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Article Title: Turkey's New Foreign Policy Activism:
Evaluating its Political and Economic
Underpinnings

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Abstract

This study aims to explore Turkey's new foreign policy activism and focus on its economic and political underpinnings. A new foreign policy vision has been promoted under the AKP administration and has born the stamp of Ahmet Davutoğlu. In his view, Turkey is among these countries that possess "strategic depth" and thus has an inherent potential of a multidimensional foreign policy. By nature of its geography, history and culture, Turkey promotes a "zero-problems policy with neighbors" and is destined to play a constructive role towards conflict resolution and international peace and security on a regional and a global level.

It is argued in this study that Turkey's ambition to play a key regional role and become a global actor is not novel. There have been at least two similar initiatives in recent history which defended Turkey's extraordinary strategic potential and aspired to put Turkey into the heart of global politics. What has, however, been indeed novel and has lent credibility to the whole experiment is Turkey's economic dynamism. Following the 1999-2001 economic crisis, Turkey has enjoyed a long period of high growth. While state finances enjoy a period of relative stability, the Turkish private sector has succeeded in improving its competitive edge and expanding its operations far beyond the Turkish borders. Being the seventeenth biggest economy in the world, Turkey is translating its newly acquired economic clout into political influence. While such a trend is indeed legitimate, Turkey's claims for a global strategic role and of a value-based foreign policy may be already overblown. The evolution of its bilateral relationships with two key Middle Eastern actors, Iran and Israel corroborates Turkey's rising self-confidence, as well as the incidence of significant inconsistencies. The deterioration of Turkey's relations with Israel is not in harmony with the "zero-problems policy with neighbors" adage. Its attempt to take equal distances from the West and Iran regarding its nuclear question has failed to help reach an agreement while it has questioned Turkey's strategic commitment to the West. While claiming a moral basis for its foreign policy, Turkey may be already falling to the same inconsistencies it has accused Western powers of. This has already become clear with respect to Turkey's stance vis-à-vis the recent Middle East uprisings. A reconfiguration of its strategic relationship with the West and the derailment of its EU membership process could question the consolidation of the steps already achieved and aggravate Turkey's domestic divisions. Turkey is bound to play a key

regional role and may indeed become a global actor in the years to come; its capabilities, however, are not infinite, and significant risks may lurk in their overestimation.

Short Biographical Information

Dr. Ioannis N. Grigoriadis is Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, Bilkent University and Research Fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP). Between 2004 and 2009 he taught at Sabanci University, Isik University and the University of Athens. His research interests include European, Middle Eastern and energy politics, nationalism and democratization. His recent publications include *Trials of Europeanization: Turkish Political Culture and the European Union*, (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), "Redefining the Nation: The Shifting Boundaries of the 'Other' in Greece and Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 1, January-February 2011, pp. 167-182, "Mutations of Turkish Nationalism: From *Ulusalçılık* to the *Ergenekon* Affair", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Winter 2010, pp. 101-113 (with Irmak Özer), "Europe and the Impasse of Centre-Left Politics in Turkey: Lessons from the Greek Experience", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Fall 2010, pp. 259-274 (with Ziya Öniş), "Friends No More?: The Rise of Anti-American Nationalism in Turkey", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 1, Winter 2010, pp. 51-66, "Islam and Democratization in Turkey: Secularism and Trust in a Divided Society", *Democratization*, Vol. 16, No. 6, December 2009, pp. 1194-1213 and "The Orthodox Church and Greek-Turkish Relations: Religion as Source of Rivalry or Conciliation?" in Jeffrey Haynes (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 51-70.