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Emre İşeri [a] & Oğuz Dilek [a]
[a] Department of International Relations , Kadir Has University , Cibali-Istanbul, Turkey
[b] Department of International Relations , University of Çağ , Mersin, Turkey
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The Limitations of Turkey's New Foreign Policy Activism in the Caucasian Regional Security Complexity

EMRE İŞERİ* & OĞUZ DİLEK**
*Department of International Relations, Kadir Has University, Cibali-Istanbul, Turkey, **Department of International Relations, University of Çağ, Mersin, Turkey

ABSTRACT *A panoramic outlook on the present global system shows that the US has been failing to preserve its global preponderance against the rise of new contenders from Asia. Turkey's new foreign policy demeanor under the AKP government reflects this shift of global power from the West to the East, leaning on both of these two poles (especially Russia and the US), thereby, aims at creating a 'zero-problem' situation with the neighboring Caucasian states. Yet, this strategy has not achieved its goal, mainly due to the ongoing debates, not only between Moscow and Washington, but also between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Caucasian Regional Security Complexity. This work tries to read all these developments by applying insights from the neoclassical realist standing and argues that there are two main hindrances to the plan's success: the dynamics of the current global system and the security complexity of the Caucasus region.*

Introduction

Fareed Zakaria, the famous political scientist working at *Time* as the editor-at-large, proposes that there are three occasions, within the last six centuries, wherein the epicenter of global economic and military power has palpably shifted from one geographical domain to another.[1] The first shift, the rise of the Western world, began in the fifteenth century and accelerated dramatically through to the late eighteenth century. The second shift occurred in the twentieth century when the US became the most powerful nation since the Roman Empire. A third great power shift, "the rise of the rest," has been coming to pass in our times. According to a recent report, drafted by the *National Intelligence Council*, the rise of China and India show the emergence of a global multi-polar system. Furthermore, this is a

Correspondence Addresses: Emre İşeri, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of International Relations, Kadir Has University, Cibali Campus, 34083, Kadir Has Caddesi, Cibali-İstanbul. Email: eiseri@khas.edu.tr.
Cğuz Dilek, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of International Relations, University of Çağ, Adana Mersin Karayolu üzeri, 33800, Mersin. Email: a_oguzdilek@hotmail.com

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harbinger of a great shift in relative wealth and economic power from the West to the East.[2]

In line with this thought, this article denotes the US post-Cold War global strategy as aiming to preserve its status as the lone superpower.[3] The US, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, gave new momentum to this global strategy by extending its military influence over the Middle East and wider Black Sea region. However, the US, for all its sheer military superiority, has accomplished neither the reconstruction of the global order (i.e. the so-called "New World Order"), nor the key strategic aim of reversing America's decadence. The emergence of the present economic downturn has also added a new layer of turbulence to the already declining ruling capacity of the US. Arguably, if the US's ongoing decline continues, may no longer be an essential source of either assistance, or hindrance, for other powers to primarily count-on when forming their foreign policies.

Such a tectonic shift is expected to produce immense effects on foreign policy choices of all secondary powers, regardless of their pro-American or anti-American orientation. Under the current circumstances, premised on a whole new set of parameters, one of the highly exposed state actors is Turkey. Arguably, as the US influence over the entire global geography has begun to be tested by rising power centers, such as Russia and China; Turkey has started to find itself at a loss in how to uphold its vital stakes within its bordering regions. Turkey's initial response, to current developments, was to extend a comprehensive framework of partnership to its neighbors (i.e. Syria and Iran) and to encourage Russia to abandon its former isolationist foreign policy principle. As an example, Turkey has been attempting to secure Iranian and Russian support in order to stay within the Eurasian energy business cycle.

Along with these changing systemic factors, traditional inputs of Turkish foreign policy—the Ottoman experience and its long-lasting legacy, the geopolitical realities of Turkey, and the ideological foundations defined under the leadership of Atatürk—have continued to play their roles in formulating the perceptions of Turkish foreign policy makers.[4]

In this context, Turkey's initial response, i.e. new foreign policy activism, does *not* necessarily aim to abandon its established allegiance to the West. In fact, Turkey, while proposing to create a stronger influence within the strategic regions of the Middle East and Caucasia, has also aimed to better its position within the Western world as a country of great prominence. It should also be noted that Turkey considers being a transit country in the East-West axis as insufficient. Turkey also desires to use its critical positioning, within projects in the North-South axis, and to thereby become an energy hub in the region. In that regard, Turkey has vested great hope in the prospect of Russian backing for several projects such as Samsun-Ceyhan and Blue-Stream-2.

Moreover, under the guidance of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's strategic depth perspective and zero problem policy with neighbors,[5] Ankara calculates that Turkey's increasing presence in Asia will contribute to its request for the European Union (EU) membership. By using an analogy of a bow and arrow, Davutoğlu

argues that the more Turkey strains its bow in Asia, the further (and more precisely) its arrow will extend into Europe. Hence, he states that; "if Turkey does not have a solid stance in Asia; it would have very limited chances with the EU."[6] In return, Ankara contemplates that Tehran and Moscow would benefit from Turkey's alleged and promoted intermediate role between the West and the East.

Nevertheless, as recent developments have vividly displayed, these two goals of the new Turkish foreign policy activism or "soft Euro-Asianism"[7] are not co-existing harmoniously. Instead, Turkey is finding out what an extremely arduous task it is to converge the conflicting interests of not only the US, Russia, and Iran, but also, of Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Caucasus security complexity.

Global politics are made up of a few economic and military power centers surrounded by multiple peripheral regions. There is no doubt that the influence of these central domains over the affairs or the security issues of these subsystems is conclusive. But, the internal dynamics of these sub-systems, or as Buzan called them, "security complexes,"[8] should be accredited with more importance than the main body of International Relations theory have thus far acknowledged. As a region in which states are less benefit maximizers, Caucasia will be brought to the fore and discussed in this light. This characteristic of Caucasia forces Turkey to overcome distinct hardships issuing not only from the characteristics of the international system, but also the specific aspects of the regional environment. Only after it addresses these issues may Turkey's dream of building a European-like teamwork, among the states of the Caucasian region, take on a functional form.

Thereby, this work aims to bring an understanding to the complexities that have confronted Turkey's newfound zeal for becoming the strategic link between the Western powers and their new challengers. The impediments of Ankara's delicate balancing strategy in the Caucasus will be discussed through the perspective of neoclassical-realist theory.

Neoclassical Realism

Following the end of the Cold War, several contemporary realist thinkers such as Thomas J. Christensen, Randall L. Schweller, and William C. Wohlforth began contemplating the defects of the neorealist proposition that relative power distribution in the international system alone is not capable of explaining the behavior of the states.[9] Thus, they have endeavored to go beyond structural realism and have included the domestic level into their interpretation of international politics. While considering the significance of systemic factors, they attest that perceptions of the state leaders, state–society relations, and the motivation of states should also be stressed upon when examining the behavior of states. Hence, they have attempted to build a bridge between structural and unit-level factors. In reference to those contemporary realists, Gideon Rose coined the term "neoclassical realism":

> Neoclassical realism argues that the scope and ambitions of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by the country's relative material power. Yet

> it contends that the impact of power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening unit-level variables such as decision-makers' perceptions and state structure.[10]

In this regard, neoclassical realism has a similar position with classical realist concern on the state and its relation to the domestic society. Both theoretical accounts consider their missions largely as building theories of foreign policy, rather than theories of the system in which states are interacting. Nevertheless, neoclassical realism's main assumption is based on the neorealist proposition that the international system shapes and restraints the foreign policy choices of states. The point on which they differ emerges from the neorealist emphasis on anarchical international system in explaining continual patterns of international outcomes as a result of the interactions among two or more units or states, which are merely black boxes without internal characteristics.[11] Moreover, according to classical and neo-realist thinkers, rationality holds the central position when making a state's foreign policy. The ruling elites should be able to alter the established foreign policy principles, demands Kenneth Waltz,[12] in order to better read the international environment transforming around them. In contrast, neoclassical realists think that the foreign policy tendencies of a state actor are not a mere dependent variable, but, in fact, a state's domestic arrangement also contributes to the final form of the foreign policy, regardless of international systemic dictates and/or rational basis.

The greatest contribution of neoclassical realism is in improving the understanding of why different state actors, with distinct domestic incentives and concerns, develop diverse reactions to the very same international impulses. On the one hand, in certain regional orders, such as Europe, the welfare of the state, or other familiar pragmatic motives, powerfully shape their foreign policy objectives; thereby, interstate cooperation is more likely to maximize their own benefit. On the other hand, the constituents of other regions, in our case it is the Caucasian regional security complex, oftentimes sacrifice their own material well-being for the sake of nonmaterial or even irrational causes. Indeed, a resilient hostility or deep-seated vendetta towards bordering nations can be found within the political and/or social foundations of almost every peripheral region, rendering them incapable of consolidating a region-wide cohesion/cooperation; as is the case with Caucasia.

By adopting insights from this neoclassical realist perspective, this article explains the limits of Turkey's new foreign policy activism in the Caucasian regional security complexity; wherein, a given regional state's national security means insecurity for the other(s). To a lesser extent, anarchical international system and, to a larger extent, regional countries' state structures and their leaders' perceptions have played a role in materializing this security complexity. For instance, Russia's conceptualization of the Caucasus as its backyard, Armenia's insistence on the alleged 1915 Armenian genocide, and Azerbaijan's claims on Nagorno-Karabakh are all products of their state structures and perceptions of their leaders. Along with the clashing interests of the US and Russia, these conflicting perceptions

of regional states also hinder Turkey's new foreign policy activism in the Caucasus. Before elaborating on these hindrances, it is prudent to first discuss Turkey's new foreign policy orientation as of the 2000s.

Turkey's New Foreign Policy Orientation in the Caucasus

Paul Kennedy, historian at Yale University, employed the term "pivotal power" to describe the ascending power of the Turkish state; a state that could, and still can, significantly determine the course of events within the three aforementioned geographies.[13] Contemporary American strategists have frequently used another popular term to define Turkey's ascending power—"the strategic partner." By coining this specific term, it is implied that Turkey has become both a country of economic and political significance and, also, a strategic buffer zone for the US calculations. According to Graham Fuller, former CIA analyst, Turkey is now unprecedentedly self-confident in mapping an independent course in Caucasia and the Middle East.[14]

By stepping into these power voids, Ankara's strategic goal is to promote itself as the primary regional energy hub for the transportation of hydrocarbon resources, from the Caucasians, via the Balkans, to the energy-thirsty economies of Western Europe. The benefits of this energy-based foreign policy are multi-fold. First and foremost, Ankara aims at covering the ever-increasing demand of the growing Turkish economy for natural gas and oil and, thereby, curbing the country's expanding energy dependency. Secondly, Turkey aspires to attain significant weight within Eurasian energy politics so that it may boost its country's position in the eyes of Brussels and Washington. The more Turkey obtains a weighty strategic role in the eyes of the Western powers, the more Russia and Iran will let Turkey stake a greater claim in the ongoing Eurasian energy deals. Neither Moscow, nor Tehran, fails to credit Turkey as a country of paramount importance. Thus, the closer their ties, the better Turkey can act as a conduit through which they can have their opinions and voices heard in the Western capitals. It is in this way that Turkish statesmen aim to reap the benefits of being a strategic link between the West and East.

Concisely, Turkey's new foreign policy aims to create a zone of economic prosperity and political stability in its surrounding areas with the backing of regional powers, especially Iran and Russia. This foreign policy takes for granted that an assertive Turkey, in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Caucasia, would ease Turkey's longstanding endeavor to become a truly Western nation. Thus, these two policies are seen to have shored up one another in various ways. However, reality has taken a distinctive and completely contradictory course in comparison to what Turkey had hoped for its new foreign policy activism in the Caucasus security complex.

Caucasia is one of the three proximate areas wherein Turkey has devised to consolidate stability with its climbing power projection capabilities. Yet, even this burgeoning potential seems to be insufficient in beating the overwhelming difficulties that perplex stability within its neighboring domains. These difficulties have two dimensions. One of them germinates from this region's very own internal

characteristics: the prevailing mode of inter-state conduct in Caucasia features prolonged disputes over ethnic, religious, and/or territorial matters. Compound with problems on the regional level, the clashing interests between the Western powers and the Eurasian powers add new weight on Turkey's shoulders.

Turkey inbetween the US and Russia in the Caucasus

The Caucasian basin, with its key strategic location and vast energy resources, has unsurprisingly become a point of attraction for both Washington and Brussels. Within the past decade, both the EU and the US have pushed to incorporate the Wider Black Sea region into the Western camp. The US, after the military operations in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, intending to extend its military sphere of influence over these lands, rushed to reframe NATO in a way that would allow ex-Soviet Republics to join.

In the three years between 2004 and 2007, the EU opened its doors to ten new member states, all of which are located inside the borders of the Wider Black Sea region.[15] The EU by stretching its borders toward these uncharted territories obviously endeavors to diversify its deep dependence on Russia for a constant flow of natural gas (on average 42 percent),[16] which was suspended after the Russia–Ukraine debacle of 2008 without previous warning. By enclosing these regional states within the economic and social borders of the EU, Brussels was able to drag them further away from their former suzerain—Moscow.

Invading Georgian territory with an onslaught of men, Russia's response to the Western powers was definitely unbalanced, but also precise in meaning. The Kremlin distinctly displayed its ill ease with *any* foreign presence in its border states. Russia's sharp reaction was more than just nostalgia for its lost territory; in truth, this gesture identified Russia as one of the major stakeholders in the Caucasian basin. The Caucasus, wherein the EU and the US aspired to politically gain control, is regarded by Moscow as its "near abroad" that creates a security belt around the country.[17] This is particularly the case in the dispute between Russia and Georgia.

Until now, no sign of reconciliation, between these two power centers, was observed. Consequently, Turkey, in its effort to exploit areas of common interests, has found itself entrapped between these two opposing powers. Before further dissecting the systemic difficulties that Turkey has encountered while promoting regional cooperation, it is wise to first probe the essential lines of Turkey's post-Cold War strategy in Caucasia.

Turkey's foreign policy over the last two decades has aimed to accomplish a plural regional order that is based on loosening Russia's grip over the ex-Soviet Turkic Republics (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, etc.) of Caucasus. Meanwhile, these newly independent countries have been intent upon bolstering their interdependence from Russia and intensifying their ties with the US and the EU. The economic aspect of this geographical pluralism hinges upon pipeline projects, through former Russian territories, that will deliver Caspian oil and gas reserves to European markets through Turkey.[18]

In this context, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Turkish government conceptualized the East-West corridor that would export Caspian energy and other trade goods to the West. This initiative was aimed at exporting regional resources through non-Russian routes to Western markets that gave its fruit with the foundation of a consortium of Western energy companies, led by BP, that signed an agreement with the Azerbaijani government called "the deal of the century" in order to begin developing the Caspian energy resources in 1994. Washington backed this strategic agenda by formulating the infamous Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999.[19] Both the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and, the parallel, Baku–Tbilisi–Erzurum (BTE) gas pipeline projects were created in an effort to prevent Russia from restoring its former domination over Caucasian resources. Two other new delivery lines Trans-Caspian and Nabucco natural gas projects for streaming Caucasian resources to European consumers, again bypassing Russia and also Iran, are already in the works and are expected to become operational by mid-2010.[20]

For the Turkish state to occupy the center of the East-West energy corridor, the territorial integrity of Tbilisi is strategically important, particularly following the detachment of the Nagorno-Karabakh district from the rest of Azerbaijan with a military occupation in 1991. The Kremlin, by displaying its resurgent military capabilities, swiftly invaded Georgia in 2008 and, most assuredly, caused the Turkish state anxiety about the probability of materializing its American-sponsored strategic enterprises, such as the East-West corridor.[21]

If Turkey never fully expressed its frustration with Moscow, in the face of this naked military aggression, it was solely due to the intense economic ties between these two states. Following the slowing trade activity, mainly due to the global financial crisis, a trade volume of $38 billion is predicted for 2010; with both Turkey and Russia agreeing on a joint target to increase the trade volume to $100 billion in the next five years.[22] Following Germany and Italy, Turkey is the third largest Russian gas importer with an annual volume of more than 23.15 billion cubic meters.[23] This illustrates why, for sound economic and security interests, Turkey has chosen not to be openly defiant of Russia's regional interests.

From a strategic point of view, Turkey has been struggling to create equilibrium between their two established foreign policy priorities during the time of the conflict.[24] The security of Georgia had to be ensured in order to secure the US-backing of Turkey's energy policies; however, this runs fundamentally against an opposing strategic interest of the Turkish state, that is, to avoid displeasing Moscow so that those vital economic ties might persist.

In order to alleviate such a foreign policy deadlock, Turkey moved to reduce regional tensions after the Russian invasion of Georgia; something, which at first glance seemed counter-intuitive. Turkey's first maneuver was to found the Caucasus Stability Cooperation Pact (CSCP). With a transparent aim of appeasing Russia, by excluding any extra-regional power, especially, that of Washington and Brussels, Turkey made its first strategic step. This pact, designed to exclude all non-Caucasian powers, was not well received by the US, recognizing it as, "a coordinated Russian–Turkish attempt to keep the US and the EU at arm's length."[25]

A subsequent event further revealed how the current overall lack of global harmony can upset Turkey's delicate balancing of Russia and the US. When the US requested official permission from Turkish authorities for the passage of two NATO-flagged vessels to the Black Sea through the straits, Turkey was once again ensnared into a dilemma. Ankara eventually gave permission to these vessels, delivering humanitarian aid to the needy Georgia, but based its decision on the legal framework of Montreux rather than that of the NATO charter. By placing its decision on this basis, Ankara was once again playing to Russian favor by putting a 21-day restriction on the presence of American vessels in the Black Sea waters.[26]

Another event illustrating Ankara's frustrations is the South Stream pipeline project. Ankara has recently decided to participate in the construction of Russia's South Stream pipeline project; which, according to commentators, aims at sweeping aside the America-tailored Nabucco pipeline project.[27] Both of these projects, which Turkey has committed to sponsor, are set to deliver central Asian and Caucasian gas to European economies by using a route that bypasses Ukraine. It can be argued that Turkey has actually been bidding on two different horses running in the very same race; and, doing so, with the hopes of agitating neither the Kremlin nor the White House.[28]

Turkey inbetween Azerbaijan and Armenia

In addition to the conflicting interests of the US and Russia, Turkey must also overcome another source of complexity, the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, before seeing its regional aspirations come true. Caucasia consists of a group of states, among which, a powerful sense of insecurity has infiltrated and supersedes any attempt at cooperation. From this, one can elicit that Turkey will confront great barriers in attempting to bond the Caucasian nations together into a multi-dimensional partnership. Any rapprochement between Ankara and one of the Caucasian states will inevitably pave way for the alienation of other states of the region: a prime example of this being the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that has remained frozen since 1994.[29] The conflict over this region can be seen as the final stage of a deep-seated and time-honored hostility between two bordering nations; and, both of them has prioritized the (re)acquisition of these lands a matter of national dignity. One can readily see that neither Baku nor Yerevan would easily abandon this national cause in return for more military security or economic gain. Before the said conflict, over the region in question, is addressed with a lasting solution it is naïve to expect rational foreign policies in either Armenia or Azerbaijan.

Ankara initially stood squarely behind Baku. The two Turkish states concerted their efforts to undo the Russian-brokered ceasefire, which gave legal ground for the Armenian capture of Karabakh and its surrounding enclaves by force. As a response Ankara closed its border to the landlocked Armenia. By doing this, Turkey's ultimate aim was to force Yerevan into terms with Azerbaijan. Turkey, to the same end, began giving military equipment and training to the Azerbaijani army.[30] As of yet,

neither Turkey's continual military backing nor the fifteen-year old economic isolation has brought the surrender of Armenia.

Not until recently has Turkey allowed the opening of its border to the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Nagorno-Karabakh. However, signals of fundamental change in Turkey's foreign policy came about with the meeting of Turkey's President, Abdullah Gül, and his counterpart, Serzh Sargsyan, in Yerevan during an international soccer match between the two countries' teams. Several other summits between high-ranking officials, from both countries, culminated in a protocol signed by both the Foreign Minister of Turkey and Armenia in 2009. Signing this protocol, which is still awaiting endorsement from the two countries' parliaments, helps to eliminate the obstacles that has kept this affair frozen for the last couple of decades. The protocol clearly states that both sides agree "to open the common border within two months after the entry into force" and "implement a dialogue on the historical dimensions [read alleged genocide] … including an impartial scientific examination of the historical records."[31]

By doing all of this, Ankara appears to be demarcating a new policy line separate from the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Changing from a direct partaker of the conflict to a bipartisan regional power, Turkey no longer demands the termination of the Armenian military occupation of Azerbaijani territories in resuming bilateral economic and political ties. Additionally, Ankara hopes to gain a significant foothold in Moscow by ending the economic containment of one of Russia's strategic regional allies.[32] Moreover, by looking at a map of the region, one can easily say that Armenia could be an ideal transit country for the prospective Nabucco pipeline. In the light of these arguments, several experts propose that Ankara may intend to incorporate Yerevan into the Nabucco pipeline project, for which Turkey must alleviate its antagonisms with Armenia.[33]

Fully confident that there will be no repercussions, Ankara is prepared to step back from its former pro-Azerbaijani stance into a quieter state of neutrality. Be that as it may, Baku has already demonstrated its grievance with Ankara's new foreign policy shift by labeling it a wedge driven between the two Turkish states. In retaliation, and to the shock of many in Ankara, Baku recently decided to accept Moscow's purchase offer for its 500 million cm gas per annum to be sold to Dagestan; reserves which Turkey had counted on in justifying the existence of the Nabucco pipeline project.[34] On the eve of the visit of US President, Barack Obama, to Turkey, Azerbaijan was overly anxious with the joint decision of Yerevan and Ankara to unclose the Armenian–Turkish border. Ilham Aliyev's decision to boycott the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) meeting in Istanbul, on April 6–7, 2009, restates Azeri concerns about the Turkish–Armenian normalization process.

Not only Baku, but also Yerevan seems to have been disenchanted with the overtures of Ankara. The maneuver space of the current Armenian government has already been severely diminished by the leading opposition groups, which straightforwardly condemned the recent agreement with Turkey as a naked evidence of betrayal to the country. Domestically, a strong anti-Turkish group led by the Armenian Tasnaksutyun Party (ATP), which has strong economic and political links with

the Armenian Diaspora, opposes any rapprochement with Turkey. Due to the non-presence of any other phenomenon, apart from the alleged 1915 genocide, on which to construct and maintain a common Armenian identity worldwide,[35] Yerevan has been keen on blocking the normalization process with Turkey. Given the pressures emanating from the Tasnaksutyun Party and Diasporas, particularly in France and the US, Armenia does not renounce its genocide claims regardless of its isolation and poverty. Indeed, a top Armenian Court gave reference to the alleged 1915 genocide in its reasoned decision about the constitutionality of protocols.[36] At this critical stage, President Sargsyan's decision to submit the protocol to parliament for ratification is an important step for normalization with Turkey. However, he insisted that the accords must first be voted on by the Turkish parliament before Armenia's parliament will approve them.[37] In this context, Turkey again finds itself in a delicate balancing game between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Moreover, the governing AKP will have a hard time persuading the opposition parties, the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) and the Milliyetçi Haraket Partisi (MHP), in the parliamentary ratification process.

To make things complicated, a non-binding resolution calling the World War I-era killing of Armenians genocide narrowly passed by a key committee of the US Congress (the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee) under the pressures of Diaspora Armenians on March 4, 2010. Turkey responded to the decision of the committee by recalling its ambassador for consultations. Clearly, this instance not only undermined Turkish–American relations, but also the Turkish–Armenian normalization process at a critical conjuncture of peace negotiations in the Caucasus. Under these conditions, on April 22, 2010, Sargsyan wisely declared that his government would one-sidedly postpone the ratification of the previously signed bilateral agreements within the Armenian parliament to a future term; giving the Turkish government time to save face.[38] Otherwise, it would have been highly likely that the mirrored ratification process, within the Turkish parliament, would have been terminated and thereby reversed all of the previously taken diplomatic steps.

From the above-depicted scene, one is able to deduce that as Turkey came close to acquiring a share of the Central Asian gas deposits, by turning a new political page with Armenia, the Azerbaijani backers for the project withdrew. This act dashed all of Turkey's hopes for the Nabucco project. This is because the amount of natural gas that the Central Asian republics can offer is not large enough to compensate for the vast contribution that was to come from Azerbaijani sources. Additionally, Turkey was not able to extend any additional pipelines to those gas fields beyond the Caspian Sea any time soon. By late 2010, Turkey, in a cut-throat competition over the region's energy-rich countries, had everything in their favor but time.

Turkey soon realized that this foreign policy deadlock could only be resolved when the Turkish–Azerbaijani affairs could be restored to their former relationship previous to the "football diplomacy." So, in respect to the Karabakh issue, Ankara swiftly returned to its former policy line and recognized Azerbaijani claims over the lands under the occupation of Yerevan.[39] Baku welcomed the revival of the pro-Azerbaijan position in Turkey's regional paradigms and responded to it by paying

an official visit to Ankara in December 2009. These actions and their resulting visit, by Baku, have seemed to ease the problems between the two states over the price of gas.[40]

Seeing that neither Armenia nor Turkey was in a position to further progress the current status between them, Baku was relieved. Furthermore, the re-established power balance within northern Caucasia—in Baku's favor—culminated in a landmark deal of natural gas sale within the summer of 2010. By brokering this deal, Ankara, in advance, secured almost half of the gas (eleven billion cubic meters) that is promised to be delivered through Nabucco to European markets.[41] Thus, Turkey again managed to stay in the game of pipeline politics. Due to the values-based inter-politics of Eurasia, Turkey's enthusiastic foreign policy action toward Armenia managed to help return it to where it initially was approximately a year and a half ago.

It seems that the Turkish state is not actually in a position to seek an all-encompassing Caucasian support without facing a steep price. In truth, the Caucasian nations' state of affairs, which Ankara aspires to combine in a framework of reciprocal cooperation, is set firmly on the side of opposition and not of cooperation.

Conclusion

Turkey's new foreign policy appears to mimic what China previously established in creating an economic zone, through which trade merchants, financial investments, and energy flows can circulate, without the fear of political grudges intervening. The tangential point of Turkey's post-Cold War foreign policy, towards its proximate areas, was to be a precursor of a whole new order that encouraged cooperation on matters of common interest. However, unlike China, Turkey must first deal with certain systemic and sub-systemic limitations; both of which are holding back the proposed foreign policy program.

Ankara was, and still is, convinced that it is viable to derive support from both regional and extra-regional powers for its energy-associated endeavors. Yet, Russia and Iran still strive to drive away all presence of the West, meanwhile, the US and the EU are seeking ways to weaken the East's hold over the Eurasian energy corridor. So far, every point of dispute has further driven Turkey's regional standing into bitter dilemmas and deadlocks.

The popular dictum of Ankara's new foreign policy, the so-called "zero problem," is understood in this work to be an ideal position from which Turkey can enjoy peace and prosperity in a conflict-free regional environment. Yet, due to domestic incentives and/or social configurations, the states of this region are unwilling to gravitate toward tracking objective material power trends. As is the case for the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the ruling elites in this region are constrained by their state-structures and perceptions of their policymaking elites, which keep them from leading more rational foreign policy courses.

It is possible that with skillful maneuvers Turkey may be able to enlarge its influence and, thereby, gain popular consent. Yet, as for the affairs between the US and

the Russian–Iranian axis, and, between the rivaling states of Caucasia, Turkey's road to the consummation of its foreign policy objectives will no doubt be a long and laborious one. Wherein, under the current constrains of the Caucasus regional security complexity, perhaps, the best that can be hoped for is not a state of collaboration but a state of constrained-competition.

Notes

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