

Re-evaluating Turkey's global relationships and its shift toward the South-East Asian region

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Abstract

Turkey is strategically positioned at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and is considered an important geopolitical actor in the global arena. Since Turkey embraced neoliberal economic policies in the 1980s, it has emerged as one of the leading emerging economies with major trade links with the US, Russia, EU, and Asia. Turkey has been a longstanding member of the NATO alliance and signed the European Customs Union Agreement in 1995. With the advent of Asia as the global economic powerhouse, Turkey's foreign and economic policy horizons today extend to the Asia-Pacific Region. Turkey plays a key role in China's Belt and Road Initiative and with the launching of the Asia Anew Initiative in late 2019, Ankara has redoubled efforts to forge closer ties with the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and with ASEAN itself. This paper will explore and evaluate Turkey's foreign policy over the last two decades and the shift from the principle of Strategic Depth to that of Strategic Autonomy. The article will also review Turkey's current change in international orientation and its international re-orientation toward Asia.

Keywords: Turkish Foreign Policy, Strategic Depth, Strategic Autonomy, Asia Anew initiative, Turkey-ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Partnership

Introduction

Since its declaration as a republic in 1923, Turkish foreign policy has gone through fundamental shifts responding to shifts in geopolitical power structures; regional security and stability and domestic demands. From its inception as a modern republic, Turkey has decidedly aligned itself with the West, which has been well reflected in its foreign policy. Turkey is a founding member of the United Nations (1945), a member of NATO (1952), the Council of Europe (1949), the OECD (1960), and the OSCE (1973), and was an associate member of the Western European Union (1992). Turkey became a member of the European Customs Union in 1995, and despite the volatile nature of the Turkey-EU relations, particularly in recent years, full EU membership nevertheless remains one of its long-term goals (Toygur, 2022; Ilgaz & Toygur, 2011). However, Turkey has had longstanding relations with Asia as well. They have deep roots in history and are assisted by Turkey's linguistic and cultural affinities with many ethnic communities and states, especially in Central Asia and the greater Middle East. Over the last 20 years, these relations have become more robust, especially in economic and diplomatic terms. With the center of gravity in global geopolitics and economics shifting eastwards, particularly in the last two decades, Turkey, like so many international actors,

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intends to review its foreign policy priorities and accommodate its strategic interests accordingly (Dalay & Keyman, 2021). To this effect, Turkey has sought to develop and strengthen its relations with China and other South-East Asian nations. Turkey initiated a strategy to engage South-East Asian nations in the early 2000s through trade and FDI agreements and through the diplomatic pathway by opening new embassies and state-sponsored institutions across the region. In 2019, Turkey announced the “Asia Anew” initiative as a commitment to forging closer ties with the member states of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The scope of the initiative includes collaboration and cooperation in the fields of education, defense, international trade and investment, technology, culture, and politics.

This article is divided into two main parts, the first part focuses on Turkish foreign policy and how it has shifted from the doctrine of Strategic Depth to that of Strategic Autonomy over a period of 20 years, since the current AKP government came into power in 2002. This section will review the two different doctrines of Turkish foreign policy in depth and the key global events leading to the paradigm shift. The second part of the article will focus on Turkey’s current shift in international orientation from its traditional Western and Middle Eastern allies to a more South-East Asian focus as part of its Strategic Autonomy. We aim to look at Turkey’s current relationship and discourse with Asia, specifically the ASEAN countries, highlighting the trends in trade, investment, and diplomacy. Finally, we discuss the possible outcomes of Turkey’s alliances with the ASEAN countries and the challenges it faces in looking eastward.

Paradigm shift in Turkish Foreign Policy from Strategic Depth to Strategic Autonomy

According to Murinson (2006: 945), the key influences of traditional Turkish foreign policy have been the historical experience of the Ottoman Empire; the Kemalist revolution and the creation of the Turkish Republic; pro-western policies of Europeanization and modernization; and the suspicion of foreign powers and interests and pan-Turkism and pan-Turanism. After the Cold War, Turkish foreign policy followed the founding ideology of Kemalism for nearly 70 years focusing on modernization, democratic reform, secularism, and nationalism. According to Ataman (2002a: 122), Kemalist leadership made a tremendous effort to maintain a pro-Western alignment and a secular character of the Turkish state and can be summed up in the words of Kamel Atatürk, the founding leader of Turkey – “peace at home and peace abroad”. The Kemalist vision did not draw upon the historical legacy and glory of the Ottoman Empire and neither did it prioritize pan-Turkism or pan-Turanism sentiments, to some extent Turkish foreign policy during that time could be characterized as being isolationist. However Turkish foreign policy underwent a radical shift from Kemalism to Neo-Ottomanism under the leadership of Turgut Ozal (Ataman, 2002b: 123) during his tenure from 1983 to 1993, first as prime minister and then as the president of Turkey. The new doctrine took a more comprehensive shape when the current AKP government came into power. Ahmet Davutoglu, the chief foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister Erdogan, was the architect of the new foreign policy concept known as the Strategic Depth Doctrine (Davutoglu, 2000).

The context of the transition from Kemalism to Neo-Ottomanism that started during the Ozal government can be traced to the geopolitical shifts in Eurasia at that time. After the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the independence of many Turkic-speaking people of Central Asia and Caucasus, and the Turkish government saw an opportunity to build a political, economic and cultural alliance with these countries. The conflict in the Balkans also influenced Turkish foreign policy and led to a revival of the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire and highlighted the Turkish government’s desire to re-instate itself as a regional power (Candar, 2009; Walker 2007). The AKP government has built on

this shift toward Neo-Ottomanism through its adoption of the Doctrine of Strategic Depth (Murinson, 2012). Turkey's geographical location at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and Asia and the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire forms the foundations of the Strategic Depth Doctrine. The doctrine was based on reviving the historical and geographical depth and influence that Turkey once had in this region and the perceived opportunity to re-emerge as a significant regional and global power. Davutoglu (2007) perceived Turkey's diverse regional and cultural composition as its strength, enabling it to control an area of influence in its immediate environs and maneuvering several regions simultaneously. Moreover, the civil war with the PKK and disruption of national cohesion also influenced its foreign policy and national agenda of moving away from "secularism" toward its more Islamist roots. Davutoglu imagined Turkey as a "model" and the "leader" for its neighboring regions. According to Balci and Kardas (2012) Turkey had a specific vision of re-establishing regional order in the Middle East through diplomacy and stronger economic, political and cultural integration. Its aim was to guarantee its own security and stability by taking a more active and constructive role in regional integration. Turkey's longstanding NATO membership and its status as an emerging economy with high rates of growth between 2002 and 2013 made it a formidable regional power.

The Strategic Depth Doctrine was built on five principles based on Turkey's new visions and targets set during the early years of the AKP government (Davutoglu, 2007). The first principle was to ensure that there was a balance between security and democracy within the country. The government was steadfast in its intentions to promote civil liberties without undermining security, despite the growing threat of terrorism close to its borders. The second principle was a "zero problem policy toward Turkey's neighbours", which meant that Turkey would pursue policy of regional integration, strategic cooperation, and increased trade and solidarity by using its soft power and diplomacy to promote further economic, cultural, and political ties. The third principle was to develop relations with neighboring regions and beyond. Turkey's regional impact would extend to the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, and this was to be done through strengthening diplomatic ties. The fourth principle was in adherence to a multi-dimensional foreign policy encompassing both regional countries and global players such as the US, EU, and Russia. The fifth principle of the doctrine was "rhythmic diplomacy" which meant that Turkey would pursue and build sustainable diplomatic relations both at a bilateral and multilateral level. Tanchum (2020) sums it up in his conclusion that the building block of the Strategic Depth Doctrine was based on the use of soft power tools, political dialogue, economic interdependence, and cultural harmony. Turkey's role as a neutral mediator between Israel and Syria, its role in the resolution of conflict in the Balkans and numerous acts of humanitarianism in the region are all examples of the use of soft power to bring peace and stability in the region. In 2005 it also restarted dialogue with the EU to further its accession plans despite their turbulent bilateral history.

However, according to Kutlay and Öniş (2021: 1085) Turkey moved away from the doctrine of Strategic Depth to that of Strategic Autonomy in the latter half of the AKP government, particularly after the failed coup attempt to overthrow the government in July 2016. There were other global, regional, and domestic events that led to this shift in foreign policy that we discuss later in this article. Kutlay and Öniş (2021: 1085) highlight this shift away from the "logic of interdependence" to a foreign policy based on a quest for Strategic Autonomy where coercion and military force subsume diplomacy and soft power.

The events that led to a shift in Turkish foreign policy

Turkey's strategic location as a bridge between Europe, Asia, and North Africa has inevitably made it a nation of significant geopolitical influence. It not only links these regions geographically but also acts as a cultural bridge thus enabling it to exercise a degree of soft power

on the regional and international stage. A review of Turkish foreign policy over the last two decades under the AKP government, which came into power in 2002, shows that there have been some significant changes during this period (Kutlay & Öniş, 2021). In the first decade of AKP rule, the government wanted to ensure that the country experienced democratization and reform; sustained economic growth through trade and FDI; and pursued a visionary and proactive foreign policy that ensured regional peace and economic growth. Therefore, Turkish foreign policy was based on the foundations of regional interdependence and integration alongside pursuing its traditional alignment with the West. During this time Turkey proactively pursued a regional integration strategy promoting economic and cultural integration and using its soft power and diplomacy to maintain political stability in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region. It also continued to strengthen its Western alliances and in 2005 it started EU accession negotiations. However, in the second decade of AKP rule Turkey's regional integration and diplomacy strategy was replaced by a more assertive quest for "Strategic Autonomy" and military interventionism and coercive diplomacy. Academics and political commentators (Haugom, 2019; Kutlay & Öniş, 2021; Sözen, 2010) have put this shift down to the following global, regional, and national events.

Regional instability caused by the Arab Springs

Arab uprisings in 2010 and the Syrian civil war in 2011 led to regional instability and national security concerns in Turkey. Following the Arab upheavals, Turkey gave up its role as a neutral mediator when became militarily involved in the Syrian civil war in 2016 (Mehmetcik & Celik, 2022: 24–41). The Syrian War caused a proliferation of terrorist organizations, foreign intervention and an influx of refugees. This meant that the Turkish government had to focus on national security and protecting the Turkey/Syrian border. While NATO released statements of support for Ankara and called for de-escalation, Turkey felt the alliance's inaction was a sign of abandonment by its NATO allies and Western partners. The military coup in Egypt led to further regional imbalance. The Russian intervention in the Syrian War in support of the Syrian regime and the US–Iran nuclear deal were both perceived by Turkey as strengthening Iran's power in the region. In 2016, there was a coup attempt in Turkey against President Erdogan and his government.

The events of the Arab Spring, the Syrian War, and the internal coup attempt led the Turkish government to focus on national defense and security. This was manifested in the following measures (Bakir, 2021):

- A presidential system with sweeping executive powers.
- A focus on developing a national defense industry that could cater to the needs of the national armed forces.
- A shift in foreign policy that aimed for "Strategic Autonomy" of Turkey enabling it to reduce its dependence on its Western alliances and follow independent multilateral and bilateral relations that were more transactional and aggressive.
- An aim to build a professional army to protect the national security of the country both from external invasions and internal terrorist groups.

Disillusionment with support from Western allies

One of the main reasons behind Turkey's push for greater Strategic Autonomy arose from the fact that US-led Western hegemony was in free fall over the last two decades (Yeşiltaş, 2013: 661–687). Turkey was increasingly growing disillusioned with the support and commitment that it receives from its Western allies. Although Turkey has historically aligned itself with the West, the current AKP government does not feel it has the backing of the West in achieving its international goals, whether it be EU full membership, political resolution in Northern

Cyprus, or protecting its maritime borders and rights in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The US disengagement from the Middle East and its reluctance to get involved in the Syrian War has further led Turkey to believe that its Western allies do not consider Turkey's interests when making decisions in Washington. This perception has been reinforced by the growing criticisms by the West on its lack of political and social reform and human rights issues.

As a result of these events, the Turkish government, in recent years, has been quite vocal and aggressive in their foreign policy with the West in order to ensure that its national interests are being looked after.

The global growth engine – Asia's new role in the world economy

Since the global financial crash in 2008, Europe and the US have experienced a long period of low growth and unbalanced recovery. Despite many challenges during this difficult period, Asia has remained a relatively bright spot and has contributed significantly to the recovery of the global economy. In a global environment of slow growth, Asia – with China in a leading role – emerged as a world economic growth engine. Turkey, like many other international players, sees Asia as its avenue for economic expansion and with a long-term view of achieving greater economic and political independence from the West. Turkey intends to capitalize on the glittering emergence of Asia as a new center of productivity and prosperity in the global economy. Turkey has been pursuing an Asian economic strategy since 2000 and Turkey's commercial relations with Asia, including the Pacific, already occupy 16% of Turkey's trade volume in 2018 and there is a constant interest to advance trade relations. For example, Turkey has signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with South Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore. Recently, the Turkish Ministry of Trade designated 15 states around the world as "target countries". The Turkish private sector has been encouraged with additional public incentives to develop commercial relations with these states. China, India, Japan, and South Korea are among these designated countries. In 2019 Turkey signed the Asia Anew Initiative with ASEAN countries with a view to further strengthening economic, social, political and cultural ties.

Domestic factors

The AKP government came into power in 2002 with a resounding parliamentary majority. The main factors that fostered their victory were the political instability and muddled foreign policy; the financial crisis of November 2000 and February 2001 and the growing internal threat of PKK terrorism that the previous government was not able to put a stop to (Sözen, 2010: 103–123). The new government immediately put in place a program of economic reform and pushed for further democratization. They had a clear and coherent foreign policy based on the doctrine of Strategic Depth that gained tremendous momentum in the early part of their government. The economy flourished under the AKP government between 2002 and 2013 due to relatively high growth stimulated by abundant capital inflows (Gökay, 2021). The populist government ensured financial inclusion by making cheap credit available to all and through welfare reforms. Internationally Turkey built its reputation as a "model country" based on these reforms and the EU was encouraged to re-engage with the Turkish government about its membership to the union and other major bilateral issues relating to immigration, energy and security. However, during the 2010s Turkey's reliance on foreign capital increased and its denominated debt in the non-financial sector increased to historic levels. Since 2013, Turkey's growth became volatile as international capital inflows slowed down when the US Federal Reserve announced that it would taper down its quantitative easing program (Akay, 2021). This period was marked by financial turbulence, raising inflation, and high unemployment rates. The government also faced challenges from various opposition parties, power blocks, and factions and it responded by imposing more authoritarian

policies. The growing discontent and factionalism as a result of the AKPs growing authoritarianism and financial crisis led to a failed coup attempt in 2016. Subsequently, in response to the coup President Erdogan institutionally sought to secure more power through an executive presidency allowing him to have a firm control over the bureaucracy, judiciary, and military.

Thus, the Turkish foreign policy under President Erdogan reflects these momentous shifts in the global geopolitical and economic arena and also in its internal politics. The transition from a parliamentary system to a strong presidential system with the concentration of executive powers in the hands of the Turkish president has been reflected in its domestic and foreign policy. Turkish foreign policy can now be characterized by the following three features – focus on national security, quest for “Strategic Autonomy, and a shift to a more assertive and transactional way of international diplomacy and collaborations” (Haugom, 2019). The focus on national security has been in a clear response to the unrest in the MENA region post-Arab Spring, particularly the civil war in Syria leading to a rise in terrorist groups, influx in refugees and interventions from nations outside the region. Protecting its borders and combating enemies of the Turkish state at home and abroad seems to be its main priority. Turkey’s international bilateral relations are influenced by the national security agenda and counter-terrorism issues (Maziad & Sotiriadis, 2020). Under President Erdogan, Turkey’s foreign policy has also become transactional and interest-based as well as pursuing a more assertive tone in diplomacy. In recent interactions with its Western allies, Turkey has demonstrated a more defiant tone (Alpogan, 2006). It has also projected its military power in regional conflicts and has set up military bases further afield in Qatar and Somalia. US retreat from the Middle East and Central Asia has opened up a geopolitical and geo-economic space for Turkish capital and military to expand. Turkey militarily acts outside NATO in places like Somalia, Qatar, Libya, Iraq, and Syria. The quest for “Strategic Autonomy” has been one of the key features of Turkish foreign policy. The aim is to reduce Turkey’s dependence on existing hegemonic power structures and to be able to forge independent alliances in order to pursue strategic goals and projects. Over the last two decades with the retreat of the West and the emergence of new economic and political power centers, Turkey, like many other international actors, is striving to reduce its dependence on Western-led hierarchical order and pursue a more autonomous foreign policy that allows it to seek flexible alliances with various countries on different issues to achieve specific foreign policy goals. Turkey’s Asia Anew Initiative exemplifies all three aspects of its new foreign policy.

Turkey’s international re-orientation toward Asia

This section of the article discusses Turkey’s alliances with Asia in the context of its new foreign policy that is based on its quest for Strategic Autonomy, strengthening its national security agenda, and focusing on interest-driven, transactional partnerships (Öniş & Kutlay, 2013: 1409). This more assertive, multi-dimensional, and proactive approach to Asia is based on Turkey’s desire to develop a greater dialogue with these countries, expand economic and commercial relations and strengthen diplomatic and cultural ties (Bezmez & Bardakci, 2020). The focus of this section will be to analyze the Asia Anew initiative that was announced in 2019.

According to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, the Asia Anew initiative was based on four key pillars namely to improve bilateral and multilateral relations; to expand trade and investment of the private sector; to strengthen academic cooperation; and finally, to develop dialogue and cooperation between countries based on cultural and social exchange. An extended period of impressive economic growth during the 2000s endowed Turkey with the financial means and self-confidence to strike out on its own and pursue a more expansive foreign policy. Turkey’s healthy GDP growth fueled its diplomatic, trade, humanitarian, and cultural activities across the Global South.

When the AKP government came into power in 2001, it introduced a sound macro-economic strategy that included major structural reforms and prudent fiscal policies transforming the Turkish economy into one of the major recipients of FDI in the region. Driven mostly by domestic demand growth, Turkey has managed to rebound strongly following the global financial crisis, growing at 9% per year on average in between 2005 and 2011, but it has since then been growing more modestly. The macroeconomic policies and large capital inflows have supported domestic demand. Turkey's economy was the fastest growing in Europe in 2011, growing at 8.8%. However, in 2012 Turkey experienced slow growth as the global economic slowdown adversely affected its exports and capital inflows. In 2014, growth weakened to 2.9%, as private consumption and investment moderated. Turkey's growth model of dependent financialization fueled through credit expansion cycles and capital inflows led to high private sector debt, persistent current account deficits financed by short-term portfolio flows, high inflation, and high unemployment have been intensified by macro-financial instability since August 2018.

Monetary policies of the Turkish Central Bank played a crucial role in securing macroeconomic balances, thereby reigning in inflation over the last decade. Having been one of the major concerns of the government for more than three decades, inflation has finally been brought down to single digits by the mid-2000s. Average inflation has been 7.9%, above the central bank's target of 5%, while the average current account deficit was 7.5% of GDP during the period 2010–2013. Though there was some rebalancing in 2013, this proved short-lived owing to policy loosening. Inflation overshoot the central bank's target in 2014 and was seen at 8.8%, reflecting premature monetary easing. Persistently high and rising inflation has been a great concern in Turkey historically but more so in recent times. The annual inflation rate in Turkey rose for the 15th consecutive month to 80.2% in August of 2022, compared to 20% from the corresponding period of the previous year. It was the highest rate since September of 1998, as the lira plunged further during the month and the central bank continued to slash interest rates.

There has been a significant fall in the public debt of Turkey over the past decade. The public debt to GDP ratio, which stood at 90.5% in 2001, decreased to 39.1% in 2011, and further to 33.5% in 2014, comfortably below the Maastricht Criterion of 60%. Turkey's international reserves have continued to increase throughout the last decade, reaching US\$ 127.3 billion by 2014, however, have been declining since 2015. The driving forces behind this considerable expansion in reserves stem from FDI inflows and portfolio transfers. Turkey's robust economic growth between 2002 to 2013 has been the main driving engine behind its expanding global footprint.

Table 1 Macroeconomic snapshot of Turkey from 1995 to 2019

Indicator	1995	2005	2010	2015	2019	2021
GDP (US\$ billion)	233.6	506.2	731.0	752.5	760.516	815.27
Real GDP (%)	7.19	8.99	9.2	3.1	1.89	11
Inflation (average, %)	89.6	8.2	8.6	6.6	15.2	19.6
Population (million)	60.184	68.861	73.0	78.2	83.155	85.04
Unemployment rate	7.6	10.5	10.7	10.2	13.7	13.4
Fiscal balance (% of GDP)	-4.9	-0.749	-3.4	-1.9	-4.749	-2.7
Public debt (% of GDP)	42.681	43.396	42.3	33.4	39.7	42.0
Current account balance (% of GDP)	-1.001	-4.145	-6.2	-4.2	0.697	-5.0
International Reserves (US\$ billion)	13.9	52.3	87.9	118.2	105.6	72.5

Source: Author's calculation using World Bank data and Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey

Turkey has experienced a significant increase in global trade from \$82.3 billion in 2000 to \$403.5 in 2018 as seen in Figure 1

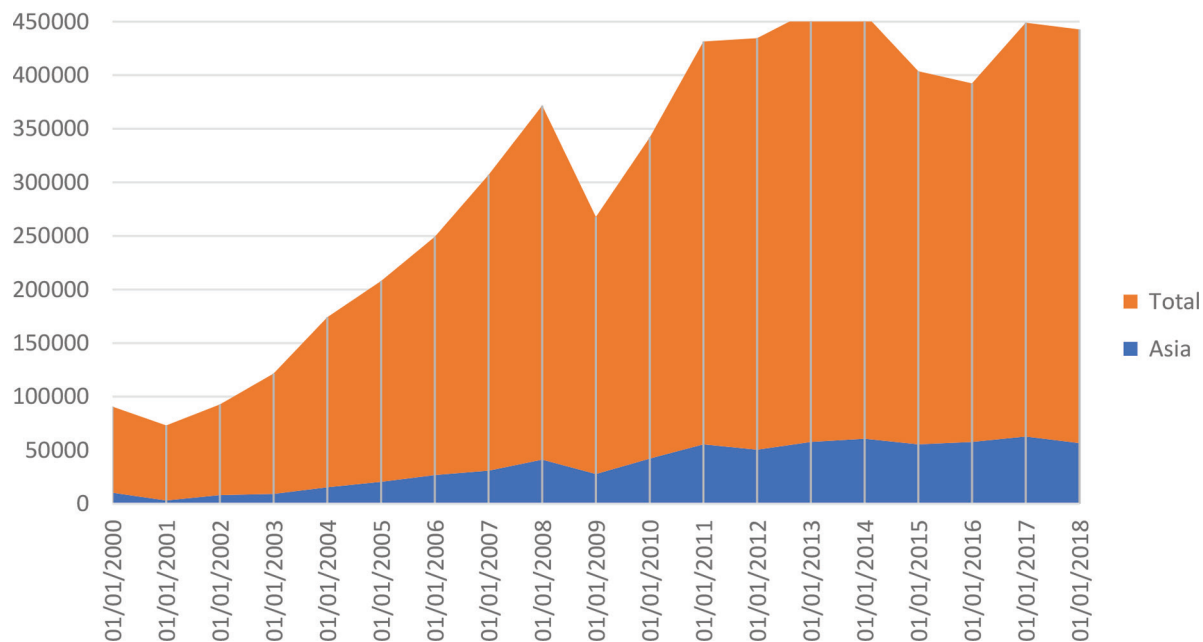


Figure 1 Asia’s Share of Turkey’s Foreign Trade (2000–2018)

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

Turkey’s trade with East Asian countries increased sharply from \$7.8 billion in 2000 to \$65.3 billion in 2017. Although Turkey’s volume of trade has increased with Asia, its trade deficit has also been expanding over the period.

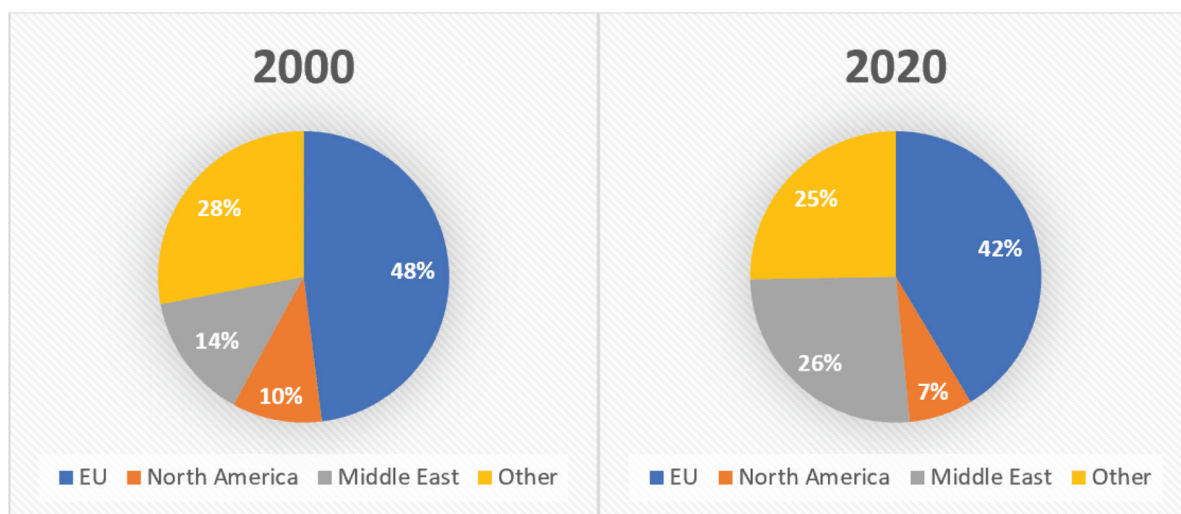


Figure 2 Turkish Exports by Geography

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

Figure 2 shows that although the EU remains the main export destination for Turkish goods and services in 2000 and 2020, the shift toward exports to the Middle East and Africa and Asia in 2020. This demonstrates the multilateral approach Turkey has been pursuing over the last two decades.

Turkey's top five East Asian trade partners are China, Japan, South Korea, India, and Malaysia (see Figure 3). Since 2008, Turkey's trade with China has far exceeded its trade with other Asian countries (Sandano, 2022). In fact, China has emerged as Turkey's third-largest trade partner after Germany and Russia. Paralleling Turkey's GDP growth, Turkey's trade with China peaked in 2013 but since then has declined. In terms of the composition of trade, it should be mentioned that South and East Asia have become potentially lucrative regional markets for a wide range of Turkish defense industry products, including armored vehicles, drones, attack helicopters, tanks, and frigates. Accordingly, Turkey has sought to pursue cooperation in the defense sector with Bangladesh and Pakistan (in South Asia) and China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand (in East Asia).

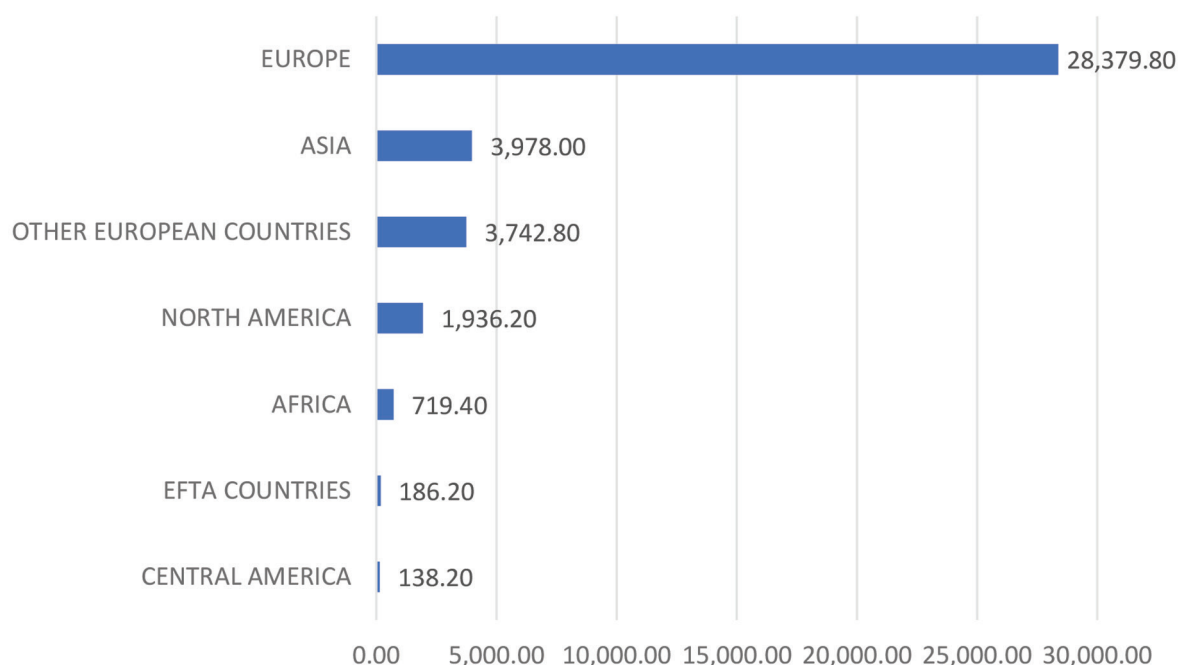


Figure 3 Turkish FDI outflow by region 2015–2019

Source: World Bank

Although Europe receives the largest amount of FDI from Turkey in dollar terms (Figure 3), Africa has seen the sharpest increase in Turkey's FDI since 2015 (Figure 4). FDI flow from Turkey to Africa grew by almost 400% in 2019, compared to the 2015 level.

As of 2019, EU FDI flow into Turkey is more than double those from Asia and is over three times that from Near and Middle East Africa (Figure 5). Europe is still by far the largest investor in Turkey, followed by Asia.

Although the trade volume with ASEAN countries was negligible in the early 2000s, trade relations later showed promising signs of growth. Turkey's total trade with all ASEAN members had remarkably increased from \$1.1 million in 2000 to \$12.1 billion in 2017 before dropping to \$7.9 billion last year (see Table 1). The sharpest increases in Turkey-ASEAN member trade flows were with the so-called "ASEAN Five" (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore) – the region's most dynamic economies.

Turkey residents' Foreign Direct Investments Abroad by region – index, with 2015 as base year.

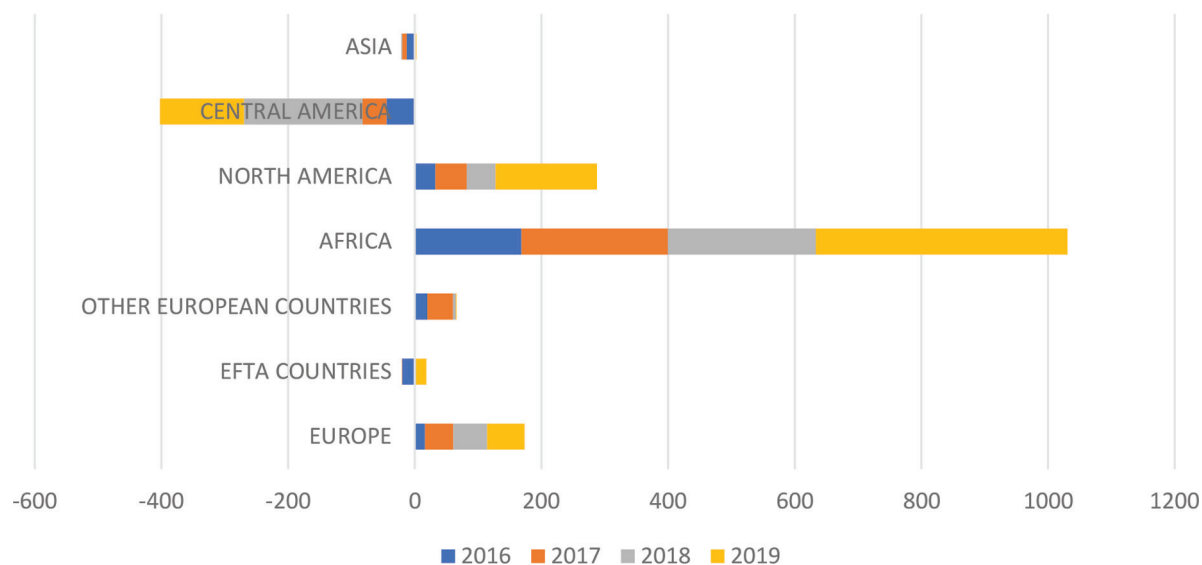


Figure 4 Turkish FDI outflow growth by region 2015–2019

Source: World Bank

Foreign Direct Investments in Turkey by regions – Flow Data (Million USD, 2019)

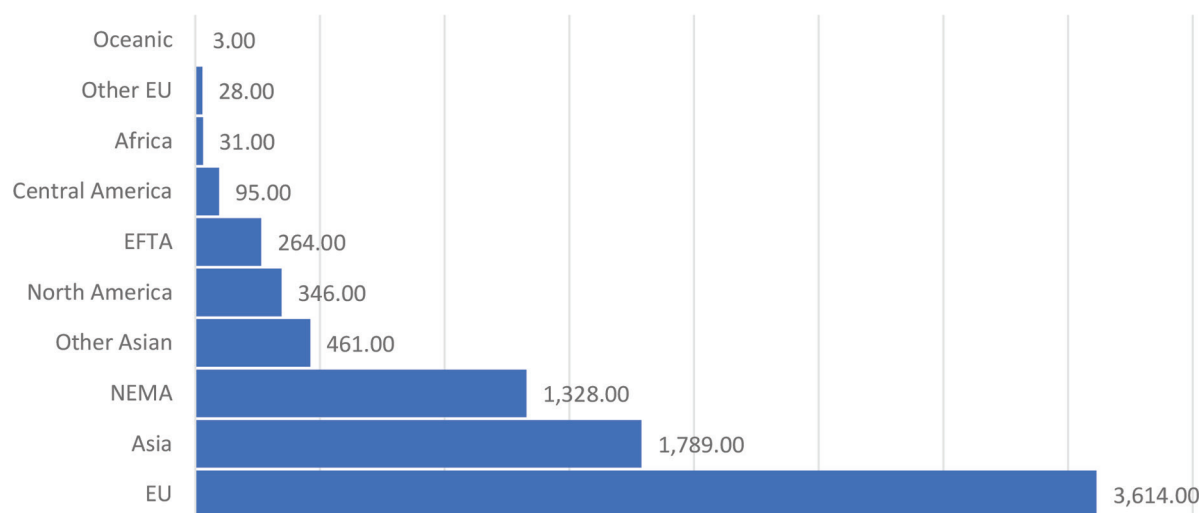


Figure 5 FDI inflow into Turkey by region 2019

Source: World Bank

Yet, even in this period of robust growth, Turkey found itself facing a large and increasing trade deficit with its leading ASEAN partners, except Singapore, the Philippines, Brunei, and Laos. Turkey's trade with Myanmar and Cambodia was on the rise in the past decade. Laos and Brunei have less trade with Turkey in the region. Nevertheless, Turkey's highest bilateral annual trade volume with a regional country barely reached \$3.5 billion (see Table 2).

Table 2 Turkey's Trade with Southeast Asian Countries (\$ millions)

	2000	2010	2017	2020
Indonesia	262	1728	1744	1398
Malaysia	308	1349	3425	2371
Thailand	248	1501	2149	1393
Singapore	281	805	1079	644
Vietnam	29	857	3285	1611
Philippines	45	178	279	231
Myanmar	1	43	58	100
Cambodia	2	33	95	88
Laos	1	2	6	6
Brunei	0	1	1	16
Total	1117	6497	12121	7858

Source: Asia Anew

In addition to strengthening the economic cooperation between Turkey and ASEAN countries, the ASEAN-Turkey Sectoral Dialogue partnership, has identified several other areas of cooperation. One of these areas is the Political-Security Cooperation area which mainly focuses on counter-terrorism, violent extremism, radicalization, and transnational crimes. This envisions the possibility of conducting intelligence exchange on security challenges; sharing experiences and best practice to counter money laundering and terrorism financing and also the monitoring and countering of social media and other more sinister online platforms for terrorist purposes. Preventing and combating transnational crimes including on legal matters and law enforcement is also a key area highlighted in the agreement as well as building capacity to develop sustainable cooperation to ensure peace and reconciliation in the region.

Another area of cooperation identified by the partners has been in the field of science and technology, innovation, research, and development (Alperen & Ersoy, 2019). This highlights joint collaboration on projects focusing on the digital transformation of the manufacturing industry; and information and communication technology. There is a significant emphasis on research and development in the field of energy and renewable energy as well as developing sustainable food and agricultural program. Other identified areas of cooperation have been disaster management; sustainable development, culture and education, skills training and youth development. There have also been proposals to explore the ASEAN Smart Cities Network through mutually accepted initiatives.

Conclusion

Although Turkey has made significant strides in the areas of trade, diplomacy, and cooperation with Asia through its Asia Anew initiative there are certain concerns regarding this initiative. Turkey's Asia Anew Initiative lacks detail and focus. The initiative has not been able clearly to articulate the intended outcomes and the impact this collaborative framework would have on the Turkish economy and its reputation on the global stage. It has not provided details on the level of cooperation or how it will fund these initiatives in terms of financial expertise, experience and institutional capacity. In order for Turkey to maintain a sustainable relationship with the ASEAN countries, it must show growth, prosperity, and political stability within its own boundaries before it can meaningfully engage in the new ASEAN cooperation initiative. It must also outline a detailed implementation strategy

including how it intends to pay for the initiatives as well as detailing the expertise and experience it can draw at an institutional level.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry has indicated that this is not a shift in international orientation that Turkey has traditionally pursued and that this is part of Turkey's quest for a "Strategic Autonomy" and diversification agenda. However, the alliances that Turkey is forging with China, BRICS, and ASEAN while maintaining close ties with its Western alliances could lead to a confused foreign and economic policy.

Furthermore, Turkish officials have yet to clarify how they intend to develop their bilateral and multilateral relations with the ASEAN countries while maintaining their existing and historical relationships with other leading Asian economies such as China, India, and Japan. It is not clear what strategies it has put in place to deal with the geopolitical rifts in that region and how it maintains its neutrality if tensions rise and the impact that it might have on its own economy. Turkey does not have a current strategy to respond to major economic and political discords in this region such as the US–China trade wars, the tensions in the South China Sea, and the historical rivalry between India and China. Turkey's trade and economic partnership with India has always been held back by the political rivalry between India and Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir. Turkey has so far maintained a balancing act with both countries, but recently India–Turkey relations have been further damaged, and India has canceled its defense exports to Turkey. But time and again we have seen that instead of having a clear and consistent economic and political strategy at the bilateral and multilateral level that Turkey can adhere to when dealing with the Asian countries, it has pursued *ad hoc* and impulsive strategies that are usually reactionary and short term in nature. Turkey will need to go back to the drawing board and review its Asian foreign and economic policy if it is to sustain its doctrine of Strategic Autonomy in dealing with the rest of the world,

Turkish foreign policy over the last two decades has gone through a paradigm shift from the principle of "Strategic Depth" to that of "Strategic Autonomy". We have seen how this in foreign policy orientation has been influenced by major economic and political events at the global, regional and domestic levels. Turkey's alliances with the West, particularly as a significant member of NATO coupled with its high economic growth in the 2000s, gave it the financial means and self-confidence to pursue its bilateral and multilateral engagements through the perspective of the Strategic Autonomy doctrine, forging alliances with countries outside the Western hegemonic power structure. However, given Turkey's current economic circumstances, institutional constraints and instances of highly reactive and volatile strategies of foreign engagement, there is reason to question the sustainability and outcome of Turkey's commitment to the Asia Anew initiative.

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