

# EUROPEANIZATION & REGIONALISM IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

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## Abstract

This paper addresses the following questions: What are the indicators of long-term trends in Turkish foreign policy? What factors account for recent activism in Turkey's foreign policy making? The paper makes three contributions to the study of Turkey's external relations. First, it offers a systematic method to analyze long-term trends in Turkish political and economic interests. The paper suggests that focusing on patterns in Turkey's voting in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) offers a reliable and highly informative approach to study the long-term trends in Turkey's political interests. Similarly, an analysis of Turkey's main trading partners over a period of three decades offers a useful way to study changes and continuities in its economic interests. Second, the paper suggests that that Turkish positions on one or two individual (yet very visible) votes in the UN are far less relevant than the broader pattern established by the hundreds (or even thousands) of votes it has cast at the UN over the past decades. The broader pattern shows that Turkey's behavior in the UNGA undermines shift of axis arguments that claim that Turkey has been increasingly detached from the "Western alliance." Turkey's UN voting behavior in the last three decades has become increasingly convergent with that of EU member-states. This trend has taken place at the same time that Turkey progressively distanced itself from the U.S. in the UN. In other words, in years when the EU members' foreign policies appear to have diverged from the United States, Turkey appears to also have distanced itself from the superpower. Turkey's voting pattern also moved closer to the American one during the years when the EU voting in this forum experienced greater convergence with that of the US. Turkey also appears to be currently more "independent" in its votes from major states such as the United States, China and Russia than it has ever been over the past three decades. It also has moved away from the Middle East countries. Finally, the diversification of Turkish commercial interests is highly relevant for understanding some of the recent developments in its policies in the Middle East. Turkey's economic interests are the main reasons for its increasing involvement in regional politics and do not necessarily contradict or undermine European orientation of its foreign policy. Economic concerns explain Turkey's attempts to seek diplomatic solutions to regional disputes ranging from Iran's nuclear program to the Israeli-Syrian disagreements and unwillingness to comply with U.S. policies that aim to isolate regional powers such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran. This diplomatic activism on the part of Turkey does not indicate a distancing of Turkish interests from those of the EU. Data for this paper come from a variety of sources. UN voting behavior is based on the Affinity of Nations Index. Turkish trade statistics are provided by the Turkish Statistical Institute.

Other sources include in-depth interviews with UN officials and newspaper articles, books and other written documents in Turkish.