Jana J. Jabbour, La Turquie. L'invention d'une diplomatie émergente
(Turkey. The Invention of an Emerging Diplomacy)

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In the 362 pages of this book, Jana J. Jabbour ranges across various concepts, actors and dynamics related to the economic and political rise of Turkey on the international scene during the 2000s. Based on a doctoral dissertation, the book, organised around three parts and ten chapters, aims at elucidating Turkey’s economic dynamism and political voluntarism as an emerging country under the AK Party (Justice and Development Party) since 2002. The book opens with an interesting foreword by Bertrand Badie, which clarifies the concept of emerging diplomacy. In fact, this concept merits attention especially vis-à-vis the geopolitical representation of emerging countries in the heart of the international system as it represents the instability as well as the fragility in today’s global world. It is important to note that various forms of political, economic and cultural domination or colonisation exert considerable influence historically over the emerging countries’ mindsets and their foreign policies. In parallel to this, Jabbour clearly refers in her introduction to Turkey’s “profound and revolutionary transformations”1 since the 2000s (p. 15) as she calls it in a metaphorical fashion. Jabbour begins by underlining structural clashes between secular, westernised and modern Homo Kemalus, representing Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s ideal for Turkey and, pious and conservative Homo Islamicus, which is the contemporary ideal of Turkey under the AK Party. While this schism seems to be largely simplistic, it is still the basic way of discovering modern Turkey together with a fragile Turkish civil society.

By mainly investigating the relationship between middle Powers and the concept of “emerging diplomacy” (p. 25), Jabbour tries to set out the core elements of the Turkish case in order better to apprehend its genesis in the 2000s. The main thesis defended in the book is that Turkey’s activity in the Middle East during the 2000s reflects its emerging character and that this represents a politically strategic posture rather than a mere “neo-ottomanism” or a “panislamist” affirmation (p. 29). In fact, with the power vacuum created by the relative retreat of the US in the Middle East, this region seems to be an arena for Turkish assertive diplomacy. From this point onward, Jabbour argues that Turkey will not cede its western alliances such as the European Union or the US. Instead, Turkey seems to instrumentalise religious

1 All translations are the reviewer’s.
elements as a means of its regional objectives not only towards the Middle East but also the Western world. However, if it is not tenable to call it a “pan-islamist” or “neo-ottomanist” (p. 29) foreign policy as Jabbour rightly indicates, one can also see the development of a religiously tinted political and economical vision under the AK Party era. It is obvious that the relatively religious identity-based Sunnite Islamic elements seem to appear dominant in the internal geopolitical discourse as well as in the external social representations of contemporary Turkish politics.

In the first part of the book, the author questions how Turkish diplomacy evolved as an ‘emerging Power’ by focusing especially on the new conceptualisation of foreign policy issues, the basic factors of Turkish emergence in the Middle East and the dynamism of non-state actors in Turkish foreign policy such as think tanks, NGOs and transnational religious movements. The background of this so-called Turkish regional rise is analysed here around many famous concepts such as the strategic depth and central state invented by Ahmet Davutoğlu, a former academic, prime minister and minister of Foreign Affairs. Jabbour offers a widely descriptive analysis of the ideas of Davutoğlu and then of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the charismatic leader in Turkish politics. Jabbour’s detailed presentation merits attention especially by giving a general reading on Turkey’s changing diplomacy, based on the “Davutoğlu effect” in Turkish foreign policy.

In this main part of the book, Jabbour also tries to capture cultural and social vectors of Turkish diplomatic emergence. At this point, it is fair to say that historical glorification of the Ottoman Empire and Islamic identity in the political discourse of Turkey’s emerging diplomacy represents a crucial link to its so-called regional leadership in the Middle East. However, some of the author’s stances on Turkish Political Islam are somehow questionable, for instance, when she says that all public and political expression of Islam was forbidden during the Atatürk era 1923–1938 (pp. 64–65). While it is clear that the political expression of Islam is different in its public and social expression and representation, a general reader can easily imagine here that religion was totally forbidden in that particular era in a similar vein to Russia under Stalin. Moreover, to identify the AKP as a “religious nationalistic-globalist party” (p. 80) looks like a profoundly striking posture by the author. It is not easy to understand this synthesis presented by the author especially when the author says that the AK Party is not a conservative but an anti-status quo party based on a different “unique” Turkish Islamism, and is also nationalistic while simultaneously open to globalisation solely from an economic point of view.

Another questionable point in the Jabbour analysis comes from the comparison she makes between Atatürk’s foreign policy and that of the AK Party by claiming that the former was based on an isolationist posture and the latter is a pro-active policy. In fact, one should distinguish isolation from non-intervention in the foreign policy field. Based on the status quo, mutual dialogue and diplomatic engagement, Atatürk’s foreign policy never opted for an isolationist foreign policy. So, the conception of “Peace at home, peace in the world” (p. 120) dear to Atatürk is too far to be qualified as an isolationist foreign policy because a non-interventionist foreign policy does not mean a passive policy and vice-versa. An interventionist and active foreign policy has not always helped to diminish problems with neighbours to zero. And from this point of view, it can be said that Jabbour’s presentation lacks methodological rigour and coherence (pp. 17–18; 120–121). Besides, while it is true that Turkey under Erdoğan has tried to create some diplomatic ‘niches’ (multilateralism in NATO and
In sum, while the qualities of the book are many and indisputable, one misses a broader and more comprehensive investigation of Turkey’s emerging diplomacy vis-à-vis not only the Middle East but also other regions in order better to assess the different dimensions of this ‘emerging’ Power. For instance, we can say that Jabbour would have done better to emphasise the comparative dimension in order better to evaluate the so-called emergence of Turkey in the Middle East. In fact, it can be interesting to compare the level of this geopolitical emergence which occurred in the Middle East together with that in the Balkans, Africa, Europe or Central Asia. Also, instead of ‘emerging’, Turkish diplomacy may be qualified as assertive or affirmative, which seems to fit better the image of Turkey as a middle Power. Finally, the appendix section at the end of the book seems to be well constructed. Especially,
the results of the polls conducted by the author are really interesting together with the visual material on the AK Party’s foreign policy and a very rich bibliography on this subject. With all these merits, this book will be especially interesting for academics, researchers and Ph.D. students attracted by Turkish foreign policy.