

A TRANSVERSAL ANALYSIS ON TURKEY'S RE-QUEST FOR CENTRAL ASIA AND GEOPOLITICAL PLAYOFF

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Abstract. *The article aims to embrace a cross-disciplinary regard over the development of Central Asia after the disintegration of the USSR and a commencement of projects at the beginning of the 21st century with focus on Turkey. Being one of the reconsidered strategic regions in the post-Cold War epoch, Central Asia has witnessed domestic convulsions intermingled with a broad cultural re-evaluation, prospects of economic development and security challenges. The energy deposits and corridors have further and mostly shaped the growing interest of not only the old and new great players in the region such as Russia, China and the US, but also middle powers which have attempted to exploit a share of influence within this space like Iran, Turkey, India or the Eastern Asian states. The paper, therefore, is a statement on Turkey's overture on Central Asia after 1990, significantly revitalized after having redefined foreign policy objectives since AKP came to power, which extolled above all the geopolitical interests on various instrumental appanages. The paper makes use of primary and secondary sources – analyses, media releases and official data, while embodying snapshots of modern history and foreign policy analysis. The purpose is to substantiate the closely interrelated aspects of Turkish attempts to reinfuse into the Central Asian space and reinforce the relations with the newly independent republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, contextually competing or cooperating with its historical rivals.*

Keywords: *Turkey, Central Asia, soft power, foreign policy, impact, prospective developments.*

Being once the possession of the Ottoman empire and bearing Turkish ethnic and cultural depths, Central Asia inspired a requiem for Turkey after the collapse of USSR in 1991¹. Turkey was the first to recognize the newly constituted five

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¹ Note – for further historical insights on Turkic hegemony in Central Asia and political clashes see Jean-Paul Roux, *Asia Centrală. Istorie și Civilizație* [Central Asia. History and Civilization], Artemis Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 125-148, 241-274; Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Oles M. Smolansky (eds.), *Regional Power Rivalries in the New Eurasia: Russia, Turkey and Iran*, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1995.

republics and the first State to open embassies, as a natural and long-expected call for its original space. Turkey has since developed gradual ties with the Central Asian republics (CAR) following economic, cultural and security cooperation, being alongside with Iran and Russia in a close geographical, cultural and religious proximity and slow pace. This aspect allowed the exercise of economic and political plays in a region whose importance has been revitalized. Within the newly generated vacuum of power, search for references and support in the nation-building process in the new five republics may have been at risk, as they could reorientate, despite pitfalls, to the traditional “bigger brother” Russia or bidder China. Turkey has been blocked till 1990 by the Soviet impervious bloc, the USA, India, Canada and some European states (Germany in particular). Thus, competition for occupying a strategic position in a region of high energy and market potential, as well as a strategic one (while the Middle East seemed to be further involved in ebullitions and insecurity), quickly regained significance for Turkey.

On the overture of the seemingly independent horizon, opinions were arguably projecting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to follow either the secular Muslim model of Turkey, democratic and Western-oriented², or Iran, a model of Islamic Republic, which has been a source, through the voice of its religious leaders, for an alleged export of the Islamic Revolution since 1979. According to Edmund Herzing, a scholar in Persian and Central Asian studies, ‘the Central Asians weren’t wanting to adopt another country’s model and they weren’t wanting to negotiate or mediate their relations with the international community through Iran or Turkey. They wanted to shape their own identities and future and they wanted to make their own direct contact with the international community and that has been very much the pattern’³.

Turkey’s Foreign Policy Resorts on Grounds of Soft Power

Turkey acknowledged two main phases after the Cold War. The process of transition could be divided between 1990-2000 and post-2000 periods, thereof understanding a lukewarm and unremitting foreign approach towards Central Asia, and a consistently more dynamic attitude in the late 2000s, particularly since the arrival of FM Davutoğlu in 2009. His contribution highlighted Turkey’s awareness on the geopolitical and geo-economic significance of Central Asia, and for Turkey’s own instrumental role in the equation, as a geopolitical pivot, transit space, melting pot of cultures and civilizations, and emerging economy⁴.

² Srdja Trifkovic, “Neo-Ottomanism in Action: Turkey as a Regional Power”, The Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies, February 7th 2012, accessed online on June 3rd 2012, at <http://www.balkanstudies.org/articles/neoottomanism-action-turkey-regional-power>.

³ Golnaz Esfandiari, “Central Asia: Iran, Turkey Struggle To Influence Region” in *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 25, 2005, accessed online on October 18th 2012, at <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1062385.html>.

⁴ See N.G. Iliadis, “The Davutoğlu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy” in *Working Paper* No 8/ 2010, Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy, April 2010, accessed online on August 19th 2011, at http://www.ehimep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/%CE%9A%CE%95%CE%99%CE%9C%CE%95%CE%9D%CE%9F-%CE%95%CE%A1%CE%93%CE%91%CE%A3%CE%99%CE%91%CE%A3-2010_IoGrigoriadis1.pdf.

Basically, Turkey is following a dual-track pattern, being geographically and symbolically a gateway to the Caucasus and Central Asia, like Iran, while the regions themselves demand more interlinking and vice-versa, from East to the West.

Recte, Turkey's initiative commenced with impetus at the beginning of the 1990s, chiseling the rhetoric over ideologies like Pan-Turkism – Turgut Özal's actions and speeches in 1994 declaimed “the Turkish century”⁵, a discursive platform about mutual national and cultural heritage, taking advantage of the cultural premises in the turcophone space of Central Asia, all except Tajikistan. It fostered cooperation at educational and cultural levels and it attempted to pose as a Kemalist political model, secular and democratic for the new republics, and to economically pervade the region⁶. Withal the religious factor was emphasized through what was seen as Turkey's political tool, the Fethullah Gülen movement or the religious orders “*tarikatlara*”⁷. Still, the process was timidly pursued due to the lack of coherence in Ankara's foreign policy, for it was engaged in other foreign priorities. This context made it easier for other states like China, Russia or Germany have access to the Central Asian market till the end of the 1990s. At the time, Turkey's primary objectives were the EU accession, the problematic Northern Cyprus case, the contentions in the Balkans and the Gulf region. But resources and interest were lower, in comparison, for Central Asia. Starting with 1996, a series of corrective measures were meant to fold better on the pragmatic requests of Central Asian realities, with a special focus on the economic sector, chiefly⁸.

Accordingly, Turkey's focus on Central Asia envisioned political and economic reforms, a state-building process for the CAR, contriving premises for stability and offering contribution to infrastructure for carting the energy resources, heading to the West⁹. The High Level Strategic Cooperation Council mechanism was established with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and the Cooperation Council with Tajikistan, aiming at offering support for the establishment of democratic rules and principles in the country. It also made diplomatic appraisal for Kazakhstan's multi-party system creation through nation-wide elections on 15 January 2012¹⁰.

Another step forward to deepen linkages with Central Asia and ease business access from one state to another, was to unilaterally abolish the visa regime with Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and later in 2007, short-term visas were eluded

⁵ Sedat Laçiner, “Turgut Özal Period in Turkish Foreign Policy: Özalism”, in *USAK Yearbook of International Politics and Law*, Vol. 2, 2009, pp. 153-205, accessed online on March 7th 2013, at <http://www.turkishweekly.net/article/333/turgut-ozal-period-in-turkish-foreign-policy-ozalism.html>.

⁶ Bayram Balci and Bertrand Buchwalter (coord.), *La Turquie en Asie Centrale. La Conversion au Réalisme (1991-2000)*, Institut Français d'Etudes Anatoliennes Georges Dumezil, Istanbul, Janvier 2001, pp. 5-8, 26, 41.

⁷ Roman Muzalevsky, “Fethullah Gülen's Movement in Central Asia: A Blessing or A Curse?”, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, January 9th 2009, accessed online on September 24th 2012, at <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5167>.

⁸ Esfandiari, *op.cit.*

⁹ Mustafa Kutlay and Salih Doğan, “Turkey and Central Asia: Modern Economic Linkages along the ‘Silk Road’” in *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, January 13th 2011, accessed online on January 12th 2013, at <http://www.turkishweekly.net/print.asp?type=3&id=2786>.

¹⁰ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Turkey's Relations with Central Asia, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa.

for Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and also Mongolia. No surprise considering that political support was incremental when Abdullah Gül, the Turkish Foreign Minister at the time, stated that Turkey can thus become a second home for all Turks and Muslims¹¹. Qubat Ibadoğlu Bayramov¹² remarked that: ‘one of the important goals of Turkey is to become the flagman of the Turkic-speaking countries and to expand its hegemonic opportunities among them. It wants to expand cooperation in the fields of foreign trade, currency exchange, and exports [The recent move to end the visa regime] is the first step’¹³.

The single critical aspect was Uzbekistan, occasionally pugnacious through his leader, President Islam Karimov, who criticized Turkish policy makers for the alleged support offered to the Uzbek opposition, as it received political Uzbek refugees inside its borders. It was the case of Muhammad Solih in 1993, the leader of Erk party, who received political asylum. Afterwards, the bombings in Tashkent in 1999 brought further fractures between the two countries. The lack of warm relations was felt by the Uzbek citizens, who paid \$10 for visas until June 1, 2003. Although the sum increased along the years (up to \$80 in 2007), it did not prevent trade flow and legal/illegal workers from creating contacts, especially in Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya. Regarding the last one, Turkey has been a tourist destination not only for Europeans, but also for Central Asian citizens which are further linked to Turkey within entertainment resorts – around 40 000 Kazakhs and 2000 Uzbeks visited Antalya in 2006¹⁴.

Between the Dynamism of Diplomacy and Economic Forays

Ahmet Davutoğlu’s approach, ‘zero problems with neighbors’ and the ideological shape of Neo-ottomanism¹⁵ meant a revulsion and fostered more dynamism within the Turkish foreign policy mainstream, which tried to patch the oversights in the important regions for Turkey, like Central Asia. By token, Davutoğlu’s first symbolic visits as a fresh Foreign Minister in May 2009 commenced with former possessions of the Ottoman Empire – the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, Central Asia, particularly when the global balance of power shifted quickly and tended to dislocate power poles to Asia – Pacific. Hereby, economy and trade were instrumental for promoting Turkey’s objectives both regionally and globally, and particularized the relation with the CAR after 2000s¹⁶.

The ruling party AKP seized the opportunity of the flow of financial and industrial companies, which managed to transform Turkey’s total foreign trade

¹¹ Gulnoza Saidzimova, “Central Asia: Turkey lifts visa requirement for post-Soviet states”, in *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, July 31st 2007, accessed online on February 22nd 2013, at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/46c1d36421.html>.

¹² Note – Qubat Ibadoğlu Bayramov is member of the Board of the Economic Research Center in Baku, http://erc.az/az/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=69&Itemid=94.

¹³ Saidzimova, *op.cit.*

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*

¹⁵ Note – for an extended perspective on Neo-Ottomanism see Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007”, in *Insight Turkey*, accessed online on March 2nd 2013, at <http://pdfsb.com/readonline/59566c436577702b5633422b4448746d56413d3d-4894643>.

¹⁶ Iliadis, *op.cit.*

from \$72 billion in 2001 to \$333 billion in 2008, where the total pointed out the Asian countries (the Middle East included) prevailed. The balance of trade expanded from \$18.7 billion to \$131 billion, rising to more than 50% faster than the average. Economy concomitantly worked with political exuberance outside the EU borders, subsequently foreign trade was propelled in the disadvantage of the EU market, because the share in Turkish foreign trade declined from 51.38% to 42%, while Turkish foreign trade with Asia (if Middle East and North Africa “MENA” excluded) raised from 12% to 26.5%¹⁷. Moreover, in 2010, Turkey’s trade volume with these states reached \$6.5 billion, the total investments of Turkish companies in the region exceeded \$4.7 billion. Withal, the total value of projects successfully performed by Turkish contracting companies in the region were about \$50 billion, on the basis of approximately 2000 Turkish companies acting in the region¹⁸.

Iconic for economic emphasis in forging international visibility and achieving reliability, the account of settlement concerning the Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) made progress through institutional investors. Though performance may be still lukewarm as regards international standards, Turkey managed for the first time, according to Doğan and Kutlay, to become visible in Central Asian/Middle Eastern market and also the European one – in 2009, the direct investment stock represented \$11.2 billion, out of which \$3.1 billion was directed to Asia¹⁹.

Turkey’s efforts to combine the dynamism of diplomacy and the economic development (both domestic and external) relied on public policy makers’ initiatives and the CEOs. EximBank actives are suggestive, for instance, when assessing the Turkish awareness of Central Asia’s market potential, between “poor” up to “engaging”. There were several loans offered by the bank to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan starting in 1990, reaching approximately \$1 billion as foreign aid. This sum constitutes ¼ of Turkish total foreign aid along the two decades, and also assistance was provided by the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA)²⁰.

Significant and unremitting improvement in trade relations was eventually achieved, as Turkey managed to be a part of the top 6 trading partners of all five republics, rising from the ranks in fields like construction industry, hotel management, financial services, oil and gas, IT and telecommunication, or food production²¹. However, the political, strategic and economic competition is compelling in Central Asia; Chinese and Indian companies widely expanded as well.

Turkey’s Relation with the Central Asian Republics (CAR) and Regional Impact

One of the CAR with which Turkey developed bilateralism in a multidimensional way is Kazakhstan, where the cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious bonds

¹⁷ Kutlay, Doğan, *op.cit.*

¹⁸ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Turkey’s Relations with Central Asia.

¹⁹ Kutlay, Doğan, *op.cit.*

²⁰ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Turkey’s Relations with Central Asia.

²¹ Kutlay, Doğan, *op.cit.*

encouraged tighter relations. Turkey was the first country to recognize Kazakhstan's independence in 1991 and a Strategic Partnership Treaty was signed in December 2009, during the visit of President Nazarbayev to Turkey²². Around 180 000 Meskhetian Turks and 40 000 Turkish citizens are living in Kazakhstan, and 3000 Kazakh citizens reside in Turkey, which brings further incentive to expand cooperation between the two, and for Kazakhstan to become one of the major partners of Turkey in Central Asia. Relevantly, the bilateral trade increased up to \$3.28 billion in 2010, while the amount of total Turkish investment is around \$2 billion. The education chapter is highly important and many corporations like Kazakh-Turkish Educational Foundation (KATEV) were involved in offering assistance; between 2010-2012, Turkey granted 175 higher education scholarships to Kazakhstan²³.

Concerning the geopolitical setting, the emergence of positive relations between Kazakhstan and Turkey may firstly loom a spill-over effect on the other members of the CAR in the future, and secondly, Russia's play. Directly proportional to the nature of intensified Russian-Turkish relations, these may as well foster or hamper the Kazakh-Turkish ones, due to Russia's large impact on the former²⁴.

Concerning Kyrgyzstan, relations with Turkey are even closer than the former's with Iran, for instance, and the nature of diplomatic activity has been much based on personal contacts. Leader Atambaev manifested a visible inclination to propel impetus between the two states, as Turkey is seen as a strong economic regional power, independent in pursuing its foreign policy. He made numerous visits to Ankara, and during his visit in April 2011, several projects of geopolitical and economic cooperation were schemed. Among them, one envisions Kyrgyzstan to become a transportation hub that connects Istanbul with Shanghai, while another one proposes to create a Custom Union that includes Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Turkey, with Bishkek at the crossroads, as a reply to Moscow's similar initiatives²⁵.

This jockeying is, in fact, motivated by more realist concerns around the unstable nature of Kyrgyzstan, the most striking one among the CAR in the late years. But similar to its neighbours, there are alternatives to guide foreign policy, out of which many straddle around Russia. The volatile power display allows more schemes and versatility in opting not to entrench integration with Russia, but chose for another "supervisor". In this case, the sedulous interplay between Ankara and Bishkek reveals Turkey's strategy to emphasize its geopolitical impact.

²² Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Relations between Turkey and Kazakhstan, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-kazakhstan.en.mfa>.

²³ Hasan Kanbolat, "The Future of Kazakhstan for Turkey" in *Today's Zaman*, November 28, 2011, accessed online on November 15th 2012, at <http://www.todayszaman.com/columnists-264148-the-future-of-kazakhstan-for-turkey.html>.

²⁴ Mahir Zeynalov, "Turkey-Kazakhstan Relations Hit Peak", in *Today's Zaman*, October 25, 2009, accessed online on October 31st 2012, at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-kazakhstan.en.mfa>.

²⁵ Dmitry Schlapentokh, "Turkey and Kyrgyzstan Deepen Ties", Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, March 21, 2012, accessed online on January 17th 2013, at <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5736>.

Tajikistan's bilateralism with Turkey does not surpass the level of rapprochement with Iran, but it witnessed an enhanced economic wave. The total trade volume raised from \$86 million, the level in 2003, to \$347 million in 2010. One encumbrance was the lack of macroeconomic development of Tajikistan. Lucrative meeting between presidents Abdullah Gül and Emomali Rahmon in 2009 carried forth facilitated possibilities to invest in Tajikistan, favoring both states²⁶. The most concerning aspect for the two countries is related to regional security and stability. Tajikistan is regarded as litmus for entrenching stability in Afghanistan by Turkey, which provided major initiatives in precluding the instable factors in the area. Therefore, further development is likely to succeed as they share joint regional orientations and Turkey can improve its assistance in Tajikistan.

Turkmenistan represents one Middle Asian State where Turkey exploited cultural, economic, ethnic and political enterprises. It assisted Turkmenistan in the process of nation-building from the beginning; Turkish companies continued investments when the Turkmen economy was in crisis and had payment delays for the Russian gas. Besides, the lucrative support of the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), present in the entire CAR, paved the way to specific infrastructure investments.

A positive aspect of Turkey's diplomacy approached the linguistic realm. Turkey forayed into what was regarded as a lack of Turkmen national consciousness, translated through the quasi-use of Russian and lapidary manifestation of national identity²⁷. The efforts of the Turkmen government to revive traditional patterns, dress code, literature and language was favored by the post-1990 arrival of many Turkish travelers and businessmen, and urban-used Russian was not helpful anymore, so Turkmen language was put back in use and Latin alphabet employed, an aspect observed by the historians to be a general phenomenon taking place in new-born Central Asia states. Turkey's contribution meant the promotion of cultural diplomacy, by magnifying the ethnic and linguistic bonds with Turkmenistan and launching numerous Turkish language schools, which widespread the language and the interaction between the two states and populations²⁸. These step-by-step cultural initiatives have not been far from geopolitical ambitions.

Central Asia's "pugnacious boy", Uzbekistan, met hindrances in developing relations with Turkey, similarly as it did with its neighbors. Fears boosted around the Islamic wave, which according to some analysts, met the degree of paranoia²⁹. Stances on the alleged Turkish propaganda in Uzbekistan, pressures

²⁶ Gülay Mutlu, "Turkey-Tajikistan Relations: Limited to Bilateral Visits", in *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, September 9, 2011, accessed online on August 23rd 2012, at <http://www.turkishweekly.net/columnist/3511/turkey-tajikistan-relations-limited-to-bilateral-visits.html>.

²⁷ Selcuk Colakoğlu, "The New Concept of Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", in *The Journal of Turkish Weekly*, March 22, 2013, accessed online on March 28th 2013, at <http://www.turkishweekly.net/columnist/3732/>.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Hasan Kanbolat, "Turkey-Uzbekistan Relations on the 20th anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence", in *Today's Zaman*, September 23, 2011, accessed online on August 16th 2012, at <http://www.todayszaman.com/columnists-257722-turkey-uzbekistan-relations-on-the-20th-anniversary-of-uzbekistans-independence.html>.

not to allow Uzbek political opposition to travel to Turkey, criticism on Turkey's Western multilateralism, led for a long-term convulsive relation between the two. Economy mirrored this reality and bilateral trade remained suboptimal, \$1143 billion in 2010, as it focused mostly on shared investments and Turkish construction, food, textile goods and services. Notwithstanding the slow increase of diplomatic and economic contacts in late years, relations are currently below their potential.

Prospective Developments on Geopolitical Pillars

The pivotal place of Turkey aims at looming centrality rather than an intersection of continents and interests, and situates itself as a "central country", more an Eurasian power within EU, rather than a marginal member of the EU. Europeanization was a source for domestic chiseling towards democracy and imposing performance standards in politics and economy since the 2000s. Turkey benefited from the context contriving a spill-over effect on the neighbors, such as supportive measures to Central Asian and Middle Eastern states – visa free regimes, financial support, education opportunities guaranteed by the Turkish State, trade agreements, "the Arab Schengen", etc.

In geopolitical language, the short and middle-term future of Turkey in Central Asia, one may believe, similarly depends on two exogenous factors. It has to do with the complete withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan in 2014 and the presence of Russia, which seems inspired by imperialist proclivities to reshape frontiers or former spheres of influence of the USSR. The trend was augmented mainly since Vladimir Putin's presidential term.

A prospective analysis on Turkey would encompass the US in the calculus, as well. It may not be reasonable to assume the latter totally gives up its strategic position in Central Asia as it has been achieved with difficulty, and where the US managed to break for the first time through the Afghan gate, under the shield of 9/11 events, which added a third player striving for influence in the New Great Game. Therefore, concerning the duet Russia – US, it may be expected to either clash or to agree. The US troops' withdrawal from a volatile and perilous location like Afghanistan, would most probably stimulate Russia to redraw the conventional sphere of influence in Central Asia and to react either by cutting the US from the equation or by containing expansionist China. Due to China's envisioned long-term ascent, the US would most probably prefer fealty to old but predictable enemies in the power games, namely Russia. Quite relevantly, a meticulous pavement of Russia – US relation resulted from a more recent agreement (March 2013) which brought the cancellation of the final stage of European missile shield³⁰.

³⁰ Steve Gutterman, "Russia Says US Must Do More to Address Missile Shield Concerns", in *Reuters*, April 18th 2013, accessed online on April 23rd 2013, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/18/us-russia-usa-missiles-idUSBRE93H00Z20130418>.

Conclusions and Beyond

Turkey might be confronted with dilemmas over the best strategy to employ, as long as it aims to compete, in order to emphasize its impact in Central Asia and further exert influence over the energy corridors. Not astonishing at all, Turkey naturally seeks for enhancing the ethnic and cultural ties with the central Asia turcophone space, but also to economically infuse the region. The perspective of approaching the US lost the mesmerizing character, as there is a background of tensions between the two states. Besides, the US manages priorities in more convulsive parts of the world. Turkey's main foreign policy objective at the start of the '90s was to secure an alignment for the Euro-Atlantic powers, but the metamorphosis of the international system has changed since then and Turkey was inspired to re-orientate to Russia and China, and to promote high-level communication, security agreements and trade.

A present core element could be the gradual rapprochement between Russia and Turkey and the multi-level cooperation, once they allow each other the limits of the playing roles (as they acted in the Balkans). It may prove fruitful for both once Russia understands the constructive role Turkey can play in Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan by helping prevent radicalism and extremism³¹. By the terms of this relation, reference to China is probably going to be adapted, as political calculation demands, from moderate to intensified one, such as *quid pro quo*.

On balance, Turkey's performance is still suboptimal in comparison with its aspirations, but it possesses the logistics served by ethnic and cultural bonds to be highly influential on the middle and long term, as the pathway to reviving the Old Silk Road route is a seemly correspondence to the world's current realities, where power poles are bending to Asia and where middle powers generate multipolarity.

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³¹ Abdullah Bozkurt, "US-Russian Deal to Impact Turkey's Role in Central Asia", in *Today's Zaman*, April 8th 2013, accessed online on April 16th 2013, at http://www.todayszaman.com/columnistDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=312036.

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