the factors influencing the political engagement of citizens abroad. The third section provides a historical background about Turkish labor emigration to GCC states. The fourth section examines the voting preferences of Turkish citizens living in GCC states in prior elections, including the presidential election of 2014, two parliamentary elections (June 2015 and November 2015), the constitutional referendum (2017), and the joint presidential-parliamentary election of 2018. The fifth section sheds light on the driving forces that shape the voting behavior of Turkish expatriates in the GCC states and how Turkish foreign policy towards the GCC states has affected voting patterns in the last elections held in May 2023. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings of expatriate voting behavior in the Gulf context.

EXTERNAL VOTING AND COMPLEX COMMUNITIES

Diaspora voting, or external electoral participation, is a legal right that enables expatriates who are temporarily or permanently residing abroad to exercise their democratic right to vote in home-country elections (Elguija, 2021). Today, it is considered to be a crucial element of democratic politics as many states in the world have granted the voting right to their citizens based abroad in order to ensure their political participation. Existing research suggests that 115 states, out of 214, have granted their citizens the right to cast their votes from abroad; however, this happens in different forms depending on each country's

specific laws (Braun & Gratschew, 2007). As granting voting rights has become an increasingly world-wide practice and a democratic norm, expatriate voting emerged as a field of research in various academic disciplines since the 1990s, such as area studies, ethnic studies, cultural studies, electoral studies, and migration studies (Yaldız, 2019). The existing scholarship offers broad insights regarding external voting by highlighting the contextual, country specific factors, transnational political space, voting behaviors and procedures, electoral system, and level of the electoral participation and its determinants.

There exist two contradicting approaches towards external voting. Proponents of external voting consider the practice as a democratic right of universal suffrage, arguing that expatriates should also have a say about the future of their country (Bauböck, 2007). On the other hand, critics argue that expatriates have chosen to reside abroad; therefore, they are not part of the 'social contract' which concerns those living within the country (Sevi *et al.*, 2020). The practice is also criticized for states using it for political and pragmatic reasons to maintain close ties with their diaspora (Lacy, 2007). Lafleur (2013) notes that external voting is considered by states as part of broader diaspora policies that see citizens abroad as an important source of support in elections. Home states adopt an instrumental approach towards their diaspora, focusing mainly on the commercial and the foreign policy gains that could be obtained through their votes. In this regard, Bauböck (2007), who developed the 'stake holder citizenship' approach, argues that "external voting should be granted to tempo-

rary absentees and conflict-forced migrants, but should be ruled out for generations born abroad because the latter category has no stake in their parents' states of origin" (p. 2394).

Since voting is the most basic act of political participation, one of the most fundamental questions in comparative politics about electoral participation is why to people vote and what factors motivate their voting preferences. There are several factors that account for why people vote (or not). The first factor to consider is a voter's motivation, which is shaped by different socio-cultural and psychological contexts (Szulecki *et al.*, 2021). The second factor is the context of the country of residence that shapes the decisions and preferences (Goldberg *et al.*, 2021). The third factor is that voters can be influenced by their "in-between positionality", which influences their sociopolitical status both in the host and home states (Szulecki *et al.*, 2021, p. 993). Thus, the decision to vote can be influenced by both the environment in which a person lives and the place to which they feel they belong to. Limited, yet still important, studies provide a good account on the driving forces behind the electoral participation and effects of the political empowerment of the diaspora. Boccagni and Ramirez (2013) explain that emigrants' involvement is predominantly driven by "patriotic-homesick drives, rather than strictly political expectations." (p. 748). Ciornei and Østergaard-Nielsen (2015) identify legal voting procedures, geographical and political proximity, and the electoral campaigns of political parties as the main factors that influence diaspora electoral participation. Applying rational choice theory to voting be-

havior, Downs (1957) argued that migrants' political participation might be related to a number of factors which one could rationally believe to maximize their expected economic utility. Beside expectations of economic utility, there are also expectations of political utility. While the economic component refers to voters' material well-being related with voting for a particular party, the political component refers to the factors related to "ideology, religion, patriotic feelings and even racial, ethnic or linguistic identification" (Fidrmuc & Doyle, 2005, p. 12). The studies that suggest migrant voting behavior is affected by the institutional environment of the host states underlines that political preferences of migrants are influenced significantly as they adapt to the norms and values of the host country (Fidrmuc & Doyle, 2005). Thus, migration can lead to movement towards a different political system with diverse political standards, norms and traditions. In this context, the importance of demographic, socio-economic and psychological factors play a role in external voting (Harder & Krosnick, 2008).

Focusing on the case of Turkey, Mencütek (2015) argues that "citizens' motivation for voting abroad was largely dictated by the symbolic dimension of citizenship, and desire to formally participate in politics" (p. 145). Mencütek and Sevi's studies also explain voter's motivations to vote with reference to motivational link between origin country and diaspora. According to Sevi *et al.* (2020), expatriate voting is linked to the strength of voters' ties to their home country and their voting preferences appear to differ with geographic and political variables associated with

the host states. Various factors, deriving from the political environment in country of origin as well as the host country on the one hand, and the characteristics of voters, on the other, determine electoral participation and voting preferences of citizens living abroad.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: TURKISH LABOR EMIGRATION TO THE GULF STATES

Within the context of “Labor Recruitment Agreements” signed with several European states, Turkish laborers started to migrate to Europe en masse in the 1960s (Adar, 2019). This was considered as the first flow of Turkish emigration, which was triggered by Western European states’ demands in the labor market and their immigration policies that aimed to attract a skilled workforce in the aftermath of World War II (Köse, 2021). Labor recruitment agreements that applied to Turkish workers, who were initially considered as “guest workers” (Adar, 2019, p. 7), had unforeseen consequences for both sides as it had led to a flow of emigration that continued for decades (Aydın, 2014). Initially, economic motivations were the main factor that encouraged migration to Europe; however, this changed over time due to the political and socio-economic developments in Turkey (Adar, 2019).

From the 1970s onwards, the second phase of migration took place as Turkish workers started to seek new employment opportunities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region due to the economic stagnation that occurred in Europe in the 1970s. The oil crisis in 1973 decreased the demand for foreign workers in Europe (Adar, 2019) and

eventually brought an end to official labor recruitment in those states (Arkılıç, 2020). Thus, the year 1975 marked the end of large-scale Turkish labor migration to Europe (İçduygu & Sert, 2011), leading to what has been called the “demise of bilaterally arranged migration.” (ILO, 2010). As Western Europe began to close its doors to immigrant labor, the Turkish government of the time, under the pressure of a high unemployment problem, began to search for new markets for labor-exporting processes and within this context it sent 342 male workers to Saudi Arabia (İçduygu & Sert, 2011). While economic stagnation altered the policies of the Western European states toward migration, the oil boom in the Middle East created new opportunities for low-skilled Turkish emigration (Köse, 2021). This shift in the direction of Turkish emigration between 1975 and 1980 towards an alternative labor market formed in the oil-exporting MENA states was the second major labor-motivated movement in the post-World War II era (İçduygu & Sert, 2011).

In the 1980s, a large number of Turkish male laborers began to emigrate to MENA states. The rise in oil prices after 1973 increased the income of the oil-exporting MENA states with very small populations and led to demand for foreign labor (Appleyard, 1995). This demand for labor paved the way to large flows of contract workers from other developing states (İçduygu & Sert, 2011). Official figures illustrate that the Turkish workforce’s major flow has been toward Libya, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, and this is followed by other Gulf states (Lawless & Seccombe, 1986). In contrast to the Western European context, the entry of the Turkish workforce into the MENA market was through

Turkish construction companies, in which only Turks were employed (Gül, 1992). Turkish construction companies were given contracts in the region, which also catalyzed labor exports to these states, in particular to Saudi Arabia (Köse, 2021). While the number of Turkish workers in Libya decreased when the Turkish companies left the country, Saudi Arabia remained as the largest and most stable market for Turkish workers. This was also because Saudi Arabia recruited seasonal workers from Turkey during the annual pilgrimage (*Hajj*) season.

In the Gulf context, the discovery of oil in the 1970s and the rise in revenues derived from its exploitation significantly changed the demographic balance in the Gulf states (Essomba, 2017). Foreign workers started to migrate to Gulf states in the early 1970s in the wake of the massive development plans and investment programs (Alsahi, 2020). The national labor-force was not only small in number but also lacked the necessary skills for the development of infrastructure and other projects, eventually pushing these states to “import” laborers from abroad (Kapiszewski, 2001). The other reason to import foreign workers was the cultural, economic and social realities within the region, which meant that the rate of participation of women and upper- and middle-class men was minimal (İçduygu & Sert, 2011).

Labor migration from Turkey to oil-exporting states to work in both the construction and service sectors occurred within this broader context. Turkey signed bilateral labor agreements with Qatar in 1986, the first bilateral labor agreement in the 1980s, and bilateral economic cooperation agreements that

paved the way for labor exchange with Kuwait (1982), Saudi Arabia (1974), UAE (1984), Bahrain (1990), and Oman (1995). 400,000 Turkish workers went to Middle Eastern states between 1970-1986 (Gül, 1992).

Table 1
The numbers of Turkish
workforce in Europe and the MENA

YEARS	EUROPE AUSTRALIA	MENA STATES
1962-1973	641,959	8,933
1973	132,670	3,146
1983	464	52,006

Source: Gül (1992).

However, the onset of the First Gulf War in 1990-91 and subsequent developments in the region interrupted Turkish migration. Although a considerable number of Turkish migrants continued to work in the region, this did not lead to a formation of a Turkish diaspora community as emerged in western states due to the “contract bounded nature of Middle Eastern migration.” (Köse, 2021, p. 73). Also, unlike some Turkish migrants in western states who gained citizenship in their host countries and became part of a Turkish diaspora community (Köse, 2021), those in the MENA region didn’t obtain such a right. One of the main characteristics of foreign labor migration in the Gulf, which differs from the Europe, is that labor migration is considered a “temporary” movement (İçduygu & Sert, 2011, p. 72). The measures and the laws, such as the sponsorship system (*Kafala* system), and

not granting citizenship, discourages staying in host states permanently. Under a sponsorship system, migrant workers can only receive visas and residence permits to work in one of the six GCC states if a citizen or an institution from these states has sponsored them (Longva, 1999). Through this system, the guarantor takes the economic and legal responsibility of the employed migrant workers, with the right to decide the duration of their stay in the country.

In light of this situation, Turkish immigration to the MENA region can be categorized into two successive and interrelating periods. The first period covers the 1970s to 1980s, which saw a decline of Turkish labor migration to Europe and triggered the start of emigration to the MENA states due to the oil crisis, which became a turning point in the patterns of Turkish labor migration. This was also the decade in which most of the Gulf states gained their independence and saw the emergence of oil as an important resource, affecting not only their economies but also politics (İçduygu & Sert, 2011). The second period between 1980s to mid-1990s was dominated by labor flows toward the MENA states, which could be described as “the major influx” (Girgis, 2005) as the migrant population reached 33 percent of the total population (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005). On the other hand, in this period, the demographic tendency in the MENA migration shifted again due to the turmoil in the region. The Gulf states started to become concerned about the political costs of hosting Arab migrants as workers (Castles & Miller, 2003), mainly Palestinians and Yemenis that were involved in political disputes

in the region (Halliday, 1985). This trend has caused the Gulf states to welcome Asian and European, including Turkish, migrant workers. Also, as the oil prices began to decrease in the mid-1980s, it was expected that the mass migration to the Gulf region would see a decline; however, in reality the mass labor migration was instead replaced (Castles & Miller, 2003).

In early 2000s, Turks comprised a noteworthy group, ranking as the fourteenth biggest nationality in the Gulf region (Kapiszewski, 2001). The 2000s became the revival period for Turkish contract-based and project-tied, mainly state-affiliated, labor migration to the Gulf region in terms of scale and scope. İçduygu and Sert (2011) highlight two drivers for this trend; firstly, a conservative government coming to power in Turkey that paved the way for the closer relations with the Gulf states. The structural transformation of the Turkish economy, in which ‘Anatolian Tigers’, who were eager to do business with Gulf states, played an important role in sending Turkish companies to the region (Altunışık, 2011). The second factor was that the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 made the Gulf states safer destinations within the broader MENA region to do business (İçduygu & Sert, 2011). Kirişçi (2009) argues that economy became the primary driver in Turkey-Gulf relations as the country emerged as a ‘trading state’ in the region. In this context, between 2001-2008, Saudi Arabia became the major destination country for Turkish labor, while Qatar became the second most popular destination to Turkish migrant workers, who numbered just 34 in 2002, but increased to 4879 in 2007. Since the 2000s,

five companies in particular, *Limak*, *Cengiz*, *Kolin*, *Kalyon* and *Mapa*, which enjoy close relations with the Turkish government and the ruling AKP, have been heavily involved in construction projects in the Gulf states, and have brought a large number of Turks to these states.

VOTING PREFERENCES OF TURKS IN THE GCC STATES: ELECTIONS BETWEEN 2014-2018

Although the majority of the states recognize external voting practice, which is an essential feature of democratic citizenship, Collyer (2014) classifies the states that grant this right into three main groups. The first group of states allow citizens residing abroad to vote in elections within its territories; the second group organizes constituencies outside their borders so that citizens can vote abroad; and the third group reserves seats in the parliament for representatives of the diaspora, which are elected by voters residing abroad. Turkey practices the second system, which is the most common one today, and grants the right to citizens to vote abroad, regardless of their length of stay in other states, whether permanently or temporarily.

Turkey's desire to maintain close ties with its citizens residing abroad, and the ruling party's perception of the impact of the diaspora vote, paved the way for the decision to enfranchise expatriates (Mencütek & Erdogan, 2016). The elections indicate that expatriate vote appears to indeed benefit the ruling party. As an outreach effort to citizens residing in other states, Turkey even opened a special agency, named the *Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities* (YTB) in 2010 as a

stand-alone government institution. The YTB was established under the aegis of the office of the prime minister, which was then abolished under Turkey's new presidential system, and now operates under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (TRT Haber, 2018). The idea of forming a separate body that solely works on the issues of Turks abroad dates back to 1990s; however, it was limited to a state ministry tied to the Prime Ministers' office (Akçapar & Aksel, 2017). The institution, which was created in order to foster Turks' participation in home-country politics while without losing their cultural heritage in the states they reside in (Adar, 2019), also acted effectively to garner expatriate attention regarding political participation.

In the years 2014-2018, there were five elections in Turkey: a presidential election (2014), two parliamentary elections (June 2015 & November 2015), a constitutional referendum (2017), and a joint presidential-parliamentary election (2018). Expatriate voters made up about 5 percent of the Turkish electorate in all five elections. Since expats were permitted to vote in national elections at consulates and embassies in 2014, Turkish citizens in Europe have tended to support conservative-nationalist parties. However, voters in the GCC overwhelmingly backed left-wing opposition parties in the 2014 presidential vote; the June and Nov. 2015 legislative polls; the 2017 referendum; and the 2018 parliamentary and presidential elections.

Adding to these complexities, the diaspora in Saudi Arabia—where the largest Turkish expat community in the GCC resides—has its own dynamics. For instance, Turks in the

Kingdom did not join compatriots in other Gulf Arab states in voting against the constitutional reforms in the 2017 referendum. The reforms—proposed by the ruling party—included the abolishing of the premiership and the establishment of an executive presidency. In the 2018 presidential elections, Turks in Saudi Arabia also deviated from other expat communities in the GCC, who voted in favor of opposition candidate Muharrem İnce rather than Erdogan. There are additional dimensions to consider with reference to Turks in Saudi Arabia. Expats in the Kingdom may cast their votes at either the consulate in Jeddah or the embassy in Riyadh. In all previous elections, the ruling AKP came out victorious in Jeddah while the main opposition CHP won most votes cast at the Riyadh embassy. The reasons for this discrepancy are complex and pertain to the general profiles of the expats living in the two cities. According to a Turkish expatriate born and raised in Saudi Arabia and who cast his vote at the Jeddah consulate in each of the five elections, this difference was due to that fact that the Turkish expatriates who live in

conservative cities of Madinah and Mecca—two cities located close to Jeddah where they cast their votes—tend to be more religious and vote for the AKP in elections. However, expatriates living in Riyadh are predominantly secular and tend to vote for the CHP (Phone interview, 25.02.2022).

The presidential election of 2014 was not only crucial because the president was elected by direct votes of citizens instead of being elected by deputies, but it was also important that expatriates, unlike in the past, showed greater willingness to practice their voting rights. In the 2014 presidential elections, three candidates nominated by parties contested the presidency: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, nominated by the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* [AKP]), Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu jointly nominated by the main opposition Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* [CHP]) and Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* [MHP]), and Selahattin Demirtaş who was nominated by the People's Democracy Party (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* [HDP]) (Resul, 2015).

Table 2
Number and percentage of votes cast in the 2014 Presidential Election

	Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu CHP + MHP		Recep Tayyip Erdoğan AKP		Selahattin Demirtaş HDP	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
UAE	483	75,4	120	%18,7	37	5,78
Bahrain	46	71,8	16	%25,0	2	3,12
Qatar	189	61,7	75	%24,5	42	13,7
Kuwait	155	66,8	73	%31,4	4	1,72
Oman	172	69,3	72	%29,0	4	1,61
Saudi Arabia	342	18,3	1499	%80,5	20	10,7

Source: Supreme Electoral Council (YSK, n.d.).

As a result of the 2015 Turkish parliamentary elections, held first in June and then again in November, led to a significant realignment of the political landscape in the country. The ruling party, whose electoral campaign focused on a constitutional amendment to adopt a presidential system that gives wide-ranging

powers to the president (Cop, 2016), failed to obtain a parliamentary majority to amend the constitution. For the first time since 2002 elections the AKP lost its parliamentary majority. Subsequently, the AKP called for new elections to be held in November 2015.

Table 3
Number and percentage of votes cast in the 2015 June Elections

	CHP		AKP	
	Number of votes	Percent of votes	Number of votes	Percent of votes
UAE	1016	60,7	211	12,6
Bahrain	82	55,7	33	22,4
Qatar	365	53,4	90	13,2
Kuwait	219	57,3	89	23,3
Oman	251	54,2	115	24,8
Saudi Arabia	JED: 879 RYD: 687	JED: 26,5 RYD: 43,4	JED: 2.056 RYD: 570	JED: 62,1 RYD: 36,1

Source: Supreme Electoral Council (YSK, n.d.)

Table 4
Number and percentage of votes cast in the 2015 November Elections

	CHP		AKP	
	Number of votes	Percent of votes	Number of votes	Percent of votes
UAE	1477	62,8	398	16,9
Bahrain	94	55,6	31	18,
Qatar	577	59,3	188	18,6
Kuwait	307	61,1	111	22,1
Oman	335	50,3	204	30,6
Saudi Arabia	JED: 971 RYD: 942	JED: 23,5 RYD: 47,2	JED: 2788 RYD: 802	JED: 67,7 RYD: 40,2

Source: Supreme Electoral Council (YSK, n.d.).

In 2016, the ruling party and the MHP came to an agreement on constitutional change and approved a constitutional referendum to take place in 2017. While the AKP and the MHP campaigned for the ‘Yes’ vote, the CHP and the HDP campaigned for the ‘No’ vote. With the country at a crossroads of a potentially historic transition, the Turkish people went to the polls on 16 April 2017 to vote on a package of constitutional amendments passed by the Turkish Parliament in January 2017 that proposed to change the current parliamentary form of government into a presidential one (Quamar, 2017). With 51.41 percent of the voters in favor, the bill was approved by the public (Çakmak & Çelikbaş, 2017). Until the 2017 constitutional referendum, Turkey was governed by a parliamentary system with multiple political parties. Yet, as a result of the referendum, a new presidential system was introduced for the 2018 election, in which the number of Turkish expatriate voters was about 3 million (Sevi *et al.*, 2020). Although this constituted a change in the system of government, changes to the electoral system were relatively minor (Sevi *et al.*, 2020).

Table 5
Voting Preferences in the 2017
Referendum

	Percent of NO votes	Percent of YES votes
UAE	86,69	13,31
Bahrain	86,44	13,56
Qatar	81,11	18,89
Kuwait	76,62	23,38
Oman	75,96	24,04
Saudi Arabia	JED: 32,6 RYD: 65,8	JED: 67,4 RYD: 34,2

Source: Supreme Electoral Council (YSK, n.d.).

In 2018, snap presidential and parliamentary elections was held in June. This was the second direct presidential election, and the first to be held simultaneously with parliamentary elections after the 2017 referendum. Most importantly, this election was also the first-time electoral alliances were allowed since the 1950s. Two alliances were formed: The People’s Alliance (*Cumhur İttifakı*) made up of the AKP and the MHP, and the Nation Alliance (*Millet İttifakı*) which consisted of the CHP, Good Party (*IYI Parti* [IYI]), and the smaller Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi* [SP]) (Sevi *et al.*, 2020). The People’s Alliance received 53.7 percent of the vote, while the Nation Alliance won 33.9 percent. The HDP, which was part of neither alliance, passed the 10 percent election threshold by receiving 11.7 percent of the vote to send its representatives to Parliament (Sarıbay, 2018).

Table 6
Number and percentage of votes
cast in 2018 Elections

2018 Elections	People’s Alliance AKP + MHP		Nation Alliance CHP + IYI Parti + SP	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
UAE	443	14.10	2.396	76,40
Bahrain	123	17.96	507	74,01
Qatar	417	29,00	858	59,67
Kuwait	406	41,05	492	49,75
Oman	105	23,60	308	69,21
Saudi Arabia	JED: 2647 RYD: 711	JED: 68.19 RYD: 29.89	JED: 1054 RYD: 1576	JED: 27.15 RYD: 66.25

Source: Supreme Electoral Council (YSK, n.d.).

FACTORS SHAPING VOTING BEHAVIOR OF TURKISH EXPATRIATES IN THE GCC STATES

Election results indicate that Turkish expatriates living in the Gulf states more often support the main opposition party, CHP, unlike Turks in Europe who tend to vote for the ruling party, AKP. Thus, the political preferences of Turkish voters living in the Gulf and the Europe differ considerably. The divergences in voting behavior of Turks residing in the Gulf states and Europe could be explained briefly by the different profiles of the Turkish migrant population in the Gulf and Europe related to the reason and period of emigration, length of stay abroad, socio-economic and educational profile, region of origin, and the differences in immigration policies of the host states. According to studies, there are two main types of Turkish emigrants: economic and political, and the majority of Turkish immigrants in the Gulf region belong to the first group (Sevi *et al.*, 2020).

Turkish migration to Europe started almost five decades ago from traditionally conservative and nationalist parts of rural Anatolia with Turks from lower income backgrounds (Sevi *et al.*, 2020). The majority of Turkish immigrants in Europe were conservative first-generation Turks who emigrated in the 1960s and were largely low-skilled, or blue-collar workers, with limited formal education (Arkılıç, 2021). The AKP is more popular among religious Turks, which makes sense as most of these migrants were originally from conservative parts of Turkey (Bilecen, 2015). Furthermore, some Turks in Europe tend to be more nationalist due to two reasons. Firstly,

being away from home, and secondly failing to fully integrate to the host country's social, economic, and political environment. Here, nationalist sentiments and the feeling of being 'foreign' feed the voting tendency. Particularly after seeing that Turks in their countries vote for 'yes' in the referendum, several European politicians raised the issue of revoking dual citizenship rights, and some even called to deport Turks. Therefore, these Turks see Erdoğan as a 'savior' particularly at a time when xenophobia and Islamophobia in Europe is on the rise. Studies suggest Turks who face discrimination at a higher rate in the states they reside in are more likely to be motivated by populist and nationalist discourse emanating from the homeland (Arkılıç, 2021). In recent years, the Turkish government has placed heavy emphasis on ethno-nationalism and religion in its diaspora policy, while addressing European host states and their leaders as 'the other' that have turned their back on Turkish expatriates (Arkılıç, 2021).

However, Turks in the Gulf states are quite different from those in Europe. The first divergent factor is related to the socio-economic and educational profile. Unlike the Turkish workforce in Europe, Turkish expatriates in the Gulf include both blue-collar workers and highly qualified professionals, including businessmen and investors, working for either local or Turkish companies. Although contributors to Turkish brain drain are mostly spread out through the Western world (Güngör & Tansel, 2008), there is a significant number of Turkish expatriates in the Gulf who are highly educated and qualified professionals with urban backgrounds. The Gulf states attracted more

skilled professionals from Turkey because of their immigration regulations. With the increasing business ties between Turkey and the Gulf states over the past decade, the workforce in the Gulf has changed. Today, there are also a number of Turkish academics who work in Gulf universities, which is a new phenomenon. Some studies indicate that better educated Turks from the upper and middle classes tend to vote for the CHP and that their political view is an important predictor of their voting preference (Sevi *et al.*, 2020). However, the AKP, which introduced new-Islamist politics into the Turkish electorate (Hope, 2018), represents the conservative, nationalist, lower or lower-middle classes (Mügge *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, class and education are important factors that influence voting behaviors.

Secondly, studies confirm that the region from which citizens emigrated has a determining role in their political choices, influencing political cleavages that exist among the diaspora. In the Gulf states, there is a significant presence of Turkish citizens that come from Turkey's southern provinces of *Adana*, *Mersin*, and *Hatay* who are generally Arab Alawites (in Turkish *Arap Alevileri*). Because of the common language and geographical proximity, many Arab-origin Alevis from Turkey travel to the oil-rich Gulf states for work. Despite the limited scholarship over Turkish immigration to the Gulf states, there are some studies that examine the immigration to the Gulf from Turkish provinces which have predominant Arab Alevi population. Cengiz (2012) underlines that the majority of the immigration from the *Hatay's Samandağı* district was to Saudi Arabia, which holds the largest Turk-

ish population when compared to other Gulf states. The same study suggests that 95 percent of the migrants from *Hatay* were Arab Alevi, speak Arabic, and have a limited educational background. Arab Alevis, who generally hold a secular outlook and vote for leftist parties in Turkey's elections, tend to be more critical of the ruling party in Turkey. Thus, ethnic and secular-religious factors are also the important correlates of Turks' voting behavior. Likewise, in an interview with a female Turkish citizen, born and raised in Kuwait and who casted her vote in elections, she stated that the votes of Turkish expatriates in Kuwait favored the CHP due to the presence of two groups. First, the Arab Alevis from *Adana*, *Hatay*, and *Mersin*; and second, qualified professionals who come from urban secular background. "Professionals, including engineers, accountants, and technicians working at project-based companies support the CHP. These professionals are mostly graduating from universities that are often critical of the government, such as ODTU [Middle East Technical University]" she added (Phone interview, 28.02.2022).

The third factor is that foreign policy choices of the Turkish government play a role in voting preferences. When the Syrian war erupted, the residents of *Hatay*, a city bordering Syria and home to most of the country's Alevis, were critical of the government's role in the conflict in neighbouring Syria (Cassel, 2012). In an interview with *Al Jazeera*, 31-year-old Kemal, who was on a brief break from work as a barber in Saudi Arabia said, "When something is happening in Syria we feel it. We have Turkish citizenship, but our origins are Arab." (Cassel, 2012). Cassel underlines that

Kemal's views largely reflect those held by the larger Alevi community in Turkey as the effects of the Syrian conflict spill across its northern border into *Hatay*. The rise of Islamist-populist nationalism in Turkey, which has direct implications for the Turkish community, seems to not be welcomed by the Turks living in the Gulf states, who support CHP's foreign policy vision instead. We can see that foreign policy does in fact influence voting behavior in several ways. Most importantly, it tells voters how a party (re-) imagines national identity and thus what the party stands for politically (Kirdiş, 2015). In this context, foreign policy also constructs the state's identity by defining the insiders and the outsiders (Campbell, 1992), and thereby defines who is part of a society and who is not (Balcı, 2011). Politicians are in constant competition with each other over votes, and they construct and politicize public opinion on foreign policy issues as a political strategy to consolidate and/or to construct their politics (Kirdiş, 2015). Thus, political parties utilize foreign policy to restructure domestic politics and their position, and vice versa. Within this context, foreign policy can be used by the dominant party to consolidate its own power while marginalizing its opposition in politics (Kirdiş, 2015). The ruling party's Syria policy, which has been criticized by the CHP, is a good example that indicates the link between the perception of the Turkish expatriates in the Gulf states. In the case of the AKP's unconditional support for the Syrian opposition, the CHP argued that religious ideology was guiding the AKP's foreign policy (The Economist, 2012b), and claimed that the AKP was trying to build "a Sunni block to

counter Iran's influence, and that this explains Turkish support for Assad's Sunni opponents and especially for the Muslim Brotherhood, [. . . and] for Iraq's Sunnis." (The Economist, 2012a). In response, Erdoğan, referring to CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's Alevi roots, suggested that "Kılıçdaroğlu opposes intervention in Syria out of a sense of kinship with Assad, who belongs to the Alawite sect" (The Economist, 2012b) – a suggestion that caused serious worries amongst the Turkish Alevis (Kirdiş, 2015).

The fourth factor is related to Turkish expatriates' integration to their host states' society. As stated above, in the European context, despite the fact that some Turks hold dual citizenship with their host states, the failure to fully integrate to the host country's social, economic and political fabric fuels nationalist sentiments, feeding voting tendencies towards nationalist-populist parties. However, the integration of migrants living in the Gulf states are almost superficial because almost all of them are considered to be 'temporary' residents of the country (Shah & Al-Qudsi, 1989), unlike the Western European context. In the Gulf states, the laws do not grant citizenship to those who reside or were born within their territories, unlike in the European context. As they don't hold citizenship, and most of them reside for temporary period of time, Turkish migrants to the Gulf don't face the integration problems in the cosmopolitan nature of the individual states. Thus, the ruling party's nationalist rhetoric does not appeal to Turks in the Gulf states due to host country's expat-dominated environment. Furthermore, the religious rhetoric of the ruling party holds

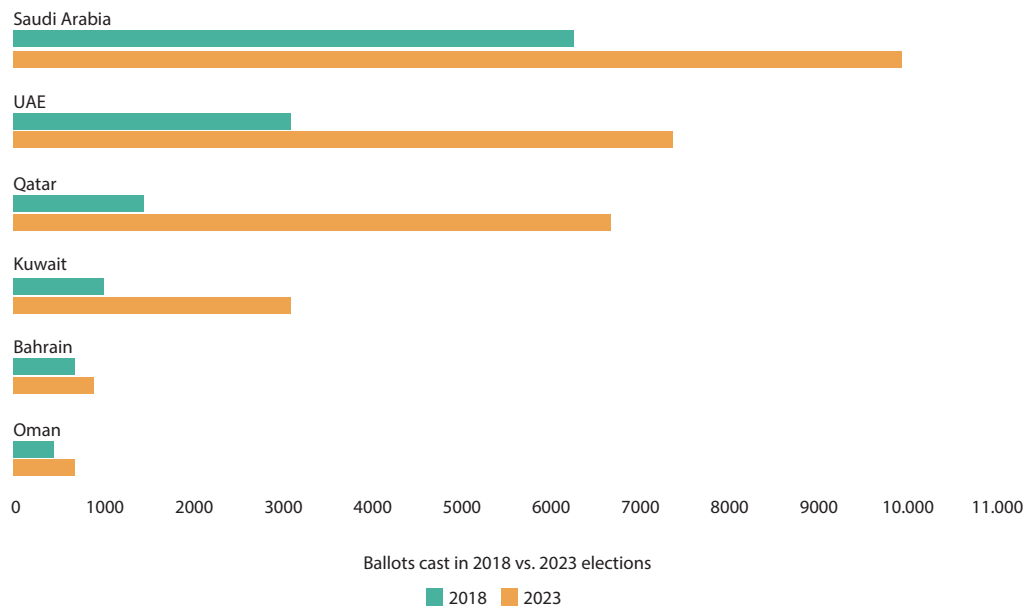
little influence with Turkish voters in the Gulf, whose support for the opposition seems to be more dominant, due to their religio-ethnic backgrounds.

SHIFTING OF VOTES IN 2023 ELECTIONS: ROLE OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE GULF

One of the reasons behind the increase in the number of votes cast for Turkey's ruling party and its leader compared to the previous elections could be related to the considerable rise in the number of Turkish citizens in the GCC countries. Of further note, Turkey's election watchdog has also announced a three-point

increase in voter turnout abroad compared to 2018 (Hurriyet Daily News, 2023). Available data suggests that the number of voters in Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia this year has almost doubled compared to five years ago. For instance, 10,054 votes were cast in Saudi Arabia this year, while just 6,332 ballots were recorded in 2018 (Daily Sabah, 2023a). The same pattern can be seen in other GCC countries as well. The increase has been most eye-catching in Qatar, where the number of votes has more than quadrupled (Daily Sabah, 2023b). The high turnout is due to the gradual rise in the number of Turkish citizens in the GCC, which has involved a change in the demographic makeup of expats.

Voter turnout among Turks in GCC states

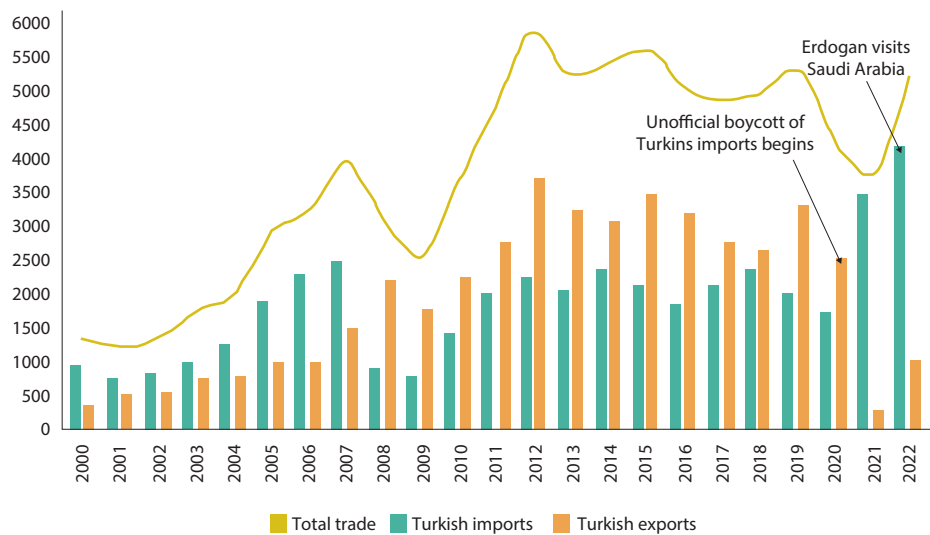


Source: Amwaj.media (2023).

A second factor that could be affecting the voting motivations of expats in Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia might be the state of Turkey's relations with the respective host countries. Turkey enjoys close relations with Kuwait and Qatar, while it has recently mended ties with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The previously tense relations between Ankara and Riyadh had led to the closure of Turkish schools (Anadolu Agency, 2021) and an unofficial trade embargo (Middle East Eye, 2022b) that adversely affected Turkish expatriates living and working in the Kingdom. The closure of schools also had an adverse impact on the employment contracts of employees in Turkish schools, forcing some to return to Turkey.

Thus, the political tensions have cost some Turks working in the GCC states, in particular those within Saudi Arabia, both socially and economically. According to a Turkish expatriate, born and raised in Saudi Arabia, expats owning businesses in Saudi Arabia might have voted for Erdogan and his alliance out of concern that bilateral relations might deteriorate if Erdogan's opponents win (Phone interview, 16.05.2023). While such anecdotal data cannot replace solid surveying, which is lacking, it should be kept in mind that the opposition alliance was skeptical of the ruling party's attempt to restore ties with GCC states (Middle East Eye, 2022a).

Saudi Arabia-Turkey trade, 2000-2022
in millions of USD



Source: Amwaj.media (2023).

In this vein, a Palestinian residing in Qatar who acquired Turkish citizenship along with her parents through real estate purchase in Istanbul, and cast ballots for the first time in the 2023 elections, said in an interview that one of the potential reasons for the support garnered by Turkey's ruling coalition could be the opposition alliance's anti-Arab or anti-refugee rhetoric (The New Arab, 2023). In 2018, Turkey began to allow foreign citizens to acquire Turkish citizenship through investment and real estate purchases. This policy was highly criticized by the opposition, which vowed to abolish the "citizenship by investment" program if they won the elections. According to reports, some 210,000 Syrians have been granted Turkish citizenship, while tens of thousands of others from different nations have also become Turkish nationals through years of working in the country, making investments, or marrying Turkish citizens (Politics Today, 2023). While anecdotal data is insufficient to draw broader conclusions about voting preferences and reasons behind their choices, it is likely that these "new Turks" voted for the ruling alliance due to concerns emanating from the opposition's rhetoric (Glinski, 2023). During the election period, there was a campaign of disinformation regarding the "Arab Gulf citizens", who were criticized for obtaining citizenship. However, it is important to note that the GCC states do not permit their

citizens to hold dual citizenship and therefore, the individuals who acquired Turkish citizenship and voted in the 2023 elections were originally nationals of other Arab countries but resided in the GCC states. This distinction is crucial to clarify.

Third, the growing political polarization of the Turkish political scene was also reflected in the political behavior of the voters. In this context, the diaspora became recently politicized, what is particularly noticeable in time of electoral campaigns when political parties, especially the AKP, appeal to Turks abroad in their political statements and visit European cities to garner their votes. Due to the growing number of Turkish expatriates, their electoral participation continues to dominate the political agenda, turning it into a serious political issue (Sevi *et al.*, 2020). For instance, a Turkish expat in Kuwait suggested that many of those who voted for the opposition in past elections decided not to cast a vote in the 2023 elections due to the divisions within the opposition alliance, which consists of six parties with diverse political and ideological views (Phone interview, 16.05.2023).¹

Lastly, the 'reset' mood in Turkey's foreign policy might also played a role in shaping voting preferences among the expatriates in Gulf Arab states. There is a significant number of expats in the GCC states who hail from southern Turkey, with relatives in Syria across

¹ Also check: Turkey's opposition alliance fractures, fails to agree on challenger to Erdogan, Al Monitor, March 3, 2023, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/03/turkeys-opposition-alliance-fractures-fails-agree-challenger-erdogan#ixzz88a761ZUM>

the border. The ruling party's changing Syria policy is seemingly one significant factor determining attitudes. Against this backdrop, Turkey's recent normalization efforts with the Syrian government, as well as with other states in the region, might be one of the factors that has shifted votes to the ruling alliance in the 2023 elections.

CONCLUSION

The voting behavior of Turkish expatriates worldwide has started to occupy a notable place in academic research, policy circles, and the wider public agenda. Yet, the diversity among Turkish expatriates and the variations in their voting preferences indicate that we cannot talk about a monolithic and unified entity. Studies on electoral participation of citizens who vote from abroad show that the level of participation, as well as voting behavior, depend on several variables. This article aimed to shed light on an understudied dimension of Turkey's expatriates living in the Gulf states. Yet this study acknowledges the political behavior of Turkish expatriates in the Gulf region cannot be captured simply. Transnational political behavior is complex and differs across the key components of interest in politics and party choice.

The analysis of the political preferences of Turks living in the Gulf states show that they overwhelmingly vote for left-wing parties, namely the main opposition CHP, unlike Turks residing in the European states, who tend to support religious-nationalist parties, mainly the AKP. This was the case until the 2023 elections, in which the votes were divided

between both ruling alliance and the opposition alliance.

The study reveals that various factors, including the political environment in the country of origin as well as the host country on the one hand, and the characteristics of voters, on the other, determine electoral participation and voting preferences. The first characteristic of this divergence can largely be explained by the voters' socio-economic backgrounds and class. Secondly, secular-religious dimensions are an important factor in voting behavior in the Gulf. Due to both their political and religious tendencies, Turks in the Gulf states tend to be more critical of the ruling AKP's policies, and in particular foreign policy choices of Turkish government play important role in their voting preferences. However, the results of the 2023 elections – which came amid the normalization of Turkish foreign policy towards regional neighbors and in particular the Gulf states – suggest that Turks living in the GCC states shifted their votes according to their perception of the government's foreign policy record as well as their own business and personal connections in the host countries in the Gulf. Besides economic consequences, social effects of the tension between Turkey and the Gulf countries were felt among the Turkish citizens residing and working in the GCC states. The closure of Turkish schools and the unofficial economic embargo on Turkish products were some of the examples of social and economic implications of the Turkey-Gulf rift. Anecdotal data suggests that both the increasing number of Turkish citizens in the GCC states in the past few years, as well as a move towards normalization between Ankara

and the Gulf capitals have played a significant role in the shifting of votes towards to ruling party in some of the GCC states, namely Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. Yet, Turkish citizens living in the UAE, Oman and Bahrain continue to hold their support to the opposition, even in the 2023 elections.

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Türkiye's Transregionalism with South Asia: Geoculture-boosted Multifaceted Bilateralism

Gurol Baba*

ABSTRACT

Transregionalism is identified with loose and less-institutional interactions functioning via both state and non-state actors. Its lesser need for multilateral and ruled-based institutions makes transregionalism naturally flexible, multifaceted, and more bilateralism-oriented. Türkiye's enthusiasm to deepen relations with Asia, which was officially encapsulated within the Asia Anew initiative (2019), is a good example of such multifaceted transregional bilateralism. The initiative prioritized this interaction scheme by stressing the importance of inter-agency mechanisms operating via state and non-state stakeholders. Accordingly, this study argues that Türkiye's interactions with South Asia, especially regarding state/people-to-people relations, which merge state with non-state actors can be analyzed within the conceptual framework of transregional bilater-

alism. Departing from this premise, this study argues that the geocultural affinities between the South Asian and Turkish communities perform as the main "booster" of this framework.

Key words: Geoculture; transregionalism; bilateralism; Türkiye; South Asia.

TRANSREGIONALISMO DE TURQUÍA CON ASIA MERIDIONAL: BILATERALISMO MULTIFACÉTICO IMPULSADO POR LA GEOCULTURA

RESUMEN

El transregionalismo se relaciona con interacciones más laxas y menos institucionales, que funcionan a través de actores tanto estatales como no estatales. Su menor necesidad de instituciones multilaterales y basadas en las normas hace que el transregionalismo sea naturalmente flexible, multifacético y más orientado

* PhD. The Australian National University (Australia). Professor, Social Sciences University of Ankara (Turkey). [gurolbaba@gmail.com]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9664-2363].

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al bilateralismo. El entusiasmo de Türkiye por profundizar las relaciones con Asia, que quedó oficialmente plasmado en la iniciativa Asia Anew, es un buen ejemplo de ese bilateralismo transregional multifacético. La iniciativa priorizó este esquema de interacción al enfatizar la importancia de los mecanismos interinstitucionales que operan a través de actores estatales y no estatales. En consecuencia, este estudio sostiene que las interacciones de Türkiye con el sur de Asia, especialmente en lo que respecta a las relaciones Estado/persona a persona, que fusionan actores estatales con actores no estatales, pueden analizarse dentro del marco conceptual del bilateralismo transregional. Partiendo de esta premisa, este estudio sostiene que las afinidades geoculturales entre las comunidades del sur de Asia y turca actúan como el principal “impulso” de este relacionamiento.

Palabras clave: geocultura; transregionalismo; bilateralismo; Türkiye; Asia del Sur.

INTRODUCTION

Today’s multipolar international ecosystem requires more flexible, or even ambiguous, terms to conceptualize the interactions between state actors and similarly flexible schemes for better functionality of these interactions. What is meant by flexibility here is less rigid and less institutionalized engagements and more ad-hoc activities. Searching for such flexibility also increases the importance of the interactions between non-state units, which are abstracted as people-to-people links.

Three concepts due to their interlinking features can be utilized in conceptualizing Türkiye’s interactions with South Asia: geo-

culture, transregionalism, and bilateralism. Geoculture is still not a very widely used term to conceptualize inter-state affairs since it does not provide a standalone and clear meaning. Yet, its amorphous, i.e., flexible, nature allows international relations (IR) scholars to use it as a blanket term. It can be used in an interlinked sense with a multiplicity of related concepts, such as imagined communities, soft power, and cultural diplomacy. In IR, particularly in regionalism studies, another flexible term is transregionalism, which is also quite useful for conceptualizing interactions transcending national and regional borders. Transregionalism is not only less institutionalized and less rule-based but also puts a special emphasis on non-state actors’ interactions. Bilateralism is also flexible, especially when it is utilized in a transregional sense. Since it allows the parties to give certain privileges to each other without giving the same commitment(s) to the others, bilateral schemes can be established and terminated more easily than multilateral structures.

Türkiye’s geocultural relations with South Asia, fit into the conceptual framework of transregional bilateralism and within this premise, geocultural affinities play a boosting role. This was well-underlined in Ankara’s Asia Anew initiative by stating ‘the deep-rooted historical and cultural ties’ between Türkiye and Asia (MFA, 2019). To prove this boosting effect of geoculture, this study focuses on the sub- and non-state interactions between Türkiye and South Asia, rather than high-political and inter-state diplomatic affairs.

The study carries out this analysis in four parts. It first discusses why transregionalism is preferable in today’s global ecosystem and

how it is linked with bilateralism. Second, it describes the concept of geoculture and what type of basis it provides for transregionalism. Third, it explains how geoculture operates in international affairs via cultural diplomacy and why it is becoming more important for transregional interactions. Fourth, it elaborates on how Türkiye's geoculture-boosted transregional bilateralism operates in its state/people-to-people interactions with South Asia.

In a more empirical sense, the article interprets how geocultural elements influence the interactions of Türkiye's state and non-state elements with their counterparts in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka, where Türkiye had strong geocultural links due to cultural, particularly religious and historical, affinities. India, on the other hand, is a peculiar case regarding these interactions in South Asia. Türkiye's geocultural interactions with India are heavily focused on its Muslim communities. In other words, state actors' interactions with each other are not particularly strong between Türkiye and India but non-state interactions due to religious affinities are relatively stronger.

In a nutshell, this study examines the patterns of culture-based state/people-to-people interactions. And regarding this examination, the Türkiye - South Asia relations case shows that if utilized smartly, geoculture could provide a very significant foundation for soft power to increase the influence of cultural diplomacy.

TRANSREGIONAL BILATERALISM: A FLEXIBLE AND PRACTICAL PATTERN

Regionalism, as a concept, is quite amorphous since it operates on multiple layers, e.g., politi-

cal, economic, strategic, etc.; on various levels, for instance, intra-regional, inter-regional, extra-regional; and via multiple types of actors, such as governments, NGOs, non-state elements and international organizations which makes the concept mean 'different things to different people in different contexts' (Söderbaum, 2016, p. 17). This multiplicity not only generated several prefixes for regionalism such as inter-, trans-, extra-, cross-, pan-, overlapping-, and mega but also prevented the formulation of a global theory to canvass the concept comprehensively (Börzel, 2016).

Transregional interactions in such amorphous conceptualizations of regionalism have some distinctive characteristics, which make them preferable to institutionalized and strictly rule-based schemes for today's international community. Transregionalism is a blanket concept for looser and less-institutionalized interactions (Aggarwal, 1998; Köllner, 2000; Yeo, 2000; Rüländ, 2002). The concept particularly focuses on amalgamated relations between state and non-state actors (Ribeiro-Hoffmann, 2016). In this sense, it goes beyond narrow interaction patterns operating within formal and intergovernmental frameworks (Baert *et al.*, 2014). Transregionalism's flexible format counts non-state actors as significant elements of cooperation in cross-regions (Aggarwal & Fogerty, 2004).

Transregional interactions do not aim to deepen institutionalization but mostly focus on agenda setting, policy planning, and developing mutual policy aims. This is more of a dialogue process with diffuse membership (Hänggi *et al.*, 2006). Since transregionalism does not require institutional frameworks,

states could act in their individual capacities (Baert *et al.*, 2014) without being restrained by strict community rules, such as the *acquis communautaire* of the European Union (EU).

To make it clearer, transregionalism needs to be differentiated from interregionalism. The latter demands institutional interchanges between at least two regions which are embodied in formal regional organizations (Mattheis & Litsegård, 2018). These regional organizations inter-regionalize in three forms: 'relations with regional organizations in other regions', 'relations with third states in other regions', and 'direct or indirect involvement in other interregional (or transregional) mechanisms' (Hänggi, 2006, pp. 33-34). 'These forms depict that interregionalism requires well-functioning regional organizations capable of representing their region, and cohesive and autonomous enough to carry out relations, symmetrically or asymmetrically with their counterparts bearing, more or less, similar characteristics' (Baba, 2023, pp. 492-493). Such requirements pushed the discussions of interregionalism into the realm of the EU due to its regional representative status, strong mandate, and institutional capacity underlining its actorship and coherence (Hill, 1993; Bretherton & Vogler, 1999). Therefore, three well-known examples of interregionalism are dialogue partnerships between the EU and Mercosur and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and also between ASEAN and the EU. Unlike transregionalism, interregionalism aims to strengthen regional identity and cohesion which again requires institutionalization (Gilson, 2002; Hänggi, 2003) and intraregional

interdependence. Transregionalism, on the other hand, could operate even between two states, which makes bilateralism a useful tool for it.

In bilateralism, the actors have a normative belief that the issues should be resolved, or the interests should be developed with one-to-one links (Pempel, 2004). This creates an element of exclusion, with which parties give particular privileges to each other. Due to such practical advantages, bilateralism has become a fashion in international schemes of trade, investment, and security (Heydon & Woolcock, 2009).

In addition to their usefulness, bilateral schemes are easier to establish than multilaterals. Bilateralism needs less structured organizing principles than multilateralism to regulate the conduct of parties. In bilateral schemes, the relations are formed and maintained according to the needs, interests, and expectations of the two parties on a case-by-case basis (Ruggie, 1992; Tago, 2017). It is particularly useful for relations that require functionality through informality (Cha, 2014; Rochester, 1990).

Unlike rule-based multilaterals, bilateral arrangements do not have checks and balances, which helps the stronger to achieve more profitable outcomes (Dent, 2006). In this dynamic relationship, asymmetries are not unusual due to an 'imperfect balance of power' or 'to a difference in the nature of actors' (Renard, 2016, pp.19-20). Yet, this does not mean that bilateralism is completely imbalanced. On the contrary, it operates with a 'simultaneous balancing of specific quid-pro-quo by each party' (Ruggie, 1992, p. 572).

GEOCULTURE: AN ALTERNATIVE BASIS FOR TRANSREGIONALISM

Immanuel Wallerstein's (1993) argument was that in the period 1945-1970, the people of the periphery organized themselves and one form or another achieved two principal objectives: greater political autonomy and greater wealth. Yet, this achievement did not eliminate the gap between the North and the South, even in the second decade of the 2000s. This gap in addition to politics and economy has also been discussed as a result of the culture. The traditional culture of the periphery has been seen by the literature on development debates between 1945 and 1970 as an obstacle to peripheral countries' development (Wallerstein, 1993, p. 213).

With the rise of the non-west via the emerging powers, including China, India, Brazil, South Africa, and Türkiye in the 1990s and 2000s, culture began to be discussed by these powers as an element of resistance to "degeneration" and "disintegration" posed by the "western" values. Culture here acts as both a unifying and dividing force. (Wallerstein, 1991). This cultural resistance goes back to the 'sociological invention of antisystemic movements' of the 19th century. The emphasis of these movements was that the opposition against the dominant or elite cultures of the West 'must be organized' if it aims to be successful in 'transforming the world'. Therefore, 'cultural resistance today is very often organized resistance – not spontaneous or eternal, but planned'. This organized cultural resistance is 'part and parcel of political resistance', which 'deliberately' asserts (or reasserts) 'particular cultural values that have been neglected or

disparaged in order to protest against the imposition of the cultural values of the strong upon the weaker'. In this way, it strengthens the weaker in its 'political struggles' against the strong (Wallerstein, 1991, pp. 193-194). Regarding the above-mentioned examples of the non-Western emerging powers, this cultural resistance unifies the non-West against the West. The reason for this non-Western unification was that the West, represented mainly by the Europeans, imposed its values on the rest of the world as universal by furthering through domination and material interests (Wallerstein, 1993).

This interpretation takes culture to an elevated point in international politics. It can now be used to mobilize socio-economic elements for particular ends between states and non-state actors, i.e., cooperation and contestation (Winter, 2021). Geoculture, although is not a very familiar term of IR, provides a useful way of inquiring about how cultural elements are distributed over territories and the people living on them (Hannerz, 2009). Even if Wallerstein (1991, p. 11) defined geoculture as 'the cultural framework which the world-system operates', it is, more evidently, a constructed conception that brings different map-making processes and cultural imaginations through shared ideas, values, history, metaphors, and ideologies (Hannerz, 2009). In this sense, it is also linked with Benedict Anderson's (1991) imagined community, which posits in the socialization of a modern community imagination acts as a transformative force. These imagined communities could be transnational, which are broadly defined as global ethnicities (Brinkerhoff, 2009).

Geoculture, with such post-national/ist features, provides a baseline for transregionalism which relies on cultural practices and beliefs creating a community imagination that can take place across regions. With their increased significance and influence, policies relying on these cultural practices have been gradually becoming preferable. In these applications geoculture does not necessarily create a unified monolithic culture, rather it maps out an empirical mosaic of transnational ethnicities, which fits into many state practices, two examples of which are contemporary Ottomanism and China's Belt and Road. Such a mosaic puts aside nationalisms 'in favour of a patchwork of ethnically determined communities that spill across state borders and demarcate the geography of multiculturalism' (Athique, 2014, p. 9).

Transregionalism – geoculture nexus underlines the changes in geopolitics with the new millennium that border-crossing politics are carried out by a collaboration between state and non-state actors. In a conventional understanding of geopolitics, the latter needed the former. In transregionalism, it is almost the opposite. Transnational businesses, NGOs, media, and second-track diplomatic elements are quite useful for the state to make its cultural imagery attractive. This attractiveness helps the diffusion of one country's cultural ideas, symbols, and practices and to be received in other territories. This understanding of geoculture also touches upon Nye's (2004) conceptualization of soft power which posits a projection of cultural values in a variety of ways such as foreign policy, higher education, and popular culture.

Here, geoculture does not give "magical" powers to state actors but a new channel

or a strand of interactions that could complement their traditional commercial and diplomatic relations. Countries prioritizing geoculture, such as China, insert a new discourse based on 'historical networks of [the] silk trade, seafaring, market cities, and cross-cultural encounters' (Winter, 2019, p. 18) in their transnational initiatives. Geoculture in these initiatives develops a type of magnetism that countries such as Iran, Türkiye, and the Gulf states see. For example, the Belt and Road Initiative amplifies the Chinese culture's international recognition and develops politico-economic loyalty between its members.

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: GEOCULTURAL APPLICATIONS IN STATE-MANAGED PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE (STATE/PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE) INTERACTIONS

Geoculture's role in foreign policy, due to its links with soft power and emphasis on historical and cultural affinities between nations, is quite visible in cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy resting on cultural affinities provides new agendas 'leading to a more vigorous and creative and strategic communication system' which is 'dynamic and flexible' (Waller, 2009, p. 403). With these very features, cultural diplomacy is quite adaptable to the rapidly changing environment of global politics. This environment is a product of the transformation from high to low politics, in which the heavy influence of security has been replaced by more humanitarian, cultural, and environmental aspects. Cultural diplomacy aims to address these aspects.

Cultural diplomacy's usage has expanded in the last decade, and it is now applied to almost any type of cultural cooperation managed by first and second-tier diplomatic agents/initiatives (Ang *et al.*, 2015). This way, it walks hand in hand with soft power and public diplomacy. More precisely, cultural diplomacy is a sub-element, if not a tool, of public diplomacy through soft power, providing the necessary ingredients for its successful operation.

Within these interlinked conceptualizations and usages, culture becomes a tool of diplomacy through which states not only develop soft power-based influence over others but also open new channels for cooperation in addition to economic and strategic realms. In these interactions, culture deepens mutual understanding, strengthens national reputation, and combats stereotypes (Mark, 2009).

The way cultural diplomacy is interlinked with geoculture rests on the ambiguity of the definition of culture. This ambiguity gives the joint operation of these two terms a broad scope of practice to cultivate cultural recognition between different nations (Ang *et al.*, 2015) and to deepen cultural affinities between nations with similar socio-cultural backgrounds. The same ambiguity also weakens the possibility of achieving concrete and precise objectives. In other words, some of these geoculture-boosted cultural diplomacy objectives could be 'ambiguous and overstated' (Cull, 2009) which can turn them into an 'overplayed hand' (Isar, 2010).

Since cultural diplomacy works through multiple channels, state, and non-state institutions operate in it mostly in a cooperative sense.

This makes it a suitable setup for transregionalism, due to its operational pattern embracing state and non-state actors together. Aid agencies, conventional and social media, religious organizations, and environmental and human rights NGOs are all instruments of cultural diplomacy. Through these instruments, it creates multiple networks for cultural and intellectual exchange. These exchanges with the help of geocultural affinities could construct, as the constructivists argue socially shared beliefs (Wendt, 1999). Cultural diplomacy fertilizes these shared beliefs with 'fine and performing arts, language education, and intellectual tradition' (Ogoura, 2009, p. 45). Today, social media and popular cultural components such as influencers, movie stars, and series have become the new instruments of cultural diplomacy. Not only they can be easily disseminated by the state and non-state actors but also, they can be easily accessed by millions and therefore these components can mobilize and reshape the cultural understandings of mass audiences. In other words, cultural diplomacy operates via both high cultural (education, art, and literature) and popular cultural (series, movies, social media) instruments.

TÜRKIYE-SOUTH ASIA TRANSREGIONALISM: AN EFFICACIOUS COMBINATION OF GEOCULTURE AND BILATERALISM

Although Türkiye is still being discussed as an assertive middle power proactively engaging with many neighboring and non-neighboring regions, it has relatively lost its proactivity due to domestic politico-economic strains, the exodus of asylum seekers from Syria, Afghani-

stan, and other neighboring regions, and sustained conflicts with its traditional allies and partners, i.e., the United States and the EU. Yet, the legacy of its golden age of proactive middle power-ism (2007-2013) is still quite considerable, especially with the boosting effect of geoculture.

Türkiye's utilization of cultural diplomacy in its transregional affairs coincides with its foreign policy activism. Here, transregionalism is a useful perspective to frame the flexible and eclectic nature of Türkiye's activism. Since Türkiye is not a member of a well-functioning regional organization, such as the EU, that can represent its region and, at the same time, is cohesive and institutional enough to carry out relations directly with its counterparts Ankara's interactions with non-EU countries need to be in a transregional pattern. Transregionalism displays Türkiye's activism regarding its aims as well. Ankara's foreign policy activism in both neighboring and non-neighboring regions focuses on agenda-setting and developing mutual policy aims rather than creating institutional schemes. Regarding Türkiye's foreign policy behavioral patterns, transregionalism is also a useful framework since, Ankara does not rely on institutional support of the organizations that it has been a member, such as the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, or the Council of Europe, but mainly on its individual capacities. Since there has been a lack of institutional support in Türkiye's transregional activism, bilateralism provides an additional, or an eclectic, framework. Ankara has been protecting and furthering its interests with one-to-one links and without necessarily in a

structured scheme. Rather, it establishes and consolidates its relations with its transregional partners on an ad-hoc and case-by-case basis. Although Türkiye has been experiencing an imperfect balance of power, regarding its relations with the smaller powers in the Balkans and Africa, the outputs usually balance the specific quid-pro-quo of the parties. Geoculture here acts as a booster that similar cultural practices with these parties create a community imagination in which both state and non-state elements could interact with greater ease, if not trust. Due to the influence of this booster, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) fueled Türkiye's transregional proactivism, in the form of cultural diplomacy, in the Balkans and the Middle East, and to an extent Africa with a bilateral pattern (Larrabee, 2007; Alpan & Öztürk, 2022).

Most pieces of the literature on AK Party proactivism see Ankara's cultural diplomatic steps into these regions as the result of Türkiye's increasing soft power (Altunışık, 2008; Kalın, 2011; Demirtaş, 2015; Altunışık, 2016; Ekşi, 2017; Tol and Baskan, 2018; Çevik, 2019; Omidi, 2021). Cultural diplomacy here performs as an instrument for creating multiple networks of diplomatic, economic, and intellectual exchanges (Baba, 2017). With these networks, cultural understandings of mass audiences in these regions are mobilized and reshaped and to an extent pulled towards Türkiye. Although not well-examined within the literature, geocultural emphasis in such instrumentalization of cultural diplomacy has been more decisive. That is the reason why, Ankara first tried its soft power influence in the Balkans and the Middle East. Through these cultural

diplomatic steps, geocultural affinities, particularly, in history and religion, acted as unifying forces for developing people-to-people and community-to-community links. These affinities were also against the dominance of Western values. As the geocultural paradigm argues these non-western tendencies with historical and religious affinities gave Türkiye a new cultural framework to impose its influence. This new geocultural framework also had transregional features as seen in Türkiye's relations with Africa and Asia. AK Party governments even implied their enthusiasm to be the leader of this geocultural imagined community. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's famous quote "the world is bigger than five" (Erdoğan, 2016) asserts this tendency.

Türkiye's interactions with South Asia particularly fit into this transregionally bilateral geocultural framework. Neither Türkiye nor the countries of South Asia are members of, EU-style, strongly institutionalized organizations, which are autonomous enough to carry out relations with each other. The lack of such an institutional scheme led these actors to look for developing mutual policy aims to satisfy their own foreign policy needs. This development has been more easily carried out via bilateralism and on a case-by-case basis. In conformity with the state plus non-state features of transregionalism, and the less institutionalized and less rule-based nature of bilateralism Türkiye utilizes its geocultural affinities with South Asia by fusing state and non-state elements of its cultural diplomacy.

Türkiye's cultural diplomacy operates in South Asia, as in many other places, via a variety of state institutions including the Turk-

ish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), and the Türkiye scholarships program of the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB). They all aim to develop state/people-to-people links and promote Türkiye's national brand through strategic and sustainable communication. In almost all their objectives and actions, cultural affinities have been providing a useful base.

TİKA, particularly after 2011, has been the most influential cultural diplomacy instrument of Türkiye. TİKA has been functioning in every South Asian country via a variety of humanitarian and developmental projects. The core of these projects has geocultural connotations aiming to develop transregional imagined communities as it is expressed on the official website of TİKA. Several emphases on the website underline these connotations:

The character of our work in our flourishing and improving ancestral lands changed over time. ... TİKA accelerated its education activities in the ancestral lands after 1995 - schools, libraries, and laboratories were built and provided universities with technical equipment. ... In parallel to the acceleration achieved on the subject of development in the countries with whom we share the same language, the projects that TİKA carried out in these regions have turned into projects that increase institutional capacities. The projects that our country and TİKA realize the ancestral lands with the proper pride of being the inheritors of a common history still continue. (TİKA, 2023)

Although it has a geocultural motivation, TİKA's activities mainly focus on the develop-

ment of communities in the target countries all over the world. And South Asia is not an exception to that. In Lahore, Pakistan, TİKA established a Textile Training Centre (TİKA, 2017), a professional education center (TİKA, 2019), and set up two water sediment filter facilities in Karachi and one in Mithi together with ten water wells in Tharparkar (TİKA, 2017). In Afghanistan, TİKA constructed Martyr Bülent Aydın Mosque as a part of the Mosque construction project under the command of Kabul International Airport (TİKA, 2017). TİKA also provided drugs and medical consumable material support to health institutions in Cevizcan Province Shibrgan District of Afghanistan (TİKA, 2018). In Bangladesh, TİKA opened a Chemotherapy Unit in Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital, (TİKA, 2017a), and carried out aid activities in the fields of education, health, emergency assistance, water, and sanitation and provided infrastructure to 750 thousand Rohingya Muslims who fled from Myanmar (TİKA, 2018). The Agency opened the Bangladesh-Turkish Technology Institute in Lalmonirhat City, with the aim to teach the local communities basic and advanced level computer skills, computerized graphical design training, and stitching and textile skills (TİKA, 2019). In Makunudu Island of the Maldives, TİKA opened a lab for the Makunudu Primary School (TİKA, 2015). In Sri Lanka, the Agency constructed a village for the settlement of the Muslims, who migrated because of terrorist activities. This village, which is 300 km away from Colombo, is comprised of 100 houses and was completed in 2015 (TİKA, 2017b).

Diyanet's role in Türkiye's geocultural interactions with South Asia has been func-

tioning in the humanitarian aid domain. The contents of Diyanet's humanitarian aid have been various, including direct money transfers (Yeni Asır, 2021), dry food (Yeni Haber, 2022), frozen meat (Doğru Haber, 2023; Anadolu Ajansı, 2023), construction of orphanages (Diyanet TV, 2018), cleaning materials, shelter and kitchen equipment (Hukuki Haber, 2018; Anadolu Ajansı, 2017; Milliyet, 2015). In Afghanistan, Diyanet provided food assistance to 2,000 Afghani families in Kabul (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2021). In Pakistan, the Diyanet Foundation also provided food assistance to 25,000 families (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2019) and helped the Pakistanis who were hit by the monsoon floods (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2022a). Similarly, Diyanet sent humanitarian assistance to 2,500 families in the Kerala state of India which was also hit by floods (TRT Haber, 2018). Diyanet also delivered humanitarian assistance to Rohingya Muslim refugees in Bangladesh (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2022b).

From the perspective of geoculture, both TİKA and Diyanet's activities are means of maintaining a transregional imagined community linking the culturally connected communities of South Asia and Türkiye. As humanitarian assistance and development projects are claimed to bolster soft power (Vuving, 2009), TİKA and Diyanet's humanitarian and developmental aid projects not only keep these transregional links fresh but also strengthen Türkiye's soft power attractiveness for the communities of South Asia.

YTB's Turkish scholarships also serve for the soft power connotation of geoculture intending to improve mutual understanding on the individual level. Their objective is to turn

Türkiye into an attractive and new center of education and research. This has been repeated in several statements of President Erdoğan (Erdoğan, 2015; Erdoğan, 2018; Erdoğan, 2022). What makes geoculture meaningful in these statements is the emphasis on common norms and values between Türkiye and the nations/communities of prospective bursaries. The scholarship covers all the educational and living expenses along with the travel expenditures of the candidates to study at Turkish universities. Regarding the application to these scholarships, South Asian candidates have a very significant percentage. In 2019 it was 19% (Türkiye Bursları, 2019), in 2020 it was 28.50% (Türkiye Bursları, 2020), in 2021 the percentage was 25.6% (Türkiye Bursları, 2021)¹. This implies the geocultural attractiveness and influence of Türkiye over the region's youth.

On the non-state level, Turkish NGOs, and on the popular cultural level Turkish series play an important role in the constant construction of an empirical mosaic of transnational communities. One major Turkish NGO is the Yunus Emre Institute established by the law numbered 5653 and dated May 5, 2007. Although it is a public foundation, it operates like an NGO with the aim 'to promote Türkiye, Turkish language, its history, culture, and art, to make such information and documents available to all interested persons around the world, to provide services abroad to those who want to learn Turkish language, culture and art, improve friendship and in-

crease cultural exchange between Türkiye and other countries' (MFA, 2023). As seen in its very aim, the geocultural essence has been the main foundational and practical element of this institute. The Yunus Emre Institute can be accepted as a high cultural instrument of Türkiye's cultural diplomacy due to its emphasis on teaching Turkish and carrying out art activities and supporting scientific research. The institute has branches in almost every major South Asian country or liaisons functioning within the Turkish Embassies. In Kabul, it has been actively teaching Turkish, especially to Afghani women, and increasing cultural exchanges and interactions between Türkiye and Afghanistan via seminars, conferences, and Turkish national day commemorations (Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Kabil, 2023). In Pakistan, in addition to teaching and cultural exchanges, the Institute has also been functioning as a cultural diplomatic platform that hosts high-level Pakistani officials including the consultants of the Prime Minister. In India, and Sri Lanka, the Institute has been offering Turkish language scholarship programs, teaching Turkish language and literature, and has been supporting Turkology studies (Yunus Emre Enstitüsü, 2023).

Another similar institution which is also a "semi-official" NGO is the Türkiye Maarif Foundation. Its official personality is slightly more emphasized than the Yunus Emre Institute since Maarif has the authority to deliver education services on behalf of the Republic

¹ The 2022 Yearly Report of YTB's Turkish Scholarships does not indicate the percentage of South Asian applicants, see <https://tbbsweb.azureedge.net/tbbsweb/Page/About/TB-Rapor-2022-TR.pdf>, Accessed on June 26, 2023.

of Türkiye. These services cover every level of education from preschool to university. In this sense, it is another high cultural instrument of Turkish cultural diplomacy. One main target area of Maarif is the non-western world. Via building and operating new schools/universities in this sphere of the globe, the foundation not only opens new centers of education but also disseminates Turkish cultural norms and values. In South Asia, Maarif's actions are very substantial in Pakistan. Under the brand of Pak-Türk Maarif International Schools and Colleges, the Foundation provides education services to more than 13000 students in 10 different cities and within 28 campuses. The Pak-Türk brand has become the top school system in the country. In Afghanistan, Maarif functions under the label of Afghan-Türk Maarif Schools. Currently, they have 6,500 students. Here the geocultural attractiveness of these schools for the war-torn nationals of Afghanistan is augmented by the opportunities that Maarif provides to them to continue their graduate studies in Türkiye (Akgün, 2022). These educational opportunities of Maarif unquestionably serve Türkiye's soft power and in a way illustrate how geoculture and soft power complement each other.

Turkish series, especially with historical connotations have been generating a great cultural influence for Türkiye in the region. Resurrection Ertuğrul (*Diriliş Ertuğrul*) and Magnificent Century (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*) are the two main examples. The former is about the era of *Ertuğrul Gazi*, the father of Osman Bey who founded the Ottoman state in the 13th century, which later turned into an empire. And the latter narrates the early

to mid-16th century of Ottoman rule by the Süleyman “the Magnificent”. Before the Taliban, *Ertuğrul* was broadcast on more than 30 TV channels in Afghanistan. The influence of the show over the masses was so visible that people put Turkish flags on their midi-buses and taxis (Akşam, 2017). After the Taliban came to power regardless of several social restrictions, *Ertuğrul*, together with other Turkish TV series ‘continue to be the primary choice’. The sales of its recorded episodes, especially by the rural inhabitants who cannot access satellite TV channels and the Internet, ‘increased even more after the Taliban banned the broadcasting of foreign serials’ (Daily Sabah, 2022, p. 6). In 2012, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* also broke sales records in Afghanistan (Milliyet, 2012). The influence of the series impacted the market value and demand for Turkish goods in Afghanistan. The Trade Representative at the Turkish Embassy in Kabul stated that the increasing awareness of Turkish culture boosted the demand for Turkish goods for both high and low-income groups (Sadat, 2019).

Muhteşem Yüzyıl's popularity in Pakistan has also been quite notable. Especially, the Turkish actor *Halit Ergenç* who portrayed *Süleyman* the Magnificent has a remarkable fan base in Pakistan (Gabrالی, 2017). *Ertuğrul*'s impact, though, has been much larger. The show has broken television records to the point that its Urdu version has ‘attracted over 240 million viewers on YouTube’ (AFP, 2020). This impact of *Ertuğrul* in Pakistan underlines the geocultural effect on Turkish cultural diplomacy. The Turkish geocultural influence through these series, particularly

with *Ertuğrul*, embraces 'an enthusiastic audience in a country that struggles with Saudi and Western influence' (Bhutto, 2020, p. 1). There are a couple of reasons why Turkish series, as a part of cultural diplomacy, have been quite influential in Pakistan. First is the historical background. Türkiye was one of the first countries which recognized Pakistan and supported its UN membership. This is a major reason why the two countries historically see each other as brothers. The second reason is more contemporary and religion-oriented. The pressure that Pakistan has been facing from Saudi Arabia's rivalry with Iran and India's with China makes Türkiye's moderate and modern version of Islam more attractive. Therefore, *Ertuğrul*, representing this version, has become so influential in Pakistan that even ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan mentioned it in several speeches (Bhutto, 2020).

Both series also achieved a notable number of viewers in Bangladesh. The geocultural influence of the series, with a particular emphasis on religion, was mentioned by the ex-Turkish Ambassador to Bangladesh who stated that 'people of Bangladesh learn about the history, culture, and norms of Türkiye through Turkish series thus a cultural bond is developing between the people of the two Muslim countries' (Anadolu Agency, 2021, p. 12).

Muhteşem Yüzyıl was quite popular in India as well (Isacotur, 2019). Yet, *Diriliş Ertuğrul* has, like in outer South Asian countries, achieved even larger popularity that even some entrepreneurs name their restaurants "Ertuğrul" (Taşcı, 2020).

Both *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* and *Ertuğrul* are clear examples of the influence of geocultural

connotations creating transregional imagined communities. Both reminded the South Asian Muslim communities of the lost glory of Muslims. More precisely, the heroism and success of the pre-Ottoman and peak-Ottoman periods amalgamated with Islamic values have an imaginary unifying role between Türkiye and certain Muslim communities in South Asia. And this role is pretty important for the success of Türkiye's cultural diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

Transregional bilateralism provides quite a significant flexibility in high-political inter-state affairs. Yet, it is equally, if not more, useful in low-political, particularly state/people-to-people transactions. These interactions are the foci of cultural diplomacy. Geoculture via its potential to create transregional imagined communities stipulates a very powerful base for cultural diplomatic actions. Since the early 2000s, this potential has been utilized by Turkish policymakers. Neo-Ottomanism and Ummah have been the two major displays of this utilization.

State and non-state elements coalesce with each other in Turkish cultural diplomacy practices in South Asia. Education institutions, scholarships, series, embassies, public religious institutions, and aid agencies all work for the same aim of boosting Türkiye's national branding. In other words, Türkiye's people-to-people interactions are mostly managed by an amalgamation of Turkish state and non-state elements.

The role of geoculture in Türkiye's transregional interactions with South Asia is clear

in the sense that Türkiye targeted to increase its influence in the nations not only are more influential in the region but also have cultural affinities, particularly in historical and religious realms. Accordingly, Türkiye's cultural diplomacy has been more effective in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and within the Muslim communities of India. Maldives and Sri Lanka were not prioritized to the same extent. India's case also requires special consideration regarding the impact of geoculture. Although state actors' interactions are not necessarily strong, the Turkish non-state still successfully operates in Muslim communities of India due to a religion-oriented geocultural impact.

These transregional geocultural interactions are multifaceted in the sense that they operate via both high and popular cultural elements and a variety of state and non-state interactions. They embrace students, television audiences, women, entrepreneurs, disadvantaged communities, and state officials. The bilateralism here, from the cultural diplomacy perspective, operates mostly on the non-state level.

Emphasizing geoculture does not nullify the importance of soft power in Türkiye's interactions with South Asia. In other words, geoculture and soft power do not mutually exclude each other, on the contrary, they are complementary. What is significant about geoculture is that it can draw a new map canvassing the transregional cultural affinities that transcend beyond national borders. This map provides a fertile ground making soft power influences more vivid and effective.

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Analyzing the Convergence of Transport Network Connectivity: Case for Türkiye and its Neighbors

Abdullah Açıık*
Can Atacan**

ABSTRACT

Intense trade between China and Europe increases the competition between Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Sea countries on alternative routes. To obtain a significant share from this sector, connectivity to the transportation network must be sufficient. The most important indicator developed for the measurement of connectivity is Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI). By using this index, inferences can be made about possible competitors by determining which countries' differences diverge or converge in the long run. In the research, a sample of Türkiye's neighbors and competitors in maritime transportation was formed, which includes

Bulgaria, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Romania, Russia and Ukraine. To test the convergence, we tested unit root by using the log differences of the LSCI values of Türkiye and other countries. The countries converging with Türkiye are Bulgaria, Lebanon, Romania, and Ukraine. Since the average LSCI values of the converging countries are lower than Türkiye, they will become possible competitors in the region. Egypt and Greece are diverging and their dominant role in the region will continue. It would be beneficial for Türkiye to strengthen its infrastructure in alternative transportation routes as well as maritime transportation.

Key words: Connectivity; convergence; liner shipping; unit root.

* Ph.D. Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Denizcilik Fakültesi, Assoc. Prof. Dr. [abdullah.acik@deu.edu.tr]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4542-9831].

** Master's, Ege University, Urla Maritime Vocational School. [can.atacan@ege.edu.tr]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4490-7566].

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ANÁLISIS DE LA CONVERGENCIA DE LA CONECTIVIDAD DE LAS REDES DE TRANSPORTE: EL CASO DE TURQUÍA Y SUS VECINOS

RESUMEN

El intenso comercio entre China y Europa aumenta la competencia entre los países del Mediterráneo, el Egeo y el Mar Negro en rutas alternativas. Para obtener una participación significativa de este sector, la conectividad a las redes de transporte debe ser adecuada. El indicador más importante desarrollado para medir la conectividad es el Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI). Al utilizar este índice, se pueden hacer inferencias sobre posibles competidores al determinar qué diferencias de países divergen o convergen en el largo plazo. En la investigación se creó una muestra de los vecinos y competidores de Türkiye en el transporte marítimo, que incluye a Bulgaria, Egipto, Georgia, Grecia, Israel, Líbano, Rumanía, Rusia y Ucrania. Para comprobar la convergencia probamos la raíz unitaria utilizando las diferencias logarítmicas de los valores LSCI de Türkiye y otros países. Los países que convergen con Türkiye son Bulgaria, Líbano, Rumanía y Ucrania. Dado que los valores medios del LSCI de los países convergentes son inferiores a los de Türkiye, se convertirán en posibles competidores en la región. Egipto y Grecia están divergiendo y su papel dominante en la región continuará. Sería beneficioso para Türkiye fortalecer su infraestructura en rutas de transporte alternativas, así como en transporte marítimo.

Palabras clave: conectividad; convergencia; transporte marítimo; raíz unitaria.

INTRODUCTION

Since the development of the container in a standard size in 1956, container shipping has been positioned as an accelerating factor for the world economy. Standard sized containers have increased transportation efficiency because they can easily be loaded onto trains, ships, and trucks (Garrett, 2014 p. 1088). Thus, loading, unloading and transfer operations have been simplified and costs have been reduced. In addition, it has become easier to transfer cargoes between transportation modes (Button, 2010, p. 329). One of the most important benefits is that it reduces the time the ships stay in the port. Ships, which used to have to stay in the port for about two months, now complete their loading and unloading activities in one day. Thanks to their metal-constructed design, containers ensure both the safety of the cargoes and the safety of the workers. Of these benefits, the ones that most affect the world economy are standardization and the reduction of costs (Wang & Liu, 2015, p. 362).

Cargoes transported by container transportation can generally be defined as valuable cargoes. Although all types of cargo can be technically transported, generally final products such as consumer goods, electronics, clothing, furniture; intermediates such as raw materials, semi-finished products, machine parts, and product components; perishable products such as vegetables, fruits, meat, and food are transported (Neise, 2018, p. 35). For this reason, container traffic volumes between countries vary according to the geographical locations, climates, specializations and industrial policies.

Today, a very large proportion of container traffic originates from China, and, in 2021, approximately 31% of the total container traffic at ports around the world took place in Chinese ports (UNCTAD, 2023a). The main reason for this is China's policy positioning itself as the world's manufacturing plant. It imports the raw materials and energies from around the world, to a large extent, and exports the products it produces with these inputs to the world. China alone imported 73% of the iron ore and 23% of the coal transported by sea all over the world in 2021 (RMT, 2022). In addition, 50.5% of coal production and 19.5% of coal imports worldwide is performed by China. On the crude oil side, 19% of the world's oil imports were made by China (BP, 2023). All these statistics support China's positioning as the world's factory. One of the main customer regions of China is European countries. In addition, countries on the transportation routes to European countries are also important customers of China. Approximately 30% of the total trade volume of European countries is carried out with China (Eurostat, 2023). This situation sheds light on the significant dimension of trade between China and Europe.

China attaches great importance to European countries, which are its most important customers, and therefore invests in alternative transportation projects (Yu *et al.*, 2021, p. 16). In this direction, China has invested in European ports in countries such as Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, and Middle Eastern ports in countries such as Egypt and Israel. In Türkiye, China aimed to expand its transportation network

and security by acquiring Kumport. Great efforts were made to sell the Çandarlı port to China, but ultimately the Chinese company preferred the Greek port of Piraeus. This has also affected the difference in cargo traffic and connectivity to the transport network between Türkiye and Greece.

In addition to the direct sea transport to Europe via the Suez Canal, there are alternative ways such as the direct railway route from China to Europe, the sea route over the Arctic Sea, the trans-Caspian route consisting of rail, sea and later rail transport, and the Middle East route transporting goods to the Middle East by sea and then by land or rail. As can be seen from these alternative routes, the transportation method may consist of one mode of transportation or a combination of several modes of transportation, depending on factors such as cost, time, political relations, and infrastructure. Transitions between more than one mode require transshipment points. Transshipment points, on the other hand, provide serious benefits to the country where they are located, both in terms of income (Santos & Soares, 2015, p. 91) and transportation accessibility (OECD, 2017, p. 88).

For this reason, there may be great competition between geographically advantageous regions. Thanks to the advantage of its geographical location and increasing infrastructure investments, Türkiye is a candidate country to become one of these main transit points (Taneja, 2010, p. 210). The main requirements of being a transshipment point in container transportation are to have a strong transportation infrastructure and facilities. One of the most common and accepted indicators used to measure

facilities on the seaside side is the Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI). A high index will indicate a high connectivity since it is calculated according to the size of the ship arriving in the country, the frequency of voyages, the number of countries with direct voyages, and the number of liner shipping companies. Therefore, a country with a higher index is considered to be in a more competitive position (Notteboom *et al.*, 2022, p. 420). While it is sufficient to evaluate the countries with a high index to analyze the current situation of the countries, the course of the difference between the countries should be examined to analyze their possible future situations. Since transportation infrastructures are costly and provide time-consuming processes, it is of great importance to have a foresight in advance before new investments. One of the most accepted approaches examining whether the course between connectivity values of the countries is closed in the long run is the convergence approach.

The concept of convergence is basically defined as an analogy and developing similar features. This analogy can be in the form of ideas, values, culture, economy, politics, religion, among other things (Ratavaara, 2008, p. 3). From the perspective of countries, there may be a convergence in beliefs, principles, social norms, and economic levels. The main factors triggering this convergence can be shown as increased intercultural interaction and communication due to globalization and technological progress (Bellet & Massard, 2002, p. 133). The location of production factors in different countries, the cheapening of transportation facilities, and the development of a common financial system acceler-

ated this convergence. In addition, increasing economic cooperation between countries, cultural interaction and diplomatic relations are other factors that accelerate convergence between countries.

In the literature, the subject of convergence has been researched and examined in many areas over digitized values for the countries all over the world. These research areas covered different topics such as GDP values (e.g. Siljak, 2015; Cabral & Castellanos-Sosa, 2019; Matsuki, 2019; Lau *et al.*, 2022), unemployment rates (e.g. Cuestas *et al.*, 2015; Monfort *et al.*, 2018), inflation rates (e.g. Valera & Valera, 2014; Liu & Lee, 2021), interest rates (e.g. Arghyrou *et al.*, 2009; Liu *et al.*, 2013), trade volumes (e.g. Jena & Barua, 2020), stock prices (e.g. Chien *et al.*, 2015), energy consumptions (e.g. Kasman & Kasman, 2020; Simionescu, 2022), carbon emissions (e.g. Herrierias, 2012; Yilanci & Pata, 2020; Marrero *et al.*, 2021; N'Drin *et al.*, 2022), transportation networks (e.g. Atacan *et al.*, 2022), product prices (e.g. Zavaleta *et al.*, 2015; Romero *et al.*, 2020; Gil *et al.*, 2022), military expenditures (e.g. Sawhney *et al.*, 2016; Clements *et al.*, 2021), citizens' life satisfactions (e.g. Welsch & Bonn, 2008) of countries. Considering the application areas of convergence, we used this approach to analyze the long-term course of the gap between the transport connectivity of Türkiye and the rival countries in the region in terms of becoming a major transshipment node. Thus, it will be possible to develop more effective policies for the future by using the effects of the investments made and the policies implemented so far and considering the situation of the competitors. Port investments in

particular are very costly and time-consuming investments, and the economic and environmental costs of possible faulty policies high. As a result of the analysis applied to nine (9) countries in the region, the countries converging with Türkiye were Bulgaria, Lebanon, Romania and Ukraine, and the countries diverging with Türkiye were Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Israel, and Russia. Since the ports of Egypt, Greece and Israel are important points on the trade route with Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, they have received significant investments from Chinese companies. For this reason, especially Egypt and Greece's connectivity on international container transportation network diverges from Türkiye. In this direction, Türkiye should design its policies that propose faster and more cost-effective alternatives by using rail and road networks.

In the second section of the study, the theoretical framework of the research was drawn based on maritime transportation. The data set and method used in the research were introduced in the third section. In addition, the situation of Türkiye and the countries in the region at the time were evaluated using LSCI and container traffic data. The findings obtained by analyzing the difference between Türkiye's LSCI value and those of other countries with unit root tests were presented in the fourth section. Potential structural breaks and nonlinearities in the variables were also considered during the analyses.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The LSCI variable is an indicator developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade

and Development (UNCTAD) that aims to measure the integration of countries into global liner transportation (OECD/EUIPO, 2021 p. 59). For this measurement, the composite main index value is calculated based on the values in the six components, which are the weekly scheduled ship call, the total annual capacity deployed, the number of liner services, the size of the largest ship deployed, and the number of countries connected to the country by direct service UNCTAD (2023a).

Generally speaking, LSCI can be considered supply side of container transportation. Therefore, LSCI also demonstrates accessibility to international trade. A higher index value makes it easier to participate in higher-capacity regular transport opportunities (Mangan *et al.*, 2020, p. 70). The demand side is determined by the container traffic at the ports. Accordingly, positive and bidirectional causality can be expected between LSCI and container traffic of the countries. In addition, container traffic in ports is directly related to the economic activities and trade volumes of the countries (Yap, 2021, p. 68). Therefore, it can be said that there is a positive relationship between all of them. To confirm this positive relationship, we examined the correlation coefficients between LSCI, container throughput (twenty-foot equivalent unit), total GDP (current US\$) and trade volume (Exports + Imports of goods and services in current US\$) values of our sample countries, which are Bulgaria, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Romania, Russia, Türkiye, and Ukraine, for 2020 and presented the results in Table 1.

As can be seen, there is a strong positive correlation between LSCI and container

throughput, indicating that countries with high port traffic also have high LSCI values. On the other hand, the relationship of LSCI variable with GDP and trade volume variables is positive, but it is a moderate relationship. The reason for this may be that the service and finance sector, which does not have physical product output, is included in these variables.

There is also a very strong correlation between the two variables, as the GDP account also includes trade data. In general, there are strong positive relationships between container traffic and economic activities, and between LSCI and the container traffic of the countries. In other words, the main determinant of the LSCI variable is the economic activities in the country.

Table 1
Correlation of Selected Variables

	LSCI	CONTAINER THROUGHPUT	GDP	TRADE VOLUME
LSCI	1	0.83 (0.00)	0.67 (0.03)	0.53 (0.11)
CONTAINER THROUGHPUT	0.83 (0.00)	1	0.73 (0.01)	0.63 (0.05)
GDP	0.67 (0.03)	0.73 (0.01)	1	0.97 (0.00)
TRADE VOLUME	0.53 (0.11)	0.63 (0.05)	0.97 (0.00)	1

Notes: (1) Correlation analysis applied for logarithmic values. (2) Probabilities are shown in ().

Source: World Bank (2023a, 2023b, 2023c); UNCTAD (2023a, 2023b).

On the other hand, another important factor affecting the LSCI variable is geographical location. If a country's location is at a strategically optimum point, this country may be used as a transit port in container transportation. For instance, Singapore's total GDP in 2020 is 23% of Russia's, but its LSCI is 3.23 times that of Russia. Such a difference is due to Singapore's unique position in the world. Containers transported to this country by large ships are sent to their final destinations by smaller ships. Similarly, Malaysia has become one of the main transit ports in the world with the advantage of its geographical location. There-

fore, according to the last quarter of 2022 in LSCI value, Singapore ranked 3rd after China and South Korea, while Malaysia ranked 4th (UNCTAD, 2023b). Apart from this, since some states are landlocked and do not have coastlines, container handling operations are carried out by neighboring states with coasts (De, 2014, p. 186). This situation leads to the emergence of countries that do not have a large economy but have high connectivity.

Since the LSCI variable is a factor that is affected by demand but also generates demand, it has a significant impact on the foreign trade of countries. In a study conducted by

Atacan *et al.* (2022) specific to Türkiye, the effect of changes in LSCI value on container traffic in the country's ports was examined. As a result, they determined that a 1% increase in the index caused an increase of approximately 1% in container traffic, which indicates that improvements on the supply side are also reflected in international trade. A similar approach was also investigated by Lin *et al.* (2020) with a spatial approach over the situation between China and its neighboring countries. The results of the applied regression and spillover analysis revealed that LSCI made a positive and significant contribution to the merchandise trade. The 1% increase in the index constitutes an approximate 0.87% increase in the trade volume. Also, since the LSCI variable consists of five (5) different components, it has been a research question that the developments in which component contribute more to international trade.

The LSCI variable has also been used as a proxy for port efficiency in another study. As increased connectivity means larger ships and busier line traffic, they assumed that the efficiency of the port with higher connectivity would also be higher. Using LSCI as a proxy for productivity, the effect of that variable on the trade balances of African countries was analyzed by Sakyi and Immurana (2021). The panel regression results applied by including 27 African countries showed that the increased LSCI value had a negative effect on the trade balance and increased exports, which means increased connectivity reduces trade costs and boosts exports. In the study conducted by Mohamad *et al.* (2015), which LSCI component had the greatest effect on port outputs

of ASEAN countries was examined by panel regression analysis. The results showed that ship size is the most influential component and if improvements were made, the region could become one of the major transit ports in the world. The trade facilitating role of the LSCI variable does not only represent the infrastructure offered, but also reduces costs as it increases supply. The factors affecting trade costs for ASEAN and India were researched by Nagraj and Ghosh (2021) using a panel regression model. LSCI was included in the model as an independent variable, along with the variables of distance, cost of entry, tariffs and exchange rate. The results showed that as LSCI increased, trade costs decreased, which supports that increased connectivity increases supply and reduces costs.

Countries that have cultural, political, geographical and economic associations can also develop similarity features. Coexistence in any factor can lead to convergence in other factors. In this context, one of the most researched groups in the literature is ASEAN countries. This group of countries has very close geographical, cultural and economic relations. Whether the empirical convergence for this region is examined for GDP growth rates (e.g. Habibullah *et al.*, 2017), GDP per capita values (e.g. Matsuki, 2019), inflation rates (e.g. Valera & Valera, 2014), stock market indices (e.g. Chien *et al.*, 2015), worker productivity (e.g. Rath, 2019), and environmental carbon footprints (e.g. Yilanci & Pata, 2020).

Similarly, the validity of convergence in the literature for European Union (EU) countries has been tested in many studies by using GDP values (e.g. Siljak, 2015; Cabral &

Castellanos-Sosa, 2019), unemployment rates (e.g. Cuestas *et al.*, 2015; Monfort *et al.*, 2018), inflation rates (e.g. Cuestas *et al.*, 2016), interest rates (e.g. Arghyrou *et al.*, 2009), trade volumes (e.g. Jena & Barua, 2020), energy consumptions (e.g. Kasman & Kasman, 2020; Simionescu, 2022), carbon emissions (e.g. Herrerias, 2012; Marrero *et al.*, 2021), transportation networks (e.g. Atacan *et al.*, 2022), life satisfactions (e.g. Welsch & Bonn, 2008). Whether integration leads to convergence in LSCI values for EU countries was investigated by Açık (2021) using the panel unit root test method. The results obtained revealed that the EU countries, which were found to converge in economic, commercial, environmental, and energy related topics in the literature, also converged in LSCI values. In other words, the gap between countries with weaker transport networks and those with strong transport networks is closing in the long run.

After evaluating the function of LSCI and the relationship between the LSCI variable and other macro variables, it is necessary to explain why Türkiye and other countries should have a convergence in their LSCI values. First, it is necessary to mention Türkiye's strategic geographical position in the world. As a result of its geographical structure, Türkiye is a natural bridge between the Asian and European continents. It is on one of the effective routes where safe road transportation from Asia to Europe can be provided. For this reason, it was in the most strategic position on the ancient Silk Road and modern Silk Road routes. It is located at the connection point of Central Asia, Middle East and Caucasus countries with Europe. It also has strategic waterways such as the

Istanbul and Çanakkale Straits. Thus, it plays an active role in maritime trade in the Aegean, Marmara and Black Sea regions.

One of the most important reasons for this is the trade between Europe and China. In 2022, trade between China and the European Union countries increased to 856 billion dollars and this amount corresponds to approximately 30% of the total trade volume of EU countries (Eurostat, 2023). In these intense commercial activities between Europe and China, which country will be used as a transshipment port and which transportation mode(s) will be used to continue the remaining journey of the cargo determine the container traffic in the relevant country. For example, an alternative would be to bring the cargoes from China to Egypt and unload them in Egypt, from there to be loaded on smaller ships and sent to their final destinations. Or another alternative would be for large ships to unload their cargo in Greece and from there to transport the cargo by rail or road to the interior of Europe (e.g. the Western Balkans Corridor). Further, it may be the unloading of cargo in Bulgaria or Romania and their transport into Europe by inland waterways (e.g. Baltic – Black – Aegean Seas Corridor). The opposite scenarios can also be seen in the cargoes going from Europe to China. There are also alternative routes for trade between China and Europe, such as the Trans-Siberian Railway, the New Silk Road and the Arctic Route. In addition, there are routes passing over Türkiye that will provide transportation through the Development Road, the route that continues by road and railroad after the sea route to the Persian Gulf, and the Zangezur Corridor, which is

in talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia. If these routes can be faster and more economical alternatives, they may reduce the regional importance of Egypt and Greece in container transshipment. Multimodal transportation routes aim to generate a more efficient and flexible trade network by harnessing the advantages of different modes of transportation. These routes can reduce transit times, lower costs, and facilitate logistical arrangements. However, the successful implementation of such routes requires suitable infrastructure, effective coordination among transportation operators, and cooperation between countries.

Although each loading, unloading and transshipment activity burdens a cost element for the cargo owner, it is a gain element for the country where those transactions are made. This gain can be classified into two (2) groups: (i) monetary gain, (ii) infrastructural gain. Monetary gain is the income obtained from each transaction, such as handling, storage, packaging, etc. since all of them are applied at a certain tariff. Infrastructural gain, on the other hand, as mentioned in the literature, increased cargo traffic and causes larger and more frequent ships to visit. This situation causes a decrease in the trade costs of the country in export and import activities due to the economies of scale. It contributes to the generation of more employment and causes an increase in port investments. For all these reasons, there is a competition and race between countries to become a transshipment port on the main cargo routes in the world (Yetkili *et al.*, 2016). In such a competitive environment, it is important to determine which countries are more advantageous, to

predict which countries will be competitors in the future, even if not now, and to analyze the situation in the market according to the competitors. Although the LSCI index is not only affected by international transshipment cargoes and local demand is also important, it can be considered as an important indicator for the competitive power of countries. In this direction, statistical inferences can be made on the long-term behavior of the LSCI values of the countries in the region. The aim of this study is to try to determine what will be the competitive power of Türkiye and its competitors in the region in the long run. It is aimed at contributing to the literature by testing the convergence theory in the transportation industry, which is rarely studied in the literature, econometrically.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

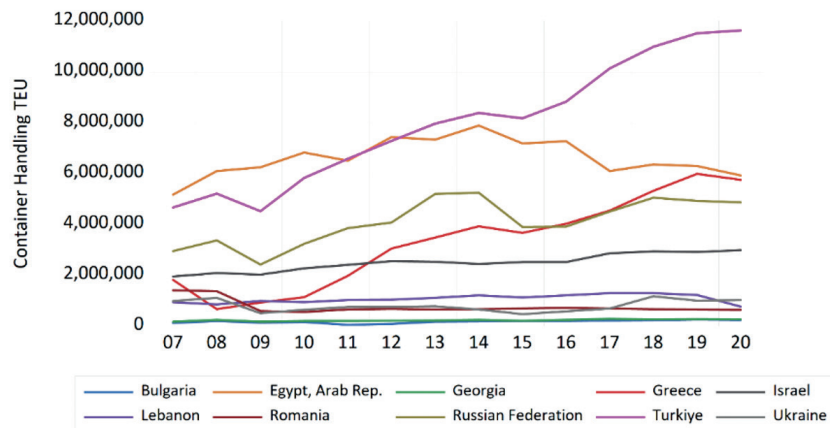
As a sample in our study, we chose the maritime neighbors around Türkiye because any trade improvement or deterioration in any neighboring country will also affect other countries. In addition, since countries serve as transshipment ports, there may be a competition between countries. Whether there are convergences between LSCI of Türkiye and other countries can show which neighbor countries are threat to the Turkish liner shipping industry. The selected neighbor countries are Bulgaria (BUL), Egypt (EGY), Georgia (GEO), Greece (GRE), Israel (ISR), Lebanon (LEB), Romania (ROM), Russia (RUS), and Ukraine (UKR).

Before examining the Liner Shipping Connectivity values of the countries, it is im-

portant to mention the cargo traffic in their ports, to have an idea about their capacity in container transportation. Also, container traffic in countries is a result of their LSCI levels. Accordingly, the handled average container amounts between 2007 and 2020 are 7,987,198 for Türkiye, 6,622,964 for Egypt, 4,115,814 for Russia, 3,310,403 for Greece, 2,506,445 for Israel, 1,079,766 for Lebanon,

801,947 for Ukraine, 765,200 for Romania, 235,656 for Georgia and 182,206 for Bulgaria respectively (UNCTAD, 2023a). In Figure 1, the course of container traffic in the ports of the countries between 2007 and 2020 is presented. According to the figure, it can be observed that Türkiye and Greece have an increasing trend, Egypt has a decreasing trend, and the remaining countries follow a stable course.

Figure 1
Port Throughputs of the Sample Countries



Source: UNCTAD (2023a).

The LSCI values of the countries are used to test the convergence in the analyses. The period that we will use in our research consists of 65 quarterly observations covering the period between the first quarter of 2006 and the first quarter of 2022. The descriptive statistics of the LSCI variables of the countries are presented in Table 2. Accordingly, the countries with the highest connectivity in terms of liner transportation are Egypt (54.3), Türkiye (48.23) and Greece (43.05), while the

countries with the lowest are Georgia (5.56), Bulgaria (7.51), and Romania (23.04). When we look at the coefficient of variation (standard deviation/mean), the countries with the most variability are Bulgaria (30%), Russia (28%) and Greece (27%), while those with the least variability are Georgia (13%), Egypt (14%), and Lebanon (15%). The low variability naturally reflects on the distribution characteristics (Jarque-Bera) and normalizes their distribution.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of the LSCI Values of the Countries

	BUL.	EGY.	GEO.	GRE.	ISR.	LEB.	ROM.	RUS.	TÜR.	UKR.
Mean	7.51	54.30	5.56	43.05	31.46	33.42	23.04	35.69	48.23	23.55
Median	6.96	54.65	5.65	41.65	30.33	35.19	23.16	36.01	51.11	24.87
Maximum	16.57	68.51	6.84	60.92	41.92	43.21	27.66	53.12	62.84	28.97
Minimum	5.28	43.07	3.93	25.02	21.85	20.55	16.00	18.52	29.82	12.35
Std. Dev.	2.27	7.55	0.74	11.48	7.10	6.49	3.34	9.86	10.08	4.28
Skewness	2.82	0.31	-0.40	0.26	0.16	-0.35	-0.39	-0.21	-0.42	-0.63
Kurtosis	11.55	1.99	2.35	1.81	1.52	1.89	1.77	1.74	1.74	2.46
Jarque-Bera	284.24	3.80	2.88	4.59	6.20	4.69	5.69	4.75	6.20	5.07
Probability	0.00	0.15	0.24	0.10	0.05	0.10	0.06	0.09	0.05	0.08
Obs.	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65

Source: UNCTAD (2023b).

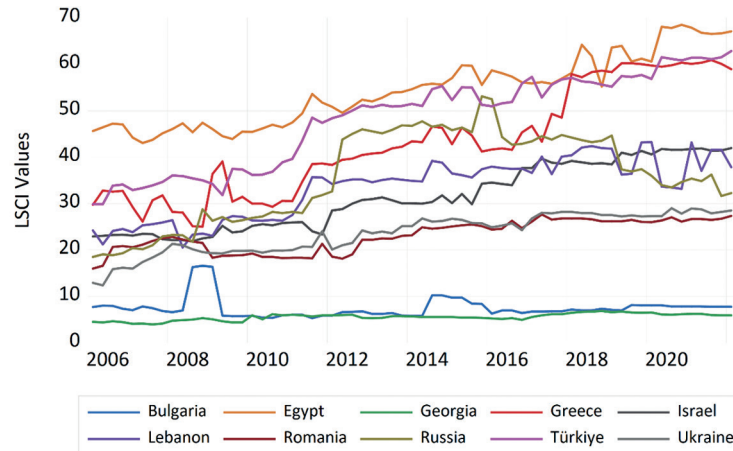
The movements of the LSCI variables of the sample countries in the period under consideration are presented in Figure 2. Naturally, as the LSCI value improves, the container traffic in the country is likely to increase, as there is an improvement in the transportation opportunities of foreign trade stakeholders (Atacan *et al.*, 2022). For instance, when we considered the correlation between LSCI and container port throughputs of the countries in the period under consideration, we found six significant positive relationships. The significant correlation coefficients were 0.96 for Greece, 0.94 for Türkiye and Israel, 0.74 for Russia, 0.72 for Lebanon and 0.65 for Georgia respectively. These confirm that there is a positive significant relationship between the variables in general. Therefore, countries with higher container traffic volumes can be expected to have higher LSCI values.

To measure whether the neighboring countries converge with Türkiye, we subtract the logarithmic LSCI variables of all countries from Türkiye's logarithmic LSCI variables and obtain the following variables whose descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3. Differenced variables are defined with the prename TD. For example, the TDBUL variable was obtained by subtracting Bulgaria's log (LSCI) variable from Türkiye's log (LSCI). The same process is true for the variables of the remaining countries. In the next process, unit root tests are applied to these variables, and it is determined whether they converge or not. A positive average value indicates that the LSCI value of the relevant country is generally lower than the Turkish LSCI value, while a negative value indicates that the value of the relevant country is generally higher than the Turkish value. For instance, the value of the variable

calculated for Egypt is negative and the country with the highest LSCI value on average is the same country. If the average is positive and the minimum value is negative (e.g. Greece,

and Russia), it indicates that the relevant country has surpassed Türkiye at some times during the period under consideration, although they have a lower value on average.

Figure 2
LSCI Values of the Sample Countries



Source: UNCTAD (2023b).

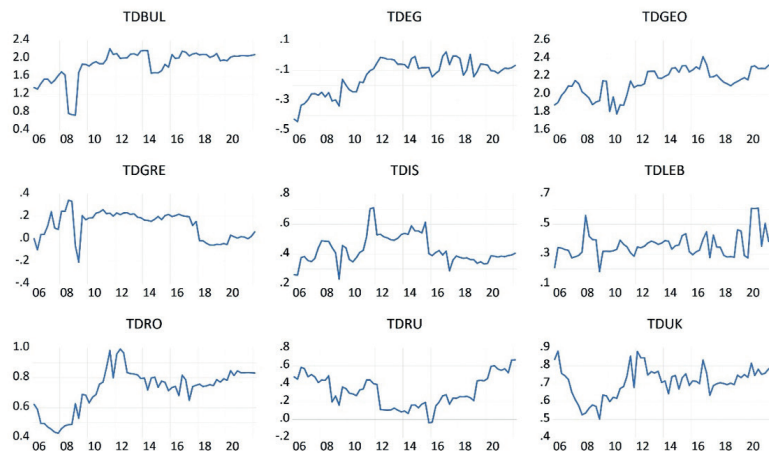
Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of the Log Differences of Countries' Indices with Türkiye

	TDBUL	TDEG	TDGEO	TDGRE	TDIS	TDLEB	TDRO	TDRU	TDUK
Mean	1.87	-0.13	2.15	0.13	0.43	0.36	0.73	0.32	0.71
Median	2.00	-0.10	2.16	0.17	0.40	0.35	0.76	0.29	0.72
Maximum	2.22	0.02	2.42	0.34	0.71	0.61	0.99	0.67	0.88
Minimum	0.74	-0.44	1.78	-0.21	0.23	0.18	0.43	-0.04	0.50
Std. Dev.	0.33	0.11	0.15	0.12	0.10	0.08	0.14	0.18	0.08
Skewness	-1.89	-0.88	-0.55	-0.56	0.72	1.07	-0.61	0.08	-0.32
Kurtosis	6.61	2.97	2.49	2.36	3.69	4.53	2.80	2.04	2.89
Jarque-Bera	74.16	8.42	3.98	4.46	6.87	18.86	4.13	2.59	1.17
Probability	0.00	0.01	0.14	0.11	0.03	0.00	0.13	0.27	0.56
Obs.	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65

The graphical representation of the log difference values of the countries with Türkiye is presented in Figure 3 in alphabetical order. For some countries, the gap tends to open in a positive or negative direction, while for other countries the gap has downward tendencies. In order to obtain scientific evidence, econometric tests should be applied, but some inferences can still

be made visually. For instance, although Greece was almost equal in the initial period, it fell back over time, but managed to close the gap after a while. Egypt, on the other hand, started to lose this superiority over time, although it was well ahead in the initial period. Therewithal, it can be said that the difference between Georgia, Bulgaria and Russia has widened over the time.

Figure 3
Log Differences of Countries' Indices with Türkiye



The TD prename variables obtained by taking the log differences between Türkiye's LSCI value and the values of other countries are used to test whether there is convergence. In our research, we used unit root analyzes to test whether the LSCI values of Türkiye and other regional countries converge by using the logarithmic differences of the LSCI values of Türkiye and other countries. The fact that a series contains a unit root indicates that it is not stationary, in other words, its mean and variance change in the long run. This makes

it difficult to analyze and predict such data, because the series bear the effects of the shocks to which they are exposed. On the other hand, if a series is stationary and does not contain a unit root, this indicates that its mean and variance do not change over time.

In this study, we first applied traditional augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF) (1979) and Phillips-Perron (PP) (1988) unit root tests. In general, the PP test is more resistant to serial correlation than the ADF test and can be used in non-normal error distributions. Basically,

these tests analyze whether the mean and variance of the series changes over time. However, these tests are used in linear series and do not consider possible structural breaks. Therefore, after applying these tests, we also applied the structural break and linearity tests. According to the results obtained from those tests, unit root tests were applied that robust to structural break and non-linearity in the series.

The inference obtained from unit root tests on convergence is evaluated according to whether the series contains a unit root or not. If the difference series contains a unit root, that is, $I(1)$, this indicates that the countries diverge from each other. On the other hand, if the difference series is stationary, that is, $I(0)$, this indicates that the countries converge with each other. However, in the selection of unit root tests, structural break and linearity properties should be examined and choices should be made accordingly.

Variables can change over time for some reasons. This change may be due to breaks in their levels and trends. The reasons for the breaks can be economic events, policy changes, technological developments, demographic changes, global integration, natural disasters, and armed conflicts. Fiscal and monetary policies implemented by governments may affect the supply-demand balances in the markets and may cause a break. In addition, technological innovations and digitalization can cause a break by increasing production efficiency. Additionally, natural disasters may disrupt the supply-demand balance in the market and cause a break in the course of the variable. For this reason, the series may experience breaks in level and trend. The break in level is related

to the change in the mean of the series on a certain date. In such cases, the series continues to move stationary at a new higher or lower average level. A break in the trend is related to the change in the direction of the series. A stable series may enter an increasing trend due to the break and the trend may become stationary. Classical linear unit root tests cannot capture such breaks and may give false inferences about the stationarity of the series.

Therefore, after applying unit root analysis to our variables, we also applied the Bai and Perron (2003) test to determine possible breaks in the variables. The purpose of the Bai and Perron (2003) test is to determine whether there is a break in the series and, if so, when. Once a break occurs, there are changes in the statistical characteristics of the series such as mean, variance and distribution. In this way, the significance and time of the break can be determined. In this method, the series is first estimated with a single regressor (constant). Afterwards, a multiple structural break test is applied to the model. In application, this method is very practical because no prior knowledge of the break date is required (He, 2022, p. 19).

After detecting possible breaks in the series, we applied the Zivot and Andrews (ZA) (1992) unit root test, which considers structural breaks. The ZA test is an improved version of the traditional ADF test and applies the unit root test, considering potential unknown breaks in the series. The advantage of this is that if there is a break in the series and unit root tests are applied that ignore the potential breaks, the result may appear as if there is a unit root. This situation makes the validity of the

obtained results open to discussion. For this reason, the application of tests that consider the breaks while applying the unit root analysis may provide more accurate results in case of structural breaks in the series. However, the ZA test is one of the linear unit root tests like the ADF and PP tests.

In some cases, linear unit root tests may also be insufficient because they assume linear relationships between the components of the series. However, the return to mean process, dependencies, seasonality and regime changes in the series may be non-linear. Therefore, by testing the linearity of our series, we applied a nonlinear unit root test to the required variables according to the results obtained. We tested the linearity of our variables with the Brock, Dechert, and Scheinkman (BDS) (1987) independence test. The BDS test detects nonlinear dependencies by examining the deviations from linear dependencies in the series between different pairs. Thus, it can reveal possible nonlinear structures.

After applying the BDS test, we also decided to apply nonlinear unit root tests to the variables considering their nonlinearities. The tests we chose are the Wavelet-based KSS (WKSS) and Fourier Wavelet-based KSS (FKSS) tests proposed by Aydin (2020). These tests come to the fore by considering both nonlinearity and structural breaks in the series. Thus, we examined the convergence by considering both the structural breaks and nonlinearity in the series.

While EViews software was used for ADF and PP unit root tests, GAUSS software was used for ZA, WKSS and FWKSS unit root tests. ADF, PP and BDS tests are embedded

in EViews software. However, other tests can be executed with GAUSS codes that can be run with the software of the same name. To summarize our analysis process: (i) apply linear ADF and PP tests, (ii) apply ZA structural break unit root test, (iii) apply WKSS and FWKSS nonlinear unit root tests, (iv) apply BDS to test the linearity of variable, (iv) apply the Bai-Perron test to determine structural breaks in the variable, (iv) consider the ADF and PP tests if the variable is linear and there is no break, (v) consider the ZA test if the variable is linear and there are structural breaks, (vi) consider the WKSS and FWKSS tests if there are structural breaks and the variable is nonlinear. At the end of this whole process, if there is a unit root, the relevant country diverges with Türkiye, if there is no unit root, it converges.

RESULTS

The results of the ADF and PP tests applied to the series are presented in Table 4. In addition, based on the Bai-Perron structural break test results presented in Table 5, the ZA test, which takes into account structural breaks, was also applied and the results are presented in Table 4. The null hypothesis of ADF and PP tests indicates unit root. According to the results obtained, the outcomes of both tests are the same for all countries except Ukraine. For Ukraine, considering the advantages of the PP test over the ADF test, PP result was taken as a basis. Unit roots were determined in the variables of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, and Russia, that is, these countries diverge with Türkiye, while the remaining countries are converging.

Of course, these results assume that the series are linear and do not have structural breaks.

On the other hand, the results in Table 5 showed that there were breaks in all variables at certain dates. When the results of the ZA test applied in this context are examined, the result changes only for Bulgaria, and the di-

verging countries remain Georgia, Romania and Russia. However, since ADF, PP and ZA tests assume that the series are linear, they do not take nonlinearity into account. For this reason, the BDS linearity test was applied to the series to determine whether nonlinear unit root tests are needed.

Table 4
Unit Root Test Results

	ADF	PP	CONCLUSION	ZA BL	CONCLUSION
Bulgaria	-1.92	-2.39	I (1)	-5.78*** (2009Q4)	I (0)
Egypt	-2.84*	-2.80*	I (0)	-5.70*** (2010Q2)	I (0)
Georgia	-2.41	-2.30	I (1)	-4.08 (2011Q1)	I (1)
Greece	-3.25**	-3.28**	I (0)	-5.50*** (2009Q1)	I (0)
Israel	-3.22**	-3.20**	I (0)	-5.51*** (2015Q2)	I (0)
Lebanon	-5.35***	-5.36***	I (0)	-6.60*** (2019Q4)	I (0)
Romania	-1.35	-1.65	I (1)	-4.11 (2010Q2)	I (1)
Russia	-1.64	-1.44	I (1)	-3.77 (2011Q4)	I (1)
Ukraine	-2.54	-3.22**	I (0)	-4.59* (2010Q4)	I (0)

Notes: (1) ADF CVs are -3.54 for ***1%, -2.91 for **5%, -2.59 for *10%. (2) PP CVs are -3.53 for ***1%, -2.90 for **5%, -2.59 for *10%. Barlett Kernel Spectral Estimation Method and Newey-West bandwidth were used. ZA Break in Level CVs are -5.34 for ***1%, -4.80 for **5%, -4.58 for *10%.

Table 5
Structural Break Test Results

	SCHWARZ	LWZ	BREAK DATE(S)
Bulgaria	-3.09 (1)	-2.95 (1)	2009Q2
Egypt	-5.78 (2)	-5.56 (2)	2009Q3, 2011Q4
Georgia	-4.60 (1)	-4.47 (1)	2012Q4
Greece	-4.76 (2)	-4.53 (1)	2009Q3, 2018Q1
Israel	-5.48 (2)	-5.25 (2)	2011Q2, 2015Q4
Lebanon	-5.05 (1)	-4.91 (1)	2020Q1
Romania	-5.03 (2)	-4.87 (1)	2009Q3, 2011Q2
Russia	-4.46 (2)	-4.23 (2)	2012Q2, 2019Q2
Ukraine	-5.17 (2)	-4.98 (1)	2008Q2, 2010Q4

The Bai-Perron structural break test results applied to the series are presented in Table 5. The results obtained with the Global Information Criteria method showed that some variables had 1 break, and some had 2 breaks. In general, the structural break dates were after and before the 2008 global economic crisis. This crisis disrupted the supply-demand balance in the world, causing shrinkage in economies and thus contraction in the demand for maritime transport.

The BDS Independence Test results that we applied to the variables are presented in Table 6. The null hypothesis of this test indicates the linearity of the series. However, if the null hypothesis is rejected in any of the dimensions, the series is considered to contain nonlinear structures. This test is applied to residuals of certain deterministic models. Therefore, after

estimating the optimum ARMA models that minimize the Aic value for each variable, the BDS tests were applied to the residuals of all models. While estimating ARMA models, we chose to automatically determine the stationarity of the series with the KPSS test and to estimate the models accordingly. For this reason, while the level values of some variables were used, the first differences of some variables were used. According to the results obtained, the null hypothesis of linearity was accepted only for Bulgaria and Georgia, while it was rejected in at least one dimension for the remaining countries. This shows that the results of ADF, PP and ZA linear unit root tests can be trusted for Bulgaria and Georgia, while WKSS and FWKSS nonlinear unit root tests should be considered for other countries.

Table 6. Linearity Test Results

VARIABLE	ARMA MODEL	AIC VALUE	DIM (2)	DIM (3)	DIM (4)	DIM (5)	DIM (6)	CONCLUSION
D(Bulgaria)	(0, 3)	-0.64	-0.009	-0.032	-0.006	0.004	0.006	L
D(Egypt)	(0, 1)	-3.17	0.003	0.025	0.043**	0.048**	0.051**	NL
D(Georgia)	(1, 1)	-2.15	-0.006	0.0139	0.0216	0.0214	0.0166	L
Greece	(1, 2)	-2.06	0.033**	0.114***	0.167***	0.206***	0.226***	NL
Israel	(1, 0)	-2.63	0.048***	0.085***	0.089***	0.079**	0.617*	NL
D(Lebanon)	(1, 1)	-2.15	0.035***	0.077***	0.095***	0.106***	0.099***	NL
D(Romania)	(0, 3)	-2.75	0.015	0.058**	0.070**	0.072**	0.071**	NL
Russia	(1, 0)	-1.97	-0.022	-0.056**	-0.054*	-0.046	-0.042	NL
Ukraine	(3, 2)	-2.90	0.019*	0.036**	0.041**	0.035*	0.025	NL

Notes: (1) Null of linearity rejected at ***1%, **5%, *10%. (2) D means first difference.

After testing the linearity of the series, WKSS and FWKSS nonlinear unit root tests were applied to the series and the results are presented in Table 7. We presented test results without linear-nonlinear distinction to enrich the re-

sults. The final situation, which is examined discriminately, is presented in the following section. Since it is known that the FWKSS test is stronger than the WKSS test in structural break situations, the final decision was made

according to the FWKSS test. The results obtained by nonlinear unit root tests show that Lebanon, Romania and Ukraine converge, while Egypt, Greece, Israel and Russia diverge.

Table 7
Nonlinear Test Results

	WKSS	FWKSS	CONCLUSION
Bulgaria	-8.12***	-1.35 (5)	I (1)
Egypt	-0.81	0.32 (1)	I (1)
Georgia	-3.16**	-3.72** (2)	I (0)
Greece	-1.07	-2.54 (3)	I (1)
Israel	-1.80	-1.13 (1)	I (1)
Lebanon	-3.22**	-3.30** (1)	I (0)
Romania	-4.32***	-3.08* (4)	I (0)
Russia	-2.26	-1.64 (3)	I (1)
Ukraine	-2.37	-3.09* (4)	I (0)

Notes: (1) WKSS CVs are -3.45 for ***1%, -2.79 for **5%, -2.49 for *10% when T=50. (2) FKSS CVs when T=50, k=1: -4.00 for ***1%, -3.24 for **5%, -2.89 for *10%, k=2: -4.10 for ***1%, -3.34 for **5%, -2.98 for *10%, k=3: -4.13 for ***1%, -3.30 for **5%, -2.93 for *10%, k=4: -4.04 for ***1%, -3.24 for **5%, -2.88 for *10%, k=5: -4.00 for ***1%, -3.20 for **5%, -2.84 for *10%.

Up to this section, aggregated results for all countries in each unit root test have been presented indiscriminately. The final evaluations for all variables, considering their linearity and structural breaks, are presented in Table 8. Structural breaks were detected in all of the variables with the Bai – Perron test. For this reason, ZA tests for linear variables and FWKSS tests for nonlinear variables were taken as reference tests. According to the results obtained, the countries that converged

with Türkiye were Bulgaria, Lebanon, Romania, and Ukraine. The LSCI values of all these countries are below Türkiye's. The variance and mean of the difference with Türkiye do not change over time.

The LSCI value of Türkiye diverges with the rest of the countries. For example, as can be seen from Figure 1, the gap with Egypt, whose index value is above Türkiye, is closing, and Türkiye will probably surpass its competitor in the region in the near future. On the other hand, the difference with Georgia is increasing. The gap with Russia, which was closed until 2016, started to increase again after this date and Türkiye managed to surpass its rival in the region. Although Türkiye was ahead until the last quarter of 2017, Greece, the biggest competitor in the region, fell behind its rival afterward. Therefore, Greece diverges from Türkiye. Finally, while the difference with Israel increased until 2015 Q3, there was a break after that.

Table 8
Conclusion

	REFERENCE TEST	STRUCTURE	CONCLUSION
Bulgaria	ZA	L	I (0)
Egypt	FWKSS	NL	I (1)
Georgia	ZA	L	I (1)
Greece	FWKSS	NL	I (1)
Israel	FWKSS	NL	I (1)
Lebanon	FWKSS	NL	I (0)
Romania	FWKSS	NL	I (0)
Russia	FWKSS	NL	I (1)
Ukraine	FWKSS	NL	I (0)

CONCLUSION

The trade between China and Europe has significantly increased in recent years. Factors such as China's economic growth, expansion of production capacity, and increased demand from Europe have contributed to this growth. The increase in trade volume has resulted in a significant rise in container traffic. These trade activities are predominantly conducted through sea transportation, relying heavily on container shipping. Sea transportation is preferred due to its cost-effectiveness, high capacity, and extensive coverage. However, in recent years, alternative transportation routes have been developed due to the congestion, logistical challenges and security risks in sea transportation.

Railway transportation between China and Europe has been gaining popularity as an alternative. The railway and road networks known as the "New Silk Road" provide connections from China's inland regions to Europe. These routes can be faster and, in some cases, more cost-effective than sea transportation. In Europe, road transportation can also serve as a significant alternative. Road transportation is suitable for quick deliveries, especially between neighboring regions. Air transportation is an important option for urgent and valuable goods. However, air transportation is generally more expensive and less suitable for large-volume shipments.

The Northern Sea Route, which passes through the Arctic region, connects Northern Asia to Europe by sea. The melting of ice during the summer months, influenced by global warming, has increased the usage of this route.

The Northern Sea Route can shorten the travel time from China to Europe and reduce costs. However, there are still challenges and safety risks due to the presence of ice during the winter months.

Multimodal transportation routes are increasingly being preferred for container traffic between China and Europe. These routes involve a combination of different transportation modes, including sea, railway, road, and air transport. The Middle East-Northern Europe Route allows containers from China to reach the Mediterranean via the Middle East and then continue to Northern Europe. This route can be an alternative option that bypasses the Suez Canal and, in some cases, reduces costs. The Basra Gulf, considered the main sea route in the Middle East, plays a significant role in trade between China and Europe. The China-Basra Gulf-Mediterranean-Europe route involves transporting containers from China to the Basra Gulf (e.g., ports like Dubai or Oman) by sea and then shipping them to Europe via the Mediterranean. In this route, sea transportation continues from Basra Gulf ports to Mediterranean ports, followed by road or railway connections to Europe. The Basra Gulf is filled with important ports and logistics centers in the Middle East, leading to the development of multimodal transportation routes that facilitate and expedite trade between China and Europe. However, the selection of each route requires careful consideration of factors such as logistics requirements, trade volume, security factors, and infrastructure conditions.

The combination of rail and sea transportation allows containers transported by rail

from China to Europe to be further shipped by sea to their final destination after reaching a European port. This multimodal combination takes advantage of the benefits of sea transportation while providing the speed and cost-effectiveness of rail transportation. In the combination of road and rail transportation, containers are transported by road from production centers in China to nearby railway terminals, and then they are delivered to Europe by rail. This combination merges the flexibility of road transportation with the efficiency of rail transportation. The combination of air transportation with rail/road transportation is particularly used for urgent and valuable cargo. It involves transporting containers from China to Europe by air and then delivering them to the final destination by rail or road. This combination combines the speed of air transportation with the cost-effectiveness of rail/road transportation.

Bulgaria, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Türkiye, which are the subject of our research, constitute transfer points of this multimodal network. Some for Mediterranean region countries, some for Black Sea region countries and some for European countries. For this reason, in order to become an important center in the container transportation sector where the final products are transported, the connectivity must be high. Of course, besides connectivity, transportation and time costs, delivery times, reliability, flexibility and political factors are also important in choosing mode combinations. But still higher connectivity positively affects the mode selection as it means faster transportation, lower costs,

and more flexibility due to higher voyage frequency. Therefore, having a high LSCI value can both accelerate the rate of increase of LSCI and provide a competitive advantage. Having an adequate level of connectivity to the transportation network contributes positively to container traffic (Mohamad *et al.*, 2015; Atacan *et al.*, 2022) and trade volume (Lin *et al.*, 2020; Sakyi & Immurana, 2021) while it contributes negatively to international trade costs (Nagraj & Ghosh, 2021).

In this study, we aimed to analyze the current situation and the future situation between the LSCI value of Türkiye, which has a rare strategic location in the world, and the LSCI values of other countries that can be considered as competitors in the region. In the analyzes we made by testing the convergence theory, we determined which countries converged and which countries diverged. The diverging countries may be ahead of Türkiye and widening the gap, or they may be behind Türkiye and widening the gap. The difference between the LSCI values of converging countries and Türkiye's value closes in the long run. While testing this situation, we applied unit root analysis by taking the difference between the log LSCI values of Türkiye and other countries. The fact that the difference values have a unit root indicates that the mean and variance of the difference change over time and do not tend to return to the mean. On the other hand, the absence of a unit root indicates that the mean and variance are constant, and the series tends to return to the mean in the long run. In other words, the stationary series show that there is convergence. In the selection of unit root tests, we took the structural breaks and non-linearity

in the series into account. According to the results obtained, the countries that converged with Türkiye were Bulgaria, Lebanon, Romania, and Ukraine. The LSCI values of all these countries are below Türkiye's.

The fact that other countries other than Lebanon are Black Sea countries can be interpreted as speeding up the trade within the European region through these countries. When the LSCI values are examined, it is seen that they have a positive trend, albeit weak. In Lebanon, on the other hand, while a positive trend was observed in the process until the port explosion in 2020, a break occurred after that date. Among the diverging countries, it can be said that Egypt and Greece will get ahead of Türkiye. Egypt, in particular, had a higher level of connectivity in the period under consideration, and it looks like it will continue to dominate. This is mainly because of its geographical position and its possession of the Suez Canal. It is located in a location where almost all ships going from China to Europe and from Europe to China have to pass. It is also located in one of the optimum locations for trade between China and North-east African countries. Similarly, Greece has a position where time and cost savings can be made in the transportation of cargoes within Europe by using this country as a transshipment node. Cargoes brought to this country by large ships can then be distributed to the interior of Europe by road or rail transportation modes. Russia, on the other hand, has entered a trend of decreasing connectivity and the gap with Türkiye is getting wider.

In this context, Türkiye's strategy is to offer time- and cost-effective alternatives that

can bypass the strategic positions of Egypt and Greece. Basically, investments to develop the railway-based trade route passing through China, Central Asia and the Caucasus countries should be accelerated. Efforts should be intensified to start the activities of the Zangezur corridor, which includes the route comes from China and passes the Caspian Sea through water and connects Türkiye via Azerbaijan. In addition, the Development Road project, which will connect Türkiye with the Persian Gulf by road and railway, which is jointly designed with the Iraqi government, should be accelerated. This way, if fast and cost-effective alternatives can be offered, the routes will enable Türkiye to increase its activities as a strategic bridge.

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RESEÑAS

**EL NO ALINEAMIENTO ACTIVO Y AMÉRICA
LATINA: UNA DOCTRINA PARA EL NUEVO
SIGLO**

Jorge Mario Gómez Lara

**RE-IMAGINING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:
WORLD ORDERS IN THE THOUGHT AND
PRACTICE OF INDIAN, CHINESE, AND
ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONS**

Tunahan Yıldız

El no alineamiento activo y América Latina: una doctrina para el nuevo siglo

Jorge Mario Gómez-Lara*

Reseña del libro

Fortin, C. et al. (2021). *El no alineamiento activo y América Latina: una doctrina para el nuevo siglo*. Editorial Catalonia, 384 pp.

Los libros que piensan a América Latina dentro del contexto internacional son necesarios porque, de alguna manera, nos abren el panorama de lo que la región representa en el mundo, de sus falencias, pero también de las oportunidades que se pueden aprovechar para que sea más relevante en el escenario global. Este libro, editado por Carlos Fortin, Jorge Heine y Carlos Ominami, y que cuenta con capítulos de varios autores destacados como Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, Leslie Elliott Armijo y Jorge Castañeda, es un ejemplo de ello. A lo largo de los diecinueve capítulos, los autores hacen un diagnóstico de la situación de América Latina y, en especial, de Sudamérica, en el siglo XXI, partiendo de

la premisa del enfrentamiento entre Estados Unidos y China, el primero visto como un país que va perdiendo su hegemonía, y el segundo como una potencia emergente que ha crecido enormemente en comercio y tecnología.

Aunque los autores no se ponen de acuerdo con respecto a si catalogar dicho enfrentamiento como una segunda Guerra Fría, como historiador puedo decir que la historia nunca se repite exactamente, y, en este caso, no son dos potencias que compiten por el poder militar, en lo que Estados Unidos es muy superior, sino en términos económicos y políticos, trasladando su poderío a todas las regiones del planeta, aprovechando la globalización. En este

* Historiador, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (UPB) (Colombia). Estudiante de la Maestría en Estudios Políticos UPB y miembro del Semillero de Investigación en Estudios Políticos SIEP de la UPB (Colombia). [jorge.gomezl@upb.edu.co]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5140-4759].

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contexto surge la propuesta del no alineamiento activo (NAA), cuyo principal objetivo es no tomar partido por ninguna de estas dos potencias, sin querer decir que se ponga en práctica una política de neutralidad. Por el contrario, es no alineamiento activo porque es capaz de discernir acerca de lo que le conviene a América Latina como región, tomando partido por una potencia o por otra según el caso.

Sin embargo, los autores son enfáticos en afirmar que el mundo contemporáneo se caracteriza por su multipolaridad, gracias al creciente poder que han tenido países como India, Rusia, Sudáfrica, Brasil —que junto a China conforman el grupo de los BRICS—, y organizaciones como la Unión Europea (UE). El NAA aboga por el multilateralismo, valiéndose de un recurso histórico como lo fue la conferencia de Bandung, en los años cincuenta, entre países asiáticos y africanos que acababan de abrazar la independencia, lo que posteriormente derivó en la creación del Movimiento de Países No Alineados, una organización que fue relevante durante la Guerra Fría. El reto es que ese multilateralismo no se quede atrapado en medio de las intenciones hegemónicas de las dos principales potencias, sino que sea una forma de reafirmar la autonomía nacional y regional.

En los últimos cuatro capítulos se hace un recorrido histórico por las experiencias de Chile, Argentina, Perú y Brasil, resaltando el compromiso con el multilateralismo de los presidentes Salvador Allende de Chile y Juan Domingo Perón en Argentina, quienes optaron por una tercera vía durante el contexto de la Guerra Fría, algo que también puede ser interpretado como un desafío al orden inter-

nacional impuesto en esos años. Igualmente, en Brasil no es nueva la idea de un no alineamiento activo, considerando su compromiso con varios países africanos y asiáticos, sobre todo los de habla portuguesa, quienes consiguieron su independencia durante el periodo poscolonial. Posteriormente, con Lula da Silva se experimentó un liderazgo encaminado a fortalecer el llamado Sur global, que sirve como contrapeso en la actual guerra comercial que se vive entre Estados Unidos y China —esta ya no se considera como parte del Sur global—.

Una gran fortaleza del libro es que propone alternativas económicas para contrarrestar un posible alineamiento con alguna de las potencias, teniendo en cuenta el rezago que tiene la región con respecto a América del Norte, Europa, Asia e incluso África, cuyo continente ha resultado beneficiado gracias a las inversiones chinas. La propuesta de construcción de una cadena de valor regional que pueda responder efectivamente a los desafíos económicos actuales puede ser una alternativa viable y necesaria, considerando que en el mundo contemporáneo los países se especializan en determinados productos o piezas que se interconectan con otras, aprovechando también la cercanía que tengan entre sí.

El libro plantea enormes desafíos. Uno de ellos es vencer la poca o nula integración sudamericana actual, lo que contribuye al rezago económico ya mencionado, teniendo en cuenta que un país por sí solo no es capaz de ser autónomo ante las presiones de las grandes potencias. Un ejemplo de ello es el caso de Ecuador, que hace poco recibió ayuda económica de Estados Unidos con la condición de excluir a China de posibles inversiones en el

país. Igualmente, China ha demostrado una posición dominante al poner en práctica la depredación ambiental, deficientes condiciones laborales en los países en donde se asientan sus empresas y perpetuar el modelo sudamericano de exportación de materias primas. Autores como Celso Amorim, Esteban Actis y Nicolás Creus proponen que América del Sur supere las diferencias políticas e ideológicas que han impedido una integración económica interregional que, en cierto sentido, podría emular lo hecho por la UE.

Otro de los retos pendientes es la dependencia de México y América Central frente a Estados Unidos, ya que forman parte de las cadenas de valor de dicho país. América del Sur puede aprovechar que Estados Unidos está mirando a Asia como su prioridad en medio de su estrategia por restarle influencia a China, como sucedió, por ejemplo, en la primera década del siglo XXI cuando el país norteamericano libraba las guerras de Afganistán e Irak, en cuyo momento pudieron llevarse a cabo proyectos de integración como Unasur, abrazando, como bien lo dice el autor Celso Amorim, “la Venezuela de Chávez y la Colombia de Uribe” (p. 353). Una mayor integración regional también puede beneficiar las relaciones con Estados Unidos, ya que una región fuerte tiene más capacidad negociadora, aportando soluciones

alternativas a temas transnacionales como el tráfico de drogas, por poner un ejemplo.

En momentos en que los países anglosajones han decidido replegarse hacia el aislacionismo, cuando en otras épocas fueron los abanderados del libre comercio, es una muestra de lo inestables que pueden llegar a ser las relaciones internacionales en un mundo fragmentado. El compromiso por una mayor integración regional parte de políticas exteriores gubernamentales que apunten a la diversificación y al multilateralismo, así como de un constante diálogo entre los líderes políticos que trascienda las diferencias ideológicas que tanto han obstaculizado dicha integración. Lo anterior contribuiría a que el NAA pase de las palabras a los hechos, pues al leer el libro queda la sensación de que la integración regional es un asunto que compete casi que exclusivamente a gobiernos progresistas.

Por último, hubiese sido interesante que se profundizara más sobre Colombia, considerando su peso dentro de Sudamérica, su larga tradición estratégica con Estados Unidos y su respuesta a la emergencia de China como potencia mundial. Por lo demás, es una obra excelente que, de forma crítica, ofrece propuestas sensatas y realizables, pensando en el crecimiento de la región.

Re-imagining International Relations: World Orders in the Thought and Practice of Indian, Chinese, and Islamic Civilizations

Tunahan Yıldız*

A Review of the Book

Barry Buzan and Amitav Acharya, *Re-imagining International Relations: World Orders in the Thought and Practice of Indian, Chinese, and Islamic Civilizations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Barry Buzan and Amitav Acharya's *Re-imagining International Relations: World Orders in the Thought and Practice of Indian, Chinese, and Islamic Civilizations* is a theoretically well-designed and empirically-rich outline of pre-modern thinking and practice of world order/international relations beyond the West. The book attempts to incorporate the Indian, Chinese, and Islamic international thought and practice into International Relations (IR) theory and world history. The authors claim that the study of classical civilizations can

enrich the discipline of IR by questioning the dominant status of a set of key ideas, such as sovereignty, by revealing the alternative origins of some key concepts, e.g., international law, by offering a better understanding of how certain cultural contexts work, and by broadening the horizons of IR theory and method.

Buzan and Acharya's latest collaborative piece is built on their previous work on non-Western IR and Global IR. On the one hand, the authors have sustained their combined interest in the non-Western concep-

* Ph.D. Candidate, Department of International Relations, Middle East Technical University, Ankara (Turkey). [tunahan@metu.edu.tr.]; [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2516-8024].

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tions and histories of the international since their 2007 forum articles (Acharya & Buzan, 2007a; 2007b), which culminate in an edited volume on Asian IR in 2009 (Acharya & Buzan, 2009). The book is an extension of this long-running effort to open space for non-Western international thought and history and overcome Eurocentrism in the discipline. Although the explicit question of their previous work is the seeming absence of non-Western IR, it searches for a set of distinctive sources from Asia to theorize the international. Their digging into non-Western IR is an attempt to reveal what they find hidden, to unchain what they see suppressed, and to systematize what they consider unsystematic.

On the other hand, Buzan and Acharya's latest piece skillfully channelizes their interest in non-Western IR into Acharya's broader call for Global IR as their 2017 critical review does so on a more limited scale (Acharya & Buzan, 2017). Global IR is an extensive, burgeoning, and ambitious research agenda, contributed to by many following Acharya's calls since 2014 (Acharya, 2014a; 2014b; 2016; 2017), to broaden and pluralize the discipline beyond Western IR, resting substantially on a set of ways to incorporate non-Western international thought and practice into the discipline. Against this backdrop, the latest piece is a prequel to their 2019 book (Acharya & Buzan, 2019), which covers the histories of international relations and IR from the nineteenth century to the present from the perspective of Global IR, arguing that the evolution of IR has mirrored that of modern international relations.

This latest book emerges in this broader context of research. It is built on two initial

observations, transferred from the previous work of the authors. On the one hand, as the West has dominated world politics, the practice and thought of non-Western actors have remained silent/marginal/secondary in IR theory and history. On the other hand, the singular dominance of the West has been in decline for decades as the world has moved into what the authors call "deep pluralism", and non-Western actors "are thus being re-inserted into the contemporary world order, with China, India, and the Islamic world being in the vanguard" (p. 1). Accordingly, the aim of the book is to reveal the multiplicity of international practice and thought beyond the Western domination of world politics and the Eurocentric examination of world history and to predict a set of cultural elements of the emergent post-Western world order.

It is also an effort to find "via media solutions" for a set of theoretical, methodological, and analytical problems in IR, which the authors not only discuss throughout the book, but also exclusively address in Chapter II and VI. First, while they highlight the currency of postcolonial analysis to reveal the conceptual and historical world of the non-West, they deliberately focus on the pre-modern non-Western cases, considered more "authentic" with their immunity from "the dual encounter with the West and modernity" (p. 14). Second, they feature the "substantial differentiation" (p. 16) in the international thought and practice of their cases as proof of the importance of culture in international relations in contradistinction to the assumptions of mechanical similarity and repetition across time and space in materialist accounts. That said, they

also draw attention to the agency of material factors, which shape the patterns of similarity.

Third, the book also sheds light on a set of similarities between modern Western IR and pre-modern non-Western international thinking, and thus, it contributes to a broader project of the cosmopolitan origins and multiple genealogies of key “Western” ideas, such as power politics. Fourth, the authors spotlight the cultural contexts and dictionary meanings of non-Western concepts to avoid the artificial universal codes of tempocentrism, but they also emphasize the need “to develop and use a shared vocabulary” to be operationalized by both Western and non-Western scholars for the sake of “a truly Global IR” (p. 22). Last, the authors underscore the analytical problem of the difference between the main unit of their analysis, empires, and the dominant analytical unit of modern IR, the state. The difference renders the extrapolation of their concepts toward each other problematic.

Building on this framework, Buzan and Acharya devote Chapter III, IV and V to their respective examinations of Indian, Chinese, and Islamic civilizations. On the one hand, they identify main strands of thinking about IR in each case. As for India, their discussion of classical Indian ideas on the international revolves centrally around Kautilya’s realist *Arthashastra*, Ashoka’s moralist doctrine of *Dharma*, and natural and divine causality. In classical China, the authors extract a hierarchical worldview, *Tianxia*’s ontology of universal order and coexistence, the Mandate of Heaven’s performance legitimacy, *zhongyong* dialectics’ relational epistemology, and material and moral positionality in the concept

“face”. When it comes to the Islamic world, their investigation diagnoses the *umma*, *Dar al-Harb*, *Dar al-Islam*, *Dar al-Ahd*, *jihad*, just war, and rationalist epistemology as the defining elements of Islamic international thought.

On the other hand, the authors subsequently focus on the practice of the international in each case. They divide the history of each civilization into two periods/trends. In the case of India, they address the era of small independent polities, *Mahajanapadas*, as “the practical foundations for what became India’s version of realism” (p. 45), and the spread of Indian culture as “perhaps the best example in history of the peaceful diffusion of ideas” (p. 47). As for China, they see the warring states period as “an extreme form of power politics” (p. 71) while they consider the tribute system epoch as the hierarchical ordering of China’s international relations. The authors read the history of the Islamic world on a similar fragmentation-unity spectrum, with the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates representing the unity of the *umma*, succeeded by the multiplicity of universal empires, namely, the Ottomans, the Safavids, and the Mughals.

In their concluding analysis, the authors operationalize six fundamental concepts to reveal difference and similarity across these cultures and modern IR: hierarchy, power politics, peaceful coexistence, international political economy, territoriality/transnationalism, and modes of thinking. First, they see hierarchy as “perhaps the most obvious difference between our three case studies and contemporary IR theory” (p. 117) since it is prevailing in the former while anarchy substantially predominates modern IR. Their cases also suggest that the

anarchy-hierarchy spectrum is a continuum, not rigid and mutually exclusive categories. Second, power politics characterizes all three cases, aligning with modern IR. That said, those cultures offer a more open, not deterministic, view of power politics (p. 128) in that anarchic multiplicity is not a permanent condition due to the classical tendency toward universal empires.

Third, those cases also incorporate some elements of peaceful coexistence or pluralism partially owing to such components as recognition of local autonomy and shared identity, and partially due to universal empires being a system of peaceful coexistence by themselves. Fourth, the authors regard trade “as one of the crucial elements of peaceful coexistence” (p. 134). Merchant activity is a defining feature of these civilizations, particularly in India and the Islamic world. Fifth, while the authors observe a looser and more flexible conception of territoriality in empires, they identify “the principle of strong, autonomous social structures” (p. 141) as another model of world order. Finally, the authors reject the dichotomous view of the West as this-worldly and the East as other-worldly, with each “containing ideas about both divine and non-divine, rational causation” (p. 143).

Re-imagining International Relations features multiple strengths. For one thing, it is yet another macro-scale operationalization of the objectives of Global IR, subsequent to *The Making of Global International Relations*, and thus, it shapes the prospects of this new research agenda. Moreover, even though the book is “exploratory and preliminary” (p. 26) considering its broad scope, it is a thought-

provoking effort to discover and anticipate what those non-Western cultures “might bring to Global IR” (p. 113). In so doing, it does not rely solely on archival material to reveal what has remained unknown to date. While much of its empirical material has already been in use in several ways for years and it typically employs secondary sources, the book skillfully makes room for mutual learning and engagement between comparative history and theory.

The book also generates a fruitful conversation between classical international thought and practice and modern IR. It is not only a brief examination of classical Indian, Chinese and Islamic thinking and making of the international, but also it is an attempt to compare “similarities and differences in the way world order and international relations have been thought and practiced across time and space” (p. 26). Furthermore, the conversation does not ignore the agency of the non-West and does not establish an analytical hierarchy as the authors claim that “the ideas and institutions of non-Western societies deserve to be studied on their own terms” (p. 155). In so doing, the book does not squash into the ambiguous boundaries of the non-West, but rather it successfully operationalizes “pluralistic universalism”, the core normative and analytical concept of Global IR.

The book has also its own problems. In the first place, the authors underestimate the multiplicity of conceptual meanings they extract from the non-West. When they discover a set of concepts in the classical thought of those civilizations, the operationalization of their meanings often relies on a singular interpretation of those concepts, which might

be understood, and indeed have been understood, in several other ways. Furthermore, the authors attempt to “purify” their cases from the West, with their purposeful exclusion of the modern international practice and thought of those civilizations. In so doing, they render the pre-modern history as more representative of the non-West. However, when those “authentic” histories are employed, “remembered” or re-invented in the modern contexts of those non-Western cultures, they become part of the politics of authenticity, and thus, do not smoothly travel through time.

Furthermore, their discussion on the Islamic world seems perhaps the most under-theorized part of their investigation. Importantly, the authors attribute a high degree of “Islamicness” to the Islamic world in their search for the Islamic concepts of world order. This conceptualization obscures a powerful current of secular thought in the Islamic world (see, for instance, Yücesoy, 2023). In addition, while they see Islamic civilization’s theory and practice of world order as highly diverged from each other, they ignore the subordination of the Sunni thought to the authority. One should also pay attention to the alternative conceptualizations of this political space. For instance, a recent work (Zarakol, 2022) defines the world orders of Eurasia from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century as the Chinggisid, post-Chinggisid, post-Timurid world orders, including the substantial parts, actors, and periods of the Islamic world as well as China and India.

In conclusion, one should note that *Re-imagining International Relations* does not correspond to any glorification of the non-

West and any devaluation of the West as their key concepts are “pluralistic universalism” in normative terms and “post-Western world” in historical terms. This is actually why the earlier emphasis of the authors on the term “non-West” has gradually given its place to the term “global” in their works although it is still employed. In any case, the book would offer much to any reader interested in the ambitious research agenda of Global IR. It should be read along with the broader literature on Global IR, and particularly, *The Making of Global International Relations*. It is yet another concrete step toward challenging the Eurocentrism of IR and developing a more pluralist, inclusive, and global discipline in its study of history, theory, and method.

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NORMAS PARA AUTORES

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Editor Revista *OASIS*
Calle 12 n.º 1-17 este
Centro de Investigaciones y Proyectos Especiales (CIPE)
Universidad Externado de Colombia
Bogotá D.C., Colombia
[oasis@uexternado.edu.co]
www.uexternado.edu.co/oasis

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