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Turkey's Role as a Regional and Global Player and its Power Capacity: Turkey's Engagement with other Emerging States

Aylin Gürzel

ABSTRACT

Turkey's role as a regional power has increased since Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power. AKP leadership not only aspired to become a regional power but also a global player. Turkey has, therefore, assumed different roles: the "natural leader" of the region; a historical "big brother;" and the "protector" of the Muslim minorities. Turkey has also assumed a "mediator" and a "facilitator" role by trying to negotiate a deal with an emerging power such as Brazil in order to attempt to resolve the controversial Iranian nuclear issue. By making use of recent developments, Turkey tried to solidify its long desired role as a "rising power" by increasing its influence in its neighborhood and engaging with other emerging powers. The concept "regional power" is a context-based notion. In other words, the location and geography are contesting and disputed approaches. Notwithstanding the fact that concepts such as "region" and "power" are social constructed reality, this paper analyzes the notion of 'regional power' as a subcategory of 'power'. In this context, this paper will make use of Stefan Schim's criteria while analyzing Turkey's power capacity in the region. Schim posits that the "regional power" needs to have a "role definition," and it should possess material power (hard power). It should also have economic as well as diplomatic and organizational capacity. Its power whether it is 'soft power' (attraction of ones idea's and or the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of other actors) or 'hard power' (material power that can be measured-economic and military power) needs to be acknowledged by other actors in the region. It should also be accepted by great powers and emerging powers that are determinant in the international system. Additionally, the regional power (and/ or global power) needs to have leverage, thus its power projection needs to yield results. Kalevi Holsti's role theory will be used as theoretical framework to analyze foreign policy behavior of the AKP. The paper will, thus, seek to find out Turkey's roles.

KEYWORDS: Turkey; AKP; emerging states; regional power; hard power

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I. Introduction

Turkey's role as are regional power has increased since Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power. AKP leadership not only aspired to become a regional power but also a global player. Turkey has, therefore, assumed different roles: the natural leader" of the region; a historical big brother;" and the protector" of the Muslim minorities. Turkey has also assumed a mediator" and a facilitator" role by trying to negotiate a deal with an emerging power such as Brazil in order to attempt to resolve the controversial Iranian nuclear issue. By making use of recent developments, Turkey tried to solidify its long desired role as a rising power" by increasing its influence in its neighborhood and engaging with other emerging powers. The concept regional power" is a context-based notion. In other words, the location and geography are contesting and disputed approaches (Bilgin 2004). Notwithstanding the fact that concepts such as "region" and "power" are a social constructed reality, this paper analyzes the notion of "regional power" as a subcategory of "power". In this context, this paper will make use of Stefan Schim's criteria while

analyzing Turkey's power capacity in the region. Schrim (2010) posits that the "regional power" needs to have a "role definition", and it should possess material power (hard power), in addition to military power. It should also have economic as well as diplomatic and organizational capacity. Its power, whether it is 'soft power' (attraction of one's ideas and/or the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of other actors) (Nye 1990)¹ or 'hard power' (material power that can be measured-economic and military power) needs to be acknowledged by other actors in the region. It should also be accepted by great powers and emerging powers that are determinant in the international system. Additionally, the regional power (and/or global power) needs to have leverage, thus its power projection needs to yield results (Schrim 2010). Kalevi Holsti's role theory² will be used as theoretical framework to analyze foreign policy behavior of the AKP. The paper will, thus, seek to find out Turkey's roles.

¹ See also Nye (2004, p. 11).

² Role theory has its roots in the sociology discipline and was first used by sociologists to analyze society's behavior. See also Kalevi Holsti (1970, p. 256).

Furthermore, the paper does not only focus on "Turkey's achievements in economic issues, but also in its impacts on Turkish foreign policy. In the first section, it will elaborate on Turkey's assumed roles and its foreign relations with its neighbors and with emerging powers. Then, it will analyze its power capacity in terms of its economic power, diplomatic power, and soft power. This paper will not examine Turkey's military power because the main focus of the paper will be on Turkey's 'economic potential' and 'soft power capacity' as well as its 'diplomatic power'. In the second section, it will elaborate on Turkish foreign policy and its engagement with other emerging states in two sections: first, throughout the financial (global) crisis; second, after the political crisis in Turkey (Gezi Park uprisings and power struggle with the Fetullah Gulen movement).

II. Turkey's growing economy: Its impact of Turkish foreign policy

Turkey, in a little more than a decade ago, has gone from a financial crisis to having one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Especially after the global financial crisis, in 2008, Turkey aspired to seek global leadership when great powers faced challenges in this new era. Emerging economies such as the BRICS (five major emerging nations- Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and the G-20 (Group of 20 major economies- Turkey is now in G-20) have done much better during and after the global financial crisis. During the global crisis, Turkey has been viewed as a rising (emerging) economic power; and tried to act as a global player in international platforms. AKP leadership has aspired to achieve its 2023 goals, which is to become one of the leading 10 economies in the world. Moreover, as "Turkey's AKP has provided stability and vision", (Byrant & Hatay, p. 1) to the country, Turkey has been revealed, by some circles the United States (U.S.), as a 'model' of democracy for the Muslim world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Notwithstanding its internal ups and downs in its own performance in democracy lately seen in the jailing of hundreds of students, academics and journalists since AKP came to power, Turkey is still being considered to be a democratic country and an inspiration for other countries in the region.³

³ OSCE's concerns regarding arrested journalists in Turkey. It is also not uncommon to punish journalists with solitary confinement for extended time periods (see OSCE 2012). According to the Turkish daily, *Hurriyet*, in

The development of infrastructure and institutions of governance, the explosive growth of its economy, as well as the combination of a religiously conservative governing party and secular governance have made the "Turkish model" a well-known rhetoric (Byrant & Hatay 2013, p. 1). Nevertheless, Meliha Altunısık, a prominent scholar in the Middle East Technical University in

August 2012, 2,824 students were being held in Turkish prisons, after having been arrested since 31 January 2012 on charges of "being a member of an armed-terrorist organization" (Number of students in jail hits 2,824 in Turkey, 2012).

Turkey, has stresses that a "Turkish model" rhetoric has been present since the beginning of the Turkish Republic after the Turkish independence war, when "unlike the other countries of the region, Turkey was born out of a determination not to accept the post-WW I settlement that was imposed on it by the winners of the war" (Altunışık 2008, p. 200). Turkey's reforms and modernization efforts, throughout the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk era, became a role model or rather an inspiration for other Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Tunisia and Iran (until the 1979 Islamic Revolution).

⁴ Interview with Steven A. Cook, "Turkey's Rising Mideast Role," 26 October 2011 (Cook, Sabbagh & Gwetzman 2011).

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) expert Steven A. Cook asserted that the Obama administration perceived Turkey, "not just as a geostrategic asset, but as a potential partner" in the Mideast, especially after tremendous change in the region.⁴ Nevertheless, if there was such a thing as the "Turkish moment", it seems to have passed as hope in Arab countries has faded away. Arab Spring left the ground to a "harsh and dark winter" instead of bringing different colors to the region. The Arab Spring did not bloom, but has given way to the hard realities of building democracy. It took centuries for the European countries to become democracies after the bloody French revolution. Since 1923, Republic of Turkey is still striving to become a democratic country and seems to have a long way to go. Civil society in Turkey is not strong and effective. Turkey has not been able to build strong institutions like the European Union countries such as Germany, France and Britain. Thus, Turkey could not move to a genuine liberal form of democracy, which led to the accumulation of centralized power. Turkey's institutions and checks and balances in the Turkish constitution are weakening.⁵ Nonetheless, the AKP leadership has strived to assume a natural "leader" role in the region. This goal has also had an impact on its foreign policy.

⁵ Interview, Sinan Ülgen, expert in Carnegie Endowment for Peace in Brussels, 18.Jan.2014.

III. Turkey's assumed foreign policy roles and its relations with its neighbors and with emerging powers

Over the past decade, Turkish foreign policy has barely been on a rising and steady curve. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's policy of "zero problems" with Turkey's neighbors has turned into "zero partners". Turkey no longer has strategic partners or reliable allies due to its "uncertain foreign policy." In the course of "unexpected circumstances" it has lost not only its former allies' trust but also has lost regional ties with countries like Iraq, Iran and Syria. For instance, Iran remains a threat (a nuclear threat if it acquires nuclear weapons in the near future) because it has announced that it would attack Turkey with its missiles if it was struck by Israeli or American forces. Iran has made this public; right after Turkey signed the missile defense agreement with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and placed the radar system in Küreçik to NATO's use. Syria's civil war and Turkey's support to the Sunni extremist opposition groups in Syria has worsened its relation with not only Iran but also Syria as well as its former partners such as Israel and the United States. Turkey's relation with Israel is not much better after Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's apology to the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the Mavi Marmara incident.

On the other hand, Turkey has tried to develop its economic relations with countries which it has historical links. Additionally, it has improved its relations with countries in parts of subsaharan Africa. For example, the number of Turkish embassies in recent years in Africa has grown from 12 to 34 and it has signed a number of trade agreements. Before the Arab Spring, in the late 2000s, the lifting of visa restrictions throughout the neighboring region was

another example of "active foreign policy" that Davutoglu has pursued. New markets have opened. This in turn, has enhanced Turkey's economic growth. Turkish aid investment has increased, in the Muslim countries of north and subsaharan Africa and particularly the Turkic countries of Central Asia. Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency's (Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı or TİKA) budget in 2011 was US\$ 1.73 billion, which is not an insignificant figure when compared to the European Union Development Fund's budget that is around 3.78 € billion (US\$ 5 billion) available annually for its work in non-EU or non-neighborhood development (EU Development Policy 2014). The current map of the activities of the TİKA illustrates that of the 30 countries that have TİKA coordination offices only five are in countries without noteworthy Muslim populations, namely Moldova, Macedonia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kenya.

Turkey focused on improving its ties with the South Caucasus, Balkans and Middle East. These are the regions where Turkey does the most business; and engages in aid and development projects. According to the PRIO-TESEV report, "neo-Ottoman" rhetoric is the most predominant strategy that shapes the country's soft power politics in its neighborhood. Bülent Aras, director of the Strategic Research Center in Ankara, the think-tank of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, argues that Turkey's new strategy is "to initiate a psychological breakthrough in the Balkans "to undo the negative memories of the past". (Aras 2012, p. 1) By doing so, Turkey tries to use its soft power to enhance its economic relations with countries in the region. In this context, "the new Turkish foreign policy is aimed at using this regional and historically based politics as a springboard to a global position". (Byrant & Hatay 2013, p. 3). On the other hand, according to the International Strategic Research Organization (USAK) report, Turkey still is not a regional leader because a regional leader need to have not only material power resources such as economic, diplomatic and organizational capacity, in addition to military power (Dinçer & Kutlay 2012). There is little doubt Turkey perceives itself as a *model* (Byrant & Hatay 2013, p. 3), but in the Middle East Turkey is perceived less as a model than as an aspiration. Middle Eastern countries aspire to be like Turkey not because of Turkey's political system but because of Turkey's economic success.

Turkey's soft power has been growing through its attractiveness to its neighborhood since the AKP government came to power. Turkish products, television, schools as well as development aid has increased its soft power. Turkish universities are being established, while religious leader Fethullah Gülen's (Gülen Cemaat) schools are mushrooming in South Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Balkans. Turkish construction companies are rebuilding some parts of Georgia. Additionally, Turkish big business is initiating new businesses and opening factories in Bulgaria. Moreover, Turkish banks dominate the finance sector in Bosnia. Furthermore, Turkish brands are flooding the markets in Egypt, Iraq as well as formerly Syria. "Throughout the Balkans, South Caucasus, and Middle East, people watch Turkish movies and media, and Turkish soap operas are popular throughout the Middle East, where they spread a vision of a Turkish way of life that is modern but Muslim". (Byrant & Hatay 2013, p. 18).

Turkey has assumed different foreign policy roles as: "natural leader" of the region; a historical "big brother;" and "the protector" of the Muslim minorities. Thus, by assuming such roles Turkey tried to solidify its long desired role as a "rising power" by increasing its influence in its neighborhood and engaging with other emerging powers. Turkey's new foreign policy has also

been called "neo-Ottomanism" (AKP's aspiration to go back to the Ottoman era) by various circles in both Europe and the United States. Turkey's particular interest in those countries of the former Ottoman sphere, with which it believes itself to have historical and cultural ties, has been questioned. Moreover, it is argued that it has undertaken a historical role as a leader of the Muslim. The course the AKP government is taken has been puzzling. Foreign Minister Davutoglu rejects the neo-Ottoman label;⁶ there seems little doubt that the AKP leadership perceives Turkey to be a "natural" leader of the region. AKP parliamentarians have expressed this aspiration. Fehmi Kinay, who has been an AKP parliamentarian since 2002, has suggested that Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan could unite the Sunni sects.⁷

⁶ "I am not a neo-Ottoman, Davutoglu says" (2009). See also: "DAVUTOGLU'NUN HAYALI Osmanlı Milletler Topluluğu" (2010); "Ahmet Davutoglu: 12 yıl içinde cihan devleti olacağız" (2011); Ortaylı (2011).

⁷ Interview, Fehmi Kinay, *AKP Parliamentarian*, 8 January 2014.

Prime Minister Erdogan's also seems to assume a role as the Muslim leader. Turkey assumes the "protector" and "big brother" role; punishes when it considers necessary and aids the weak Muslim countries and (extremist) Sunni groups (Byrant & Hatay 2013, p. 2). For instance, Prime Minister Erdogan's support to extremist Sunni Muslim groups in Syria and also its visit to Libya, in 2011, and his relation with the leader of the National Transitional Council was considered to be an act that illustrated his will to be a *Halife* (Muslim leader) in the MENA. Another example to this argument has been Turkey's aid to Somalia. This policy was perceived as a "geo-strategic vision." It was argued that Turkey was seeking new allies. "The discourse of common Islamic values underpins Turkey's engagement in Africa, emphasizing its normative foundation" (Aynte 2012). Hence, AKP leadership assumes a role that entails setting an example for the counties in the region.

On the other hand, it can also be argued that Turkey's new foreign policy has enhanced its economic growth. This is founded on a vision of Turkey as regional leader. The AKP leadership perceives itself as having not only the responsibility but also the power to act. Even though Turkey's Western allies, both the U.S. and the European Union (EU) are skeptical about Turkey policies both in domestic politics and foreign policies, AKP leadership does not pay any attention to the critics and it is willing to assume a leadership role. This new role can be observed in many incidents: Erdogan's reaction at Davos to Shimon Peres; Turkey's disapproval of the Israeli response to the Mavi Marmara flotilla aiming to breach the Gaza barricade; AKP's support to Hamas; its aid to extremist groups in Syria. All these can be considered signs of a country that perceives itself as a "Muslim leader". This motive led to AKP leadership to engage in building new relationship with not only countries in its neighborhood but also engaging in emerging powers such as Brazil and China. Turkey, thus, turned its back to its former Western allies. But the so-called Gezi Park uprising and the power struggle between Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan (Menzili Tarikat) and religious leader Fetullah Gülen (Gülen Cemaat) in Turkey have changed not only Turkey's power capacity but its diplomatic power and soft power. Both events have decreased both its soft power and diplomatic power in the region.

IV. Turkey's power capacity before and after Gezi Park Protests: diplomatic power and soft power in the neighborhood and Turkey's engagement with emerging powers

Gezi Park uprising in Turkey was a remarkable development in history of Turkey. People occupied public spaces and tried to reach out to the government with slogans, which contained hummer in it. But the government did not react to it in a constructive way as in Brazil (where there were protests appro-

ximately at the same time). The protests began when a group of people started the Taksim Solidarity (Taksim Dayanışması) due to environmental concerns. They intended to save hundreds of trees at Gezi Park and "halt an urban development project to rebuild the historical Ottoman barracks..." (Yayla 2013). The group, before long, occupied the park and built tents to demonstrate their concern. This movement grew further and high school and university students joined the passive protests. But on May 31st, 2013 the authorities attempted to forcefully evacuate the park through extensive use of pepper gas, which resulted in clashes and injuries. The AKP government's rhetoric of freedom and democracy was questioned because these events clearly demonstrated that it lacked substance at home.

The Gezi Park uprisings "surpassed their local and national appeal and, before long, attracted global interest". (*ibidem*). Among the Arab nations this was seen as a sign that the AKP government was not a democratic country and Turkey was no longer viewed as an inspiration to other Arab countries. Not only the Gezi Park protests but also the power struggle between the AKP leadership and Fethullah Gülen has created doubts about Turkey's democratic and secular regime. "The movement of charismatic cleric, Fethullah Gülen, having a strong hold on Turkish politics and social life", (Byrant & Hatay 2013, p. 14) has disturbed Prime Minister Erdogan and he has decided to close down the Gülen's schools. Gülen's schools and universities were opening branches abroad and in Turkey and this was one of the soft powers of Turkey in its neighborhood. "Turkey's role as a stabilizing force may be undermined by the current government's Islamist leanings and ties". (*ibidem*). On the other hand, Turkey's role as "protector" of Muslim minorities in South Caucasus and the Balkans are also viewed to be in conflict with its foreign policy interests. Additionally, in the post-Arab Spring Middle East some groups such as Salafi and Shia's are concerned about Turkey's role as a "big brother" trying to provide a "role model" to the Arab countries. Especially, the Salafi in Saudi Arabia, the secularist in Egypt and the Shia regime in Iran brought this event to the agenda.⁸ According to some circles in Europe, "Turkey's rhetoric of democracy contrasts with failures of democracy at home". (Byrant & Hatay 2013, p. 17). AKP leadership has been much less successful at encouraging and protecting democratic values at home. Therefore, Turkey's soft power has declined gradually. The efforts of AKP leadership to assume a role as a "natural leader" and a "rising power" came to nowhere. So the efforts to increase Turkish influence and presence in the South Caucasus, Balkans and Middle East failed.

⁸ Interview with Eyüp Ersoy, USAK expert in Middle East, 2.Mar.2014.

On the other hand, in the global context, AKP government called the redefinition of the role of the United Nations (UN) and particularly the UN Security Council. This call has been the "key planks in Turkey's attempts to leverage itself into a global role". It attempted to play an active role as a facilitator and mediator during the negotiations with Iran side by side with Brazil, which is considered to be an emerging power in the new global order. According to the recent report from the Center for a New American Security Turkey as well as Brazil, India and Indonesia are considered to be "swing states" (those states whose alliances have still not been determined). In the new regional order, these countries should be molded into a significant regional broker by the U.S. and EU. The polarities of power are ambiguous in this new international order since U.S. is "exhausted by security wars and an EU struggling with financial crisis". (Kliman & Fontaine 2013, p. 8). Not only the ambitions and interests of Brazil, Russia and China needs to be considered but also the aspirations of other "intermediate states" (Turkey can be named as intermediate state),⁹ with

⁹ Lima (2005) indicates that an "intermediate state" generally includes at least one of three elements: intermediate material capabilities, a certain level of self-perception and the recognition of this international status by other states, especially great powers.

regional influence and wide scope, needs to be calculated. Brazil, India and South Africa can be considered as "intermediate states", which are regional powers (Hurrell 2006).

These states have some capacity for effective international action. Additionally, they seem to possess a considerable range of economic and political power resources. This gives them the ability to contribute to the making of international order in the regional and global levels. They also believe that they should have a more influential role in international politics and search for recognition in multiple ways, such as the struggle for recognition of regional spheres of influence and the criticism of asymmetries. They can also use international cooperation – sometimes in the form of international institutions – to signal reassurance to weaker states, particularly within their regions, and tame great powers through established rules and procedures. Besides having "voice opportunities" to make known their interests and bid for political support, those states see in international cooperation political spaces to build new coalitions in order to change norms in ways that are more compatible with their interests and balance policies of the most powerful.

Intermediate states' such as Turkey and Brazil that have limited material capabilities and leverage comparatively to great power; they value collective action and multilateral forums with 'like-minded' partners in similar stance so as to influence international outcomes. Notwithstanding the fact that Turkey and Brazil's leverage changes a lot from year to year, Turkey and Brazil will remain an extremely important 'player' in the geopolitical and economic affairs of the Middle East as well as the broader Mediterranean. Turkey, just as Brazil, wants to have an impact on global politics. Therefore, it tried to be part of the solution in the disputes that persist for years in the broader Middle East and the Mediterranean. First and foremost, Turkey increased its trade and business relations with Arab states including Iran. Second, it improved its relations with its neighbors by lifting visa restrictions. Third, it assisted to facilitate and even mediate some of the region's most disputed issues, trying to broker talks between Iran and the international community, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Syria and Israel as well as Fatah and Hamas.

To date, the Turkish government has not only deteriorated its relations with not only Syria, but also with Iran owing to its support to the Sunni opposition groups. Moreover, it did not hesitate to "burned his bridges with the military regime in Egypt, squabbled with Gulf monarchies for refusing to stand by deposed Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy, and started a war of words with Israel for having a hand in the coup that removed Morsy from power". (Aras 2013). Turkey has lost leverage everywhere in the world due to the Syrian crisis, its relations with its neighbors, and Gezi Park uprisings in Turkey. On the contrary, Turkey has indeed evolved over time. Its economic dynamism and geopolitical importance cannot be disregarded. As a result of its "growing economic diversification and military self-reliance allows Turkey to exercise greater leverage with the West". (Metais 2013).

On the other hand, Brazil has got leverage over some powers and can influence world issues. Brazil's Roberto Azevedo has been selected the head of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as a result of this it is expected that his leadership will remove barriers 'as part of global trade talks' due to its influence over the 'BRICS' that is composed of five member states, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota maintains that this "reflects the transformation underway in the global order".

(Zalewski 2013). Brazil has the ability to convince and persuade actors to engage because Brazil is more sensitive to other actors' preferences and it has the ability to present arguments and ideas in an effective manner.

Moreover, Turkey has engaged with other emerging powers, namely China, Russia and Japan. Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's decision to purchase Chinese missile system (CPMEIC's HQ system) over the U.S. Patriots has created more concern over Turkey's intentions (False Friends: Why US is getting tough with Turkey 2013). In 2012, the strategic relationship between China and Turkey had taken off with Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping's visit to Turkey in February, later Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to China in April a few months later. The relationship between the two nations entered a "honeymoon" phase. (China, Turkey to Establish Strategic Cooperative Relationship 2010). Turkey has steadily increased its trade with China since the AKP government came to power. Turkish trade with China has increased; exports to China amounted to \$1.43 billion in 2008, and Turkey's imports from China were \$15.6 billion in the same year (Turkey-China Trade Relations Weaken as Crisis Hits 2009). The two countries' closer relationship not only in the fields of trade but also culture, tourism, as well as the military has signaled its willingness to engage with emerging powers. According to Tao Zhan, "Turkey's acceptance as a 'dialogue partner' in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is not necessarily leading to the establishment of a substantial strategic relationship, though leaders of both countries have spoken of such a partnership since 2010. Rather, Turkey's turn to the East is not a strategic shift, but is a way of keeping a balance between the West and the East. Due to its substantial needs that the West can provide, from security to technology, Turkey is still anchored in the West". (Zan 2013). Center for Global Modernization Studies scholar also argues that "Turkey, China is a potential partner but not an alternative partner to the West". (*idem*). Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that Turkey has engaged with many emerging powers since AKP came to power and this is sign that AKP wants to engage with new allies and acts careless towards its former allies concerns. Turkey has also signed a deal with Russia in order to build its first nuclear facility on Turkish territory. Then, Turkey has signed another deal with Japan to construct another nuclear facility. But Turkey had lost the trust of its "strategic partners" or "reliable allies" due to its uncertain foreign policy. All these new foreign policy decisions have created doubts about AKP leaderships' intentions.

V. Conclusions

"Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called for a 'new global order' based on solidarity and trust rather than conflict. In practice, however, Turkey has yet to settle on any definitive vision for that new order beyond expanded representation in key forums". (Byrant & Hatay 2013, p. 8). Turkey has puzzled countries by its uncertain foreign policy and most of its former Western allies have lost trust in Turkey. Davutoglu had proposed an ambitious program before the uprisings but afterwards his ambition faded away gradually with the unexpected events especially in Egypt and Syria. AKP's foreign policy, especially after the 'Arab Spring' or rather 'Dark Arab Winter' has been low key. Nur Bilge Criss has stressed that "priorities may always have to be re-directed under changing junctures, but AKP does not seem to have priorities. [...] AKP is merely trying to score points in foreign policy through populism". (Criss 2010, p. 10). The only priority AKP seems to have is to stay in power

and consequently change the regime in Turkey. The 2023 vision (AK Party 2012) of the government is to become one of the emerging powers and seek to be almighty as the Ottoman Empire. AKP identify themselves as the "conservative-democratic" mass party and their ideology has its roots in Islam, which was influential in Turkish-Iranian rapprochement. Supporters of AKP also have played a role in maintaining the relatively positive relations between Iran and Turkey. Business associations such as the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD) has particularly been active in improving economic ties with Iran even though there was an UN embargo on Iran. Turkey has also initiated a nuclear program and signed a contract with China to buy a missile defense system. This move has confused NATO member states and the U.S. has lost trust in Turkey's partnership (False Friends: Why US is getting tough with Turkey 2014).

Turkey's political cooperation with Iran can also be elucidated by its economic interests. Turkey's effort to avoid sanctions on Iran can be understood as a result of its dependence on Iran's gas resources. The main reason behind Turkey's objections to sanctions on Iran is due to protect new business. Similar to Brazil, the reciprocal viewpoint between Turkey and Iran as partners was based not only on economic objectives, but also in their political aspirations. All partners aimed to attain more engagement in international institutions that set the norms and values, where developing countries could have a voice. Both Turkey and Brazil argued that the political isolation of Iran would only radicalize its position. In this regard, they renowned the 2009 elections of Iran as a valid development of the democratic process, by congratulating the former President Ahmadinejad straight after the elections.

The international image of Turkey similar to Brazil was viewed as an intermediate power in the light of its 'soft power', (Tarik 2007) its abilities to persuade and assume a mediation role as a regional power since Turkey's AKP came to power. For instance, AKP attempted to seem as credible regional power by making believe it is a democracy. The internalization of a foreign policy driven by economy (economic interdependence) rather than national security increased the legitimacy of its role as an intermediate power. Additionally, Turkey participated actively in the main economic and political forums as well as regional and multilateral cooperation agreements. Turkey through its active foreign policy (Davutogly 2013), could make use of multilateral forums with states of similar capabilities and common interests so as to influence international outcomes. Despite its limited capabilities and recourses compared to great powers, Turkey akin to Brazil, demonstrated its readiness to expand its role and liability with the intensification of regional as well as global politics. Turkey and Brazil has quite similar ambitions given that they profile themselves as 'order-setter' intermediate powers.

Turkey is seeking to build new alliances with emerging powers in the BRICS. It is trying to improve its relations with countries like Brazil; those states that have ambition to play a global role and change the global order. Both countries' objective is "at launching a new era in political and economic fields". In line with their mutual goals the two countries also aim to strengthen their cooperation in not only the economic field but also in the defense industry. (Turkey. Ministry of Foreign Affairs s.d.).

All these new foreign policy decisions have created doubts about AKP leaderships' intentions. Particularly, a military deal with China has worried the

NATO member states since Turkey is a NATO member and has signed the NATO missile defense deal.

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RESUMO

O papel da Turquia como uma potência regional ampliou-se desde que o Partido da Justiça e do Desenvolvimento (AKP) chegou ao poder. A liderança do AKP aspirava não apenas à posição da Turquia como potência regional, mas também à posição de uma potência global. Assim, a Turquia assumiu diferentes papéis: o "líder natural" da região; um "grande irmão" histórico e o "protetor" das minorias islâmicas. A Turquia também assumiu o papel de mediadora e de facilitadora ao tentar negociar um acordo em parceria com uma potência emergente como o Brasil a fim de buscar resolver a controversa questão nuclear iraniana. Utilizando-se de desenvolvimentos recentes, a Turquia tentou solidificar seu papel há muito tempo desejado de "potência em ascensão" ao ampliar sua influência na sua vizinhança e se engajar com outras potências emergentes. O conceito de "potência regional" é uma noção baseada no contexto. Em outras palavras, a localização e a geografia são perspectivas contestáveis e disputadas. Considerando o fato de que conceitos como "região" e "potência" são realidades socialmente construídas, esse artigo analisa a noção de "potência regional" como uma subcategoria de "potência". O artigo fará uso dos critérios desenvolvidos por Stefan Schim ao analisar a capacidade de projeção de poder da Turquia na região. Schim coloca que uma potência regional precisa ter uma "definição de papel" e deve ter poder material (poder bruto). Ela também deve ter capacidades econômicas bem como diplomáticas e organizacionais. Seu poder - seja o brando (atração pelas ideias e/ou a habilidade de definir a agenda política de forma a moldar as preferências de outros atores) ou o bruto (poder material que pode ser medido, como o econômico e o militar) - precisa ser reconhecido pelos outros atores na região. Ela também deve ser aceita pelas grandes potências e potências emergentes que são determinantes no sistema internacional. Ademais, a potência regional (e/ou a potência global) deve ter alavancagem; assim, sua projeção de poder precisa produzir resultados. A teoria de papéis de Kalevi Holsti será utilizada como o marco teórico de referência para a análise do comportamento de política externa do AKP. Este artigo buscará apontar os papéis assumidos pela Turquia.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Turquia; AKP; Estados emergentes; potência regional; poder material.