

# Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia

This book discusses and analyses the dimensions of Turkey's strategic rapprochement with the Eurasian states and institutions since the deterioration of Ankara's relations with its traditional NATO allies.

Do these developments signify a major strategic reorientation in Turkish foreign policy? Is Eurasia becoming an alternative geopolitical concept to Europe or the West? Or is this 'pivot to Eurasia' an instrument of the current Turkish government to obtain greater diplomatic leverage? Engaging with these key questions, the contributors explore the geographical, political, economic, military and social dynamics that influence this process while addressing the questions that arise from the difficulties in reconciling Ankara's strategic priorities with those of other Eurasian countries like Russia, China, Iran and India. Chapters focus on the different aspects of Turkey's improving bilateral relations with the Eurasian states and institutions and consider the possibility of developing a convincing Eurasian alternative for Turkish foreign policy.

The book will be useful for researchers in the fields of politics and IR more broadly and particularly relevant for scholars and students researching Turkish foreign policy and the geopolitics of Eurasia.

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# **Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia**

Geopolitics and Foreign Policy in a  
Changing World Order

**Edited by Emre Erşen and Seçkin Köstem**

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# Introduction

## Understanding the dynamics of Turkey's pivot to Eurasia

*Emre Erşen and Seçkin Köstem*

Recently, there has been a heated debate about the emergence of a shift of axis in Turkish foreign policy. The sharp deterioration of Ankara's relations with its traditional NATO allies and the gradual Turkish strategic rapprochement with Russia and Iran over the issue of Syria in the last few years have provided a significant impetus to the claims about a strengthened Eurasian orientation in Turkish foreign policy. Such claims have also been reinforced by the Turkish leaders' toughening criticisms against the policies of the U.S., NATO and European Union (EU) as well as their growing interest in developing Turkey's ties with non-Western international institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Turkic Council and BRICS.

Do all these developments signify a major strategic reorientation in Turkish foreign policy away from the West towards Eurasia, or is it more reasonable to view this latest "shift of axis" debate in Turkey merely in light of the Turkish governments' pragmatic interests in developing their political and economic links with rising Asian/Eurasian powers? Is Eurasia becoming an alternative geopolitical concept to Europe or the West, which has been perceived as the most important strategic partner for the Turkish leaders for so many decades? Or is the so-called pivot to Eurasia in Turkish foreign policy rather an instrument for the ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP) to gain greater diplomatic leverage vis-à-vis the Western governments?

In light of these questions, this volume seeks to discuss and analyse the various dimensions of Turkey's strategic rapprochement with the Eurasian states and institutions in the 21st century. The main objective of the volume is to understand the geographical, political, economic, military and social dynamics that influence this process, while addressing questions that arise from the difficulties in reconciling Ankara's strategic priorities with those of other Eurasian countries such as Russia, China, Iran and India. The chapters of this edition in this regard focus not only on the various aspects of Turkey's improving bilateral relations with the Eurasian states and institutions but also discuss whether it would be possible to come up with a convincing Eurasian alternative for Turkish foreign policy.

It should be emphasized that Turkey's recent pivot to Eurasia has had an ideological character as well. The idea of Eurasianism, which was originally developed in Russia in the 1920s, remains at the heart of Turkey's shift of axis debate, while it continues to attract significant attention especially in the Turkish conservative

and nationalist political circles. Although this is not the first time Turkey's developing relations with Russia have become a concern in the West, this latest debate is peculiar, since it is also strongly related with the radically altered domestic political balances in Turkey in the wake of the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016. It also takes place at a time when both the Turkish government and public increasingly question their long-standing alliance ties with the West. A recently conducted opinion poll, for example, revealed that more than 60% of the Turkish people view the U.S. as the most important threat against Turkey's national interests, while 14% believes strategic cooperation with Russia can become an alternative to Turkey's stalled EU membership process (Kadir Has Üniversitesi 2018).

In this introductory chapter, we argue that Turkey's pivot to Eurasia is taking place amidst a transforming global order, dynamic regional context and turbulent domestic political scene. These global, regional and domestic factors reinforce each other in explaining Turkey's growing interest in closer cooperation with Eurasian states and institutions at the expense of its traditional Western orientation. After a brief discussion of each factor for Turkey's Eurasian outlook, we go on with providing a summary of each contribution to this volume.

## **Transformation in the global order**

One of the most important dynamics of post-Cold War Turkish foreign policy has been Ankara's search for strategic autonomy from the West. Freed from the obstacles of the bipolar structure of the international system, Turkish governments pursued ambitious foreign policy goals in the 1990s. Post-Cold War Turkish foreign policy agenda, therefore, has expanded to a significant extent to embrace new regions, international institutions and thematic interests. Nevertheless, Ankara's ability to manoeuvre in the 1990s was rather limited. In addition to financial constraints, growing threat of terrorism particularly from the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and domestic political instability urged Turkey to remain loyal to its transatlantic allies in most important regional and international issues in the 1990s. Moreover, Turkey's traditional goal of joining the EU was a unifying force across political parties and ideologies.

Ankara's commitment to transatlantic security and economic institutions in the 1990s was consistent with the unipolar structure of the international system, in which the U.S. enjoyed an unrivalled status. Yet the triumphalism of the U.S. as the world's sole superpower paved the way for its occupation of Iraq in 2003 despite the "soft balancing" attempts from Russia as well as a number of NATO members including Germany and France (Paul 2018, 110–15). Nevertheless, the occupation of Iraq has led to the questioning of U.S. legitimacy and leadership in the 21st century. As the unilateralist actions of the U.S. brought greater instability to the Middle East, its destructive effects increasingly disturbed Turkey and other countries in the region.

At the systemic level of analysis, the most important reason that triggered Turkey's pivot to Eurasia in the 2000s has been the decline of U.S. hegemony and the emerging multipolar structure of the international system with the rise of new

centres of power – especially in Asia (Erşen 2014). In the past two decades, the international system went through a rapid transformation that empowered rising powers such as China, India and Brazil. In 1980, for instance, the share of China in world GDP was a mere 2%, while it went up to 6% in 1995 and 15% in 2014 (Layne 2012, 205). In the same period, India’s share increased from 3% to 6%, while Japan’s share dropped from 8% to 6%. Yet it should be noted that the U.S. still continues to enjoy supremacy in the global distribution of economic power. While in 1980, the share of the U.S. in world GDP was 22%, in 2017 it was 24% (World Bank 2018). The U.S. also continues to be the top military spender of the world. In 2017, at \$610 billion, it accounted for 35% of the world’s military expenditure, while China’s share in world military spending has increased from 5.8% in 2008 to 13% in 2017 (SIPRI 2018).

The global financial crisis of 2008–2009 was a turning point for the U.S. global hegemony. The crisis highlighted the problems associated with unregulated capitalism that had its origins in the U.S. and brought to the forefront alternative development models proposed by countries like Russia and China. The postcrisis turmoil created the conditions for the emergence of the challenge of BRICS to the Western-led international financial institutions (Öniş & Kutlay 2013; Stuenkel 2015, 2016). In addition, the Eurozone crisis damaged the global appeal of the EU – making it a less attractive partner for Ankara. In fact, Turkey’s ruling elite started to view the EU’s growing economic problems as a major warning sign and strived to diversify Turkey’s foreign economic relations with other regions starting from the second half of the 2000s. In this changing global order, various analysts have also started to define Turkey as a rising power, emerging middle power, regional power or near-BRICS country due to its impressive economic growth in the 2002–2011 period (Parlar Dal 2016; Öniş & Kutlay 2013, 2016; Köstem 2018).

Due to its strategic geographical location at the centre of the Eurasian landmass, Turkey has been largely affected by the ongoing power transition in the international system. For example, China was not among Turkey’s top 10 trading partners at the turn of the millennium. However, as of 2017, it became Turkey’s second-biggest import partner after Russia and second-biggest total trade partner after Germany. More importantly, despite its official commitment to EU membership, Ankara has become much more enthusiastic about the emergence of multipolarity in international politics.

According to Acharya (2017, 277), the coming “multiplex world order” will be “a world of multiple modernities, where Western liberal modernity . . . is only a part of what is on offer.” He argues that the new wave of globalization led by rising powers will witness the prioritization of alternative development models as well as the protection of state sovereignty (Acharya 2017, 278). That will be in stark contrast to the post–Cold War U.S. democracy promotion agenda. The transformation in the global order due to the rise of new powers has been coupled with the challenge to the liberal international order from within the West. Ankara and many other capitals have read developments such as Brexit and Donald Trump’s economic nationalism in the U.S. as a clear repudiation of Western-led global liberalism. In addition, the growing populist nationalism and anti-immigrant

attitudes in Europe have been strengthening Turkey's scepticism about the EU (Kirişçi & Toygür 2019, 3).

For Turkish leaders, the obvious outcome of the realization of the West's relative decline has been a desire to re-focus their diplomatic, economic and political activity in non-Western regions to prevent overreliance on the U.S., NATO or EU. In his famous book titled *Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position* (2001), for instance, Ahmet Davutoğlu, who served as Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and later prime minister, argued that Turkey had to rediscover its historical and civilizational origins in the former Ottoman space. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on the other hand, criticized the structure of the United Nations (UN) Security Council with his slogan "the world is bigger than five" (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2018b).

Ankara has also decided to move closer to the rising powers in its foreign relations. For example, speaking at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in May 2017, Erdoğan praised China's grand economic project and argued that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was in line with Turkey's own infrastructure and transportation projects (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey 2017). Later, attending the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg in July 2018, he expressed his desire to enhance Turkey's cooperation with BRICS in trade, investment and development and called for building new Turkish connections with the BRICS Business Council and New Development Bank (Daily Sabah 2018).

It is worth noting that Ankara has not been alone in reorienting its foreign policy goals in recognition of the growing importance of the Asia-Pacific in global politics. The U.S. pivot to Asia was one of the greatest foreign policy promises of the Barack Obama administration, although it has stalled since Trump rose to power in 2016 (Wilson 2018). Nevertheless, the U.S. National Security Strategy of December 2017 refers to China and Russia as revisionist powers and pays significant attention to the power competition in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region (The White House 2017). In the past decade, Japan similarly developed a pivot-to-Asia policy in search for greater strategic independence, which requires the transformation of its traditional geopolitical orientation (Samuels & Wallace 2018). Likewise, Russia developed a pivot to the East in 2011 in an effort to attract greater foreign direct investment (FDI), especially from China, for its Siberian and Far Eastern regions. As the U.S. and EU imposed sanctions on the Russian economy after the latter's annexation of Crimea in 2014, closer cooperation with China has become one of Moscow's most significant moves in foreign policy (Baev 2018). The UK, similarly, devised a new Asia strategy in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and aimed to enhance its power and influence in the Indo-Pacific, East Asia and Southeast Asia (Turner 2018). Thus, Turkey's pivot to Eurasia has been taking place in this transforming global context.

### **Dynamic regional context**

Turkey's reorientation of its foreign policy goals can also be seen as a response to the changing regional context in its immediate neighbourhood. The most important development that shaped Turkey's geopolitical alignment behaviour in the



past decade was the Syrian civil war. During the first few years of the Syrian conflict, Ankara and Washington acted together to back the armed Syrian opposition with the hope of toppling the Bashar al-Assad regime. Starting with 2014, however, the views and priorities of the two NATO allies started to diverge significantly as moderate opposition forces in Syria have been sidelined by radical Islamist groups and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) emerged as a formidable force capturing large swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq.

Against this new threat in Syria, the U.S. changed its strategy and started to offer technical and military support to the Kurdish-dominated People's Protection Units (YPG), although the latter has been considered to be the Syrian branch of the PKK, which is officially labelled as a terrorist organization by both Ankara and Washington. Nevertheless, despite Ankara's harsh protests, the U.S. increased its support for the YPG, which later also became the backbone of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) created in 2015. While the SDF managed to capture many towns of strategic importance from ISIL along the 900-km long Turkish-Syrian border in the following three years, Ankara's relations with Washington sharply deteriorated due to the YPG issue.

Secondly, the Syrian conflict urged Turkey to develop closer military cooperation with Russia and to a lesser extent Iran (Erşen 2017). Such a "strategic rapprochement" with Russia was a foregone conclusion for the Turkish leaders because Moscow dramatically and decisively became the major actor in the Syrian conflict following its direct military involvement in Syria in September 2015. The Russian intervention in Syria came as a major shock to Turkey's plans, as it has not only prevented the fall of the Assad regime – which was at its nadir in the summer of 2015 – but also forced Turkey to gradually accept Russia's rules on the Syrian battleground. The downing of a Russian fighter jet by Turkish forces in November 2015 was a major turning point in this regard, as it had severe economic and geopolitical consequences for Ankara. Not only did Russia introduce harsh economic sanctions against Turkey after this incident, but it also completely closed the Syrian airspace to Turkish fighter jets during the seven-month diplomatic spat that could only be resolved in June 2016 after President Erdoğan sent a letter of regret to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Since summer 2016, Ankara and Moscow have been working closely toward a lasting solution of the Syrian conflict. The two countries came together with Iran in December 2016 to launch the "Astana talks", which became a major diplomatic mechanism bringing the representatives of the Assad regime and the moderate opposition around the negotiation table. One of the most important outcomes of the Astana process, in which the U.S. only serves as an observing country, has been the creation of a number of de-escalation zones in Syria. More importantly, the Astana process and enhanced military-political dialogue with Russia and Iran enabled the Turkish armed forces to conduct two major cross-border operations in Syria. As a result of Operation Euphrates Shield launched in August 2016 and Operation Olive Branch launched in January 2018, the Turkish forces achieved to clear a large territory in northern Syria along the Turkish border from both the ISIL and YPG militants. It is interesting to note in this regard that a commentator

writing for the pro-government newspaper *Daily Sabah* interpreted Turkey's cooperation with Russia and Iran in the Syrian conflict as a development that "will pave the way for regional economic opportunities and change the future of Eurasia" (Alkin 2018).

Beyond the dynamics of the Syrian conflict, several other regional factors have also drawn Turkey's attention to the East. The most important development that created excitement in Ankara was China's Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) initiative, which was announced by Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Astana, Kazakhstan, in 2013. The Chinese project revitalized Turkey's desire to connect its railway and road infrastructure with the Caucasus and Central Asia through the Caspian Sea. Ankara has also welcomed the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as an alternative to the World Bank.

The past decade has also witnessed the consolidation of Russian–Chinese strategic partnership in Eurasia. Since 2014, Moscow and Beijing have deepened their cooperation in many fields including energy, arms trade and military affairs. The rising influence of Russia and China in world politics also attracted the interest of Turkey starting from the second half of the 2000s. Turkey has particularly been enthusiastic in developing its links with the SCO, which is regarded as the most important embodiment of the Russian–Chinese strategic partnership. Since 2012, Turkey has been a dialogue partner of this organization, which recently expanded to include India and Pakistan as its new full members.

In the past decade, another important regional development that had significant repercussions for Turkish foreign policy was the Iran nuclear crisis. In early 2010, Turkey developed a nuclear deal together with Brazil, which foresaw Iran's transfer of its low-enriched uranium to Turkey in exchange for fuel for the Tehran research reactor (Levaggi & Yılmaz 2018, 14). Yet due to lack of support from the P5+1 group, the nuclear deal failed to deliver its promise. In reaction, Turkey decided not to take part in the sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Iran, which has further deepened the mistrust between Ankara and Washington.

Finally, the changing geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean region has also contributed to Turkey's search for alternative partners outside the West. The past decade has been marked by friction in Turkey's relations with Israel due to disagreements over the Palestine issue. Turkey's deteriorating ties with Israel and the discovery of hydrocarbons in the East Mediterranean region led to the emergence of a "quasi-alliance" between Greece, Cyprus and Israel (Tziarras 2016). As the EU accession process also stalled during the JDP's second term in office (2007–2011) partly due to the deadlock in the Cyprus issue, Turkey and the EU's regional policies and priorities in the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider Middle East have also diverged. This became another major factor that strengthened Ankara's interest in developing relations with Eurasian states and institutions.

### **Turbulence in the domestic political scene**

The debate about Turkey's recent pivot to Eurasia is also closely related with the domestic political developments that took place in the country particularly after

the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, which resulted in the killing of more than 200 people including many civilians. Although the attempt was quickly repelled by the Turkish security forces, the JDP leaders were extremely disappointed in the muted and hesitant reaction of the U.S. and EU, while Moscow and Tehran gave outright support to President Erdoğan against the coup plotters. It has even been claimed in the Turkish media that the Western governments would be willing to accept a new era of military tutelage in Turkey, as they have already been increasingly critical about the domestic and foreign policies of the JDP government (Sabah 2017). In addition to Ankara's more independent stance in foreign policy particularly with regard to the developments in the Middle East, the anti-government Gezi Park protests of 2013 which received great sympathy from the U.S. and EU officials were among the main factors that deepened the rift between Ankara and its Western allies.

Turkey's relations with Washington and Brussels became even more strained in the second half of 2016. The reluctance of the U.S. authorities to extradite the Pennsylvania-based cleric Fetullah Gülen, who Ankara accused of orchestrating the coup attempt, further alienated Ankara from Washington. On the other hand, the European Parliament took a decision in November 2016 advising temporary suspension of the accession talks with Turkey due to the government's "disproportionate repressive measures" in dealing with the repercussions of the failed coup attempt (*Financial Times* 2016).

The fact that Gülen continued to reside in the U.S., where he allegedly masterminded the activities of the clandestine network, which was officially labelled the Gülenist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) by the Turkish authorities, seems to have strengthened the view in the Turkish public that the July 15 coup attempt was actually a plot of the U.S. to weaken Turkey. In an opinion poll conducted in November 2016, for instance, 79% of the respondents admitted that they believed the U.S. was the real actor behind the coup attempt (Habertürk 2016). This extremely negative view about the U.S. was also closely related with the emerging partnership between Washington and YPG in Syria in the post-2014 period, which became more visible around the same time with the escalation of armed clashes between the Turkish security forces and the PKK in the summer of 2015 following a three-year ceasefire. Due to the close links between the YPG and PKK, the U.S. support behind the former was perceived as a direct support to the latter by many Turkish leaders, including President Erdoğan himself.

In addition to fighting with FETÖ and PKK, Turkey also became the scene of a series of bloody terrorist attacks of the ISIL in the 2016–2017 period, which killed more than 300 people. The increased threat of terrorism in the country was used by the government to take critical security measures including the extension of the state of emergency, which was only lifted in July 2018. In the meantime, Turkey's long-standing parliamentary system of government was transformed into a heavily centralized presidential system with a referendum held in 2017. The strengthened powers of the president vis-à-vis the legislative and judiciary in this new period have been harshly criticized by many government officials and nongovernmental organizations in the West. Freedom House, for instance,

downgraded Turkey's status from "Partly Free" to "Not Free" for the first time in its 2018 report. The 2017 World Press Freedom Index of the Reporters Without Borders (RWB) has similarly seen Turkey fall to the rank of 157 among 180 countries. The report furthermore defined Turkey as "the world's biggest prison for professional journalists" (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2018a).

In July 2014, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban delivered a striking speech in which he cited Turkey, Russia, China and India as the chief examples of a much more promising "Eastern" model of development based on "a strong state, a weak opposition and emaciated checks and balances" (Puddington 2017, 35). In such a geopolitical depiction, while the West continues to represent liberal democratic values, the East is associated with an authoritarian type of government that has been long upheld by the supporters of the idea of Eurasianism in Russia, Turkey and elsewhere. It is no coincidence in this regard that many pundits make reference to Turkey's strategic rapprochement with Russia and China not only as a simple foreign policy tactic but also as a deliberate political choice that signifies the Turkish leaders' frustration with Western values as well as their enthusiasm to embrace an alternative model in which strong leaders and state-led reforms are essential for political, economic and social development.

Such a model also enables the JDP leadership to rally the support of many nationalist and national-patriotic groups in Turkey especially in the post-July 15 period. It should be noted for instance that President Erdoğan's harsh criticisms against the Western liberal order as well as his popular slogan "native-and-national (*yerli ve milli*)" have also been shared by the leaders of anti-Western Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and the Patriotic Party. In fact, the latter has been one of the leading advocates of Eurasianism in Turkey as well as building closer relations with Russia and China. This also demonstrates the changing geopolitical interpretations of the concept of Eurasia for the Turkish leaders at a time when Turkey's relations with its traditional Western allies continue to deteriorate due to both practically and ideationally defined conflicts.

## **Outline of the chapters**

As indicated above, the main goal of this volume is to discuss and analyse the various dimensions of Turkey's strategic rapprochement with the Eurasian states and institutions in the 21st century. To this end, the chapter of Tarık Oğuzlu offers a critical analysis of the changing dynamics of Turkey's relations with Western powers over the course of the last 15 years since the ruling JDP came to power. The author argues that given the legacy of strong historical and institutional relationship between Turkey and the West, one should focus on the rational and structural framework of this relationship in order to answer whether there has been a shift of axis in Turkey's international orientation away from the West to Eurasia. While the chapter emphasizes that the confluence of some internal and external factors during this time period seems to have accelerated the erosion of trust and common strategic-security bonds between Turkey and the Western powers, it offers a systemic explanation of Turkey's foreign policy orientation and highlights the role of

internal factors such as the geopolitical vision and worldview of Turkey's ruling elites in interpreting the emerging international environment. For Oğuzlu, the way Turkey has responded to emerging dynamics in the structure of international order during this time period has been decisively informed by geopolitical imaginations and worldviews of the ruling elites.

In his chapter, Emre Erşen elaborates on the idea of Eurasianism, which has been mainly associated with the views of the Russian intellectual Alexander Dugin in the post-Soviet period and has advocated the formation of a grand geopolitical coalition between the countries of Eurasia against the Western dominance in world politics. The author emphasizes that Eurasianism has been particularly attractive for Turkish national-patriotic groups that have traditionally favoured a rapprochement with Russia due to their discontent with the Turkish governments' pro-Western policies. Throughout the 2000s, Eurasianism gained new supporters from both the rightist and leftist circles, especially during the periods when Turkey faced significant problems in its relations with the West. Within this context, Erşen discusses the rising appeal of Eurasianism in Turkey in light of the latest rapprochement with Russia and particularly focuses on the post-July 15 period, which signifies a growing rift between Turkey and the U.S., EU and NATO over a number of issues. The chapter also explores Dugin's personal links with the leadership of the pro-Russian Patriotic Party as well as the views of the Turkish political, intellectual and military figures on the strategic rapprochement with Russia in order to understand the real influence of the Eurasianist ideas on this process.

Pavel K. Baev focuses on Turkey's relations with Russia and argues that the dynamics of strategic partnership-building between Turkey and Russia have been highly uneven and can hardly be stabilized. For Baev, the multidimensional and changeable war in Syria produces the heaviest impact on this relationship, and the deep differences in Turkish and Russian goals in this crisis determine the limits of their cooperation in promoting the peace process. The chapter also emphasizes the personal relations between Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, indicating that the trust that was badly damaged in the fighter jet crisis that emerged in late 2015 could not be fully reconstituted. It also argues that while cultivating friendly connections, Moscow always checks its course against the fact that Turkey is a NATO member state and therefore a party to the evolving confrontation between Russia and the West. Baev believes that the Russian leadership perceives Turkey as a "weaker link" in the hostile NATO alliance and is therefore eager to exploit opportunities for undermining the transatlantic solidarity. Every tension in Turkey's relations with the U.S. and EU in this sense is assessed in Moscow as a "net gain", although in the final analysis, the rapprochement with Ankara cannot alter the reality of strategic rivalry between the two countries.

In her chapter, Çağdaş Üngör aims to analyse whether Turkish foreign policy has acquired a Eurasianist (*Avrasyacı*) leaning, based on the developments in Sino-Turkish relations in the aftermath of the July 15 coup attempt. Since 2011, the so-called axis shift debate has centred primarily on Turkey's relations with the U.S., Israel, EU and most recently Russia. Although China's growing clout in global politics is undeniable, Beijing rarely becomes a topic of discussion among

Turkish international relations scholars. The chapter argues that in the aftermath of the July 15 coup attempt, China's leverage on Turkey and its overall appeal for Turkish policy makers has increased. Bilateral relations saw a major boost when China threw its explicit support behind the Turkish government in a rather fragile political atmosphere. Turkey's recent downplaying of the Xinjiang (or Uyghur) question and China's positive remarks on Turkey's full membership in the SCO are cases in point. China is often put under positive light in pro-government media in relation to its standing vis-à-vis Western powers. Therefore, Turkey's Eurasianist twist, which also signals closer collaboration with China, has more to do with the intensification of the anti-Western sentiment in Turkey than a calculated pro-China stance. Overall, China's appeal in Turkey seems to be limited to its global role in checking the U.S. power. In this sense, closer ties with China presents itself as an opportunity for Turkish policy makers to exercise a relatively more independent foreign policy. Given Turkey's recent policy change on Xinjiang, however, it is not clear if a globally rising China can deliver on that promise.

For Altay Atlı, in comparison with the remarkable rapprochement between Turkey and Russia in the 2000s, the improvement of Turkey's relations with China has been quite modest. Turkish-Chinese relations still have a long way to go despite the new momentum in the spheres of military cooperation and cultural exchange. At the same time, he also takes notice of the rapidly improving trade relations between the two countries. Despite the remarkable trade balance deficit that is working against Turkey, China has recently become one of Ankara's most significant trade partners, with an overall trade volume of \$26.3 billion in 2017. This picture clearly reveals the significance of economic concerns in Turkey's renewed interest in strengthening its relations with China. Ankara is also quite enthusiastic in playing an active role in China's BRI project. Yet it is hard to claim that Turkish-Chinese relations are evolving into a strategic partnership. In addition to the significant trade imbalance that is currently working against the economic interests of Turkey, the two countries also have significant differences with regard to the Uyghur issue.

Nicola P. Contessi's chapter seeks to understand the motivations and drivers behind Turkey's asserted aspiration to pursue closer engagement with the SCO. The chapter offers three explanations rooted in three different theories of international relations and their views of international institutions. The first is constructivist and highlights the conception of international organizations as communities of values and practices endowed with a shared identity. It understands Turkey's SCO rapprochement as part of a rethinking of many of the underpinnings of the country's domestic and foreign policy. The second is neoliberal and rests on the view of international organizations as instruments of states, devised to enable cooperation and reduce transaction costs. The third is realist and argues that Turkey's interest in the SCO is primarily geopolitical. For Contessi, as Turkey seeks to position itself as a central country linking the East and the West, it is natural for it to look for greater cooperation with the SCO – especially at a time when EU accession is definitively off the table.

Seçkin Köstem provides an overview of Turkey's renewed interest in the Caucasus and Central Asia. He starts with discussing the new geopolitical trends in

Eurasia with a focus on how Ankara has perceived them. Ankara has welcomed China's grand economic projects, as it expects to increase its economic connectivity with Eurasia. Turkey expects the BRI to contribute to Turkish exports and investments in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Then the chapter analyses Turkey's initiatives to institutionalize its ties with countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The most important among those initiatives are the Turkic Council, which was established in 2009, and the various trilateral cooperation mechanisms that Turkey has formed together with Azerbaijan. The chapter then continues with discussing Turkey's economic ties with the region, which have remained miniscule compared to the Turkish economic activism elsewhere. No deep form of regionalism exists between Turkey and the states of the region, while Ankara preserves its efforts to enhance mutual understanding and strengthen the foundations of its presence in post-Soviet Eurasia. The third section examines Turkey's bilateral ties with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan since they are the two most significant countries in terms of Turkish foreign policy toward the region.

In her chapter, Pınar İpek reassesses the importance of Russia and the Caspian Sea region for Turkey's energy security in the process of the gradual Turkish strategic rapprochement with Moscow and Tehran over the issue of Syria in the last few years. The turmoil in Syria and Iraq highlighted the geopolitics of oil and gas resources that has been simultaneously accompanied by a resurgence of the alternative Eurasian orientation in Turkish foreign policy. The analysis in the chapter is divided into four sections. The first section presents an overview of Turkey's policy toward the Eurasian energy pipelines in the post-Cold War period. The second section shows the recent status of Turkey's energy relations with Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The third section questions to what extent Eurasia remains critical for Turkey's energy security within the context of Turkey's interdependence with the energy supplier countries in the region. The argument asserts that not only strategic interests driven by trade-offs, but also a cognitive bias driven partly by the worldview of the recent political leadership and mostly by national identity conception of the ruling elite matters to understand and explain Turkey's energy security in Eurasia. The conclusion underlines the limitations and opportunities in Turkey's pivot to Eurasia in light of Turkey's asymmetric interdependence with Russia in energy security.

Gülriş Şen explores the dynamics of estrangement and realignment in Turkey-Iran affairs and discusses the role of the U.S. in the complex interplay of cooperation and competition between Turkey and Iran throughout the 2000s. She traces the shifts in bilateral affairs from alignment in the early 2000s to estrangement between 2012 and 2016 and to realignment since mid-2016. The chapter argues that the growing estrangement in Turkish-Iranian affairs during the Arab Uprisings mostly pertained to their own countervailing positions as two rising regional powers at a time when the U.S. was rather relatively absent or reluctant to act in the Middle East. This period also revealed the novel characteristics taking shape in Turkish-Iranian rivalry with elements of hard balancing and signs of sectarian entrapment. In the post-2016 era, Turkey and Iran started to realign, as both states' contentious relations with the U.S. and uncertainties of American policy in

the region drew them closer and granted them a ground to dissipate divergences. However, the recent realignment does not necessarily mean an end of Turkish-Iranian competition or the birth of a full-fledged strategic partnership. It may at best signal a return to soft balancing, with many potential and actual areas for continuous rivalry in place. Furthermore, the likely limits of Turkey's Eurasian tilt and growing U.S. pressure on Iran may result in another episode of estrangement in Turkey-Iran relations, presenting Turkey the perennial challenge of balancing its relations with Iran and the U.S.

Harsh V. Pant and Ketan Mehta argue that the JDP initiated an expansion of Turkey's South Asia policy, which had traditionally been fixated on Ankara's shared Islamic solidarity with Pakistan. Under stress from a new set of drivers such as India's rising economic and political profile, Turkey has started exploring the possibilities of cooperation with New Delhi. Moreover, South Asia's evolving security environment augments Turkey's strategic interest in the region. It is becoming imperative for Turkey to expand ties with emerging powers like India and look beyond the dynamics of its partnership with the West. On the other side, following the rise of radical Islamist groups and instability in the Middle East, India also hopes for cooperation with Turkey, which has significant stakes in the regional power dynamics. The chapter examines the changing contours of Turkey's engagement with India while underlining the factors which are making this shift imperative in Turkey's foreign policy. The authors argue that the changing geopolitical context in the Middle East and South Asia requires a new approach from both Ankara and New Delhi towards each other.

Finally, Mustafa Kutlay's chapter explores how developing countries are responding to and being affected by the transformations in the international order with special reference to Turkey and BRICS. The global system is passing through sea changes, and the rules, norms and practices of the liberal order are becoming increasingly contested. The global diffusion of power and the accompanied rise of emerging economies such as BRICS and near-BRICS are contributing to the emergence of a new world dis-order. The chapter offers a push-and-pull framework to account for the changing forms of state-market relations in developing economies in a changing international system. It argues that the internal crises of neoliberal economic paradigm constitute the "push" dynamics for countries located in the periphery of global capitalism. It also suggests that the "pull" dynamics inform the economic paradigms and political regimes in developing countries. Accordingly, in the posthegemonic era, the emerging great powers seem to have demonstration effects for developing countries as they rely on distinct economic and political models, called "state capitalism". The chapter, with particular reference to the interactions between BRICS and Turkey, aims to explore how push and pull dynamics operate at the international level.

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have gone to great lengths to have their country's international identity recognized as a "virtuous", "humanitarian" and "responsible" power puts Turkey in a much closer affiliation with the Western world than Russia and China. For example, while Putin's Russia and Xi's China have been trying to drive wedges within the transatlantic alliance, Turkey still sees NATO as vital to the materialization of its national security interests and actively contributes to the transformation of the alliance from within (Oğuzlu 2013).

As part of its soft balancing strategy, Turkish rulers do now increasingly voice the view that "the world is bigger than five". Signing up to Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB), showing interest in developing joint projects with China within the framework of the BRI, contributing to global and regional governance initiatives, such as MIKTA and MINT, buying S-400 missile defence system from Russia, establishing military bases in faraway regions such as Qatar and Somalia and showing interest in joining the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) all suggest that the gradual erosion in the relative weight of Western powers in international politics and the concomitant rise in the influence of non-Western powers appear to have increased Turkey's manoeuvring capability and bargaining power in its foreign policy. Yet this does in no way amount to a strong Turkish revisionism evincing a hard balancing or spoiling character.

As Turkey's current economic crisis, which has been to a significant extent driven by the Trump administration's bullying actions, reveals, whenever Turkey's relations with the U.S. worsen, Turkey comes much closer to the EU. The EU is Turkey's number one economic partner, and it now seems that Turkish rulers have once again realized that Turkey's economic and political stability would be positively affected by positive Turkish-EU relations. Turkey's need to be firmly located within the Western world and to experience positive strategic relations with Western powers within NATO and other Western organizational platforms might further increase if its strategic cooperation with Russia and other non-Western powers prove to be unsustainable in the larger Middle East region.

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policy, it is difficult to view this as a long-term orientation, especially in the absence of a clear geopolitical and economic convergence of interests between Turkey and the other Eurasian countries.

It should be noted, for instance, that Ankara still has important disagreements with Moscow and Tehran regarding the solution of geopolitical issues in the Middle East, Caucasus, Black Sea and East Mediterranean. Dugin's harsh rhetoric about Ukraine and Georgia as well as his enthusiasm in collaborating with the Iraqi and Syrian Kurds, for instance, constitute significant obstacles for a genuine Eurasianist rapprochement between Turkey and Russia. In economic terms, on the other hand, one should remember that almost half of Ankara's exports are to the EU countries, while there is a huge trade imbalance with Russia and China that negatively affects the macroeconomic balances of Turkey. Due to these reasons, it seems that Eurasianism will continue to remain an emotionally attractive but politically and economically unrealistic option for Turkish policy makers in the near future.

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to the possible withdrawal of U.S. nuclear bombs from Turkey (Marshall 2017). Moscow is targeting every split between Turkey and the U.S., demonstrating its military dominance in the Black Sea theatre and emphasizing the nuclear risks (Hacıoğlu 2018). The contract on exporting to Turkey the S-400 surface-to-air missiles is seen by Moscow primarily as a means to exacerbate the conflict and isolate Turkey inside NATO (Khodarenok 2018).

The interactions in the Syrian war zone caused both the sharpest crisis in Turkey–Russia relations in late 2015 and the still ongoing rapprochement in the Astana format, which may very well have exhausted its usefulness in the Idlib crisis. The ground for further cooperation in managing this war is shrinking, and a new clash caused by Turkey’s irreducible animosity to the seemingly victorious but profoundly unstable al-Assad regime is highly probable already in the near future. Current concerns in Europe and the U.S. about an emerging “alliance” between Turkey and Russia will then turn into worries about security risks produced by their conflict. With all the disagreements and disappointments accumulating in Ankara’s relations with the U.S. and EU, the scale and intensity of potential threats to Turkey’s security emanating from Russia are too high to be alleviated by diplomatic manoeuvring and high-level dialogue, and thus NATO remains the best available mechanism for ensuring effective containment.

## Note

- 1 This chapter is an output of my research projects supported by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and draws on the research presented in Baev & Kirişçi (2017).

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Seen through a value-laden prism, these words suggest that post-coup attempt Turkey is much more tolerant of China than its Western partners. As of 2018, Turkish officials keep remaining silent on the predicament of the Uyghur Muslims, a million of whom were placed in detention camps in the last year by the Chinese regime in an effort to “re-educate” them (Kirby 2018).

## Conclusion

The failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, with its several tragic consequences, will be remembered as one of the turning points in modern Turkish history. Beside its much-discussed domestic impact, the incident also left an imprint on Turkish foreign policy. In the immediate aftermath of the failed plot, the rising anti-American sentiments and frequent skirmishes with the EU governments drew Turkey further away from the West. Amidst this environment, Russia’s and China’s friendly gestures to the JDP government increased the popularity of Eurasianist ideas in Turkey.

Much of the post-coup attempt Eurasianist euphoria in the Turkish media and official circles had to do with the popular conviction on the duplicity of the Western world. But Russia and China certainly had their attractive offerings on the table. The new cooperation with Moscow elevated Turkey’s bargaining position in Syria and the material benefits offered by China, such as infrastructural investment and technology transfer, lured Turkey towards this otherwise unpopular Asia-Pacific country. In the geopolitical sense, Sino-Turkish cooperation clearly provided leverage to the JDP leadership vis-à-vis Western countries, which are anxious about Turkey’s possible membership in the SCO and its pulling away from NATO. Unlike what the Eurasianist circles in Turkey promote, however, closer ties with China may not necessarily enable Turkey to implement a fully independent foreign policy line.

In the last decade, Turkish officials have had to employ new strategies and sometimes felt obliged to underemphasize Turkey’s grievances and complaints in order to come to terms with China’s rise. The most recent policy change is with regard to the Uighur issue, which resulted in Turkey’s gradual accommodation to Chinese priorities. Given the growing power asymmetry between the two countries, it is unclear how much realpolitik advantage Turkey may derive out of this relationship in the coming years. As I have tried to put forward throughout this chapter, China is an important powerhouse that pushes forward Turkey’s recent Eurasian leaning, and its role in Turkish foreign policy has clearly grown in the post-July 15 period. Since Turkey spares Eurasian powers the value-based judgments it usually chooses to put down its transatlantic partners, the ethical dilemmas inherent in Turkey’s new Eurasianism mostly go unnoticed.

## Note

- 1 The decision of the U.S. authorities to arrest President Erdoğan’s security guards, who attacked some protesters in Washington during Erdoğan’s visit to the U.S. in May 2017, was labelled the “bodyguard crisis” in Turkish-U.S. relations. *U.S. v. Atilla* is an Iranian sanctions case in which Hakan Atilla, the chief executive of one of Turkey’s main state



banks Halkbank, was found guilty of conspiring with Iranian-Turkish businessman Reza Zarrab to violate the U.S. sanctions on Iran. The visa crisis, on the other hand, started when the U.S. missions in Turkey stopped issuing visas after a Turkish employee of the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul was detained for alleged links to FETÖ. The latter crisis could only be resolved after a three-month standoff between Ankara and Washington.

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between Turkey and its Western partners, and political discourse often represents Turkey's foreign relations as a matter of a binary choice between the West and the East, Turkey's improving relations with China do not result from an ideological preference. Neither is it a decision taken at the expense of other established partners, with whom Turkey possesses deeply rooted economic, political and cultural ties. As discussed above, Turkey's economy is so strongly anchored in the West – especially in the EU – that it is simply impossible to replace it with another actor, not even with China. Turkey's deepening relations with China are a sign of purely rational and pragmatic behaviour. For Turkey, China is an economic power that can support closing the country's infrastructure and technology gaps, whereas for China, Turkey is located on a strategic position along the BRI, as a connector between Europe and Asia.

As Turkey's current ambassador to Beijing, Abdülkadir Emin Önen, stated in an interview with the Chinese media, "Turkey does not consider this array of developing relations with China and other countries to replace its existing ties with the United States or the EU. Turkey has the strength and confidence to place itself at a position where it can work with all these actors on an equal footing. Turkey does not favour one partner over another. Our goal in developing relations with China is to enjoy bilateral cooperation in a win-win setting" (*Global Times* 2018). The world of the 21st century is defined by concepts like interconnectedness and interdependence, and instead of using binary lenses, Turkey's development of its relations with China can be better understood within this context.

## Notes

- 1 All the overall and bilateral trade figures used in this chapter are either directly taken from or calculated using the data in Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK n.d.) unless stated otherwise.
- 2 All the commodity-level trade figures used in this chapter are either directly taken from or calculated using the data in ITC n.d. unless stated otherwise.
- 3 Official investment statistics cannot always fully cover the actual amount invested because they do not include retained earnings and investments through third countries, but they are still useful for comparison purposes.
- 4 In the same period, the total number of entries into Turkey made by foreign passport holders (including citizens of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) was 32,410,034. Chinese citizens' share in this total figure is 0.08% (Ministry of Culture and Tourism n.d.).

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business as it is a major trading partner, the perfect client for Russian natural gas and a prospective transit route for further gas exports. Realistically, Turkish officials seem to understand this. Commenting on Turkey's election as the chair of the SCO Energy Club, Eşref Soysal, a deputy SCO representative for Turkey, observed, "This is the main message sent to us by Moscow. This is how Russians view Ankara's membership in the SCO" (Chulkovskaya 2017).

However, while Moscow welcomes Ankara's efforts to join, it appears that the Russian military is more sceptical. One retired Russian colonel and military journalist, speaking on the condition of anonymity, sentenced that Turkey could not join the SCO without leaving NATO (Chulkovskaya 2017). Turkey's position on Syria prior to July 2015 illustrates the kind of discrepancies that could emerge between Ankara and other SCO members on key strategic issues were Turkey to become a full member (İdiz 2013). Nonetheless, during a visit to Turkey in November 2017, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the Russian Liberal Democratic Party, affirmed that Erdoğan personally asked him to assist with Turkey's effort to join the SCO and that there was a possibility Turkey would leave NATO (TASS 2017).

At any rate, one day after Erdoğan's second plea, Geng Shuang, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, remained tentative and stated that Turkey was already a dialogue partner and China "attaches importance to Turkey's aspiration to further deepen cooperation with the SCO", affirming China's willingness "to consult with other SCO members about the issue to seriously study it on the basis of consensus consultation" (*China Daily* 2016; Reuters 2016b). Yet the Uyghur issue again loomed in the background as only one year earlier and just weeks before Erdoğan's official visit to China in 2015, Istanbul witnessed a series of protests against China, during which Chinese flags were set on fire near the Chinese Consulate-General and a Chinese restaurant was attacked (Wang 2016).

In sum, it is difficult to judge whether Turkey may eventually obtain what Erdoğan claims it wants as both China and Russia are allergic to pan-Turkism – China probably more so than Russia today – and both may have misgivings about whether they can trust Erdoğan and the durability of Turkey's political commitments in the future. Notwithstanding the numerous overtures, according to Murat Bilhan, who is the vice chairman of the Turkish-Asian Centre for Strategic Studies, Moscow and Beijing still seem to consider Turkey "as a Trojan horse of the West". Even though Turkey has intensified official visits and other contacts with both China and Russia since 2016, it is likely, therefore, that more substantial proof of loyalty will be expected on the Turkish part.

## Notes

- 1 In the Russian context, Tsygankov (1998) referred to the equivalent perspective as "hard-line Eurasianism".
- 2 The year 2016 was quite turbulent for Turkey, recording the demise of Davutoğlu as prime minister in May, the crackdown on an attempted coup against Erdoğan in July and the rapprochement with Russia officialized in June, after the downing of a Russian fighter jet by Turkish forces over the Turkish-Syrian border on November 24, 2015.



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Ankara has also deepened bilateral relations with every country in the Caucasus and Central Asia, except Armenia. Yet despite the rhetoric and practice of strategic partnership, Turkey's economic relations with the Caucasus and Central Asia have been of limited capacity. Ankara will most likely never go back to its enthusiasm and activism with regard to post-Soviet Eurasia, which was quite visible in the 1990s. However, the Caucasus and Central Asia have once again solidified their place in Turkish foreign policy in the past decade. Despite the presence of geopolitical and economic limits to a greater role for Turkey in the Caucasus and Central Asia, these two regions will continue to be crucial components of Turkey's pivot to Eurasia in the foreseeable future.

## Notes

- 1 The author would like to thank M. Yusuf Yılmaz and Beyza Aksoy for their research assistance.
- 2 For a detailed analysis, see Nicola P. Contessi's contribution to this volume.
- 3 Interview with anonymous diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, June 12, 2018, Ankara.
- 4 For the effect of the jet crisis on Turkish-Russian relations, see Baev's and Erşen's contributions to this volume.
- 5 Interview with Khazar Ibrahim, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Turkey, August 16, 2018, Ankara.
- 6 Interview with anonymous official at TANAP, August 14, 2018, Ankara.
- 7 Interview with anonymous official at TANAP, August 14, 2018, Ankara.
- 8 For a detailed discussion on Turkey's energy security and Eurasia, see İpek's contribution to this volume.
- 9 Interview with Khazar Ibrahim, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Turkey, August 16, 2018, Ankara.
- 10 Author's calculations based on TİKA's annual development aid reports. To see reports, see TİKA n.d.
- 11 Interview with Khazar Ibrahim, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Turkey, August 16, 2018, Ankara.
- 12 Interview with anonymous diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, June 12, 2018, Ankara.
- 13 Interview with anonymous diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, June 12, 2018, Ankara.

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makers promoting the resurgence of a Eurasian orientation in Turkish foreign policy can face challenges to be part of a winning coalition, which can be blocked by the growing authoritarianism in domestic structures of the state. Consequently, despite the increasing level of uncertainty in today's regional and world politics, in which new ideas matter, under the current circumstances of Turkey's asymmetric interdependence in energy relations with Russia, alternative ideas advocating Turkey's pivot to Eurasia may not be fruitful.

## Notes

- 1 When the EU Commission initiated a debate for the EU's energy policy by publishing the Green Paper in 2006, roughly half of the EU's gas consumption was coming from only three countries – Russia, Norway and Algeria (European Commission 2006).
- 2 Turkey's state pipeline company BOTAŞ initiated the project in February 2002, and a declaration of intent was signed in June 2002 with the Austrian energy firm OMV's support. The transit countries (Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Austria and Hungary) signed an agreement in October 2002, and the project officially started.
- 3 The intergovernmental agreement between Turkey and Azerbaijan was signed on June 26, 2012. The Host Government Agreement was amended and signed on May 26, 2014, and ratified by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on September 20, 2014 (TANAP n.d.).
- 4 The first natural gas agreement between Russia and Turkey was signed in 1986 for the Western Route, which transits through Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria. In 1997, there was the second agreement to construct a sub-sea pipeline to transport Russian gas to Samsun via the Black Sea. In February 1999, Gazprom and ENI signed a Memorandum of Understanding to build a pipeline (today known as the Blue Stream) to transport Russian gas to Turkey. The construction of the pipeline started in September 2001, and gas flow started in February 2003.
- 5 There was an agreement between Turkey and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq to build a new oil pipeline between northern Iraq and the Ceyhan terminal in March 2013 as well as a new gas pipeline route towards the northern Iraq border to import gas from this region (Peker 2013; Çamlıbel 2014).
- 6 TANAP's total capacity is 16 bcm/year. The remaining 10 bcm/year will be transported from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz II field to Europe. The capacity of the pipeline is targeted to increase to 23 bcm/year in 2023 and 31 bcm/year in 2026. The consortium members are SOCAR, the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (58%), BOTAŞ (30%) and BP (12%). See *Hürriyet Daily News* 2018.
- 7 Many EU member states experienced gas disruption in different degrees from 100% to 15% during January 2009 (Westphal 2009, 22–3).
- 8 With the Decree Law 649 in 2011, all ministries gained power to audit the activities of relevant regulatory agencies. Also, with the Article 22 of Law 6353 of 2012, Energy Market Regulatory Authority transferred all the audit rights of electricity distribution companies to MENR.
- 9 Because of space limitation, a qualitative data analysis about the political leadership's cognitive bias cannot be presented in this chapter.

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affairs slightly improved due to the reinvigoration of nuclear diplomacy. This era clearly revealed that Turkey and Iran had their own tensions and clash of interests over the region, in which the U.S. factored rather indirectly and remained mostly instrumental. The analysis of the post-2016 developments shows that Turkey's disappointment with the U.S. and growing mistrust between the two allies factored positively in the realignment of Turkey and Iran. The tension served as a stepping stone for Russia and Iran to align with Turkey and work together to shape the region in line with their usually conflicting interests. The recent concord in Turkey–Iran affairs is also underpinned by a greater understanding of their disagreements and the recognition of the necessity of cooperation to resolve the crises in their vicinity, as neither of them proved able to end the turmoil on their own. Such cooperation is noteworthy for bringing stability to their neighbourhood and extinguishing the flames of sectarianism engulfing the region.

Having said so, the recent realignment does not denote an end of Turkish–Iranian competition or a full-fledged strategic partnership. It may at best signal a return to earlier soft balancing mechanisms with many potential and actual areas for continuous rivalry in place. Given the fact that the conflicts in Syria and Iraq are not yet over, the fate of the recent thaw is far from clear. Bilateral relations will also be tested by mounting political and economic pressure of the U.S. on Iran, a policy that receives tremendous support from Israel and the U.S. allies in the Persian Gulf. This once again presents Turkey the perennial challenge of balancing Iran and the U.S. and positioning itself in the region between the Arab world and Iran. Though Turkey declared that it would search for “new friends and allies”, unless the U.S. changes its current policies (Erdoğan 2018), Turkey is still a NATO country, and its “pivot to Eurasia” has strategic limits. A possible warming up of Turkey–U.S. affairs may roll back the realignment in Turkey–Iran affairs observed since 2016. In this regard, the latest decision by U.S. President Trump to pull American forces out of Syria must be mentioned as a post-script note. Despite uncertainties regarding its timetable and implications for U.S.–PYD as well as Russia/Syria–PYD relations, the abrupt decision of withdrawal will no doubt add new dynamics to the complex web of relations between Turkey, the U.S., Russia and Iran. In any case, if the past is a guide, what is certain for Turkey–Iran affairs is that relations will continue to be marked by the constant interplay of cooperation and competition shaped by shifting domestic, regional and international dynamics.

## Note

- 1 With the Tehran Declaration, Iran agreed to ship 1,200 kg of low-enriched uranium to Turkey in return for fuel for a research reactor.

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countries in the global economy and a perceptible decline in its relations with the West have been forcing Turkey to explore avenues of cooperation with Asian countries like India. To this end, Turkey's "pivot to Asia" is characterized by burgeoning trade links with Asian countries as well as an interest in exploring the possibility of cooperation in new sectors such as defence and space technologies.

From India's perspective, following the events of the "Arab Spring", it is becoming imperative to engage Turkey, which has been pursuing a more active foreign policy in the region. In particular, the rise of Islamist and extremist groups in the Middle East which have expanded their reach to South Asia have led New Delhi to underline the need to develop diplomatic relations with Turkey, which also has significant stakes in the regional security dynamics. On the other hand, the JDP leadership is concerned about the influence of the Gülenist organizations that are still active in India. This incentivized the Turkish government to seek counterterrorism cooperation with New Delhi.

India's growing diplomatic and economic engagements in Turkey's neighbourhood have also enhanced its importance for Turkish foreign policy. India is not only a significant trading partner for many Middle Eastern countries, but its potential as an expansive market and an increasingly important investment destination has been attracting Turkey's interest. Ankara especially senses an opportunity in meeting India's demands in the infrastructure sector and seeks to participate in the flagship initiatives of the Modi government. The key bilateral visits by the JDP leadership to India, including the 2017 visit of President Erdoğan to New Delhi, are indicative of Turkey's developing ties with India and its interest to diversify bilateral relations.

Yet major challenges continue to confront the India–Turkey relationship. Turkey's interest to play a role in the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan has dismayed India, which views it as a bilateral dispute with Pakistan and is apprehensive of any third-party intervention. Turkey's behaviour in the OIC, which has been critical of India's counter insurgency strategy in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, is also a reason of concern for New Delhi. On the other hand, Turkey's burgeoning role in Afghanistan's politics and its support for the Uzbek political leader Dostum, who has an uneasy relationship with the Afghan President Ghani, could be negative for India's interests in Afghanistan, as New Delhi has invested politically and financially in the government in Kabul. Finally, the economic ties between Turkey and India remain underwhelming. If the two countries are really serious about imparting a new dynamism to their bilateral ties, then it will be important for them to come to terms with the challenges and build a more forward-looking relationship.

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majoritarianism and strong executives are constantly praised as an alternative to liberal democracy and political pluralism.

The most powerful members of BRICS – China and Russia – appear to be the most assertive representatives of this emerging paradigm. In a post-Western international order, state capitalism seems to make its way into other countries as well. This chapter placed the transformation in the Turkish political economy over the last decade within this broader framework, with particular reference to the push-and-pull dynamics in international affairs. To be clear, neoliberal policies still carry significant weight in Turkish political economy. However, the growing emphasis on alternative developmental paths, growing scepticism about the liberal values and norms as well as the increasing emphasis on South–South cooperation imply that the current transformation reflects more than an edited version of orthodox policies. Finally, this chapter demonstrated that new developmentalist models suffer from internal contradictions and certain constraints, which are also discernible in the Turkish case. In this regard, the incompatibility of long-term sustainable economic development within an extractive institutional framework appears to be the major challenge for emerging states seeking status in global politics.

## Notes

- 1 The push-and-pull framework was first sketched out in Öniş and Kutlay (2017).
- 2 Data retrieved from SIPRI database: <http://visuals.sipri.org>.
- 3 Data retrieved from <https://developingeconomics.org/2017/09/27/the-brics-and-a-changing-world/>.
- 4 For a discussion on financialization, see Krippner (2005). On the regulatory failures and credit crunch in 2008, see Gowan (2009).
- 5 The JDP has been ruling the country as a single-party government since then.
- 6 For an analysis of the crisis between Russia and Turkey, see Erşen (2017).
- 7 This part partially draws on Kutlay (2018b).
- 8 For comparative analysis, see the OECD data: <http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Helpers/GenerateHTML>. The data belong to the PISA 2015 survey.
- 9 For an analysis of Turkey's asymmetrical economic relationship with Russia, see Köstem (2018).

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