
Is the Soft Power of the Republic of Turkey in Middle Eastern Countries Enough?

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Article Information




Research Article • UDC: 327(560:5-11)

Volume: 21, Issue: 1, pages: 202-222

Received: January 11, 2024 • Accepted: March 4, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.51738/Kpolisa2024.21.1r.202smt>

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We have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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• Cite (APA): Štrbac, K., Milosavljević, B., & Tomašević, V. (2024). Is the Soft Power of the Republic of Turkey in Middle East Enough? *Kultura polisa*, 21(1), 202-222, <https://doi.org/10.51738/Kpolisa2024.21.1r.202smt>



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Abstract

Regardless of the existing conflicts, the twenty-first century might be predominantly a century of soft power, most pronounced in Europe. Turkey, which geographically belongs to Europe and Asia, has been looking to achieve its foreign policy priorities and is changing its methodology of conducting foreign policy. The use of soft power based on national culture, political values, religion, economy, institutions, and international relations in the early 21st century represented a radical turn compared to earlier historical attempts. Throughout history, Turkey used hard power in the region, but it was mostly unsuccessful. Therefore, the nature of soft power represented an opportunity for strengthening Turkey as a regional power and a qualitative change of negative stereotypes about this country. However, it is evident that soft power in the changed regional security circumstances in the final years of the second decade in the 21st century is insufficient, so Turkey has started using hard power (military) again to strengthen its leadership position. This paper explains the soft power of the Republic of Turkey in the MENA region and the recent reorientation to the combination of military strength and diplomatic influence in international relations. How much that rearrangement in foreign policy will position Turkey in the new security and political circumstances at the beginning of the 21st century's third decade remains to be seen.

Keywords: soft power, international relations, Republic of Turkey, Middle East

Is the Soft Power of the Republic of Turkey in Middle Eastern Countries Enough?

Preface

Following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire post-World War I, Turkey's revolutionaries, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, triumphed in the War of Independence, laying the foundation for the contemporary Republic of Turkey. Atatürk, serving as Turkey's President, played a pivotal role in this transformative period. Turkey needed to modernise, apply the European way of life, and eliminate the excessive influence of religion on the population. In addition, Turkey is rich in raw materials that need industrialisation. Throughout World War II, Turkey maintained a neutral stance until February 1945, when it aligned with the Allies. Subsequently, the nation actively participated in the Marshall Plan of 1947, gained membership in the Council of Europe in 1949, and joined NATO in 1952. As a NATO member, it was impossible to remain neutral in the Cold War era, so the country strongly supported allies at that time. Turkey benefited from this decision politically and economically.

In addition to membership in NATO, Turkey also started negotiations with the European Union. Later, those negotiations paused because of Turkey's internal issues related to human rights. Turkey's stance in relation to Europe has been characterised as "Europe has been an object of desire as well as a source of frustration for Turkish national identity in a long and strained history" (Ahiska, 2003, p. 351–352).

In the post-Second World War era, the most developed and politically influential European countries, regardless of which side they were on during the war, tried to act as an example to the global community in solving problems peacefully. "Therefore, even after the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the European integration aspiration was focused exclusively on economic development, i.e., creating a common market, even though the idea of cooperation in international politics already existed" (Ilic et al., 2017). In 1959, Turkey initially pursued associate

membership in the "European Economic Community" (EEC)¹. Later, on September 12, 1963, Turkey officially ratified the Ankara Agreement, formally titled the "Agreement Establishing an Association between The Republic of Turkey and the European Economic Community" (Official Journal of the European Communities, Vol. 16, No. C113 1963). This agreement officially took effect on December 12, 1964. The main aim of the Ankara Agreement was to ease Turkey's integration into a customs union with the EEC, recognising the ultimate objective. In November 1970, a crucial agreement called the "Additional Protocol" was ratified, significantly influencing the trade dynamics between Turkey and the European Economic Community (EEC). This protocol outlined a systematic plan for gradually eliminating tariffs and quotas on exchanged goods between Turkey and the EEC.

On April 14, 1987, Turkey formally applied for full membership in the European Economic Community. Nevertheless, in December 1989, the European Commission, while acknowledging Turkey's eventual accession, chose to postpone the commencement of formal negotiations for more favourable circumstances. The Commission pointed to Turkey's economic and political situation, strained relations with Greece, and the ongoing conflict with Cyprus as factors creating an unfavourable environment for starting negotiations. This stance was reiterated in the Luxembourg European Council 1997, where accession talks commenced with central and eastern European states and Cyprus but not with Turkey.

During the nineties, Turkey moved towards faster integration with the European Union by entering the customs union in 1995. By joining the customs union, Turkey harmonized its customs rates with the EU for all industrial goods, except for agricultural products, public

¹ The European Economic Community (EEC) was a former regional organization established by the Treaty of Rome in 1957 with the goal of achieving economic integration among its member states. Following the establishment of the European Union (EU) in 1993, the EEC was assimilated into the EU and rebranded as the European Community (EC). In 2009, the institutions of the EC were integrated into the broader framework of the EU, leading to the dissolution of the European Community. <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/glossary/european-economic-community>

procurement, and services. This gave Turkey significant privileges in trade with the European Union. Furthermore, the European Council of 1999 marked a significant milestone as the EU recognised Turkey as a candidate on equal footing with other potential candidates.

Turkey's initiatives to commence membership negotiations with the European Union have caused frustration because there have been virtually no results. In Turkey, interest in the EU has declined, and it is turning its foreign policy more and more to other parts of the world to take advantage of the reality of the increased multipolarity of the world.

Economically, the most important partner for Turkey today is the European Union. According to EUROSTAT data for 2022, Turkey was the seventh largest trade partner, export destination and importer in the EU. The European Union was Turkey's primary import and export partner and remained a key source of investment. The trade exchange is convincingly the largest, but that was not enough for faster negotiations with the EU.

Following the European Commission's recommendation regarding negotiations, EU leaders reached an agreement to initiate accession talks with Turkey on October 3, 2005. (European Council, 2005) Turkey generally ensured its energy security by scaling up energy arrangements with Russia as an economic power on the rise. It becomes crucial for a country serving as a transit point along critical routes supplying Europe with Russian and Central Asian energy sources. "Thereby, it would gain economic profit and be a powerful political instrument in relations with the European Union, whose membership as a candidate has been pending since 1987" (Štrbac et al., 2019, p. 190–193).

Numerous internal and external problems of Turkey have influenced the postponement of negotiations on the country's accession to the European Union. Since the growth of Turkey's economy is partly based on trade with the EU, delaying EU membership could negatively affect the country's economic growth. "The growing interdependence of countries in the world and the pressures of globalisation are pushing the nation-state from the bottom up, and current conditions reveal a new identity, and a nation-state is no longer

the only option of loyalty and primary base identity" (Tomic et al., 2017, p. 42).

Soft power in Turkey's foreign relations?

"In the realm of politics, especially within international contexts, soft power can allure and persuade, as opposed to the forceful nature of hard power. Unlike hard power, which relies on coercion, soft power aims to influence the preferences of others through appeal and attraction. A key characteristic of soft power is its non-coercive nature, with cultural elements, political values, and foreign policies serving as its currency. Joseph Nye introduced the concept of "soft power" in the late 1980s" (Nye, 2003). "In the late 1980s, Nye began to study elements such as civilisation and culture in his work on patterns of soft power, which he defined as the competence of a state to coerce another state to exact its bidding without using power or force" (Nye, 2004). "He argues that countries can achieve their objectives without coercion, but the notion that religion could be soft power first penetrated the scholarly debate only at the turn of the century" (Steiner, 2011, p. 127-129). In 2012, Joseph Nye elucidated that through the use of soft power, "the best propaganda is not propaganda" and "credibility is the scarcest resource" during the Information Age (Nye, 2012). Soft power can encompass a range of elements and resources that contribute to a state's ability to influence others. These factors encompass political attitudes and beliefs, doctrines and ideals, the strategic consequences of policies, economic concerns, social values and cultural exports, diplomacy, and international relations, including soft diplomacy. Therefore, considering the changed international status of Turkey, as well as the increased resources of soft power, the creators of the foreign policy of the Republic of Turkey increasingly tried to position their country as a global actor. According to the annual index released by Portland Communications and the USC Centre on Public Diplomacy in 2019, Turkey secured the 29th position among the most influential soft power countries. The report highlighted Turkey as the most influential nation

in the Middle East and Africa's government, education, economy, culture, engagement, and digital categories. Trade emerged as a pivotal element of Turkey's regional policy. Specifically, under the leadership of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the then-Prime Minister (later President) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey actively pursued a dynamic foreign policy in the Middle East during the early 2000s. This proactive approach resulted in Turkey playing a crucial and prominent role in regional diplomacy, contributing to a favourable perception in the Middle East for various reasons.

Firstly, Turkey engaged in successful mediation efforts in various conflicts, demonstrating its capacity as a neutral mediator. These efforts included mediating between Palestinian factions, facilitating indirect talks between Syria and Israel, and contributing to peace dialogues between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Secondly, Turkey's engagement in the Lebanese conflict, its mediation efforts among various parties, and its deployment of troops to UNIFIL II underscored its dedication to promoting tranquillity and stability in the region. Thirdly, Turkey's robust economy and political transformation under the AKP's leadership served as an example for nations in the Middle East. Its success story was admired, especially when many countries in the region were grappling with stagnant economies and calls for political reforms. Next, Turkish soap operas, known as "Turkish dramas," gained immense popularity within the Middle East, resonating with viewers, and influencing cultural trends. This cultural exchange bolstered Turkey's soft power within the region. Also, Arab tourists gathered in Turkey, boosting the country's tourism industry. Economic ties between Turkey and Middle Eastern countries expanded, promoting economic cooperation.

And Turkey's narrative of "Muslim solidarity" and its vocal stance on issues related to Palestine and Israel found resonance in a region where such issues were profoundly significant. This stance positioned Turkey as a champion of Palestinian rights and acquired support from various Middle Eastern governments and populations. During this period, Turkey's active foreign policy, often called "neo-ottomanism" or "zero problems with neighbours," aimed to establish Turkey as a pivotal a key player in the region with positive relations with its

neighbouring countries. Although this strategy initially achieved success and garnered popularity in the Middle East, regional dynamics have since changed, leading to shifts and challenges in Turkey's role and relationships in the subsequent years. This proactive approach has resulted in a key and prominent role for Turkey in regional diplomacy, contributing to a favourable view in the Middle East for various reasons.

First, Turkey has engaged in successful peace processes in various conflicts, demonstrating its ability as a neutral mediator. Those efforts included mediating between Palestinian factions, facilitating indirect talks between Syria and Israel, and contributing to peace talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Second, Turkey's involvement in the Lebanese conflict, its mediation efforts among the various parties, and the deployment of troops to UNIFIL II, highlighted its commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region. Third, Turkey's strong economy and political transformation under the leadership of the AKP served as an example for countries in the Middle East. Her success story was admirable, especially when many countries in the region are facing economic stagnation and calls for political reform. Next, Turkish soap operas, known as "Turkish dramas", gained immense popularity in the Middle East, flirting with viewers, and influencing cultural trends. This cultural exchange strengthened Turkey's soft power in the region. Also, Arab tourists visited Turkey, supporting the tourism development of the country. Economic relations between Turkey and countries in the Middle East have expanded, promoting economic cooperation.

And Turkey's narrative of "Muslim unity" and its vocal stance on issues related to Palestine and Israel resonated in a region where such issues were highly significant. This stance positioned Turkey as a defender of Palestinian rights and gained support from various governments and populations in the Middle East. During this period, Turkey's active foreign policy, often called "neo-ottomanism" or "zero problems with neighbours", aimed to establish Turkey as a key player in the region with positive relations with neighbouring countries. Although this strategy initially achieved success and gained popularity in the Middle East, regional dynamics have since changed, leading to changes and challenges in Turkey's role and relations in the following

years. In the early 2010s, Turkey led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) pursued a foreign policy approach that emphasized its importance as a key player in the Middle East, especially in the context of political Islam. This policy had several aspects.

First, in 2010, Prime Minister Erdogan received a prestigious award from the King of Saudi Arabia, Abdulaziz bin Abdulaziz, emphasizing the importance of Turkey's critical attitude towards Israel. This recognition reflected Turkey's alignment with certain regional dynamics and growing influence in Middle Eastern affairs. Second, the declining importance of Arab nationalism in the region provided an opportunity for Turkey to reestablish contacts with its Middle Eastern neighbours. The Turkish government has sought to position itself as a regional superpower with aspirations of influencing regional affairs. Third, Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul's speech at the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 2003, in which he criticized the engagement of Muslim society in the context of democracy and human rights, was well received. This speech indicated Turkey's willingness to engage in constructive dialogue and promote democratic values in the region. Fourth, Turkey capitalized on ties to Islamist political movements across the Middle East, some of which had historical roots as far back as the 1950s. The AKP leadership cultivated relations with Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, and positioned Turkey as a centre for discussions about the future of political Islam. In addition, Turkey has welcomed uprisings in Arab countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, seeing them as opportunities for political Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, to seize power. Turkey's foreign minister at the time, Ahmet Davutoglu, even called the uprisings the "Turkish Spring," hoping to bring Islamists to power and replace what he saw as a culturally separate political establishment.

Why is Turkey so important?

Turkey's geographical location indeed gives it both significant advantages and challenges. Its strategic position at a pivotal juncture

of Europe, the Caucasus, and the Middle Eastern region offers various advantages and opportunities. "Turkey is neither a strategic producer of energy nor a strategic consumer of it. However, it is an important transit country with increasing future potential and importance. Turkey is also emerging as a key partner in ensuring European energy security by transporting energy from producers near Turkey to of Europe" (Milosavljević, 2021, p. 110–111). Turkey's strategic location as a crucial transit country for energy resources presents a significant advantage. Positioned between resource-abundant areas in the Middle East, the Caspian Sea, and energy-consuming markets in Europe, Turkey is a vital energy transit hub. It boasts pipelines and infrastructure capable of efficiently transporting oil and natural gas to European destinations. Key projects such as the "Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan"² (BTC) oil pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor underscore Turkey's pivotal role in facilitating energy transportation. Location of the Republic of Turkey has security implications. It shares borders with countries facing political instability and conflicts. Managing these security challenges while preserving stability is crucial for its security and the wider region. Turkey's geographical location has positioned it as a historical and cultural bridge connecting Europe and Asia. This has enriched its cultural heritage and contributed to its soft power, attracting tourists, and fostering cultural exchanges. However, Turkey's position also comes with risks and challenges, including:

1. Turkey is often affected by regional conflicts and tensions due to its proximity to volatile regions. These conflicts can pose security threats and economic challenges.
2. While Turkey benefits from its role as an energy transit hub, it also relies heavily on importing energy. Disruptions in energy

² The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline serves as the conduit for transporting oil from the Azeri-Chirag-Deepwater Gunashli (ACG) field and condensate from Shah Deniz, spanning across Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. This pipeline connects the Sangachal terminal on the Caspian Sea to the Ceyhan marine terminal on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey. Furthermore, it facilitates the transportation of crude oil from Turkmenistan. https://www.bp.com/en_az/azerbaijan/home/who-we-are/operations/projects/pipelines/btc.html

supply routes can have significant economic and energy security consequences.

3. Turkey's strategic location makes it a focal point of geopolitical competition among regional and global powers. This competition can sometimes put it in a delicate diplomatic position.
4. Turkey's location along migration routes has made it a destination and transit country for refugees and migrants, leading to significant humanitarian and political challenges.

However, the soft power of the Republic of Turkey's approach to international relations does not signify a complete renunciation of military influence or the utilisation of military force in conflicts. Given the need for deterrence, Turkey finds itself requiring more robust armed forces, particularly considering the terrorist activities occurring along its borders.

Turkey's Foreign Policy Transition in the Early 21st Century

Disappointment with slow integration into the European Union has turned Turkey's foreign policy in another direction. Although theorists believe that Turkey's role has diminished with the post-Cold War era, in the latter part of the 21st century's third decade, it will be shown that this country is an important strategic member of NATO. Recognising the strategic value of its history, culture, and geography, Turkey seeks to leverage these elements as key tools in its soft power toolkit. There have been significant shifts in Turkish Foreign Policy compared to the post-1923 era and the 2000s. Turkey's strategic assets stem from a synthesis of history and geography. Despite facing domestic economic challenges, Ankara pursues an ambitious foreign policy initiative fuelled by aspirations for Pan-Turkish influence stretching into Central Asia, a Neo-Ottoman presence extending throughout North Africa and the Middle East, and a leadership role in the Sunni world. In principle, greater multipolarity, when it comes to world international relations, gives Turkey more room for maneuver as the US and European interests often diverge, Cold War rivalries have

softened with the rise of non-state threats, and China has emerged as its pole of power. "Despite Ankara's actions, none of the big powers wants to alienate Turkey, and none has the strength or interest to force Turkey down a single path. Davutoğlu delineates five principles guiding Turkey's foreign policy formulation". They are (1) a balance between security and democracy, (2) a 'zero problem policy with Turkey's neighbours', (3) developing relations with neighbouring regions and beyond, (4) adherence to a multi-dimensional foreign policy, (5) and rhythmic diplomacy" (MFA Turkey, 2010). "The thrust of Davutoglu's doctrine sits easily alongside" (Tüysüzog̃lu 2014, p. 93) according to which Turkey would assume the role of a link between the Euro-Atlantic world and Islamic civilization. Turkish soft power augments Turkey's geoeconomic prowess, extending its influence and positioning it as a regional finance, commerce, and energy hub. The economic aspect of neo-ottomanism involves forging connections between the Middle East and Europe through trade, transportation, and energy initiatives. It includes the expansion of economic ties with Russia and the enhancement of manufacturing capabilities to cater to the needs of neighbouring countries. "The commercial trade volumes currently attained, and the steady development of economic relations between Turkey and Russia bear witness to the geoeconomics efficacy of efforts to turn Istanbul into a financial centre of Eurasia as a whole, as evidenced by the Borsa Istanbul initiative and energy projects such as Trans-Anatolia, and South Flow" (Tüysüzog̃lu 2014, p. 96) The new approach of Turkish foreign policy can be analyzed through a geopolitical framework based on civilization, which is reflected in the prominent legacy of the Ottoman period and the focus on Islamic civilization.

The Arab Spring instigated noteworthy shifts in Turkey's approach to the Middle East and altered the perception of Turkey within Middle Eastern populations. The Syrian crisis played a pivotal role, as Syria became a focal point in Turkey's revised foreign policy stance in the Middle East. Historically, Turkey had maintained exemplary relations with Syria, embodying the traditional approach of zero problems with neighbours. However, as events unfolded during the

Arab Spring, Turkey's alignment supporting those opposing the Bashar al-Assad regime marked a substantial transformation. The predominant portion of the Syrian opposition, backed by Turkey, comprised Sunni factions. Assad, on the other hand, belongs to the Nusayri sect (Alevi or Alawite), and the fact that Iran supported his regime led to the perception that Turkey's Middle East strategy was favouring only Sunni sect members. Consequently, the Arab Spring and the Syrian crisis created an impression that Turkish foreign policy was taking a factional stance, resulting in strained relations with Syria, Iran, and the central authority in Iraq. Similar strains extended to relations with Hezbollah in Lebanon. "For Turkey today, zero problems with neighbours no longer apply, particularly in the Middle East" (Kibaroglu, 2012, p. 59–60).

Middle East and Turkey's soft power

The limited engagement of Turkey in Middle Eastern affairs during the initial years of the Republic of Turkey, especially under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, can be ascribed to various factors, encompassing the historical context and the prevailing priorities of Turkey at that time. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st century, Turkey has progressively intensified its involvement with Middle Eastern nations, undertaken diplomatic initiatives, and assumed mediation roles in regional conflicts, reflecting the evolution of its foreign policy priorities. "Furthermore, in Turkey's case, the rhetoric of East and West has been matched by the rhetoric of Islam and democracy. As a result, the geographic coincidence of being in both Europe and Asia has become fused with the historical circumstance of being both Muslim and democratic or both Muslim and secular" (Danforth, 2008, p. 84). The evolution of Turkey's foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, has undergone substantial changes over the years. The shift from a primarily military-focused approach in the 90s of the last century to an emphasis on soft power and diplomacy at the beginning of the current century, coupled with the subsequent challenges posed by the Arab uprisings and regional

conflicts, illustrates an intricate and dynamic trajectory. It is important to emphasise key points that might explain Turkey's evolving foreign policy in the Middle East. In the 1990s, Turkey's regional policy had a pronounced military focus.

According to the Arab Barometer Wave II³ (2011), Middle Eastern societies perceived Turkey as a moderately democratic country, with a mean value of 6.4 on an 11-point scale, where 10 represents a democracy to the greatest extent possible. The Republic of Turkey's position in the region and its relationships with various actors, including Western countries, remain a matter of global interest and concern. The challenges and choices facing Turkey in domestic politics and foreign policy are multifaceted, raising questions about Turkey's future trajectory and role in a rapidly changing global landscape. Turkey's new appearance can also be seen in relations with Tehran because Tehran and Ankara have at least one point of convergence of interests – Kurdistan. Independent Kurdistan does not suit Turkey or Iran, nor Iran's ally in the region – Syria, because of the Kurdish minority living in the three countries and Iraq. The Kurdish Autonomous Region is the most peaceful part of Iraq, and the Kurds are the only Iraqi allies of the Anglo-American forces. They are an essential ally of the United States in a possible military conflict with Iran. However, the Kurdish allies complicated and seriously tested the alliance between Washington and Ankara. Turkey has repeatedly stated that it could intervene in northern Iraq, which it has often done during Saddam Hussein's rule and more recently. With its growing energy needs, Turkey sees Kirkuk as a strategically important position in ensuring energy security. The Kirkuk-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which passes through Iraq and Turkey, is a symbol of this partnership. However, the control

³ Arab Barometer stands as a nonpartisan research network offering valuable insights into the social, political, and economic attitudes and values held by ordinary citizens throughout the Arab world. Since 2006, the organization has been consistently conducting high-quality and reliable public opinion surveys in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It proudly holds the distinction of being the longest-standing and largest repository of publicly available data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of both men and women in the MENA region. <https://www.arabbarometer.org/about/>

and distribution of revenues from this pipeline has been a matter of dispute, especially at times when the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has tried to bypass Baghdad and export oil directly to Turkey. The Iraqi government has often characterized such actions as a threat to its sovereignty, leading to political disputes between Iraq and Turkey.

Conclusion

In recent years, Turkey's foreign policy has heavily leaned on what is commonly referred to as "Islamic soft power" strategies, seeking to advance foreign policy objectives by promoting Islamic virtues, such as charitable activities and general Islamic ethics. Turkish policymakers have demonstrated self-confidence and political will in the Middle East, shaping a strategic depth that allows Turkey to play a significant role in soft-power dynamics. Nevertheless, Turkey's ruling elite is prepared to undertake the challenge, and we can expect increased Turkish involvement in addressing protracted problems in the Middle East in the coming years. The demilitarisation of society and, at least for the present, successful integration of democratisation and re-Islamization provide Turkey with internal vigour, enabling a confident approach to foreign policy. Turkey readily transforms its economic, cultural, and social influence into tangible political actions.

Given the uncertain outlook regarding EU membership, Turkey is selective in the reforms it chooses to implement. Reforms that may alter Turkey's independence and vital interests, such as enhancing freedom of speech, are no longer prioritised. Instead, demilitarisation aligning with the objectives of the ruling AKP takes precedence. Simultaneously, there is a noticeable decrease in support for EU accession among citizens and intellectuals in Turkey.

During the same period, Turkey has actively sought to expand its economic presence in the Middle East through bilateral partnerships. In times of global economic challenges and the post-COVID period, Turkey has been eager to attract fresh capital, particularly from countries experiencing consistent, rapid growth, and it leverages this to enhance its influence through capital investments in regional

economies. Governments in the Middle East and Turkey encourage Turkish companies to enter their markets, especially in strategic projects. The way Turkey invests capital and finances projects reflects its aspirations outlined in the "Strategic Depth" doctrine, emphasising the infrastructural connection of Muslims in the Middle East and the sustainable development of those areas. Turkey is also strengthening its cultural influence in the region by actively participating in restoring and constructing monuments related to the Ottoman heritage.

However, the escalation of tensions and conflicts in neighbouring areas, such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Israel, has disrupted the security situation and prompted a re-evaluation of Turkey's foreign policy priorities. Despite the relatively stable power of the ruling party, President Erdogan's authoritarian governance has faced strong criticism and increased internal divisions within Turkey. The realisation of Turkey's ambitious goals will depend on the responses of significant global players (USA, Russia, China, and the EU) and influential Muslim and Arab states and organisations, many of which may have differing views on Turkey's approach to resolving internal and regional issues. As an important member of NATO, Turkey is unlikely to settle for a passive role in the existing geopolitical landscape. It may deploy its military forces to secure the realisation of its foreign policy goals and priorities, as observed in the case of Syria. The reactions of other countries in the region will shape the dynamics in the next period, bearing in mind that Middle Eastern countries have their security agendas, which may not exclusively revolve around Turkey.

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Da li je meka moć Republike Turske u zemljama Bliskog istoka dovoljna?

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Sažetak

Bez obzira na postojeće konflikte, dvadeset prvi vek je pretežno vek meke moći, najizraženije u Evropi. Turska, koja geografski pripada Evropi i Aziji, traži ostvarivanje svojih spoljnopolitičkih prioriteta i menja svoju metodologiju vođenja spoljne politike. Korišćenje meke moći zasnovane na nacionalnoj kulturi, političkim vrednostima, religiji, ekonomiji, institucijama i međunarodnim odnosima na početku 21. veka predstavljalo je radikalna zaokret u poređenju sa ranijim istorijskim pokušajima. Kroz istoriju, Turska je koristila tvrdu moć u regionu, ali je bila uglavnom neuspešna. Stoga je priroda meke moći predstavljala priliku za jačanje Turske kao regionalne sile i kvalitativnu promenu negativnih stereotipa o ovoj zemlji. Međutim, očigledno je da meka moć u promenjenim regionalnim bezbednosnim okolnostima u poslednjim godinama druge dekade 21. veka nije dovoljna, pa je Turska ponovo počela koristiti tvrdu moć (vojnu) radi jačanja svoje vođstvene pozicije. Ovaj rad objašnjava meku moć Republike Turske u MENA regionu i nedavnu reorijentaciju ka kombinaciji vojne snage i diplomatskog uticaja u međunarodnim odnosima. Koliko će to preuređenje u spoljnoj politici pozicionirati Tursku u novim bezbednosnim i političkim okolnostima na početku treće dekade 21. veka ostaje da se vidi.

Ključne reči: meka moć, međunarodni odnosi, Republika Turska, Bliski istok