

AN INSULATOR IN THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE? EVALUATING TURKEY’S REGIONAL STANCE BETWEEN 2002 AND 2011

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ABSTRACT

AN INSULATOR STATE IN THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE? TURKEY’S REGIONAL STANCE BETWEEN 2002 AND 2011

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MA in Political Science and International Relations

Thesis Advisor: Assist. Prof. Şirin Duygulu Elcim

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This study focuses on Turkey’s stance in regional security dynamics with the utilization of the Regional Security Complex Theory. The theory defines Turkey as an insulator state. This conceptualization and the impact of geography on the making of the foreign and security policy have found a wide place in the literature. Drawing attention to the fact that insulator and buffer concepts are frequently used interchangeably due to the underdevelopment and ambiguity of the concept, this study offers a new definition of the concept of insulator based on the discussions in the literature. Within the framework of this proposed conceptualization, the impact of historical background, geography, discourses that developed on geography, and Turkey’s amity-enmity relations with the regional states on the formation of the foreign and security policy is examined. Through the evaluation of the regional developments in the period under question, this work discusses the validity of the concept of insulator and the question of whether Turkey can be defined as an insulator.

Keywords: Turkey, regional security, Regional Security Complex Theory, insulator state, foreign and security policy

ÖZ

BERMUDA ÜÇGENİNDE BİR YALITKAN DEVLET? TÜRKİYE’NİN 2002-2011 YILLARI ARASINDAKİ BÖLGESEL KONUMU

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Bu çalışma, Bölgesel Güvenlik Kompleksi Teorisinden hareketle Türkiye’nin bölgesel güvenlik dinamiklerindeki konumuna odaklanmaktadır. Teori Türkiye’yi bir yalıtkan devlet olarak tanımlar. Bu kavramsallaştırma ve coğrafyanın dış ve güvenlik politikasına yaptığı etki literatürde kendine geniş bir yer bulmuştur. Kavramın gelişmemişliği ve muğlaklığı sebebiyle literatürde yalıtkan ve tampon kavramlarının sıklıkla birbirinin yerine geçer şekilde kullanıldığına dikkat çeken bu çalışma, literatürdeki tartışmalardan hareketle yalıtkan kavramına yeni bir tanım sunar. İleri sürülen bu kavramsallaştırma çerçevesinde Türkiye’nin 2002 ve 2011 yılları arasındaki dış ve güvenlik politikasının şekillenmesinde tarihsel arkaplan, coğrafya ile coğrafya üzerine geliştirilen söylemler ve Türkiye’nin bölge devletleri ile olan dostluk-düşmanlık ilişkilerinin etkisi incelenmektedir. Söz konusu dönemdeki bölgesel gelişmeleri değerlendirerek yalıtkan kavramının geçerliliğini ve Türkiye’nin bir yalıtkan devlet olarak tanımlanıp tanımlanamayacağını tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Türkiye, bölgesel güvenlik, Bölgesel Güvenlik Kompleksi Teorisi, yalıtkan devlet, dış ve güvenlik politikası

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Öz	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables.....	ix
List of Figures	x
List of Maps	xi
CHAPTERS	
1. Introduction	1
2. Literature Review	5
2.1. Regional Level in Security Studies	5
2.2. Defining Turkey's Regional Stance	10
3. Regional Security Complex Theory and the Concept of Insulator	15
3.1. Regionalization of International Security	15
3.2. The Concept of Insulator	19
3.2.1. Insulator States and The Critics of the Concept of Insulator.....	22
3.2.2. How to Define the Concept of Insulator?	29
3.3. Turkey as an Insulator State?	34
4. A Brief History of Turkey's Foreign and Security Policy	44
4.1. The Ottoman Legacy on the Foreign and Security Policy Of Modern Turkey	44
4.2. One-Party Era and The Foreign and Security Policy Of Turkey	46
4.3. From The End of the World War II till the End of the Cold War	48
4.4. Turkish Foreign and Security Policy in the "New World Disorder"	51
5. Turkey's Foreign and Security Policy in the JDP Period (2002-2011)	56
5.1. Continuities and Changes in the Foreign and Security Policy of Turkey	57
5.2. Turkey and the European Regional Security Complex	61
5.3. Turkey and the Middle Eastern Regional Security Complex	68

5.4. Turkey and the Post-Soviet Great Power Regional Security Complex	75
6. Conclusion: Reconsidering Turkey's Designation as an Insulator State	82
6.1. Recommendation for Future Studies	91
Bibliography	93



LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1. Insulator States in RSCT: Comparison on the basis of population, military personnel, military expenditure, and GDP.	30
Table 3.2. International Organization Membership of Insulator States	32



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1. The concept of insulator	33
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LIST OF MAPS

Map 5.1. Turkey as an insulator between the European and post-Soviet RSCs (2003). .62	
Map 5.2. Turkey as an insulator and the Middle Eastern RSC (2003). 69	



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The study of region has been a significant area of research in the discipline of international relations, and even before the emergence of the discipline, similar researches conducted by scholars who are interested in geopolitics. While the discipline of international relations looks at the causes of rivalry between states, the growing literature on international security included the studies on regional security as an intermediary level between the international and national levels. Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) is a recent example of the studies in regional security, which has a claim to explain the structure of international security by focusing on the local dynamics and the interplay among these regional groupings.¹

With the deepening and widening of the concept of security, the literature on international security had become more open to the developments that remained outside of the scope of studies that direct attention to the traditional security issues centered on the military threats. The framework proposed by Buzan and Wæver in RSCT acknowledges economic, political, societal, and environmental security threats as well as the military threats that affect the survival of actors in international politics. The framework takes the decolonization process and the shifting of the bipolar structure of international politics into account by considering them as processes that led to an increase in the prominence of regional security dynamics. These changes necessitated the evaluation of the actors' security policies within the regional context that they operate, and the RSCT provides the tools for conducting such an assessment.

¹ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

With the utilization of the Regional Security Complex Theory, this thesis will look at the foreign and security policy of Turkey from 2002 to 2011. Turkey, as a country that is located between the security dynamics of three regional security complexes, is defined as an insulator. The developments after the end of the Cold War displayed that Turkey emerges as an active player by becoming increasingly interested in the developments occurring in its neighborhood and, more generally, in regional politics. This activism of Turkey resulted in the development of new discourses and the re-articulation of previously existing concepts in order to assess the role and position of the country in international politics. In assessing the activism of Turkey and its limitations, the admitted conceptual underdevelopment of the concept of insulator requires a profound analysis and conceptualization.

The concept of insulator refers to “a location where regional security dynamics stand back to back,” and thus, indicates an in-betweenness.² The RSCT designates Turkey as an insulator because of its outsider status in between three regional security complexes. By doing this, the theory contributes to the scholarly discussions that had difficulties in categorizing Turkey’s regional membership and offers a new perspective to the discussions on whether an axis-change occurred in Turkey’s foreign and security policies. However, Turkey’s activism in its surrounding region after the end of the Cold War, and especially in the new millennium, necessitates a reassessment of Turkey’s insulator status. Therefore, this thesis tackles the question of how useful is the concept of insulator in understanding Turkey’s foreign and security policy in its regional environment. This necessitates having a clear definition of the concept of insulator since it is a rather new concept, and the misunderstood usage of the concept is widely present in the literature. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to the scholarly discussions by providing a detailed answer to the question of how one can identify an insulator in the structure of international security and whether Turkey can be considered as one.

² Buzan and Wæver, 490.

Through analyzing the literature in regional politics and the usages of the concept of insulator in the case of Turkey and other insulator states in the RSCT, this thesis argues that four factors play a significant role in the designation of these countries as insulator. I argue that the geography of states, the historical practices in the making of foreign and security policy, perception of actors about the geopolitical stance of the country, and the amity-enmity relations of the states are the factors that help the designation of a country as an insulator. The detailed analysis of these dimensions will be central in answering the question of whether Turkey is an insulator or it became part of a region with the creation of an external transformation in the regional security complexes that surround the country.

As discussed above, this thesis will focus on a certain time scope that covers a decade under the Justice and Development Party (JDP) government. While the beginning of the period focuses on the change in government, the ending coincides with a period when the headlines of international politics directed its attention to the Middle East due to the emergence of a series of uprisings in the region. The Arab Spring left a significant impact in the region, and in certain countries, the turmoil started with the beginning of these uprisings continues even today. Although this thesis mentions the role of the Arab Spring in the foreign and security policy of Turkey, it does not develop the main arguments of the thesis on the basis of these developments. Moreover, even though the time scope is limited to a decade, the developments in the foreign and security policy of Turkey to broad to handle in a thesis. Therefore, the developments categorized under three sections with reference to the regional security complexes that surround Turkey and key developments related to these regions are examined. The exclusion of Turkey's relations with Africa, East Asia, and Latin America is not because of an attempt to prove or disprove the validity of Turkey's designation as an insulator. Instead, this thesis tries to assess the insulator status of Turkey, and this status has a meaning with respect to the regional security complexes around it.

In terms of methodology, this thesis adopts the framework provided by the Regional Security Complex theory. Although it is a single case study, its level of analysis emerges as the regional level since the thesis looks at the amity-enmity relations and security considerations of Turkey with its neighbors. By looking at the developments occurring in a certain time scope, the thesis utilizes the process tracing in assessing the usefulness of the concept of insulator and usage of it in the case of Turkey.

This thesis argues that Turkey continued to be an insulator in the 2002-2011 period even though Turkey's involvement in its surrounding regions had increased significantly. The legacy of history and the perceptions about the geography of Turkey resulted in the continuation of Turkey's in-betweenness. Even though the cooperative relations that the country experienced with the regional actors increased the influence of Turkey in its neighborhood and beyond during this period, they were directed towards multiple directions, and the outsider status of Turkey became visible in certain instances, which will be discussed in a detailed way in the following pages.

The thesis is composed of six chapters. Following the introduction, the second chapter will look at the place of Regional Security Complex Theory in the literature on international security studies and underlines the difference of the concept of insulator by looking at the alternative conceptualizations that are used for defining Turkey. In the third chapter, a detailed summary of the RSCT and its main tenets will be underlined, and the critics directed towards the concept of insulator and the usage of the concept in the literature will be analyzed in order to reach a definition of the concept of insulator. The fourth chapter will briefly discuss the history of the foreign and security policy of Turkey since it allows us to understand one of the significant factors in the designation of countries as insulators. The fifth chapter looks at the period that the thesis mainly focuses on and tries to analyze the foreign and security policy of Turkey towards the regional security complexes that surround it. The last chapter provides an analysis of the overall arguments of the thesis and makes suggestions for future research projects.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study presents an analysis of Turkey's foreign and security policy choices within a specific time scope, and it does this through the utilization of the theoretical framework that is presented by Buzan and Wæver, Regional Security Complex Theory. Since every selection bears a logic behind it, the selection of RSCT as the basis of this thesis must be explained first by focusing on the promise regional level security and by defining the utility of using this approach instead of other regional approaches. Second, as the definition of regional security complexes and the role of insulators in this theory form the basis of this selection, alternative explanations in the literature regarding the interpretation of Turkey's regional stance must be discussed in order to show the utility of the concept of insulator among others.

2.1. Regional Level in Security Studies

As mentioned above, this thesis looks at security from a regional perspective by utilizing the Regional Security Complex Theory. However, before I move further, the multi-layered nature of security must be acknowledged. Although security is a contested and ambiguous term,³ it emerges from every corner of the discipline of international relations. The frequent usage of security in the literature paved the way for the development and transformation of the concept. The discipline of international relations concerned with power and peace relations, and the concept of security is regarded as having a subordinate role.⁴ However, the end of the Cold War accelerated the process of increasing the centrality of the concept in international relations and the efforts of broadening and deepening of the concept of security. The horizontal and vertical

³ David A. Baldwin, "The Concept of Security," *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 1 (January 1997): 5–26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210597000053>; Arnold Wolfers, "'National Security' as an Ambiguous Symbol," *Political Science Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (1952): 481–502, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2145138>.

⁴ Barry Buzan, "Peace, Power, and Security: Contending Concepts in the Study of International Relations," *Journal of Peace Research* 21, no. 2 (1984): 110.

expansions of security refer to the fact that it includes individuals at the one end and of the international system at the other, and that security in military terms is accompanied by other areas such as economy, social, political, environmental and human security.⁵ This extension also resulted in attempts to redefine the concept. Here, the redefinition of the concept does not mean a change in the dictionary definition of the concept. The consideration of security as “the absence of threats to acquired values” remains as the starting point in these discussions. However, the values are now much more inclusive, and the subjective sense of security refers to different levels other than the state level.⁶

Although neorealist scholars insist on limiting the focus of the concept of security to the military field since the states’ military competition is the main focus of the discipline,⁷ the rejections point out that considering the security only in military terms creates a profoundly dangerous and misleading image.⁸ Once powerful criticisms directed against the orthodox understanding of security paved the way for the broadening of the definition with the inclusion of various kinds of threats, the deepening of the concept accompanied this process with the addition of different levels.⁹ At this point, the regional level comes into the picture. As Buzan rightly points out, “security is a relational phenomenon,” and even if we look at security at the national level, we have to consider the relations between states.¹⁰ At the system level, the analysis of great power politics and the categorization of the system as unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar reduce the role of states that do not have the material capacity to be considered as a great power. Analyzing the security dynamics at the regional level enables not only the operationalization of the relational nature of the concept of security but also to see the

⁵ Emma Rothschild, “What Is Security?,” *Daedalus* 124, no. 3 (1995): 55.

⁶ Wolfers, “‘National Security’ as an Ambiguous Symbol,” 485.

⁷ David A. Baldwin, “Security Studies and the End of the Cold War,” ed. Graham Allison et al., *World Politics* 48, no. 1 (1995): 136.

⁸ Richard H. Ullman, “Redefining Security,” *International Security* 8, no. 1 (1983): 129, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538489>.

⁹ Keith Krause, “Theorizing Security, State Formation and the ‘Third World’ in the Post-Cold War World,” *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 1 (1998): 126.

¹⁰ Barry Buzan, *People, States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (London ; New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 187.

objects that affect or be affected by the actors such as economy, military, society, politics, and environment. Moreover, as the Copenhagen School claims it, the ending of the bipolar structure of international politics with the end of the Cold War made the regional level security interactions more vivid and central.¹¹

Although the study of region has become a significant area of research in the last decades that is a trend visible in the leading journals and the increase of new institutions focusing on particular regional studies, regional studies did not emerge right after the end of the Cold War, and the place that it occupied in the literature was relatively small.¹² However, the end of the Cold War accelerated the process of moving away from the great power bias in the literature, a critic that was posed as early as the late 1950s.¹³ The studies of area specialists have increased our knowledge on the sub-systemic level and provide a basis for going beyond the analysis and interpretation of the actions of great powers.

Focusing on the regional level came in many forms, and the main trend in the literature had been the lack of uniformity since the selection of the terms for such subsystems differed significantly and meant different things to the scholars and students of international relations. The lacking of an agreement over the definition of the region ended up with the plenitude of regional studies focusing on different parts of the world that are not comparable and open to misunderstandings.¹⁴ The complexity of the models that are offered, the ability of the neorealist and neoliberal approaches in providing a global level and accurate understandings of the Cold War dynamics, and the fashion of in-depth analysis developed by behavioral approach tradition were the reason behind

¹¹ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, UK ed. edition (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 9; Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 3.

¹² Amitav Acharya, "The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics," ed. Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Peter J. Katzenstein, *World Politics* 59, no. 4 (2007): 629.

¹³ Leonard Binder, "The Middle East as a Subordinate International System," *World Politics* 10, no. 3 (1958): 408–29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009495>.

¹⁴ William R. Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem: A Conceptual Explication and a Propositional Inventory," *International Studies Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1973): 95, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3013464>.

the absence of a regional approach that is applicable to all parts of the world, and thus, comparable.¹⁵

During the last decade of the Cold War and its aftermath, the realization of the increasing role of the local has become more apparent in the studies of scholars, a trend responsive to the headlines of international news. Several studies on the importance of regions in understanding the security concerns of local actors, as well as the great powers, had been published in recent years.¹⁶ These studies offered a framework for the understanding of the World that is composed of regions or examine the dynamics within and the particularity of certain regions.

Among the studies stated above, Buzan and Weaver's theory is taken as the basis of this thesis. The theory explains the structure of international security by focusing on regions with the utilization of regional security complexes, and it does not single out a particular kind of regional setting. Since it discusses every region with the usage of the conceptualization of regional security complexes, the unique features of different types of regions become comparable with each other. Moreover, the theory specifies places where regional security complexes are not present, which is done through the explanation of in which conditions this lacking emerges and in what circumstances this situation can change. Although all of the approaches discussed above made significant contributions, their focus was either to understand the reasons behind regional

¹⁵ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 77.

¹⁶ Louise Fawcett and Andrew Hurrell, eds., *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order*, New Ed edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan, eds., *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, eds., *Security Communities* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Etel Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century's Dawn* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1998); Michael Schulz, Fredrik Söderbaum, and Joakim Öjendal, *Regionalization in a Globalizing World: A Comparative Perspective on Forms, Actors and Processes* (London: Zed Books, 2001); Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*; Peter J. Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium*, 1 edition (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2005); Robert Stewart-Ingersoll and Derrick Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders: A Theoretical Framework*, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 2012).

integration¹⁷ or to explain only a particular dimension in the security agendas of states.¹⁸ Due to this reason, compared to the Regional Security Complex Theory, their approach reduces the possibility of making comparison between regions or actors. On the other hand, the study of David Lake and Patrick Morgan shares a lot with the explanation in the Regional Security Complex Theory. They utilize the regional security complex definition of Buzan and present a framework in their edited book but became subject to critics since the case studies in this edited volume, with the exception of two of them, did not follow the framework that is offered by the authors.¹⁹ In addition to this, their approach of melting two distinct levels of analysis, the global and the regional levels, in one pot is seen as a deficiency of the theory.²⁰ A similar approach to the RSCT can also be found in a more recent study conducted by Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier. By making some modifications on the RSCT, they offered “regional powers and security framework” which focuses on the impact of regional powers in the 12 regional security complexes which were defined on the basis of Buzan and Wæver’s theory after making some changes such as taking the concepts such as *insulator* and *overlay* out.

A final approach that needs to be discussed is the approach of Cantori and Spiegel,²¹ which has a lot in common with the RSCT. Similar to Buzan and Wæver, these authors look at the world as a whole and argue the importance of the regional level. Their classification of distinct regional subordinate systems and definitions of countries as the members of these units have a definite impact in the formulation of RSCT even though Buzan and Wæver did not explicitly accept this contribution in their book.²² However, Buzan, in his influential book *People, States and Fear*, admits its motivating role in the

¹⁷ Fawcett and Hurrell, *Regionalism in World Politics*; Adler and Barnett, *Security Communities*.

¹⁸ Schulz, Söderbaum, and Öjendal, *Regionalization in a Globalizing World*.

¹⁹ Gerald L. Sorokin, review of *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, by David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan, *The Journal of Politics* 61, no. 1 (1999): 280, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2647812>.

²⁰ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 80.

²¹ Louis J. Cantori and Steven L. Spiegel, “The International Relations of Regions,” *Polity* 2, no. 4 (1970): 397–425, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3233994>.

²² Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 77.

development of the regional security complex approach.²³ Cantori and Spiegel also examine the role of great powers in regions other than their own and add a category for states like Turkey that can be considered to coexist in two subordinate systems.²⁴ The traces of this categorization can be seen in the development of the concept of insulator in the RSCT.

Buzan and Wæver's approach stands out, among others, for three crucial reasons. First, it allows the formulation of an interpretation of Turkey that is comparable to other states that bear the burden of in-betweenness. Second, the RSCT formulates an approach that accepts the influence of global powers on the different regional units as well as the regional actors' ability to have a considerable degree of autonomy in conducting and establishing security relations with the members of their respective regional security complexes. Third, the utilization of both the materialist neorealist approach and the securitization theory, which points out the ideational side in defining an issue as a security threat, give sufficient tools to the RSCT for the analysis of states' geography and the representation of that geography with respect to the security issues.

2.2. Defining Turkey's Regional Stance

This thesis focuses on the security policy and regional stance of Turkey with the utilization of the concept of insulator. As the existence of other regional level schemes, there are other conceptualizations that explain and predict Turkey's security policy and its regional standing. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the reason behind the selection of the concept of insulator instead of other conceptualization.

The history of the security policy of the Republic of Turkey can be categorized into broad periods of isolation and alliance with the West until the end of the Cold War. The developments of new approaches coincide with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the

²³ Buzan, *People, States & Fear*, 189.

²⁴ Cantori and Spiegel, "The International Relations of Regions," 400.

beginning of the era for states to reinterpret their stance in world politics. In this new period, search for new identities became visible in the making of Turkish foreign and security policy,²⁵ which led scholars to develop new concepts defining Turkey's stance in international politics. The interpretation of Turkey in the geopolitical discourses brought metaphors like bridge, cross-road, gate and torn country on the one hand and on the other side, the scholarly debates introduced concepts like "hybridity, marginality, cusp state, liminality" with an attempt to understand the implication of the characteristics of Turkish foreign and security policymaking.²⁶ In addition to this, central state, barrier, pivotal state came into place with reference to Turkey's stance in regional and international politics.

All these conceptualizations assign Turkey a unique role that drives from geography, ideational factors, and for some cases, two of them have a role to play. Considering Turkey as a bridge between the East and the West had been one of the most common representations of Turkey's position in its geography and its foreign and security policy. Starting with the 1970s, the problem that Turkey experienced in its economy and security paved the way for the usage of bridge metaphor that connects West and the East.²⁷ This categorization was also related to the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, the buffer concept was used for Turkey with reference to its geopolitical position, and the dramatic change in international politics opened the way for new opportunities as well as new definitions. The definition of Turkey as a pivotal state regarding its geography and soft power capabilities are among the descriptions in this new period. Another concept defines Turkey as a torn country, having its internal distinction between the Islamic and Western civilizations that comes with security implications in the new

²⁵ Hasan Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 117–43.

²⁶ Bahar Rumelili and Rahime Suleymanoglu-Kurum, "Brand Turkey: Liminal Identity and Its Limits," *Geopolitics* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2017): 549–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2016.1270269>.

²⁷ Meliha Benli Altunışık, "Geopolitical Representation of Turkey's Cuspness: Discourse and Practice," in *The Role, Position and Agency of Cusp States in International Relations*, ed. Marc Herzog and Philip Robins, 1 edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 31.

era of civilizational clashes.²⁸ When it comes to the concept of liminal state, it is the combination of both the self and the other, and therefore, presents danger to the outsider as in the case of the EU and Turkey.²⁹ It focuses directly on the agency and interprets the in-betweenness as the result of discursive construction.³⁰ Although these terms can be useful in analyzing some particular events or Turkey's relations with certain regions, they did not have strong explanatory power in terms of the security interaction of Turkey within the broader regional and interregional framework due to the fact that they were reactions either to the present atmosphere or to the approaches of neighboring countries' or regions' image of Turkey.

One of the most influential categorizations of Turkey is the description of it as a cusp state, which refers to the relation between a nation's foreign policy and its geography, in other words, the representation of geography by a state in formulating its foreign policy.³¹ As the bridge metaphor shows, policymakers can differ in their understanding of the geography that the state occupies, and based on this understanding, they can develop diverging foreign policy objectives. Therefore, the cuspsness that has the ability to explain different representations of Turkey by policymakers such as bridge, crossroad, central state, etc., and it gives equal weight to both material and ideational sources of in-betweenness by integrating agency and structure.³² This approach is significant since it does not only focus on the role of geography in the formation of a state's foreign policy, but it also considers the ideational factor that makes the reshaping of a state's geography through different representations of it. Moreover, the work on cuspsness offers a critique of the concept of insulator by making references to the RSCT that it defines the insulator

²⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

²⁹ Bahar Rumelili, "Liminality and Perpetuation of Conflicts: Turkish-Greek Relations in the Context of Community-Building by the EU," *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 213–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066103009002003>.

³⁰ Altunışık, "Geopolitical Representation of Turkey's Cuspsness: Discourse and Practice," 28.

³¹ Altunışık, 25.

³² Altunışık, 27.

status “as a structural and ideational characteristic, and not as a result of the choice of the leader.”³³

As discussed above, the concepts like bridge and crossroads are developed by the elites in Turkey to understand the role of Turkey’s geography in international politics. However, the concept of insulator is not there to explain the role of the elites in representing this in-betweenness. It is only a small piece in the big puzzle of an international security framework that insists on the increasing role of regional security, whereas the conceptualization of cusp state refers to a group of countries (Iran, Israel, Brazil, Mexico, Japan, and Taiwan) that are very well located into a regional security dynamic within the framework of RSCT.³⁴ Among these countries, only Turkey presented as an insulator state not only because of its geography but also because of the traditional policy adopted by the policymakers not to involve in the securitization practices in its surrounding regions when they were taking place. Altunışık also criticizes the concept of insulator as being structural essentialist since insulators are not part of different regional security complexes, and they cannot connect them.³⁵ However, the RSCT considers the possibility for insulators to be part of one RSC with the intensification of securitization dynamics, and they are “by definition always possible candidates for external transformation,” and this status depends on the creation of a balance between the RSCs that surrounds the insulator country.³⁶

Among many alternatives, this thesis utilizes the concept of insulator in analyzing the foreign and security policy of Turkey with the span of a decade from 2002 to 2011. Since the RSCT offers a framework to understand the changing dynamics of international security after the end of Cold War and that broader framework provides a way to make sense the in-betweenness of particular countries, this thesis will try to grasp the

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Marc Herzog and Philip Robins, eds., *The Role, Position and Agency of Cusp States in International Relations*, 1 edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014).

³⁵ Altunışık, “Geopolitical Representation of Turkey’s Cusps: Discourse and Practice,” 28.

³⁶ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 487.

geopolitical stance of Turkey within the regional realm and within the securitization practices occurring around it. In addition to this, one can argue that the concept of insulator will do nothing more than complicating the picture among this plenitude of concepts. However, it becomes a central concept when we consider the official rhetoric of Turkey as a regional and central power. The concept of insulator came with some implications, which will be central in explaining the mismatch between the rhetoric and practice of Turkish foreign and security policy.



CHAPTER 3

REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX THEORY AND THE CONCEPT OF INSULATOR

As mentioned earlier, this thesis presents a theory-based inquiry by taking the Regional Security Complex as its starting point. The place of RSCT in the literature explained in the previous section but, the claim of the theory in asserting the regionalization of international security needs elaboration. Before moving to the role of the concept of insulator within the RSCT and to the discussion of how to conceptualize the concept, this chapter will examine the basic tenets of the RSCT.

3.1. Regionalization of International Security

One of the interpretations of the end of the Cold War and the new era in international politics was “the new world disorder,” in which the United States would assume to play the role of the policeman of the world.³⁷ However, the discussion over the unipolarity and multipolarity did not sufficiently capture the new pattern in international relations according to the RSCT.³⁸ The pattern that the theory offers is the regionalization of the international politics and security concerns.

Although the end of the Cold War is very critical in the theory, the authors also give credit to the decolonization process, which resulted in the emergence of the regional level of security as a prominent feature of international politics. The ending of the Cold War contributed to this process since the interference of superpowers did not occur anymore obsessively as it had been before as a natural result of the end of bipolarity.³⁹ In this new international politics, the security dynamics are defined on the basis of the distribution of power that took the shape of 1+4+x.⁴⁰ This argument accepts the unipolar

³⁷ Ted Galen Carpenter, “The New World Disorder,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 84 (1991): 24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148779>.

³⁸ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 3.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Acharya, “The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics,” 630.

categorization of international politics since “1” refers to the United States of America as the only superpower in the system. Whereas Europe, Japan, China, and Russia are considered as the great powers that occupy the second position after the USA in this power hierarchy. This is accompanied by regional powers that do not have enough capabilities to be counted as a great power but regarded as important actors in the regional security dynamics. Under this structure, the world divided into three distinct regional formations: overlay, unstructured regions, and the regional security complexes. In this pattern, overlay and unstructured regions refer to the regional spaces where regional security complexes do not emerge.⁴¹

In this division, the logic behind such categorization is based on both materialist and constructivist approaches. In terms of the former, the authors utilized the distribution of power in the regional setting, and in terms of the latter, they use the securitization theory in order to assess the amity and enmity relations between the actors.⁴² Based on these variables, the theory divides the world into regionally clustered groupings. The eleven regional security complexes presented in the theory are categorized on the basis of the number of great powers. There are three types of regional security complexes: centered, great power, and standard RSCs. Centered RSC refers to the presence of a great power or an institution. Great power RSC is composed of more than one great power, and the only example of this type of RSC is East Asia, in which Japan and China have this status. Lastly, the standard RSC refers to the absence of great powers, and the number of regional powers located in it defines its polarity.⁴³

As stated above, another regional setting is called overlay, which is defined as the increasing penetration of a great power into a region so much so that the local security dynamics cease to operate. Examples to this can be found in the history of colonialism that made Africa, North and South America, and parts of Asia examples of an overlay,

⁴¹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 61.

⁴² Buzan and Wæver, 4.

⁴³ Acharya, “The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics,” 631.

and during the Cold War, Europe itself was an overlay by being divided into two and its security dynamics shaped by the superpowers.⁴⁴ Similar to Europe, Turkey was also an overlay as well as an insulator during that period since it chooses to side with the United States as a response to the threat posed by its neighbor, Soviet Union. However, the end of the Cold War ended the overlay status of regions because even if the penetration of great powers continues, the local security relations operate autonomously. Another form of regional setting is called unstructured regions, which emerges either by consisting of actors that have not enough capability to project their power outside of their borders or by consisting of actors whose influence is limited by the geography that limits the actors' interaction.⁴⁵

In the earlier articulations of the regional security complexes, Buzan focuses on regions where conflict is an essential feature of the security dynamics. However, the new formulation that Buzan and Wæver present also discusses the cooperative versions of the regional security complexes.⁴⁶ The categorization of the internal dynamics of regional security complexes has share similarities with what is offered by Wendt's three cultures of anarchy.⁴⁷ In the RSCT, the regional security complexes can be placed in a spectrum that ranges from conflict formation to security community with security regime lies in the middle.⁴⁸ The authors present four variables for the structure of regional security complexes: first, the boundary of the RSC that separates it from the other RSCs that surrounds it; second, similar to the international system, it has an anarchic structure in which at least two actors are present; third, the distribution of power between these actors and what type of polarity that the complex has; and forth, the amity and enmity

⁴⁴ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 61–62.

⁴⁵ Buzan and Wæver, 62.

⁴⁶ Acharya, "The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics," 631.

⁴⁷ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 246–312; Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 54.

⁴⁸ Barry Buzan, "Regional Security Complex Theory in the Post-Cold War World," in *Theories of New Regionalism: A Palgrave Reader*, ed. Fredrik Söderbaum and Timothy M. Shaw, International Political Economy Series (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2003), 142, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403938794_8.

relations among the actors.⁴⁹ By using these variables, it is possible to determine the limits and the internal structure of a regional security complex according to the theory.

Even though the variables do not mention the role of geography in determining the limits of a complex, the topography of the land and natural water barriers play a crucial role in differentiating one RSC from another. However, this does not mean that RSCs are the features of international politics without having the possibility of change. They are open to changes both internally and externally just as they have the option to sustain the existing condition both in terms of the borders of the RSC and the internal dynamics. In this first option, “maintenance of the status quo,” the key components of the regional security complex that are the actors, the anarchical structure, and amity-enmity relations among the units remain unchanged on the faces of developments occurring within and outside of the complex. The other option for change is the “internal transformation” of the security complex. This refers to the changes in the distribution of power among the units, and/or their amity-enmity relations changes to a degree that the type of the internal structure of the RSC must be redefined since this change results in a shift in the spectrum ranging from conflict formation to security community. The last option is that the borders of the RSC can change if an outsider actor’s security interdependence increases to a level that it should be considered as a member of the RSC, or it can lose a member in the same way. According to the theory, this can also happen through the emergence of a merger between the two distinct RSCs.⁵⁰ Moreover, the authors also argue the possibility of a split that creates two RSCs out of one, which is also counted as a possibility under the external transformation. Even though this transformation is also internal to the RSC since two emerging RSCs brake away from the larger unit that holds them together, the internal and external transformation refers to different conditions. While the former evolution suggests the need to redefine the internal dynamics of the RSC, the latter is about the shifts in boundaries.

⁴⁹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 53.

⁵⁰ Buzan, “Regional Security Complex Theory in the Post-Cold War World,” 144–45; Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 53.

Dividing the world into the regional security complexes and analyzing the local dynamics by moving away from the global level calculations is a significant contribution of the theory. However, as discussed before, the world does not only composed of RSCs, and there are also unstructured regions that do not possess the features of an RSC. Moreover, there are locations where the regional security complexes are separated through an insulator. As will be discussed in the next section, the insulator differs from the concept of buffer since the latter has a role in separating the powers with high capabilities within an RSC, whereas the former does not belong to any region by being relatively indifferent to the security dynamics in its surrounding RSCs.⁵¹ After the Cold War, the ending of the bipolarity removed the overlay over Europe and from many other parts of the world, which made the world composed of RSCs, the global level powers that are located in one RSC but also have an impact in others, and insulators.⁵² Thus, insulators play a central role in the study not only because they separate, and thus, help the creation of distinct RSCs but also by having the potential of contributing to the evolution of RSCs through external transformation.⁵³ Therefore, the next section will discuss the concept in a detailed way with the help of criticisms and examples of its usage in the literature.

3.2. The Concept of Insulator

When defining the concept of insulator, Buzan and Wæver acknowledge that it is an underdeveloped concept; however, it still presented as one of the central concepts for the overall framework.⁵⁴ States, mini-complexes and weak interaction zones that cannot take part in or can be considered as outsiders by the members of surrounding RSCs, named as insulators in the theory. To state it with the authors' words, the concept of insulator "defines a location occupied by one or more units where larger security dynamics stand back to back."⁵⁵ In other words, this location is not part of a strong

⁵¹ Buzan, *People, States & Fear*, 193.

⁵² Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 483.

⁵³ Buzan and Wæver, 487.

⁵⁴ Buzan and Wæver, 483.

⁵⁵ Buzan and Wæver, 41.

securitization pattern or security interdependence that is enough to consider it as part of one RSC.

As discussed in the previous chapter, RSCT has some similarities with the framework proposed much earlier by Cantori and Spiegel. According to their interpretation of the regional systems:

Every-nation state (no matter how strong or how weak) is a member of one subordinate system. There are two exceptions to this generalization: the most powerful states are also active in other subordinate systems besides their own, and there are a few states which exist on the borderline between two subordinate systems and may be considered to coexist in some degree in both (for example, Finland, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Burma).⁵⁶

Approximately 30 years later, Buzan and Wæver revised this approach by referring the same states with the exclusion of Finland as insulators, which exist on the borderline but not part of any of the RSCs that surrounds them.⁵⁷ Another critical but mainly disregarded difference is that unlike the former approach, RSCT's definition of in-betweenness covers more than just states but also the grouping of states and areas which are the natural zones where the interaction of actors weakens simple because of the geographical conditions. By getting rid of the overlapping membership problem in the Cantori and Spiegel's framework, which is also their critic to Lake and Morgan's approach and by adding the geographical factors more vividly than their predecessors did, they divided the world map that consists of "mutually exclusive RSCs, insulators, and global actors."⁵⁸

Barry Buzan presents an earlier categorization of the concept of insulator in his influential book, *People, States and Fear*. The chapter that focuses on the regional security dynamics defines the insulator with reference to the "relative indifference" that

⁵⁶ Cantori and Spiegel, "The International Relations of Regions," 400.

⁵⁷ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 41.

⁵⁸ Buzan and Wæver, 48.

the boundaries between RSCs have in their security perceptions.⁵⁹ However, he found it necessary to redefine the concept since it is easy to confuse the term with buffer, even though they are not synonyms. A buffer can be found within the RSCs and play the role of separating the powerful actors, whereas insulator refers to a zone of indifference that keeps different RSCs apart.⁶⁰ In addition, the role that the insulators play can be summed up into two: one is that insulators due to their geographic position and security interactions face both ways but are not able to link them, and the other one is that their existence may be in relative isolation from the RSCs that surrounds them.⁶¹ The differentiation of buffer and insulator is central for this thesis as well as the reference to the insulators' inability to link the neighboring regions. Because Turkey's location has been defined by the concepts of buffer and bridge, by defining Turkey as an insulator, the RSCT refutes these categorizations and offers a new way of interpreting the foreign and security policy of Turkey within the larger regional security dynamics.

When it comes to the question of how to identify an insulator when we look at the "seamless web of security interdependencies", the theory does not provide enough indicators, which is very problematic when we consider the centrality of the concept for the overall framework of the theory. One of the characteristics of an insulator is to remain relatively passive since it does not want to find itself in an escalation around itself.⁶² The number of insulators in the theory is limited, and one of the defining characteristics of insulators is passivity. However, among these limited insulators, Turkey is presented as an exception since it is considered as an insulator even though it was active during the decade after the Cold War, and this period was before the publication of the book. Therefore, the activity of Turkey is stated by the authors even though they

⁵⁹ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 193.

⁶⁰ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 483.

⁶¹ Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 196.

⁶² Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 394–95.

conclude the Turkey part by stating that Turkey's insulator role will continue for a foreseeable future.⁶³

Considering the centrality of the insulator in the theory and the ambiguity of the concept, there is a necessity to define the boundaries of the term in order to make a well-grounded analysis. There are attempts of sophisticating and redefining the concept as well as critics, and both sides are significant for identifying an insulator in regional politics. I will focus on the insulator states in RSCT and discuss the scholarly debates over the designation of these countries as insulators briefly. After that, a redefined concept of insulator will be presented by taking the critics into account.

3.2.1. Insulator States and the Critics of the Concept of Insulator

The earlier discussions on regional politics had provided plenty of definitions regarding the questions of what is a region. An analysis of these definitions ended up with the conclusion that there is an absence of uniformity about the defining features of a region.⁶⁴ The lack of uniformity is also valid for subcategories such as regional power, middle power, pivotal state, central state, buffer as well as insulator. The introduction of the concept of insulator with an attempt to fill the gaps within the structure of international security becomes a problematic issue instead of being a solution. Instead of reducing the ambiguities, the introduction of the concept opens the way for new discussions regarding the usefulness of the term. This plenitude of concepts in defining a geographical area or a state paved the way for the questioning of the very existence of such terms, and the concept of insulator gets its share in these critics. However, the literature does not focus on the concept itself but, directs the attention on particular states that are defined as insulator, and many of the critics question the designation of Turkey as an insulator state by ignoring the other countries branded with the same term in RSCT, which are, in addition to Turkey, Afghanistan, Burma, and Nepal.⁶⁵

⁶³ Buzan and Wæver, 395.

⁶⁴ Thompson, "The Regional Subsystem," 95.

⁶⁵ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 483–87.

Studies focusing on Afghanistan's regional environment agree with the conceptualization of the country as an insulator state. In analyzing the impact of Pakistan and India rivalry and the influence of great powers over Afghanistan, the term insulator attracts the attention of scholars and experts. For instance, the engagement of the EU in the Afghan conflict is explained through the RSCT framework in a study, and Afghanistan defined as an insulator; however, as the title of the study suggests, the meaning of the concept of insulator ambiguous for the authors since they not only consider Afghanistan within an RSC but also talk about the existence of an Afghanistan centered RSC.⁶⁶ In another case that analyzes the Central Asian RSC, the concept of insulator is used for Afghanistan, and the author also considers Kazakhstan as an insulator between Russia and Central Asian RSC.⁶⁷

The same categorization is also present in the PRIO project titled "Afghanistan in a Neighborhood Perspective." In this project, the authors utilize the RSCT framework and define Afghanistan as an insulator, and they analyze the place of Afghanistan in the regional security dynamics and three RSCs that surrounds the country.⁶⁸ However, the ambiguity of the concept presents itself in this project since Tadjbakhsh uses the concept of insulator and buffer as synonyms, even though she utilizes the framework proposed by Buzan and Weaver.⁶⁹ This misunderstanding derives from the widespread usage of the term buffer regarding Afghanistan. Prior to the introduction of the term insulator,

⁶⁶ Sander Ruben Aarten and Siegfried O. Wolf, "The EU in Afghanistan's Regional Security Complex," in *The Merits of Regional Cooperation: The Case of South Asia*, ed. Siegfried O. Wolf et al. (London: Springer, 2014), 153–68.

⁶⁷ Evgeny F. Troitskiy, "Central Asian Regional Security Complex: The Impact of Russian and US Policies," *Global Society* 29, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 2–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2014.961125>.

⁶⁸ Kristian Berg Harpviken, "Afghanistan in a Neighbourhood Perspective: General Overview and Conceptualisation," PRIO Paper (Oslo: PRIO, 2010), <https://www.prio.org/Publications/Publication/?x=7203>.

⁶⁹ Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "Central Asia and Afghanistan: Insulation on the Silk Road, Between Eurasia and the Heart of Asia," PRIO Paper (Oslo: PRIO, 2012), 3, <https://www.prio.org/Publications/Publication/?x=7214>; Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "South Asia and Afghanistan: The Robust India-Pakistan Rivalry," PRIO Paper (Oslo: PRIO, 2011), <https://www.prio.org/Publications/Publication/?x=7214>.

Afghanistan defined as a buffer state due to its geography and its power status.⁷⁰ It is a land-locked state that is located between Russia and the Indian subcontinent, and its location creates a zone through which rival powers exclude one another.⁷¹ The geo-strategic location of Afghanistan between three different security complexes is seen as the source of instability,⁷² and the relations of the country with its surrounding regions differs from time to time, which may end up with the questioning of the insulator status of the country. However, the strategic location of the country, whether it is referred to as an insulator or a buffer, means an in-betweenness, and most of the time, this definition does not drive from the choices of the country. At this point, we can remember the assertion of Ziring that “States do not choose to become buffers”; however, it follows with the argument that in the case of buffer states, one can also observe, “the diminishing of a state’s sovereignty.”⁷³ This assertion indicates the role of geography and the influence of external powers in defining a country as a buffer state, a point that must be kept in mind in analyzing the insulators.

The usage of the term in plenty of studies shows that the concept is widely accepted in the literature in the case of Afghanistan. Although some studies misread the RSCT and use the concept of insulator and buffer interchangeably, all of them will be significant in the conceptualization of the concept. By sharpening the differences, it is possible to reach a concept that means the same thing for the readers and to develop this “underdeveloped” concept.

⁷⁰ Michael Greenfield Partem, “The Buffer System in International Relations,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27, no. 1 (1983): 3–26.

⁷¹ Keith McLachlan, “Afghanistan: The Geopolitics of a Buffer State,” *Geopolitics and International Boundaries* 2, no. 1 (June 1, 1997): 82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629379708407579>.

⁷² Melanie Hanif, “Indian Involvement in Afghanistan: Stepping Stone or Stumbling Block to Regional Hegemony?,” *GIGA Working Papers*, GIGA Working Papers (GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, 2009), <https://ideas.repec.org/p/zbw/gigawp/98.html>.

⁷³ Lawrence Ziring, “Buffer States on the Rim of Asia: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and the Superpowers,” in *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan*, ed. Hafeez Malik (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1987), 90, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-08553-8_6.

In the case of Myanmar, the concept of insulator does not emerge very often in the literature. There is the tendency to see the country as a contested place between China and India, and in this Sino-Indian rivalry, both countries see Myanmar as a strategic price.⁷⁴ On the other hand, some studies consider the country as a buffer state.⁷⁵ As Malik argues, the peace between India and China has prevailed when they respect and maintain the presence of buffer states between them, and India hopes to keep Myanmar between these two countries as a “stable, neutral, and peaceful buffer state.”⁷⁶ From this perspective, the term buffer seems more accurate instead of insulator in the case of Myanmar since the peace between China and India rests the presence of a buffer between them, and therefore, there is a security interdependence. Even though the authors categorize the country as an insulator, they also accept the reducing insulator status of Myanmar with the increasing Chinese penetration and the membership of the country into ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations).⁷⁷ However, when revisiting the RSCT by looking at the South Asian Security Complex, Buzan argues that Myanmar’s desire to become a member of the SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation) increases the validity of the designation of the country as an insulator.⁷⁸

Together with Myanmar and Afghanistan, Buzan and Weaver list Mongolia as an insulator while categorizing Nepal as a mixed buffer/insulator in Asia.⁷⁹ Considering the purposeful distinction that the authors make between insulator and buffer, the categorization of a country as both creates a problem for the theory since it also shows

⁷⁴ Shishir Upadhyaya, *India’s Maritime Strategy: Balancing Regional Ambitions and China* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 79.

⁷⁵ David Brewster, *India’s Ocean: The Story of India’s Bid for Regional Leadership*, 1 edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁷⁶ J. Mohan Malik, “Sino—Indian Rivalry in Myanmar: Implications for Regional Security,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16, no. 2 (1994): 143–44.

⁷⁷ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 486.

⁷⁸ Barry Buzan, “The South Asian Security Complex in a Decentring World Order: Reconsidering Regions and Powers Ten Years On,” *International Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 9, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002088171204800101>.

⁷⁹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 97–100.

the uncertainty of the boundaries of RSCs. Moreover, the consideration of Nepal as a buffer state also erodes the role that Myanmar plays as an insulator since both of them keep this position thanks to the existence of distinct regional security complexes in the continent. However, the authors conclude the Nepal question by stating that after the occurrence of the merger between South Asia and Northeast Asia RSCs, Nepal will be a buffer between China and India, but until then, it will be an insulator in regional security dynamics.⁸⁰ On the other hand, Nepal was regarded as a buffer state, starting from the elimination of Tibet's role as a buffer.⁸¹ However, some authors criticized the consideration of Nepal as a buffer state due to the fact that it lacks economic strength, military power, and geographical viability.⁸² This critic brings an important question to the surface: if economic strength and military power are necessary conditions for categorizing a country as a buffer, is it possible to consider a state as an insulator that lacks them? This kind of questions and different categorizations of these countries will be central in the understanding of the difference among the RSCT's insulators and the similarities that unite them under the same category.

In the case of Mongolia, the authors have an implicit hesitation just as they have it in the case of Nepal. Even though they define it as an insulator in the Asia chapter, they do not list it in the special section that is assigned to the insulators. Making references to the country's history, during most of it the country was under either direct control of China or Russia or was overlaid by them, Buzan and Weaver argued that the country became independent and an insulator after the end of the Cold War by sustaining balanced relations with China and Russia.⁸³ On the other hand, the country is stated as a buffer in the literature, and Mongolians themselves also recognize the buffer status of the country

⁸⁰ Buzan and Wæver, 486.

⁸¹ Werner Levi, "Nepal in World Politics," *Pacific Affairs* 30, no. 3 (1957): 236–41, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2753421>.

⁸² B.C. Upreti, "India-Nepal Relations: Dynamics, Issues and Problems," *South Asian Survey* 10, no. 2 (September 1, 2003): 258, <https://doi.org/10.1177/097152310301000207>.

⁸³ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 432.

between its two great power neighbors.⁸⁴ Some argue that the place of the country makes it a part of a great game between three Asian great powers: China, Russia, and Japan; and this situation shapes the destiny of the country. The same idea continues by defining Mongolia as a passive state without having a say in the developments occurring within its territory.⁸⁵ The passivity of the country enables Buzan and Wæver to categorize it as an insulator since being a passive actor is a central attribute in the definition of the concept of insulator.

In addition to these insulators, there are some countries that can be considered as insulators if changes occur in the boundaries of RSCs. One example of this is Panama, which is located between the South and North America and bears the possibility of becoming an insulator. The authors place the country within the southern end of the Central American subcomplex embedded in the North American RSC.⁸⁶ The turning of Panama into an insulator can happen through the increase in the security interaction between Colombia and Panama, which is regarded as not alarming by the authors.⁸⁷ In the case of Panama, the literature does not mention it as an insulator or a buffer state. Much later in a study that considers the concept of insulator as an unnecessary invention, Panama is located within the North American RSC.⁸⁸

Another possible scenario of a country turning into an insulator is asserted in the case of Egypt, which is located in the Middle Eastern RSC that stretches from Morocco to Iran and includes three subcomplexes: Maghreb, Levant and the Gulf. The southern boundary of the Middle Eastern RSC to the Horn is not solid and subject to changes, which may occur with the emergence of a long-term rivalry between Ethiopia and Egypt, according

⁸⁴ Li Narangoa, "Mongolia and Preventive Diplomacy: Haunted by History and Becoming Cosmopolitan," *Asian Survey* 49, no. 2 (2009): 359, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2009.49.2.358>.

⁸⁵ (Bat-Erdene Batbayar) Baabar, *Twentieth Century Mongolia* (Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 1999), <https://brill.com/view/title/19308>; Stéphane Grivelet, review of *Review of Twentieth Century Mongolia*, by (Bat-Erdene Batbayar) Baabar, *Journal of Asian History* 35, no. 2 (2001): 202–3.

⁸⁶ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 278.

⁸⁷ Buzan and Wæver, 331.

⁸⁸ Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 45.

to the authors.⁸⁹ In a study that focuses on the relations between the Horn and Middle Eastern states locates Egypt into the Middle Eastern RSC but also states that Sudan and Ethiopia are the second-tier national security threat for Egypt.⁹⁰ This study shows the involvement of Egypt in the security affairs of the Horn, and this situation for Buzan and Weaver if accompanied by the country's involvement in the Maghreb, as it happened in its history, could make Egypt an insulator between three RSCs. In the time that the theory is written, Egypt was not considered as an outside player in the Horn, and the increase in the security interaction would pave the way for the inclusion of the Horn into the Middle East RSC as a subcomplex.⁹¹ However, both the revision of the RSCT and the studies on the Horn of Africa designate the region as a distinct unit without the inclusion of Egypt.

All the insulator states (existing and possible) other than Turkey are presented above. Turkey here needs special attention not only because it is the country that the thesis is focusing on, but also it is described as a unique insulator within the framework of RSCT. The location of the country is described as unique both in the literature and by the policymakers. In terms of regional politics, it always emerges as a country that is hard to place on one or another side. Starting from Cantori and Spiegel, the regional security literature discusses this difficulty and explain it with different concepts such as peripheral state that has double membership,⁹² buffer,⁹³ and/or insulator in RSCT, and regional power that has the possibility of becoming a member also to Europe's RSC in addition to the Middle Eastern RSC.⁹⁴ In addition to this, there are examples of different categorizations in the case of Turkey like liminal state, cusp state, pivotal state, bridge,

⁸⁹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 243.

⁹⁰ Brendon J. Cannon and Federico Donelli, "Asymmetric Alliances and High Polarity: Evaluating Regional Security Complexes in the Middle East and Horn of Africa," *Third World Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (March 3, 2020): 514, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1693255>.

⁹¹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 259–60.

⁹² Cantori and Spiegel, "The International Relations of Regions."

⁹³ Barry Buzan, "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 67, no. 3 (1991): 449, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2621945>.

⁹⁴ Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 47.

barrier, etc., and these concepts have implications for regional security. Before moving to the examination of these critics and different usages, I will define the concept of insulator, which will enable making sense of Turkey's regional stance.

3.2.2. How to Define the Concept of Insulator?

The regional studies face the problem of deciding the limits of the region. Although some regions have clear-cut boundaries and some can be understood on an organizational basis by basically looking at its members like the EU, the definitions of regions can differ from scholar to scholar and can mean not the same thing in diplomacy.⁹⁵ Defining the borders of regions is a challenging enterprise mostly because of the presence of areas or states that can be considered as part of different regions. This difficulty leads to the emergence of new concepts like boundary, buffer, and insulator since “they do not fully belong to any region or belong to several geopolitical regions at a time.”⁹⁶

The changing dynamics in international politics in the first decade of the new millennium and the legacy of active foreign policymaking in the aftermath of the Cold War have changed Turkey's image in the eyes of the analysts. During this period, Turkey's definition as an insulator state debated in a number of studies, and these discussions are the result of the ambiguity of the concept. This argument constitutes one of the main contributions of this thesis, and it necessitates the conceptualization of the concept in a clear way. In this section, I will redefine the concept with the use of the criticisms directed towards the RSCT.

The most critical factor in determining a state's role in regional politics is the geography of that state. It is sometimes the geopolitical location that the state occupies, and in

⁹⁵ For a fruitful discussion on how the limits of regions changed from time to time, and the lack of precision and the presence of ambiguity created problems in the history of diplomacy, see: Roderic H. Davison, “Where Is the Middle East?,” *Foreign Affairs* 38, no. 4 (July 1960): 665–75, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20029452>.

⁹⁶ Alexei D. Voskressenski, *Non-Western Theories of International Relations: Conceptualizing World Regional Studies*, 1st ed. 2017 edition (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 185.

some cases, the topography that creates the conditions for being an insulator. The location of insulator states usually defined not only by policymakers but also by scholars as unique. Another important aspect is the conduct of the foreign policy of a country. The activism and passivity of states in external relations can impact the insulator status. Moreover, the relative indifference of a country in the regional environment around it is an important factor in defining a state's designation of an insulator. This relative indifference can be observed in the countries' cutoff ability against the threats that surrounds it rather than being affected by them.

Table 3.1. Insulator States in RSCT: Comparison on the basis of population^a, military personnel^b, military expenditure^c, and GDP^d.

Country	Population	Military Personnel	Military Expenditure (mil. US\$)	GDP (bil. USD)
Turkey	73,443,863	612,800	13214	832.524
Afghanistan	30,117,413	340,350	292	15.857
Myanmar	50,990,615	513,250	2949 (2012)	59.977
Nepal*	27,041,437	157,750	315	18.914
Mongolia	2,770,362	17,200	71.8	10.41
Panama**	3,706,483	12,000	0	34.686
Egypt**	84,529,250	835,500	3117	236.002

^aTotal population, 2011, source: World Bank

^bMilitary personnel by country, source: World Bank

^cMilitary expenditure by country, source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 2011

^dGDP current prices, source: World Bank

* Nepal is defined as an insulator but also as a possible buffer if a merger between RSCs occurs.

** Panama and Egypt are mentioned as possible insulators in the RCT depending on the nature of security interaction between RSC.

What is misleading here is to look at the countries' material capabilities such as military, economy, industry, political system, etc. in order to assess whether a country is an insulator, since these power capabilities will present a power projection and will not say anything about the insulation. The main critic about the literature in the case of Turkey

is that Turkey is too powerful to be an insulator, but the reason behind the designation of the countries as insulators is not their relative power but the location that they occupy and the representation of this by the policymakers. However, a quick look at the other insulators' material capabilities will show that the numbers differ significantly (see Table 1). As can be seen in the comparison of the states, there is no meaningful relationship in terms of material capabilities in their designation as insulators. Therefore, the measurement of the power of a state will not change its designation as an insulator.

Another important aspect of locating countries into regions can be membership of the countries in international organizations. In a study that searches the basis of regionalization finds the answer in international organizations, particularly Regional Economic Institutions (REI). The authors claim that countries are part of at least one important regional economic organization, and this helps us to define the boundaries of regions.⁹⁷ Another claim in the study is that their regions have similarities with the RSCs.⁹⁸ In their framework, they also point out the insulator concept while making comparisons with Buzan and Wæver's study, and the overlapping membership is not a problem for them.⁹⁹ A country can be a member of several REI and thus regions e.g., Russia as part of four REIs. However, a quick look at the membership of countries into international organizations will show that there are political, social, and environmental institutions that bring together the countries other than the ones devoted to the economy (see Table 2). Moreover, all the insulator states are members of, for instance, the Asian Development Bank and three insulators (Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nepal) take part in the SAARC. The RSCT looks at regions as a result of security interdependencies between state, and even though economic security is an important concern for their categorization, it is not the only parameter in defining RSCs and insulators. Therefore, if we want to understand the concept of insulator, the membership in economic

⁹⁷ Kathy Powers and Gary Goertz, "The Economic-Institutional Construction of Regions: Conceptualisation and Operationalisation," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 5 (2011): 2387–2416.

⁹⁸ Powers and Goertz, 2390.

⁹⁹ Powers and Goertz, 2391.

organizations cannot be a defining feature. One criticism of this can be the diversification of insulators' international organization membership. For instance, Turkey is part of the Council of Europe, Economic Cooperation Organization, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, all of which refer to a particular region, and this can be regarded as an indicator of the insulation of the country between RSCs. However, the same situation is valid for non-insulators as well. Therefore, the rejection of the concept of insulator on the basis of membership in an international organization does not present a well-grounded argument.

Table 3.2. International Organization Membership of Insulator States^a

Turkey	ADB (non-regional member), Australia Group, BSEC, Council of Baltic Sea States (observer), Council of Europe, D-8, EAPC, ECO, EU (candidate country), G-20, NATO, Organization of American States (observer), OECD, OIC, OSCE, Pacific Alliance (observer), SCO (dialogue member),
Afghanistan	Asian Development Bank (ADB), The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), ECO, NAM, OIC, OSCE (partner), SAARC, SACEP, SCO (dialogue member)
Myanmar	ADB, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), East Asia Summit (EAS), G-77, NAM, SAARC (observer)
Nepal	ADB, BIMSTEC, G-77, NAM, SAARC, SACEP
Mongolia	ADB, ARF, CICA, G-77, NAM, OSCE, SCO (observer),

^a International Organization Participation by Country, *source*: CIA the World Factbook.

Neither the measurement of material capabilities or the analysis of states' participation in regional organizations can present a clear indicator for insulators. The emphasis on this measurement will be given to geography, which has a deciding say on the formation of the foreign policy of countries. However, this is not to say that geography creates a determinism for countries, i.e., they have to follow a certain type of foreign policy strategy. For instance, while the foreign policy of Turkey usually described as neutrality or isolation from the foundation of the Republic to the beginning of the Cold War, the foreign policy strategy turned into finding an alliance and acting in accordance with certain countries in most of the issues that affect the national security of the country.

After the Cold War, another shift happened towards conducting a multi-directional foreign policy.

Moreover, the emergence of states as insulators in between security complexes is the result of amity-enmity relations. In order to understand this dynamic in a better way, this thesis will present how the RSCs around Turkey formed through the creation of security interdependencies, and how Turkey as an insulator remained outside of this process in the following pages. However, before moving to this dynamic, the insistence of the RSCT on the role of insulators to be passive has to be revisited. States that are located between RSCs have the function to separate these dynamics from one another. In doing so, they are facing strong challenges for their national security, which may trigger the conduct of an active foreign policy.¹⁰⁰ Similar to the states that are at the center of strong security interdependencies within their respective RSCs, insulators also has the ability and the possibility to shape their foreign and security policy agenda. Therefore, this thesis will not move on from the rigid categorization of insulators as passive actors, which is also not present in the RSCT since the authors reach the conclusion of having an active insulator is possible.¹⁰¹ Based on these interpretations, the figure below shows the indicators for deciding whether a country is an insulator or not.

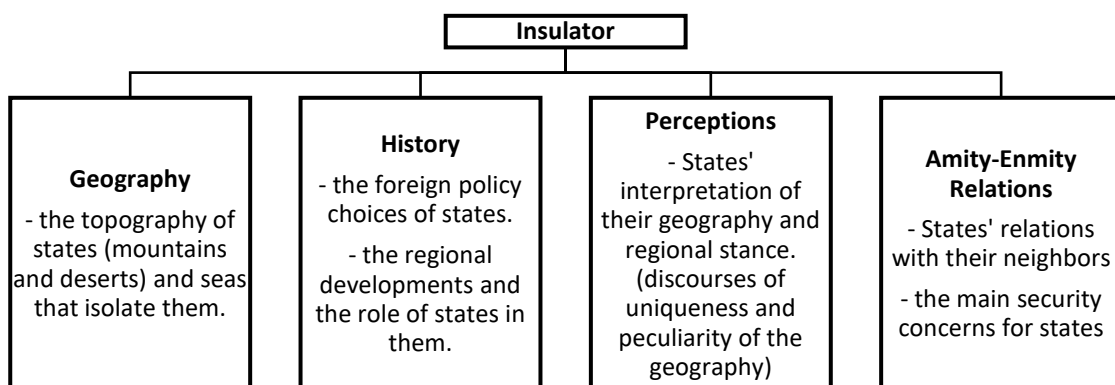


Figure 3.1. The concept of insulator

¹⁰⁰ Isil Kazan, "Turkey: Where Geopolitics Still Matters," *Contemporary Security Policy* 26, no. 3 (December 1, 2005): 589, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260500500906>.

¹⁰¹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 395.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the insulator status can be determined by looking at states' geography and history together with their relations with other actors and the perceptions of the states regarding their regional stance. All of these indicators will be analyzed shortly in the final section. Turkey's location in the world and its geography is already discussed plenty of times, whereas the impact of history will be seen in the next chapter before analyzing the period that looks at Turkey's foreign and security policy from 2002 to 2011, which will also look at the amity and enmity relations between actors.

3.3. Turkey as an Insulator State?

Within the RSCT, Buzan and Wæver describe Turkey as an insulator state under the section of Balkans, which was seen as a subcomplex operating under the European RSC. During the time of its publication, the relations of the country to the other directions were limited and the aim of the country was to be part of the European Union. The sign of the decision to explain Turkey's regional stance mainly in relation to the European RSC can be seen in an article published a few years earlier than the RSCT, which asserts the insulator role of the country as a peripheral actor in the regions that surround it.¹⁰² In order to understand the logic behind the designation of Turkey as an insulator in a better way, the history of the country's foreign and security policy becomes central.

Turkey's surrounding RSCs is formed after the weakening of the Ottoman Empire and the loss of territories first in the Balkans and then in the Middle East. The wars of independence for the countries in the Balkans created hostility between the Ottomans and the newly emerging states, most of which left a legacy in the relations that occur thereafter. In the case of the Middle East, Arabs were seen as betrayers in the official discourse of the Republic, and this created a hostile attitude for both sides. And in the case of the Caucasus, the long term enmity between Russia and Turkey determined

¹⁰² B. Buzan and Thomas Diez, "The European Union and Turkey," *Survival* 41, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 47, <https://doi.org/10.1093/survival/41.1.41>.

Turkey's approach towards this region, and the region was under the Russian(Soviet) control for much of the 20th century. The location of Turkey between these different RSCs makes the country an insulator according to the RSCT. This historical background and the developments in the face of these events force Turkey to follow a passive foreign policy that was materialized with the official doctrine of "peace at home and peace abroad."¹⁰³ During the Cold War, the insulator status of the country changed since it was sided with the West and become a member of NATO, and thus turn into an overlay, a term that was used to refer the great power penetration into the local dynamics in a way that the regional security dynamics became irrelevant or put aside.¹⁰⁴ The end of the Cold War ended the superpower overlay from the country, and the insulator status became visible one more time.

What makes the Turkish case in the RSCT is an interesting one among other insulators is the period after the end of the Cold War since, in this period, the search for a new identity and new foreign and security policy agenda became central for Turkey just as many other states. In this new period, Turkey became very active by trying to establish relations in its surrounding regions. This situation leads Buzan and Wæver to consider the country as an exceptional insulator state due to the fact that it does not fit one of the defining features of the concept of insulator: passivity.¹⁰⁵ Due to the conceptualization of insulators as passive and the recognition of Turkey's active foreign policy in the regional security interactions, the criticisms directed towards the theory.

These criticisms can be categorized under three points: the refusal of the use of the concept of insulator and the inclusion of Turkey into a neighboring RSC, revisiting the concept of insulator by offering an alternative explanation, and the imagination of a new geographical region that is centered on Turkey. While the first and second points are

¹⁰³ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 392.

¹⁰⁴ Buzan and Wæver, 490.

¹⁰⁵ Buzan and Wæver, 394.

driven from the scholarly debates, the third point has its roots mostly in the speeches and approaches of Turkish foreign and security policymakers.

The first group of criticisms rejects the designation of countries as insulators. Although insulators are located between different regional security complexes, they have significant interaction at one side compared to the other, which makes it possible to place the country into one of the regional security complexes, and unlike the suggestion of Buzan and Wæver, the overlapping membership is also a conceivable outcome. Moreover, the same criticism continues by pointing out Turkey's possible membership in the Central Asian RSC as inconceivable since there not enough strategic interaction,¹⁰⁶ even though Central Asia and the Caucasus presented as one of the most important security concerns of Turkey. For instance, the security of Georgia depicted as the most crucial country for Turkey's security.¹⁰⁷ Yet, in the Regional Powers and Security Framework (RPSF), the authors locate Turkey into the Middle East RSC in which the country acts as a regional power together with Saudi Arabia and Iran.¹⁰⁸

Turkey has been regarded as a regional power in recent years, and the lack of in-depth discussion by conducting case studies on Turkey is seen as a problem that emerged as a result of Buzan and Wæver's designation of the country as an insulator. By referencing the Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll's study,¹⁰⁹ Kardaş claims that Turkey is not treated as a regional power, and this is because of Turkey's designation as an insulator.¹¹⁰ When turning the article into a book, Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll added Turkey into the Middle Eastern Security Complex as a regional power, but this time, reducing Egypt and

¹⁰⁶ Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 47.

¹⁰⁷ Mustafa Aydın, "Foucault's Pendulum: Turkey in Central Asia and the Caucasus," *Turkish Studies* 5, no. 2 (June 21, 2004): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1468384042000228576>.

¹⁰⁸ Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 56.

¹⁰⁹ Derrick Frazier and Robert Stewart-Ingersoll, "Regional Powers and Security: A Framework for Understanding Order within Regional Security Complexes," *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 738, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066109359847>.

¹¹⁰ Şaban Kardaş, "Turkey: A Regional Power Facing a Changing International System," *Turkish Studies* 14, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 646, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2013.861111>.

Israel from this role.¹¹¹ Kardaş probably missed this change in the author's categorization, but his critic towards the concept of insulator goes much beyond then this superficial issue. The insulator status can be removed with the inclusion of the country into one RSC, through the creation of a merger between two RSC, and with the creation of a new RSC, which includes the insulator state in question. Kardaş argues that since RSCs are distinct and differ according to their structure, "the inability of an insulator state to merge these two worlds into one is no ground to claim that it is a member to none."¹¹² Similar to the critic in the RPSF, he claims that it is possible to think of a country within two distinct regions. In the analysis that he suggests, he assesses Turkey's regional power status in the Balkans, the Black Sea and the Caucasus, and the Middle East and differentiates the roles that the country plays in different regions as a regional power.¹¹³

Another criticism of the theory came from one of the forerunners of the designation of Turkey as an insulator. Before the publication of *Regions and Powers*, Thomas Diez, together with Barry Buzan, published an article analyzing Turkey's position with respect to the European RSC. In the article, the authors argued that Turkey is an insulator, and the EU hopes to maintain this position of Turkey in order not to allow the transfer of security threats from the Middle East to the Balkans.¹¹⁴ A few years after this article, the internal developments in Turkey and their effects on the country's external relations pushed Diez to write another article that questions Turkey's role as an insulator.¹¹⁵ In that article, Diez suggests the inclusion of Turkey into the European RSC since the relations of the country with the EU were improving and the discussion on Turkey's role in the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The same analysis argues that the insulator status can reemerge with the rejection of Turkey's membership or with Turkey's decision to withdraw from candidacy, but both of them are seen as unlikely to

¹¹¹ Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier, *Regional Powers and Security Orders*, 56.

¹¹² Kardaş, "Turkey," 646.

¹¹³ Kardaş, 655.

¹¹⁴ Buzan and Diez, "The European Union and Turkey," 52.

¹¹⁵ Thomas Diez, "Turkey, the European Union and Security Complexes Revisited," *Mediterranean Politics* 10, no. 2 (July 1, 2005): 167–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629390500141600>.

happen.¹¹⁶ In a similar fashion, Diez finds it necessary to revise the argument that he posed in his previous article that revisits the European Security Complex and Turkey's role. This time, he challenges the very idea of insulating and argues that "states caught between security dynamics always have the option to act passively, as Buzan and Wæver predicts, or pursue an active policy of barrier or bridge."¹¹⁷ The activism in Turkish foreign policy in the first decade of the new millennium changes his ideas significantly, and the criticism that starts from Turkey's designation of an insulator goes much further and questions the "theory" label for Buzan and Wæver's framework.¹¹⁸ By referencing the bridge and central country arguments that are present in the discourses of Turkish policy-makers, the idea of mapping the world was criticized harshly since the process of mapping discounts the role of agency in determining the regional security interactions.¹¹⁹ His criticism against the RSCT and the concept of insulator points out the theory's inability to explain the foreign policy decisions of actors that especially lies between different regional security dynamics. Similar to Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier, Diez comes to a point where the usage of insulator is nothing more than complicating the picture.

Another study that refuses the use of insulator in the case of Turkey accepts the presence of regional security complexes but places Turkey into the Middle Eastern RSC since, in the first decade of the second millennium, Turkey willingly choose to be part of the Middle East.¹²⁰ The study reaches the conclusion that Turkey can be regarded as a regional power in the Middle East in terms of its material capabilities while this power status is not materialized in terms of the influence of the country.¹²¹ Once the inclusion

¹¹⁶ Diez, 173.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Diez, "Insulator, Bridge, Regional Center? Turkey and Regional Security Complexes," in *Debating Security in Turkey: Challenges and Changes in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Ebru Canan-Sokullu (Lanham; Boulder: Lexington Books, 2012), 47.

¹¹⁸ Diez, 46.

¹¹⁹ Diez, 52.

¹²⁰ Ažuolas Bagdonas, "Turkey as a Great Power? Back to Reality," *Turkish Studies* 16, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 319, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2015.1069712>.

¹²¹ Bagdonas, 326.

of Turkey into the Middle Eastern RSC is accepted, the role of the country in this RSC as a regional power acknowledged in other studies as well.¹²² Another contribution to this discussion came in the form of the articulation of changes and continuities in Turkey's foreign and security policy that was transforming into a multidirectional one, and therefore, goes beyond the insulator status. But, the same study also rejects the inclusion of Turkey into a neighboring RSC and offers the usage of "interface logic" instead of the label of insulator for understanding Turkey's security interactions.¹²³ The interface logic "builds on the idea that actors are mutually constituted through their actions"¹²⁴ Based on this formulation the candidacy status of Turkey in the European Union paved the way for the addition of Turkey into the European security community; but, the political developments in this relations shows the opposite.¹²⁵ Therefore, the interface logic also implicitly points out the in-betweenness of Turkey.

In a similar vein, a study that focuses on the shift in Turkey's approach towards the Middle East and questions whether this is an illusion or an awakening rejects the designation of the country as an insulator; instead, Turkey is able to perform the role of a mediator in the middle of two regional security complexes without isolating them and with the creation of linkage between the two.¹²⁶ This line of thinking represents the interpretation of Turkey's location as a bridge between Europe and Asia. This idea presented much before by Turkish policymakers, which was materialized at the beginning of the new millennium in the event that brings together the foreign ministers of the member countries of the EU and the OIC.¹²⁷

¹²² Jitlaeka Luenam, "Rethinking Turkey's Position in the Middle Eastern Regional Security Complex: From Insulator to Regional Leader?" (Master Thesis, Cairo, American University in Cairo, 2015).

¹²³ Ebru Vural, "The Middle East As A Regional Security Complex: Continuities and Changes in Turkish Foreign Policy Under the JDP Rule" (Master Thesis, Ankara, Middle East Technical University, 2010).

¹²⁴ Rikard Bengtsson, "Constructing Interfaces: The Neighbourhood Discourse in EU External Policy," *Journal of European Integration* 30, no. 5 (December 1, 2008): 602, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036330802439582>.

¹²⁵ Bengtsson, 600–601.

¹²⁶ Emel Parlar Dal, "The Transformation of Turkey's Relations with the Middle East: Illusion or Awakening?," *Turkish Studies* 13, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 252, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2012.685257>.

¹²⁷ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 142–43.

Another study that utilizes the concept of insulator agrees with the designation of the country as an insulator but explains this as the consequence of the polarized international politics.¹²⁸ Due to the misread of the RSCT, the article misses the depiction of Turkey as an overlay throughout the Cold War. In addition, the study claims to assess Turkey's role in the Balkans and the Caucasus by asking the question of whether it is an insulator or a player. However, it does not give enough explanation about the concept of insulator before refuting the validity of the concept for Turkey and describe the country as a regional player.

André Barrinha articulates one of the most important contributions in the discussion of the usage of the concept of insulator in the case of Turkey.¹²⁹ One of the reasons for this, he directly focuses on the concept and investigates the alternative forms that it can take, unlike many other studies that present superficial reading of the RSCT since the concept of insulator emerges as an alternative in formulating or interpreting similar conceptualizations. Turkey's geopolitical position has been regarded as central, and the concept of insulator helps to understand the inactiveness of such an important geopolitical actor for most of its history.¹³⁰ Accepting the contribution of the concept in regional security politics in explaining particular countries' geopolitics, Barrinha moves forward to discover the limitations that the concept brings. For him, the insulator status limits the country to become a regional or a global power unless this status changes with the inclusion of a country into one of the neighboring RSC. The suggestion of Diez to include Turkey into the European RSC becomes invalid as years passed and the relations between the EU and Turkey worsened, but the ties with the EU remained an important aspect in the agenda of Turkey, as well as the place of other neighboring regions becomes intensified, which makes it hard to locate Turkey into an RSC.¹³¹ The problem

¹²⁸ Didem Ekinçi, "Turkey between the Balkans and the Caucasus in the Post-Cold War Era: 'Insulator' or Player State?," *Çankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 7, no. 2 (2010): 441–65.

¹²⁹ André Barrinha, "The Ambitious Insulator: Revisiting Turkey's Position in Regional Security Complex Theory," *Mediterranean Politics* 19, no. 2 (May 4, 2014): 165–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2013.799353>.

¹³⁰ Barrinha, 166.

¹³¹ Barrinha, 166.

emerges here if one asks the question of how one can categorize a country as a regional power if it does not belong to a region. Although Barrinha, in a study that focuses on the US-Turkey relations, agrees with the designation of Turkey as an insulator,¹³² changes his position by re-questioning the concept and Turkey's status. He suggests that "by redefining the relationship between the condition of insulator and great power status, it is possible to retain RSCT's analytical value regarding Turkey's international ambitions; that is to say, it may ultimately be possible for there to be a great power insulator."¹³³ He concludes by accepting that Turkey has a long way to go to become a great power and can become a great power in the future by remaining an insulator between different RSCs. This is possible if a disconnection between being a regional power and a great power is being established, the analytical framework of the RSCT can explain the hard case of Turkey being an active insulator.¹³⁴ As argued before, this is an important contribution since, unlike many other studies, it does not directly accept the concept of insulator by ignoring the fact that it is an underdeveloped concept, and different from several that categorically reject the idea of using the concept of insulator.

Whereas Barrinha focusing on the criteria for insulators to change their position and tries to develop the conceptual tools of the RSCT, McLean in a study that focuses on Turkey with the use of RSCT searches for the causes of insulation and offers the concept of "sectoral divergence" that refers to the state's having different directions in their foreign policy for different sectors such as economic, societal and political. In the case of Turkey, the argument of the author resonates with the torn country argument of Huntington. McLean claims that while the economic sector directs Turkey to the east, the societal sector directs to the country to the east, and this was, in a way, the result of the political sector that is divided within the domestic sphere by the seculars and Islamists.¹³⁵ Unlike

¹³² André Barrinha, "The Copenhagen School in US--Turkey Relations : The 'War on Terror' in Northern Iraq," Working Paper, *Oficina Do CES*, vol. 295 (Oficina do CES, Centro de Estudos Sociais, January 2008), <https://estudogeral.sib.uc.pt/handle/10316/32690>.

¹³³ Barrinha, "The Ambitious Insulator," 167.

¹³⁴ Barrinha, 179.

¹³⁵ Wayne McLean, "Regional Security Complex Theory and Insulator States: The Case of Turkey" (ProQuest UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2011), 8.

McLean, Imai suggests the sophistication of the concept insulator in order to explain the activity of Turkey in its regional environment, and thus reduce the limitations of the concept's emphasis on insulators' passiveness.¹³⁶ In this contribution, the differentiation between the classical insulator and the sophisticated insulator suggests that even though the source of being an insulator is the geography for both types of insulator, in addition to the cutoff ability of classical insulator against the military threats, the sophisticated insulator has the ability to connect and cutoff not only military threats but also economic, political, societal, and environmental threats.¹³⁷ Although the ability of cutoff is an important term in understanding the concept of insulator since they do not want to face threats in different directions, the connectivity that the author suggests does not go well with the concept of insulator since their primary function is to separate different regional security dynamics. In addition to the differentiation between classical and sophisticated insulators, Imai also explains the distinction between strong and weak insulators. While the former aims to establish a security community, the latter focuses on a limited goal, the protection of national security and its borders.¹³⁸

After listing the alternative explanations, lastly, I will turn back to the Turkish political elites representation of Turkey's location, which plays an important role in the activity of the country's foreign and security policy and affects the scholarly debates on the geographical representation of the country. One example of this representation is already given above. Similar to the bridge doctrine, the third group of criticism is not directly criticize the concept of insulator but tries to formulate a new perspective for Turkey's international stance, and the literature on Turkey's regional stance uses this conceptualization instead of concepts like buffer or insulator. The central state concept gained importance after the election of the JDP and the coming of Ahmet Davutoğlu into the political scene, who wrote a book with a civilizational perspective that focuses on

¹³⁶ Kohei Imai, "Rethinking the Insulator State: Turkey's Border Security and the Syrian Civil War," *Eurasia Border Review* 7, no. 1 (2016): 19–29.

¹³⁷ Imai, 26.

¹³⁸ Imai, 28.

Turkey's role in international politics. However, the usage of the central state concept goes back to the 1960s when the military officials reconsidered the Mackinder's Heartland theory and reached the conclusion of depicting Turkey as a central state.¹³⁹ In the beginning, the term central state was used with reference to domestic politics in order to show that the impact of geography can only be reduced by the presence of a strong unitary government in Turkey.¹⁴⁰ In the JDP period, the term referred to an imagined geography where Turkey occupies a central location that necessitates following an active and multidirectional foreign policy in its proximate surroundings.¹⁴¹ The turning of the concept "from a tool advising caution to one calling for activism"¹⁴² and the centrality of the term in the making of foreign policy increased the activism of Turkey, which paved the way for the scholarly criticism of the concept of insulator. As argued before, Turkey's categorization as a central state or a bridge by the policymakers does not present a direct criticism towards the RSCT and the concept of insulator; but, the scholarly discussions utilize these conceptualizations or interpret the changing foreign and security policy of Turkey by keeping these concepts in mind, which in turn leads to the critic of the concept of insulator.

In sum, this chapter discussed the basic arguments of the Regional Security Complex Theory and looked at the usage of the concept of insulator in the literature for not only Turkey but also other insulator states. The usages and misusages of the concept in the literature provide a base for reaching a new conceptualization of the concept of insulator. Based on this new conceptualization, the next chapter will look at the history of the foreign and security policy of Turkey in order to see the emergence of the conditions for being an insulator state and to assess the continuities and changes in Turkey's regional stance.

¹³⁹ Pınar Bilgin, "'Only Strong States Can Survive in Turkey's Geography': The Uses of 'Geopolitical Truths' in Turkey," *Political Geography* 26, no. 7 (2007): 748–49.

¹⁴⁰ Pınar Bilgin, "Turkey's 'Geopolitic Dogma,'" in *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe?: Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises*, ed. Stefano Guzzini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 154.

¹⁴¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2012).

¹⁴² Bilgin, "'Only Strong States Can Survive in Turkey's Geography,'" 749.

CHAPTER 4

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TURKEY'S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

In this chapter, I will look at the main dynamics that shaped the foreign and security policy of Turkey. Since the Republic of Turkey was born out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, it inherited important legacies from the late Ottoman period. Therefore, this chapter will start by shortly looking at the fundamental problems and orientations that passed from Ottomans to the Republic of Turkey. It will continue with Turkey's stance in regional politics by focusing on four broad periods in which various leaders played a significant role in shaping Turkey's security policy.

4.1. The Ottoman Legacy on the Foreign and Security Policy of Modern Turkey

The Ottoman Empire expanded through its military power, and once it lost that superiority over its rivals, it relied on diplomacy and power calculations. Following a series of military and diplomatic defeats in the Western front and facing threats in different directions, Ottomans tried to utilize the clashing interests of the European powers in order to continue its existence, and this was possible when the Ottoman Empire became part of the European balance of power that established in the Vienna Congress.

The strategic location of the empire connecting the East and West on the one hand and the North and the South on the other made the empire an important center of attraction for the European powers. These territories offered more accessible routes to the colonial administrations, and it held the gates for further expansion, as in the case of Russia. This created the so-called Eastern Question. The underlying logic behind the Eastern Question can be summarized with the question of "what to do with the Turks?"¹⁴³ Since it was long

¹⁴³ Çiçek Nazan, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 1–2.

described as “the sick man of Europe,”¹⁴⁴ all powers have an interest in the future of the empire. However, the labeling of the problem as a question was mostly because of the problem of clashing interest among the European powers. One of the best examples of this emerged during the Crimean War, in which the European powers sided with the Ottoman Empire in order to balance the increasing influence of Russia. In addition to this, the survival of the empire financially depended heavily on the Western powers. Çetinsaya analyzes these dynamics as having a significant influence on the Republic of Turkey, and he classifies them under three: first, the strategic and military threat that it posed by Russia; second, the emergence of nationalist movements; and third, the financial dependence of Turkey on the West.¹⁴⁵ All of these factors force the Ottomans to act in accordance with the balance of power game, which required giving territorial and economic compromises. Therefore, the main objective of the foreign and security policy of Turkey focused on the maintenance of the status quo by not only military means but also by the diplomatic efforts.¹⁴⁶

The process of reform starting in the Selim the Third’s period paved the way for not only the reshaping of the institution but also the opening of new institutions such as the Translation Office, the ministry of foreign affairs and permanent embassies in European capitals, which had become essential especially after the acceptance of the empire into the Concert of Europe. These institutions and diplomats made the 19th century an era of diplomacy.¹⁴⁷ Turkey inherited this diplomatic practices as well as the institutions from the Ottoman Empire. In addition to this, certain foreign policy principles also continued in the new period, among which “westernism” and status-quo oriented approach were

¹⁴⁴ Roderic H. Davison, *Turkey, The Modern Nations in Historical Perspective* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968), 74.

¹⁴⁵ Gökhan Çetinsaya, “A Tale of Two Centuries: Continuities in Turkish Foreign and Security Policy,” in *Contentious Issues of Security and the Future of Turkey*, ed. Nursin Atesoglu Guney Mr (Ashgate, 2007), 5.

¹⁴⁶ Professor Ferenc Albert Vali, *Bridge Across the Bosphorus: The Foreign Policy of Turkey*, 1st edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 42.

¹⁴⁷ Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık, “Uluslararası Sistemde Türkiye,” in *Uluslararası İlişkilere Giriş*, ed. Ali Balcı and Şaban Kardaş (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2017), 80; Nur Bilge-Criss, “Komşularla Sıfır Sorun Çok Güzel Bir Söylem, Ancak Gerçekçi Değil,” in *Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası*, ed. Habibe Özdal, Bahadır Dinçer, and Mehmet Yegin, vol. 4 (Ankara: USAK Yayınları, 2010), 22.

the important ones.¹⁴⁸ In short, the Ottoman Empire had a significant impact on the foreign and security policy of Turkey not only because of the inherited geography but also because of the memory and practices of institutions and actors who face a series of wars in its all four sides. This thesis considers this background as an important factor in the classification of Turkey as an insulator in the RSCT.

4.2. One-Party Era and the Foreign and Security Policy of Turkey

During the War of Independence between 1919 and 1923, Turkey fought for regaining some of its territories that were under the control of the allied powers and hoped to preserve the Misak-ı Milli (National Pact) borders. Although the First World War caused the loss of peripheral territories of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey was founded on the essentials of the Ottoman Empire's geopolitical status, whose defense meant the survival of the country.¹⁴⁹ Being exhausted after years of wars, the new republic focused on the establishment of order in the domestic sphere, which will shape foreign policy and security as well. This approach can be best seen in Atatürk's famous "peace at home, peace abroad" motto, which preaches a neutralist attitude.¹⁵⁰ However, the search for establishing good relations with the neighbors continued, and it did not suggest a passivism.¹⁵¹ In the one-party era, a friendship agreement signed with the Soviets and the troubled relations with Greece were turned into a close one approximately ten years after the two fought against each other and later on exchanged their populations.

In the interwar period, the Republic internally suffered from the nationalist movements, and in the external front, they confront the threat of Italy that was aiming to revitalize the Roman Empire by making the Mediterranean an Italian sea. In order to counter both problems, Turkey sought a friendship and nonaggression treaty: against the Italian

¹⁴⁸ Baskın Oran, ed., *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt I 1919-1980)*, 20th ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019), 46.

¹⁴⁹ Vali, *Bridge Across the Bosphorus*, 43.

¹⁵⁰ Vali, 25; Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 392.

¹⁵¹ Feroz Ahmad, "The Historical Background of Turkey's Foreign Policy," in *The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy*, ed. Lenore G. Martin and Dimitris Keridis (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2002), 18.

threat, the Balkan Entente Pact was initiated; and against the Kurdish nationalism, the Sadabad Pact was signed.¹⁵² These treaties helped to the establishment of a security belt that is key for the defense of the country.¹⁵³

Although Atatürk's foreign policy is regarded as a neutral foreign policy,¹⁵⁴ he made use of every disagreement between the Western powers and at times he initiated negotiations with the Soviets and used this as a bargaining tool in the West or vice versa, which resulted with the description of him as "the most apt pupil of the nineteenth century Ottoman diplomats."¹⁵⁵ Therefore, the descriptions of the period as relatively autonomous,¹⁵⁶ or as active isolation¹⁵⁷ grasp the foreign and security policy of the period in a better way.

This situation continued during the Second World War. Turkey aimed to remain outside of the war as a country that had a fresh memory of wars and devastation. This task was possible through establishing relations with international actors in a way that can support the impartiality of Turkey. This foreign policy objective is defined as active neutrality.¹⁵⁸ Although Turkey reached into the last phase of the war as a neutral country, just before the beginning of the war, Turkey signed a military alliance with Britain and France.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, Oran summarizes this situation by stating that "Turkey was not neutral but merely maintained to be nonbelligerent during the Second World War."¹⁶⁰ Whether we name it as neutral or nonbelligerent, Turkey declared war against Germany

¹⁵² Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 54–57.

¹⁵³ Çetinsaya, "A Tale of Two Centuries: Continuities in Turkish Foreign and Security Policy," 10.

¹⁵⁴ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 392.

¹⁵⁵ Roderic H. Davison, "Turkish Diplomacy From Mudros to Lausanne," in *The Diplomats, 1919-1939*, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (Princeton University Press, 1994), 173.

¹⁵⁶ Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt I 1919-1980)*, 257.

¹⁵⁷ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 188.

¹⁵⁸ Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War: An Active Neutrality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹⁵⁹ Çetinsaya, "A Tale of Two Centuries: Continuities in Turkish Foreign and Security Policy," 11.

¹⁶⁰ Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt I 1919-1980)*, 393.

at the end of the war. Through this symbolic act, Turkey fulfilled the precondition of attending the conference in San Francisco, out of which the United Nations emerged.¹⁶¹ Turkey kept a foot in both camps during the war and used domestic and economic excuses when it was necessary, which made its impartiality possible, but this situation also decreased Turkey's reputation in the international sphere. However, the politicians and diplomats of the time considered this as a great success since they had fresh memories of World War I.¹⁶²

4.3. From the End of the World War II till the end of the Cold War

Turkey, with the last move that it made at the last phase of the Second World War, became part of the new order by participating in the San Francisco Conference and was one of the founding members of the United Nations. Soon after the war, the cooperation between liberal capitalism and communism that formed against the fascist threat came to an end.¹⁶³ In this newly emerging international system, the continuation of the "neutral" attitude of Turkey became impossible when the Soviet Union refused the renewal of the friendship agreement and wanted to territories in the north-eastern border of Turkey as well as the establishment of naval and land bases on the Bosphorus.¹⁶⁴ The newly emerging international structure pushed Turkey to side with the West under the leadership of the USA that was considered as a security shelter against the Soviet threat. The hopes and aims to get the support of the West came with some precondition that forced Turkey to make significant changes in domestic politics. After starting to consider the change to a multiparty system, Turkey found the necessary support that it needs first through the Truman Doctrine and then through the Marshall Plan.

¹⁶¹ Çetinsaya, "A Tale of Two Centuries: Continuities in Turkish Foreign and Security Policy," 11.

¹⁶² Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London : New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 205.

¹⁶³ Çağrı Erhan and Özge Özkoç, "Yirminci Yüzyılda Uluslararası Siyaset," in *Uluslararası İlişkilere Giriş*, ed. Ali Balcı and Şaban Kardaş (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2017), 44.

¹⁶⁴ Mehmet Gönlübol and Haluk Ülman, "İkinci Dünya Savaşından Sonra Türk Dış Politikası (1945-1965) - Genel Durum," in *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası*, ed. Mehmet Gönlübol (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1987), 192–93.

After the “Long Telegram,” Turkey became an essential country for the American strategy of containment. Moreover, the above-mentioned aid packets showed that Turkey is supported by the Western countries against the expansionist policies of the Soviet Union. The materialization of this support could be completed through Turkey’s membership into NATO, which became possible when Turkey sent soldiers to the War in Korea.

Achieving a sense of security against the Soviet threat with the NATO membership, Turkey began to use its growing economy and its diplomatic ties in order to expand the country’s sphere of influence in regional and international politics. Similar to the 1930s, Turkey established relations and signed agreements in the Balkans and the Middle East. Both the Balkan and the Baghdad Pact formed in line with the containment policy of the USA. In the 1950s, a series of development occurred in Cyprus that affected Turkey’s foreign and security policy for a long period. The signing of London and Zürich agreements that pave the way for a consociational period in Cyprus, which came to an end three years after its establishment in 1963. However, the treaties gave Turkey the guarantor status that can act to protect the security of the Turkish community in Cyprus.¹⁶⁵ Another significant development was the placement of Jupiter missiles in Turkey, which were removed in 1963 as a result of increasing tension between the USA and the Soviet Union over the missiles in Cuba and Turkey.¹⁶⁶

After ten years of active foreign policymaking, Turkey faced a series of internal crises, and the coup in 1960 resulted in the creation of coalition governments and the strong influence of military not only in domestic politics but also in the conduct of foreign and security policy.¹⁶⁷ The instability in domestic politics resulted in Turkey’s concentration of its internal problems. The key foreign and security issue that dominated its external relations was the Cyprus problem. Moreover, the rapprochement process in the Cold

¹⁶⁵ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 85.

¹⁶⁶ Vali, *Bridge Across the Bosphorus*, 128–29.

¹⁶⁷ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 87–115.

War diminished the perception of the Soviet threat in Turkey, which led to the questioning of Turkey's membership to NATO.¹⁶⁸ In addition to the rapprochement process, Turkey's worsening relations with the USA over the Cyprus and opium crises resulted in isolationist foreign policy.

As stated above, Cyprus became the exception in this period. Turkey's plan to intervene in Cyprus as a reaction to the suppression of the Turkish community stopped with the Johnson Letter in 1964. This letter deteriorated the relations between the USA and Turkey significantly and opened the discussions for the relevance of NATO since it stated that in case a Turkish intervention triggers a Soviet attack, NATO would not provide support for Turkey. On the other hand, the letter opened the way for a multidirectional foreign policy.¹⁶⁹ Although the letter stopped a Turkish intervention in 1964, ten years later, Turkey intervened in the island in order to protect the Turkish community, which resulted in an arms embargo of the USA on Turkey.

While the year of 1979 came with remarkable developments that changed the course of the Cold War and the balances in the Middle East, Turkey was struggling with internal problems that led to another military coup in 1980. After three years of military rule, Turkey under Turgut Özal developed an active foreign policy, which became much more visible and autonomous with the beginning of his presidency and especially after the end of the Cold War. A significant development that occurred during the last years of the Cold War was Turkey's application for membership in the European Union in 1987, which opened the way for the acceptance of the idea of the eventual membership of Turkey into the EU in 1989 by the European Commission.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Vali, *Bridge Across the Bosphorus*, 157–64.

¹⁶⁹ Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt I 1919-1980)*, 689.

¹⁷⁰ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 122.

During the Cold War, Turkey sided with the West, and the materialization of this choice is visible in Turkey's membership in NATO and OECD and its relations with Europe.¹⁷¹ The activity of Turkey in other regions and directions other than West was either passive or formulated on the basis of Western interest. Here, the Cyprus issue can be seen as an exception; however, it was long regarded as an internal issue and as a "national cause" in the foreign policy of Turkey.¹⁷² After the end of the Cold War, Turkey began to search for new identities and tried to adapt itself to the changing dynamics of international politics.

4.4. Turkish Foreign and Security Policy in the "New World Disorder"

The end of the Cold War brought the question of whether Turkey is an important regional actor as it used to be. While these discussions were becoming prominent in the international atmosphere, Turkey was aiming to maintain its status as an important actor in the geostrategic position that it occupies. Even though Turkey was hoping to achieve its policy of a Turkey stretching from Adriatic to the Great Wall of China, the liberation of Eastern Europe opened the way for the redefinition of Europe. In this new idea, Turkey was excluded from the "New European Home," and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact caused the emergence of the predictions that NATO was no longer a necessary institution, and the strategic importance of Turkey was diminished.¹⁷³ While these discussions were going on, the Gulf crisis proved that Turkey is still an important actor with a strong potential to influence the outcome of regional security issues.

In this period, different actors came with different foreign and security policy agendas, which were not considered during the Cold War period. Özal was the first person who initiated such a project by refusing the isolationist attitude of the political establishment in Turkey since it was not able to grasp the changing dynamics of the international

¹⁷¹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 392.

¹⁷² Behlül Özkan, "Making Cyprus a National Cause in Turkey's Foreign Policy, 1948–1965," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 15, no. 4 (2015): 541–562; Tanju Cılızoğlu, ed., *Çağlayangil'in Anıları* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2018), 351.

¹⁷³ Fahir Armaoğlu, *Türk Dış Politikası Tarihi* (İstanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2019), 268.

structure.¹⁷⁴ The support of Turkey to the USA's intervention to the Gulf War by allowing the use of its airspace showed that Turkey is still an important regional actor. However, the above-mentioned externalization of Turkey in the West could create the result of the redefinition of the strategic importance of Turkey from a European context into the Middle Eastern.¹⁷⁵ In order to reduce the likelihood of this, Turkey initiated two significant institutions, one in its northern and the other in its southern neighborhood. The establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), and the addition of new members to Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which was initially founded in 1985 but expanded towards the Turkic Republics in Central Asia in 1992, were the indicators that Turkey was aiming to establish relations in its immediate neighborhood in order to define a new role for itself in the post-Cold War atmosphere.¹⁷⁶

Another important step was taken in Turkey's relations with the European Union in 1996 when the Customs Union agreement came into force, and it is followed by the Helsinki Summit in which the EU considered Turkey as a candidate country.¹⁷⁷ In this process, Turkey's relations with Greece played an important role in the evolution of the accession process. When Turkey and Greece came close to fight a war over small and uninhabited islets in the Aegean Sea, the relations were tense. However, the 1999 earthquakes in Turkey and then in Greece cooled down the tension since both countries helped each other in their efforts to overcome the tragedies that the earthquakes created.¹⁷⁸ The aim of Turkey to join the West gained pace in this period through the increase in bilateral relations and the signing of agreements.

¹⁷⁴ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 122.

¹⁷⁵ Ian O. Lesser, "Bridge or Barrier? Turkey and the West After the Cold War" (Rand Corporation, January 1992), 46, <https://apps.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA428384>.

¹⁷⁶ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 123; "About ECO," Economic Cooperation Organization, accessed April 18, 2020, http://www.eco.int/general_content/86055-History.html?t=General-content.

¹⁷⁷ Funda Keskin Ata, "EU-Turkey Relations (1999–2016): Conditionality at Work?," in *Turkish Foreign Policy: International Relations, Legality and Global Reach*, ed. Pinar Gozen Ercan (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 105–6, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50451-3>.

¹⁷⁸ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 142.

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Balkans turned into a region of chaos, and the conflicts that started in the 1990s are, in a sense, frozen and waiting to be solved. Turkey, considering its historical ties in the Balkans, acted assertively in order to reach a positive outcome in these crises by utilizing the ending of superpower rivalry, which gave Turkey more room for maneuver in the region.¹⁷⁹ To this end, Turkey brought these issues to international organizations to catch the attention of the international community and contribute to the forces that were formed within the framework of the UN and NATO.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, Turkey encouraged the participation of Balkan states into the BSEC, and a new organization with the name Blackseafor supportive to the BSEC was formed to conduct some security-enhancing operation in 2001.¹⁸¹

While Turkey's relations with the West continue, Turkey was experiencing the rise of a new political movement that was aiming to create a unity with the Islamic World. The dependence on West and NATO was highly criticized, and if the new atmosphere in international politics can be interpreted, Turkey's foreign policy can be designed in accordance with the needs of a leader country instead of the continuation of a satellite state.¹⁸² Within this framework, the idea for a cooperation organization of developing Islamic countries was mooted by Erbakan, and the organization was formed with the participation of seven major developing Muslim countries together with Turkey in 1997.¹⁸³

Turkey's most troubled relations in the 1990s occurred related to the Kurdish question. The internal chaos that the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) created affected the relations

¹⁷⁹ Birgöl Demirtaş, "Reconsidering Turkey's Balkan Ties: Opportunities and Limitations," in *Turkish Foreign Policy: International Relations, Legality and Global Reach*, ed. Pinar Gozen Ercan (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 133, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50451-3>.

¹⁸⁰ İlhan Uzel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt II 1980-2001)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), 495–96.

¹⁸¹ Uzel, 522.

¹⁸² Turkish Grand National Assembly, "T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi" (1991), 250, <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/TBMM/d19/c002/tbmm19002020.pdf>.

¹⁸³ "Brief History of D-8," D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, accessed April 19, 2020, <http://developing8.org/about-d-8/brief-history-of-d-8/>.

with Syria, Greece, Italy, the USA, and paved the way for the development of a strategic partnership with Israel. The feeling of containment by enemies produced the strategy of “two and a half wars,” which could be balanced through cooperation with Israel together with the concentration of the focus on defensive spending.¹⁸⁴ After the capture of the leader of PKK, the increasing tension cooled down, and the above-mentioned mutual aids between Turkey and Greece opened the way for a new period.

During the last years of the 1990s and at the beginning of the new millennium, Turkey developed the discourse of civilizational bridge, and the initiative that brings representatives from the European countries and the Organization Islamic Cooperation in İstanbul can be seen as the materialization of this discourse.¹⁸⁵ Although Turkey acted in multiple directions in the aftermath of the Cold War, the internal crisis that it experienced limited its capacity to expand its influence. In addition to the internal problems, the ideal of Turkey to be the leader of the Islamic or Turkic world was not welcomed during this period. Soon it became clear that the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia did not search for a new “big brother” for themselves.¹⁸⁶

In short, Turkey was very active in the post-Cold War period compared to the earlier period. The foreign policy orientations of the pre-WWII period focused on isolation. The diplomatic rope-dancing that Turkey experienced during the Second World War challenged this neutralist attitude,¹⁸⁷ and the developments after the war resulted in Turkey’s joining into the West, which mostly shaped the foreign policy of Turkey. As can be seen in the example of the Jupiter missile crisis, Turkey is defined with the concept of overlay during the Cold War since the calculations of the external powers dominated the security considerations of Turkey. With the ending of the bipolarity, Turkey tried to conduct more autonomous foreign policy by focusing on the developments in other

¹⁸⁴ Şükrü Elekdağ, “İki Buçuk Savaş Stratejisi,” *Yeni Türkiye* 3 (1995): 516–522.

¹⁸⁵ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 142–43.

¹⁸⁶ Aydın, “Foucault’s Pendulum,” 7; Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 393.

¹⁸⁷ Vali, *Bridge Across the Bosphorus*, 35.

regions. The aims to increase Turkey's sphere of influence in its adjacent regions have left a legacy to the new millennium, which continued with a reformulation of the rhetoric in the Justice and Development Party (JDP) period. Moreover, the foreign and security policy activism of Turkey in the 1990s challenged the RSCT's conceptualization of insulator states. The position of Turkey between conflict-driven regions increases not only the need to be active in the surrounding regions but also the fears that being drawn into conflicts on all sides. The possibility of this was always present in the minds of the policymakers not because of the experiences in the distant Ottoman past but because of the presence of such instances in modern Turkey such as the formation of alliance pacts in the Balkans and the Middle East as a response to Italian, the Soviet, and Kurdish insurgency threats. The latest example of this was the development of the idea of "two and a half war" at the end of the 20th century. Therefore, Turkey became an important example of an insulator state, even though it was very active in its surrounding regions. The beginning of the new millennium with an event that unsettled international politics accompanied by a domestic change in Turkey. In this changing domestic and international context, the continuation of foreign policy activism requires a reassessment of the concept of insulator and the usefulness of it in the case of Turkey. Therefore, the next chapter will look at the developments in the foreign and security policy of Turkey between 2002 and 2011.

CHAPTER 5

TURKEY'S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY IN THE JDP PERIOD (2002-2011)

The historical background on Turkish foreign and security policy shows that “the Turkish Republic, which has inherited from the Ottoman Empire the historical role of serving as both a land bridge and a fortress connecting Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, constitutes an excellent example of how and to what degree geography determines a country's foreign policy.”¹⁸⁸ Although the pattern that shapes the foreign and security policy of Turkey circulated mainly around acting on the basis of its Western alliance, the ending of the Cold War opened up new directions and increased the countries’ ability to conduct their policies by having a relative degree of freedom from the limitations of the recent past’ bipolar politics. As presented in the previous chapter, the 1990s for Turkey were dynamic years in terms of the discussions on foreign policy, and alternative directions and strategies were present throughout the decade. However, the domestic sphere was chaotic, and the successive coalition governments reduced the likelihood of forming a coherent foreign and security policy strategy.¹⁸⁹ On the contrary, the beginning of the second millennium presents a critical turning point since the presence of a majority government of the JDP, under which the foreign and security policy of Turkey conducted without having almost any interruption until the present-day. During these years, discussions on whether Turkey was changing its orientation have dominated the literature on Turkish foreign policy.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, this chapter will first look at the

¹⁸⁸ Mustafa Aydın, “Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Historical Framework and Traditional Inputs,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 35, no. 4 (October 1, 1999): 157, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209908701290>.

¹⁸⁹ Starting from 1990, there had been 13 foreign ministers until the beginning of the JDP’s coming to power, which illustrates the effects of coalition governments on the conduct of foreign policy, see: “List of Former Ministers of Foreign Affairs,” Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed May 15, 2020, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/list-of-former-ministers-of-foreign-affairs.en.mfa>.

¹⁹⁰ Tarik Oğuzlu, “Middle Easternization of Turkey’s Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?,” *Turkish Studies* 9, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 3–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683840701813960>; Ziya Öniş, “Multiple Faces of the “New” Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique,” *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 1 (2011): 47–65.

changes and continuities in Turkish foreign and security policy by looking at the principles, and second, it will discuss Turkey's policy towards its surrounding regions.

5.1. Continuities and Changes in the Foreign and Security Policy of Turkey

While defining Turkey as an insulator, Buzan and Wæver have some suspicion of assigning this role to Turkey because of the activism that it had after the end of the Cold War. This foreign policy activism of Turkey continued during the period under scrutiny. This necessitates understanding the motivations behind such a change and through which means this change was orchestrated. Since the 1990s, the search for a new identity in foreign policy opened the way for active diplomacy in multiple regions and issues other than military security. Therefore, the foreign policy activism of Turkey in the first decade of the new millennium can easily be interpreted as a continuity. In this period, Turkey's relations with its neighbors and with the global actors utilized new tools and new discourses, and for some, it was just an increase in the level of activism with the usage of a blend of already existing approaches. Both approaches often see a level of continuity between the JDP and Turgut Özal's period. Since the history factor in defining an insulator is a key indicator, the level of continuity in foreign policy choices of states became an important element for the classification of states as insulators. Therefore, the multidirectional and multi-sectoral conduct of the foreign policy of Turkey in the post-Cold War era must be kept in mind in the analysis of the foreign and security policy of JDP.

In the analysis of the 2002-2011 period, one should also remember that there are continuities and changes within this period as well. While the continuity refers to the maintenance of a multilateral and proactive approach, the change became visible in the level of commitment that Turkey attached to the processes of Europeanization.¹⁹¹ This situation necessitates making a division within this period. While the first term of the JDP

¹⁹¹ Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era," *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683840802648562>.

government focusing on the increasing relations with the European Union in order to finalize the accession process, the second term mostly concentrates on improving relations with the countries in the Middle East as a response to the souring relations with the EU. Although there are alternative suggestions for periodization of this period, most of them make this division by looking at Europeanization process, and the ruptures in this realm are often interpreted as the shift of axis because of the response to this rupture came in the form of intensification of relations with other actors. While this thesis agrees with the division on the basis of the shift in the weight that Turkey put on the EU, it will not direct the whole attention to the processes Europeanization, since these relations cover only one region that Turkey is being active and being insulated by it. Therefore, it will examine Turkey's relations with the Middle East RSC and what is called as the post-Soviet great power RSC in addition to the European RSC. In other words, the foreign and security policy choices of Turkey in this period will be interpreted around the question of whether Turkey is an insulator. Therefore, it presents the reassessment of the description of Turkey's regional stance within the RSCT, which acknowledges the occurrence of changes in the conduct of foreign and security policy. However, before moving to the foreign and security policy of Turkey towards other regions, the sources and logic behind the activism of Turkey between 2002 and 2011 must be analyzed.

The activism of Turkey can be best understood by looking at the implementation of a new discourse and new tools. At this point, the "Davutoğlu factor" became an important starting point due to his influence in the conduct of the JDP's foreign policy and due to his significant work, *Strategic Depth*, which is considered as the first attempt to give Turkish foreign policy a dimension of past and future.¹⁹² According to his formulation, Turkey is a central state with a historical and strategic depth that necessitates a proactive stance instead of a reactive one.¹⁹³ While the historical depth refers to the Ottoman past,

¹⁹² Baskın Oran and Ünal Ünsal, "Dönemin Bilançosu," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 138.

¹⁹³ Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*.

which assigns Turkey the task of being active in issues that relates to the geography under the control of the Ottoman Empire at its heydays, the strategic depth focuses on the geopolitical location of Turkey at the center of three continents. In achieving that goal, five principles are mentioned: first, “balance between security and democracy”; second, “zero problem policy towards Turkey’s neighbors”; third, proactive diplomacy that aims to act before the occurrence of a crisis instead of reacting the event after its beginning; fourth, multi-dimensional foreign policy; and fifth, “rhythmic diplomacy” which refers to the presence of Turkey in international forums both as the participant of them both also as the organizer.¹⁹⁴ During this period, the most important factor in relations of Turkey with its neighbors is that they are usually centered on the concept of soft power. Through institutions, companies, cultural activities, etc., the influence of Turkey has gradually expanded to its neighbors and beyond.

The soft power of Turkey has increased with the presence of Turkey in international platforms. The activism that it displayed resulted in the description of the country in the international arena as a rising power.¹⁹⁵ In addition to this, Turkey finds itself in a position after the 9/11 attacks in which the merger of the Muslim identity and democracy is seen as a product that can be sold to the failed and/or authoritarian states across the Middle East that were seen as the sources of terrorism. In a period when the world occupied itself with the global war on terror, and the increase in the level of terrorist activities in different parts of the world, the proposal of Spain to start an initiative that can create a harmony between civilizations appealed to many countries including Turkey. This idea was not alien for Turkish politicians since an early attempt in this direction was actualized by İsmail Cem, the foreign minister of Turkey before the JDP period, and the political elite of the JDP was verbalizing their thoughts on cooperation and harmony between

¹⁹⁴ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007,” *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 1 (2008): 79–84; Oran and Ünsal, “Dönemin Bilançosu,” 139.

¹⁹⁵ Muharrem Ekşi, *The Rise and Fall of Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy During JDP* (LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2016), 49.

civilization in different occasions.¹⁹⁶ The development of the Alliance of Civilization initiative and Turkey's active role in it increased its strategic role in different regions, and the presence of democracy and Muslim identity together with secular values increased the model country discourse both in the making of foreign policy and in the eyes of the international community.¹⁹⁷

Another significant factor that had boosted the soft power of Turkey in this period was Turkey's emergence as an important donor through the contributions that it made to the development assistance programs.¹⁹⁸ This transition from being a foreign aid recipient country to the consideration of Turkey as an emerging international donor became a valuable asset in Turkey's relations with other countries in supporting the assertion of regional power.¹⁹⁹ Soft power capabilities of Turkey and its increasing influence as a model and donor country pave the way for the support of 153 countries that vote for Turkey's becoming of a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the term 2009-2010, and the activities in Turkey during this period and throughout the decade gave the confidence of branding Turkey as a "wise country."²⁰⁰

As mentioned at the beginning of the section, Turkey developed a new discourse in this period with the utilization of new tools and concepts. It is often said that most of the foreign and security policy choices of the JDP were formulated before 2002, and the thing that the JDP government did was just the continuation of the existing policy but with the intensification of them. In fact, *Strategic Depth*, which was the background of the foreign

¹⁹⁶ Ali Balcı and Nebi Miş, "Turkey's Role in the Alliance of Civilizations: A New Perspective in Turkish Foreign Policy?," *Turkish Studies* 9, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 389–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683840802267355>.

¹⁹⁷ Ekşi, *The Rise and Fall of Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy During JDP*, 64.

¹⁹⁸ For detailed information on Turkey's Foreign Development Aid, see: Oran and Ünsal, "Dönemin Bilançosu," 203–6.

¹⁹⁹ Musa Kulaklıkaya and Rahman Nurdun, "Turkey as a New Player in Development Cooperation," *Insight Turkey* 12, no. 4 (2010): 132.

²⁰⁰ "Dışişleri Bakanı Sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun 3. Büyükelçiler Konferansı'nın Açılışında Yaptığı Konuşma," T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, January 3, 2011, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/disisleri-bakani-sayin-hmet-davutoglu_nun-3_-buyukelciler-konferansi_nun-acilisinda-yaptigi-konusma_-03-ocak-2011.tr.mfa.

policy of Turkey, is described as nothing new but the repetition of the old and outmoded geopolitical concepts in a new framework.²⁰¹ However, the activism of Turkey in the international arena during this period is very much related to the existence of such a framework and the ability of the foreign policy vision to combine the different foreign and security policy choices of the political elites in the 1990s.

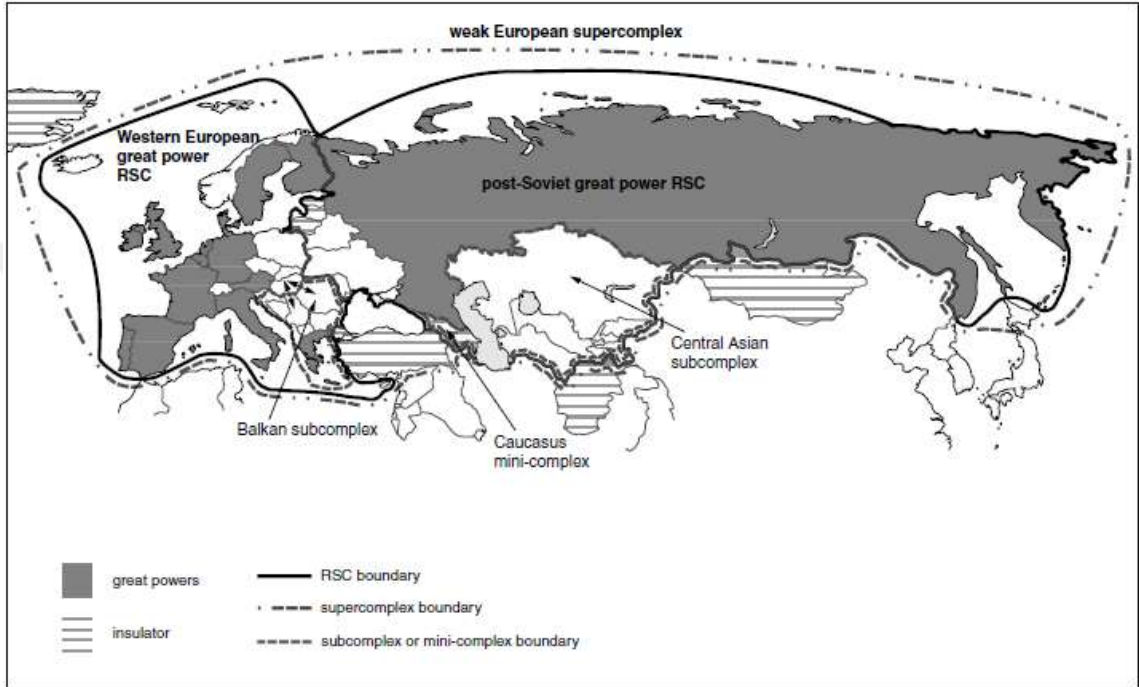
By keeping this background in mind, the following sections will be assigned to Turkey's relations with the three regional security complexes: the European, the Middle Eastern, and the post-Soviet great power RSCs. Although during this period, Turkey's relations with Africa, Asia, and Latin America had increased, the insulator status of Turkey is derived from the in-between situation between the above-mentioned RSCs. Therefore, they will not be discussed but will be kept in mind as the indicator of Turkey's activism that reaches beyond its borders and surroundings.

5.2. Turkey and the European Regional Security Complex

Turkey's relations with the European Union and the Balkans has increased significantly in the 1990s. Turkey's contribution to the peacekeeping operations in the Balkans had been an important asset for the 21st century Turkish foreign policy. Moreover, Turkey's increasing relations with Greece at the end of the 1990s opened the way for the candidacy status, even though the two countries faced severe problems throughout the decade. With this legacy, the JDP government directed its attention to the EU process. Another significant development was the creation of a model country image of Turkey after the 9/11 period when the global war on terror and the ideas of clash of civilization necessitated the formation of an alliance between civilizations. Moreover, throughout this process, the internal structure of the European RSC shifted significantly due to initiatives like the Mediterranean Process and the enlargement of the institution through the inclusion of new members into the EU, which resulted in the inclusion of three countries from the Balkan sub-complex into the EU. Since this chapter looks at the

²⁰¹ Bilge-Criss, "Komşularla Sıfır Sorun Çok Güzel Bir Söylem, Ancak Gerçekçi Değil," 145.

relations of Turkey with the European RSC, the attention will not be directed only to the EU but also to Turkey's relations with the Balkans and with some member states like Greece and later on, Bulgaria and Romania that are the immediate neighbors of Turkey.



Map 5.1. Turkey as an insulator between the European and post-Soviet RSCs (2003).²⁰²

During this period, the foreign and security policy of Turkey towards Europe is often regarded within the framework of EU accession and often divided into two periods with particular attention to the relations with the EU and the developments in the accession process.²⁰³ A similar division can be made towards Turkey's relations with the Balkans since Turkey's increasing activism and the utilization of new instruments coincide with the prevalence of ups and downs rather than the hopes of eventual EU membership. Moreover, the relations with Greece will be particularly discussed here since the

²⁰² Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 350.

²⁰³ Sanem Baykal and Tuğrul Arat, "AB'yle ilişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 337; Öniş and Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism"; Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 146.

developments in the Balkans and the responses of Turkey and Greece to those events created a rivalry between them. Therefore, this section will try to analyze the relations of Turkey towards Europe as a continent.

When the JDP came to power in November 2002, one of the first issues that came to the table was related to the Cyprus issue since it was the time when the Annan Plan was introduced. Turkey's support for the Annan Plan was a significant change compared to the attitudes of the previous government's foreign policy choices; however, the Plan delayed and renewed after the objections of the parties. The role of Cyprus in Turkish foreign and security policy has been discussed already, but the EU enlargement process and the plans of accepting Cyprus as a member of the EU became an important factor that determines Turkey's relation with the EU as well. During this process, a series of attempts failed, and the clashing interests of the Greek and Turkic Cypriots could not overcome, and thus, the aim of producing a framework for the solution of the long-term conflict could not be achieved. An important side of the issue related to the attitude of Greece, and the developing relations between these two countries continued at the beginning of the 21st century. At this point, the visits between the leaders of these countries indicate that the long-term hostilities are overlooked if not overcome, which is done mostly through the developments of relations in the domain of low politics, whereas the problems in the domain of high politics are continued. In addition to the mutual visits of leaders, the role of hostility between Turkey and Greece did not play a significant role in the domestic politics and election processes of these countries.²⁰⁴

On the topic of relations with the European Union, the JDP government take up from the legacy of its predecessors and start to focus on the Europeanization, and the reforms process started in Turkey in order to fulfill its responsibilities according to the Accession Partnership Plan of 2001 and the Copenhagen Criteria.²⁰⁵ At this point, the decision to

²⁰⁴ Ali Dayıoğlu, "Yunanistan'la İlişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 560–67.

²⁰⁵ Keskin Ata, "EU-Turkey Relations (1999–2016): Conditionality at Work?," 107.

accept the starting of negotiations at the Brussels Summit in December 2004, which is materialized approximately a year after this decision, is an important point since it was seen as a turning point in this relations. However, the difficulties that the enlargement process posed for the EU together with the changing attitudes of the parties towards each other, which were increased when the circles that oppose Turkish membership in the EU raised their voices both in Turkey and in the EU problems emerged in the accession process. In Turkey, the double standards in the approach of the EU towards Turkey are represented as problematic, and the government was accused of giving too many concessions. On the European side, when Merkel was offering another solution for Turkey in the form of a special status instead of full membership, Sarkozy consolidated its public by utilizing the discourse of opposing Turkey's accession.²⁰⁶ In addition to the resistance of France, issues related to Cyprus became a barrier for Turkey's accession process, and consecutive vetoes in the ongoing process resulted in Turkey's hesitation and its gradual distancing from the EU.²⁰⁷

In terms of the Balkans, Turkey tried to continue its relations with the region through the implementation of new instruments, and the problems derived from the dissolution of Yugoslavia shaped the agenda of Turkey.²⁰⁸ Although some claim that the increasing influence of the EU and Greece as a member state reduced the role of Turkey in the region,²⁰⁹ the implementation of soft power instruments especially in the last years of the first decade of 21st century increased the political weight of Turkey in the region. The establishment of bilateral links with Balkan countries contributed to the increase in Turkey's trade volume with and direct investments in the countries of the region almost six times in 2012 compared to the level in the year 2000. Together with this, the establishment of Yunus Emre Centers, increasing importance giving to the Turkish

²⁰⁶ Baykal and Arat, "AB'yle İlişkiler," 372–73.

²⁰⁷ Meltem Müftüler-Baç, "Assessing Turkey's Foreign Policy Choices towards the European Union," *Insight Turkey* 19, no. 1 (2017): 121.

²⁰⁸ Demirtaş, "Reconsidering Turkey's Balkan Ties: Opportunities and Limitations," 136.

²⁰⁹ İlhan Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 693.

language courses, the export of Turkish TV series, and scholarships given to the students increased the political weight of Turkey in the Balkans.²¹⁰

In terms of the persistent problems in the Balkan countries, Turkey established a multilateral framework for finding solutions to these problems. In terms of the rhetoric, the people and states of the region are seen as a soup consisting of various ingredients, and the removal of one piece will make it tasteless.²¹¹ Based on this rhetoric, the problems between states are tried to be solved by the conflicting parties and Turkey acting as a mediator. The establishment of a dialogue platform between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Turkey after the failure of the Butmir Process played a crucial role in providing some tangible results to the nonperforming order established in the Dayton agreement.²¹² Moreover, Turkey made an effort to the participation of Balkan countries into NATO and the EU and tried to motivate the existing members to contribute to the membership processes of the non-member Balkan states.²¹³

However, there are problematic sides of the Balkan activism of Turkey. Turkey's support for the membership of the countries into the EU created the problem of border issues since the Turkish trucks had to pay higher costs for their transition to Europe than before their membership, and the visa problem limited Turkey's entrance into the Balkans.²¹⁴ Moreover, Greece emerged as a model country for the Balkans in this period by being a member state to the EU and NATO. During the 1990s, Turkey's involvement in the region was in accordance with the USA, and its gradual departure from the region reduced the role of Turkey since its membership process in the EU was not moving fast as the other Balkan countries.²¹⁵ In addition to this, the interpretation of Turkey's discourse in foreign policy in the region was different from what Turkey imagined. The narrative in the

²¹⁰ Demirtaş, "Reconsidering Turkey's Balkan Ties: Opportunities and Limitations," 140–43.

²¹¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "A Forward Looking Vision for the Balkans | SAM," 2011, 6, <http://sam.gov.tr/a-forward-looking-vision-for-the-balkans/>.

²¹² Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler," 2017, 698–99.

²¹³ Davutoğlu, "A Forward Looking Vision for the Balkans | SAM," 10.

²¹⁴ Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler," 2017, 694.

²¹⁵ Uzgel, 707.

Strategic Depth that consists of arguments such as the description of the near basins of Turkey as a kind of *lebensraum* where the security of it must be provided, the references to the Ottoman legacy by describing the empire as a unique entity and Turkey as a successor of the Ottoman Empire has the responsibility towards the region in every aspect of politics are interpreted as being expansionist and away from entering equal relations with its neighbors.²¹⁶ Especially after Ahmet Davutoğlu's appointment as the foreign minister of Turkey, his call for integration for the Balkan countries with the leadership of Turkey increased the hesitation among the Balkan countries towards Turkey.²¹⁷ Even though it had limitations both in the discourse and in the field, Turkey increased its activity in the Balkans, and it utilized the ongoing process of EU membership during this period.

While Turkey's relations with the European Union and the Balkans are improving until 2005/6, the ups and downs in the relations are coupled with the effects of the 2008-9 global economic crisis. This process not only brought forth the problems in the European integration but also increased the burden for the EU to support the affected members from the crisis. The internal problems in the EU and the opposition to Turkey's membership pushed Turkey to construct its foreign policy on the belief that without being dependent on the EU's foreign policy, Turkey's effectiveness in its region can become more significant.²¹⁸ In addition to the opposition of certain member states to Turkey's accession, the visa requirements for Turkish citizens created tension both in the Turkish public but also in the relations. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Turkey was the only country that is subject to visa requirements among the members and potential member states of the EU, and even the states that are not given the candidate status are hoping to enjoy the visa liberation.²¹⁹ In short, the achievement of

²¹⁶ Herkül Millas, "Stratejik Derinlik Kitabı - Yurtdışından Okunduğunda," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 137–38.

²¹⁷ Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler," 2017, 694.

²¹⁸ Baykal and Arat, "AB'yle İlişkiler," 399.

²¹⁹ Baykal and Arat, 395.

the early years in the JDP period gradually slowed down due to domestic and international problems.

Another aspect of Turkey's relations toward the region was centered on relations with Greece that explained at the beginning of the section briefly. The enhancement of the relations between Turkey and Greece was driven by the Europeanization process in both countries in addition to the cooperation between non-governmental actors.²²⁰ However, problems related to the Aegean Sea and Cyprus, which are considered as issues of high politics, had not enjoyed any significant improvement. Especially, the natural resources of the Eastern Mediterranean increased the tension and expanded the complicated situation of Cyprus islands with the involvement of Middle Eastern countries into the picture. Turkey regularly denied the efforts of the Republic of Cyprus to create exclusive economic zones with Egypt and the support of Israel and Greece to these efforts. Turkey had to pay the price for any action not only in the relations with the EU but also with the Middle East.²²¹ Moreover, the increasing relations between Greece and Israel took the form of a military cooperation agreement in 2011.²²²

To sum up, the increasing relations between Turkey and the EU and Turkey's soft power policies increased its visibility and activeness in the region compared to the previous periods. This enhancement in relations, later on, resulted in consideration of Turkey within the European regional security complex.²²³ However, the steps that are taken in the process of accession gradually slowed down, especially after 2007, when the opposition to Turkey's membership became a consolidating policy in the domestic politics of certain member countries. Moreover, despite the increasing relations of Turkey with Bulgaria and Greece, their membership status in the EU created new

²²⁰ Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: Rhetoric or Reality?," *Political Science Quarterly* 123, no. 1 (2008): 135–36.

²²¹ Kudret Özersay, "Kıbrıs Konusu," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 674–77.

²²² Dayıoğlu, "Yunanistan'la İlişkiler," 575.

²²³ Diez, "Turkey, the European Union and Security Complexes Revisited."

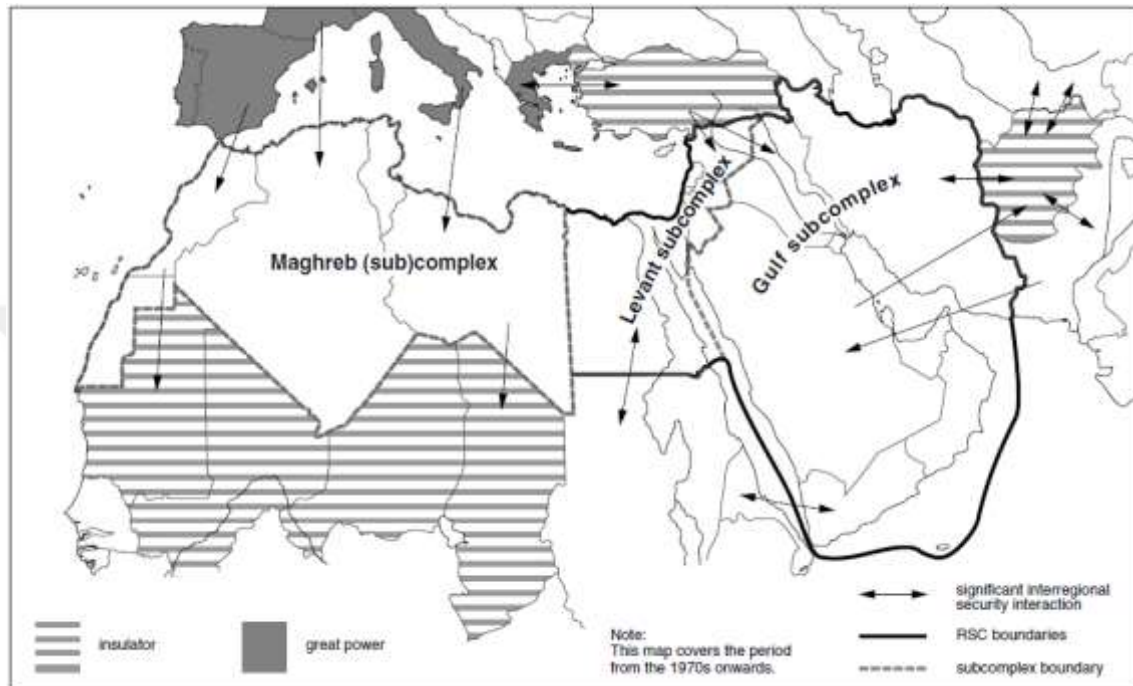
problems, and the continent with its institutions and states lost its accessibility compared to the earlier period. Turkey's outsider status in the continent due to its identity, gradually reinforced in the political and geographical sense when the accession process entered into a stalemate.

5.3. Turkey and the Middle Eastern Regional Security Complex

In the second half of the first decade of the 21st century, discussions on Turkey's foreign policy centered on the dispute over whether Turkey is becoming Middle Eastern by changing its axis from West to East. A glance at these discussions is given at the beginning of this chapter. It is no doubt that Turkey's foreign policy activism in the Middle East increased significantly. However, Turkey's relations with the Middle had been an important aspect of foreign policy, especially after the late 1990s. Relations with the Middle East were improving at the end of the 20th century and until the beginning of the JDP period, but they were under the shadow of the EU accession process, which represented the final stage of the long-term foreign policy orientation. Moreover, the politics of the Middle East were so worrisome and dynamic at the beginning of the new millennium due to the impact of the 9/11 attacks on the region. Therefore, the efforts and activism of Turkey in the Middle East accompanied the process of EU accession in the JDP period as well. However, the entering of relations with the EU into a stalemate process, especially after 2007, increased the role of the Middle East in foreign policy decisions.

The ascent of the Middle East from the shadow of the EU process and the increasing of concerns of Turkey in different sectors of security due to the dynamic political nature of the Middle East need to be assessed to understand the role of Turkey's role in its geography. Another critical factor here is Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern RSC are always affected by the attitude of the great powers. Since both superpowers and great powers are able to project their power in not only their region but also other

regions around the world,²²⁴ the factor of external powers must be kept in mind and will be mentioned with reference to some key events in the following paragraphs.



Map 5.2. Turkey as an insulator and the Middle Eastern RSC (2003).²²⁵

Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern countries are developed on the basis of security considerations since the beginning of the Republic, mainly due to the cross bordering effects of ethnicity. The presence of such threats to the territorial integrity of the country became much more visible after the 1980s. In addition to Turkey's long-term Kurdish problem, the wars in the neighboring regions are also a concern for Turkey that left a considerable impact on the JDP period. A destabilized Middle East increased a significant level of interregional security interactions as it was the case in the aftermath of the Gulf War with the fleeing of half-million Iraqi Kurds to Turkey. In addition to the increasing tensions in the Middle East, Turkey suffered from domestic problems, which led to an economic crisis in 2001 and increased Turkey's desire to find economic and

²²⁴ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 34–35.

²²⁵ Buzan and Wæver, 189.

diplomatic contacts in the Middle East. All these problems and concerns were coupled with the US pressure on Iraq and Syria after the terrorist attack in the USA in 2001, which pushed Turkey to be an active power in the region.²²⁶

Soon after the election of JDP, the outspoken invasion plans of the USA became more real, and they asked for Turkey's cooperation since the presence of American bases in Turkey would make the invasion more convenient. However, the suspicious image of Turkey in the Arab countries would strengthen if Turkey opens the way for another Muslim country's invasion.²²⁷ On the other hand, the newly emerging good economic relations with the region and especially with Iraq would hamper the relieving economy of Turkey after the economic crisis. However, the most important consideration was the possibility of the emergence of a Kurdish state in the north of Iraq. All these problems prolonged the negotiation process for the American use of Turkish soil during the invasion, and it will end with the rejection of the motion on the transit of troops and equipment of the USA in the parliament. Although Turkey's position criticized by the West during the process of negotiation, the rejection of the motion provided a base for the continuation of relations with its neighbors and appreciated by the international community.²²⁸

From the perspective of Turkey, Iraq's invasion not only created the feared Kurdish autonomous region in Northern Iraq but also increased the role of Iran in the region.²²⁹ However, after the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, Turkey and Iran managed to reverse the picture by being able to cooperate on the Kurdish problem that was the basis of the tense relations for many years, and their overlapping ideas on the future of Iraq hidden the disputes over regional issues.²³⁰ Another important factor was the revitalization of

²²⁶ Nuri Yeşilyurt, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 401.

²²⁷ Oran and Ünsal, "Dönemin Bilançosu," 145.

²²⁸ Oran and Ünsal, 147.

²²⁹ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 166.

²³⁰ Yeşilyurt, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler," 451–53.

the Neighborhood Forum Initiative with the name Iraq's Neighbors Forum to understand the approaches and concerns of the neighboring countries and to reach solutions on tackling the problems arising from Iraq.²³¹ Through this Forum and bilateral relations, Turkey was able to understand the position of Iran as well as other states. Moreover, the invasion did not affect the economic relations, and Turkey's exports to Iraq increased steadily by reaching a point that is ten times higher in 2011 than the volume in 2003.²³²

A similar trend was also visible in Turkey's relations with Iran in terms of the economy. However, Turkey's imports were increasing at a higher pace due to the dependence on Iranian natural gas. However, the establishment of good relations in regional affairs and the economy did not prohibit the emergence of problematic relations in other areas. Iran's development of a nuclear program created an international tension in which Turkey hoped to play a mediator role and made some attempts in this direction. Even though Turkey did not oppose the development of a nuclear program for providing energy, it strongly opposed Iran's emergence as a nuclear power in military terms.²³³ The negotiations at the international level did not produce a result, which was initiated mainly to protect the NATO members from Iran's developing missile capacity.²³⁴ Turkey's acceptance of this plan deteriorated the relations between Turkey and Iran, and in the same years, the start of Arab uprisings increased the distancing between the two countries.

In the case of Turkish-Syrian relations, the tense atmosphere in the late 1990s left its place to the increasing partnership and cooperation. The historical problems such as the Hatay problem and the water, and similar to the Iranian case, the strong presence of the USA in the region increased the insecurity of Syria, and Turkey was an ideal partner to

²³¹ Meliha Benli Altunışık, "Worldviews and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 40 (ed 2009): 184–87, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0896634600005264>.

²³² Yeşilyurt, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler," 408.

²³³ Faruk Sönmezoğlu, *Son Onyıllarda Türk Dış Politikası (1991-2015)* (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2016), 591.

²³⁴ İlhan Uzgel, "ABD ve NATO'la İlişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 317.

overcome this insecurity.²³⁵ The relations between Turkey and Syria until the beginning of the uprisings in Syria can be divided into two: the rapprochement on the basis of common threat perception between 2003 and 2007 and the deepening relations and integration after 2007.²³⁶ The first period refers to the cooperation between the actors on the agreement that the emergence of a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq would be detrimental for both countries. During this process, Syria supported Turkey's stance against PKK, which came at its latest phase with the conduct of a joint operation against PKK group and with the support of Turkey's cross-border operation to Northern Iraq.²³⁷ In the second period, the free trade agreement between the two countries entered into force, which increased the trade volume significantly. Moreover, the trust between the two governments become more visible with the beginning of the role of Turkey as a mediator in Syrian-Israeli relations.²³⁸

The developing relations with Syria also opened the way for the establishment of contact between Turkey and Lebanon since the latter's foreign and domestic politics was highly influenced and shaped by the presence of the Syrian military in the country. However, the internal crisis of the country continued throughout this period. Even though it was not problem-free, Turkey's relations with the country became a valuable asset for Turkey's Mediterranean policy.²³⁹

Turkey established relations with actors and became an increasingly active player in disputes other than the ones that occurred in its neighboring countries. Turkey's relations with Israel are shaped mainly on the basis of the Palestine issue during this period. Especially with the beginning of the Second *Intifada*, Turkey raised its attention

²³⁵ For a detailed analysis of the international and domestic factors of the rapprochement between Turkey and Syria, see: Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür, "From Distant Neighbors to Partners? Changing Syrian-Turkish Relations:," *Security Dialogue*, 2006, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010606066172>.

²³⁶ Özlem Tür, "Türkiye'nin Irak ve Suriye ilişkileri," in *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, ed. Faruk Sönmezoglu, Nurcan Özgür Baklacioğlu, and Özlem Terzi (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2012), 593–615.

²³⁷ Yeşilyurt, "Orta Doğu'yla ilişkiler," 414.

²³⁸ Tür, "Türkiye'nin Irak ve Suriye ilişkileri," 611–12.

²³⁹ Yeşilyurt, "Orta Doğu'yla ilişkiler," 415–19.

to the humanitarian dimension of the conflict and took up a position on the side of the Palestinians in international platforms. This trend became more visible in the JDP period compared to the previous decade. Turkey's developed strategic relations with Israel in the 1990's in order to establish a balance against the threat posed by Syria. However, as Turkey's relations improved with Syria, Turkey's strategic ties with Israel weakened since Israel had a historical enmity with Syria.²⁴⁰ Even though the balance changed, Turkey's role as a mediator and its attempts to promote multilateral relations provided a base for discussion for Syria and Israel. However, Turkey's effort in these relations did not produce a positive outcome.

As discussed above, Turkey became more vocal in the Palestinian-Israeli dispute by playing an active role in international platforms for the solution of the conflict, developing a discourse that is sensitive to the Palestinians, creating a dialogue mechanism among all actors in the conflict, and deepening the economic and humanitarian relations with the Palestinians.²⁴¹ After the Gaza War, the worsening relations between Turkey and Israel reached its peak with two significant events. The first one was the speech of Prime Minister Erdoğan at the Davos Summit in 2009 when he strongly criticized Israel due to the deaths of civilians. The second one occurred in the Mediterranean when Israeli soldiers in the international waters attacked a ship named Mavi Marmara that was carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza, and the raid resulted in the death of nine Turkish citizens. These two events increased the distancing of Turkey and Israel, whereas heavy criticism of Turkey against Israel and the supportive attitude towards the Palestinian case resulted in the development of a friendly approach in the Arab countries.

Turkey's activism is also seen in the Gulf during this period. Similar to the relations with other states, the invasion of Iraq became a game-changer in these relations. Gulf states'

²⁴⁰ İlker Aytürk, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri," in *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, ed. Faruk Sönmezoğlu, Nurcan Özgür Baklacioğlu, and Özlem Terzi (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2012), 618.

²⁴¹ Yeşilyurt, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler," 429–30.

reliance on the presence of Iraq as a balancer against the Iranian influence in the region had to be recalculated after the Iraq War, and Turkey was considered as the new balancer for Gulf countries.²⁴² Moreover, after the 9/11 attacks, the West looked at Gulf countries with suspicion due to the possible connection between the terrorist organizations and the Gulf capital.²⁴³ While Turkey was trying to overcome the difficulties of economic crisis, the Gulf countries that searched new markets for investment found Turkey attractive and established close relations.

Although good relations established across the region, Turkey's activism in the Middle East affected significantly from Arab uprisings that started in Tunisia and spread to the whole region within a very short period. The developments in Tunisia and Egypt were very sudden, and the uprisings ended up with changes in the regimes. However, when the uprisings spread to Libya, it became a real challenge for Turkish foreign policy since the beginning of the civil war in the country resulted in the discussions of military intervention in Libya, an approach that Turkey strongly opposed at the beginning by advocating a humanitarian approach.²⁴⁴ Soon after, the military intervention became inevitable, and Turkey finds itself by supporting the NATO mission. During the Arab uprisings, Turkey faced a dilemma. Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, it managed to establish good economic relations with the authoritarian leaders of the Middle East, and the sacrifice of the self-interest was not an easy decision, but Turkey managed to present a degree of pragmatism in a situation that required the reversal of policies or making some adaptation.²⁴⁵

The lesson for Turkey from the uprisings in Libya is that the public pressures on the regime change were so intense that without the support of regional or global powers,

²⁴² Meliha B. Altunışık and Lenore G. Martin, "Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East under AKP," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 577, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2011.622513>.

²⁴³ Yeşilyurt, "Orta Doğu'yla ilişkiler," 434.

²⁴⁴ Yeşilyurt, 426.

²⁴⁵ Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and the Arab Spring: Between Ethics and Self-Interest," *Insight Turkey* 14, no. 3 (2012): 46–47.

the continuation of the regimes would not be possible.²⁴⁶ The distant uprisings came to the border of Turkey with the start of the demonstrations in Syria, and Turkey utilized its previous experiences and focused on the possible effects of a prolonged crisis for the Kurdish citizens of Syria. Turkey's position in the Syrian uprisings can be summed up as from suggestions to the regime for listening to its people to harsh critics, which led to the deterioration of economic and bilateral relations at the end of 2011.

In sum, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 brought new opportunities and challenges to Turkey since it became a substantial part of the power calculations in the Middle East. Increasing relations with the states and groups within states reversed the economic crisis of 2001. During this period, historical disputes left aside, and cooperation in every domain was the primary approach of Turkey. Moreover, the EU candidacy status and Turkey's NATO membership increased its influence in the region. However, the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and the beginning of Arab uprisings changed the status quo in the region significantly and opened the way for the discussion of the main foreign policy vision of the JDP government. Nevertheless, the changing of the status quo in the region did not result with the inclusion of Turkey into the Middle Eastern RSC, even though it increased Turkey's influence in the region. Turkey tried to approach the region with the consideration of the possible effects of it in other regions and sided with the great powers in certain issues. Moreover, the agenda setting role that Turkey tried to establish especially after the beginning of the Arab Spring increased the suspicions of the Middle Eastern countries about Turkey's activism in the region.

5.4. Turkey and the Post-Soviet Great Power Regional Security Complex

As mentioned before, Turkey is located between three RSCs. The Post-Soviet space is the last regional setting that Turkey's foreign and security policy towards the region will be assessed. The Post-Soviet great power RSC, according to the RSCT, consists of four subgroupings: the Baltic states, the western group of states, the Caucasus, and Central

²⁴⁶ Yeşilyurt, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler," 429.

Asia; and what unifies them is the presence of Russia as a great power and of a coalition that restrains the Russian influence.²⁴⁷ After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkey's relations towards the region was concentrated on Central Asia with the hope to establish relations with and to act as a leader of the Turkic Republics. Soon after, the limitations of extending the Turkish influence to the Great Wall of China became visible. Therefore, Turkey shifted its focus to its adjacent region, the Caucasus, by leaving up the development of its influence in Central Asia, which had created a competition between Russia and Turkey. Turkey's approach towards the Caucasus is centered on energy projects and it normalized the relations with the Russian Federation starting with the beginning of the second millennium. Moreover, international and regional developments increased the distancing of Turkey from Central Asia. The establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001 bolstered the presence of Russia in the region, and China became a new actor that wants to solve the border disputes with its neighbors. In addition to this, the invasion of Afghanistan and the opening of US military bases in the region reduced the possible role of Turkey.²⁴⁸

However, these developments do not mean that Central Asia lost its importance in the making of foreign policy. In fact, with the failure of Turkey as a big brother project, Turkey became able to analyze the limitations and focused on the formulation of realistic policies such as the commitment to the concrete projects in the field of energy.²⁴⁹ This was also related to the existence of security problems in Turkey's adjacent region, and the process of Europeanization. The ties with the EU and the energy demand of the Union affected Turkey's relations with the energy-exporting countries and the discourse of being an energy corridor or regional energy hub becoming more visible.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 397.

²⁴⁸ Mustafa Aydın, "Kafkasya ve Orta Asya'yla İlişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 463.

²⁴⁹ Ertan Efeğil, "Turkish AK Party's Central Asia and Caucasus Policies: Critiques and Suggestions," *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 2, no. 3 (2008): 166–172.

²⁵⁰ Aydın, "Kafkasya ve Orta Asya'yla ilişkiler," 466.

During this period, the realistic attitude did not reduce the establishment of economic and political relations. With the legacy of Turkey as a model discourse, small and middle scale enterprises that entered into the markets of newly emerging states in Central Asia proved to be beneficial.²⁵¹ Although Turkey's economy in the 2000s developed significantly, the share of the region in Turkey's exports remained insufficient compared to the other regions.²⁵² In terms of political relations, diplomatic visits were an important source of activity in this period. High-level visits and the establishment of economic and political contacts enable Turkey to understand the limits and possibilities of the region in a better way. The Summits of Statesmen of Turkish Language Speaking Countries have continued to be a ground for communication, which institutionalized with the creation of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States in 2009. It played a significant role in the soft cultural diplomacy of Turkey that was conducted not only in Central Asia but also in other adjacent regions.²⁵³ In short, Turkey maintains its relations with Central Asia between 2002 and 2011, but it was not focused on the discourse of the 1990s.

During this period, Turkey's relations with the Caucasus were more dynamic. Turkey's aim to be an energy corridor based on the presence of projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) and Nabucco, which necessitate the maintenance of peace in the region. The policy of zero-problem with neighbors is an essential factor in this goal, considering the historical enmity between Turkey and Armenia. However, without the presence of this problem, the Caucasus is vulnerable to the turning of disputes between the countries into dangerous conflicts. With the beginning of the conflict between Russia and Georgia, which ended up with the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent units by Russia, the attention given to the Caucasus increased in Turkish foreign policy.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Hakan Güneş, "Türkiye-İsrail ilişkileri," in *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, ed. Faruk Sönmezoğlu, Nurcan Özgür Baklacioğlu, and Özlem Terzi (İstanbul: Der Yayınları, 2012), 728.

²⁵² Aydın, "Kafkasya ve Orta Asya'yla ilişkiler," 510.

²⁵³ Hakan Fidan, "Turkish Foreign Policy towards Central Asia," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 114, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448950903507560>.

²⁵⁴ Aydın, "Kafkasya ve Orta Asya'yla ilişkiler," 476.

The exacerbation of these frozen conflicts increased the attention given to the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. For Turkey to be active in the solution of the border dispute, it found reducing the tension between Turkey and Armenia necessary, and the attempts to find common ground between these two countries increased its pace during this period. The talks on the opening of the border between Turkey and Armenia and the normalization of relations faced with the critics of Azerbaijan.²⁵⁵ In terms of political relations, Turkey's attempts to solve its problems with its neighbors created new problems, and no positive outcome emerged. In addition, an increasing number of countries recognized the 1915 events as genocide during this period with the effectiveness of the Armenian diaspora.

As argued above, Turkey concentrated its focus on energy-related projects. Turkey's growing economy and infrastructure increased its dependence on oil and natural gas. The import of energy for the continuation of economic growth was necessary but also an expensive business. To reduce the amount of money that is paid for energy, the construction of pipelines that crosscuts Turkey was seen as a desirable solution since it was possible to reduce the level of payment but also gain from the transaction. Nabucco and Shah Deniz projects were developed within this framework. Unlike the BTC, these two projects did not finalize in the period under scrutiny. Another dimension of these projects was the European countries' desire to reduce the dependency on Russia in terms of energy. However, the Russian response to this was the development of other alternatives in order to sustain and increase its share in the energy market, which necessitated cooperation with Turkey.²⁵⁶ Therefore, the conflicting interest of Russia and Turkey in Central Asia in the 1990s had to be revisited in the first decade of the 2000s.

The rivalry between Turkey and Russia left its place to cooperation with the efforts under the foreign ministry of İsmail Cem and the "zero problems with neighbors" policy of the JDP government. The American attitude after the 9/11 attacks towards Afghanistan and

²⁵⁵ Aydın, 478–82.

²⁵⁶ Aydın, 517–22.

Iraq posed serious threats for Turkey and Russia since the former increased American presence in Central Asia and the Black Sea, and the latter presented a danger to the emergence of a Kurdish state in Turkey's neighbors. Therefore, Turkey and Russia came closer due to different events but with the same approach since both of them interpreted these developments differently from the USA.²⁵⁷ During these invasions, certain circles in Turkey were criticizing Turkey's Western and European orientation and offering Eurasianism as an alternative.²⁵⁸ Being on the same page with respect to regional developments and having supportive voices in public dimension, bilateral relations increased not only in energy-related issues but also in defense, economy, and tourism, which reached its heights when the visa exemption agreement was signed in 2010.²⁵⁹

Even though the search for alternatives in energy supply was in the agenda of Turkey, and the beginning of the BTC project that excluded Russia increased the tension in relations, the cooperation in terms of energy became visible when the Blue Stream project finalized in 2005, which aimed direct transfer of energy to Turkey.²⁶⁰ During these years, Russia became the leading supplier of energy to Turkey by meeting 68 percent of the country's total natural gas demand, and the value of exported goods to Russia increased significantly.²⁶¹ Another significant indicator of increased cooperation is the decision to use local currencies in trade, which increased the trade volume between these two countries.²⁶² Another development in the realm of energy was the agreement on the construction of a nuclear energy plant in Southern Turkey in 2010. Although there

²⁵⁷ Fiona Hill and Omer Taspinar, "Turkey and Russia: Axis of the Excluded?," *Survival* 48, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 86–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330600594256>.

²⁵⁸ Emel Akçali and Mehmet Perinçek, "Kemalist Eurasianism: An Emerging Geopolitical Discourse in Turkey," *Geopolitics* 14, no. 3 (August 21, 2009): 550–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040802693564>.

²⁵⁹ Mitat Çelikpala, "Rusya Fedarasyonu ile İlişkiler," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 532.

²⁶⁰ Çelikpala, 546.

²⁶¹ Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization*, 173.

²⁶² Çelikpala, "Rusya Fedarasyonu ile İlişkiler," 543.

are many disputes on the construction of this plant, it became one of the main issues in the economic relations of Turkey and Russia.²⁶³

Although the cooperation of the two countries increased to a great extent between 2002 and 2011, there are problematic relations in some cases that sometimes caused the souring of relations and showed their diverging approaches. Among these issues, the Cyprus question, Russia's position on the Armenian genocide, and both countries' suspicious approach in terms of terrorism are the main sources of problematic relations. Russian relations with the Republic of Cyprus and Greece continued during this period, and thus, it used the veto power for the UN and Turkish plans on the resolution of the conflict in many instances. Although Russia reminded the Northern Cyprus issue to the international community when Kosovo's independence recognized, the overall attitude did not change, which brought Turkey and Russia once again to the opposing sides in the natural gas exploration policies of Southern Cyprus. In terms of Turkey's relations with Armenia, the Russian position was to support the diplomatic opening. However, the recognition of the 1915 events as genocide increased the suspicion of Turkey towards Russia. Similar suspicion was also present in the fight against terrorism. Both Russian non-recognition of the PKK as a terrorist organization and the presence of Turkish identity holder terrorists in Chechenia resulted in the sustenance of these suspicions in two countries' relations.²⁶⁴

The more vivid example of diverging and conflicting interests emerged after the beginning of the uprisings in Syria in 2011. It represented the final stage of the process, starting with the "Five Days War" in Georgia since in both instances the two countries came to the brink of a proxy war.²⁶⁵ The different opinions about the uprisings in Syria

²⁶³ Vügar İmanov, "Türkiye-Rusya İlişkileri 2010," in *Türk Dış Politikası Yıllığı 2010* (Ankara: SETA, 2011), 301–32, <http://earsiv.sehir.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11498/269>; Çelikpala, "Rusya Fedarasyonu ile ilişkiler," 550–55.

²⁶⁴ Çelikpala, "Rusya Fedarasyonu ile ilişkiler," 556–57.

²⁶⁵ Şener Aktürk, "A Realist Assessment of Turkish-Russian Relations 2002–2012: From Peak to the Dip" (İstanbul: Caspian Strategy Institute, 2013), 13.

and the outcomes of the civil war affected the relations between the two countries negatively. However, considering the position of them during the Cold War, the achievements of the 2000s increased the possibility of a strategic partnership with the feeling of exclusion. Even though energy relations tied Turkey with Russia and Caucasus, the problematic relations, in some instances, reinforced the status of Turkey as an outsider in the region.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: RECONSIDERING TURKEY'S DESIGNATION AS AN INSULATOR STATE

The designation of Turkey as an insulator state is subject to criticism and alternative explanations developed instead of this concept. Turkey's foreign and security policy between 2002 and 2011 became more active not only in its adjacent region but also reached to East Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Considering the RSCT's designation of great powers as having the capability to extend their power beyond their region, Turkey's activism, in the period under scrutiny, necessitated the reconsideration of the concept of insulator. In order to do that, the thesis directs attention to four dimensions of the term: geography, history, perceptions of states, and the amity-enmity relations between the actors in regional settings. In this chapter, each of them will be shortly discussed by giving references to the discussions in the earlier chapters.

The role of geography is a central attribute of the concept of insulator. The designation of the countries as insulators depends heavily on the topography and water that limit the movement of security threats as well as the projection of power.²⁶⁶ Although this is true in terms of the traditional security threats, in a globalizing world, the economic and environmental threats can easily cross the natural barriers. However, it is still true that actors in the international system are mainly concerned with the immediate threat. As put by Buzan and Wæver, "most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones."²⁶⁷ Therefore, the geography of actors has a defining role in their security interdependencies. Turkey, as a peninsular country, is separated by waters in its south and north. Although this situation is valid for the Western border of Turkey, the presence of many islands became the source of threat due to the problems related to the

²⁶⁶ Mearsheimer argues the limiting effect of large bodies of water in the offensive abilities of countries: John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Updated edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 44.

²⁶⁷ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 4.

continental shelf and territorial waters. In the eastern and southeastern border of Turkey, high mountains could provide the same role as large bodies of water, but became the security umbrella of the PKK for many years. These natural borders became the source of Turkey's indifference to the developments in its neighbors for most of its history unless they present an immediate danger to the territorial integrity of Turkey. This relative isolation of Turkey provided the base for remaining outside of the security interdependencies of the countries in its neighbors. However, when it comes to the issues that had risks for Turkey's security, it responded by forming alliances to face those threats as it was the case during the 1930s in the creation of Balkan and Sadabad Pacts or after the end of the Second World War, Turkey's alliance with the USA in order to balance the threat that is posed by the Soviet Union.

The same situation continued after the end of the Cold War since the emergence of conflicts in its surrounding regions led Turkey to involve in them in order to reduce the likelihood of their spread to its borders. Turkey's involvement in the Balkan Wars or the position that it took at the Gulf War can be presented as examples of this situation. However, Turkey's activity is much more visible in the post-Cold War period due to the relative autonomy of the regional conflicts from the penetration of bipolar politics. Although both the Gulf War and the War in the Balkans attract the attention of the great powers, they did not result in the penetration of two superpowers directly or through a proxy war as it was the case during the Cold War years. In a similar fashion, Turkey tried to prevent the emergence of regional conflicts, especially if they constitute a threat to its interest or security between 2002 and 2011. Turkey's stance for the creation of peace in Georgia after the Five Days War, for the sustenance of the territorial integrity of Iraq, and for the creation of peaceful coexistence in the Cyprus issue within the framework of proposed UN plans can be given as examples to Turkey's aim of preventing the spillover effects of these conflicts.

Although Turkey's accession process to the European Union is a long journey, the start of accession talks and the efforts of Turkey to complete the conditions of membership presented another case of involvement. Even though Turkey's accession was not guaranteed at that time the acceptance of Turkey as a candidate country, led scholars to consider Turkey within the European RSC due to the fact that it entered into a path that will result in eventual membership.²⁶⁸ However, the developments after 2005 showed that the in-betweenness of the country continued. As discussed in the previous chapter, the distancing of Turkey from the EU process is also interpreted as the distancing from the European RSC, which resulted in the inclusion of Turkey into the Middle Eastern RSC. It is true that Turkey increased its activity in the region by establishing good relations with the countries that were considered as hostile before. However, the emergence of new conflicts led Turkey to act in line with the West in order to prevent the threats to its territorial integrity, as it was the case in the early stage of the Syrian civil war.

As argued by Buzan and Wæver, the transfer of some security threats occurs more easily over adjacent regions, but some can affect every actor in international politics. Economic and environmental security threats are examples of the latter. After the end of the Cold War, Turkey increased its relations with its neighbors and beyond through reaching agreements in the realm of economy. Especially after the economic crisis in 2001, this trend had become more visible. Turkey's attempt to reduce the tension that continued for decades mostly derived from economic concerns. The increasing economic ties with Syria, Russia, the European Union, the Balkans, and the Caucasus resulted in the growing Turkish economy. However, as discussed in the third chapter, Turkey's economic and institutional ties are not limited to one region, and therefore, the increasing of economic relations cannot be considered as the vanishing of insulator status.

Another interesting development was the increase in Turkey's activity in its surrounding regions through its activity as a mediator in regional disputes. The efforts to find common

²⁶⁸ Diez, "Turkey, the European Union and Security Complexes Revisited."

ground in Syrian-Israeli dispute, the establishment of a platform for discussion between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the tries of resolution for the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia are the examples for Turkey's search for a peaceful neighborhood in its adjacent regions where the continuation of economic dependence can serve the interests of the country. Therefore, the increasing economic ties cannot be the reason for the inclusion of Turkey into a particular regional setting.

On the other hand, Turkey's depiction as a model country increased the possibility of the emergence of like units throughout the Middle East, which increased the popularity of Turkey in the public of the Middle Eastern nations. However, the model country discourse was not new, and it was used in the 1990s when Turkey aimed to project its influence in Central Asia.²⁶⁹ Turkey's diverging approaches in Libya and then in Syria gradually reduced the "model country's" role in the region; however, this changing perception of Turkey mostly occurred after 2011. However, in the period that the thesis focuses on, Turkey's approach towards Libya and Syria can present good examples for why including Turkey into the Middle Eastern RSC requires further examination.

Turkey's approach in the Libyan case to sustain the order under the Qaddafi regime at the beginning of the uprisings showed that it aims stability for the continuation of the status quo and the established relations. In contrast, in the case of Syria, Turkey interpreted the uprisings as strong opposition to the present regime and made suggestions to the Assad regime to respond to the voices of the public. In the Syrian case, Turkey acted in accordance with the Western alliance and considered giving support to the Assad regime would create further problems after the occurrence of inevitable regime change. In addition, Turkey's attitude in the Syrian case is similar to its position in the invasion of Iraq since, in both cases, Turkey feared the emergence of a Kurdish autonomous region that could hamper its territorial integrity. Moreover, during this period, Turkey was developing its relations with the Russian Federation as the agreement

²⁶⁹ Oran and Ünsal, "Dönemin Bilançosu," 195.

on the establishment of a nuclear power plant illustrates. In this period, Turkey was signing agreements to transfer the natural gas in the Caucasus to Europe.

As argued above, the Syrian civil war presents an immediate danger for Turkey, but the activity of it continued in its surrounding regions. At this point, the counter argument can be the discourse of the central country rather than the placement of Turkey into a certain region by refuting the usefulness of the concept of insulator. Since Turkey established relations with its neighbors, Turkey can be considered as a central country that needed to and managed to establish contacts in its near basin, which were lacking throughout much of its history. From the framework of the RSCT, the designation of the country as central can be explained through the creation of a new regional security complex in which Turkey is located as a regional if not a global power.

This possibility mentioned in the RSCT by referring to the possible emergence of strong cooperation between Greece, Syria, and Russia.²⁷⁰ The developments throughout the period under scrutiny showed that the cooperation between Turkey and these countries emerged even though they did not bring all of them together. However, considering the framework that the RSCT presents, the creation of a security interdependence between all these countries can result in the emergence of a new regional security complex in which Turkey would be a regional power, and the Caucasus and the Black Sea will emerge as buffer zones between Turkey and Russia. This possibility is still open to discussion, but considering the period between 2002 and 2011, the security considerations of these countries mainly shaped by the RSCs that they are located in. For example, Russia was aiming to gain its influence in Central Asia, especially after the presence of the USA in the region as a result of the invasion of Afghanistan. Greece was trying to solve its economic problems within the framework of the EU and try to be active in the Balkans with the utilization of its European identity and the EU membership. In the case of Syria,

²⁷⁰ Isil Kazan, *Regionalisation of Security and Securitisation of a Region: Turkish Security Policy After the Cold War* (Univ., Inst. of Political Science, 2003); quoted in Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 395.

the main security concerns were the spill-over effect of the ethnic problems after the invasion of Iraq and the hostile relations with Israel. Even though Turkey and Syria saw each other as immediate threats to each other in the late 1990s, the underlying problems for such hostility ignored if not overcame totally. Therefore, the possibility that is mentioned in the RSCT about the creation of a cooperative framework between these actors is far from the realities on the ground. However, the emergence of a new RSC within the framework of RSCT by looking at the period after the Arab Spring and Turkey's further rapprochement with Russia can be examined in future studies.

The importance of geography and the interplay between the geography of countries and the history of foreign and security policymaking is discussed so far. Another indicator in identifying an insulator is the representation of the geography and the countries' regional stance by the political elites. As stated above, scholars and political elites who make statements on the geography of insulators tend to use the discourse of uniqueness.²⁷¹ This geographical uniqueness of Turkey, compared to the other countries, creates a more deterministic path in the making of foreign and security policy.²⁷² Whether they do this for reasons related to domestic politics, the repetition of the unique geography discourse is present for the insulator states. However, the representation of geography as unique is present in the case of non-insulators as well. What distinguishes these countries can be the in-betweenness of these countries in the middle of different regional dynamics, rather than being surrounded by seas and mountain ranges, as articulated in the RSCT, although the latter has a significant impact on the emergence of the situation of being caught in the middle.

The perceptions about Turkey's in-betweenness also presented latently in the speeches of political elites. The speech of Abdullah Gül in the Turkish Grand National Assembly as

²⁷¹ Examples to the perception of Turkey as occupying a unique space can be found in: Kazan, "Turkey"; Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision"; Bülent Aras, "Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy Revisited," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 404–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2014.938451>.

²⁷² Bilgin, "Only Strong States Can Survive in Turkey's Geography," 751.

a foreign minister can be given as an example to this: “We have to get rid of the dilemma that Turkey is appearing Eastern in the West and Western in the East.”²⁷³ This illustrates how political elites developed a perception that Turkey does not belong to any of its neighboring regions. However, the emergence of this perception also shows the interplay between history and geography. Since Turkey remained outside of the political developments when the regional security complexes around it were forming, and in the case of the European RSC, Turkey was seen as an outsider even though it had the will to join the European Union and thus, the security community, its neighbors continued to see the country as an outsider.

During the period between 2002 and 2011, the perception about Turkey’s geography shifted gradually in the perspectives of the policymakers in Turkey, whereas the perceptions of Turkey’s neighbors bear the traces of their hesitation about this new discourse. Turkey considered itself as a central actor in the Middle East through increasing its activity. However, the new discourse had some elements that created further hesitations on Turkey’s increasing activity. For instance, Davutoğlu, in a speech, stated that Turkey owns the new Middle East.²⁷⁴ Turkey’s growing influence in the region after the invasion of Iraq resulted in the emergence of negative voices in the Arab countries that often question the leading role of Turkey and Iran in the region when there is no Arab leader that represents the voices of Arabs.²⁷⁵ Therefore, discourses about Turkey as a central country that acts as a player and sets the agenda for its neighboring regions increased the suspicions on the role of Turkey and Turkey’s perception about its geography. This trend was also visible in the case of Balkans when the references to the

²⁷³ A. Gül, Foreign Minister, Proceedings of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Ankara: 22 Dec. 2003) quoted in Rumelili and Suleymanoglu-Kurum, “Brand Turkey,” 549.

²⁷⁴ “‘Yeni Ortadoğu’nun Sahibi Biziz,’” *Gazete Vatan*, April 27, 2012, <http://www.gazetevatan.com/-yeni-ortadogu-nun-sahibi-biziz--446394-gundem/>.

²⁷⁵ Burhanettin Duran, “2011 Türk Dış Politikası Değerlendirmesi Paneli,” in *Ortadoğu Konuşmaları: Bölgesel ve Küresel Perspektiften Arab Baharı*, ed. Zahide Tuba Kor (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2014), 658–59.

Ottoman history led to the emergence of question marks in the minds of the people of the region or as it was seen after the Sarajevo speech of Davutoğlu.²⁷⁶

Another problem was Turkey's consideration of the countries in the Middle East, with the exception of Iran and Israel as Arab countries. Although it is true that ethnically Arab populations dominate them, these countries do not share a common view, and they differ significantly in their approaches to foreign policy issues.²⁷⁷ However, Turkey's relations with the region had been influenced by its relations with Israel due to the role of the Palestinian issue, which had an important place in the minds of Arabs states, especially for the ones that share a border with Israel.²⁷⁸ Therefore, the distancing of Turkey and Israel after the Gaza War and the series of developments in its aftermath increased the positive perspectives on Turkey in the region. Nevertheless, after the beginning of the Arab uprisings, perceptions about Turkey shifted significantly throughout the region. In some cases, the suspicions left its place to consideration of the country as a model, while in others, the cooperative approaches turned into either rivalry or hostility, as it was the case for Syria and Iran.

As discussed above, Buzan and Wæver conclude that Turkey is an insulator and will continue to have that status in the future. The developments between 2002 and 2011 period are significant to assess whether Turkey's insulator role continues or not. Critical developments during this period in three regional security complexes that surround Turkey in a way strengthen Turkey's in-betweenness. Although Turkey's security concerns are related to the developments in its neighborhood, Turkey was not part of the main security dynamics of these regions. Here, Turkey's activity in the Middle Eastern

²⁷⁶ Millas, "Stratejik Derinlik Kitabı - Yurtdışından Okunduğunda"; Baskın Oran, "Davutoğlu'nun 16 Ekim 2009 Saraybosna Konuşması - Dinleyenler Açısından," in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt III 2001-2012)*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 199–200; Demirtaş, "Reconsidering Turkey's Balkan Ties: Opportunities and Limitations," 144.

²⁷⁷ Meliha Benli Altunışık, *Turkey: Arab Perspectives* (İstanbul: TESEV Publications, 2010), 23, https://www.tesev.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/report_Turkey_Arab_Perspectives.pdf.

²⁷⁸ Basheer M. Nafi, "The Arabs and Modern Turkey: A Century of Changing Perceptions," *Insight Turkey* 11, no. 1 (2009): 79.

RSC is a challenging one since Turkey increased its economic relations with the states of the region and acted as a mediator in the solutions of disputes. However, as examined in the respective chapters, Turkey established similar relations in other regions as well.

Moreover, the central country argument, when combined with the increasing activism of Turkey in regional politics, generally resulted in the refutation of the concept of insulator, but Turkey did not enjoy having a backyard that other regional and great powers utilize when they operate in regions other than their own.²⁷⁹ It remained as an outsider, but the creation of cooperative relations in its neighborhood opened the way for the emergence of an external transformation in its surrounding regional security complexes. At this point, the criteria that is defined for the great powers can be applied to Turkey's situation: "It is easier to become a global power if one can draw on as much as possible of the resources of a region and avoid spending effort on handling regional security and power balancing."²⁸⁰ Turkey tried to build its relations on the basis of benefiting from cooperation; however, the presence of local disputes and hostilities between regional actors limited Turkey's ability to extend its power and to create new security interdependencies that can lead to the creation of a new regional security complex in which Turkey can be considered as a regional or great power.

Even though both policymakers and analysts focused on the Middle East due to the relatively peaceful period in the Balkans and the Caucasus between 2002 and 2011 compared to the dynamism in the 1990s, Turkey had to absorb different security dynamics around its borders as a result of being an insulator.²⁸¹ Turkey had to consider the developments in its surroundings throughout this decade without being able to turn its back to those issues. The increase in the Europeanization process accompanied by the invasion of Iraq, and it could not turn its back to the developments in the Middle East. Similar to this, while energy politics shaped its relations in the Caucasus, it could not

²⁷⁹ Barrinha, "The Ambitious Insulator," 179.

²⁸⁰ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 473.

²⁸¹ Kazan, "Turkey," 589–90.

remain distant from the developments in Cyprus and the emergence of a new strategic alliance against its interest in the Israel-Greek axis. Moreover, the aims of Turkey to reduce the long-term tension with Armenia put its relations with Azerbaijan in danger, and on the other side, when the EU membership of Bulgaria and Romania completed, whose membership processes supported by Turkey, the outsider status of Turkey in the European RSC increased since its access to the Balkan region is limited with the emergence of new barriers.

Overall, the developments of until the end of 2011 under the JDP government resulted in the continuation of the insulator status. During this period, Turkey continues to develop its foreign and security policy with the consideration of the developments in its surrounding regions. Even though the distancing from the EU and the increasing of the role of the Middle East in the minds of the elites, it did not result in the occurrence of an external transformation in the Middle Eastern RSC. The Arab uprisings became the latest challenge of this period; however, both in the case of Libya and Syria, Turkey was coherent with the EU and the USA until the end of the period under scrutiny. Although this thesis agrees with the designation of Turkey as an insulator, it does not investigate the developments after 2011, and therefore, does not reject the possibility of the occurrence of an external transformation.

6.1. Recommendation for Future Studies

Although there is a considerable number of studies about the place of Turkey in regional security dynamics, most of them do not reason with an approach that explains the international security dynamics as a whole. Therefore, the RSCT provides a base for studying the role of Turkey in regional security that is comparable to the other countries that occupy similar positions. By utilizing the framework that is offered here or by developing the conceptualization offered in this thesis, it is possible to compare Turkey with other insulator states, which are Afghanistan, Myanmar, Mongolia, and Nepal. Moreover, the framework proposed by the RSCT provides the tools for the possible

changes in the existing regional security complexes. Therefore, future research on Turkey's stance in regional politics that focuses on the period after the beginning of the Arab Spring can reassess the boundaries of the regional security complexes that surround Turkey. An analysis that locates Turkey within one of the regional security dynamics can also answer the question of whether the changes in the boundaries of RSCs result in the emergence of a new insulator that separates the security dynamics of the new RSCs.



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