



Turkey's own "pivot to Asia": a neoclassical realist analysis

Emine Akcadag Alagoz¹ 

Received: 15 March 2020 / Revised: 9 September 2020 / Accepted: 5 February 2021 /

Published online: 25 February 2021

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Abstract

Over the past decade, Turkey has executed its own turn to Asia, which has materialized in the form of greater high-level dialogue between countries, strategic partnerships, and improved economic and commercial relations. The aim of this study is to bring an understanding to the factors that determined this turn. For this purpose, using a neoclassical realist perspective, along with international and regional systemic factors such as the global shift of power from West to East, relocation of the center of the international economy, the pivot to Asia trend, and changing regional dynamics in the Middle East, domestic determinants—the AKP's pragmatic foreign policy and the role of the Turkish business community—will be employed to explain the Turkish foreign policy orientation toward East Asia.

Introduction

The “rise” of Asia¹ has been one of the latest buzzwords of international relations due to Asia's unprecedented rapid growth since the 1960s. This rise began with Japan and was followed by first the four Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan), and then by China and India. Today, Asia is the largest manufacturer, the largest market, the largest recipient of foreign investment, and the largest net capital exporter.

Economic opportunities created by the rise of Asia have hence motivated many countries to promote a “pivot to Asia,” more or less changing their foreign policy priorities. Turkey's growing relations with East Asian countries, and its visibility in regional organizations since the 2000s, demonstrate that Ankara has not remained

¹In this article, the term Asia is used to denote East, Southeast, and South Asian countries unless stated otherwise.

✉ Emine Akcadag Alagoz
eakcadag@gelisim.edu.tr

¹ Department of Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul Gelisim University, Istanbul, Turkey

indifferent to this trend. A pro-Western orientation has shaped Turkey's foreign policy since the establishment of the Republic. Nonetheless, the 8th President, Turgut Özal (1989-1993), and the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, İsmail Cem (1997-2002), adopted a proactive foreign policy and enhanced Turkey's relations with different regions, namely, the Middle East and Eurasia, aligning Turkish foreign policy with economic interests. The AKP (Justice and Development Party), which came into office in the aftermath of the 2001 economic crisis with the promise of economic recovery, has furthered this opening up to new geographies and has paved the way for the development of Turkey's relations with East Asia. Today, while remaining faithful to the Western alliance, Turkey seems to be executing its own turn to Asia.

Turkey's search for closer relations with East Asia as a result of the rise of China and the shift of the world's center of economic gravity to Asia has increased the academic interest on the different dimensions of the relationship between Turkey and East Asian countries (particularly China). Especially in the last twenty years, IR scholars have conducted various researches, most of which deal with the current and future challenges and opportunities in economic and trade relations (e.g. Ögütçü 1996, Arıboğan 2004, Karaca 2008, Çolakoğlu 2012, Çolakoğlu 2013, Togan 2013, Zan 2015, Zou 2015, Atlı 2016, Pehlivan Türk 2017, Atlı 2019), as Ankara's motivation to develop robust relations with East Asia is mainly economic. Similarly, this paper largely concentrates on Turkey's economic and trade relations with East Asia, as economic interest has been the main driver of Turkey's East Asia policy. However, rather than focusing predominantly on the nature of Turkey's economic relations with regional countries, the aim of this work is to bring an understanding to the factors that determined Turkey's orientation toward East Asia, going beyond superficial arguments such as "the shift of axis²."

Since external relations are not driven by a single factor, Turkey's turn to Asia will be discussed through the perspective of neoclassical realist theory, which enables researchers to analyze a state's foreign policy without concentrating on either the systemic factors or the intervening unit-level variables alone. Going beyond structural realism, and including the unit-level variables in his interpretation of international politics, Gideon Rose coined the term "neoclassical realism." This theory argues that "systemic pressures must be translated through intervening unit-level variables such as decision-makers' perceptions and state structure" to understand the behavior of states (Rose 1998: 149). Neoclassical realism emphasizes that international and/or regional systems shape and restrain the foreign policy choices of states; nonetheless, domestic variables, which can strengthen or weaken the influence of systemic factors should also be taken into account when analyzing foreign policy behavior. Opposing the neorealists' assumption that the pressures from international and/or regional systems are directly translated into foreign policy actions, neoclassical realism argues that foreign policy is the result of international system, domestic actors, and also of complex interactions between the two. In other words, it attempts to create a bridge between the international system and domestic actors to analyze a foreign policy practice.

² Turkey's search for closer relations with the non-Western world since the last half of the second term of the AKP has triggered a debate, principally in the Western media, on "the shift of axis" in Turkish foreign policy, in other words, whether Turkey is shifting its axis by turning away from the West and heading towards the Middle East and Asia.

Neoclassical realism hence offers an adequate framework to examine the domestic actors in foreign policy making. Within this context, along with international and regional systemic factors such as the global shift of power from West to East, the relocation of the center of the international economy, the pivot to Asia trend, and changing regional dynamics in the Middle East, domestic determinants—the AKP's pragmatic foreign policy and the role of the Turkish business community—will be used to explain Turkey's nascent "pivot to Asia."

A neoclassical realist analysis relies on in-depth case studies, and this study is no exception. The analysis will proceed as a within-case analysis, which "enables (the researcher) to be thoroughly immersed in the data within a single case" (Mills et al. 2010: 971). The case is a foreign policy change in which Turkey's visible rapprochement with East Asia under the AKP tenure will serve as the empirical object. Aiming to obtain a more detailed examination of the process within the case, a process-tracing method will be used, since this method allows a researcher to test casual mechanisms in case studies through the tracing of casual processes (George and Bennett 2005: 21-30). The objective is to explain the reasons—largely related to economic concerns—for Turkey's orientation toward Asia by looking back in time and identifying the key factors and events.

The transformation of Turkish foreign policy

Turkey's traditional foreign policy has been based on two main pillars: status quoism and Westernism (Oran 2003: 46-53). After the establishment of the Republic in 1923, the maintenance of the status quo with its neighbors became a key determinant of Turkish foreign policy. With the Soviet Union becoming an increasing threat to its integrity and security, Ankara opted for a relatively pro-Western stance in its foreign policy and established a permanent alliance with the West. Although Turkey developed economic and trade relations with the Middle Eastern countries after the 1973-74 oil crisis, it meticulously avoided involvement in inter-Arab disputes, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and other regional conflicts (Sayari 1997: 45). The emergence of the armed rebellion of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in south-eastern Anatolia in the late 1980s forced Turkey to have closer relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors, especially with Syria and Iraq. Security concerns thus were the main drivers of Turkish foreign policy until the end of the Cold War.

Turkey's relatively low profile foreign policy began to change after Turgut Özal's ascent to the Presidency. Following export promotion policy instead of the previous period's import promotion policies, the Özal government led to the emergence of the mercantile and trading economy and adopted accordingly a pragmatic and proactive foreign policy. Ankara emphasized its historical and cultural ties with the Turkic and Muslim countries in the Caucasus and the Balkans. The formation of Black Sea Economic Cooperation in 1992 with Özal's initiative was an element in its opening to these regions. Özal's emphasis on a strong economy and substantial economic relationships in order to become a regional power has been adopted by subsequent governments. The Customs Union with the European Union (EU) was another important development, since it opened up European markets to Turkish producers and traders. Mustafa Aydın (2003: 12) notes that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as early

as the late 1980s and early 1990s, “became increasingly concerned with obtaining necessary loans, opening up markets for Turkish goods, and striking deals with foreign governments and, sometimes, even with private companies, in order to bring more investment into the country.”

A considerable change of attitude in Turkish foreign policy occurred during Ismail Cem’s tenure. Cem (2009: 15) claimed that Turkey should abandon its strategy of distancing itself from the nations with which it has shared a history, such as the Balkans, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. Hence, he tried to change the scope of Turkish foreign policy. Along with bringing a new dynamism to Turkish foreign policy through improved relations with Greece, he intensified Turkey’s relations with Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization, Iraq, and the Central Asian and Caucasus countries.

No immediate change in foreign policy occurred after the coming into power of the AKP government. It embraced the idea of Turkish membership of the EU and sought increased regional cooperation. Following the appointment of Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu as the chief advisor on foreign affairs to the Prime Minister in 2003, and notably as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009, Turkish foreign policy started to show signs of change. In his book “Strategic Depth,” Davutoğlu (2008: 78) argues that Turkey possesses strategic depth due to its history and geographical position, since it is “a central country with multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one unified character.” To position Turkey as a central country, Davutoğlu presented five principles to be followed: an internal balance between security and democracy; a zero problem policy toward neighbors; increasing relations with neighboring regions and beyond; a multi-dimensional foreign policy, aiming to develop complementary relations with global actors; and rhythmic diplomacy—an active role in international organizations. Kemal Kirişçi (2009: 42) emphasizes that even though none of these five principles directly deal with economic issues, Davutoğlu “refers to the growing significance of economic interdependence in shaping Turkey’s relations with most of its neighboring countries.” Other than being a tool for conflict resolution and peace building, interdependence provides markets for Turkish exports and businesses (Kirişçi 2009: 42). Accordingly, Ankara has started to use its soft power toward its neighbors and adopt a more co-operative, diplomatic approach.

Along with the Middle East, Davutoğlu’s pro-active and multidimensional foreign policy has brought about the opening up to Africa, Latin America, and East Asia. As a result, Turkey has become one of the countries with the largest diplomatic representations worldwide, with more than 200 diplomatic missions. Even though the weight of the Middle East in Turkish foreign policy has considerably increased since the Arab Spring, and although Ankara has since faced a number of foreign policy challenges, from the war in Syria to relations with its nearest neighbors, relations with East Asian countries have gained unprecedented impetus. Even after the resignation of Davutoğlu, this trend has remained as demonstrates Turkey’s 2019 “Asia Anew Initiative” which aims to give greater weight to cooperation with Asian countries.

Turkey’s orientation toward East Asia

To explain Turkey’s interest toward East Asia, personal initiatives or systemic and regional factors alone would not offer an adequate analysis. As Fareed Zakaria (1998:

198) states, "A good account of a nation's foreign policy should include systemic, domestic and other influences, specifying what aspects of a policy can be explained by what factors." Hence, neoclassical realism, emphasizing the special role of unit-level variables such as domestic political structures, decision makers' perceptions, and political elites, in addition to systemic factors, to explain foreign policy behavior, is a relevant theoretical approach to analyzing Turkey's turn to Asia. Thereby, first, the changes in the international and regional systems that created the general context for this turn will be examined. Then, the intervening variables will be identified.

Systemic-level determinants

Following the rapid economic advances of Japan in the 1950s and the Four Asian Tigers (Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan) in the 1970s, China, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines significantly sped up their economic growth in the 1980s. This continuing economic growth of regional countries, especially in China, reshaped the regional order after the Cold War, considering the decline of Russian power and the uncertain future role of the US in the region.

This economic rise has had a tremendous impact on the global order. In 1990, Asia's share in world GDP (purchasing power parity), which was 23.2% in 1990, went up to 38.8% by 2014, much larger than the shares of the US and the EU (Global Economic Databank 2015). It is estimated that this share will reach 45% by 2025, given that Asia's role in global production and global demand has been constantly increasing since the 1990s (Global Economic Databank 2015). Besides, Asia's hunger for commodities, especially energy commodities, has a huge impact on the commodity markets. Today, the demand from Asian countries is the key driver of global oil prices. Finally, the China-led Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank and the BRICS Development Bank have given China a greater role in shaping the international economic and financial order.

As a result of Asia's growing economic and political power, the 21st century is often referred to as "the Asian century." Bringing about a global shift of power from West to East, the rise of Asia has triggered discussions related to the impacts, risks, and opportunities it may imply for the rest of the world. Some argue that Asia's rise means economic, political, and security risks, while others emphasize the economic opportunities, a multipolar world system, and a more interdependent world order as results of this rise (e.g., Pei 2009; Tellis et al. 2010; Waldron 2005; Morrison 2014; Kahler 2013). However, it seems that the potential risks do not hinder the development of economic and trade relations with Asia's fast-growing economies, as "the pivot to Asia" is likely to become an international trend. Almost all countries, whether large or small, are in search of economic opportunities considering Asia's increasingly affluent markets, trade potential, energy needs, and investment possibilities. Hence, many countries have opted for a foreign policy shift, more or less changing their traditional foreign policy focus, and have gravitated toward the Asia-Pacific region in order to build diplomatic, economic, and security ties with the most dynamic region in the world.

The US has played a pioneering role in reorienting its foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific region. In his second term, US President Barack Obama announced his aim to intensify the US' role in this region. The main purpose of this attempt was to

raise the region's priority in US foreign policy, military planning, and economic policy, taking into account the region's growing political, economic, and military power, particularly that of China. Many European countries, not only the UK, Germany, and France but also small and medium-sized ones such as the Czech Republic, Poland, and Greece, have sought to consolidate their relations with rising powers, most notably with China. Russia is another major power, which has been following a relatively active policy in the Asia-Pacific region for many years. The alarming economic situation due to the sanctions imposed by the West against Russia over the Ukraine crisis pushed Moscow to expand its relations with East Asian countries in order to find new energy export markets and reposition itself in a region of intensifying strategic competition. Latin America, once considered as the back yard of the US, is another region where the influence of emerging Asian powers can be felt. The diminishing role of the US in economic and political affairs has paved the way for a greater Asian influence in Latin America. As for the Middle East, many regional countries, notably Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, have intensified their ties with India, Japan, South Korea, and, in particular, China.

Thereby, the global shift of power from West to East and the concomitant "pivot to Asia" trend was among the main drivers of the reorientation of Turkish foreign policy, since Ankara has been keen to benefit from new economic opportunities, considering the stalemate in its relations with the EU, the main trading partner of Turkey. In particular, the impact of China's economic power on the international system and its increasing influence across the world is a crucial factor for understanding Turkey's interest toward East Asia.

As for sub-systemic regional factors, it is possible to say that changing regional dynamics in the Middle East has accelerated this pivot, as the Arab Spring exposed the vulnerabilities of the "zero problems with neighbors" policy established by the AKP government. The deterioration of its relations with Egypt and Syria following Turkey's support for the anti-regime demonstrations in these countries and Turkey's volatile relationship with other regional countries such as Iraq, Iran, and Israel led Ankara to get closer to emerging Asian powers, considering its economic interests. The loss of these economic partners—at least temporarily—making the implications of the 2008 global economic crisis even more apparent for Turkey played an important role in the calculations of the AKP's foreign policy toward East Asia.

Domestic-level determinants

Since there is not a specific "list" of intervening variables, researchers try to identify the most important ones for each case. The choice of the most relevant variables depends on the specifics of a particular state's domestic situation. For this study, two domestic-level determinants will be employed: the AKP's pragmatic foreign policy and the role of the Turkish business community.

The AKP's pragmatic foreign policy

First of all, it is worth emphasizing that after coming to power, the AKP government remained attached to the economic reforms and policies already introduced and the ensuing economic recovery and stabilization boosted the AKP's popularity. This

economic boom that followed the 2001 financial crisis encouraged the AKP to implement a more active and multi-faceted foreign policy. Even though the AKP's intention to improve relations with neighboring states and play a leading role in the region has been sometimes identified as nostalgia for the old Ottoman Empire, the main driving force behind the AKP's foreign policy has been pragmatism. Calling Turkey a "trading state," Kemal Kirişçi draws attention to the role of economic factors shaping Turkish foreign policy under the AKP rule, rather than security concerns (Kirişçi 2009). Kirişçi and Kaptanoğlu (2011: 706) note that "Turkish foreign policy is increasingly the foreign policy of a "trading state" seeking markets and economic benefits rather than that of an ideologically driven state."

Since the second term of the AKP government, Turkish foreign policy has appeared more pragmatic and has been based on economic interests rather than the values of the EU (Öniş and Yılmaz 2009: 18). Desperate to speed up the gaining of its EU membership, Turkey has intended to benefit from entrepreneurial opportunities in the Middle East and Eurasia, better its position as a transit country in the East-West axis, and secure a stable inflow of hot money and significant amounts of foreign direct investment. According to Öniş and Yılmaz, the loss of enthusiasm for the EU membership project in Turkey in the post-2005 era brought about a "soft Euroasianism" strategy.

Soft Euroasianism "does not refer simply to shift of foreign policy orientation in a direction focusing more on the former Soviet space and the Middle East. Rather, it means that foreign policy activism is pursued with respect to all neighboring regions, but with no firm EU axis as was previously the case" (Öniş and Yılmaz 2009: 12).

Economics and energy have been proven to be the two main drivers of soft Euroasianism, as Turkey aims to diversify its trade partners, ensure a reliable and cost-effective energy supply, and become an energy hub.

These economic concerns have also prompted Turkey to gravitate toward East Asia. As Selçuk Çolakoğlu (2012: 129) notes, Turkey's Asian policy orientation changed from security to economics after the end of the Cold War. Turkey's economic-oriented Asian policy, implemented by Turgut Özal at the beginning of the 1980s, contributed to the development of relations with Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, and the establishment of economic ties with China. After the transformation of Turkey's economy from an import substitution model to an export-oriented open economy, Ankara has begun to seek new markets for its trade interests (Kirişçi and Kaptanoğlu 2011: 710). Even though some of the diplomatic or economic activities directed to Asia date back to governments prior to the AKP era, they were limited in scope and these activities could not be maintained because of Turkey's economic and political instability during the era of coalition governments between 1991 and 2001. Additionally, the opportunities created by the economic rise of this region have considerably changed Ankara's perception on East Asia in the 21st century.

As mentioned before, given that the perception of sustained economic improvement has helped the AKP to have an unbroken string of electoral victories since 2002, economic interest has been the main driver of the AKP's multidimensional foreign policy. As a result of this policy, the AKP government has opted for opening up to new

geographies such as East Asia. This opening up has accelerated due to Turkey's disappointment with the EU accession process and the loss of some economic partners in the Middle East during the Arab Spring. Hence, following the declaration of the "Strategy for Improving Trade and Economic Activities with the Asian-Pacific Countries" in 2005, the AKP government has intensified high-level contacts with East Asian countries in an attempt to strengthen its economic relations with regional countries. The Turkish currency and debt crisis of 2018 forced the AKP government to look further east, especially toward China. Finally, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu launched the Asia Anew Initiative in August 2019, aiming to diversify Turkey's economic partnerships in Asia.

It should be emphasized that the AKP's multidimensional foreign policy is certainly not limited to East Asia. Nevertheless, the abovementioned systemic-level determinants, the continuous increase of Asia's share in Turkey's trade (Turkey's trade with Asia, which was \$8.2 billion in 2000, reached \$60.2 billion in 2012 (Esenbel and Atlı 2013).), and its intention to compensate Turkey's trade deficit with Asia through investments and to fulfill the business community's demand for new markets and opportunities altogether led the AKP government to head toward East Asia. To better understand East Asia's place in Turkey's foreign policy, it would be useful to address Turkey's bilateral relations with regional countries.

Relations with China

Even though China was not one of Turkey's major trading partners in the 20th century, this country has been factored into Turkey's eastward shift under the AKP tenure. China surpassed Japan as Turkey's largest trading partner in the region in 2001. Turkey's trade with China, which was \$283 million in 1990, increased to \$1.4 billion in 2000, \$24.1 billion in 2011, and finally to \$26.6 billion in 2018 (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019a). Today, China is Turkey's second-largest trade partner globally after Germany. Nonetheless, the trade relationship has been marked by a significant deficit in China's favor since 2001. Despite this trade deficit, "for a country like Turkey that is excessively dependent on imported components and intermediate products for its own production, China is a source of low cost and high quality supplies" (Atlı 2018, 234).

Bilateral relations were elevated to the level of "strategic partnership" in 2010, in spite of the Uyghur issue, Turkey's main sticking point with China. The air forces of China and Turkey carried out a joint military exercise in 2010, demonstrating that Turkey's NATO membership does not necessarily hamper closer bilateral military relations. Besides, Ankara has supported all efforts to carry into effect Beijing's "One Belt, One Road" initiative (now renamed the Belt and Road Initiative—BRI), aiming to integrate its "Middle Corridor" project which will connect Beijing and London via Turkey into the BRI. The Marmaray Tunnel, Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars, and the Edirne-Kars railway projects developed by Turkey so far constitute the middle corridor of the BRI. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, inaugurated in 2017, is situated in the middle belt of the Iron Silk Road, which aims to link Beijing to London. This alternative East-West route that does not pass through Russia shortens the transportation route between Asia and Europe by approximately 7,000km and decreases the travel time to 15 days (Akçay 2017: 82). Also, the first freight train

departed from China crossed into Europe using Marmaray subsea tunnel as part of the Middle Corridor in November 2019. Another important infrastructure project is the Kars-Edirne high-speed train lines which will be constructed by a Turkish-Chinese joint venture as an extension to the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars line.

Within the context of the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road," Chinese companies started to invest in Turkish ports in 2015. The COSCO Pacific, a Chinese investor consortium, purchased a 66% share of Kumport Terminal, Turkey's third-largest container terminal, for approximately \$940 million in 2015 (Invest in Turkey 2015). The two countries have already expressed their will to expand their partnership in Turkey's other ports, such as Çandarlı and Mersin (Akgül 2017). Turkey Wealth Fund and China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation (Sinosure) signed a 5-billion-dollar agreement to promote bilateral trade and investment as part of the BRI in March 2020 (White 2020). The two countries have also initiated an "Electronic Silk Road" project, promoting e-commerce in support of the implementation of the BRI, launching a China-Turkey cross-border e-commerce pilot with a leading Chinese online wholesale marketplace, DHgate.com. Besides, Turkey's largest e-commerce platform, Trendyol, was bought for \$728 million by Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba (Sözcü 2018).

Turkey is also one of the co-founders of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, a China-led multilateral development bank designed to provide financial support for infrastructure development in accordance with the BRI. This bank has already approved \$600 million for the capacity expansion project of Lake Tuz underground natural gas storage facility, \$200 million for Turkey's Industrial Development Bank (TSKB) Sustainable Energy and Infrastructure On-lending Facility and \$600 million for the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (DailySabah 2019). Overall, the AIIB's total investment in Turkey reached \$1.4 billion in 2018 (DailySabah 2019).

As for Chinese direct investments in Turkey, they are concentrated in energy, infrastructure, logistics, finance, telecommunication, and manufacturing. For example, Chinese smartphone giant ZTE bought 48.8% of Turkish Telekom in 2016 (CNN 2016). Five China-based highway companies bought 51% shares of the Third Bosphorus Bridge, North Marmara Motorway, and Eurasia Highway in 2019 (Çolakoğlu 2020). Nevertheless, it would not be wrong to say that Chinese investment in Turkey is far from satisfactory. There are approximately 1000 Chinese enterprises in Turkey, and the total amount of their direct investment is about \$2.8 billion, as of 2019 (ChinaDaily 2019). It is of prime importance for Turkey to receive more Chinese capital and investment to compensate for its trade deficit with China. To this end, Turkish commerce centers were opened in Xining and in Urumqi. After the opening of the Turkish commerce center in Urumqi in 2012, the trade volume between Turkey and the Uyghur Autonomous Region increased from \$11 million to \$900 million in 2013, and this figure was maintained until 2018 (Aydınlık 2020).

Furthermore, Turkey's traditional Western partners' reluctance to provide advanced weapons technology makes China an alternative supplier of advanced weapons for Turkey. Ankara's decision to choose China's FD-2000 air defense missile system in a joint production agreement with Turkey, rather than US, Russian, or Western European manufacturers, was a good illustration of this case. Although Turkey called off this air defense deal under US pressure in 2015, this preference demonstrated Ankara's willingness to transfer to advanced technology from China.

Last but not least, China's out-bound tourism—133 million Chinese tourists traveled out of the mainland and spent \$104.5 billion overseas in 2016—may significantly contribute to the increase in Turkey's tourism revenue (South China Morning Post 2016). In this regard, after China's declaration of 2018 as the “Turkey Tourism Year,” the number of Chinese tourists traveling to Turkey reached 394,000 with a 60% increase in 2018 (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019a).

Relations with Japan

Even though China overtook Japan as Turkey's largest trading partner in East Asia, Japan remains Turkey's more natural partner in this region due to its alliance with the US and its partnership with NATO. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's help to send messages to Russian President Vladimir Putin at Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's request after Turkey shot down a Russian jet in 2015 illustrates the closeness of the relationship between the two countries (Walker 2016: 3). However, the bilateral trade volume (\$4.6 billion, as of 2018) is far from meeting expectations, and this country ranks fourth in terms of Turkey's trade partners in the Asia-Pacific region, coming after China, South Korea, and India (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019b). Japan has also a huge surplus in its trade with Turkey. In 2018, while Turkey's imports were \$4.1 billion, its exports to Japan were around \$480 million only (see Table 1). To further develop economic relations, talks over a free trade agreement have been continuing since 2014. After the entry into force of the EU-Japan free trade agreement in 2019, Tokyo and Ankara have sped up their negotiations. As of 2018, Japan's total FDI in Turkey is around \$3.2 billion, and there are over 200 companies with Japanese capital in Turkey (Invest in Turkey 2019).

Moreover, ambitious projects such as Marmaray tunnel (built in 2013) and Osman Gazi Bridge (built in 2016) were partially financed by Japan. The construction of the Türksat 4A in 2014, a Turkish communications satellite, by Mitsubishi Electric of Japan, with the participation of Turkish engineers trained in Japan, has demonstrated their willingness to undertake joint projects. Although the 2013 agreement regarding the construction of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant was a landmark deal between the two countries, the Japanese-led consortium scrapped the project due to the rising costs. Bilateral cooperation between two countries is not limited to Turkey and Japan. There are mutual projects in the Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries. For instance, the

Table 1 Turkey's trade with East Asian Countries

Countries	Exports (Million US \$)			Imports (Million US \$)			Total (Million US \$)		
	2000	2007	2018	2000	2007	2018	2000	2007	2018
China	96	1.040	2.910	1.345	13.234	20.710	1.441	14.274	23.630
Japan	149	247	479	1.621	3.703	4.120	1.770	3.950	4.590
South Korea	130	152	920	1.181	4.369	6.340	1.311	4.522	7.260
Taiwan	69	95	300	563	1.884	1.600	632	1.979	1.900
Total	444	1.534	4.609	4.710	23.190	32.770	5.154	21.195	37.380

Source: Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Dubai metro was built by the Japan-Turkey consortium "Dubai Rapid Link" in 2009. Also, the Turkish company "Çalık," which has installed huge cotton progressing plants in this region, provides intermediary services in the provision of Japan's equipment and components for cotton processing (Ivanova and Ledovskaya 2016: 95). The consortium of the companies "Kawasaki Heavy Industries" (Japan) and "Rönesans Holding" (Turkey) started to construct a gasoline production plant for natural gas in Turkmenistan in 2014.

Finally, Turkey has been one of the important destinations for Japanese official development aid. For the period of 2002-2018, Turkey has received \$2.7 billion through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation and other Japanese government institutions (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019b).

Relations with South Korea

As for the relationship with South Korea, close historical relations (largely due to Turkey's participation in the Korean War) between the two countries were upgraded to a strategic partnership level in 2012. After the entry into force of the free trade agreement in 2013, Turkey's trade with South Korea, which was \$5.22 million in 2012, increased to \$7.26 billion in 2018 (Yonhap News 2019). Also, South Korea's exports of pharmaceutical goods to Turkey increased sevenfold, with those of auto parts also climbing 28.4% as of 2018, while South Korea's imports of clothes and aviation parts from Turkey also increased, leading to overall growth of 76.9% in imports (Yonhap News 2019). As of 2018, 300 South Korean firms including SK Engineering and Construction, Hyundai Motors, Samsung, LG, Hanwha Q-cells, Daelim Industrial, and GS E&C operate in Turkey, and foreign direct investment by South Korea in Turkey is around \$881 million (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019c). Hyundai Motor Company, which decided to produce automobiles in Turkey in 1996, was the first big Korean foreign direct investment. It is noteworthy that 35% of Hyundai cars produced in Turkey were exported outside Turkey, mainly to the EU in 2005 (Korea Times 2007). In 2013, Hyundai Motor Company completed the expansion of its Turkey plant, Hyundai Assan Otomotiv Sanayi with an investment of \$634 million (Hyundai 2013). EUROTEM, a joint enterprise between Hyundai Rotem of South Korea and TÜVASAŞ of Turkey, was founded in 2006 to manufacture Turkey's high-speed trains. Kibar Holding and POSCO jointly launched Turkey's first stainless steel plant in 2013.

Despite the fact that Turkey preferred a Japanese-French consortium for its second nuclear power plant project instead of the South Korean state-owned company KEPCO, South Korea has emerged as an important investor and economic partner for Turkey. The Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, creating a new link between Asia and Europe, was built by South Korea's consortium of Hyundai Engineering and Construction and SK Engineering and Construction. Also, a consortium of two Korean companies (Daelim and SK) and two Turkish companies (Limak and Yapı Merkezi) started to build the Çanakkale Bridge, the world's longest suspension bridge, in 2017.

Moreover, the defense industry is another important area of cooperation between the two countries. In 2001, the Turkish Land Forces and Korean Samsung signed a \$1 billion deal on an artillery control system (Milliyet 2001). Turkey's Otokar signed a

contract with Hyundai Rotem in 2008 to jointly develop the Altay main battle tanks, and the first prototype was publicly revealed in 2011.

Relations with Taiwan

Even after starting to follow the “One China” policy, Turkey did not break its relations with Taiwan, and bilateral ties continued through the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Turkey and the Turkish Trade Office in Taipei. The Turkey-Taiwan trade volume, which was \$500 million in 1996, increased to \$1.9 billion in 2018 (Çolakoğlu 2019). Taiwan’s investment in Turkey between 1952 and 2017 amounted to \$17.36 million, mainly in the sectors of ICT, finance, motor cars, and textiles, while Turkey’s investment in Taiwan for the same period was \$5.47 million (Bureau of Foreign Trade 2018). Additionally, the Visa-Waiver system came into effect in 2013, and direct flights between the two countries, which started in 2015, provided a new opportunity for boosting the number of tourists coming from Taiwan.

Turkey has also elevated its relations to a strategic partnership level with countries in Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, and has widened its diplomatic network in the region by opening new Embassies in Myanmar, Cambodia, and Brunei. As a result, Turkey’s trade volume with Asia-Pacific countries jumped from \$17 billion in 2004 to \$60 billion in 2016 (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Economy 2016). It is also possible to say that regional organizations have played an important role in Turkey’s opening up to the Asia-Pacific region. Turkey acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (ASEAN) in 2010. It was granted the status of dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and was admitted as a Post-Forum Dialogue Partner to the Pacific Islands Forum.

The role of the business community

The role of the business community is the second intervening variable employed in the analysis of Turkey’s foreign policy orientation toward East Asia. The business community is among the most influential domestic interest groups in determining Turkish foreign policy. Business involvement in foreign policy reaches back to the Premiership of Turgut Özal, who followed an export-led growth strategy through an economic liberalization program. In his efforts to integrate Turkey with the global economy through trade and investment, Özal opted to “work with the business community rather than the bureaucracy, which he considered to be a slow, obsolete, and uncreative apparatus” (Atlı 2011: 3). These incentives which were provided for the private sector led to the emergence of small-scale family businesses in Anatolia. This conservative and self-sufficient group, called the “Anatolian tigers,” formed the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association (MÜSİAD) as the main representative of Anatolian capital. Unlike the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association (TÜSİAD), Turkey’s top business community group established in 1971, which “is politically and economically Western-oriented and based on European organizational models,” MÜSİAD represents the more modest Anatolian bourgeoisie, which “has adopted a primarily Eastern-looking strategy due to geographical proximity and cultural factors” (Tür 2011: 590).

These business communities give the private sector the possibility to exert influence over the government through lobbying activities. First of all, the business communities' power over the government comes from the economic power of the members of these communities. For example, 4500 member companies of TÜSİAD represent 85% of Turkey's total foreign trade and 50% of the value-added (TÜSİAD 2019). Furthermore, TÜSİAD and MÜSİAD members operate in almost all major sectors of the Turkish economy. These powerful business communities participate in the foreign policy-making process by "creating platforms of interaction with the state, such as large-scale business events, participation in state leaders' official visits and direct contacts with policy makers" (Atlı 2011: 121). Moreover, business communities attempt to influence foreign policy decisions through reports, policy briefs, and bulletins they regularly publish. For instance, TÜSİAD, one of the main supporter of Turkey's EU membership, published a report entitled "Toward European Union Membership: Political Reforms in Turkey" in 2002 in order to emphasize the necessity of the implementation of the related political reforms to meet the Copenhagen Criteria (TÜSİAD 2002). Similarly, MÜSİAD's 2010 research report "Rising Value: Turkey" stressed the importance of the continuation of the "zero problem with neighbors policy" and the economic opening up to different regions for Turkish businessmen (MÜSİAD 2010). Also, the Foreign Policy Forum established by TÜSİAD in 2002 with the partnership of Boğaziçi University and MÜSİAD's Foreign Relations Commission has conducted various researches to collect information and pass it on to the policy makers. For instance, MÜSİAD which has been in search for new export markets has published different research reports on Turkey's trade potential with Islamic countries (MÜSİAD 2010; MÜSİAD 2013; MÜSİAD 2015).

This vision of MÜSİAD has had considerable implications for Turkish foreign policy, first during the rule of the Welfare Party in the mid-1990s, and then under the AKP. MÜSİAD's influence on the government's foreign policy increased after the 2001 economic crisis, since a stabilization program prioritizing a market economy and minimum intervention by the state was carried out as a remedy for this economic crisis. Therefore, when the AKP came to power in 2002, it continued to pursue this stabilization program, supported by the Anatolian bourgeoisie's private investment, and accordingly implemented a pro-active foreign policy that will ensure economic and financial opportunities for the business community. This economic-driven foreign policy has allowed the AKP, the "party of the rising devout bourgeoisie," to secure the business community's support (Gümüüşçü and Sert 2009: 953-68). Thus, the AKP government's opening up to East Asia, which has offered new opportunities to Turkish businessmen, should be considered in line with this interaction.

Concerning the role of the MÜSİAD in Turkey's turn to Asia, first of all, it should be mentioned that MÜSİAD has always preferred to develop closer economic and political relations with the Middle East and Asia rather than Europe due to its Islamist stance. In spite of the fact that MÜSİAD has begun to support Turkey's EU membership since 1999, it opts to strengthen relations with the Eastern countries. Various research reports published by MÜSİAD provide useful sources of data to examine MÜSİAD's lobbying activities for a more robust engagement with East Asia. In MÜSİAD's research reports published since 1996, there is a constant emphasis on East Asia, and this emphasis is stronger in the reports published after 2005. For example, MÜSİAD's 2010 research report highlights that taking into account the shift

of the world's center of economic and political gravity to Asia, Turkey should revise its foreign policy accordingly and make efforts to develop closer relations with this "unfamiliar" region (MÜSİAD 2010: 265). In its report entitled "Turkish Foreign Policy toward the Post-Western World," MÜSİAD suggests that Turkey's accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization should be considered as a way to establish mutual trust between China and Turkey (MÜSİAD 2013: 91). Additionally, considering the large and widening trade deficit, MÜSİAD recommend identifying the products where Turkey has significant prospects for exporting to China and attracting more long-term Chinese direct investment into the Turkish economy in its report published in 2015 (MÜSİAD 2015: 99-100). It is also remarkable that this report is the first one, which has two different chapters devoted to China and East Asia separately. It is also possible to find references to the undeniable importance of Asian markets for the Turkish economy in the speeches of the president and members of MÜSİAD. For instance, MÜSİAD president Abdurrahman Kaan states that he personally and other MÜSİAD members pay particular attention to the Chinese market, and MÜSİAD wishes to develop projects with the principle of win-win (MÜSİAD 2018). İbrahim Uyar, Chairman of MÜSİAD Foreign Organizational Development Commission, stresses that MÜSİAD has been working on an investment and export platform to facilitate finding investors and financial support from China for all investment projects in Turkey and provide consultancy services to Turkish companies aiming to export to China (Anadolu Ajansı 2018). Last but not least, MÜSİAD's representative offices in different countries of East Asia (such as MÜSİAD Japan, MÜSİAD Taiwan, and MÜSİAD China) ensure the connections between MÜSİAD and Turkish diaspora in East Asia.

Conclusion

Today, East Asia seems to occupy an unprecedented place in Turkish foreign policy. Turkey's significant interest in this longtime neglected region started during the second term of the AKP. The global shift of power from West to East and the relocation of the center of the international economy have been the main systemic factors that motivated Turkey to expand relations with East Asia.

Since domestic variables can either strengthen or weaken the influence of systemic factors, the AKP's pragmatic foreign policy and the role of the Turkish business community—two relevant domestic level determinants—were employed to analyze this new foreign policy orientation. After the AKP commenced its second term in 2007 and Ahmet Davutoğlu was appointed foreign minister in 2009, Turkish foreign policy became more and more pragmatic. Turkey has launched several foreign policy initiatives aimed at benefiting from economic opportunities in different regions of the world. The disappointment with the EU accession process has led the AKP to implement a more active foreign policy and gravitate toward the East. Economic interests—expanding its trade relationships and diversifying its foreign policy options—were the main drivers of the AKP's multidimensional foreign policy. Also, the conservative Anatolian business community's demand for new markets and opportunities has been another driver of Turkey's pivot to Asia, since the AKP needs to secure this business community's support.

Turkey has not yet determined a comprehensive strategy for its turn to Asia, as it is in its nascent stage. However, it should be emphasized that Turkey's relationship with East Asian countries is not at the expense of its relationship with the West. The EU is Turkey's major partner in the fields of trade, direct investment, and technology transfers, and it is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. Hence, Turkey is well aware that East Asia cannot be the alternative to the EU. Rather, Turkey's aim is to find new economic partners to decrease its dependence on its Western partners. Consequently, it is possible to note that Turkey's pivot has its own features reflecting the general characteristics of Turkish foreign policy: not driven by geopolitics, neutral in regional disputes, faithful to the Western alliance, and focused on economic interests.

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