



## Turkey's regional power aspirations

**SUMMARY** *The rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) in 2002 has prompted the emergence of a new Turkish foreign policy doctrine. Its principles emphasise a policy of "zero problems with neighbours", proactive diplomacy, as well as a more autonomous foreign policy.*

*There have been many debates on Turkey's foreign policy activism during the last decade as well as on its regional ambitions. Some experts view Turkey as an emerging mid-rank power or regional leader, whereas for others Turkey remains a less central player.*

*In practice, the new doctrine translated into efforts to improve bilateral relations with neighbours, conduct mediation initiatives in the region and, in particular, re-engagement with the Middle East and Arab countries. A distancing from Turkey's traditional Western allies led to perceptions of a "shift of axis" from the west.*

*Recently however, the Arab uprisings have challenged Turkey's "zero problems with neighbours" policy and tested its capacity to deal with regional instability alone. This has motivated a redefinition of Turkey's foreign policy principles, as well as a rediscovery of its Western allies.*



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### Issue

Turkey's increased diplomatic activism, under the Justice and Development Party ([AKP](#)) government, has sparked debate on Turkey's role and ambitions regionally and globally. In particular, Turkey's re-engagement with the Middle East, as well as its readiness to diverge from its longstanding Western allies has been debated. While for some analysts, Turkey has become a regional power, for others it is a [secondary player](#). Unrest in the Arab world has led to a re-assessment of Turkey's foreign policy and its limitations.

### The AKP's foreign policy doctrine

#### Tenets of the AKP's foreign policy

Most experts have acknowledged the novelty of the AKP's foreign policy doctrine, which reflected "a [newly-acquired self-confidence](#)". In 2010, the AKP set ambitious foreign policy goals to be achieved by 2023 (the centennial of the republic): to become an important EU Member State; to advance regional integration and regional conflict resolution; to be influential in international organisations and a top-ten world economy.

According to Ahmet Davutoğlu, Foreign Affairs Minister and architect of Turkey's new foreign policy, Turkey's unique geographical and historical characteristics define it as a "central country with multiple regional identities". An Asian and European

country, Turkey should be a central player in its areas of influence (the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Mediterranean, the Gulf and the Black Sea). Turkey should achieve "strategic depth" and a "zero-problems foreign policy" by improving ties with its neighbours.<sup>1</sup>

[The main tenets](#) of Turkey's foreign policy rest on three methodological principles (a **"visionary" approach**; a **systematic and consistent framework** for Turkish foreign policy; **soft power** promotion) and five operational ones:

- *Balance between security and democracy*: providing security to citizens without undermining their freedoms;
- *Zero problems towards neighbours*;
- *Proactive and pre-emptive peace diplomacy*: facilitating regional reconciliation processes;
- *Multi-dimensional foreign policy*: diversifying Turkey's alliances to avoid dependence on any actor. NATO and the EU remain the elements of continuity;
- *Rhythmic diplomacy*: participating in all important global issues and international organisations.

### Continuity or radical departure?

Some [experts](#) underline the continuity in Turkish foreign policy: Turkey's active regional role is due to systemic and regional factors which allow Ankara to play such a role (similar activism by previous governments did not benefit from the right external conditions). For [others](#), it is the AKP's transformation of the power structure within the state that radically changed Turkey's foreign policy.

[Another view](#) asserts that the AKP has taken to a new level the limited changes to Turkish foreign policy of the late-1990s, when a vision of Turkey as "regional power" emerged. At the end of the Cold War,<sup>2</sup> Turkey tried to reconnect with its neighbours, including Israel. But, it almost came to war with Armenia (1992), Greece (1996) and Syria (1998). The Kurdish issue

became the focus of Turkey's foreign policy, leading to securitisation and to a confrontational stance towards those of its neighbours thought to support the insurgent Kurdistan's Workers Party (PKK). However, other [developments](#) (obtaining candidate status for EU membership in 1999; capturing PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, after his expulsion from Syria) refocused Turkey on developing good relations with countries in the region.

### External factors

Systemic and regional factors increased Turkey's influence regionally. The Middle East power vacuum after the 2003 war in Iraq and the loss of US credibility as a provider of order in the region, intra-Arab divisions and the deterioration of the Arab-Israeli conflict have created the conditions for Turkey (and Iran) to fill the vacuum and paved the way for a Turkish mediation role in regional conflicts. Turkey's cooling Western relations (with the US, standstill in the EU accession negotiations), the de-securitisation of its foreign policy and its emergence as a "trading state", in search of new markets, have led Turkey to improve relations with neighbouring countries.

### Domestic factors

#### *Political stability*

In the [most recent general elections](#) (June 2011), the AKP gained 49.8% of the votes and a third mandate. A party with Islamist roots<sup>3</sup>, the AKP maintained power, despite several attempts to destabilise it.<sup>4</sup> The AKP's domestic consolidation led to foreign policy activism. It also became a [strong advocate](#) of EU integration, implementing reforms to align with the EU *acquis*. The perspective of EU membership in turn encouraged Turkey to renounce hard security policy and play a more constructive role regionally. With the change in civil-military relations<sup>5</sup>, other societal actors became involved in foreign policy - business and civil society organisations, and other institutions (ministries of trade, energy). Accordingly, Turkish foreign policy became more pragmatic, less security-

oriented and focused on economic interests and soft power. As the AKP became more sensitive to public opinion, Turkey's readiness to diverge from the West also grew.

Political stability had also boosted [investor confidence](#), although there are currently serious [concerns](#) over Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's alleged grip on power, the politicisation of the police and judiciary and the deterioration of freedom of the press and of expression ([Ergenekon and Sledgehammer](#) cases). Efforts to adopt a new constitution are under way.

#### *Economic development*

Under the AKP, Turkey has become the [18th economy](#) in the world and a member of the G20. Since 2003, Turkey registered [annual growth rates](#) of between 5% and 9.5%. After a slowdown (2008-2009), GDP growth was back at 8.9% in 2010. Although the growth rate registered for 2012 was [below expectations](#), [projected average](#) annual GDP growth between 2013 and 2017 is 4.74%. Turkey however has a problematic [current account deficit](#) with the world: 10% in 2011, 7.5% in 2012. The need for new markets, prompted by the rise of "Anatolian tigers" (small and medium-sized businesses run by the Sunni conservative middle class), has influenced Ankara's opening towards the Middle East. While the EU remains its main trade partner (see annex), Turkey's [trade with Middle Eastern](#) countries has increased fourfold (2003-2011) supported by a policy of [free-trade agreements](#) and visa-free travel with most of them. Turkey's commercial interests have raised its need for a stable Middle East.

#### *Identity factor*

The AKP has emphasised a common [Muslim identity](#), making openings towards the Kurds, the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq (KRG) and the Arab world.

### Turkey's foreign policy in practice

Turkey's activism translated into [initiatives](#) to **improve bilateral relations** with

neighbours, to act as **mediator** or to project **soft power** in its neighbourhood. Turkey has also officially become a [donor of aid](#). The most dramatic changes in Turkey's foreign policy relate to the **Middle East**.

#### **The South Caucasus**

The AKP's policy toward the South Caucasus has not changed. Relations with Azerbaijan remain very close, and Turkey has avoided taking sides in the dispute between Georgia and Russia. Relations with Armenia are the most problematic<sup>6</sup>. Despite signing [two protocols](#) tackling some issues, both countries have yet to ratify them. Turkey's [Caucasus Peace and Stability Platform](#) had no tangible outcomes.

#### **Russia**

The AKP has [profoundly changed](#) Turkey's distrustful relationship with Russia, through deeper economic ties, political dialogue and [mechanisms for cooperation](#). Russia is at the top of Turkey's energy imports, but also a major destination for Turkish exports and investments.

#### **The Balkans**

The AKP argues it has a more [structured approach](#) aimed at: developing bilateral relations; enhancing cooperation at multilateral level (e.g. trilateral cooperation mechanisms); and supporting regional co-operation and economic interdependence.

#### **Greece and Cyprus**

Turkey's bilateral relations with Greece remain highly contentious (disagreements over territorial air and sea rights in the Aegean; Cyprus). The AKP has continued previous initiatives to ease tensions, but no agreement is in sight.

The AKP government had [backed](#) the Annan plan in 2004 rejected by the Greek Cypriots. After the latter became EU members, Turkey's own EU accession negotiations became linked to normalising relations with Cyprus. Recent tensions concern offshore [energy drilling rights](#) in the Eastern Mediterranean, with Turkey at risk of being perceived as [antagonistic](#).



### Re-engagement with the Middle East

Turkey's "re-engagement" with the Middle East emphasises a common Islamic religion, shared heritage and economic prospects. It is in the Middle East that Turkey has enacted most comprehensively its foreign policy doctrine, and where some believe it has become a [regional power](#).

#### *Main Turkish initiatives in the Middle East*

Firstly, Turkey has promoted **regional integration** through [free trade and visa liberalisation](#): Turkey had the ambition to create a free trade area with Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, and possibly Iraq; in 2009, it lifted visa requirements for Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Libya, and discussed a possible common visa initiative with Syria, Iran and Iraq. Secondly, it tried to act as **mediator** or **facilitator** in regional issues: Israel-Syria proximity talks (2008), Hamas-Fatah reconciliation, trying to broker a Hamas-Israel ceasefire (2009) and a US-Iran compromise over Iran's nuclear programme. Thirdly, Turkey started to play a more active role in **regional organisations** (Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation). Finally, it focused on its **soft power**: Turkey's democratisation, economic development and cultural products improved its image in the Arab world, while Turkish leaders' anti-Israeli, pro-Palestinian rhetoric raised their popularity. A 2012 survey on the [perception of Turkey in the Middle East](#) finds that it is the country most positively perceived (69% of respondents); Turkey is also seen as the region's most powerful political power and, in a decade, its future economic leader.

#### *Improving bilateral relations*

Turkey had improved relations with **Israel** in the mid-1990s, but they experienced a downturn since the 2008 Israeli military operation against Gaza and the 2010 *Mavi Marmara* incident (Israel's raid on the flotilla resulted in the death of nine Turkish activists). In [response](#), Turkey downgraded its diplomatic relations with Israel, suspended all military agreements and

asked for an [international investigation](#) into the incident. In return for normalisation, Turkey demanded apologies, compensation for the victims' families and an end to the Gaza blockade. Israel delivered apologies in March 2013. Turkey [vetoed](#) NATO-Israeli cooperation until recently, and its pro-**Palestinian** stance turned more vocal. However, the 1996 Free Trade Agreement remained in place and [trade](#) even increased.

Normalised in 1998, ties with **Syria**<sup>7</sup> were enhanced after 2002, through military cooperation, visa-free movement of people and free trade<sup>8</sup>. Turkey tried to rehabilitate Syria internationally, in exchange for support against Kurdish insurgents. With the ongoing civil war in Syria, Turkey withdrew its support to the Assad regime.

Turkey-**Iran** relations were normalised after 2002, in a rapprochement prompted by the Iraq war, the necessity to stem Kurdish nationalists and Turkey's growing energy needs.<sup>9</sup> Turkey's attempted mediation on the nuclear issue between Iran and the West, while arguably turning it into the leading regional power, has also caused friction with Turkey's Western allies.

**Iraq** is one of Turkey's [largest trade partners](#) and providers of energy. With a stake in Iraq's stability, Turkey [supported](#) Iraqi national reconciliation. Turkey and the KRG established direct political and economic relations. Turkey's concerns are the contested status of the ethnically diverse [city of Kirkuk](#) (with some of Iraq's largest oil reserves) and the PKK's presence in Northern Iraq.

### Limits to Turkey's regional ambitions

#### *Overstretch*

[Experts](#) have warned against an over-extension of Turkey's foreign policy capabilities,<sup>10</sup> due to slowing economic growth and insufficient bureaucracy.

#### *Unsuccessful mediation role*

Turkish facilitation efforts were considered by some as naive attempts given its long [disconnect](#) from the region. Turkey is also criticised for moving from honest broker to

taking sides: rebuking [Israel](#) in international fora, or defending, to the West's dismay, Iran's regime and its nuclear programme (after brokering, with Brazil, a nuclear fuel-swap deal with Iran, Ankara [voted against UN sanctions](#) on Iran's nuclear programme).

#### *Unresolved issues*

The unsolved Cyprus and Armenia issues hamper Turkey's regional ambitions.

## Western perceptions and debates

### **The United States**

The Turkish Parliament's vote in March 2003, denying the US use of Turkish airspace to attack Iraq, marked a low point in US-Turkey relations although joint efforts in stabilising Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Lebanon otherwise continued. Later disagreements in Turkish-US ties related to Turkey's engagement with Hamas, cooperation with Syria and Iran, and deteriorating ties with Israel. [US officials](#) viewed Ankara as undermining a US priority in the Iranian nuclear programme, and Israel's image as a US ally. Conversely, Turkish anti-American attitudes stemmed from a tendency to hold the US accountable for Israel's policies and from suspicion of US backing for Kurdish separatism. In the latest [Transatlantic Trends Survey](#), Turkey had, among the countries surveyed, the lowest rate favourable to the US (34%). Also, Turkey is the **NATO** member with the lowest public support for the alliance (38%) and the country least worried about Iran's nuclear programme. However, the US is aware of the key role Turkey could play in the region.

### **The European Union**

Since 2006, eight chapters<sup>11</sup> in Turkey's EU accession [negotiations](#) have been blocked (related to Turkey's restrictions regarding Cyprus). Turkey has to fully implement [the Additional Protocol to the Association Agreement](#) before these can be unblocked. [France](#), backed by [Germany](#), recently agreed to open negotiations on one chapter, on regional policy.

The economic crisis has exacerbated populist approaches both in the EU and in [Turkey](#). Some EU Member States have proposed, instead of membership, a "[privileged partnership](#)" to Turkey. Anti-European trends in Turkish public opinion (the majority of Turks - 53% - now have an [unfavourable view of the EU](#)) and Turkish leaders' emphasis of their Muslim neighbourhood have raised concerns about Turkey's non-European disposition. EU [concerns](#) also relate to Ankara's assertive foreign policy in its region, its anti-Western rhetoric and its stance on issues such as Iran or Israel. Since Cyprus' EU membership, Turkey has [hindered](#) EU-NATO strategic cooperation (denying the EU access to NATO assets and capabilities).

However, the EU remains Turkey's [main trade partner](#) and Turkey seems to have [no intention](#) of letting its ties to the EU deteriorate. Europeans have also followed with interest Turkey's increasing soft power in the region. Improving Turkey-EU relations will depend on both sides. With the EU developing a "[Positive agenda](#)" to help Turkey align with the EU *acquis* and having prepared a [visa-liberalisation roadmap](#), the process may improve. Turkey should also explain its goals better to avoid misperceptions and to get support for its policies.

### **Main debates**<sup>12</sup>

#### *Shift of axis or the "losing" Turkey debate*

Turkey's activism, mainly in the Middle East, encouraged the view that Turkey has renounced its traditional alignment with the West in favour of an ideological one with Muslim countries. This debate has occurred mostly in the US, whereas Europeans are more nuanced: Turkey has not shifted axis, but aims at a more autonomous regional approach.

#### *The Islamisation of Turkey's foreign policy*

Turkey's foreign policy is said to have undergone a process of [Islamisation](#): Turkey aims at a regional role, by siding with Muslims against non-Muslims. The [opposing argument](#) underlines AKP's pragmatic

foreign policy, based on economic interests and traditional power politics.

#### *The neo-Ottoman debate*

Turkey's activism in the former Ottoman territories surrounding it has fuelled the debate on a neo-Ottoman foreign policy. Although emphasising common Ottoman heritage, Turkish leaders assert they are not developing an Ottoman-style foreign policy. Some analysts believe Turkey is playing different cards in each region (religion in the Middle East, ethnic links in the Caucasus).

#### *Turkey as model*

Turkey has [recurrently](#) been seen as a model, of Islam and secular democracy coexisting. But, many experts point to the *sui generis* nature of Turkey's modernisation and the Western influence on the country. For others, Middle Eastern leaders identify with the AKP's own model – of power consolidation through democratic means.

## The Arab uprisings - a test for Turkey?

### **End of zero-problems with neighbours?**

The Arab uprisings have [put in doubt](#) Turkey's "zero-problems with neighbours' policy", its networks of relations with regimes, as well as its regional role. Turkey's leaders rapidly decided to side with [popular demands for change](#) against the regimes: the Turkish prime minister was the first international leader to call for Egyptian President Mubarak to step down; Turkey [supported](#) anti-Gaddafi forces in Libya and engaged with the new political movements in Tunisia and Egypt. However, the realisation that Turkey cannot act alone led to a rediscovery of its European and US links, as well as a redefinition of Turkey's foreign policy. In particular, Syria has proved Turkey's limits in the region, showing that Turkey is not "a regional leader but a power in the region".

Relations with **Iran** already started to cool down once Turkey agreed to host US early warning radars as part of NATO's missile defence project (2011); they deteriorated

further due to opposing positions on Syria and differing interpretations on the results of regime change there. Opposition over Syria is said to have revealed the [regional competition](#) between Iran and Turkey spreading to **Iraq** as well. Turkey's relations with the central government in Iraq have deteriorated, impacting on Turkey's [trade links](#). Sectarian tensions in Iraq have aggravated, and the Iraqi central government fears that Ankara's close relations with the KRG may lead to rapid economic and political independence of the Kurdish region. Iraqi accusations of Ankara violating Iraq's sovereignty have also emerged. Turkey-Russia relations have also experienced a downturn, with **Russia** actively backing the Assad regime. Although Turkey's criticism of Russia's Syria policy has become more vocal, Turkey lacks the means to confront Russia. However, trade and energy ties continue, both sides being careful not to escalate the issue into a bilateral crisis, as both are key actors in a potential settlement of the Syrian conflict.

Deteriorating relations with neighbours led to questions of whether Turkey was renouncing (or could sustain) its "zero problems with neighbours policy". [Some observers](#) point to the limits of Turkey's "zero-problems policy" (reliance mainly on trade and personal contacts with now contested leaders). Others have asserted the upheaval in the Middle East has generated a new, "[2.0 version](#)" of Turkey's "zero-problems policy", whereby normative and humanitarian considerations will be more prominent in its foreign policy. Others again maintain that Turkey's foreign policy doctrine still revolves around the concept of "central country", but the [focus](#) has shifted from the zero problems with neighbours' principle to the principle of striking the balance between freedom and security.

Against this background, Turkey has been **realigning with its Western partners**. Turkish and Western views on the regional situation have converged, despite Turkey's

reticence to support military intervention (e.g. NATO's intervention in Libya). Turkey has asked for NATO support on the Syrian crisis. At the end of 2012, NATO approved the deployment to Turkey of six [Patriot surface to air missile](#) batteries, to defend against potential ballistic missile attacks from Syria. The Syrian branch of the PKK, the PYD, is also a challenge in Turkey's calculations. Turkey and the West have also cooperated in supporting and contributing to the formation of a [unified opposition](#) bloc in Syria. Recently, Turkey has also re-established [full diplomatic relations](#) with Israel, after receiving formal apologies in March 2013

for the 2010 *Mavi Marmara* flotilla incident. Mending ties between the US's most important allies in the region should facilitate cooperation on Syria, Iran and Eastern Mediterranean gas reserves.

For some observers, Turkey has [re-pivoted](#) fully towards the West, by admitting it cannot deal with regional instability alone and that its strategic value for the Middle East rests in its being part of the Western alliance, with access to NATO technology and strong ties to the US and the EU. For others, however, Turkey has not abandoned its quest for [strategic autonomy](#) underlying its regional policies. Before the Arab Spring, this took the form of increased convergence with other states in the region. The changing context has convinced Turkey of the security and defence value of NATO and the West. However, the argument goes, Turkey is maintaining its dual approach: while revaluing its partnership with the

### The European Parliament

The EP, in its [resolution](#) (March 2012) on the 2011 Commission progress report on Turkey, acknowledged Turkey's strategic role, as an important regional player (in the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus, the Middle East, the Black Sea) and as a source of inspiration for the democratisation of Arab States.

On 18 April 2013, the EP adopted its [resolution](#) on the 2012 Progress report. [MEPs called](#) on both the EU and Turkey to increase coordination and dialogue in foreign policy matters, in particular with regard to the southern neighbourhood. EU-Turkey cooperation on dealing with the humanitarian crisis in Syria and on developing a joint strategic vision for the end of the conflict is also needed. With regard to the accession negotiations, the resolution calls for renewed mutual engagement and welcomes the "positive agenda" launched by the Commission in 2012.

West, it will continue its assertiveness, desire for autonomy and "West-sceptic" rhetoric.

### Revisiting Turkey's Middle East policy

In 2012, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu recast the [principles of Turkish foreign policy](#), to account for the changes in the region. Turkey's foreign policy will be **value-based**, with the aim of being recognised as a "wise country" (a responsible member of the international community), **autonomous** (partnering with the West but not letting this partnership affect relations with neighbours) and **vision-oriented** (towards crisis management). Davutoğlu

asserts that Turkey had a values-based foreign policy during the Arab uprisings, supporting the popular demands for democracy and legitimacy. In his view, the transition towards stable and democratic political structures can be achieved only through a balance between security and freedom, a principle that poses no contradiction between confronting repressive regimes and maintaining good neighbourly relations. Davutoğlu justifies Turkey's "zero-problems with neighbours' policy" prior to the Arab Spring by saying that the regimes in question were at that time "not at war with their own people". He argues that Ankara sided with the citizens' democratic demands when the regimes started their oppression. In any event, Ankara will act according to its own evaluation of developments in the region.

Some [analysts](#) argue that the Arab uprisings did not put an end to Turkey's ambitions for regional leadership. However, its success is



said to depend on achieving zero problems internally (by solving the Kurdish issue), on forging a partnership with Egypt<sup>13</sup> and achieving balanced relations with Iran.

### Main reference

[Turkey's global strategy](#) / London School of Economics, May 2011.

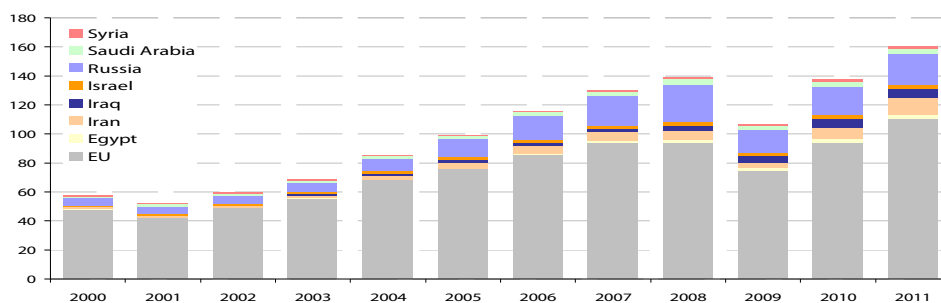
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### Annex: Turkey's trade in goods - exports and imports (€ billion)



Source: International Monetary Fund

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: an Assessment of 2007" / A. Davutoğlu in Insight Turkey, vol. 10, no. 1, 2008, pp.77-96.
- <sup>2</sup> During the Cold War, Turkey was an [ally of the West](#), a NATO member since 1952 and had difficult relations with the Arab states. Turkey was the first Muslim country to recognise Israel, while Arab countries (Syria, Egypt) were Soviet allies. The Iran-Iraq war again convinced Turkey of NATO's importance, siding with the West against Iraq, supporting UN intervention in the Gulf War and the embargo.
- <sup>3</sup> The AKP is one of the [successors](#) of the Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP), in power for a short while (July 1996-June 1997). In 1998, the Constitutional Court banned the RP for pursuing a hidden Islamist agenda and undermining secularism. The new Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi, FP) was also banned in 2001. The Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) and the AKP emerged in 2001 as new Islamist parties, but, of the two, it was the AKP which managed to garner popular support.
- <sup>4</sup> In 2008, the Constitutional Court found the AKP guilty of attempting to undermine secularism, but did not ban the party.
- <sup>5</sup> In a 2010 constitutional referendum, the AKP succeeded in passing amendments intended to increase civilian accountability and control over military and judicial institutions.
- <sup>6</sup> The two countries maintain no diplomatic relations; their land border is closed and they dispute the issue of recognition of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire (1915-17).
- <sup>7</sup> In [Turkey's global strategy](#) / London School of Economics, May 2011.
- <sup>8</sup> On 6 December 2011, the [free trade agreement](#) was suspended for political reasons.
- <sup>9</sup> Turkey is energy [import dependant](#) by 73%: almost all oil and natural gas are imported.
- <sup>10</sup> The number of Turkish [diplomatic representations](#) around the world has risen from 172 in 2008 to 209 at present. New embassies will open in 2013, as Turkey aims for fifth rank in the world for number of representations.
- <sup>11</sup> Currently, twelve [negotiating chapters](#) are provisionally open and one has been provisionally closed.
- <sup>12</sup> [European perceptions of Turkish foreign policy](#) / T. Küçükcan, M. Küçükkeleş, SETA Policy Report, April 2010.
- <sup>13</sup> Egypt aims to return to its Middle Eastern role, as is evident in the country's efforts to broker an [intra-Palestinian](#) deal or the [ceasefire](#) between Israel and Hamas in November 2012.