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THE TRANSFORMATION OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE  
MIDDLE EAST SINCE 2002

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## SUBMISSION OF THESIS FOR A RESEARCH DEGREE

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE TRANSFORMATION OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST SINCE 2002**

Turkish foreign policy has experienced a significant transformation since the AK Party came to power in 2002. The pro-status quo, passive and reactive foreign policy with a limited regional perspective transformed into an active foreign policy that aims to change international relations in the region as a whole. This change was analyzed in many different studies in recent years, and scholars from different fields of political science have tried to make sense of this major shift and understand its causes and outcomes. In this study, this foreign policy change will be explained as a gradual development that came as a result of the transformation of Turkey's state identity. The process of change was started with the Neighboring Countries of Iraq Conference in 2003. The Conference was the first of such an attempt to engage the countries of the region in order to resolve problems in a neighboring nation.

This study attempts to challenge this dominant discourse by providing a new narrative of Turkish politics and evolving foreign policy of Turkey. The study argues that the change in Turkish foreign policy was gradual and based on different dynamics that took place in the country over the last ten years. Although it is difficult to explain this change to the academic world, this challenge is due in part to the failure of classical theories of international relations, such as realism and liberalism, to explain the reasons for shifts in nations' foreign policy. The structural explanation sometimes fails to explain transformations that took place in a more complicated mixed impact of domestic and external dynamics. However, another major approach in international relations,

constructivism, provides solutions for both of these challenges. It has an important strength in explaining foreign policy changes in countries, especially in Turkish foreign policy, which has important ramifications in regards to the impact of the shift on the state's identity. The three cases under study demonstrate the changing identity of Turkish foreign policy, from a pro-Western, status quo-oriented and passive foreign policy towards a more independent, pro-active foreign policy.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Turkish foreign policy has experienced a significant transformation since the AK Party came to power in 2002. The pro-status quo, passive and reactive foreign policy with a limited regional perspective transformed into an active foreign policy that aims to change international relations in the region as a whole. This change was analyzed in many different studies in recent years, and scholars from different fields of political science have tried to make sense of this major shift and understand its causes and outcomes.

In this study, this foreign policy change will be explained as a gradual development that came as a result of the transformation of Turkey's state identity. The previous identity of state was challenged by both external and domestic forces and led to the emergence of a new identity in a gradual manner. This study will respond to the question of how these domestic and external forces impacted the transformation of state identity. It will demonstrate the transformation by using multiple methods and multiple different sets of data, including the secondary sources, the primary official documents and the interview with policy makers.

The secondary sources, including monographs, articles and books written on Turkish foreign policy in recent years were the most easily accessible documents in this research. There is a growing literature in the field of foreign policy analysis focusing on

the changes in the Turkish foreign policy in the last decade.<sup>1</sup> In addition to these secondary sources, the study will also use the primary sources, that includes the decisions of the international summits and meetings and interview with the foreign policy decision makers who played a prominent role in the making of foreign policy during the last twelve years of Ak Party government. The methodology of process tracing will be utilized together with discourse analysis in order to explain the foreign policy changes.

### **Rationale for Research:**

Three case studies were selected to explain these changes. All of these three case studies are instances of emerging autonomy in Turkish foreign policy. In the first case of Neighboring Countries of Iraq Conference, Turkish foreign policy makers acted in a relative autonomy and launched an initiative together with other regional actors. In the second case study, Hamas's visit to Turkey, Turkish foreign policy makers took a position after the parliamentary elections in Palestine that contradicts with the position of the Western countries and in particular the US. Finally in the third case study of this dissertation, the Tehran Declaration and during the UN Security Council voting on Iranian sanctions, Turkish foreign policy makers voted against the resolution brought by the US and other Western countries. All of these three cases were considered as serious crises of Turkish foreign policy with its Western allies and in all three cases the orientation of Turkish foreign policy were questioned by the Western scholars. However, the three case studies demonstrate that there is a gradual transformation of Turkish foreign policy. Each

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of these works include, Kemal Kirisci. "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State" *New Perspectives on Turkey* No.40: 29-57. 2009; Mesut Ozcan, *Harmonizing Foreign Policy: Turkey, the EU and the Middle East* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008; Mustafa Aydın, "Twenty Years Before, Twenty Years After: Turkish Foreign Policy at the Threshold of the 21st Century," in *Turkey's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: A Changing Role in World Politics*, ed. Tareq Ismael and Mustafa Aydın Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003; Akçapar, Burak. *Turkey's New European Era: Foreign Policy on the Road to EU Membership*. Lanham: Row- man & Little, 2007; Bilgin, Pinar. "Turkey's Changing Security Discourse: The Challenges of Globalization." *European Journal of Political Research* 4, no. 1 (2005): 175-201

case will demonstrate that Turkey was gradually having a more independent and autonomous foreign policy.

The dissertation will show that the process of change in Turkish foreign policy began with the immediate aftermath of Ak Party's electoral victory. It was started with the Neighboring Countries of Iraq Conference in 2003.. The Conference was the first of such an attempt to engage the countries of the region in order to resolve problems in a neighboring nation. For the first time, Turkish foreign policy makers launched such an initiative and abandoned their long-held "non-involvement" and "non-interference" policy towards the politics of the Middle East. In this initiative, the regional countries created a forum in order to solve the problems that could have emerged after the invasion of Iraq by U.S. forces. The primary goal was to contain a potential civil war in the country and prevent the spread of such instability. It was not a position that intended to challenge Western policies in the region. However, after the March 1, 2003 vote in the Turkish National Assembly that resulted in the refusal to allow the U.S. to launch its troops from Turkish soil, it was perceived as a challenge to Western policies and an attempt to turn away from the West. Especially during the crisis ridden days of the post-March 1<sup>st</sup> period, some observers in Western capitals started to publish essays criticizing Turkish politics came up with different titles to their pieces, such as "who lost Turkey?" and "sick man of Europe, again." During these years, Turkey did not have sufficient instruments to react to these criticisms and to reach some of these observers to provide a thorough analysis of the changes in Turkish foreign policy. However, even when Ankara used its limited capabilities, its attempts were ignored by some observers in these capitals.

The changing Turkish foreign policy challenged the traditional approach in Turkey, but it also challenged the perception and expectation of Turkish foreign policy in Western capitals. Many observers of Turkish foreign policy described the shift by emphasizing the change in leadership and neglected a more significant transformation that was taking place

at the level of public opinion and society. This change in Turkish foreign policy later projected itself in other developments, such as the visit of senior Hamas leaders to Turkey. During this visit, foreign policy analysts once again argued that it was another shift from a pro-Western foreign policy to an almost anti-Western one. Turkey's position on the Iranian nuclear crisis, the Tehran declaration and its attitude during the voting at the UN Security Council also created similar reactions in the Western world. After each and every one of these major events, Turkish foreign policy makers expressed their intention to have an independent foreign policy; however, the statements of these policymakers were always ignored and these developments were interpreted as a major break from Turkey's Western orientation. This situation made the shift in Turkish foreign policy difficult to understand, leading to misinterpretation. Despite several studies in the field that demonstrates the different dimensions of Turkey's transformed foreign policy, the dominant discourse in the Western world focused on the view that Turkish foreign policy is becoming anti-Western and increasingly "Islamic or Middle Eastern."

This study attempts to challenge this dominant discourse by providing a new narrative of Turkish politics and evolving foreign policy of Turkey. The study argues that the change in Turkish foreign policy was gradual and based on different dynamics that took place in the country over the last ten years. Although it is difficult to explain this change to the academic world, this challenge is due in part to the failure of classical theories of international relations, such as realism and liberalism, to explain the reasons for shifts in nations' foreign policy. The structural explanation sometimes fails to explain transformations that took place in a more complicated mixed impact of domestic and external dynamics. However, another major approach in international relations, constructivism, provides solutions for both of these challenges. It has an important strength in explaining foreign policy changes in countries, especially in Turkish foreign policy, which has important ramifications in regards to the impact of the shift on the state's

identity. The three cases under study demonstrate the changing identity of Turkish foreign policy, from a pro-Western, status quo-oriented and passive foreign policy towards a more independent, pro-active foreign policy. This change took place as a result of the emergence of a new set of actors and circumstances in foreign policy making. On the one hand, the new leadership brought a novel perspective to foreign policy making. Both Erdoğan and Davutoğlu had very ambitious goals in regards to Turkey's place and role in the world arena. Secondly, the change was also impacted by the perception of the region by policy makers and public opinion. Once considered a quagmire, the Middle East started to be viewed as one of the hinterlands of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey's non-involvement policy towards Middle Eastern politics started to change rapidly as Turkey started to be more actively involved in the region. This transformation in Turkey's foreign policy identity also influenced the perception of its role in the region. Its soft power increased rapidly which in turn also provided the opportunity to alter its foreign policy. Thus, domestic public opinion, leadership and external factors influenced Turkey's role and foreign policy identity.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides an overall analysis of Turkish foreign policy since the foundation of the Republic in 1923. Turkish foreign policy has been consistent for more than eight decades. Its pro-Western orientation started with the foundation of the Republic, but strengthened later in the 1950s with the rise of the Cold War. Turkey decided to bandwagon its policies to the Western bloc for most of the Cold War. Other than a crisis over Cyprus, Turkish foreign policy was in line with U.S. policies in the region during those years. Moreover, Turkish foreign policy's reluctance to engage in the conflicts and politics of the Middle East started at the state's very inception. Turkish foreign policy makers considered any move towards the Eastern world in general and to the Middle East in particular as a betrayal of this pro-Western orientation. Thus, despite the significance of its geographical location, Turkish foreign

policy did not take advantage of its location or contribute to the resolution of disputes in the Middle East.

This situation also led to a passive and reactive foreign policy. Being the frontline state against the spread of communism and enlargement of the Soviet Union became the main identity of Turkish foreign policy. However, with the end of the Cold War, Turkish foreign policy faced an identity crisis. The loss of its frontline status was a major problem for Turkish foreign policy makers. According to these officials, Turkey had lost its privileged status among Western democracies, resulting in Turkey's rejection of from the European Community and inability to buy weapons from European and the U.S. The independence of Central Asian nations and the Gulf War did not help Turkey to recover from this anxiety. Foreign policy makers therefore decided to launch a rapprochement with Israel to resolve the identity crisis. The military and security cooperation agreements with Israel provided an anchor to the West for foreign policy makers. First of all, Israel was considered a Western nation; thus, improved relations with Tel Aviv was considered a confirmation of Turkey's pro-Western orientation. Secondly, the power of the Israeli lobby in different Western countries provided access in these capitals. By doing so, Turkish policy makers hoped to recover their privileged status. However, this rapid rapprochement with Israel took place at the expense of Turkey's already crisis-driven relations with the Middle East. During this period, Turkey was excluded not only from its region, but also from the Islamic world. This situation continued until the end of the 1990s. The first signs of this change took place at the turn of century with the rapprochement with Syria and Turkey's newly instated candidate status by the European Union. However, what accelerated this process was the electoral victory of the AK Party in 2002 and the foreign policy developments that occurred afterwards.

The second chapter of the dissertation utilizes a theoretical approach to understand the changes in Turkish foreign policy after 2002. The chapter discusses the limitations of



the mainstream IR approaches to explain foreign policy changes and argues that the theoretical and methodological tools of constructivism are most relevant in order to understand this shift. Especially the literature on state identity provides important insights about the emergence and transformation of foreign policy behavior of states. The chapter provides a synopsis of the major debates within the concept of state identity. Many names within the constructivist tradition, including Alexander Wendt, established that states have an identity and this identity informs foreign policy of countries. However, the more challenging part was how states acquire their identities. According to Wendt, the identities of states are formed by external factors, such as the interactions of states with other nations in the international system. This idea dominated “state identity” scholarship in international relations for years, until the emergence of a challenging concept in constructivism. According to this more recent notion, scholars, such as Ted Hopf, argue that states’ identities are not externally shaped, but rather formed by internal factors, such as public opinion and popular culture. This study argues that the identity of the Turkish state informed its foreign policy and a shift in its identity is reflected in its foreign policy. However, instead of endorsing one of these arguments, this dissertation argues that both external and domestic factors play a role in shaping the identity and thus the foreign policy of Turkey. Ahmet Davutoğlu and his approach to international relations greatly shaped this new identity. The doctrine of “zero-problems with neighbors” as well as his role in conceptualizing Turkey’s place in the world shaped the Republic’s new foreign policy outlook. The domestic transformation in Turkey, such as the changing nature of civil-military relations and increasing public attention of public on foreign policy issues, also played a role in the emergence of this new identity. However, Turkey’s changing relations with neighboring countries also consolidated this more autonomous and pro-active foreign policy line. However, the gradual evolution of Turkey’s state identity and thus foreign policy was missed by the experts in Washington and other capitals. Thus, every

autonomous foreign policy decision was interpreted as an attempt to turn away from the West by these experts.

The next three chapters of dissertation focus on three case studies that demonstrate the change in Turkish foreign policy. These three cases, namely the Neighboring Countries of Iraq Meetings, the visit of the Hamas delegation in 2006, and the Tehran Declaration and Turkey's 'no' vote in the UN Security Council regarding sanctions on Iran are selected because of several commonalities. First of all, they are all cases that created some form of tension between Turkey and the Western governments, particularly the U.S. All of them also represented serious ruptures in Turkey's policy towards the region. After all of these events, Turkey faced considerable criticism in regards to its foreign policy orientation; however, these actions were regarded as an attempt to contribute to the resolution of conflicts in the region by Turkish foreign policy makers. These three cases also represent turning points in the emergence of a new foreign policy identity in Turkey.

## **CHAPTER 2**

## **TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY: A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH**

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

War is the most important instrument of change in International Relations (IR). Most conceptual developments in IR theory coincide with historical milestones that mark the end of systematic wars. In fact, liberalism emerged out of the first theoretical discussions in the post First World War era, which also provided the ground for the advent of the discipline of International Relations. Similarly, after the Second World War, a new school of thought, Realism, found its grounding in the intellectual developments of the crisis period between the two wars. Although many different strands of critical theory were developed in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, hence the polarized international structure, Constructivism prevailed as one of the most significant and preferred schools of thought in IR theory.

The term constructivism was introduced to the theories of international relations by Nicholas Onuf<sup>1</sup> but was later developed and represented by scholars including Alexander

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas G. Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989.

Wendt,<sup>2</sup> Peter Katzenstein,<sup>3</sup> Ted Hopf,<sup>4</sup> Martha Finnemore<sup>5</sup> and John Ruggie<sup>6</sup>. Constructivism especially challenged the predominance of neorealist and neoliberal debate in international relations. It offered an alternative approach and discussion within the scholarly community on the nature of the international system. Different versions of constructivism in this period emerged, challenging the main rationalist tenets of liberalism and realism. Constructivism focused on issues previously ignored in international relations theory, including the content and sources of states interests and the social fabric of world politics.<sup>7</sup> However, what makes constructivism different to analyze and classify within mainstream IR theories is the variation on substantive issues within the constructivist theory. The extent of these variations make it difficult for scholars to come up with some basic tenets of constructivism.

Several crucial developments provided the ground for the rise and prevalence of the constructivist approach in the post-Cold War era. First, the failure of mainstream IR theories to predict the end of the Cold War and dramatic changes in the international system shook the reliability and credibility of these theoretical approaches. Especially realist theory, when its neorealist variant assumed that the bipolar nature of international system would continue for many years, which turned out to be wrong as a result of rapid changes in the international system. Although these two theories maintained its relevance,

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<sup>2</sup> Alexander E. Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992, 391-425.

<sup>3</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1998, 171–200.

<sup>5</sup> Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge," *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 1998, 855-885.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey T. Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory," *World Politics*, Vol. 50, 1998, 324.

with the rapid changes in international system and new types of conflict, theories such as constructivism gained more ground and increased its impact within the IR literature and debates.

Some of the projected alliance patterns that were formed by realist and liberal scholars during the Cold War years did not totally fit with the circumstances after the end of the Cold War. Especially realist scholars who theorized the balance of power theories in order to explain the alliance patterns in world politics projected a new world with various different balancing scenarios. For example, in the last days of the Cold War, John Mearsheimer, a prominent neorealist scholar claimed that after the end of the Cold War, Europe would be more prone to international conflicts as a result of the emergence of a new multipolar international order.<sup>8</sup> Another realist scholar, Christopher Payne, asserted that Germany and Japan would not continue to prefer economic power in favor of military power and begin investing in their military capabilities; in the long run he believed that they would try to balance the United States. This would create a new period of confrontation between US and these regional powers.<sup>9</sup> In a short period of time these explanations proved to be wrong, demonstrating mainstream IR theory's inability to provide credible explanations.

The problems of mainstream theorists are not the only reason for the rise of constructivist IR scholarship. The event driven nature of theoretical changes and transformations also played a critical role. In fact, the events that started to take place necessitated different forms of explanations for world politics. Although some issues that were prevalent during the Cold War years such as nuclear proliferation, continued to be an important dimension of debates on international politics, some other variables started to

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<sup>8</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future." *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1990, 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Layne, Christopher. "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise." *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security*, ed. Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995, 130-176.

impact the nature of international system. For example, the post-Cold War world was starting to be impacted by new types of conflicts, such as the ethnic conflicts in Balkans and Russia. Although these conflicts played a very destabilizing role in the regions and in some instances, the international system, mainstream theories of IR were not developed sufficiently to provide explanation for these new phenomena. Concepts such as identity, a field of study of Comparative Politics during the Cold War years, started to be pronounced more frequently by IR scholars. These ethnic, religious and tribal conflicts paved the way for more frequent debates on different forms of behavior, such as humanitarian intervention. These norms constituted an important pillar—at least discursively—of international politics. The emergence, spread and impact of these norms started a new debate in the discipline of international relations. It also launched a more meaningful discussion on the impact of non-state actors in the international system. Especially the role of NGOs, how these NGOs can promote norms in the international system and how they can contribute to world politics, started to be analyzed by constructivist scholars. The inefficacy of mainstream/conventional IR theories such as neo-realism and neo-liberalism to offer an understanding of these developments carved the necessary conceptual space for new approaches to emerge.

In addition to these events, some theoretical challenges and innovations also provided a fertile ground for the development of constructivist scholarship in this period. In particular, developments and inspirations from other fields of social sciences such as sociology and philosophy, provided a new ground for the emergence of new approaches in international relations. One of the most influential of these interventions was the one by Anthony Giddens, and his conceptualizations of “structuration”.<sup>10</sup> The theory challenges the structure and agency debate, which was very prevalent in international relations

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<sup>10</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society, Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984.

scholarship. According to this theory “the relationship between structures and actors involves intersubjective understanding and meanings. Structures do constrain actors, but actors can also transform structures by thinking about them and acting on them in new ways.”<sup>11</sup> This allows a more dynamic understanding of international relations in which actors and structures shape one another. IR scholars picked up this idea of structuration in a very short period of time. Wendt especially utilized the new formulation of a mutually constitutive nature of agents and structures in his studies on international relations.<sup>12</sup>

These developments came at a very critical time period, when the basic premises of realism and liberalism started to be challenged due to their empirical and theoretical shortcomings. In this new era, critical theory became especially illustrative with its critique of some fundamental assumptions and rationalism. Constructivism lead the way among the approaches developed in this period. Constructivist theorists rejected the realist concepts of power and anarchy and claimed that state structures were the result of state-society dialectic, hence not dependent variables.

Different schools of constructivism in this period started to contribute to the basic understanding and explanations of international relations; the rational premises of realism and liberalism came under attack. Constructivist scholars particularly called the discipline of international relations to “take into account the transformation of identities and interests, that is, of entities which are, because of their shared commitment to rationalism, taken as exogenously given by both Realists and liberals.”<sup>13</sup> This idea also challenged one of the tenets of neorealism and neoliberalism, which stated that the international structure shapes and informs foreign policies of countries. Constructivism, with its focus on the social

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *The Constitution of Society, Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984. 163.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander E. Wendt, “The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory.” *International Organization*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 1987, 335-370.

<sup>13</sup> Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 ,13.



dynamics between actors in the international arena/politics, holds that states' foreign policies are determined by their state (national) identities and values and that other states' behaviors shape these identities and values.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, constructivism is not a recent innovation, but rather a part of an older methodological tradition, which according to some, can even be traced to the eighteenth century writings of Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico. According to him, history itself is not something external to human affairs and socially constructed by the intersubjective relationship. In this construct, states are also artificial creations and the system that they interact within is also part of this artificial creation process. Thus, human beings can change the system if they want to.<sup>15</sup>

In their review of constructivism, Fearon and Wendt stated four important characteristics of the constructivist IR approach. First, constructivism is specifically focused on the role of ideas in constructing social life, challenging the materialistic conceptualization of social life. In order for these ideas to have relevance, they need to be shared by many people and instantiated in practices. However, the emphasis of constructivism on ideas does not mean that material conditions have no role in social life. Instead it means that the impact of material conditions on social life is mediated by the ideas that give them their meaning.<sup>16</sup> This differs from idealism in the sense that it does not deny any role to material conditions. According to constructivism, material factors matter, but how they matter depends on the ideas.<sup>17</sup> However, a more critical brand of constructivism is more skeptical about the autonomy of ideas. Critical constructivists

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<sup>14</sup> Martin Griffiths, Steven C. Roach and M. Scott Salamon, *Uluslararası İlişkilerde Temel Düşünürler ve Teoriler*. Trans. CESRAN. Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2011, 123.

<sup>15</sup> Jackson and Sorensen, 163.

<sup>16</sup> James Fearon and Alexander Wendt, "Rationalism vs Constructivism: A Skeptical View," in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds., Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons. London: Sage, 2002, 57.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 58.

believe that the social constructions “reflect, enact and reify relations of power.”<sup>18</sup> They also believe that certain groups have more influence and impact on the process of social construction. As stated by Finnemore and Sikkink, “the task of critical scholar is both to unmask these ideational structures of domination and to facilitate the imagining of alternative worlds. Critical constructivists thus see a weaker autonomous role for ideas than do other constructivists because ideas are viewed as more tightly linked to relations of material power.”<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, constructivism focuses on the socially constructed nature of agents and subjects. For constructivists, the agents are not givens as rationalists believe. They can be dependent variables. According Fearon and Wendt, this nature of constructivism demonstrates itself in two different ways. First of all, social construction of agents means that there is a process of socialization through which agents acquire their identities and interests. Constructivists focus on the causal processes behind this socialization and try to figure out how and under what conditions socialization took place. Secondly, on a broader and deeper level, constructivists focus on the constitutive conditions of certain modes of subjectivity. As stated by Fearon and Wendt, “some of these conditions are historical in the sense that understanding of what it means to be an agent may change over time and this is culturally relative rather than reducible to universal features of human beings’ biological constitution.”<sup>20</sup>

The third aspect of constructivism is related to its methodological difference from rationalism. According to Fearon and Wendt, “constructivism is based on a research strategy of methodological holism rather than methodological individualism.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 4, 2001, 398.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Fearon and Wendt, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Methodological holism entails that we need to make social wholes and internal relations rather than individuals central to explain our social world.<sup>22</sup> According to rationalism, macro-level phenomena, such as balance of power, can be explained through a more micro level phenomenon such as state motivations and capacities. However, for methodological holism, this methodology may not lead to the best form of explanation of different phenomena. Constructivism argues that macro level phenomena, like the international system, need to be utilized in order to explain the parts of this macro level structure, such as states.<sup>23</sup> For Fearon and Wendt:

Another way of expressing this opposition is by contrasting causal and constitutive forms of explanation. Causal explanations, which refer to the action of pre-existing, temporally prior causes that produce effects to be explained, would seem to have an affinity with the micro-to-macro program of rationalism. Constitutive explanations, which characterize systems of beliefs and practices that in effect create or define social objects and actors- such as master and slave, or states, for instance- would seem to illustrate holism in action.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, constructivists believe in the importance of constitutive explanations rather than causal explanations. Causal theorizing focuses on the cause effect relationship, and in its assumption, cause and effect exist independently from each other. Constitutive theorizing on the other hand, focuses on establishing “conditions of possibility for objects or events by showing what they are made of and how they are organized.”<sup>25</sup> In fact, it is the event in question and effect of the conditions that make it possible. Fearon and Wendt give the example of the relation between master and slave in order to explain the nature of the constitutive relationship. According to them, the nature and meaning of master and slave is constituted in relation to each other. They do not exist independently. They cannot be masters or slaves in the absence of this relationship. Although constructivist analysts also

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 57.

pay attention to the causal relations between two variables, the constitutive dimension is still prioritized.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Constructivism as a Social Theory***

Similar to other strands of critical theory, the intellectual roots of constructivism are planted in the field of sociology; thus is characterized as social constructivism. In the social sense, constructivism focuses on the social construction of reality. As stated above, the social world is not an external reality; it is not a given, but is part of the thoughts and ideas of the people involved in it.<sup>27</sup> Constructivism, in this context, also having benefited from discursive and historical analysis methods, gained a strong foothold among IR theories. In tandem with the critical theory tradition, constructivism understands knowledge as a product of historical and material conditions. It cannot be separated from the subject and serves a societal function. In this conception, knowledge, as a historical and cultural product, is born out of the power relations between actors. Thus, in constructivism, theory is perceived to develop out of contextual power relations between subjects that hold particular identities in a specific spatio-temporality.

In constructivism, fundamental theoretical concepts such as the interactions between collective unities such as nations, states, civilizations, classes, ethnicities and tribes; international structures; diplomacy; security; sovereignty and interest are shaped by communicable and dialectical actions. Constructivism questions concepts such as national interest, sovereignty and national unity, which were taken as the fundamental concepts and assumptions of the modern nation-state structure and realism. In the constructivist approach, international politics, cultures and institutions are constructed by the actors that

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Jackson and Sorensen, 164.

live in them.<sup>28</sup> The meanings of factual events are dependent on the concepts that frame them, in other words, they are contextual. On the international level, friends and foes are friends or foes because of criteria assigned and meanings loaded on to them by the actors. State identities and interests are constituted relationally. The international political structure shapes the states' conception of their own identity and national interests.<sup>29</sup> For example, for the Western states the nuclear armament of Israel or Iran does not carry the same connotations. While the nuclear armament of Israel is not conceived as a threat, production of nuclear arms in Iran is perceived as a serious threat to international peace and security. Thus, according to constructivists, the billiard ball model offered by realists does not reflect the reality on the ground, since it ignores the thoughts, ideas and identities of actors as well as corporate bodies. Constructivists want to see what variables make up the billiard balls.<sup>30</sup> Through this idea, they challenge one of the basic tenets of the realist and liberal approach to international relations, namely the assumption that states are unitary actors. However, this is not the end of the story; according to constructivists, in a more macro level even the international system can be a result of social construction. If states want and work together, they can also play an important role in shaping the structure of international system. In fact, anarchy is actually what states construct. Thus it is a mutually constitutive and intersubjective understanding of the state-system relationship.

In short, constructivist theory asserts that some notions that seem natural and instinctive are in fact the product of social construction.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the prevalent belief in

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<sup>28</sup> Torbjon L. Knutsen, *Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorisi Tarihi*. Trans. Mehmet Özay. İstanbul: Açılım 2006, 371.

<sup>29</sup> Yücel Bozdağhoğlu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*. New York: Routledge, 2003, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Jackson and Sorensen, 166.

<sup>31</sup> Kemal İnat and Ali Balcı, "Dış Politika: Gelenekselden Post-Moderne Teorik Perspektifler," in *Uluslararası Politikayı Anlamak: Ulus Devletten Küreselleşmeye*, ed. Zeynep Dağı, İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2007, 269.

IR theory that anarchy and security dilemma are the fundamental conditions of the international system is not inherent to the international system but rather it is a construct of the states in the system. International relations are neither based on inherent conflicts between states like the realist theory asserts, nor are they based on the cooperation and interdependence of states like the liberal theory holds. International relations are shaped by states' differing perceptions of each other—conflicting or cooperative.<sup>32</sup>

The constructivist theory maintains that the relationship between social and political institutions, the meanings that are loaded onto such institutions, and the relationship between these institutions and their actors are relationally and socially constructed. While, on the one hand, social institutions define the actors through the cultural identity they create, on the other hand, the actors through their actions vitalize the dynamic structure of these institutions. As stated by Checkel, the ontology is one of mutual constitution, “where neither unit of analysis—agents or structures—is reduced to the other and made ‘ontologically primitive.’”<sup>33</sup> The concept of anarchy in international relations is a social construction born out of the distrust among states. Ideas and perceptions states hold or speculate about each other is an important factor in determining the international political structure.

In constructivist theory—in which material resources are evaluated through the lenses of socially constructed meanings—what the material resources held by one state means to the other is determined by state identities and subjective perceptions. For example, weapons held by an enemy state do not mean the same thing as the weapons held by a state that is a friend. Social and political institutions' practices play a determining role in the production and reproduction of subjective meanings. The theory also challenges the logic of consequentialism, which argues that states' actions are the consequence of rational

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<sup>32</sup> Alexander E. Wendt, “Anarchy is What States,” 391-425.

<sup>33</sup> Checkel, 324-326.

calculation based on actors' preferences and interests. Constructivist international relations thought instead advocates a logic of appropriateness which considers human behavior to be influenced and/or prescribed by norms that regulate the social environment.<sup>34</sup> For Fearon and Wendt, this is a basic distinction between *homo economicus* and *homo sociologicus*. *Homo economicus* works like a calculating machine. It assesses different courses of actions, evaluates possible outcomes and among those outcomes, chooses the most efficient means to its goals. It takes every possible step to achieve the best outcome. On the other hand, *homo sociologicus* is a form of rule- follower. It sometimes acts out of habit and when a decision is going to be taken, *homo sociologicus* poses the question, "how is a person in the same position supposed to act under those circumstances?"<sup>35</sup> The distinction between *homo economicus* and *homo sociologicus* becomes most obvious in the debate over norms. The answer that they give to the question of "Why do people follow norms?" reflects the basic dividing line between two approaches. For *homo economicus*, norms can be followed when there is a clear interest to do so. On the other hand, for *homo sociologicus*, it does not need to be a material interest to motivate people to follow norms. Instead, they believe that people can follow norms because they think it is right to do so. Although some scholars believe that there should not be a zero sum game in the approach towards the norms, and the *homo economicus* and *homo sociologicus* can be complementary under certain circumstances, this situation creates an important division between rationalism and constructivism.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Antonio Zotti, "The Distinction Between Logics of Appropriateness and and Logics of Consequences in the Context of Krasner's Critique of Norm Based Theories of International Relations," *Crossroads*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2010, 67-81.

<sup>35</sup> Fearon and Wendt, 60.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

### *Varieties of Constructivism*

Constructivism is not a single approach with some set standards and principles. There are differences among the scholars who are considered as constructivists in their use of methodologies and in their approach to the subject matter. This diversity of constructivism made it difficult to compare its relevance and its explanatory power with other more mainstream theories of international relations. As stated by Finnemore and Sikkink, constructivism operates at a different level of abstraction. It is not a substantive theory of politics but it makes claims about social life and social change. However, while doing this it does not make any particular suggestion regarding the content of social structures or about the nature of agents. In fact, it does not generate predictions on political outcomes that one could test in social science research.<sup>37</sup>

In the literature of IR, scholars provided different forms of classifications for categorizing constructivism in international relations. According to one of these classifications, there are three principal strands of constructivism in international relations: the middle ground strand; the self-reflexive strand and the discursive strand. Alexander Wendt is the most notable constructivist of the middle ground strand in international relations theory whose efforts focused on bringing rationalism and constructivism together within a systematic framework. This variant mostly underlines the role of identities and norms in constructing international relations and determining the outcomes of foreign policy. Wendt's strand of constructivism is most common among scholars in the United States. The other brands of constructivism are more frequently emphasized by European scholars. Among these, self-reflexive or interpretive variant mostly focuses on the role of language, linguistic constructions and discourse on construction of social reality. The most

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<sup>37</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, 393.



important constructivist of the self-reflexive approach is Friedrich Kratochwil. The third strand involves the application of Habermas's communicative action theory to world politics.<sup>38</sup> One of the prominent names in this genre of constructivism, Thomas Risse uses Habermasian communicative action to create a change in world politics. Risse suggests that actors in international relations have another mode of social action while functioning within the international system. They argue and deliberate. To argue, deliberate and debate presuppose that "actors no longer hold fixed interests during their communicative interaction but are open to persuasion, challenges and counterchallenges geared toward reaching consensus."<sup>39</sup> In fact, when actors engage in argument, they are usually ready to change their views, their interests and even their identities.

In an alternative way of classifying different forms of constructivism, the approaches in this theory were distinguished as being normative, identity based and linguistic. According to this classification, normative constructivists focus on the role and impact of norms in international relations. These scholars "make norms defined as shared expectations about appropriate behavior central to their argument."<sup>40</sup> This brand of constructivism is particularly significant in the development of constructivist scholarship in IR. Many early constructivist IR scholarship paid attention to norms and tried to answer the question of why norms matter. For example, Martha Finnemore in her studies shows how international organizations make states accept new international norms and social values in ways that have a lasting impact on the conduct of war, the workings of the international political economy, and the structure of states themselves.<sup>41</sup> Audie Klotz also focuses on norms and demonstrates how the global norm of racial equality made a large

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<sup>38</sup> Griffiths, Roach and Salamon, 123.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Risse, "Let's Argue: Communicative Action in World Politics." *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 2000, 1-39.

<sup>40</sup> Zehfuss, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Finnemore.

number of international organizations and states adopt sanctions against the Apartheid regime in South Africa despite strategic and economic interests in relation to the country.<sup>42</sup>

Other studies of norms in IR also demonstrated that norms can also an effective medium to understand international security. In Peter Katzenstein's edited volume on *The Culture of National Security*, contributing authors explained how norms can be effective in shaping national security interests of states.<sup>43</sup> These works demonstrate how these norms can challenge and undermine conventional conceptions of state interests. For instance, the victory of human rights norms over powerful states and the triumph of environmental norms over multinational corporations were demonstrated in different studies to show the impact of norms.<sup>44</sup> In this very extensive and exhaustive discussion of norms, constructivists pay a close attention to the formation and spread of norms. In particular, norm entrepreneurs constitute an important part of this debate. The role of individuals in purposefully trying to change social understanding and norms, and the formation of these norms are studied extensively by constructivists, since the mainstream approaches in international relations fail to provide an explanation.

Another strand of constructivism pays close attention to the concept of state identity. In this brand, constructivists focus on the relationship between identity and interest and how identity informs and shapes the national interest and foreign policies of states. The most significant representatives of this identity-based constructivism include prominent scholars like Alexander Wendt<sup>45</sup> and Ted Hopf<sup>46</sup>. As discussed below, there are

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<sup>42</sup> Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.

<sup>43</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

<sup>44</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, 398.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander E. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>46</sup> Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of Foreign Policy: Identities and Foreign Policies Moscow 1955 and 1999*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 1999.

variations within this brand of constructivism regarding external and domestic determinants of the state identity. Finally, the representatives of the last strand in this categorization, such as Fierke,<sup>47</sup> focus on the role of rhetoric and linguistic constructions on the formation and construction of social reality.

### ***Formation and Role of State Identity in Constructivism***

An important contribution of constructivists to international relations was the concept of state identity. Although identity and nationalism had been an important dimension of international politics, they were not effectively utilized by the scholars of international relations. First of all, nationalism scholarship was missing the idea that in addition to people, groups and nations, organizations, corporations, institutions and even states may also have their identities. The nationalistic understanding of the state as the embodiment of the national principles, ideas and identity was not an accurate description. Nationalism scholarship almost always ignored this division between the nation and the state. States in this sense were perceived as only neutral entities and empty vessels that will reflect the nationalistic feelings in the international realm.<sup>48</sup>

A related failure of nationalism literature was its concentration on the domestic society. Since states are shaped by the national culture and character of the people, state identity (if it has one) is not very different than the national identity and largely shaped by domestic society. This domestically produced nationalism then influenced the foreign

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<sup>47</sup> Fierke Karin M., "Breaking the Silence: Language and Method in International Relations." *Language, Agency, and Politics in a Constructed World*. ed. François Debrix, New York: M.E Sharpe, 2003, 66-86.

<sup>48</sup> See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca. Cornell University Press, 2009.

policy of the countries and international relations.<sup>49</sup> Of course, this was an extremely reductionist explanation of the role of identity to international relations. Nationalism scholarship ignored the interaction of the state with other states and international organizations in international realms. It also ignored the fact that the identity of the state may change or may be transformed by the social international interaction of the states.

Constructivist scholarship attempted to provide the missing link between identity politics and international relations. According to this scholarship, states just like the firms and other corporal enterprises have their own corporate identity and this identity may be different from the national identity of them. While trying to understand this phenomenon, constructivist school of thought, provided three different forms: systemic, unit-level and holistic constructivism.<sup>50</sup> The evolution of state identity can be informed by developments and changes on both the national and international levels. For example, Iran's state identity, which was secular and nationalist during the Shah's rule, evolved into a religious state identity as a result of the Islamic revolution born out of developments on the national level. These national changes reshaped Iran's foreign policy tendencies; Western concepts were abandoned and an anti-Western discourse was developed. In Turkey, in the second half of the 80s and first half of the 90s, on the other hand, the restructuring of foreign policy was the combined effect of global changes at the end of the Cold War and the change in the country's leadership.<sup>51</sup> In multiple different studies since the end of the Cold

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<sup>49</sup> For an example of this position, see Suisheng Zhao. "Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited: the strident turn." *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 22, No. 82, 2013, 535-553.

<sup>50</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, "Constructivism." In *Theories of International Relations*. Ed. Scott Burchill et al., 3rd edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 188-212.

<sup>51</sup> Muhittin Ataman, "Özal Leadership and Restructuring of Turkish Ethnic Policy in the 1980s." *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2002, 123-142.

War, scholars tried to understand the role that the state identity played in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy.<sup>52</sup>

Systemic constructivism focuses solely on interactions between unitary state actors, in other words, *inter-national* interactions and ignores events that occur within the domestic political realm. In this approach, the social, and not the corporate, identity of the state informs its interests and in turn its actions. The social identity of a state—its status, role, or personality that international society ascribes to a state—is an important factor in establishing the international connections of actors. Structural contexts, systemic processes and strategic practices produce and reproduce different sorts of state identity. New state identities and new roles, in turn, reshape the state's interests and its actions. Especially, some scholars within constructivist school, such as Wendt<sup>53</sup> and Barnett<sup>54</sup>, emphasized the significance of the role and role identities while discussing the state identity. For actors who cannot adopt to changing roles and identities, identity crisis become imminent and they fail in realizing their interests.

Systemic constructivism understands state identity to be constituted by the normative and ideational structures of international society, and emphasizes that states become distinct structures as a result of a process of interacting with other states. The most important manifestation of this interaction is war. In fact, war has been instrumental, for most states established in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in declaring independence and producing national identities. It is important to mention that this assumption does not hold true for all states. For example, although war has been the determinative factor for Turkey in

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<sup>52</sup> See for instance Marc Lynch. "Abandoning Iraq: Jordan's Alliances and the Politics of State Identity." *Security Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1999, 347-388 and Shibley Telhami and Andrew Barnett. *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*. Ithaca, NY. Cornell University Press. 2002.

<sup>53</sup> Alexander Wendt. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Barnett. "Institutions, Roles and Disorder: The Case of the Arab States System." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 1993, 271-296.

establishing its independence, friend-enemy distinction in the international level has not played an important role in the shaping of Turkish national identity. The independence war, motivated by anti-imperialist, anti-western and religions/Islamic sensitivities, could not serve as the creation myth of Turkish national identity. Even though, the independence war was fought against the West, Turkey exerted a lot of effort in becoming a member of the Western family. In the attempts to establish close relationships and interactions with the West, relationship and interactions with the East and the Muslim World were severed. In this context, it can be said that systemic constructivism's conception of state identity as constituted by international interactions and its neglect of domestic events and political elite also serves as a deficiency. If, as Wendt claims, state's social identity is the product of international interactions, then the first contact between actors should determine the quality of their relationship. However, this understanding excludes from the analysis the states' perceptions and ideas of each other prior to first contact.<sup>55</sup> This deficiency can be corrected with the help of concepts borrowed from the pluralism approach which rejects assumptions such as the separation of domestic and foreign policy and rationality of the state.

Wendt defines his own constructivist approach as follows: "Constructivism is a structural theory of the international system that makes the following core claims: (1) states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory; (2) the key structures in the states system are intersubjective, rather than material; and (3) state identities and interests are in important part constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics"<sup>56</sup> Wendt's approach to state identity mainly shaped the nature of the debate in constructivist international relations theory. In his account of constructivism Wendt considered identity

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<sup>55</sup> Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, "Türkiye'nin Batılılaşma Sürecinde Avrupa ve Batının Yeri ve AB'ye Üyelikte Kimlik Olgusunun Etkileri." *Türkiye-AB İlişkileri: Avrupa'nın Genişlemesi, Müzakere Süreci ve Batılılaşma Sorunsalı*, eds. Ertan Efeğil and Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, Ankara: Orion Yayınevi, 2007, 389-422.

<sup>56</sup> Griffiths, Roach and Salamon, 154.

as a central component of international relations. In his seminal article that resulted in a renaissance of constructivism in international relations, Wendt argued that states have an identity which informs and shapes the interests of states. Thus the identities play a constitutive role over the foreign policy interest and thus on foreign policy actions of the states.

Wendt also emphasized the social dimension of the construction of this identity in international relations. According to him “[A]ctors do not have a ‘portfolio’ of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead they define interests in the process of defining situations. Sometimes situations are unprecedented in our experience, and in these cases we have to construct their meaning and thus our interests, by analogy or de novo. More often they have routine qualities in which we assign meanings on the basis of institutionally defined roles. When we say that professors have an interest in teaching, research or going on leave, we are saying that to function in the role of identity of professor, they have to define certain situations as calling for certain actions.”<sup>57</sup> In addition to social dimension of identity, Wendt also emphasized that identities are inherently relational. Therefore, a state may have multiple identities based on institutional roles and relationships to other states. In fact, Wendt completely rejected the idea that states have a universal identity as power-maximizers, which was considered as the basic tenant of neorealism in international relations.<sup>58</sup> However, this does not mean that states can have an infinite number of possible identities. According to Wendt, states can have multiple but limited number of identities, and “identity formation is always limited by the array of possible identities in the international system at any historical moment.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Wendt, “Anarchy is What States,” 391-425 .

<sup>58</sup> See Mearsheimer, John. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2001.

<sup>59</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, 398.

In a following article he clarifies his conceptualization of state identity further and distinguished between a state's corporate identity (its internal human, material, and ideological characteristics) and its social identity (the meaning an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others).<sup>60</sup> However he mainly focused on the constitutive role of international social actions. Wendt synthesized and extended his earlier conceptualization of the relationship between identity and foreign policy in his highly acclaimed "Social Theory of International Politics".<sup>61</sup> In his final version of conceptualization of state identity, he again reiterated that although domestic factors may be initial sources of identity, social interaction among states explains identity diffusion and change.<sup>62</sup>

Unit level constructivism developed as the antithesis of systemic constructivism. This approach, while not entirely disregarding the external, international domain and the role of international norms in conditioning identities and interests of states, emphasizes that the relationship between domestic social and legal norms has more determinative role in conditioning state identity. This approach draws attention to the internal and domestic determinants of national policy as an explanation of variations of identity, interest and action across states with similar conditions and common experiences. States' status, interest and definition of friend or enemy are shaped by their state identities, which is actually shaped prior to their systemic interactions with other states. Relations with states designated as friends take place in a system of collective security and open diplomacy, while relations with states designated as enemies develop in anarchy.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Alexander E. Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 2, 1994, 384-396.

<sup>61</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory*.

<sup>62</sup> Hopf, *Social Construction*.

<sup>63</sup> Bozdağlıoğlu, "Türkiye'nin Batılılaşma", 397-398.



Ted Hopf is one of the most significant constructivists in this genre of constructivist international relations. He challenged Wendt's conceptualization of a social and relational state identity and instead developed one which focuses on domestic variables. Hopf has tried to domesticize the social constructivist approach to international politics, to bring society back into social constructivism- the society within states rather than the society between them. According to him, domestic society is much more important and determinative than international society in terms of shaping identities.<sup>64</sup> In his book on construction of world politics, Hopf argues that "a state understands *others* according to the identity it attributes to them, while simultaneously reproducing its own identity through daily social practices."<sup>65</sup> In order to bring back the society, in his study Hopf tries to find a collection of identities existed in Moscow during the period of his study. He analyzed the dominant discourses in popular culture (pulp fiction) in Moscow and how these discourses shape the state identity, and in return, how the identity of the state informs the national interest and foreign policy of Soviet Union in 1955 and Russian Federation in 1999. Scholars like Neuman contributed to this debate and discussed the unthinking, unintentional, automatic, everyday reproduction of self and other through a collection of discursive practices that relies neither on the need for the denial and suppression of the Other, nor on the conscious selection of behavior based on a particular norm.<sup>66</sup> Also, some contributors to Katzenstein's edited volume stated that identity is mostly a domestic attribute, which in turn shapes state's perception of interest and foreign policy.<sup>67</sup>

Holistic constructivism seeks to bridge the two domains of systemic and unit-level constructivism by propounding that both internal and external factors are determinant.

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<sup>64</sup> Hopf, *Social Construction*.

<sup>65</sup> Hopf, *Social Construction*.

<sup>66</sup> Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The East in European Identity Formation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

<sup>67</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, p. 399.

Concerned primarily with the dynamics of global change, holistic constructivists by focusing on the mutually constitutive relationship between the international system and the state accommodate the entire range of factors conditioning the identities and interests of states. For example, Kratochwil, who emphasized changes and developments both in international and domestic level in his writings on the role of changing ideas of international order and security at the end of the Cold War, utilized the holistic constructivism approach. According to Kratochwil, actors who are constitutive of the social reality determine political actions and state practices.<sup>68</sup> In another study Yucel Bozdağlıoğlu tries to explain the transformation of the state identity of Turkish Republic by focusing on the interplay of domestic and external determinants of identity formation.<sup>69</sup> In his study he develops a more interactive form of identity construction. For Bozdağlıoğlu, a state's identity is constructed as a result of a struggle among different groups within that state. The foreign policy is also shaped in accordance with their identity conception. But in the aftermath of the construction of this identity a new interaction takes place.<sup>70</sup> According to Bozdağlıoğlu:

Once an identity is constructed, states institutionalize that identity at both domestic and international levels. Domestically while states develop their identities "they also develop myths and institutions to protect them. Internationally, "states seek to enact their identities potentially shifting or multiple ones) in interstate normative structures, including regimes and security communities." While states try to institutionalize their identity at both domestic and international levels, domestic and international environments, especially cultural and institutional ones, shape their identities. International institutions, where the density and frequency of systemic interaction are the greatest, "shape identities that inform interest..."<sup>71</sup>

This approach replaces the state-centric approach with an understanding based on a complex web of relations woven with both domestic and international factors and stresses

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<sup>68</sup> Griffiths, Roach and Salamon, 128.

<sup>69</sup> Bozdağlıoğlu, *Turkish Foreign Policy*.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

the importance of accounting for economic, political and other domestic developments in analyses. However this does not solve the problem in regards to which comes first in the construction of state identity. In some instances it even turn into a chicken-egg problem between domestic and external variables. Ernst Haas, who claims that the main factor that influences the actions and practices of actors in the name of the state is knowledge, stresses the importance of a historical understanding and scientific knowledge in line with the holistic constructivism approach.<sup>72</sup> Competency in historical analysis is of particular importance because history plays an important role in the constitution of state identity, which defines the process of decision making on foreign policy.

In line with holistic constructivism's emphasis on the total effect of domestic and international developments, many scholars suggest that a state's status, place in the international system, its perception of its own interests and security are often defined by the political elite's constructed view of time and space. The political elite's interpretation of their social worlds is governed by a processual mode of historical knowledge accumulated through psychological, cultural, ideological and religious values and by the geographical place in which this historical knowledge is accumulated. Abstract concepts such as time and place can turn into an ideological conflict among the political elites of a country. There may indeed be differences in how opposing sides in this ideological conflict define friends or enemies of the state. Each side may attempt to consolidate its preferences as the state identity through myths and institutions. The consolidation of state identity in the international level, on the other hand, is effectuated through its membership in the "international normative structures such as international regimes and collective securities" which is also the most important factor of its legitimacy.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, 12-14.

<sup>73</sup> Bozdağlıoğlu, "Türkiye'nin Batılılaşma ," 396-397.

In fact, the debates above demonstrate that the constructivist school of thought, a state's foreign policy or national power cannot be solely based on its material conditions. For instance, Davutoğlu complements the concept of power, which is the cardinal concept of the traditional realist approach, with social factors in addition to material resources. According to Davutoğlu, in addition to concrete factors such as geography, history, population and culture and potential factors such as economics, technological and military capacity, strategic planning and capacity and political will are constitutive of the national power.<sup>74</sup> It can be said that concepts of power and interest are emphasized in the constructivist school of thought similar to the realist tradition. However, the constructivist school of thought suggests that the meaning and impact of these concepts are dependent more on the interpretations of the actors rather than objective independent definitions. For example in a study on the constructivist analysis of Turkish foreign policy, Bahar Rumelili rejects essentialist arguments about the prospects of Turkey's EU membership from identity dimension and argues that "European and Turkish identities can be reconstructed in such a way as to make the justification of Turkish membership possible and desirable from an identity viewpoint."<sup>75</sup> This means that the interests of the countries can change through reconstruction of identities. According to her this is possible, because:

First, because identities are socially constructed, negotiated and contested, EU-Turkey relations provide a site where the identities of Europe, the Turk, Asia and Islam are continuously negotiated....Second, identities cannot be divorced from interests. Rather identities are constitutive of interests, meaning that the question of whether or not Turkish membership is in the EU's or in Turkey's interests is defined by how European and Turkish identities are constituted in relation to one another.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*. İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001, 17-29.

<sup>75</sup> Bahar Rumelili, "Negotiating Europe: EU-Turkey Relations from an Identity Perspective." *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2008, 97-110, 98.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid*

The constructivist school of thought, which seeks to explain how the world is and not how it should be, is not optimistic in its explanations of the existent system. While constructivism stands close to realism in terms of its emphasis on the concepts of power and interest, in terms of the constitutive role it assigns to international institutions in organizing state practices and defining national interests it stands close to the liberal institutionalist approach.<sup>77</sup> Despite the similarities, constructivism differs immensely both from the liberal and the realist traditions. Constructivism defends the constitutive role of norms in structuring the interests of states as well as the thesis of adjustment of actions according to normative institutions while rejecting the rational action thesis of the rationalist school of thought.

Security in constructivism is understood within the framework of dichotomies such as self and the other and friend and enemy, which are themselves the products of common identity and culture constituted through interaction between individuals and states. Political actors determine national interests from within a contextual set of meanings that are defined with reference to the state's strategic planning capacity and the state identity. The concept of security in constructivism is shaped by values, norms, expectations and knowledge states can access about each other. In this context, states construct their own perception of potential threats. For example, while the production of nuclear weapons in a Western nation does not create a security risk for the US, any activity within the nuclear field in Iran is discerned as a serious threat. This becomes clearer when we compare the US attitude towards nuclear weapon production during the Shah's rule—the very same nuclear weapon activities encouraged during the Shah's rule came to be perceived as serious threat after the regime change. As it can be deduced from the above example, material calculations such as military power are not the only motives behind a state's perception of threat its security policies. Ideational factors such as social construction of

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<sup>77</sup> İnat and Balcı, 367-372.

that state's identity and the constitution of the relationship between the states are also instrumental as guides to international action.

Constructivism asserts that systemic qualities such as anarchy, security dilemma and self-sufficiency are not pre-defined stagnant concepts but rather are products of social construction.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, in constructivist theory, being identified as a friend or enemy, supporting peace or war are not the ineluctable consequences of the international system, but are rather parameters established by whether the states' legitimacy are acknowledged, whether states are identified as friends or foe, and whether the political ideologies of states are democratic. In conjunction with the fundamental assumption of the democratic peace theory, in constructivism, a democratic state seeks to use war as an instrument only against those defined as enemy. In this context, the constructivist school seeks states' strategic preferences in their strategic culture.<sup>79</sup> Strategic culture identifies the ideational foundations of international behavior and refers to modes of thought and action with respect to force, which derives from perception of the national historical experience, from aspirations for responsible behavior in national terms. Thus, strategic culture "provides the milieu within which strategy is debated" and serves as an independent determinate of strategic policy patterns<sup>80</sup>. For example, the continued existence and even expansion of the NATO, which was relieved of a serious threat with the collapse of the Soviet Union, can only be explained through a constructivist approach to security. To begin with, the perception of the Soviet Union as a threat was not objective. Rather it was an effect of the process of the construction of the state identities of NATO's member states. Moreover, what holds coalitions of states together are not only perceived common threats, but also

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<sup>78</sup> Alexander Wendt. "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics." *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992.

<sup>79</sup> See Alastair Iain Johnston. "Thinking about Strategic Culture." *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1995, 32-64.

<sup>80</sup> Colin Gray, "National Style in Strategy: The American Example." *International Security*. Vol. 6, No. 2, 1981, 35-37.

their common values and norms. Therefore, it can be argued that NATO was the institutionalized manifestation of the common values the West held against the Soviet threat. As shown by the above example, national security emerges as a barrier to perceived threats to state identity and the cultural structures of the international system in which the state is a member.

In this study, the construction of state identity and its impact on the changes of foreign policy will be analyzed through an integrative framework. Instead of engaging into a debate over whether the state identity is constructed through domestic or external factors, it will be argued that the state identity is more frequently shaped by the joint impact of external and domestic factors. The change in the identity of the state then influences the foreign policy of the country. This new foreign policy further impacts the state identity and shapes it through actor socialization and emergence of new norms. In fact it is an ongoing and continuous process.

## **CHAPTER 3**



## **TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY UNTIL THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY'S RISE TO POWER**

The foreign policy of the Turkish Republic since its foundation until the early 2000s followed a pattern of cautious non-interference and a pro-Western alignment. After the foundation of the Republic, concerns over Turkey's territorial integrity and international recognition constituted the most significant priorities of the new state. While the Turkish government was trying to restore its diplomatic ties with Western states, which it fought against during World War I, the impact of the war and the Western allies' earlier plans to divide Turkey through secret agreements, like Sykes Picot, continued to be a source of skepticism towards the West. This created a paradoxical situation for Turkish foreign policy makers from the very early years of the Republic. Meanwhile, unresolved territorial disputes, which are remnants of WWI, created tension between the nascent Turkish Republic and its neighbors. In particular, Turkish foreign policy focused on issues that were not resolved in the Lausanne Treaty, including the Mosul question, the issue of the Straits and the question of Hatay. Moreover, there were some disputes during this period with Greece in regards to the interpretation of the agreement signed on the situation of

minorities in both countries. Until the 1930s, when Atatürk and Venizelos launched the rapprochement between the two countries, they remained highly crisis driven.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1930s, Turkey launched a limited engagement with different actors and organizations in the international arena. For instance, in 1932, Turkey became a member of the League of Nations. Meanwhile, Turkey also started some initiatives in regards to its region. For example, with its Eastern neighbors (Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan), Turkey established the Sadabad Pact in 1937.<sup>2</sup> Before that, Turkey took part in the Balkan Entente with the countries in the Balkans. During this period, just before the Second World War, Turkey also took an important step in the resolution of one of the most significant problems that it could have encountered. In 1936, Bulgaria, France, Britain, Japan, Romania, Turkey and the Soviet Union signed the Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of Straits. This agreement gave the control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits to Turkey and established regulations in regards to the movement of naval ships through these straits.<sup>3</sup>

With WWII and the Cold War, Turkey's foreign policy started to be influenced by systemic factors and great power rivalry. During these years, the fear of a possible Soviet invasion and ideological concerns consolidated the security focus of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey took part in the Western camp during the Cold War and tried to become a member of the organizations that were formed in the Western bloc, such as NATO, the OSCE and the EC. Other than a few major disruptions, such as the Cyprus Crisis, Turkey followed policies that mirrored the U.S. and its European allies. It viewed its role as a frontline state in the war against the spread of communism and aggression of the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> Ayla Göl, ““A Short Summary of Turkish Foreign Policy: 1923-1939.” *Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol. 48, 1993, 57-71.

<sup>2</sup> B. Criss and P. Bilgin. “Turkish Foreign Policy toward the Middle East.” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Ayla Göl, “A Short Summary of Turkish Foreign Policy: 1923-1939.

Union. While receiving strategic assurances and economic support from the Western world, Turkey lost most of its autonomy in its foreign and security policy. The threat perception during the Cold War became firmer after the empowerment of leftist groups in the country and ideological clashes in domestic politics.

The end of the Cold War created a strategic dilemma for Turkey. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Turkey lost its frontline status. Turkish foreign and security policy, which was structured in accordance with the threat perception of the Cold War, had difficulty adapting to the changing circumstances. However, the end of the Cold War did not diminish Turkey's strategic relevance. During significant crises, such as the Gulf War, Turkey demonstrated its strategic significance to the Western bloc. Furthermore, the independence of Central Asian Republics during this period and Turkey's potential geopolitical leverage on these nations strengthened its strategic relevance. However, Turkey's relationship with the West experienced major problems during this period. In addition to the increasing anti-Turkish sentiment in the U.S. Congress, Turkey's exclusion from the European integration process generated an increasing degree of skepticism.

The most significant development in Turkish foreign policy during this time was the country's rapprochement with Israel. Turkish foreign policy makers during these years believed that improving relations with Israel was the best way to anchor Turkey to the West. Despite the negative reactions of its neighbors in the Middle East and the Islamic world, Turkey signed significant defense and economic cooperation agreements with Israel. However, the dawn of a new millennium led Turkey to restructure its foreign policy. However, most of these policies could not be adopted due to the deeply imbedded role that the state establishment played in the formulation and implementation of Turkish foreign policy. Just before AK Party took power in Turkey in November 2002, several important developments, such as the restoration of ties with Syria, rapprochement with Greece and

the EU's Helsinki Summit, signaled the emergence of a fertile ground for a foreign policy transformation.

### THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE ONE-PARTY STATE

After the World War I, the founders of the Turkish Republic preferred to follow an aggressive westernization policy despite domestic skepticism of the West and its recent enmity and wars with Western powers. Domestically, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk worked to westernize Turkish society through radical reforms.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, he followed a much more cautious – and at times isolationist – foreign policy while also trying to maintain cordial relations with the Western powers. The goal of the founders of the Turkish republic could be described as “getting its house in order.” Turkey's leaders strived to build the country's capacity, to form a nation-state after a series wars – including the Balkan Wars, WWI and the Turkish War of Independence – and to westernize society through radical social engineering. The Turkish public suffered from war fatigue after these long conflicts, the infrastructure was in ruins, and the economy was devastated by constant war mobilization and a huge loss of lands. Moreover, the implementation of the Western reforms in Turkey necessitated a strong focus on domestic politics and public affairs. Turkish foreign policy during this period focused on negotiating peace agreements with the Allied powers and attempting to solve the remaining territorial disputes with the neighbors and European powers. One of the main goals of the newly established Turkish state was to earn international legitimacy and isolate its foreign policy from conflict.

For the Turkish government, the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, which ended the conflict between Turkey and the West, demonstrated a significant achievement in the country's foreign policy. The treaty not only shaped the borders of the new Turkish Republic, but it

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<sup>4</sup> See Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

also was the only post-war agreement that depended on mutual negotiations.<sup>5</sup> The agreement and international recognition that the Republic of Turkey received during the negotiations was considered to be a major development in Turkish foreign policy.

In the formative years of the Republic, Turkish politics and foreign policy were mostly determined by Mustafa Kemal and a few of his close associates. The one-party rule of Atatürk's Republican People's Party (CHP) singlehandedly managed the majority of significant policy initiatives for the next three decades. During this period, the Turkish leadership avoided engaging in conflicts and disputes with other major powers. Atatürk's principle of "Peace at Home and Peace in the World" is said to be the most significant principle of the early Republic. The country's founders were aware of Turkey's capabilities and its economic and military potential; thus, they spent more time and effort securing the borders and gaining international recognition of the state's boundaries. At the same time, the nascent Republic was trying to gain legitimacy by engaging in international organizations and coalitions. Multilateral diplomacy, such as the Balkan Entente and Sadabad Pact, and membership in international organizations were considered the best way to ensure the security and legitimacy of the Republic. However, this period was not without any foreign policy disputes. In particular, territorial issues such as the status of the Hatay and Mosul provinces created tension between Turkey and neighboring countries. The Hatay province was incorporated into Turkish territories in the late 1930s, whereas the pursuit of the Mosul province was abandoned due to the combined effect of British pressure and internal unrest. Turkey also gained full control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits during this time as a result of the Montreux Convention. After this agreement, Turkish-British relations, which deteriorated after the Mosul crisis, largely recovered and the two countries started to follow a more cooperative foreign policy. In addition, Turkey and Greece reached an agreement during these years in regards to the

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<sup>5</sup> Ayla Göl, "A Short Summary of Turkish Foreign Policy: 1923-1939.

exchange of Greek and Turkish minorities living in their countries. However, this period left a lot of questions unresolved between Turkey and Greece.

### TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING WWII

Although Turkey avoided international and regional conflicts in the immediate aftermath of World War I, political developments in Europe, especially the rise of fascism, had an influence on Turkish politics. On one hand, the Turkish government was concerned about the rise of fascist rulers in Germany and Italy and the aggressive foreign policies that these countries pursued in the region. In fact, when the Germans invaded Austria in March 1938, Turkey's chief concerns were the rising economic and military capabilities of Hitler's Germany. The Turkish government tried to initiate different policies in order to provide greater security. At the same time, Turkey's relationships with Britain and France started to recover from the WWI conflict. As mentioned above, Turkey restored its relations with Britain after the Montreux Convention and opened a new page in its relations with France after the resolution of the Hatay issue in 1937.<sup>6</sup>

Upon repairing its relations with Britain and France, Turkey started to receive loans and financial assistance. For example, in order to strengthen its naval forces, Turkey obtained a loan from Britain for 6 million pounds in May 1938 and another 25 million pounds in October 1939. This instigated a competition between Germany and Britain, who tried to offer Turkey more aid than the other in order to secure their support in the war. When Germany matched a British tax credit of 10 million pounds, Turkey rejected a tentative neutrality treaty with Berlin and did not purchase any more arms from Germany

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<sup>6</sup> MÜCAHİT ÖZÇELİK, "İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türk Dış Politikası." *Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2010, 253-269.

in 1939.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, while trying to protect itself from the aggression of fascist regimes in Europe, Turkey's domestic political practices were influenced by these regimes. Especially during the presidency of İsmet İnönü, the government enacted certain policies that were reminiscent of those of with the fascist parties in Germany and Italy.

When World War II started, Turkey aimed to avoid armed confrontation with any blocs and protect its borders. The Turkish government adopted very strict economic regulations in order to increase defense spending and prepare itself for a wartime economy. Turkey kept this position during most of the war despite pressure from both sides to join the fighting. However, this position began to shift in early 1943, when allied victories against Germany occurred on multiple fronts, including the defeat of Germany at al-Alamein in the fall of 1942. When Allied powers launched their landing operations in Algeria and Morocco in February 1943, the threat from the Axis in the Middle East was ended. In addition, the German's surrender in February at Stalingrad assured the failure of Germany's occupation of the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> According to William Hale, Turkey's preferred scenario was a peaceful agreement between Germany and the Western Allies before Stalin could exert his power over Eastern Europe, leaving Germany with some influence in order to balance that of Russia. However, it soon became clear that Hitler would not go quietly and that the only acceptable resolution would be the total destruction of Hitler's Third Reich, which led to instability in the region and threatened Turkey's security.<sup>9</sup> As such, Turkey preferred to follow a balanced policy towards the UK, the Soviet Union and Germany during WWII.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout most of World War II, the fear of Soviet aggression overshadowed most other threats for Turkey. Once such fear was that if Turkey was to join the Allied

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<sup>7</sup> William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*. New York: Routledge, 2002, 65.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>10</sup> Özçelik.

forces with inadequate support, the country would become vulnerable to Germany and that Stalin might use Turkish involvement in the war as an excuse for the Soviet Union to invade Turkey.<sup>11</sup> Turkey's eventual involvement in the war was chiefly due to Winston Churchill. One of the most remarkable moments of diplomacy in World War II was the meeting between Winston Churchill and İsmet İnönü in Adana on January 30, 1943. During this meeting, Churchill tried to convince Turkey to actively join the war in order to protect the Allies in the Mediterranean Sea. However, İsmet İnönü was reluctant to accept this proposal; hence, they placed extremely challenging conditions on Turkey's involvement in the war on the side of the Allies. The meetings continued for two days and both sides announced that their demands were met. However, Turkey continued to follow its impartial and non-involvement policy throughout the war.<sup>12</sup> Churchill's plan to gain Turkey's support was also endorsed by the U.S. administration. For Hale, Churchill had a comprehensive plan to bring military aid to Turkey and gain Turkish support for the Allied war effort. However, during this period, İnönü's main objectives were to avoid committing to a war against the Axis and to maximize the amount of military aid that Turkey received from the Allied powers. İnönü was also extremely skeptical about the Soviet Union and wanted to let Churchill know about Stalin's hidden post-war objectives. During the historical meeting, Churchill was not able to convince İnönü to support the war due to his inability to quell concerns that Turkey's inclusion was intended to soften the blow of a future invasion by the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the rest of the war, the Allied powers consistently pressured Turkey to join the war, while Germany tried to convince Turkey to stay neutral in the conflict by

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<sup>11</sup> Hale, 94.

<sup>12</sup> Osman Yalçın, "İkinci Dünya Savaşında İsmet İnönü ve Churchill Arasında Yapılan Adana Görüşmesi." *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, Vol. 47, 2011, 701-731.

<sup>13</sup> Hale, 94.



providing financial assistance to the Turkish government.<sup>14</sup> This external pressure also impacted domestic politics and the debate about the war in Turkey. For instance, this pressure strengthened the ongoing domestic discussion regarding joining the war. In several instances, these external and domestic debates caused tensions between Turkey and Allied forces as well as between different groups in Turkey. It even led to the resignation of some foreign policy makers, such as Minister of Foreign Affairs Numan Menemencioğlu, who was forced to resign after various complaints made by Britain about his pro-German statements. Menemencioğlu was one of the most prominent pro-German voices in Turkey. The Allied forces also pressured Turkey to break diplomatic and commercial relations with Germany during the Spring and Summer of 1944.

In the last year of the war, Turkish concerns over Stalin's increasing ambition and the post-war international order pressured Turkey to take a position. Meanwhile the British, American and Soviet leaders met in Yalta to decide how to shape a new world order. One of the most significant dimensions of this meeting was the decision about the UN system. According to Hale, this development was the chief reason that Turkey reconsidered its involvement in the war on the Allied side. In Yalta, the "Big Three" decided to offer only membership in the newly established United Nations to individuals who joined the side of the Allies prior to the end of February 1945.<sup>15</sup> With this new incentive, Turkey formally declared war on Japan and Germany on February 23, 1945. However, by that time, combat had already ended and Turkey did not actively engage with the Axis powers. The ability to avoid armed conflict in WWII, despite the economic hardships that Turkey endured, was considered one of the most significant successes of Turkish diplomacy for many years.

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<sup>14</sup> Özçelik.

<sup>15</sup> Hale, 101.

## TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE COLD WAR

The end of World War II created a new international order in which two superpowers launched an unprecedented rivalry. The use of the first atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the start of the nuclear age were the most significant determinants of this period. During the Cold War, Turkey allied with the Western bloc. Turkey's fear of the spread of communism and Soviet aggression during World War II played a significant role in this decision. These concerns were aggravated by the Soviet Union's demands regarding the use of straits. It was a major concern for Turkish policy makers even before the Montreux Convention. As the level of these threats increased, Turkey felt a greater urge to become part of the West's defense and security formations.<sup>16</sup> However, Turkey's integration into the Western security architecture was not a smooth process. Although Turkey joined the Western bloc at the very last minute during World War II, the active neutrality policy that it followed throughout the war created estrangement and mutual skepticism between Turkey and the Western allied forces.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of Turkey's relations with the Western world, the post-WWII period created a problematic dynamic. As mentioned above, many among the Allied powers felt that Turkey did not meet their expectations during WWII and did not support the war effort against Germany. However, Turkey's geopolitical significance made it a country that could not be ignored or neglected in a global rivalry with the Soviet Union. Moreover, the domino theory, which started to shape the security perception of the U.S. and Western

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<sup>16</sup> Barın Kayaoğlu, "Strategic Imperatives, Democratic Rhetoric: The United States and Turkey, 1945-52." *Cold War History*. Vol. 9, No. 3, 2009, 321-345.

<sup>17</sup> Gamze Avcı, "The Postwar Incorporation of Turkey into the Western Alliance 1947-1952." *European Review*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2005, 419-429.

Europe, made these Western countries consider the consequences if Turkey fell to communism and became a member of the Eastern bloc. In such a scenario, communism could have spread to other Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries, expanding the Soviet zone of influence to Southern Europe.

For the strategists of the post-WWII order, Turkey was a significant buffer zone, which could ideologically block the spread of communism and militarily hinder possible Soviet aggression towards the West. It could also prevent the USSR from attaining its goal of reaching to the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, as stated by Kayaoğlu, in the case of a Soviet move towards the Southwest, the Turkish military's resistance could have been instrumental in impeding a Soviet advance into the Middle East and defending Allied bases near the Suez Canal. Moreover, Turkey could play an important role in the U.S.'s desire to protect oil reserves in the Middle East. These reserves were particularly important for the global economy as well as the post-war reconstruction of Europe.<sup>18</sup> Geopolitically, Turkey was a country that could not be ignored in the Cold War years. For these considerations, it was critical that the United States and its allies involve Turkey in the formation of the emerging security structure. The first step of this process was the inclusion of Turkey in the reconstruction efforts in post-War Europe. Although Turkey did not participate in combat operations in WWII, its economy was equally influenced by the war in Europe. In order to alleviate the negative impacts of the war and help reconstruct the basic sectors of the economy, Turkey was included in the European economic reconstruction and development effort. During this period, Turkey received economic aid under both the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.<sup>19</sup>

The next step in the construction of the Western bloc was building a security framework which would protect the member or signatory countries against Soviet

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<sup>18</sup> Kayaoğlu, 321-345.

<sup>19</sup> Avcı, 419-429.

aggression. This collective security framework was intended to be a major source of deterrence against a possible attack from the Soviet bloc. However, during the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the founding countries excluded Turkey. Under the increasing threat from the Soviet Union and growing militarization of the rivalry between the Western and Eastern blocs, Turkey was particularly concerned about its exclusion from the process. In order to solve this security problem, Turkey tried to broker a bilateral security agreement with the United States. However, this was not a viable option for the U.S., which rejected Turkey's request. Meanwhile, the NATO framework began to take shape. In 1949, when the NATO agreement was signed by 12 countries, Turkey was not invited to attend. According to Avcı, there were various reasons for Turkey's exclusion. For example, from the British perspective, it was believed that admitting Turkey would be detrimental to the shared Atlantic Community identity. For others, Turkey's inclusion would expand the organization's military risks, which would be unfavorable to current members who would not welcome an increase in their defense obligations, especially during such a sensitive time. An attack on Turkey by the Soviet Union would necessitate a joint reaction from the Western camp, which would pull war-fatigued European countries into another major conflict. For the U.S., there were other concerns regarding possible Turkish membership. Most significantly, accepting Turkey into NATO too soon would fuel Soviet fears of Western aggression and the Soviets would view Turkey's admission as a Western attempt to encircle and contain the USSR. This could result in further aggression and pre-emptive actions from the Soviet Union that could spiral out of control and lead to a major confrontation between the two superpowers.<sup>20</sup>

However, excluding Turkey from the alliance could have also had significant costs. Although many in the West did not view Turkey's membership favorably, without a strong anchorage to the Western world, a nonaligned Turkey could lead to more significant

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

threats for NATO. In fact, a neutral Turkey meant that the country would be susceptible to ideological and political threats from the communist bloc and could play the role of a springboard for Soviet influence in the future. In addition, as mentioned above, Turkey's geopolitical significance made it almost impossible to ignore. Its geopolitical position made its airfields valuable for NATO members both for defense and surveillance purposes. In peacetime, it could play an important role in deterring Soviet attacks and intelligence and information gathering; in the case of an armed confrontation, Turkish territories would be extremely critical for the success of NATO operations. Moreover, in a period when the competition and rivalry between the East and the West was spreading, the security of the Middle East was particularly critical for the U.S. As explained by Yeşilbursa, for some within the U.S. administration, Turkey was instrumental in providing security in the Middle East and could become a link between NATO and the region. This would also help the U.S. to lower its direct commitment to the security of these countries.<sup>21</sup> This debate about Turkey's membership within NATO had repercussions in Turkish politics and foreign policy as well. A very significant dimension of these debates was that Turkey was just a passive actor, expecting the West to make a decision. This pattern continued throughout the Cold War and actually became one of the defining characteristics of Turkish foreign policy.<sup>22</sup> During this period, while concerned about the reluctance of the Western countries to let Turkey join the alliance, Turkey attempted to show its solidarity with the NATO member and their defense and security policies. For example, Turkey joined the Allied forces war efforts in Korea in order to demonstrate its support for the U.S. Eventually, after long debates and deliberations, Turkey was accepted as a member of NATO in 1952.

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<sup>21</sup> Behçet K. Yeşilbursa, "Turkey's Participation in the Middle East Command and its Admission to NATO, 1950-52." *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1999, 70-102.

<sup>22</sup> P. Robbing. *Turkey and the Middle East*. London: Thomson Learning, 1991.

Turkey's membership in NATO can be seen as an anchor to the Western security platform during the Cold War. After gaining NATO membership, although Turkey still feared of an attack from the East, it was less eminent than before. Until the end of the Cold War and even afterwards, NATO significantly impacted the way that Turkey conducted its foreign policy. Some in Turkey started to approach NATO as not only a security alliance, but also a component and occasionally determinant of its foreign policy identity. In later years, despite Turkey's geopolitical significance, its large army and NATO's decision-making structure, Turkish foreign policy makers did not try to utilize an autonomous perspective while dealing with security challenges. In most instances, during different crises in world politics, Turkish foreign policy makers followed the decisions of NATO, without much deliberation and without taking into account public opinion and domestic politics.

#### THE MIDDLE EAST QUESTION IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

Turkey minimized its relations with countries in the Eastern bloc during the Cold War and tried to follow a policy of non-involvement in regional politics and non-interference in conflicts in the Middle East. Especially during periods of increasing crisis and armed confrontation between the Arab states and Israel, Turkey avoided taking a position or becoming involved directly to the conflicts. While conducting foreign policy in the region, Turkish foreign policy makers described their stance regarding disputes as “a balanced approach” between Israel and Arab countries, meaning that Turkey did not favor either of the parties.<sup>23</sup> This approach was an amalgamation of the principle of non-involvement in the Middle East, the emerging norm of adopting the Western stance on

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<sup>23</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan. “The Palestinian Question in Turkish Foreign Policy from the 1950s to the 1990s.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1993, 91-110.

international conflicts, and its paradoxical relationship with the countries of the Middle East. As a result of these dynamics, Turkish foreign policy sometimes pursued contradictory policies towards states in the Middle East. For example, although Turkey acted with Arab countries in adopting resolutions against Israeli policies and actions in international organizations, the Turkish government secretly met with Israeli officials in order to form a “peripheral alliance” in the late 1950s. In these meetings, Turkish diplomats assured Israel about restoring full diplomatic relations, but these promises never materialized. In part, this reluctance has to do with the strong public reaction in Turkey against Israel during the Arab-Israeli conflict. In spite of the emerging Western-centric orientation of Turkish foreign policy, the public did not favor cordial relations with the state of Israel before the conflict was resolved. Although Turkish foreign and security policy was mostly considered as an issue of the state establishment, the public had a very forceful attitude towards this conflict and was able to influence decision makers.

Turkish foreign policy makers’ unwillingness to publicly engage in diplomatic relations with Israel also had to do with the possible reactions of the Arab states, which could play an important role in UN General Assembly votes due to their sheer number. Turkey needed the support of these countries especially in regards to the conflict in Cyprus.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the modernization of the Turkish economy necessitated access to Middle Eastern oil. Thus, the Turkish state establishment preferred to take a cautious approach. Despite strong pressure from the Israeli side and although Turkey was one of the first Muslim countries to recognize the state of Israel, Turkish diplomats kept this relation extremely confidential. This situation irritated Israeli decision makers, who accused Turkey of treating Israel as its “mistress” rather than a legitimate and strategic partner.

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<sup>24</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan. “The Palestinian Question in Turkish Foreign Policy from the 1950s to the 1990s.”

Other than the short-lived peripheral alliance between Turkey and Israel, throughout the remainder of the Cold War, Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East was mostly influenced by regional conflicts and other international developments. The Cold War led Turkey to become involved in different alliances with other countries. For example, Turkey became a member of the Baghdad Pact, which was formed by Turkey, the UK, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran. Though less successful than expected, the Baghdad Pact was a significant attempt to create a pro-Western pact in the Middle East. The United States only joined the military committee of this organization. The Pact was eventually dissolved in 1979.

There were other issues apart from the Palestinian conflict that influenced Turkey's relations with the Middle East. For example, the war in the Suez Canal had particularly significant consequences, especially in regards to Turkish foreign policy towards Israel. During, and in the immediate aftermath of the war, the Turkish government denounced Israel's actions. During the meetings of the Baghdad Pact, Turkey, along with other member countries, accused the Israeli government of threatening stability and peace in the region. The Turkish public's reaction to Israeli policy further strained relations between the two countries and played a significant role in shaping Turkish policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict during the Cold War. Due to the public sensitivity and pressure from neighboring countries, Turkey recalled its Israeli ambassador in November 1956. Later, Turkey announced that its ambassador would not return to Tel Aviv until the end of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict and diplomatic relations were lowered to the level of charge d'affaires.<sup>25</sup>

Later, the continuation of the conflict between Israel and the Arab countries forced Turkey to take a firmer position. For example, after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Turkey, along with other Arab nations, denounced Israeli aggression. In several instances, Turkish

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<sup>25</sup> Türel Yılmaz, *Türkiye-İsrail Yakınlaşması*. Ankara: Kitapevi, 2001.



foreign ministry officials made it clear that Turkey was against Israeli occupation of Arab lands through the use of force. However, at the same time, Turkey tried to follow a cautious approach. While expressing its discontent, Turkey rejected a proposal by the Organization of Islamic Conference to suspend all diplomatic relations with Israel.<sup>26</sup> Turkey also followed this policy after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. The Turkish government once again denounced Israel and voted with the Arab countries in a resolution calling Zionism a form of racism in 1975. Ankara also joined other countries in the region in recognizing the Palestinian Liberation Organization as the representative of the Palestinian people.<sup>27</sup> However, this did not lead Turkey to suspend all diplomatic relations with Israel. Turkish foreign policy makers kept a minimum amount of interaction between the two countries.<sup>28</sup>

As stated above, scholars point to several reasons that made Turkey take this position in the Arab-Israeli conflict. First of all, public opinion in Turkey was very sensitive over the issue of Palestine, especially after the wars in the 1960s and 1970s, when mass demonstrations took place in Turkey in support of the Arab countries. Secondly, Turkey's dependence on foreign oil also played an important role. As an energy dependent country, it was risky to alienate countries which provided the majority of Turkey's energy needs. Finally, the number of Arab countries in international organizations played an important role in Turkey's position regarding Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>29</sup> The votes of Arab states were key at the UN regarding sensitive issues for Turkish foreign policy. The Cyprus issue played a particularly important role in Turkey's foreign policy decisions during this period. The isolation that Turkey experienced in international organizations as a result of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan. "The Palestinian Question in Turkish Foreign Policy from the 1950s to the 1990s."

the country's position on Cyprus led Turkish leaders to follow a more multidimensional foreign policy. However, at the same time, continuing minimal relations with Israel was considered a show of Turkey's attachment to its Western orientation. In some instances, this ideational concern diverged greatly from the public's attitude. Nevertheless, one of the defining features of Turkish policy towards the Middle East during this period was extreme avoidance of taking a pro-active stance in the resolution of regional disputes. Other than a few messages of goodwill and symbolic expressions of readiness to contribute to peace in the region, Turkish foreign policy makers were not involved in the conflict resolution process or de-escalation between Israel and the Arab states. The same way true in regards to the Palestinian question. Despite a huge public reaction and mobilization about the conflict in Palestine, Turkish foreign policy makers, other than some diplomatic gestures, did not try to initiate any resolution process or actively take a stand about the conflict. Turkish foreign policy making followed this passive stance for most of the Cold War.

### THE CYPRUS QUESTION

During the Cold War, relations with Greece constituted an important dimension of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey and Greece fought multiple battles during the Turkish War of Independence and unresolved problems had lingered. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the leaders of these two countries, Mustafa Kemal and Eleftherios Venizelos, attempted to resolve some of the residual problems and form friendly diplomatic and economic relations. During a period referred to as the interwar years, the two countries even joined the Balkan Pact along with Yugoslavia and Romania. However, the attempt to repair relations did not resolve some of the issues that would become the foundation for the emergence of significant crises between the two countries in the coming years. At the beginning of the Cold War, due to the structure of the international system, the crisis

dissolved. Turkey and Greece became members of NATO and took their places in the Western camp against a common enemy, the Soviet Union. However, despite this situation, the crisis in Cyprus began to impact bilateral relations in the mid-1950s.

Nevertheless, tensions between the countries became inflamed in the 1950s over the British-administered island of Cyprus. The first signs of a crisis emerged as a result of increasing nationalism in the domestic politics of both Turkey and Greece. Due to the prevalent and ever-growing nationalist ideologies, an armed struggle began in Cyprus with the goal of *enosis*—formal union with Greece—by the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA). The group was supported by Makarios and led by a retired Greek officer, George Grivas. Under Grivas' leadership, the group attacked numerous British targets in an attempt to wrest the island out of the hands of international powers. Turkish-Cypriots, strongly opposed to the thought of Greek *enosis*, created a parallel organization called the Turkish Resistance Organization (TMT). In return, anti-Greek nationalism flared up in Turkey, resulting in demonstrations and, in some cases, violence to members of the Greek minority in Istanbul.<sup>30</sup> As a result of these attacks, Greece withdrew from the Balkan Pact, forcing its collapse.

The crisis temporarily ended in 1960 as a result of an agreement that created an independent republic of Cyprus and named Greece, Turkey and Britain as guarantors of its independence under the Treaty of Guarantee. The treaty was not fully accepted by all parties, however. Problems among different groups on the island soon arose regarding Cyprus' legal constitution, which was created to "accommodate intercommunal differences by sharing power between the communities and institutionalizing ethnic differentiation within the political system."<sup>31</sup> When communal tensions arose between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in 1963, the crisis began to take on an international dimension. Both Greece and

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<sup>30</sup> Nicole Pope and Hugh Pope, *Turkey Unveiled: A History of Modern Turkey*. New York: Peter Mayer Publishers Inc., 2011, 87.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 661.

Turkey inflamed tensions and delayed the resolution of the conflict through diplomatic means. The mounting tension on the island led to the deterioration of U.S.-Turkish relations.

The Turkish government's response escalated as Turkish casualties in Cyprus increase, and public opinion grew increasingly favorable for a military intervention. As the Turkish government was drafting plans for intervention, however, President Johnson sent an abrasive letter to Prime Minister İnönü in the summer of 1964 making clear that if Turkey intervened in Cyprus, particularly if it used American weapons to do so, the United States would not defend Turkey against possible Soviet aggression.<sup>32</sup> The letter marked one of the lowest points in the U.S.-Turkish bilateral relationship. The Turkish public already felt a sense of abandonment and distrust after the U.S. withdrew its Jupiter missiles from Turkey during the Cuban Missile Crisis; the Johnson letter only added insult to injury and is considered one of the most humiliating moments of Turkish foreign policy.<sup>33</sup>

The crisis on the island continued throughout the 1960s and flared up once again in the mid-1970s as a result of domestic changes in Greek Cyprus. On July 15, 1974, the Greek Cypriot group, EOKA, forcefully stripped Makarios of power and instated the leader of the military junta, Nikos Sampson, as the president of Cyprus. Concerned about the security and safety of the Turks on the island, Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit called on the British to intervene to protect the Turkish population.<sup>34</sup> However, Britain rejected this request, which led Turkey to launch a unilateral operation on the island. Both Britain and the U.S. were against the Turkish military's intervention, but failed to persuade Prime Minister Ecevit to choose another path. Within two days, Turkish forces had seized control

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<sup>32</sup> Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirişçi, *Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2001, 132.

<sup>33</sup> M. Gönlübol. NATO, USA, and Turkey." *Turkey's Foreign Policy in Transition, 1950-1974*, ed. Kemal Karpat, Leiden: EJ Brill.

<sup>34</sup> Hale, 156.

of a portion of land in the northern part of the island, and a ceasefire was implemented under United Nations Security Council Resolution 353.

After the ceasefire, complicated and drawn out diplomatic negotiations began between the parties of the conflict. Under strong American pressure, Turkey first agreed to a federal structure for the island. However, due to Greece's decision not to accept it, Turkey made another advance on the island, which led the Greek side to leave the negotiating table. Amidst failed negotiations, the Turkish military remained on the island. The international reaction to Turkey's actions was swift, creating another source of tension on the island. The U.S. implemented an arms and military aid embargo in February 1975; other institutions such as the IMF soon followed suit.<sup>35</sup> The crisis later became a very significant source of tension between Turkey and Greece, as well as between Turkey and the EC. After this period, Turkey pursues a status quo policy on the island. Despite international pressure, the Turkish state establishment failed to take steps to resolve the conflict on the island. It almost became a traditional Turkish foreign policy position to stand against the resolution of the conflict. Turkish foreign policy makers were usually reactive agents of the problem and never sought to take more proactive steps to make their case or launch initiatives to solve the issue. During this period, some officials even argued that Turkey would benefit most from an unresolved status on the island. This firm position made it almost impossible to develop alternative approaches to resolve the conflict and gain relevance. The Turkish military and foreign policy bureaucracy in particular prevented the emergence of any initiatives outside of their control. This passive position not only affected the image of Turkey in the international arena, but also hurt Turkey's relations with Western countries, including the EC. Under these circumstances, the Turkish side on the island was considered as the major impediment towards the resolution of the conflict.

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<sup>35</sup> Pope and Pope, 125.

## TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

During the Cold War years, another foreign policy issue that began to have a significant impact on Turkish foreign policy was the economic and political integration of European nations through the EC. After the formation of the EC and the institutionalization of the European integration process, Turkey started to openly express its intention to join this newly forming entity. Becoming part of this process was not only important for economic reasons; Turkish foreign policy makers believed that membership could also serve as another anchor to the Western political and military framework. More importantly, being part of a union in Europe, without any strategy or policy stance, was seen as a requirement if Greece joined. This perception was clear in a statement given by a former Turkish Foreign Minister, who stated, “If Greece jumps into an empty pool, we will do it as well.” Consequently, Turkey applied for associate membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) in July 1959, a month after Greece’s application was submitted.<sup>36</sup>

Following its application, Turkey and the EEC signed the “Agreement Creating an Association between the Republic of Turkey and the European Economic Community.” This agreement provided a roadmap for Turkey to join a Customs Union with the EEC and opened the possibility for Turkey to become a full member. Under the agreement, which was later updated by the Additional Protocol in 1970, the process would have three phases. The first phase lasted from 1964 to 1973, during which Turkey benefitted from preferential trading conditions and direct financial aid from the EEC. The second phase involved the

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<sup>36</sup> See Stephen F. Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser. *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty*. Rand Corporation, 2003.

removal of trade barriers and thus established the Customs Union. Only after the completion of this phase would Turkey's accession to the EEC be considered.<sup>37</sup>

As mentioned above, despite the Association Agreement's economic focus, Turkey's primary reasons for applying to the EEC were politically motivated. Already a NATO member, Turkey wanted additional recognition for its place within the Western community during the Cold War. Turkey followed the same policy by becoming a member in Western European organizations. It became a member of the Council of Europe in 1949, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1961, and the OSCE in 1973. To be sure, Turkey's relations with Greece, especially over the crisis in Cyprus and territorial waters in the Aegean Sea, impacted Turkey's decision to participate in Western European institutions. The Turkish government did not want to be excluded from any organization that Greece was a part of.<sup>38</sup>

However, despite Turkey's willingness to be a party of the EEC, the community's perception of Turkey was complex. Thus, throughout the 1970s, the relationship between Turkey and the EEC faced multiple challenges. For example, Turkey complained about restricted access to the agricultural market of the EEC, but the EEC failed to take meaningful steps to ameliorate the situation. Additionally, the EEC dropped its commitment to allow the free movement of workers between Turkey and the EEC under the Additional Protocol in 1976. Instead, the EEC vowed to give Turkey priority if it needed additional workers and promised to address the freedom of movement issue for Turkish workers already located within the EEC. In 1978, the EEC began to implement trade barriers on some of Turkey's main exports, notably cotton, yarns and textiles. Under these circumstances, Turkey considered changing its relations with the EEC several times. The EEC's discriminatory and exclusionary policies disappointed many in Turkey, who

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<sup>37</sup> Hale.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

considered EEC membership to be an essential project of civilization. The state establishment, which traditionally carried out modernization and Western reforms in the country, were puzzled by the European's resistance to include Turkey in their economic union, especially after Turkey took part in NATO and Western military operations. Relations between Turkey and the EEC went through constant up and downs as a result of the EEC's ambivalent attitude towards Turkey. For instance, Turkey broke off its Protocol commitments in 1978 under the Ecevit government, reinstated them in 1979, and froze them again after the military coup in 1980.<sup>39</sup> Turkish foreign policy during this period had a passive attitude towards the EEC membership process. As Turkey had turned away from the Middle East and had ideological rifts with the Soviet Union, the EEC became the most important goal for foreign policy makers. However, Turkey did not take major steps to achieve membership and instead tried to market its own strategic significance to the EC. The lack of proactivity to meet the standards and criteria of the EEC left Turkey in the "waiting room" of the EC for decades.

#### TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE 1980 COUP

The 1980 military coup was a significant turning point for both domestic and foreign policy in Turkey. In terms of domestic politics, the junta banned all political parties, created a new constitution and ruled the country for three years, which was unusual compared to previous coups in Turkey. During this period, the military tried to eradicate all existing political structures in Turkey, resulting in many serious human rights violations. Thousands of political activists and party members were imprisoned. Furthermore, the junta regime drafted a new constitution, which gave the military extensive rights and power over almost all state institutions. In addition, the military coup altered Turkey's

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



foreign policy. For instance, European countries froze Turkey's membership in certain regional organizations, while Turkey's relationship with the U.S. remained constant. A significant development in Turkish foreign policy took place in regard to the Cyprus issue. During this period, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was established. However, the new state could not garner enough diplomatic support from the international community and – apart from a few states – no nation recognized it as an independent and sovereign entity.

During the 1983 elections, civilian rule was reinstated with the election of Turgut Özal and the Motherland Party. Özal came to power with the goal of liberalizing the Turkish economy, but he also intended to make Turkish foreign policy more multidimensional. Özal first tried to change Turkey's non-intervention policy towards the Middle East by increasing its economic and political interaction with the region.<sup>40</sup> In addition to following a neutral policy during the Iran-Iraq war, Özal improved Turkey's relations with Arab countries. Özal's initiatives led to an increased level of skepticism among the state establishment. However, the investment in the Middle East that came as a result of improved relations provided an important source of economic strength to the Turkish economy. This was the first time that Turkey and Middle Eastern countries were interacting successfully following a period of isolation.<sup>41</sup>

Prime Minister Özal also tried to develop Turkey's relations with Europe. In 1987, Turkey applied for full membership to the EC.<sup>42</sup> The Commission rejected the application due to Turkey's lack of economic development in comparison to the EC member countries, Turkey's troubled relationship with Greece and the dispute over the Aegean Sea, Cyprus,

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<sup>40</sup> Ziya Öniş. "Turgut Özal and His Economic Legacy: Turkish Neo-liberalism in Critical Perspective." *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 2004, 113-134.

<sup>41</sup> Sedat Laçiner. "Özalizm (Neo-Ottomanism): An Alternative In Turkish Foreign Policy?" *Journal of Administrative Sciences*. Vol. 1, No. 1-2, 2003, 161-202.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen F. Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser. *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty*. Rand Corporation, 2003.

and concerns related to human rights and democratization within the country. Instead, the Commission suggested that plans for a Customs Union be implemented according to the Additional Protocol.<sup>43</sup> This created a serious crisis between Turkey and the EC. Turkey believed that the Commission had applied a double standard and many interpreted the decision as discriminatory against Turkey's Muslim population. Finally, an important aspect of the new multidimensionality was Turkey's increasing economic relations with the Soviet Union after Gorbachev came to power. In most instances, the Özal administration tried to increase its economic relations with multiple partners from different regions, which resulted in improved economic ties with the Soviet Union.

During the late 1980s, two specific issues started to dominate the agenda of Turkish foreign policy. First, relations with Greece were strained over numerous issues, including territorial disputes in the Aegean Sea and Cyprus. The low intensity crisis between the two countries, which throughout the Cold War was contained by the nature of the international system and membership to international organizations, began to flare up in the 1980s. Tension peaked between the two countries in 1987, when a Canadian oil company planned to drill in waters claimed by Turkey in the Aegean Sea. Turkey sent a survey ship, which was countered by a reported preparation of Greek warships. Özal stated that the survey ship would not enter disputed territory as long as Greece refrained from drilling new wells, temporarily de-escalating hostilities. However, on both sides of the border, the crisis led to a rise of nationalism and a more belligerent public opinion against the other. Strained relations between Turkey and Greece have also impeded the creation of a solution to the Cyprus problem. Although the personal diplomacy between Turgut Özal and Andreas Papandreu helped improve relations, the main issues between the two countries could not be resolved. Later, this tension led to diplomatic disputes in bilateral relations and international forums. The tension also created problems in Turkey's relations with the

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<sup>43</sup> Hale.

European Community, especially in the context of Turkey's relations with the EC and the U.S. In particular, the increased activity of the Greek lobby in Washington, DC impacted Turkish-American relations during this time.

An additional rift occurred in Turkish-U.S. relations due to the Armenian lobby's increased efforts in Washington to pass a resolution that recognizes the events of 1915 as genocide. During the 1970s, Turkey dealt with Armenian armed groups, such as ASALA, which organized violent attacks on Turkish targets both in Turkey and abroad. In the 1980s, the relative power of the Armenian lobby in the U.S. increased and led to minor tensions in Turkish-U.S. relations. For instance, in 1987, pro-Armenian Congressmen pressed for April 24<sup>th</sup> to be declared an official day of mourning for victims of the 1915 Armenian massacre, which led to the cancellation of President Evren's previously planned trip to Washington. In addition, the Turkish government imposed temporary restrictions on the U.S.'s usage of the Incirlik base. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, tension became routine every April. Efforts by the Greek and Armenian lobbies and problems with Greece heavily influenced Turkey's relations with the U.S. and other Western countries and Turkey oriented its foreign policy accordingly.

Another significant issue that impacted Turkish foreign policy during the 1980s was the rise of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) as a major factor in domestic and regional politics. The increasing activity of the PKK in Turkey's southeast region during these years increased the role of the defense establishment in Turkish foreign policy. In terms of regional politics, the PKK impacted Turkey's relations with its southern neighbors for most of the 1980s and 1990s. First of all, the fact that PKK militants were being trained in Syrian-controlled Lebanese territories, particularly the Bekaa Valley, widened the rift between Turkey and Syria. The two countries already had significant policy differences regarding the city of Hatay and Syria's support for terrorist organizations that fought against Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s. Later in 1980s, two additional problems arose

in bilateral relations. On the one hand, Syria accused Turkey of cutting off the water from the Euphrates River. Turkey's ambitious Southeastern Anatolian Project aimed to create multiple dams along the river and hydroelectric terminals that would meet Turkey's energy needs. However, the project limited the amount of water that could flow into Syria. The Syrian government opposed the project, considering it as a major threat for its survival, and called for a "fair share" of water from the river.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, the rise of PKK activity started to poison the relations between these two countries. Syria was not only hosting the leaders of the PKK in Damascus; it also permitted the PKK to train in Syrian-controlled Lebanese territory. As the number of attacks grew, Turkish public opinion and the security establishment became increasingly angry with the Syrian government and perceived Damascus to be conducting proxy warfare against Turkey. Although there were several attempts to solve these issues, relations between the two countries did not improve. For example, Turkish Prime Minister Özal signed an agreement with Syrian President al-Assad after construction began on the Atatürk dam on the Euphrates, granting a minimum average flow of 500 cusecs in exchange a promise that neither country would back violent opposition groups. However, Syria continued to support the PKK and later decided that it was unsatisfied with the 500 cusec minimum. The PKK problem also influenced Turkey's relations with other neighboring countries including Iran, Iraq and Greece. Turkey constantly blamed Iran and Greece for supporting or harboring members of the PKK.<sup>45</sup> In several instances, Turkey and Iraq signed agreements to handle the issue, as both countries had concerns about Kurdish activity on their peripheries. For instance, Özal signed an agreement with Baghdad in the mid-1990s that allowed Turkish forces to pursue PKK targets in Iraqi territory due to

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<sup>44</sup> Stephen F. Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser. *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty*. Rand Corporation, 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Barkey, Henry J. and Graham Fuller. *Turkey's Kurdish Question*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998.

concerns over the power vacuum in Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>46</sup> During these years, the PKK question also poised Turkey's relations with European countries, as criticisms from the EU and European nations regarding the rights of Kurdish groups were viewed in Turkey as a sign of support for the PKK.<sup>47</sup>

### TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 1990S

The sudden end of the Cold War and the transformation of global politics created a major change in Turkish and regional politics.<sup>48</sup> The end of the fifty-year-old confrontation between the East and West was that Turkey was left in a strategic dilemma after losing its frontline status. The Turkish security establishment often depended on the Western bloc for its security and the loss of this privileged status was seen as an existential threat to its strategic relevance.<sup>49</sup> Two developments helped to temporarily alleviate of this problem. First of all, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the critical role that Turkey played in an international effort to oust Iraqi forces led many Turks to believe that the strategic and geopolitical relevance of their country was revived. After Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, Turkey played a prominent role due to its border with northern Iraq.<sup>50</sup> Turkish territory was significant: first, in efforts to open a northern front in the war by allowing the international coalition's troops to use Turkish land and airspace; and second, to

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<sup>46</sup> Murat Somer. "Resurgence and Remaking of Identity: Civil beliefs, Domestic and External Dynamics and the Turkish Mainstream Discourse on Kurds." *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 6, 2005.

<sup>47</sup> Aslan Gündüz. "Human Rights and Turkey's Future in Europe." *Orbis*. Vol. 45, No. 1, 2001, 15.30.

<sup>48</sup> Nasuh Uslu. *Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Period*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2004.

<sup>49</sup> See. Graham Fuller and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkey's New Geopolitics From the Balkans to Western China*. Boulder, CO: Westview-Rand Publications, 1993.

<sup>50</sup> See Mahmut Bali Aykan, "Turkey's Policy in Northern Iraq 1991-1995." *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1996, 343-366.

successfully implement international sanctions, especially by stopping the flow of oil through the Kerkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline. In both instances, despite strong domestic opposition, the Turkish government played an accommodative role and fulfilled the demands of the international coalition. During the war, the rapport that was developed between U.S. President George Bush and Turgut Özal led many in Turkey to expect a heightened international stature in Washington, DC and in other Western capitals. However, the promises that Western powers made to Turkey about economic losses and repatriation were not fulfilled. Moreover, Turkey had to deal with the flow of refugees after the end of the war and the security risks of the power vacuum, which emerged in northern Iraq as a result of international sanctions.

The second development that resulted in a heightening of Turkey's strategic relevance during the immediate post-Cold War years was the independence of Turkic republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The emergence of states, such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and Turkey's cultural, ethnic and religious affinity with these republics increased the strategic and geopolitical value of Turkey for the West.<sup>51</sup> In particular, the geopolitical location and natural resources of these countries attracted the attention of the U.S. and Europe. During this period, Turkey was depicted as a model country and a big brother for these newly established states due to its secular and democratic nature. However, the expectations of many actors were more than Turkey could afford to deliver.

The Turkish economy was not well equipped to provide infrastructural and development aid to these countries. Moreover, due to the one-dimensional nature of Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War, which makes to form relations with Soviet Bloc countries difficult, Turkey was unable to form close diplomatic relations with the

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<sup>51</sup> Larrabee, F. Stephen. "Turkish Foreign and Security Policy: New Dimensions and New Challenges." *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Towards a Strategic Plan*. d. Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser and F. Stephen Larrabee, Santa Monica: California: Rand Report.

Central Asian republics. Despite all of their affinities, Turkey did not have adequate information regarding the current nature of political, economic and social life in these countries. The only people with information about the region in Turkey were former or current nationalists, who had more ambitious and unrealistic goals about the future of the region. These expectations irked many high-level officials in these countries who were actually former regime elements. Turkey did not have enough experienced staff in its foreign policy bureaucracy that could manage the formation of strong diplomatic ties. The attempts of the ultra-secular Turkish bureaucrats to market secularism to these societies backfired. In later years, relations with some of these countries, such as Uzbekistan, were soured due to attempts by certain groups in Turkey to meddle in internal affairs of state. Moreover, other regional powers, such as China and Germany, began to exert more influence in the region throughout the 1990s due to their economic strength and relationships with the Central Asia republics. Although Turkey and these republics developed functioning diplomatic relations and strong economic ties, Turkish foreign policy could not take advantage of the new window of opportunity in the early 1990s as many had expected.

In the mid-1990s, Turkey's focus turned mostly inwards due to the increasing number of terror attacks by the PKK<sup>52</sup> and the discourse of the "Islamic threat." In conjunction with this new threat perception, Turkish foreign policy focused primarily on nations that were considered the source of these imminent domestic threats. The Turkish government accused its southern neighbors, including Iraq, Syria and Iran, of harboring terrorist groups and European countries of allowing these groups to function, fundraise and organize in those nations. After every terror attack, public grievances against these countries and diplomatic tensions in bilateral relations increased dramatically. In addition,

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<sup>52</sup> Kemal Kirişçi. "Turkey's Foreign Policy in Turbulent Times" European Union Institute for Security Studies. *Chaillot Paper*, No. 92, September 2006.

the Turkish state's "Islamic threat" discourse prevented the normalization of relations between Turkey and Middle Eastern countries. In particular, Turkish-Iranian relations were constantly strained due to regime differences. Turkey accused Iran of trying to export the Islamic revolution to Turkey. In particular, this perception gained strength among the state establishment with the rise of the Welfare Party in Turkey. The Welfare Party's critical approach to Turkey's relations with Western countries and its Euro-centric foreign policy irked many in the foreign policy bureaucracy and military.

During the 1990s, one of the most significant developments in Turkish foreign policy was the rising entente between Turkey and Israel.<sup>53</sup> Although the two countries severed ambassador-level diplomatic relations in 1980, the Gulf War and the beginning of the peace process between Israel and Arab nations with the Madrid Peace Conference in December 1992 led Turkey to decide to advance diplomatic relations. However, Turkey wanted to keep the balanced approach that it pursued throughout most of the Cold War by upgrading the status of the Palestinian representative in Turkey simultaneously. Nevertheless, the restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel had more significant repercussions than was originally intended. While the majority of the Turkish government did not expect a rapid improvement in relations, bilateral ties were quickly transformed into a strategic and military entente in the Middle East, mainly as a result of the increasing role of the Turkish military in foreign and security policy in the mid-1990s.

Turkey had multiple goals in forming such a rapprochement with the state of Israel. Some within the Turkish foreign policy establishment considered the improvement of relations as a panacea to end Turkey's political isolation from the West in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. In the absence of a frontal state notion, Turkey needed strong allies that would anchor it to the Western world. The strength of its lobby in Washington

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<sup>53</sup> Meliha Benli Altunışık, "The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East. *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2008.



and other major capitals around the world provided Israel with strong relationships with each of these countries. Turkish leaders saw that Israel could provide essential access to these capitals. Through these connections, Turkey could also balance the power of the Greek and Armenian lobbies in Western capitals, particularly in regard to the very sensitive issues of Cyprus and the Armenian genocide claims. In addition, the Israeli defense industry could also meet certain needs and demands of the Turkish military. In the early 1990s, mainly due to Turkey's human rights records, some Western countries stopped selling arms to Turkey that were extremely vital for the modernization of the Turkish military during its war on terror. Under the pressure of the Greek and Armenian lobbies, the U.S. Congress blocked several arms purchases to Turkey, which increased the security crisis that the Turkish state found itself in after the end of the Cold War. Israel's high-tech defense industry and its willingness to sell weapons unconditionally to Turkey made the country a feasible partner. Furthermore, with the deepening crisis between Turkey and Syria, Israel was viewed as a perfect partner to contain the threat of Syria. The Greek-Syrian rapprochement and military cooperation agreement, which enabled Greece to use certain Syrian military bases, increased the significance of Turkey's threat perception.

In the mid-1990s, the relationship between Turkey and Israel was transformed into a security and military partnership, which significantly impacted Turkey's relations with the region.<sup>54</sup> The most controversial areas of cooperation during this period were the military and intelligence spheres. In September 1995, Turkey and Israel signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate in the training of both nations' pilots. According to the agreement, the Israeli Air Force would train Turkish pilots, particularly against anti-aircraft missile systems, whereas Turkey would allow Israeli pilots to conduct military maneuvers in Turkish airspace. Another Military Cooperation Agreement was

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<sup>54</sup> Efrahim Inbar. "The Strategic Glue in the Israeli-Turkish Alignment." *Turkey in World Politics*, eds. Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirişçi, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001.

signed in February 1996 and included plans to exchange military personnel and conduct joint training exercises. With the Military Industrial Cooperation Agreement, which was signed in August 1996, Israel and Turkey agreed to cooperate in military modernization and arms trading. The extent and scope of these articles greatly increased later in 1996, when the parties also agreed to initiate political dialogue in order to strategize a common foreign and security policy. Meanwhile, Turkey and Israel also engaged in more controversial forms of cooperation in intelligence-gathering and sharing, as well as in the field of counterterrorism. The content of these agreements were kept confidential under the Security and Secrecy Agreement, which was signed in May 1994.

Such a rapid acceleration in the alliance between Turkey and Israel can be attributed in part to the growing tensions between Greece and Turkey. In the late 1990s, the two countries were at the brink of war in several instances. In January 1996, the two countries were closer to war than any other period in their 80-year relationship as a result of the conflict over a disputed island in the Aegean Sea. Although the U.S. mediated the conflict, the main dispute over maritime delimitation remained unresolved. In 1997, the two countries again faced a significant crisis regarding the Cyprus issue. The Cypriot government's decision to purchase S-300 anti-aircraft missiles and make them operational across the island created a great deal of tension between Turkey and Greece. The crisis escalated in a very short period of time due to Greece's support of Cypriot authorities, but ultimately concluded without an armed confrontation after Greece decided to place the missiles on the island of Crete instead of Cyprus. These developments were particularly significant for the strengthening of the Turkish-Israeli alliance. However, during this period, groups that desired improved relations with Israel also took into account domestic political developments in Turkey. The rise of the Welfare party, its electoral victories and its critical approach to mainstream Turkish foreign policy, particularly its relations with Israel, drew a harsh reaction from the Turkish military. According to some within the

Turkish military, which was the predominant power in foreign and security policy at the time, Turkey's relationship with Israel had an ideational dimension and those who wanted to disrupt these relations were also targeting Turkey's secular and pro-Western nature. Thus, the relationship with Israel was associated with Turkey's traditional stance in regards to the West.

During the 1990s, another significant dimension of Turkish foreign policy was related to Turkey's relationship with the European Union. Although the initial application for full membership was rejected in the late 1980s, the process was not completely halted. In 1992, the leadership of the European Community met in Lisbon and came to the consensus that Turkey's role in European politics was significant. The Association Council also agreed to resume the process of establishing a Customs Union. Turkey took several steps to fulfill the requirements to become a part of the Customs Union. Following Turkey's legal and economic adjustments, the Association Council signed the Customs Union agreement in Brussels on March 6, 1995 and the European Parliament ratified it on December 13, 1995.<sup>55</sup>

Many in Turkey hoped that the Customs Union agreement would pave the way for a smooth transition to full membership; however, this soon proved to be not the case. According to the EU, Turkey still had many problems that prevented it from becoming a full member. As a result, Turkey found itself last on the list of many European states vying for full membership.<sup>56</sup> During the 1997 European Council Summit in Luxembourg, the accession negotiations with many Eastern and Central European states were completed; however, the council excluded Turkey on the basis of its economic and political condition.<sup>57</sup> This was a major blow for Turkey, as countries that became independent from

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Pope and Pope, 189.

<sup>57</sup> Joseph S. Joseph, "Turkey and the EU: Problems and Prospects of Accession." *American Political Science Association Conference Papers*, 2007, 4.

the Soviet Union just a few years prior were given a better likelihood to attain membership than Turkey, which had aspired to become a member state for almost half a century.

The Luxembourg summit resulted not only in a major setback in Turkey's goal to join the EU; it also increased the level of mistrust on both sides.<sup>58</sup> This worsened the strategic dilemma that Turkey had felt since the end of the Cold War. Angered by the decision, the Turkish Prime Minister, Mesut Yilmaz, boycotted the European Conference in Cardiff that March and broke off political dialogue with the EU.<sup>59</sup> Regarding Turkish foreign policy, the Luxembourg Summit made many Turkish citizens feel excluded from the Western camp. However, Turkey's isolation from the Western camp was not the only dilemma that Turkey faced during this period.<sup>60</sup> The increasing strategic and military relations between Turkey and Israel angered many Middle Eastern countries and the Islamic World. In 1997, Turkey was openly criticized by the Arab League, as some member states accused Turkey of trying to redraw the map of the Middle East. Later that same year, Turkey was criticized by member states for forming strategic relations with Israel during the Tehran Summit of the OIC. The isolation that Turkey experienced from both the Western world and the Middle East led Turkish policy makers to search for alternative approaches to conduct foreign policy and discuss the need for multidimensionality and a "region-based foreign policy."

After 1997, dramatic changes began to take place in Turkish foreign policy. The first important change in Turkish foreign policy took place 1998 as a result of a crisis between Turkey and Syria, which brought the two countries to the brink of war.<sup>61</sup> The

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Chris Rumford, "From Luxembourg to Helsinki: Turkey, the Politics of EU Enlargement and Prospects for Accession." *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2000, 331-343, 333.

<sup>60</sup> Öniş, Ziya. "Luxembourg, Helsinki and Beyond: Towards an Interpretation of Recent Turkey-EU Relations." *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 2000, 463-483.

<sup>61</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkish-Syrian Crisis of October 1998: A Turkish View." *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1999, 174-191.

crisis happened as a consequence of increasing PKK infiltration from the Syrian- Turkish border. The logistical support of Syria to PKK forces were already known by the Turkish government but the intensity of the attacks increased in late 1990s, which led to a serious ultimatum by the Turkish military to the Syrian government. With the impact of the postmodern coup in Turkey, the military had consolidated his impact on design and implementation of Turkish foreign and defense policy, civilian leaders follow the lead of the military in critical foreign and security matters. In a very short period of time, the tone of the Turkish government increased and the two countries came to the brink of an armed confrontation. Turkey requested that Syria stop the activities of the PKK within its border immediately. It was only after the shuttle diplomacy by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that Turkey agreed to stop the escalation of crisis with Syria. Shortly after this crisis, Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader who used to reside in Damascus, was expelled from Syria and during his hunt for refuge was arrested by Turkish officials in Kenya. The crises between these two countries were transformed into an opportunity to heal the relations in a short period of time. After this event, a protocol was signed in Adana between Turkey and Syria in which the Syrian government promised to cooperate with the Turkish government on security and terrorism issues. The Adana Protocol paved the way for a new era in Turkish-Syrian relations. In the aftermath of this protocol, the two countries started to restore diplomatic, economic and social relations in a short period of time. High level meetings were launched between the two countries in 1999, which led to a rapid rapprochement between two countries that continued until the use of force by the Assad regime until the demonstrators in 2011.

In 1999, Turkey also began to alter its relations with Greece, which led to an appreciable change in its threat perception. Following the 1999 earthquake in Turkey, Greece was one of the first countries to offer to assist Turkey. Turkey responded in kind when a major earthquake took place in Athens. Diplomatic reciprocity helped to thaw their

strained relations. Later, the personal diplomacy between Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem and his Greek counterpart strengthened these ties. Although the two countries could not reach a solution over the most controversial problems, such as the delimitation of territorial waters in the Aegean Sea, the level of confrontation was significantly reduced. The last significant foreign policy change in 1999 was related to Turkey's relationship with the European Union. Following the disappointment of the 1997 Luxembourg Summit, Turkey was given the status of an official candidate for membership at the European Council's Helsinki Summit in December 1999. For the first time, Greece did not stand in the way of Turkey's addition to the membership list.<sup>62</sup> However, the process toward official membership was far from simple for Turkey. Due to long and strained negotiations, the Turkish government approached the 1999 Summit as its last attempt for membership and resolved not to re-apply if negotiations did not move forward. Both public opinion and the Turkish government were extremely frustrated with the perceived double standard towards Turkey and public support for EU membership, which rose dramatically after Turkey's accession to the Customs Union, plummeted in a very short period of time.

Thus, the European Council's decision was considered to be the result of a more determined Turkish foreign policy by many. In the presidential conclusion of the Helsinki Summit, members declared that Turkey would be recognized as a candidate country based on the same criteria as all other states; Turkey would be a recipient of coordinated pre-accession assistance; the EU would seek enhanced political dialogue with the aim of helping Turkey meet the accession criteria; and finally, Turkey would be included in community programs and agencies.<sup>63</sup>

However, in order to avoid unrealistically high expectations, the Council was clear that candidacy did not mean that Turkey had fulfilled all of the necessary criteria to

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<sup>62</sup> Rubin and Kirişçi, chapter 31.

<sup>63</sup> Rumford, 340.

become an EU member state. In particular, according to the Council, Turkey did not meet the Copenhagen political criteria, and had “serious shortcomings” in terms of human rights and the protection of minorities.<sup>64</sup> There were also several issues in relation to maintaining active civilian control over the military, which needed to be reformed. Therefore, a decision was made to establish an accession partnership with Turkey which could serve as a “road-map” to eventual membership.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the EU also expanded the number of acceding countries to include Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania and Slovakia.

During this time, the U.S. was a constant advocate for Turkey’s acceptance into the EU. Following the Helsinki Summit, President Clinton sent a personal letter to Bülent Ecevit congratulating him on the country’s progress and emphasizing that Turkey could rely on U.S.’s support to help them reach full membership.<sup>66</sup> Although the Turkish people celebrated the decision, the Turkish government was cautious not to orient its foreign policy solely towards the EU and thus continued to improve its relations with Middle Eastern countries, particularly Syria. The failure of the Camp David process, the Syrian-Israeli track of negotiations and the launch of the Second Intifada in the Occupied Territories increased Turkey’s political interest in the Middle East. After the abrupt end of the Syrian-Israeli track, the Syrian government began to make more of an effort to approach Turkey, signing multiple economic agreements that would pave the way for regional economic integration. Moreover, the Second Intifada and the harsh response of the Israeli Defense Forces increased public scrutiny and criticism of Turkish-Israeli relations, but also increased Turkey’s involvement in the peace process. Both the Turkish Prime Minister and Turkish President criticized the Israeli government for its handling of the demonstrations in the Occupied Territories, which strained relations between the two countries.

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<sup>64</sup> Joseph, 4.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Rubin and Kemal Kirişçi, 134.

September 11 was a significant turning point for global politics and especially Middle Eastern politics. The Turkish government was one of the first countries to condemn the terrorist attack on U.S. soil and threw its support behind the U.S.-led global war on terror. Following NATO decision to consider the strikes as an attack on an alliance member, Turkey assisted the U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan by allowing U.S. forces to use Turkish airspace and military bases. Furthermore, Turkey also contributed to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, which was vital for U.S. efforts in the region.

#### STUDY OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY UNTIL THE RISE OF AK PARTY;

It is important to understand that the evolution of Turkish foreign policy over the last decade had a lot of repercussions on the study of Turkish foreign policy in the literature of international relations . For many years, Turkish foreign policy has been studied in regards to a few areas of foreign policy disputes that have been present since the establishment of the Turkish Republic. One of those study areas has been issues related to the interpretation and outcome of the peace agreements after the First World War, specifically the Lausanne Peace Agreement. This agreement and its ramifications to the foreign policy in Turkey have been discussed frequently by scholars of Turkish foreign policy. Lausanne was not only a recognition of the Turkish Republic by Western countries, but it also played a significant role in shaping Turkey's relations with Western countries. Because of the timing of the agreement, in the formative years of the Turkish foreign policy, there was constant emphasis on the significance of this agreement to the foreign relations of Turkey with other countries. Early studies of Turkish foreign policy, such as those done by Yusuf Hikmet Bayur's *Türk Devleti'nin Dis Siyaseti* <sup>67</sup> and Cemal

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<sup>67</sup> Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk Devletinin Dış Siyaseti*, İstanbul 1952



Bilsel's Lozan<sup>68</sup> deal with this issue specifically. Ataturk era foreign policy was mostly discussed in the context of Lausanne and attempts to normalize Turkish foreign policy in the aftermath of this agreement. Most importantly Turkish relations with Western countries and Greece were studied and analyzed in this context.<sup>69</sup>

The end of the World War II and the beginning of the Cold War was a serious turning point in the history and study of Turkey's foreign policy. In general this period of world history dramatically transformed the study of diplomatic relations between countries and helped with the development of the field of international relations in general. The changing nature of the international system and the emergence of a bipolar world also dramatically impacted the study of Turkish foreign policy. Instead of studying Turkey in relation to its smaller neighbors such as, Syria and Greece, Turkish foreign policy started to be studied in the context of the greater Cold War and thus was looked in relation to the superpowers, the United States and Soviet Union. Studies that focused on this period of Turkish foreign policy include, Abdulahat Aksin's study on the issues of Turkish foreign policy after 1945<sup>70</sup> and Kemal Karpat's study on the transition of Turkish foreign policy during this period.<sup>71</sup> One of the first studies on Turkish foreign policy during the same period conducted by a foreign scholar was Ferenc Vali's study.<sup>72</sup> Most of these studies

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<sup>68</sup> Cemil Bilsel, *Lozan*, 2 Cilt, İstanbul 1933

<sup>69</sup> <http://turkoloji.cu.edu.tr/ATATURK/arastirmalar/ozgoren.pdf>

<sup>70</sup> Abdülhat Akşin, Türkiye'nin 1945'ten Sonraki Dış Politika Gelişmeleri, Ortadoğu Meseleleri, İstanbul: İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1959

<sup>71</sup> Kemal Karpat (der.), Turkish Foreign Policy in Transition 1950-1974, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975

<sup>72</sup> Ferenc A. Vali, Bridge Across the Bosphorus: The Foreign Policy of Turkey, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971.

look at Turkish foreign policy and its challenge to find and adjust to a new orientation due to the systemic transformation within the country.

During this period several regional problems relating to Turkey arose. One of these problems was the deterioration of the situation in Cyprus between Turkey and Greece . Other issues about Turkey-Greece relations, such as the dispute over islands and territorial waters in Aegean Sea also became very prominent during this period. With the rising of tensions and increasing internationalization of the crisis, the Cyprus issue has attracted the attention of the Western scholars. Ehrlich's book on Cyprus and its place in international law was one of the first examples of these studies.<sup>73</sup> During this same period, Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern countries also raised significant attention among the scholars. In accordance with regional developments studies about Turkey's position in regards to crises such as the Palestinian-Arab conflict and the increasing issues about oil increased during this period. Additionally, the Cold War increased discussion by the scholars of foreign policy about Turkey's relations with in the region . In particular, the Baghdad Pact and the debates about the emergence of different ideological blocs in the region were addressed..

The internal turmoil in Turkey during the 1970s also impacted the event driven nature of Turkish foreign policy in this period. Turkey's relations with other countries were only discussed in the case of major crises. The infamous Johnson's Letter and the impact it had on Turkish-US relations was one of the most famous topics in the field. In addition, the deterioration of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the role of Turkey in this conflict also started to be discussed more frequently by scholars.

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<sup>73</sup> Ehrlich, T. *International Crises and Role of Law: Cyprus, 1958-1967*. Oxford University Press, 1974.

One of the critical turning points in Turkish foreign policy studies took place in the aftermath of the military intervention to politics in 1980. While the Armenian problem continued(now considered a classic Turkish foreign policy issue) with the increasing effectiveness of the Armenian lobby and increasing degree of violence of the groups, such as ASALA. the Ozal government, launched brand new policy initiatives in the region. The neoliberal economic reforms and Turkey's opening towards the Middle East started a new wave of scholarship about the foreign policy of Turkey. There were several issue areas that were discussed by the scholars during this period.<sup>74</sup> One of the most critical issues was the rapprochement between Turkey and Greece as a result of the personal rapport between Ozal and Papandreou. This relationship revived the conversation on topics such as Greece, the Aegean Sea and debates about the situation of Turks in the Western Thrace. A second issue that was raised during the Ozal years was the membership debate about joining the European Community. The debates about the relation of Turkey with this organization became more prominent with Turkey's application for the full membership in late 1980s. The third and more significant debate was about Turkey's involvement in the Middle East. In the early years this issue was mostly related to the increasing economic relations of Turkey with the Middle Eastern neighbors and rising foreign direct investment from the Gulf States. However with the eruption of the Gulf Crisis and beginning of the Gulf War, Turkey's relation to its Middle East neighbors changed in nature. Studies, such as Mustafa Aydin's work on the Turkish foreign policy

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<sup>74</sup> See an example of these studies, Ataman, Muhittin (1999). *An Integrated Approach to Foreign Policy Change: Explaining Changes in Turkish Foreign Policy in the 1980s*. Doctoral Dissertation, Kentucky University.

during the Gulf War gained increasing prominence due to the more complicated nature of this foreign policy issue.<sup>75</sup>

Studies of Turkish foreign policy increased dramatically with the end of the Cold War. The opening of Turkey to the world economy and changing politics during the Ozal years was a major factor contributing to this new wave of scholarship. Changes within the international system and an emerging debate on potential foreign alignments also impacted this trend. One of the most prominent of these studies was an edited volume of different debates on Turkish foreign policy in the period after the Cold War. Edited by Graham Fuller and Ian Lesser, this study provided different options for the main focus of Turkish foreign policy, including the Balkans, Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.<sup>76</sup> Ian Lesser also published another monograph on the relations between Turkey and its Western allies, including the US and the EU after the end of the Cold War during the early years of 1990s.<sup>77</sup> In the midst of 1990s, the debates about the foreign policy of Turkey focused mostly on its relations with Israel. The Turkish government preferred to improve its relations with the state of Israel sometimes at the expense of its relations with the other countries in the region. This situation continues until the 2000s and major changes in regional and global politics as well as Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern countries.

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<sup>75</sup> Mustafa Aydin. *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Gulf War of 1990-1991*. The American University in Cairo Press.

<sup>76</sup> Graham E. Fuller, Ian O. Lesser, et al., *Turkey's New Geopolitics: from the Balkans to Western China*, Boulder, CO: West- view/RAND, 1993.

<sup>77</sup> Ian O. Lesser, *Bridge or Barrier? Turkey and the West After the Cold War*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, R-4204-AF/A, 1992.

TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: A MULTI-SIDED, MULTI-DIMENSIONAL  
AND MULTI-TRACKED CONSTRUCT

STRATEGIC DEPTH DOCTRINE:

The Strategic Depth Doctrine has been one of the most frequently cited and debated topics of Turkish foreign policy in recent years. The doctrine is based on a book of the same name written by Ahmet Davutoglu, advisor for the Prime Minister after the electoral victory of the Justice and Development Party in November 2002 and later Foreign Minister of Turkey. The book and the idea behind it is said to have guided Turkish foreign policy under the rule of the JDP in the last ten years.

Davutoglu's book focuses on Turkey's repositioning in the international system in the post-Cold War period. In his introduction, Davutoglu states his goals as providing an analysis of Turkish strategic depth that takes into account its historical background as well as the geocultural, geopolitical and geoeconomic dimensions of Turkish foreign policy. In addition, for him, the shift to a dynamic international system after a relatively static bipolar system during the Cold War creates an important challenge for analyzing Turkish foreign policy. According to Davutoglu, Turkey stands at an important turning point in history. As such, Turkey needs to integrate the depth of its own history and geography through a rational strategic plan, which in turn will provide a pro-active and forward-looking policy. Examining the domestic aspect alongside the dynamic dimensions of the global order in particular will pave the way for the emergence of alternative perspectives that may fill the voids in Turkey's strategic approach. Suggesting alternative perspectives for Turkish foreign policy is extremely innovative in a period during which the EU was considered the only dimension of Turkey's foreign policy and Turkish foreign policy makers felt

segregated as a result of self-isolation from the Middle East and exclusion from the European Union.<sup>78</sup>

The book is divided into three main parts. The first section offers a theoretical introduction alongside a background of Turkey's lack of strategic outlook and the causes of it, as well as examining the influence of historical legacy in shaping a country's foreign policy. Rather than defining power narrowly, Davutoglu provides a broad equation of power:

$$\text{Power} = (\text{CV} + \text{PV}) \times (\text{SM} + \text{SP} + \text{SW})$$

In the above, CV signifies Constant Variables, which include history (h), geography (g), demography (d), and culture (c). PV signifies Potential Variables, which include economic capacity (e), technological capacity (t), and military capacity (m). In fact, Davutoglu asserts:

$$\text{CV} = h + g + d + c \text{ whereas } \text{PV} = e + t + m$$

SM is Strategic Mind, SP is Strategic Planning, and SW is Strategic Will. Interpreted together, the extension of the equation of power above becomes:

$$\text{Power} = \{(h + g + d + c) + (e + t + m)\} \times (\text{SM} + \text{SP} + \text{SW})^{79}$$

After offering various explanations and examples with respect to different elements of the equation, Davutoglu focuses on the absence of a strategic dimension in Turkey's foreign policy. According to him, excessive pessimism and exaggerated optimism regarding the Turkey's future role in the international system is partly responsible for the lack of a strategic approach. This was somewhat a result of the unstable political climate in Turkey in the 1990s. Instability in different coalition governments' approach to foreign

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<sup>78</sup> Ahmet Davutoglu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Turkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* (Kure Yayinlari), 10.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 17.

policy was challenged by the risk averse and pro-status quo Turkish foreign policy bureaucracy, which in turn created contradictory messages in foreign policy. For example, one of the most significant foreign policy problems during this period was the fluctuating nature of Turkey's relationship with the European Union. The idea that the membership to the European Union would be a long and difficult journey (as was underlined by Turgut Ozal when Turkey officially applied for membership), had swung between two extremes: full commitment and dedication to EU membership, and the belief that the EU was not Turkey's sole option for foreign policy integration. Changes in power introduced different discourses adopted by short-term governments, leading to such mixed assessments about the EU.<sup>80</sup>

Another factor that played a significant role in the absence of a strategic vision in Turkish foreign policy has to do with disagreements over the value of constant and potential variables. For instance, among different groups of foreign policy elites and public opinion, some of the variables hold different meanings and values. Historical background, for example, is a huge asset for certain groups of people, while others consider it a major burden in designing and implementing an autonomous foreign policy. Geographical reach and demographic characteristics have similar debates regarding value priorities.

The same disagreements are also present in the potential variables, such as economy and technology. For Davutoglu, this was most apparent in the energy sector, where a divergence of opinion took place in the measurement of the variables.<sup>81</sup> According to him, the same level of disagreement and confusion also existed in the other variables, such as strategic planning. Especially during the 1990s when Turkish foreign policy experienced important challenges and transient governments, it was difficult to design and implement a long-term strategic plan. The short-lived coalition governments, existence of multiple actors along different levels of government that held contradictory political and

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 46.

foreign policy goals, and constant change in the position of the foreign ministry made it difficult for Turkey to develop a strategic plan.

During this period, Turkish foreign policy was primarily reactive to external developments, rather than proactively designing foreign policy goals. This also caused Turkey to lose the consistency and stability of domestic political discourse, as well as external credibility in the international sphere.<sup>82</sup> Davutoglu argues that another significant problem that contributed to the lack of strategic vision took place as a result of the delay of a more dynamic evaluation of the constant variables of power. Despite the changes in the global system, Turkish foreign policy makers and observers preferred to approach the variables in a more static manner. In this sense, for instance, geopolitics was interpreted through Cold War codes instead of adapting to changing circumstances and regional developments. This failure to adapt to new geopolitical realities caused Turkish foreign policy to miss an important input of strategic vision.<sup>83</sup> During this period, most of the optimism of the early 1990s – particularly with the independence of Central Asian Republics – was replaced with pessimism as well as a lacking sense of direction. In most instances, rather than an overarching strategic vision, tactical moves guided and shaped strategy and determined the foreign policy direction of Turkey.<sup>84</sup>

According to Davutoglu, there are various reasons for Turkey's failure in developing a strategic theory. First, the institutional structure of Turkish foreign policymaking does not allow foreign policymakers to develop alternative strategic viewpoints. On the one hand, the Turkish foreign ministry does not have any financial or institutional infrastructure to serve as a hub for strategists and analysts to develop alternative strategies. On the other hand, opposition parties do not have any preparation to provide credible criticisms to majority foreign policy. As a result, actors fail to bring foreign policy

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 48.



issues to the Turkish parliament. Furthermore, universities and independent research institutes are not equipped to create debate or stimulate a discussion regarding foreign policy options for Turkey. Both of these institutions have serious infrastructural problems that hinder the establishment of a venue for foreign policy discussions.<sup>85</sup>

Second, Davutoglu argues that historical background also creates an important impediment to more active and independent foreign policymaking. Late Ottoman and early republican concerns and threat perceptions shaped the main tenets of Turkish foreign policymaking for most of the Republican period. As a result, foreign policymakers focused on domestic and external threat perceptions. The same concerns also led them to ignore the Eastern world altogether. In many circumstances, domestic threat perceptions – such as the fear of Islamism and the Kurdish Question – led Turkey to make problematic foreign policy decisions. It also alienated Turkey from its neighboring regions, including the Middle East, Balkans and Caucasia. While significant regional changes were taking place, Turkish foreign policymakers had difficulty in taking autonomous positions.<sup>86</sup>

A final contribution to Turkey's lack of strategic theory has to do with problems about historical consciousness as well as an issue of split identity. According to Davutoglu, a failure to recognize historical continuities leads to the polarization of a society and a clash of identities domestically. This also engenders significant contradictions between domestic and external identities. Turkey, in order to be more effective, needs to create a harmony between two such identities. For him, it would be extremely difficult for a nation that does not have historical memory and consciousness to leave its mark on history. The factor that distinguishes between nations, shapes the flow of history, and is shaped by external developments is the way that these nations approach their own histories.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 60.

Davutoglu states that Turkey started to feel the absence of a strategic theory more seriously after the end of the Cold War. Changes in power configurations during this period forced Turkey to reevaluate its position in the international system. For Davutoglu, this period actually provides a lot of opportunities for states that are preparing to move to an upper level in the global hierarchy of power. During the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, however, countries like Turkey were not prepared to utilize this opportunity due to a lack of strategic theory.<sup>88</sup> Further, Turkey was simultaneously experiencing significant domestic debates regarding political identity, culture, institutions, and legitimacy. In order to avoid similar failures, Davutoglu provides a schema for Turkish foreign policymakers: the first step in overcoming such a chaotic situation is recognizing particularities of Turkey's political cultural infrastructure.<sup>89</sup>

Davutoglu argues that there are certain characteristics that make Turkey's political culture different from others'. Historically, it holds a geopolitically crucial space where significant global powers once existed. This central position and subsequent engagement with other centers of civilization deeply impacted the sociology of Turkish political culture. The West's defeat of and later collapse of the Ottoman Empire created a major role in the formation of this new political sociology. Despite their rivalry and the Ottoman loss of power, Turkish political elites wanted to integrate the newly founded republic in the Western bloc, and especially in the European Union. However, the European nations rejected Turkey's attempts in most instances. According to Davutoglu, what makes Turkey unique in this situation is partly a result of this contradiction between historic significance and simultaneous attempt to integrate itself into another civilization.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 82.

## CONSTRUCTION OF NEW STATE IDENTITY:

The strategic depth discourse developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu in the recent years transformed Turkish foreign policy both in theory and practice.<sup>91</sup> Davutoğlu is the intellectual architect behind AK Party cabinets' foreign policies and therefore the intellectual architect of Turkish foreign policy of the last few years. The transformation was realized in foreign policy visions and inspirations, as well as in practice. Foreign policy was purged of the concerns and changes of domestic politics.<sup>92</sup> Foreign policy that served as an instrument of domestic politics became a factor that delineated domestic politics. With the advent of the strategic depth discourse, a safer domestic political platform became a necessity in order to execute more decisive practices in foreign policy. The envisioned restructuring of foreign policy for more effective stand in the international community required the undertaking of a set of initiatives in order to reshape politics on the domestic level. In fact, economic developments, political progress, dynamic social actors, democratic progress and concord with opposition allowed Turkey to play a more effective role in international politics. Turkey deemed it a principle to cooperate with international actors using its accumulation historical, civilizational and cultural of knowledge and practices.<sup>93</sup>

A multi-dimensional and execution of various strategies in foreign policy strengthened Turkey's status. A balanced approach to politics among all global and local actors was developed. While maintaining the US as the most important political ally, Turkey became the most prominent commercial partner with Russia. While proceeding with the accession negotiations, it embarked on a process of unifying neighbor states in cooperation and undertook new initiatives towards states situated farther geographically.

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<sup>91</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*. İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001.

<sup>92</sup> See Bulent Aras, "Davutoglu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy". *SETA Publications*, Ankara, 2009.

<sup>93</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*.

Turkey became a more outspoken and self-confident country in the international platform through its independent international actions. It is highly possible for Turkey to become a global actor in the near future, provided that it achieves a national coherence through the resolution of its current domestic issues, and provided that it makes good use of opportunities and its strategic plans.

As substantiated by the theoretical discussion above, the realist approach, whose explanatory power started to be questioned in the light of global developments, seems insufficient to explain the current Turkish foreign policy and the changes that took place in this sphere in the last 13 years. With the AK Party rule, Turkey national politics, identity and its relationship with its neighbors were reconstituted and redefined.<sup>94</sup> Although it is difficult to evaluate the strategic depth concept that shaped Turkey's most recent foreign policy in terms of conventional international relations theories developed in the West, it can be situated in the conceptual map of IR theories closer to the constructivist approach.

### ***1. Sub-national Construction***

The strategic culture that determines the process of foreign policy making is an effect of the structuring and restructuring of state identity at the intersection of the perception of space based on geographic data and the perception of time based on a historical consciousness. According to Davutoğlu, a fragmented sense of identity caused by the lack of strategic theory (a "torn country" in Huntington's words<sup>95</sup>) and historical

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<sup>94</sup> Ahmet Davutoglu, "'Turkey's Zero Problems Foreign Policy.'" *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2010. [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/20/turkeys\\_zero\\_problems\\_foreign\\_policy](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/20/turkeys_zero_problems_foreign_policy)

<sup>95</sup> Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, 1993. Also available at. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/48950/samuel-p-huntington/the-clash-of-civilizations>

consciousness are<sup>96</sup> in the process of constructing a new historical narrative after the establishment of the Republic, the new elite, rejecting Turkey's historical inheritance, endeavored towards a national identity that designates Turkey as a part of the Western world. However, Turkey today, under AK Party's leadership is able to turn this historical inheritance into an asset in its foreign policy practices and, hence, modify the national identity. Therefore, while the historical inheritance in Kemalist foreign policy functioned as a negative constitutive factor, in AK Party foreign policy under Davutoğlu's leadership it serves as a positive factor. Bearing semblance to the concept New Ottomanism developed at the end of the 80s during Özal's rule<sup>97</sup> as an alternative to the negative connotations assigned to Turkey's historical inheritance, Davutoğlu's approach, since 2003, takes this cultural inheritance as historical, geographical, and cultural reference in his initiatives.<sup>98</sup>

#### *i) Construction of a New Identity*

The transformation of Turkish foreign policy, aligned with the constructivist school of thought, can be explained by the amendment of Turkey's national, social and civilizational identity caused by the redefined perceptions of the parameters of threat to its national security such as its geographical location, particularly of Istanbul, and its relations with its neighbors, particularly designation of friend and foe, because the reconstruction of political, economic and social structures and institutions necessitates a redefinition of

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<sup>96</sup> Davutoğlu, 59. See also Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Modernleşme Sürecinde Entelektüel Dönüşüm ve Zihniyet Parametreleri." *Modernleşme, İslam Dünyası ve Türkiye*, ed. Sabri Orman, İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2001, 361-400.

<sup>97</sup> Sedat Laciner. "Özalizm (Neo-Ottomanism): An Alternative In Turkish Foreign Policy?" *Journal of Administrative Sciences*. Vol. 1, No. 1-2, 2003, 161-202.

<sup>98</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu. "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007." *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No.1 2008, 77-96, <http://arsiv.setav.org/ups/dosya/9595.pdf>

relationships as well. In fact, each instance of construction and reconstruction demands the structuring and restructuring of foreign policy.

Therefore, which of the continuation or transformation factors are more effective can only be revealed at the end of the process of construction and reconstruction required by the developments in the domestic and international environment. The new state, after the establishment of the Republic, was constructed based on a new Western identity that was developed by following developments in the West. The new nation state was established based on political nationalism inspired by the French Revolution.<sup>99</sup>

In order to accommodate the sustainability and endurance of this identity and new political regime, remnants of institutions or concepts from the old regime were removed from use. The transformation realized during the first years of the Republic is a manifestation of this move. A lot of attention was paid so that this new nation state was constructed as a modern and Western state based on the principles of nationalism and secularism. Following this, Turkey's foreign and domestic policies were determined and executed in accordance with this new state identity. On the domestic level, any activity or group opposing the current regime was excluded from the political stage with accusations of partisanship, factionalism and reactionary politics. This is best illuminated by the fact that the two most deployed concepts in addition to nationalism and laicism, reactionarism (Islamic) and factionalism (Kurdish) are still at the center of political, economic and social debates.<sup>100</sup>

In tandem with this new identity, in the period immediately following the end of the war in which Turkey suffered huge territorial and material damages, Turkey followed a

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<sup>99</sup> See Bernard Lewis. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961 and Erik-Jan Zürcher. *Turkey: A Modern History*. I. B Tauris. 2004.

<sup>100</sup> See Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus*, Vol. 102, No. 1, 1973 and Ömer Taşpınar, *Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey*. Routledge: New York. 2011.

formal foreign policy that was concerned with maintaining the status quo. It built relationships with all new states established with Western assistance, because of their affiliation with Western states, particularly with those in near vicinity. This move prompted colder, more distanced relationships with nations and groups with whom Turkey had shared a common history and geography. Nations and states of the Middle East, Balkans and the Caucasus were avoided and otherized, because any cooperation or coalition with these states evoked images of the past the new nation-state was trying to purge. Manifestations of this Western approach can be observed in Turkey's perceptions of Iran and Israel in terms of their nuclear energy and weapon activities. In the Turkish public sphere, while silence is maintained about the nuclear weapons Israel currently possesses, much is said about Iran's acquisition of weapons. The short and long-range missiles developed by Iran are characterized as worrisome for Turkey. One cannot find articles criticizing Israel's possession of approximately 200 nuclear missiles even though Israel declared in no uncertain terms that, if need be, it would deploy these weapons. The reason for this inconsistency is that Israel is not perceived as a threat by the Western nations. Since Turkey's perception of threat is constructed similar to the Western states, it determines its foreign policy towards Israel and Iran in accordance with the Western views on the subject of nuclear weaponry.

As a result of this western construction of the perceived threat, every step Iran—ostracized and otherized by the political elite with Western inclinations in Turkey—is watched closely and carefully during the process of producing nuclear energy (and presumably weaponry) and much is written in the media about the threat this process poses to Turkey.<sup>101</sup> When Iran experimented with Şahap missiles, it was emphasized heavily in the media that first Diyarbakır and Ankara, then Istanbul, are within the range of these

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<sup>101</sup> “İran atom bombasıyla Adana İncirlik Üssü’nü vurursa ne olur? Adana’da kaç kişi ölür?”, *Euractiv*, November 11, 2011.

missiles. Iran is perceived as a threat by the Western proponent political elite of Turkey because it is perceived as a threat and otherized by the Western states. Furthermore, not even the fact that Turkey and Iran shares one of the oldest borders in the world, and not even the vehement declarations of Iran state representatives to the fact that nuclear technology is being developed only as an instrument of economic development and potential defense and that they have no intention of producing weapons of mass destruction<sup>102</sup> could satisfy the Western suspicions, hence the suspicions of the Western inclined elite of Turkey. In reality, when examined from a realist and nationalist perspective, nuclear weapon technology developed in the region, regardless of the state that develops or possesses it, should be perceived as a potential threat to Turkey.

Similar Westernist attitudes can be traced in Turkey's stand in the Bandung Conference (although partly caused by the Cold War), its leading role in formation of the Baghdad Pact, its appearance as an ally to France during the Algerian Independence struggle, and its reactions to national political developments in Middle Eastern countries such as Syria and Lebanon. At times, Turkey undertook symbolic economic and political initiatives towards the East in order to increase its negotiating power and to assuage its economic weakness.

With the AK Party, Turkey entered process of delineating a new identity more suitable to its new conditions and the new developments in the international arena. According to this new identity, the conventional nation-state discourses are being abandoned in favor of discourse on civilization. Regarded as "New Ottomanism"<sup>103</sup> by

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<sup>102</sup> "Iran not after nuclear weapons: Ayetollah Khamanei", *Press Tv*, September 17, 2013.

<sup>103</sup> See Ömer Taşpınar. "Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, No. 10, 2008, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cmec10\\_taspinar\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cmec10_taspinar_final.pdf); Nora Fisher Onar. "Neo-Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy." *EDAM Discussion Paper Series*, 2009; and Deniz Bingöl McDonald. "Imperial Legacies and Neo-Ottomanism: Eastern Europe and Turkey." *Insight Turkey*. Vol. 14, No. 4, 2012.



some, the process of constructing a new identity that is more inclusive and more suitable to the process of globalization has began in Turkey. With the construction of this new identity how national interest and perceived threats were defined is transformed as well. New perceptions of threats are constructed. Conceptions of threat and interest constructed in the West in Turkey's name are gradually being abandoned. Existent threats have been reinterpreted from a Turkey-centric perspective. In this context, initiatives to establish close relationships with states long perceived as threats such as Iran, Syria, Iraq and Armenia are implemented.

In the process of constructing the new identity, history is conceived as field of opportunity and not as a burden as it was previously conceived.<sup>104</sup> In particular, the Ottoman inheritance that was forgotten or suppressed was reinvigorated and an emphasis on historical depth began to appear in foreign policy discourses. A newfound importance is assigned to Turkey's historical values in addition to the values borrowed from the West. In other words, in juxtaposition with the Western concepts and institutions of democracy, primacy of the law, and free market, new concepts and values are being produced as a result of the East-West synthesis and of the remembrance of a poly-lingual, poly-ethnic, multicultural and pluralist past.<sup>105</sup>

Turkey endeavors to possess historical, geographical, strategic, political and civilizational depth on the regional, international and universal level. In order for Turkey to become one of the core states or a global power, it first needs to overcome its national issues. Because the construction of a new identity involves the restructuring of both domestic and international politics, in order to bring its political initiatives towards Armenia, the Caucasus, Middle East, Africa and the Balkans to fruition, Turkey first needs

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<sup>104</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu. *Stratejik Derinlik*.

<sup>105</sup> Alexander Murinson. "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 6, 2006.

to ensure the success of its current democratic initiatives towards Kurdish and Alevi minorities.

*ii) Re-Construction of Domestic Politics*

Under the new government, a balance between democracy and security in the restructuring of domestic politics was observed. When foreign policy is conceived as an extension of domestic policies and politics, it is clear to see that steps taken towards the democratization of the country not only improves the stability and security of the country, but it also develops a more effective, flexible, constructive, and peace promoting foreign policy. A state's legitimacy is best justified by its ability to provide security for its citizens. However, this security cannot be achieved through restriction of freedoms and human rights in the country. Freedom cannot be sacrificed in the name of security. Sacrificing freedom in the name of security creates the space for an authoritarian regime to emerge. Under the new leadership in Turkey, attempts are made to improve civil liberties without neglecting the nation's security.<sup>106</sup> This path is evinced from the initiatives made towards Kurdish and Alevi minorities and progress made in the process of accession to EU.

Due to the balance achieved between security and democracy, Turkey's latest foreign policy stresses soft power more than hard power.<sup>107</sup> The practice of securitization of all foreign policy issues in the last decades is being abandoned gradually. Soft power factors assists in implementation the soft balancing strategy. For example Turkey is

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<sup>106</sup> See for the list of democratization reforms taken place during the Ak Party government: "The Silent Revolution", *AK Parti*, April 04, 2014, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/english/haberler/the-silent-revolution/61958#1>

<sup>107</sup> See Selcen Öner, "Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy: New Instruments and Challenges." *Euxeinos*, Vol. 10, 2013, also see Meliha Benli Altunışık. "The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East. *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2008.

gaining a reputation as a lending and donor country.<sup>108</sup> In the year of 2008, Turkey's foreign aid exceeded 700 million USD and to 3.5 billion dollars in 2012.<sup>109</sup> Perhaps because of these developments, Istanbul gained preeminence in foreign policy instead of Ankara, which reflects the traditional nationalist nation state perspective. As the symbol of two civilizations and as the bridge between two continents, Istanbul is accepted as a universal center in which universal values are easily accommodated. For this reason, in the recent period many bi-lateral and multi-lateral international conferences take place in Istanbul and not in Ankara.

Turkey no longer practices a hierarchy in its foreign policy issues as suggested by the realist school of thought, because it does not have the luxury of neglecting or avoiding certain topics in its foreign policy analyses. The common saying, "All matters are footnotes to the unity of the Nation" gives the impression that foreign policy is composed solely of security concerns. However, under the new government, the concept of security has also gone through a fundamental transformation. The due importance is given to economic, communal and individual rights, health and environment issues.

### *iii) Participation of Non-State Actors in Foreign Policy Decision Making*

For the first time in its history, in addition to government institutions, non-state actors such as civil society organizations and corporations began to participate in foreign policy effectively in their roles of providing support and guidance to governmental activities. Civil society organizations, think tanks, corporations and charity organizations

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<sup>108</sup>see "Turkey's rise from aid recipient to mega-donor", *Al Jazeera*, April 25, 2014,

<http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/4/turkey-internationalaidafricasomaliameasternmiddleeastdorgan.html>

<sup>109</sup>"Turkish aid for 121 countries reached \$ 3.5 billion in 2012", *Hürriyet Daily News*, October 28, 2013.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-aid-to-121-countries-reached-35-billion-in-2012-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=56940&NewsCatID=344>

were activated in order to actualize the new foreign policy discourse.<sup>110</sup> For example, TÜSİAD, MÜSİAD and TUSKON, which represent the business world, assume activities that support the new multi-sided, multi-dimensional foreign policy. TÜSİAD, which houses Turkey's biggest corporations, takes part in activities towards speeding the process of accession to the EU as well as activities towards Westernization of the country. MÜSİAD, which represents the interests of the businesses that emerged in Anatolia recently, facilitates the improvement of relations with Middle Eastern and Muslim countries,. In addition to these, various civil society and human rights organizations support the new foreign policy with their efforts in various countries such as Pakistan, Indonesia, Palestine and Africa.<sup>111</sup>

Foreign policy practices in accordance with Davutoğlu's views implemented by AK Party governments since 2003 hold an important philosophical depth, variety and efforts to restructure, incommensurable to any of the prior governments. As a result of this foreign policy, deemed as the strategic depth policy, Turkey began to play more and more important roles in regional or international crisis and participated in almost all global developments. As a result of the rapid expansion of its foreign policies, Turkey became a country to pay attention to and to contend with. Turkey, with its Ottoman inheritance, growing economy, and civilizational accumulation, will become one of the major players of the international arena, provided that it overcomes international and particularly domestic obstacles in relation to its new foreign policy.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> See Kilic Bugra Kanat. "Understanding Changes in Foreign Policy of Nations: The Turkish Case and Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy". *History, Politics and Foreign Policy in Turkey*, eds. Kılıç Buğra Kanat, Kadir Üstün and Nuh Yılmaz. SETA Publications, Ankara, 2012.

<sup>111</sup> See Kemal Kirişçi. "Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State." *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No. 40, 2009.

<sup>112</sup> Alexander Murinson. "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 6, 2006.

In conjunction with participation of the domestic non-state actors in foreign policy making, Turkey focused on developing relationships with international non-state actors. Under the new government, Turkey practiced politics actively with various communities, nations, and regions simultaneously and consequently developed constructive communication with these actors. While maintaining the traditional vigorous interaction with the West, Turkey, began to take an active role in the regional politics of the Middle East, the Balkans, Middle Asia and the Caucasus. It played a functional role in the international crises involving Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Psychological obstacles that emerged in the Middle East in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and became chronic were eliminated. Turkey interacted with political actors situated in the different fronts in the Middle East such as Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Hamas, Al-Fatih and Hezbollah on both formal and informal levels. For instance, while only state institutions were considered legitimate actors during the previous governments in Turkey, the AK Party government developed relationships with Shia, Kurdish and Turkic groups and made progress in very short time. This change in domestic politics actually played an important role in the construction of a new identity in Turkish foreign policy and Turkish state. It was a construction that took place through transformation of domestic politics.

## ***2. International Construction***

### *i) Reconstruction of Relationship with Neighboring Countries*

Turkey, under AK Party leadership, reconstructed its relationships with the neighboring countries. First operating under the “zero problems with neighbors” principles, it began mending relations and offering solutions to existing problems. Then, under the “maximum cooperation” principle, it aimed to jumpstart a process of unification by

optimizing the potential of cooperation between the countries.<sup>113</sup> As a consequence of these principles Turkey no longer perceived itself as a country surrounded by its enemies. The saying, “Turks do not have any friends but Turks” was finally abandoned. Concrete steps towards resolving the problems with neighboring countries and co-founding institutions that would work to determine common targets and purposes. After achieving resolutions to problems with Georgia, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Bulgaria and Greece, Turkey moved onto resolving its issues with Armenia. After completing the first phase of reaching a “zero problems level” with its neighboring states, Turkey is implementing policies to attain relationships based on maximum levels of cooperation in realizing common interests. The target is the invigoration of relationships that were originally founded on geographical and historical depth.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Davutoğlu began to deploy the term “neighbor” in two separate and distinct ways—close neighbors with common borders by land and distant neighbors with common borders by sea. States located in nearby regions were included in the definition of a neighbor.<sup>114</sup> According to this modification, Turkey’s close neighbors are Greece, Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Its distant neighbors are Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Egypt, Lebanon, and Israel.

## *ii) Cooperation with Various Global and Regional Powers*

Turkey during this period also started to exhibit a multi-dimensional and pluralist approach in its relationships with global and regional powers. On the one hand, bilateral relationship between Western states and Turkey, strategic relationships with the United

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<sup>113</sup> Ioannis N. Grigoriadis. “The Davutoglu Doctrine and Turkish Foreign Policy.” *Working Paper No. 8*, 2000. [http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/KEIMENO-EPTΑΣΙΑΣ-8\\_2010\\_IoGrigoriadis1.pdf](http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/KEIMENO-EPTΑΣΙΑΣ-8_2010_IoGrigoriadis1.pdf)

<sup>114</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu. “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007.” *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No.1 2008, 77-96, <http://arsiv.setav.org/ups/dosya/9595.pdf>

States and relationships in the context of the NATO were maintained while the process of accession to the EU was expedited.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, close relationships with Eastern states and states in close proximity were developed. More attention than usual was paid to relations with Russia and China.<sup>116</sup> While close relations were maintained with the West, new initiatives were undertaken towards the Western and Southern states. Turkey perceived these attempts to develop relationships with various states as strategic foreign policy moves and not as competition or conflict. Turkey assumed a foreign policy based on the principle of acting Western in the West and Eastern in the East. Its relationships with the East developed, not as an antithesis of its relationship with the West, but as complementary factors. It took a more active and comfortable role in the international arena. The process of establishing interdependent partnerships with various states, instead of depending on a single center of power, state or ally began. In this way, the influence independence on a single state or nation has on politics has been diminished. Instead of being dependent solely on the Western states, by creating interdependencies with both the West and the East Turkey expanded the effectiveness of its foreign policies. For instance, Turkey, after having signed the Nabucco Project in Ankara this year, was considered Westernist; however, shortly after signing this project, it signed a bilateral commercial agreement with Russia that covers a wide range including natural gas. Through this Turkey also reformed its social relations with the countries around it and other global powers and actors. This change in relations with other countries impacted the social identity of Turkish state and its foreign relations and policy in the same period. This situation created an external impact on the emergence of identity change in foreign policy of Turkey.

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<sup>115</sup> See Meltem Müftüler Baç. "Turkey's Political Reforms and the Impacts of the European Union." *South European Society and Politics*, Vol 10, No. 1, 2005.

<sup>116</sup> See Fatih Özbay. "The Relations between Turkey and Russia in the 2000s." *Perceptions*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2011.

### ***3. Inter-mestic Construction: The Discourse on Civilization***

There were also some dimensions that we may consider as intermestic which experienced major transformations during AK Party period. Except for under Özal regime, until 2000s, Turkey followed an exclusionary foreign policy. During the rule of AK Party governments, a more constructive and more inclusive political and diplomatic discourse was developed. Turkey was characterized as a country “surrounded with enemies in every direction” under the Kemalist leadership, and for Turkey’s traditional political elite, Turks did not have any friends other than Turks. Kemalist Turkey, in order to ensure its existence and security was perpetually seeking a balance of power as ascertained by the prevalent international relations theories. Having determined its foreign policy and international behaviors under the influence of these prevalent theories, Kemalist Turkey followed an antagonistic foreign policy. Under the new rule, an inclusive and constructive discourse was developed. This new language, discourse, and voice aimed to construct a new way of doing politics.

Davutoğlu, in his scholarly articles, criticized several prominent theories developed in the aftermath of the Cold War and defended by a large group of Westerners, such as the “new world order, “the end of history” and “the clash of civilizations.”<sup>117</sup> He defended the alternative approaches such as shifting the homogenizing effects of globalization towards an adventure that promotes differences and as “improving dialogs between civilizations”. In fact, these assertions Davutoğlu made in his articles were calls to Western powers to abandon their hegemonic discourses. Turkey, under Davutoğlu leadership, aimed to increase the effectiveness of traditional civilizations, particularly of Islam as a prerequisite of the civilizational discourse and to advance an alternative discourse to Western conceptions based on conflict. One of the reasons that make Davutoğlu policies the target

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<sup>117</sup> Ahmet Davuotglu. *Stratejik Derinlik*.



of insistent criticism by Westerners is its purported aim of revitalizing the civilization discourse. Turkey aspires to utilize its Ottoman inheritance and the revitalization of the Islamic civilization, in its foreign policy, as a constitutive power factor.<sup>118</sup>

Turkey hosted a high number of important international conferences in the recent years. Turkey's social, bureaucratic, economic and social actors are functioning with an unprecedented vigor. The extent of intensity in diplomatic relations can be easily discerned from the number of international conferences that took place in Turkey since 2003. Multi-lateral meetings such as the NATO summit in 2004, African Summit in 2005, International Water Forum and International Finance Summit in 2007 and bilateral meetings such as Solana-Laricani, Musharraf-Karzai and Abbas-Peres encounters indicate that Turkey has become an effective actor in International Politics. Turkey also hosted direct and indirect meetings for the actors of regional disputes. For example, indirect encounter between Syria and Israel and direct encounters between Afghanistan and Pakistan took place in Istanbul.

Turkey's leaders also deploy a productive and active diplomatic strategy. The travel itinerary of the Turkish president, Abdullah Gül, only since 2009 testifies to Turkey's active role in international politics. The president traveled to Riyadh to speak at the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia in 2009, to Russia to facilitate the negotiations about commercial transactions being conducted in Russian ruble, to Iran for the EcoSummit, to Iraq to mediate the Talabani-Barzani encounter, and to Belgium to visit the European Union Commission. The president is an active player in the international arena even though the presidential office is a relatively symbolic office in Turkey.

Turkey applies an active diplomatic strategy not only to its own international issues with regional or global forces, but also to international crises that does not involve Turkey directly. Turkey took initiative in resolving regional problems instead of waiting for the Western nations to take the first step. For example, during the Georgian civil war and

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<sup>118</sup> Ahmet Davutoglu, *Stratejik Derinlik*

Caucasian crisis, Turkey's representatives paid official visits to Georgia, Azerbaijan and Russia before any of the European countries. In order to overcome the crisis, Turkey proposed the first initiative of creating a Caucasian platform of stability and security, which included five countries (Turkey, Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia). Turkey also prevented a potential NATO vs. Russia conflict by promoting diplomacy. On another front, following Israel's attacks on Gaza towards the end of 2008, the prime minister, Erdoğan, visited four important Arab countries, while the minister of foreign affairs Davutoğlu traveled back and forth between Damascus and Cairo. The prime minister's intervention of the tensions between Iran and Pakistan and Iraq and Syria after terrorist attacks in Iran and Iraq with in the last month is enough to evince the active role Turkey plays in regional politics.

This new Turkey promotes equidistance in its interactions with others, establishing coalitions to resolve problems and initiating wide based strategic actions. It pays particular attention to not taking sides and remaining disinterested in conflicts, and makes constructive moves towards a win-win strategy to assuage concerns of the international actors. In order to play a peace-building and mitigating role in the solution of regional problems, it insists on taking preventative measures in order to increase the trust between Turkey and states with which it interacts. For example, Turkey is the only country that maintains constructive relations with all actors in Iraq. In order to achieve stability in Iraq, Turkey works relentlessly on the international platforms such as United Nations Security Council and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and calls all ethnic and religious groups to action in order to attain stability, security and unity in the country.

Davutoğlu's strategic depth approach renders national borders obsolete in practice while still respecting the national sovereignty of the states. Some initiatives taken under this approach aim to make the concept of national borders in the Middle East, particularly those drawn by foreign powers in southern Turkey, irrelevant. Davutoğlu insists that the

concept of nation state is a Western invention and not universal unit of political analysis. He propounds the importance of historical and geographical factors in the development of relations among states and takes these factors into account while delineating strategies for Turkey's interaction with states in its proximity.

As an alternative to prejudiced discourses employed by the US such as characterizing its adversaries as the "axis of evil" or "rogue states", Turkey purports to build axis of stability and to this end, promotes new discourses based on the civilizational particularities of the geographical and strategic regions in which it is located. Aiming to build relationships among states, not by otherizing but by accommodating, Turkey began to work towards building an axis of stability in the regions the United States declared 'the axis of evil' and towards restructuring the political order in the region by developing bilateral and multilateral relationships and by playing a mediating role among states. According to Davutoğlu any development in the region may cause a domino effect. Since regional political and economic issues are closely related to each other, development in any one of them may have a negative or positive effect on the region. Therefore, in order to achieve stability in the area, the domino tiles must be organized well ensuring the fall of the first tile towards the right direction.

In Turkey's new inclusive foreign policy based on civilizational foundations, a positive sum game based on the win-win strategy is preferred to the zero sum game in its interactions with its neighbors. To this end, new strategic approaches to its problems with Cyprus, Kurds, Iraq, Iran and Armenia are developed. For example, When Davutoğlu invoked the "just memory" concept shortly after signing a protocol with Armenia, calling both sides to assume a constructive approach that reflects a common target; he was acting within the parameters of his foreign policy strategies. This strategy employs an accommodating, inclusive and constructive discourse that mitigates the expectations of both sides instead of an exclusionary and otherizing policy.

As a result of this transformation in Turkey's foreign policy, a positive change in perceptions of Turkey in its region has been observed. Turkey's new strategy of stressing cooperation and coalition improved its regional image. For example, the president Abdullah Gül, became the first Muslim country leader who addressed the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia. He also became the first and only leader to stay overnight in occupied Iraq. During his visit, Iraq's first lady, who rarely attends official ceremonies, attended to such events out of respect for the Turkish President. In addition to state representatives, lay people, political and intellectual elite also are also becoming more trusting of Turkey. While Turkish cinema and television series find an unprecedentedly high number of audiences, Turkish is quickly becoming a regularly spoken language in the region. Turkey's relatively stable and progressive democracy, its powerful political institutions, developed economy, historical accumulation, strategic depth, civilizational discourse and social progression combine to impress the states and peoples of the region.

Under the leadership of the AK Party and aligned with the conceptual framework summarized above, Turkey began to follow a multi-dimensional, multi-sided and multi-tracked foreign policy. The new foreign policy developed in three different dimensions. As stated above, the mainstream theoretical approaches, such as liberalism and realism, fails to explain the change in foreign policy in Turkey. The transformation can be explained best by utilizing the theoretical tools of constructivism. What took place in Turkey was a complicated process that includes the change of state and foreign policy identity from within, through a major change in domestic politics and discourse on foreign policy through the actions of different actors and from outside, through a transformation of Turkey's relations with its neighbors and other global actors. The outcome of this transformation was a Turkish foreign policy with a new identity. Three dimensions of this new identity particularly differed from the premises of the traditional foreign policy. First, contrary to the realist discourse it started to interact with informal actors. Second, it began

to establish close relationships with groups of states that engage in different ideologies and regimes. Finally, non-state actors representing different sections of the country, for the first time, participated in the process of foreign policy making as international actors. In the remaining chapters of the dissertation the outcomes of these conceptual changes will be discussed in three different case studies of Turkish foreign policy in recent years.

## **CHAPTER 4**

## THE MEETINGS OF THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES OF IRAQ

Turkey's policy in the Middle East has substantially gained momentum due to the new foreign policy pursued by the Justice and Development Party (AK Party). This new, proactive policy was first apparent in the "Initiative of Iraq's Neighboring Countries," introduced by Turkey on the eve of the U.S. invasion in Iraq.<sup>1</sup> In the days leading up to the occupation of Iraq, the AK Party managed to take a vital and transformative step—a step that was not recognized as such at the time. By initiating the Neighbors of Iraq Conference, the AK Party made the first attempt at contact with countries in the region both at the state and non-state levels in 80 years. For the first time, Turkish foreign policy makers and security bureaucracy had to work with Middle Eastern actors.<sup>2</sup> The Neighbors of Iraq Conference, which first took place on January 23, 2003 in Istanbul, met a total of 15 times. Having started with the participation of regional countries, it soon included the UNSC's

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<sup>1</sup> Bülent Aras. "Turkey's Rise in the Greater Middle East: Peace-Building in the Periphery." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2009, 29-41.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Larrabee. "Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 4, 2007.

P5, G8, the UN, the OIC, the Arab League, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, and the EU.

The Iraq meetings, in which the U.S. did not take a special interest, became an important platform during and in the aftermath of the occupation of Iraq. In 2005, which was considered a year of crisis in the occupation of Iraq, the Conference played a significant role in ensuring the participation of the Sunni community in the process in Iraq. More importantly, however, it played a crucial function in the transformation of Turkish foreign policy. The Iraq meetings helped Turkish foreign policy gain a natural opportunity and self-confidence to revise the nation-state's clichés of the past 80 years. By refusing to participate in the occupation of Iraq, Turkey had to confront U.S. for the first time since the Cyprus Operation of 1974. The AK Party, as the chief actor of this confrontation, faced harsh criticism and was accused of being a "political Islamist" party by the U.S. neoconservative administration in the post-9/11 atmosphere. However, as the events started to unfold in Iraq, the significance of the conference became more obvious..

The recommendations offered by the conference, which were never taken seriously by the U.S. administration, could have offered a solution for the problems that emerged in Iraq following the occupation and withdrawal of U.S. forces. Especially after developments in 2014, including the rise of ISIS and re-emergence of sectarianism, it became quite clear that the participants of the conference foresaw most of the problems and disputes that might emerge in the region. However, the occupying forces in Iraq did not pay attention to the suggestions of the local and native actors in the region; instead, the Western powers tried to engineer a new system that had no relevance to the situation on the ground. The meetings also significantly changed the perception of Turkey in the region. Particularly, Turkey's Iraq decision increased its popularity both domestically and in the region. Also, the conference allowed Turkish foreign policy makers to understand and learn about the region and its actors. While they were taking place, the Neighbors of Iraq



Conference did not receive a lot of attention from many foreign policy analysts and academics. Nevertheless, these meetings obliged the Turkish bureaucracy to do its most intensive work in the Middle East since WWI. The network that emerged during the meetings became influential in dealing with Middle Eastern actors and issues in the years that followed.

The subjects and issues that were negotiated in these meetings were mostly matters that had not been addressed intensively by Turkish foreign policy since the WWI. The process of adapting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has accelerated largely due to the hard work of Ahmet Davutoğlu, who became the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009. The results of the Neighbors of Iraq meetings were felt in Turkish foreign policy especially on the eve of the Iraqi elections in March 2010.

#### A NEW ERA IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD THE REGION

The AK Party, which came to power in November 2002, was faced with the consequences of the occupation of Afghanistan and impending invasion of Iraq during its first days in office. Preceding the occupation of Iraq, the Turkish government was put under serious pressure by the Bush administration and faced a big crisis. This crisis was recorded in Turkish foreign policy as “the Bill of March 1, 2003.” The AK Party drafted the bill in the Council of Ministers, which proposed “to deploy Turkish Military Forces to foreign countries and to allow foreign military forces to be present in Turkey.” The bill was particularly important for the U.S. war effort of in Iraq. Opening of a Northern front in the war with the support of the Kurdish forces and Turkish geography was considered vital for the U.S.’s rapid success in defeating the Iraqi army and controlling different regions of Iraq.

The bill was introduced to the parliament because Article 92 of the Turkish Constitution gives the power to authorize the deployment of Turkish Armed Forces into foreign countries and allow foreign troops to be stationed in Turkey to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM). The bill proposed, as stipulated by the Article 117 of the Constitution, that the Council of Ministers would be responsible to the TBMM for national security and the preparation of the Armed Forces for the defense of the country. As such, the government would have the authority to determine the scope, limits and duration of the deployment of troops into northern Iraq. Furthermore, the bill proposed, also in accordance with the Article 117, that the TBMM authorize the government to determine the limits and scope of the use of Turkish land and airspace by foreign armed forces in order to create more credible deterrence against Iraqi forces.

The bill would have authorized the entry of no more than 62,000 U.S. troops into Turkey, composed of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry regiment, 255 fixed wings and 65 rotary wing aircrafts. In a closed parliament session, 264 MPs voted for the bill, 250 MPs voted against the bill and 19 abstained. In accordance with Article 96 of the Constitution, the bill would have required 268 votes to pass. When the quorum was not reached, the bill became void.<sup>3</sup> The process that led to the rejection of the bill began in late December 2002.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TURKEY AND IRAQ

The relationship between Turkey and Iraq has always been full of ups and downs. In the 1980s, there was a large increase in trade between the two nations during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war; however, the possibility of a change in the borders led to the reemergence of Turkey's security concerns that began when all the Kurdish groups in

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<sup>3</sup> TBMM, Genel Görüşme Tutanakları, 22. Dönem 1. Yasama Yılı, 39. Birleşim, March 1, 2003.

North Iraq united and came under the control of Iran, and the Iranian army came close to Kirkuk and began to threaten the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık oil pipeline. In the face of these developments, Turkey did not refrain from taking certain military measures along the Iraqi border. On the other hand, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) became a serious source of tension in the region. Iran viewed Turkey's operation against the PKK in northern Iraq as an assault on all Iraqi Kurds, whom it saw as allies and therefore Tehran believed that Turkey was assisting Baghdad in the war. As Turkey's operations against the PKK in northern Iraq increased, Iran – fighting alongside the Iraqi Kurds – and Turkey began confronting one another.

The influence of the nation-state paradigm on Turkish foreign policy from the 1930s to the 1990s led Ankara to perceive neighboring countries as threats to national security, negatively impacting Turkish-Iranian relations.<sup>4</sup> During the Cold War, however, Turkey's relations with countries in the Middle East, particularly Iraq, as a *regional power* followed the trajectory of the U.S. The nation-state and Cold War paradigms dominated foreign policy thinking and approach in Turkey. The relations with Iraq was handled in terms of the Kurdish question, and the possibility of the foundation of an independent Kurdish state was constantly kept on the Turkish agenda, eventually transforming into an element of fear.

1990 and 1991 were turning points, as the parameters on which Turkish foreign policy was based both at the regional and international level since 1945 and 1965, respectively, finally changed. One could argue that this transformation took place because the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the war that ensued changed the balance of power in the Middle East, the Soviet Union disintegrated and the Cold War ended, and the Arab-Israeli peace process began. During this period, two additional factors began to play a fundamental role in Turkish-Arab relations: the PKK question and the water issue.

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<sup>4</sup> Bülent Aras, "Türkiye'nin Irak Çıkmazı," *Radikal*, December 29, 2002.

As the PKK began to significantly impact the relations between Turkey and Iraq, Turkey became involved in the question of northern Iraq due to the group's abuse of the power vacuum. The refugees gathering at the Turkish and Iranian as a result of the Kurdish revolt against the Saddam regime in northern Iraq following the Gulf War led to an intervention by the U.S. and its allies. In the face of the possibility that these developments might lead to the disintegration of Iraq and thus the foundation of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, Turkey and Iran grasped the importance of the territorial integrity of Iraq and began to cooperate; however, the continued ambiguity of the situation resulted in the escalation of tensions and conflict in the region.

Starting in the 1990s, Turkey attempted to consolidate its *regional power* character in the Middle East. This diplomatic evolution reflected Turkey's goal as a *regional power* to take advantage of the vacuum left by other *superpowers/great powers* in regional politics. This goal will inevitably occur as Turkey pursues an active and dynamic understanding of diplomacy that includes mediating and game-setting activities in order to gain a more permanent position in global affairs. Turkey has endeavored to highlight not only historical and cultural bonds, but also shared elements of identity, taking a more active role in the international politics of neighboring regions such as the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans and the Mediterranean Basin. This has been important in strengthening trade relations and cultural bonds between Turkey and its neighboring regions.

This change and improvement in Turkey's Middle Eastern policy through has also helped Turkey to be seen as a *normative power*, meaning that it determines certain norms, acts in line with them, and contributes to their recognition at the international and regional level. Similarly, the concept of *soft power*, which works in a more effective way than *hard power*, has been used to explain the effectiveness of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle

East. In this regard, Iraq has been handled from a more holistic perspective, rather than with the reflexes of a nation-state or Cold War paradigm.<sup>5</sup>

Turkey's commercial activities and efforts to increase trade with the region in the AK Party era<sup>6</sup> have strengthened the country's hand both in direct political relations and in diplomatic steps to find solutions to regional problems. The increase in trade volume based on interdependence during this era has become even more important in relations with Iraq, which are critical for Turkey in terms of both national security and economic resources and potential. This way, Iraq has ceased to be perceived as a threat and become a trade partner. Developments such as the reactivation of the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık oil pipeline and the increasing activities of Turkish companies in Iraq have strengthened bilateral relations.<sup>7</sup> Turkey is Iraq's second largest partner in trade today.<sup>8</sup> Iraq, in turn, has risen to the fifth largest importer of Turkish goods. Nevertheless, trade relations between Turkey and Iraq could expand in the areas of tourism and education.

Political relations with Iraq was not left far behind economic relation ties, and steps have been taken to improve them further. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Baghdad in 2008 marked the first visit from a high-level Turkish official to Iraq since 1990, and although "the high-level cooperation approach"<sup>9</sup> agreed upon during the visit became increasingly inactive over time, it has gained recent momentum. This process is being regarded as the beginnings of economic integration. Another critical turning point in

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<sup>5</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007." *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No.1 2008, 77-96.

<sup>6</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Türkiye ve Irak Ekonomi İlişkileri," [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-irak-ekonomik-iliskileri-ve-turkiye\\_nin-yeniden-imar-surecine-katkisi.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-irak-ekonomik-iliskileri-ve-turkiye_nin-yeniden-imar-surecine-katkisi.tr.mfa)

<sup>7</sup> Gökhan Çetinsaya and Taha Özhan, *İşgalin 6. Yılında Irak*. Ankara: SETA Yayınları, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Hatice Karahan, "Türkiye ve Irak Ekonomik İlişkileri, IŞİD ve Ötesi." *SETA Perspektif*, Vol. 56, 2014

<sup>9</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile Irak Cumhuriyeti Hükümetleri Arasında Yüksek Düzeyli İşbirliği Konseyi'nin Kurulmasına İlişkin Ortak Siyasi Bildirge," <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/DISPOLITIKA/Bolgeler/ortadogu/irak/Ortak%20Siyasi%20Bildirge.pdf>

Turkish-Iraqi relations was in May 2009 when Prof. Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who developed the “strategic depth” doctrine and argues in favor of strengthening relations with the Middle East, became the Minister of Foreign Affairs. His visit to Baghdad in August 2009 was important in terms of the Bilateral High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council’s activities in the domains of diplomacy, security, energy and the economy. The Council aims to implement a common security framework, political dialogue, economic cooperation and cultural harmonization between the two countries.<sup>10</sup>

To conclude, unlike other actors who continue to see Iraq as a risky partner, Turkey displayed a more active attitude in terms of both bilateral and multilateral relations between 2005 and 2011 and developed a “new partnership model” with Iraq, a country with which it has profound religious, linguistic, ethnic and historical bonds.<sup>11</sup> Turkey has moved beyond being one of the neighbors of Iraq in terms of both foreign policy objectives and commercial activities and has taken important steps to become its partner and ally. In 2012, however, this process has come to a halt when the Maliki government was founded with the support of the U.S. and Iran even though the Al-Iraqiya Movement won the elections.

The Neighbors of Iraq Conferences were very significant for the Turkish foreign policy as well as for the region during this period. Having shaped its relations with Iraq through the elements mentioned above in this period, Turkey took significant steps to become an influential actor and to resolve the problems of the region through multilateral dialogue. When it came to power, Ak Party government was engaged in negotiations with the U.S in order to resolve the problem about launching the troops from Turkish soil. However when the resolution failed to pass from the Turkish National Assembly and when the crisis in the region deepened, Turkey tried to take an active part on this issue. Ak Party

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<sup>10</sup> DEİK, *Irak Ülke Bülteni*. İstanbul: DEİK, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Nasuhi Güngör, “Ankara-Erbil Hattında Yeni Dönem,” *Star*, April 2, 2010.

government aimed to revitalize the country's relations with different actors in Iraq and the Middle East. These renewed relations soon paved the way for the birth of the Neighbors of Iraq Conference. The network formed during these meetings became an important element of Turkish foreign policy in the years that followed. The relations established through the Neighbors of Iraq Conference often played a facilitating part in Turkish foreign policy regarding the instability in Iraq, which began after the March 2010 elections and expanded into a bigger crisis in 2014.

In fact, this conference was a starting point in changing the conceptualization of foreign policy in Turkey. After so many years, Turkey was engaging in with the Middle East through an initiative that it had launched for the first time. This engagement was different than any other political actions because of its intention to form multilateral ties with states that adhere to different ideologies in order to achieve stability and prosperity in the region. It was the formal end of the non-intervention policy for regional conflicts and regional politics that dominated most of Turkey's Cold War history. For the first time, and at such a critical juncture in international and regional politics, Turkish foreign policy attempted to transform its foreign policy identity. After this period, Turkey was involved in almost all of the conflicts in the Middle East and tried to find solutions to problems in the region. The Turkish state's identity in terms of Middle Eastern politics transformed from being a non-interventionist and outsider to an active insider and potential resolver of regional conflicts.

#### THE FORMATION OF THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES OF IRAQ MEETINGS

The Iraq War represented a major change in the grand strategy of the only global super power, the United States, from the Cold War strategy of containment to pre-emptive

action. After 9/11, the U.S. tried to redefine its National Security Strategy in order to eliminate the perception of vulnerability that emerged after the attacks. The U.S. transitioned to a new foreign policy platform by espousing a new security doctrine in the post-Cold War era. In accordance with this new understanding, the U.S. set its main goals, including the integration of China and Russia with the West, the construction of a new global order to strengthen freedoms, and the stabilization of the Middle East by empowering democracy and free market conditions in the region. In keeping with its new security-based foreign policy, the U.S. incorporated the concept of pre-emptive military interventions in other countries into its repertoire.

With this new security paradigm, the U.S. regarded Iraq as a “rogue state” under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, and considered it a possible threat on the grounds that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and would use these weapons against the U.S. and other Western countries. Therefore, the U.S. began preparations for a pre-emptive military intervention in Iraq. The U.S., failing to secure a favorable United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution, embarked on a mission to form a “coalition of volunteers.” Concerned about the reactions of the regional countries to its illegitimate intervention in Iraq, the U.S. garnered support by establishing a “coalition of volunteers.” However, it failed to ensure legitimacy for its military intervention due to its failure to gain the support of the UN and the fact that pre-emptive wars are against international law.

Various countries have developed initiatives to prevent an intervention by the U.S. and the “Coalition of willing” in Iraq. The most effective and long-lasting among these initiatives has been the Neighboring Countries of Iraq. With this initiative, Turkey aimed to prevent the invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and its coalition, and to protect Iraq’s territorial integrity and political unity, while simultaneously preparing the ground for a political solution by involving the neighboring countries of Iraq. Within the scope of this new



process, 12 meetings of foreign ministers were held, beginning with the first meeting in İstanbul on January 23, 2003.

At first, under the leadership of Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria participated in this initiative to seek a genuine solution to Iraq's problems. Later, participants from many countries and international institutions of regional and global importance attended these meetings as they comprehended the significance of this platform. The Meetings of the Foreign Ministers of Iraq's Neighboring Countries have allowed neighboring nations to reiterate their commitment to the protection of Iraq's unity and territorial integrity, and to find a common denominator to ensure calm and security within the country. These meetings have also been beneficial to convey to the international community the concerns and apprehension of regional countries that chaos in Iraq may cause problems not only regionally, but also globally.

For Turkey's new foreign policy, which was exposed to the international community through the attendance and organization of these meetings, regional problems necessitated regional solutions. While engaging with one of these Middle Eastern countries was approached with skepticism in the 1990s, Turkey started to engage with multiple actors from the region simultaneously. In fact, the new foreign policy encouraged foreign policy makers to take steps in order to actively engage and become involved in these regional initiatives. Ahmet Davutoğlu's idea of pro-active and rhythmic diplomacy was a reflection of this new identity of foreign policy.

The Meetings of the Foreign Ministers of Iraq's Neighboring Countries have provided a critical ground for coordinated discussions on developments in Iraq, and they have given Iraq's neighbors the opportunity to confirm their continued support for Iraq's political and territorial integrity. In the final reports, emphases have placed on Iraq's territorial integrity, political unity, rights of sovereignty and independence, as participant countries condemned the terrorist activity in the country in the strongest terms.

Accordingly, representatives have suggested the option of political dialogue from the very beginning, rather than a military intervention. A total of 12 meetings at the foreign ministers level were held, nine of which were official.

**Official Meetings:**

1. İstanbul January 23, 2003
2. Riyadh April 18, 2003
3. Tehran May 28, 2003
4. Damascus November 2, 2003
5. Kuwait February 14-15, 2004
6. Cairo July 21, 2004
7. Amman January 6, 2005
8. İstanbul April 28-30, 2005
9. Tehran July 8-9, 2006

**Unofficial Meetings**

1. İstanbul, June 15, 2004 (Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers margin)
2. Sharm El-Sheikh November 22, 2004
3. New York September 22, 2006 (UN Security Council margin)

**Expanded Neighboring Countries of Iraq Foreign Ministers Meeting**

1. Sharm El-Sheikh May 4-5, 2007 (With the participation of the members of the Neighboring Countries Initiative, Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, and the G-8 Countries)

2. İstanbul November 2-3, 2007

3. Kuwait April 21-22, 2008 (With the participation of the Neighboring countries, Egypt, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Qatar, the UN Security Council's P5, the G-8 and the UN, the Organization of Islamic Development, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Arab League, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), and the EU)

#### THE MEETING OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES PRIOR TO THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. administration has radically changed its political course. Following the invasion of Afghanistan, various attempts were made to find diplomatic solutions for Iraq.<sup>12</sup> In order to prevent the probable military intervention in Iraq, the recently empowered AK Party invited the regional countries to İstanbul on January 23, 2003 for a Neighboring Countries of Iraq meeting to discuss the “Foreign Ministers’ Regional Initiative on Iraq.” The Neighboring Countries of Iraq initiative determined its mission as the protection of the territorial integrity of Iraq, and set as its objectives the prevention of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and a peaceful solution for the issue of the Saddam Hussein regime. To launch the process, the first meeting at the foreign minister level was held with the participation of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran and Syria, despite the stern response of the U.S., which was determined to invade Iraq. The meetings, in time, have transformed into a platform where regional countries have

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<sup>12</sup> Held in İstanbul in 2003.

announced their support for Iraq's territorial integrity, political unity and the Iraqi government.<sup>13</sup>

The meeting convened with the objective of preventing the U.S. and its allies' military intervention in Iraq and to seek a diplomatic solution. The Turkish Ministers of Foreign Affairs requested that Iraq fully comply with UNSC Resolutions 1284 and 1441 for disarmament, and warned of the probability of military intervention if it did not comply. Although the main goal from the very beginning was to stop another military conflict in its region, which could cost thousands of lives and bring economic and political instability to the Middle East, the meetings was also used to exchange views and opinions in regards to the other conflicts and problems in the region. For instance, in the first foreign ministers meeting, officials also addressed the Palestinian issue, which was then in the third year of the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Intifadah*.

Although there were different regional organizations, such as the GCC and the Arab League, this was a unique venue for the countries that attended the meeting. First of all, it was open for almost all of countries in the region that would be affected by armed regional conflict. Secondly, the main focus of the meeting was Iraq and the potential destabilizing impacts of a regional war. The goal of the participant countries was to create a win-win situation. The attendees include different actors from different countries with variant interests. Instead of trying to remain distant from Middle Eastern politics, Turkish foreign policy makers attempted for the first time to become architects of an initiative that deals with a very significant regional problem and whose membership extends across sectarian and ethnic divisions. This was the first of such an opening in Turkish history and a major revision in the identity of Turkish foreign policy. It demonstrates a more regional focus that emerged in Turkish foreign policy and a willingness to engage in the

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<sup>13</sup> "Irak'a Komşu Ülkeler girişimi nasıl başladı?" *CNN Türk*, November 2, 2007.

construction of a new regional order in the Middle East through the actions of regional actors.

During the summits and meetings, delegations held intensive talks regarding what messages they should send to the U.S. and Iraq both in the final reports and agenda items. The ministers argued over the Palestinian issue and discouragement of the U.S.'s preparations for war. There were also debates in regards to the list of participant countries. For instance, Saudi Arabia and Iran criticized the exclusion of Kuwait. The Turkish delegation, however, emphasized that Kuwait was not invited because it was directly involved in the issues at hand, but that the country had been informed regularly. In the two-page final report released at the closure of the consultations, the ministers did not directly refer to the U.S. and Israel. However, they strongly appealed to the Iraqi administration and implicitly conveyed opposition to a U.S. military intervention attempt and Israel's actions.<sup>14</sup>

The delegations, stressing that war should not be an option to resolve this crisis, declared that the countries of the region did not wish to live through yet another war and all its devastating consequences. This was also Turkey's position in regards to a possible war in Iraq from the very beginning of the crisis. The Turkish public was almost traumatized after witnessing the outcomes of the First Gulf War as well as the impact of the sanctions on civilians in Iraq, and hence they were very sensitive to the potential consequences of another conflict. The new Turkish foreign policy took into account the negative outcomes of previous conflicts and was actively engaged in preventing another major humanitarian disaster in the region.

During the meetings, the delegations also urged the Iraqi government to take serious steps to restore peace and regional stability. The ministers asked Iraq to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Monitoring

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Verification and Inspection Committee (UNMOVIC), and to comply with UNSC Resolution 1441. In the same vein, the ministers asked Iraq to provide the requested information and material to the international institutions that were attempting to prepare a report on nuclear capabilities. In its statement, the delegation requested that Iraq initiate policies that would unambiguously inspire confidence in its neighbors, and it emphasized its support for the protection of Iraq's territorial integrity and national unity. In the concluding statement, regional countries included multiple emphases on the territorial integrity and national unity of Iraq and repeated appeals for peaceful solutions as an implicit call against U.S. military intervention.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE MEETINGS OF THE NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES OF IRAQ FROM THE INVASION TO THE ELECTIONS (2003-2014)

Five days after the meeting was held in İstanbul with the dignitaries of regional countries, U.S. President George W. Bush announced that the U.S. and its allies might strike Iraq without a UN resolution on January 28, 2003. Then, on March 17, 2003, he issued Saddam Hussein a 48-hour ultimatum to leave Iraq.<sup>16</sup> After Hussein rejected the ultimatum, the allies launched Operation Iraqi Liberation on March 20, 2003.<sup>17</sup> The Pentagon announced the end of war with the takeover of Tikrit on April 14, 2003,<sup>18</sup> and President Bush declared on May 1, 2003 that the U.S. had won the war.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "The Joint Declaration of Regional Initiative on Iraq," *Hürriyet Daily News*, January 25, 2003, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=the-joint-declaration-of-regional-initiative-on-iraq-2003-01-25>

<sup>16</sup> "Bush'tan Saddam'a 48 saat," *NTV*, March 18, 2003, <http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/206345.asp>

<sup>17</sup> "Bombardıman ve kara harekatı başladı" *Hürriyet*, March 21, 2003, <http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/2003/03/20/264051.asp>

<sup>18</sup> "Tikrit'te de Tık Yok," *Hürriyet*, April 15, 2003, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=140281>

The Foreign Ministers of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Republic of Turkey, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Arab Republic of Syria, the state of Kuwait, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia held a meeting on April 18, 2003 with a focus on the danger of instability in Iraq, the formation of a future vision for the nation, and assistance for the Iraqi people.<sup>20</sup> Bahrain and Kuwait were invited to participate in the initiative, beginning with the second meeting. After the meeting, the participants announced that they could not accept any interference in the internal affairs of Iraq. Turkey was again a major actor in the organization and diplomacy that brought these countries together to discuss the question of Iraq. The major outcome of this meeting was not different than the first one. The participating countries emphasized once again the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political unity of Iraq, and under the leadership of Turkey, they tried to integrate the platform of the Neighboring Countries Meetings within the process of restructuring Iraq in the post-Saddam period. In this vein, the regional countries announced their determination to hold meetings until the situation in Iraq returned to normal in the 9-article Riyadh Statement. This meant that the ad hoc meetings that Turkey initiated were shifting towards institutionalized gatherings. The 9-article final statement reflected the stance and demands of regional countries, which would endure for five years.

In their statement, the ministers stressed the formation of a new government based on popular will, broad participation and full representation. As they agreed with the war for oil criticism that was purported by the opponents of the invasion, the ministers also underlined that the natural resources of Iraq must be allocated in accordance with the wishes of the legitimate Iraqi government and the Iraqi people. The U.S.'s observance of

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<sup>19</sup> "Bush: Terörizme karşı zafer kazandık," *Hürriyet*, May 2, 2003, <http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/2003/05/02/283209.asp>

<sup>20</sup> Held in Riyadh in 2003.

these principles indicated that the regional countries, in fact, conveyed a message to the U.S.-led coalition.

In the Riyadh joint declaration, regional countries reaffirmed the central role of the UN by issuing a message for the U.S. Pro-occupation countries and analysts had suggested that the UN would forfeit its relevance if it refused to issue a resolution in favor of a military intervention. In this view, the Riyadh statement, while addressing the U.S. and its allies, may be regarded as an indirect message to the UN, asserting that the organization cannot leave Iraq alone and must play a central role in the country after the war. The ministers who convened in Riyadh affirmed their countries' readiness to offer assistance to the Iraqi people, and to participate in international efforts, be they humanitarian assistance or the full reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq. The final communiqué of the meeting demonstrated that the change and transformation in Turkish foreign policy was also transforming the foreign policy of the region as a whole. Turkey's approach to find regional solutions for regional problems was adopted by other countries in the region as well. Thus, Turkey increasingly became a norm-instead of a norm-taker in the politics of the Middle East.

The impact of the meetings became clear after this second meeting. For the first time, the U.S. took a step to address the demands of the foreign ministers of the Iraq's Neighboring Countries Meeting by acknowledging that Russia, France, Germany and the UN must play a more effective role in Iraq. The U.S. submitted a draft resolution to the UNSC in this spirit. As a matter of fact, on May 22, 2003, the UNSC unanimously approved the joint draft submitted by Spain, Britain and the U.S., and introduced it as Resolution 1483. In the document, the UNSC welcomed the resumption of humanitarian efforts and the appointment of a Special Adviser by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Annan



appointed Brazilian UN Human Rights High Commissioner Sergio Vieira de Mello as his Special Envoy to Iraq for a four-month period.<sup>21</sup>

Another major impact that Turkish foreign policy had on the meetings was in regards to Syria. Despite the Bush administration's insistence that Syria should be considered a rogue state, Turkey had continuously emphasized its willingness to continue to engage with Syria. The improvement of relations between Turkey and Syria, especially after the Adana Protocol, represented a major change in Turkish foreign policy. In this new approach, Turkey decided to resolve its foreign policy problems with neighbors through diplomatic means and turned the crisis with Syria into an opportunity to jumpstart diplomatic and economic relations. Thus, Turkey decided not to follow U.S. policy in the region; instead, it continued its engagement with Syria and attempted to integrate Damascus into the international system. Its approach to Syria also influenced the approach of the meeting: nations expressed their disagreement with Ankara by voicing allegations against Syria, but they welcomed the news of the U.S Secretary of State's intention to visit Damascus to discuss Syrian-American relations.<sup>22</sup>

Next meeting of the Neighboring Countries of Iraq Meetings held in Tehran.<sup>23</sup> On May 28, 2003, the countries of the region met to discuss the duration of the invasion of Iraq. In this meeting, the participants one more time emphasized the significance of the decisions taken in Riyadh summit and the necessity of close cooperation to achieve these goals. In addition to the reactions against the US, in this meeting Turkish foreign policy makers emphasized the need for a more comprehensive analysis of the situation in Middle East and the requirement for reform and development. This was also a signal of a regional

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<sup>21</sup> "13 yıllık ambargo kalktı," *Hürriyet*, May 22, 2003, <http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/2003/05/22/292403.asp>

<sup>22</sup> "The Joint Declaration of Regional Initiative on Iraq," *Hürriyet Daily News*, January 25, 2003, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=the-joint-declaration-of-regional-initiative-on-iraq-2003-01-25>

<sup>23</sup> Held in Tehran in 2003.

approach in foreign policy of Turkey. Turkish foreign policy makers, unlike earlier periods started to consider Turkey, beside Europe, Asia and Africa a part of the Middle East as well and thus deliberate on the necessity to reform its domestic and foreign policy as well. During the meeting in Tehran, then Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, emphasized this issue by stating that, "In short, we must first put our house in order." Gül reminded that the Muslim world has a spiritual heritage of peace, harmony, tolerance and affection, and he urged Islamic countries to establish a new vision in which good governance, transparency and accountability reign, the fundamental rights and freedom and gender equality are upheld, and there is no place for blunting rhetoric and slogans.<sup>24</sup> Thus, instead of being a status quo state Turkish foreign policy makers started to emphasize the necessity of change in the Middle East and slowly took a step towards being a more revisionist power in the region. For the first time in the history of Turkish Republic, Turkish foreign policy makers offering constructive criticisms in a regional meeting without any protest from other countries.

In Tehran, the ministers and delegation leaders agreed to express solidarity with the Iraqi people in the spirit of Islamic brotherhood, and to reaffirm the imperative of respect for the sovereignty, political independence, national unity, territorial integrity and stability of Iraq. The ministers and delegations leaders thus decided to continue to hold meetings until normalcy, security and stability were fully restored in Iraq.<sup>25</sup> During this meeting Turkey emphasized the need for a more regional approach and further interaction and integration between nations. Turkey's tone became more assertive as time passed, as

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<sup>24</sup> "İslam dünyasına Gül dersi," *Milliyet*, May 29, 2003,  
<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2003/05/29/dunya/adun.html>

<sup>25</sup> "The Joint Declaration of Regional Initiative on Iraq," *Hürriyet Daily News*, January 25, 2003,  
<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=the-joint-declaration-of-regional-initiative-on-iraq-2003-01-25>

Turkish foreign policy makers became more comfortable and confident in their approach.

For instance, Gül suggested:

We should leave the confrontational period behind us. As the immediate neighbors of Iraq, we should assist their people in every possible way we can. We should act in a manner that will enhance the process of Iraqi national reconciliation. We should remain vigilant against their disintegration. We should cooperate with the parties in Iraq along the lines of the Security Council resolution. And we should impress upon all on how Iraq's neighbors wish to see this country as a bastion of stability in the region. In short, the message that will emerge from our meeting today should be one that stresses our vision for a stable, prosperous, free and united Iraq, and that extends our hand for cooperation for the Iraqi transition. We should be aware that the world community is watching us, because we are so important and have so much to offer to Iraq.<sup>26</sup>

As they wrapped up the meeting, the ministers underlined most of the statements emphasized in previous meetings. They also welcomed all the steps taken by the UN and the Interim Government of Iraq in preparing the ground for the full participation of all Iraqis in the political process by holding general elections before the end of January 2005, as envisaged in UNSC Resolution 1546. They also stressed the need for enhancing mutual border security cooperation between their countries within the framework of existing bilateral agreements. The timing of this meeting overlapped with the increase in terror attacks against civilians in Iraq. Therefore, the participants also condemned terrorist acts against people, humanitarian institutions, foreign workers and transporters, diplomatic missions and international organizations, as well as religious Holy places in Iraq. They expressed their readiness to provide training and equipment if requested to the Iraqi police force and border guards in order to assist the Iraqi government with restoring stability.

As part of additional efforts, the Foreign Ministers of Kuwait, Jordan, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Lebanon and Turkey convened in Damascus on November 1-2,

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<sup>26</sup> T. C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, "İslam Konferansı Teşkilatı Dışişleri Bakanları Toplantısı Marjında Gerçekleştirilen Irak Konulu Toplantıda Yapılan Konuşma," May 28, 2003.

2003.<sup>27</sup> The participants stressed the restoration of security in Iraq.<sup>28</sup> Formulas to bring peace to Iraq “without troop deployment” were also among the main subjects discussed. Distinct from the previous meetings held in İstanbul and Riyadh, the Damascus meeting expressed full solidarity with the Iraqi people and discussed ways to accelerate the transfer of authority to Iraqis as quickly as possible.<sup>29</sup> Following this meeting, Turkish foreign policy started to focus more on the issue of Iraq’s internal stability and the peaceful resolution of conflicts between different groups in the country. This was also a major departure from mainstream Turkish foreign policy because of its emphasis on the domestic politics of another country. Regional peace and stability necessitated constancy in all countries in the region and thus Turkey departed from its earlier non-interference policy for the sake of regional harmony. From this point on, Turkish foreign policy makers took an active role in trying to mediate disputes among different factions and sects in Iraq.

Regional countries convened for a fourth meeting to concentrate on escalating violence and terror despite the appointment of a United Nations Special Envoy and the establishment of the Iraqi Transitional Governing Council on July 12, 2003. Nations used the Neighboring Countries of Iraq Meetings as a platform to discuss the latest developments not only in Iraq, but also in the whole region; they also issued a statement condemning the Israeli Air Force operation in Syria on October 5, 2003. The congregation discussed the current situation in Iraq as a contribution to the objective of enhancing the unity and independence of Iraq and its sovereignty over its natural resources as recognized by Security Council Resolution 1511. The ministers agreed to express their sympathy and full solidarity with the Iraqi people with regards to their suffering due to the serious

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<sup>27</sup> Held in Damascus in 2003.

<sup>28</sup> “Şam komşuları ağırlayacak,” *Radikal*, October 29, 2003,  
<http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=93679>

<sup>29</sup> “İrak’a komşu ülkeler toplantısı başladı...,” *Milliyet*, November 2, 2003,  
<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2003/11/02/son/sontur14.html>

deterioration of security and economic conditions. They rejected any measure that might lead to the disintegration of Iraq, and once again reiterated their respect for Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political unity.<sup>30</sup>

The meeting was attended by the foreign ministers of Syria, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan and Egypt.<sup>31</sup> The seven ministers urged the restoration of security as quickly as possible and pledged to aid the Iraqi government in ensuring the integrity of its borders. On Turkey's initiative, the group acknowledged the danger that terrorist organizations in Iraq pose to neighboring nations and called upon the Iraqi administration to work towards eliminating this threat. Thus, the Iraqi administration has been asked to cooperate with Turkey in the fight against terrorist organizations.<sup>32</sup>

Following the 2003 meetings, the "Agreement on Political Process" was signed on November 15 by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and Jalal Talabani of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which pledged to transfer governmental control to Iraqis by July 1, 2004. According to the agreement, the transitional government would be elected by a Transitional National Assembly made up of regional assemblies. The coalition forces, trying to resolve their legitimacy problem, did not welcome the regional countries' idea to let the UN play a more central role in the process.

Next, Kuwait hosted the fifth ministerial meeting on February 14-15, 2004. Foreign ministers from Iraq's six neighboring countries, Egypt and Bahrain, as well as the UN representative to Iraq, Lakhdar Brahimi, and the Iraqi delegation responded to the

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<sup>30</sup> "Final Statement of The Meeting of The Foreign Ministers of Iraq's Neighboring Countries Damascus," November 2, 2003.

<sup>31</sup> "Iraq's Neighbors Discuss Effects of War," *Latimes*, November 2, 2003, <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/nov/02/world/fg-syria2>

<sup>32</sup> "Iraq's Neighboring Countries Call for Security and Integrity of Borders," *Today's Zaman*, November 3, 2003, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-3841-iraqs-neighboring-countries-call-for-security-and-integrity-of-borders.html>

invitation extended by the State of Kuwait. For the first time, the meeting was held in a country that was not among the founders of the regional initiative. The ministers also welcomed the participation of Iraq. In addition, Brahimi's participation in the meeting helped solidify the official bond between the initiative and the United Nations, as the minister expressed his support of an enhanced role for the UN to enable it to assist in Iraq's transitional period. Still, regional countries criticized Iraq for not responding to previous invitations and for failing to attend the Damascus Meeting in November 2003, although the Interim Iraqi Foreign Minister had been officially invited. In the meeting, Egypt defined the protection of Iraq's democratic structure as a simple task, and indicated that trade relations and intelligence cooperation between Turkey and Iraq must be improved and accelerated.<sup>33</sup>

Participants commended the decision of the Iraqi people to bring to justice to the leaders of the previous regime—particularly the former President of Iraq—by trying them for their crimes against humanity and calling upon all states not to provide them safe haven. The representatives affirmed the importance of continuing the meetings of the neighboring states. The ministers decided to convene further meetings, and they welcomed the offer by the Arab Republic of Egypt to host the forthcoming meeting.<sup>34</sup>

Turkish Foreign Minister Gül, who represented Turkey in the meeting, expressed the necessity of cooperation and coordination among the countries of the region in order to speed up stabilization:

We raised our collective voice in a manner unprecedented in the modern history of this region. The very fact that we could assume a common posture on Iraq attests to how deeply our security and well-being is interlinked, and how clearly we all come to recognize this and all of us know very well that the terrain on which the Iraqis are striving to establish

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<sup>33</sup> "Mübarek'le mesai," *Radikal*, September 2, 2004, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=105544>

<sup>34</sup> "The Final Communiqué of the Fifth Conference of the Foreign Affairs Ministers of Iraq Neighboring States Kuwait," February 14-15, 2004.

their new way of life is a very difficult one. Terror continuously claims lives of many. Only this week two successive suicide bombings resulted in the death of more than one hundred young Iraqis who wished to assume duties for their country's security. The vicious terror has already caused heavy losses and untold suffering to all segments of the Iraqi society. Our sympathy is with them and we stand by all Iraqis in helping overcome this difficult phase.<sup>35</sup>

He also mentioned solutions to these problems and discussed their execution:

We should take confidence in having claimed the ownership of our own region. We can equally play our respective role in linking our region with the security and well-being of entire Middle East, with the Mediterranean and even with the southern Eurasian geography. We should prepare ourselves to take the further step of building overall confidence in our wider region. Like Europe did after two world wars, we should draw our lesson from the successive conflicts and wars that constantly undermined our stability and well-being. With political resolve and inspiration, we can create our own multilateral framework for cooperation and security. We deserve prominent roles in these changing times, and are capable of assuming them.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, Turkish foreign policy makers were extremely insistent on keeping the major goals of the meeting on the agenda and wanted foreign policy makers in other countries to focus on the stabilization of the region and avoid any competition that would challenge this goal. Although neighboring countries did their best to help the Iraqi people and the occupation forces increased their efforts to control the insurgency, violence continued to escalate. Photos of prisoners being tortured in the Abu Ghraib Prison were leaked to the international media in April 2004,<sup>37</sup> putting the coalition forces in a difficult spot.<sup>38</sup> Despite the violence, scandals and instability, the transfer of sovereignty to Iraqis, as envisaged in the Agreement on Political Process in 2003, was realized on June 28, 2004.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, "Irak'a Komşu Ülkeler Toplantısında Yapılan Konuşma," February 14, 2004, [http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/konusma\\_aciklama\\_mesajlar/kitap/65.pdf](http://www.tccb.gov.tr/sayfa/konusma_aciklama_mesajlar/kitap/65.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Held in Cairo in 2004.

<sup>38</sup> "İşkenceci ABD askerleri sadece emirleri uygulamış," *Zaman*, May 19, 2004, [http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya\\_iskenceci-abd-askerleri-sadece-emirleri-uygulamis\\_49613.html](http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_iskenceci-abd-askerleri-sadece-emirleri-uygulamis_49613.html)

<sup>39</sup> "Egemenliğin Iraklılara devrinin kronolojisi," *NTV*, June 28, 2004, <http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/276239.asp>

After the Iraqi Transitional Government took office, the foreign ministers of the regional countries met in Cairo on July 21, 2004 to assess the new situation in Iraq and discuss various incidents in Iraq and the region. The Cairo Meeting convened on three main topics of discussion: methods of supporting the interim government to fulfill its political and security duties, threats caused by escalating violence and instability in Iraq for its neighbors, and Israel's activities in Iraq.

The participants supported the transfer of sovereignty to the interim government as a critical step, but affirmed that it was crucial to have an elected, fully representative government in Iraq. The foreign ministers also suggested that their countries would improve cooperation with the interim government. In the final statement, the ministers focused on political stability and security, expressing their support. The foreign ministers of Syria and Iran addressed Israel's activities in Iraq, and the issue was added to the agenda. This effort indicated that the regional initiative was more than an ordinary meeting to provide assistance to the transition process in Iraq; it had also become a platform where regional countries' perception of national issues could be discussed.

The Cairo meeting also was a platform for Turkey to address its problems on the southeastern border, which stemmed from the instability in Iraq. After many years of avoidance and, in some rare instances, bilateral diplomacy, Turkish foreign policy makers brought up a problem that was considered a "domestic issue" by previous governments. Turkey discussed its perception of this issue with regional countries. The increasing terrorist attacks in Turkey due to the instability in Iraq helped neighboring countries understand the threat, and with the initiative of Turkey, it was added to the agenda of the meeting. These discussions were included in the final statement of the initiative, where participating nations emphasized that the terror threat to neighboring countries emanating from Iraqi territory must be dealt with. Turkey's initiative added a new dimension to the regional initiative, which included the ministers of Internal Affairs and security officials



from neighboring countries. Thus, the meetings that were intended to be a forum only for states gained a more successful and institutional framework through the addition of a security dimension.

At the meeting, the foreign ministers, Iraq's Arab neighbors, and representatives from the UN, the EU, the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic States cautiously endorsed U.S.-sponsored plans for national elections in Iraq. The representatives approved a final declaration, which condemned "terrorism," pledged to follow a policy of "non-interference," and stressed a commitment to elections in Iraq, under the auspices of the UN, for a transitional government responsible for drafting a permanent constitution.<sup>40</sup>

#### IRAQ'S NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES MEETINGS IN 2005

The year 2005 was shaped by the elections and Iraq's new political structure in the post-Saddam era. Despite escalating violence, terror and instability, electoral registrations started on November 1, 2004. However, the administration declared a state of emergency on November 7 due to uncontrollable violence. This cast a shadow over the elections. A few weeks before the January 2005 General Elections in Iraq, the regional countries gathered for the seventh meeting of Iraq's Neighboring Countries on January 6, 2005 in Amman, Jordan. The regional initiative urged all segments of Iraqi society to participate in the forthcoming elections. The ministers also affirmed the right of the Iraqi people for a secure and stable life and for the free determination of their future through democratic means. Deteriorating conditions in Iraq presented a clear threat to both the elections and neighboring countries; thus, the initiative focused on this instability.

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<sup>40</sup> "Iraq's Doubtful Democracy Will Not Inspire Others," *Common Dreams*, December 1, 2004, <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines04/1201-23.htm>

The Iraqi people headed to the polls on January 30, 2005 under the shadow of terror and a Sunni boycott. Only 8.5 million out of 14 million possible voters cast their ballot and turnout settled at 58 percent. However, in regions heavily populated by Kurds, the turnout varied between 80 percent and 89 percent. The ratio was between 59 and 73 percent in Shiite neighborhoods. In the province of Anbar, where the Sunni boycott was quite effective, the turnout was considerably low, at 2 percent. The Sunni turnout varied between 29 percent and 34 percent in general. Mostly supported by the Shiites, the United Iraqi Alliance won 140 seats in the 275-seat Iraqi Parliament, becoming the strongest faction. The Kurdish Alliance gained 75 seats and became the second strongest group, as the Iraqi List of Iyad Allawi settled for 40 seats. The other nine parties sent a total of 20 representatives to the Iraqi National Assembly.<sup>41</sup>

With this formation, the National Assembly of Iraq began writing a new constitution, which was one of the most critical steps in the construction of the new system. As Iraq started the constitution-drafting process following the elections in January, the regional countries met again in İstanbul on April 29-30, 2005 to assess the situation and extend their full support for the country's democratic transition process. The regional initiative expressed their strong desire that the elected bodies pursue and complete the political transition in an inclusive, transparent and democratic manner, which would ensure the participation of all Iraqis in the political, economic and social rebuilding of the nation. The ministers stressed the pivotal role that the United Nations should play in this new phase, where consensus building and articulation of a unifying constitution would become paramount.

The meeting in Istanbul was opened by the then-Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Ashraf Qazi, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, also

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<sup>41</sup> Gökhan Çetinsaya, "30 Ocak 2005 Irak Seçimleri Sonrası Irak," *SETA Yorum*, January 5, 2005, <http://setav.org/tr/30-January-2005-irak-secimleri-sonrasi-irak/yorum/270>

attended the meeting. The participants convened to assess the new situation in Iraq following the general elections of January 2005. Turkish Foreign Minister Gül stressed the importance of political unity and the territorial integrity of Iraq. Addressing the elections, Gül said, “It would have been much better if Sunnis had participated in the elections.”<sup>42</sup> These statements were in direct contradiction with Turkey’s earlier position regarding non-interference in the domestic affairs of the other countries in the Middle East.

The four main goals of Iraq’s Neighboring Countries were crystallized during this meeting: they pledged to assist the development of Iraq, to keep neighboring countries on common ground, to contribute to regional stability, and to help neighboring countries contribute to the international stage.<sup>43</sup> During his speech, then-Minister of Interior Abdülkadir Aksu said that everyone should have an equal say in preparing Iraq’s future in order to facilitate peace and security in the nation. In terms of sustainable stability, Aksu highlighted border control as the most urgent issue. Participants welcomed the rising awareness of the international community towards the fight against terror. However, they shared concerns that a discourse associating Islam with terror had gained popularity, which was a negative development. Aksu emphasized that such discourses give terrorists the upper hand in the war against terrorism and cause a great deal of harm to intercultural and interreligious tolerance and dialogue.<sup>44</sup>

The ninth Foreign Ministers of the Neighboring Countries of Iraq was held in Tehran on July 9, 2006. The Foreign Ministers of Iraq, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, Egypt and Bahrain, as well as the General Secretaries of the Arab League and the Islamic Organization Conference, and the UN Deputy Secretary-General, attended

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<sup>42</sup> “Irak’a komşu ülkeler toplantısı İstanbul’da,” *Hürriyet*, April 28, 2005, <http://hursiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=315302>

<sup>43</sup> “Irak’a komşu ülkeler toplantısı başladı,” *Sabah*, April 29, 2005, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2005/04/29/gnd98.html>

<sup>44</sup> See on T. C. İçişleri Bakanlığı, [http://www.icisleri.gov.tr/default.icisleri\\_2.aspx?id=3053](http://www.icisleri.gov.tr/default.icisleri_2.aspx?id=3053)

the meeting. The ministers reasserted their countries' support for Iraq, expressing their concern about the ongoing acts of violence targeting civilians in Iraq.<sup>45</sup> The 11-article final statement from the meeting stressed the significance of a broad-based government and the need to assist the nation in establishing stability and security in Iraq.<sup>46</sup>

The foreign ministers emphasized the need to raise the readiness of Iraq's defense and security forces, and to transfer defense and security responsibilities to them as soon as possible. In this context, the ministers welcomed the contributions of the Arab League and the OIC, as reflected in the Baku declaration and relevant resolutions.<sup>47</sup>

At another interior ministers' meeting, participants gathered in Amman, Jordan on October 24, 2008 to show their countries' support for Iraq's security. During this meeting, Turkish Minister of Internal Affairs Beşir Atalay expressed:

As Iraq's neighbors, we have gathered once again to pledge our support to the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government in their move toward greater stability and prosperity. We need to focus our efforts on stabilizing and reviving Iraq; our priorities should be parallel among us as well as with those of Iraqi government. Support of the new government in Iraq shown by the international community, especially by the neighbors of Iraq will facilitate the conditions for achieving lasting peace in Iraq. We should do our utmost to help Iraq regain stability and prosperity by also improving economic relations. In turn, Iraq needs strengthening cooperation with its neighbors in the political, security, economic, trade and other fields. We should also keep in mind that, in this world, and especially in our region, negative developments reinforce each other. Worsening tension and outright escalation in Palestine will disrupt our efforts directed at ensuring stability in Iraq. Therefore, the international community should not fail to see how negative the effects of worsening conditions in Palestine will have on Iraq. We must be vigilant concerning such side-effects and should do our best to restrain the escalation over there. We are never tired of reminding the utmost importance of the territorial integrity and political unity of Iraq to its neighbors and to the region.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Held in Tehran in 2006.

<sup>46</sup> "Komşuları Irak'a destek verdi," *Haber10*, July 9, 2006, <http://www.haber10.com/haber/35625/#.UmjRt3BSi6M>

<sup>47</sup> "Tahran: Tahran'daki 9. Irak'a Komşu Ülkeler Dışişleri Bakanları Toplantısı," *Haberler*, July 9, <http://www.haberler.com/tahran-tahran-daki-9-irak-a-komsu-ulkeler-haberi/>

<sup>48</sup> "Neighboring countries gather in Amman to show support for Iraq's security," *China View*, October 24, 2008, see. <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90777/90854/6520593.html>

## UNOFFICIAL MEETINGS

In addition to these official meetings, which took place with the initiative of Turkey, there were also several gatherings that took place during the convention of foreign ministers at different summits. Dignitaries from Islamic countries met in İstanbul on June 15, 2004 for a meeting at the foreign ministerial level. Along with representatives from Turkey, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, Jordan and Egypt, the foreign ministers of Iraq and Kuwait attended the İstanbul meeting for the second time.<sup>49</sup>

In the same year, the Foreign Ministers of the Neighboring Countries of Iraq convened in Sharm El-Sheikh on November 23, 2004<sup>50</sup> with the objective of consulting on the implementation of the political process as envisaged by UNSC Resolution 1546. Participants in the meeting included the Foreign Minister of Egypt, Ahmed Abul Gheith, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari and Foreign Minister Gül. Dignitaries also included the foreign ministers of the "Group of Eight" –Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, Russia, Britain and the U.S.<sup>51</sup> The objective of the summit was to provide the infrastructure for the January 2005 Iraqi General Elections. The ministers also encouraged the Interim Government of Iraq to continue the political process and urged non-governmental organizations to participate in the elections.<sup>52</sup>

In Sharm El-Sheikh, the foreign ministers underlined the importance of broad political participation and the involvement of all individuals who reject violence in the political process. The conclusion statement also stressed the importance of stability and

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<sup>49</sup> “İrak’a komşu ülkeler toplantısı bugün,” *NTV*, June 15, 2004,  
<http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/274234.asp#BODY>

<sup>50</sup> Held in Sharm El-Sheikh in 2004.

<sup>51</sup> “İrak’a komşu ülkeler toplantısı başladı,” *Milliyet*, November 22, 2004,  
<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2004/11/22/son/sonsiy21.html>

<sup>52</sup> “İrak kavgası, Şarm el Şeyh’de,” *Yenişafak*, November 22-23, 2004,  
<http://yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2004/November/14/p03.html>

security in Iraq; therefore, it called upon Iraq's neighbors to intensify cooperation in this direction. This meeting was considered a step towards achieving broader participation in Iraq, thus contributing to the success of the political process and providing solutions to the problems of Iraq.

In another effort, the foreign ministers of Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, the UAE, Turkey and Syria, as well as then-OIC President Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, gathered for a meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on September 22, 2006.<sup>53</sup> The foreign ministers recalled their previous meeting and the meeting of the ministers of interior, reiterating their determination to assist the government and people of Iraq in ensuring stability and security.

Following the meeting where participants provided Iraq with "strong support,"<sup>54</sup> Turkish Foreign Minister Gül met his Iraqi counterpart, Hoshiyar Zebari, and conveyed that Turkey would work with the Iraqi people and the government even after the war. He expressed that all Iraqis are partners and neighbors of Turkey, saying, "We all are relatives."<sup>55</sup> In his meeting with then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Gül also shared his views about the Middle East and the situation in Iraq.<sup>56</sup>

## CONCLUSION

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<sup>53</sup> Held in New York in 2006.

<sup>54</sup> "AB için TBMM erken toplanabilir," *CNN Türk*, July 9, 2006, <http://www.cnnturk.com/2006/dunya/07/09/ab.icin.tbmm.erken.toplanabilir/198871.0/index.html>

<sup>55</sup> "Gül, Irak'a Komşu Ülkeler Toplantısı'na Katıldı," *Haberler*, September 22, 2006, <http://www.haberler.com/gul-irak-a-komsu-ulkeler-toplantisi-na-katildi-haberi/>

<sup>56</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "'No:142 - 19-29 September 2006 tarihlerinde New York'da Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) 61. Genel Kurulu genel görüşmelerinin gerçekleştirilmesi hk.", September 15, 2006, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_142---15-eylul-2006\\_-19-29-eylul-2006-tarihlerinde-new-york\\_da-birlesmis-milletler-\\_bm\\_-61\\_-genel-kurulu-genel-gorusmelerinin-gerceklestirilmesi-hk\\_.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_142---15-eylul-2006_-19-29-eylul-2006-tarihlerinde-new-york_da-birlesmis-milletler-_bm_-61_-genel-kurulu-genel-gorusmelerinin-gerceklestirilmesi-hk_.tr.mfa)

The Neighboring Countries of Iraq meetings represented an important departure from mainstream Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East. For the first time, the Turkish government launched an independent initiative in the Middle East in order to contain a possible crisis resulting from the spillover of the invasion of Iraq. The initiative signaled a change in the state's identity and conceptualization of Turkey's role in the Middle East. It represented the emergence of a foreign policy that is more active and autonomous and that has a significant regional focus. The leaders of Turkey's civilian foreign policy makers and the support of the public were particularly important for the change in the state's identity and thus the transformation of its foreign policy. The Neighboring Countries of Iraq meetings were one of the early indications of this newly emerging identity.

The first meeting of Iraq's Neighboring Countries was held in January 2003 with Turkey's initiative to prevent a possible war in Iraq. Later on, the meetings transformed into a platform that aimed to limit the negative impacts of the war on the region. Eventually, the agenda of these meetings shifted to explore ways to provide assistance to Iraq's reconstruction process. The meetings constantly underlined the importance of healing the wounds of Iraqi society that was gravely harmed by an illegitimate military intervention, meeting the public's needs, establishing a strong constitution with an independent, prosperous and democratic system, and the participation of all Iraqis in the decision-making process.

In the aftermath of the occupation and in line with the progress made in Iraq's institutional restructuring and the sensitivities of Iraqi leaders who were driven by an urge to regain the nation's sovereignty, the Iraqi administration mistakenly believed that the "Neighboring Countries Initiative" was unnecessary. The U.S.'s attitude and political dynamics in Iraq played a role in this view. The U.S. had always remained aloof to these meetings, and the political dynamics of the country were always concerned with

maintaining the support of the U.S. A diplomatic note, dated July 30, 2011 and sent from the Iraqi Embassy to the Saudi Foreign Ministry, stated that the Secretariat formed for the Interior Ministry advisers in the framework of the Neighboring Countries of Iraq Initiative was no longer needed and that matters would be discussed at bilateral level. The Iraqi Embassy in Ankara issued a similar note, dated August 2, 2011. The note, however, made no reference to the Interior Ministries. In this frame, it may be concluded that the meetings had been ended by de facto.

This left most of the well-thought out recommendations unenforced. If they were applied and implemented thoroughly, these recommendations could have been very critical in the peaceful resolutions of the conflict in Iraq and stability in the region as a whole. The situation in Iraq today demonstrates how useful these recommendations could have been for the future of Iraq.

Although it had a limited impact, the Neighboring Countries of Iraq meetings were critical in terms of Turkey achieving its goal of becoming a regional and global foreign policy actor under the AK Party's rule. The Party's attitude towards the Iraqi issue became a critical test to prove its adequacy both inside and outside Turkey. First of all, all global actors saw that Turkey, with its pro-active stance on the Iraq question, had already departed from the foreign policy understanding of the old period.

During these meetings, the transformation of Turkish foreign policy makers' tone and the departure from the previous identity of Turkish foreign policy was easily observable. Turkish foreign policy makers become more regionally-oriented and more willing to engage and discuss regional issues with their counterparts in neighboring countries. As part of the policy of "regional problems necessitate regional solutions," the Turkish government initiated a platform to discuss regional problems with neighboring countries. It was also interesting to see that Turkey's perception of itself geographically was also altered as a result of these meetings. Instead of trying to avoid the label of a



Middle Eastern country, Turkish foreign policy makers started to recognize that they are also a part of the geography and thus need to play a part in the resolution of conflicts in the region. Without this change in Turkey's foreign policy identity, it would have been inconceivable to organize, initiate and lead regional organizations like the Neighbors of Iraq meetings. Another important dimension of these meetings was that for the first time, Turkish foreign policy makers were engaging in regional arrangements without expecting the leadership of the U.S. or any other Western power. It was a more localized initiative than any other groupings that had previously emerged. Turkey started to have a more autonomous foreign policy identity starting from the Iraqi crisis. Later, in several instances, the impact of these changes on foreign policy making was observed.

The Neighboring Countries of Iraq meetings have had a serious impact on Turkish foreign policy, the foreign policy bureaucracy and the reflexes/reactions of the state. The meetings have played a significant role in returning to the Middle East, where Turkey had clearly drifted away from in the aftermath of World War I. Turkish modernization and Westernization, as an important internal issue in Turkey, has been tested by the Iraq question.

After many years, Turkish bureaucracy had to deal with the official and unofficial delegations that were involved in these conferences. The Turkish military tutelary regime, which overthrew the elected government in 1997 for allegedly being "politically Islamist," had to directly deal with different Islamic groups in 2003. Capability issues in Turkish foreign affairs have surfaced as well. The cost of keeping neighbors at bay for so many years has come to light. Although the capacity problem could not be resolved immediately, the adaptation issues have been mostly eliminated due to the political capital afforded by the AK Party's continued rule.

Contacts established during these meetings proved fruitful in the crisis that broke out during the 2005 Iraqi general elections. As the U.S.'s project to incorporate Sunnis into

the democratization process came to a deadlock, Turkey came into play. The political capital accumulated throughout the conferences was used to persuade different Sunni groups to participate in the 2005 elections. Turkey was partly successful in these efforts. The real outcome was seen during the 2010 general elections in Iraq. Thanks to Turkey's support and persuasion, various Shiite, Sunni and Turkmen groups joined the elections under the Iraqiyya umbrella and succeeded. The Iraqiyya Movement, as the winner of the elections, has, therefore, become the only movement embracing the diversities of Iraq. This is because other parties that joined the election only represented the Shiite or the Kurds. In this regard, it may be said that the Iraqiyya has a structure resembling that of the Neighboring Countries of Iraq meetings. As the Iraqi crisis has deepened in 2014, the need – although undeclared – for the Neighboring Countries of Iraq platform has been expressed in various ways.

## **CHAPTER 5**

## **HAMAS' VISIT TO TURKEY IN 2006**

One of the most serious reflections of the paradigm shift that occurred in the AKP-era Turkish foreign policy, the dimensions of which we have tried to describe in earlier sections, was the visit paid to Ankara on February 16, 2006 by Khaled Meshaal, the leader of Hamas' Political Bureau which won 76 seats in the 136-member Palestinian Assembly in elections on January 25, 2006. Khaled Meshaal's visit represented a departure from the nation-state centric, pro-Western orientation of Turkish foreign policy. Despite the criticism of the international media, Turkey demonstrated its commitment to integrating Hamas into the Arab-Israeli peace process. Turkey continued to play a constructive role in mediating the disputes between Israel and Hamas in the 50-day conflict during the summer of 2014. While the case represents a missed opportunity for long-term peace in the region, it shows how a change in the foreign policy identity of Turkey make it possible for policy makers to meet and engage with Hamas, which is considered as a terrorist organization by Western countries.

Turkey's engagement with Hamas marked a major departure from its traditional foreign policy in three ways. First, through direct contact with Hamas, Turkey for the first time opened its foreign policy to non-state actors instead of limiting itself within the nation-state paradigm. In this sense, Turkey was one of the first actors in the region to recognize the significance of non-state actors. Building up diplomatic channels and pursuing a multi-dimensional foreign policy have become significant elements of foreign policy making in Turkey. Turkey's experience in Iraq was particularly valuable for foreign policy makers to establish a method for interacting with competing actors. In the following years, Turkey leveraged this experience effectively to encourage the participation of Sunni groups in the political process in order to minimize the sectarian conflict in the country. This experience colored Turkey's engagement with Hamas just after its electoral victory. Turkish government recognized Hamas as a major factor in regional politics and wanted to open a channel of communications with them. Such a move began a new epoch of Turkish foreign policy.

Second, Turkey's attempt to communicate with Hamas after the elections made clear its newfound investment in mediating a potential peace process in the Middle East. Historically, Turkish foreign policy makers distanced themselves from the conflict in Palestine. Although Turkey generally voted on the issue in unison with Arab countries in the UN and other international organizations, it continued to engage in indirect diplomacy with Israel. Upon the breakout of major armed conflicts in the region, Turkish foreign policy makers typically issued passive condemnations of violence instead of making positive contributions to end the crises. Whatever declarations of intention they made to engage meaningfully in the resolution process were rarely fulfilled and often insincere. Yet under the AKP, the country demonstrated its remarkable ability to pursue warming relations with Hamas, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) simultaneously. Especially with the suggestions that Turkish foreign policy makers gave to

Hamas officials during their visit, in terms of denouncing violence and recognize the constraints of legal and legitimate political arena, Turkey tried to contribute to a potential peace process in the region, which was a unique episode for Turkish foreign policy makers, most of whom are not accustomed to engaging in dialogue with multiple actors from the same country. This was made possible by the change in the identity of Turkish foreign policy in a few years before Hamas took power in the elections. In fact, following Neighbors of Iraq meeting, Turkey improved its ability to juggle the demands of multiple actors from the same country and used this experience to inform its negotiations with Hamas.

Third, Turkey's engagement with Hamas countered the country's previous commitment to Western initiatives in the Middle East. By addressing the humanitarian crisis in Palestine, Turkey approached the Arab-Israeli conflict in new way and established its foreign policy autonomy from the West. Case in point, Turkey's invitation to Khaled Meshaal took place despite ample protests from the United States. While Meshaal was in Turkey, U.S. Congress sent a scathing letter to the Turkish administration criticizing the initiative and asking Turkish officials to cut off engagement that would unconditionally "legitimize" Hamas. The newly emerging state identity of Turkey allowed Turkey to develop more autonomous foreign policy in the Middle East. Especially when it is analyzed in the context of Turkey's relations with the state of Israel that started to be developed during the 1990s, the Hamas visit can be considered as a representation of major transformation of foreign policy.<sup>1</sup>

Khalid Meshaal's visit took place after the Palestinian Legislative Elections in 2006. The elections resulted in a victory for Hamas with 44.5 percent of the votes, whereas Fatah received only 41.5 percent. Hamas also won a clear majority of seats in the parliament. The election surprised major Western powers, including the United States, who issued statements expressing reservations about the voting results. For instance, the

Secretary State of the United States Condoleezza Rice stated that despite the group's democratic success, the U.S. still considered Hamas a terrorist organization. She said, "a party could not have one foot in politics and the other in terror. Our position in Hamas has therefore not changed."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Javier Solana, the foreign policy chief of EU, recognized the validity of the Palestinian people's democratic expression but said that Hamas must renounce violence in order to gain the support of the European Union.<sup>2</sup> During this process, the EU and U.S. debated the appropriate reactions to Hamas' electoral victory; however, in the final analysis both of the actors did not consider Hamas as a legitimate Palestinian political representative.

Despite censure from Western countries, Turkish policy makers decided to approach the issue from different angle. Policy makers believed Hamas needed to be invited to join the conflict negotiations because they thought Hamas' social base in Gaza would be an important factor in the peace process. Thus, unlike the traditional Turkish foreign policy where the country only interacted with other nation-states, the new Turkish foreign policy aimed to construct informal channels of communication with other actors. This approach developed from the early days of the AK Party government. To do so, policy makers subscribing to the new paradigm coopted other actors in order to invite them to the reconciliation process. In this sense, Hamas was a significant player in shaping the future of Palestinian politics and the fate of the peace process. After the election, Hamas gained legitimacy as the elected representative of the Palestinian people; to exclude such an actor from the process would hurt the peace process and stability in the region. Turkey expressed its recognition of this fact just days after the elections in Palestine. Officials also

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Wilson, "Hamas Sweeps Palestinian Elections, Complicating Peace Efforts in Mideast," *Washington Post*, January 27, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> "EU Says Hamas Must Change to Win its Support," *DW*, January 30, 2006,  
<http://www.dw.de/eu-says-hamas-must-change-to-win-its-support/a-1876777>

insisted that the international community must give Hamas a chance to contribute to the peace process and asked the Israeli government allow its participation.<sup>3</sup>

Meshaal's visit to Ankara took place immediately after the elections. A delegation from Hamas arrived in Ankara to meet with Turkish officials. Although they were publicly promised that they would be received by then-prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Prime Minister's office stated shortly thereafter that such a meeting would not be possible. Instead, Meshaal was received by then-foreign minister, Abdullah Gül, at the AK Party headquarters. Gül's meeting with Hamas was heavily criticized by the U.S. Congress and Israeli government. The Israeli ambassador to Ankara refused the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' invitation to attend to a briefing on Hamas' visit. Israeli spokesman Ra'anan Gissin drove home the country's displeasure by asking how Turkey would react if the Israeli government hosted PKK-leader Abdullah Ocalan. Instead of showing sympathy to this comparison, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs called Gissin's analogy baseless and wrong. Nevertheless, a few days after the visit, the Israeli ambassador to Ankara met with AKP leaders at the party headquarters to discuss both the Hamas visit and the future of Israeli-Turkish relations. After these meetings, the Israeli ambassador stated that relations had hit a minor crisis but that the bilateral relationship would stabilize.<sup>4</sup>

Members of the American-Israeli community, joined by senior Democratic congressman Tom Lantos, also protested the visit. In his letter to Turkish Prime Minister, Tom Lantos stated that the visit would harm Turkish national interests and would weaken relations between Turkey and the United States. According to Lantos, the visit undermined the efforts of those who wanted Hamas to abandon its violent approach and to recognize

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<sup>3</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Dışişleri Bakanlığı Sözcüsü Namık Tan'ın Haftalık Olağan Basın Toplantısı," February 2, 2006, [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/2-subat-2006\\_-disisleri-bakanligi-sozcusu-namik-tan\\_in-haftalik-olagan-basin-toplantisi-.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/2-subat-2006_-disisleri-bakanligi-sozcusu-namik-tan_in-haftalik-olagan-basin-toplantisi-.tr.mfa)

<sup>4</sup> "Reverberations Still Echoing After Hamas Official Visits Turkey," *JTA*, 27 February 2006, <http://www.jta.org/2006/02/27/archive/reverberations-still-echoing-after-hamas-official-visits-turkey>.



the state of Israel. The letter not only sent shockwaves through U.S. and international media but also created a stir among the ultra-secular opposition in Turkey. The Ultra-Secular elites in Turkey also criticized the visit as a move against the principles of conventional Turkish foreign policy.

Turkey's new understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict surprised many in the U.S. policy community who had grown accustomed to seeing convergence between Turkish and U.S. policy approaches. The crisis over the March 1<sup>st</sup> Memorandum was considered an accident, and the initiatives that Turkey started in the region to create stability in the Middle East were regarded as a symptom of Turkey's territorial concerns. Though some policy differences, such as the question of whether to isolate Syria for its state sponsorship of terrorism, were emphasized as part of the debate over Turkey's "shifting axis," the Hamas visit represented a distinct change in Turkish foreign policy toward greater autonomy, which was seen as a total departure from the pro-Western foreign policy track. Policy makers in Washington managed to establish a wide variety of opinion regarding the significance of this shift.

For instance, pro-Israeli think tanks in Washington reacted harshly to the visit. They criticized Turkey for potentially hurting Turkey's longstanding role as an honest broker in the dispute in the region between Palestinians and Israelis and for creating another major foreign policy breach between Turkey and the West.<sup>5</sup> What was not understood among these circles, however, was Turkey's new foreign policy identity, which aimed to establish channels of communications with all of the major actors in the region in order to become a major actor itself. Turkish policy makers were not interacting with different players in order to create "a shift of axis" or "turn away from the West"—rather, they were merely shaping a new identity in foreign policy.

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<sup>5</sup> Soner Çağaptay, "Hamas Visits Ankara: The AKP Shifts Turkey's Role in the Middle East," *The Washington Institute*, February 16, 2006. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hamas-visits-ankara-the-akp-shifts-turkeys-role-in-the-middle-east>

Despite the criticisms that were mentioned above Turkey stand behind its decision to host the Hamas delegation. During the talks, Hamas was advised that being a democratically elected *power* brought about new responsibilities, it would be for the benefit of peace in the region to act in line with them and become a legitimate actor of the international system and thus he should not open Israel's right to exist to debate, abstain from violence and embrace the roadmap that came into being a result of Israeli-Palestinian talks.<sup>6</sup> In a formal statement after the visit, Turkish foreign ministry stated that the request for the meeting came from Hamas, who won a democratic election and whose visit was important for Turkey to continue to play the constructive role that it has been playing in the region. The statement also underlined that Turkey made significant suggestions to Hamas to act more responsibly and constructive during this process.<sup>7</sup>

Hamas' statement seemed to confirm these sentiments after the group's visit to Turkey. Upon returning to Gaza, Meshaal made the following comment: "We have taken the advice of Turkish authorities and listened to their suggestions, which we find serious and valuable. Candid suggestions are undoubtedly welcome by the Palestinian people. We will take them into consideration."<sup>8</sup>

The visit created major repercussions in international media, but it was also important in terms of Turkish state and its identity. On one hand, it was an unexpected step for the state establishment in Turkey to allow civilian authorities to take such a dramatic move without their consent. Likewise, it was a shocking development for many in Israel and the U.S. to have an administration in Ankara that assessed the Israeli-Palestine issue from a perspective different than that of the West and to host in Ankara an actor that had

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<sup>6</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Hamas Heyetinin Ziyareti hk." [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_25--16-subat-2006\\_-hamas-heyetinin-ziyareti-hk\\_.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_25--16-subat-2006_-hamas-heyetinin-ziyareti-hk_.tr.mfa)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Volkan Yıldırım, "Halid Meşal: Nasihat niteliğinde tavsiyeler aldık," *Hürriyet*, February 17, 2006, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=3947272>

been viewed as a terrorist organization by the USA since August 10, 1997 and by the EU since 2003, for which it faced the threat of sanctions.

Hamas' visit revealed growing fissures in the civil-military structure of the Turkish government. Yaşar Büyükanıt, who was then-Commander of the Land Forces and was expected Chief of Staff of the Turkish military, called Hamas a terrorist organization, thereby ignoring Hamas' democratic mandate and reflecting the entrenched nature of Western political understanding in Turkey<sup>9</sup> Thus, Hamas' visit demonstrated a major crisis between civilians and the military in Turkey and demonstrated a major change in the nature of the Turkish state.

Until recently, Turkey's foreign and security policy was dominated by the military and foreign policy bureaucracy. In most instances, foreign ministers were regarded as puppets of the state establishment. The 1980 military coup institutionalized the hegemony of these policy makers by bringing the National Security Council under stronger control of the security sector. In doing so, the Council was given greater authority to determine foreign and security policy of the country, which proved relevant for Turkey's relationship with Israel in 1990s when the National Security Council undertook major initiatives to improve relations with the country. Unlike other democracies where security agreements are approved with civilian oversight, most of the Turkey's security agreements with Israel were authorized by the military, specifically Deputy Chief of Staff Çevik Bir. Such autonomous military action became almost a norm in foreign policy making of Turkey.

For instance, Çevik Bir later wrote an article for a pro-Israeli journal about the need to improve relations between Turkey and Israel, a sort of manifesto for the development and consolidation of this partnership. According to Bir:

The 1990s loom like the lost decade in the Middle East. The carefully-constructed house of cards known as the Arab-Israeli "peace process" lies in a heap. Saddam Husayn still menaces his neighbors and the region. And the

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<sup>9</sup> "Hamas terör örgütüdür," *Sabah*, 4 March 2006, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2006/03/04/siy107.html>

prime export of the region, aside from oil, is fundamentalist-fueled terror, whose recent performance in Manhattan wrenched the city's tallest buildings from its skyline. In the balance sheet of stability, the 1990s left the Middle East in the red. But at the top of the plus column is one indisputable achievement: the Israeli-Turkish relationship.<sup>10</sup>

Çevik Bir went further to argue that the U.S. needs to pay attention to the growing partnership between Turkey and Israel because their relationship would serve Western interests:

As U.S. policymakers scan the ruins for bits of scaffolding with which to reconstruct a semblance of order, they should consider the Israeli-Turkish relationship. The ties between these two countries—democratic, pro-Western, non-Arab—could provide the Middle East with stabilizing ballast, which is now a vital interest of the West. Yet theirs is a peculiar relationship with a complex history. Its potential may be very great indeed, but realizing it requires that the partnership be promoted and managed with utmost care.<sup>11</sup>

This view was no different than the views of pro-Israeli experts in Washington, DC. Both groups considered Turkey's relations with Israel and the Middle Eastern in zero-sum terms. Any détente with Middle Eastern powers was considered a threat to Turkey's relationship with the West. For instance, Alan Makovsky, a well-known analyst in Washington wrote a piece on Prime Minister Erbakan, when he was trying Turkey to improve neighborly relations with the Middle Eastern countries. According to him, for instance, an improvement in economic relations between Turkey and Iran needs to be considered as a major threat to the Western world. He wrote:

Shortly after Turkey's new Islamist prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, signed a \$23 billion gas pipeline deal with Iran, Thomas Friedman of The New York Times wrote an article titled "Who Lost Turkey?" In fact, Turkey is not really lost. It remains a secular, pro-Western, democratic state. However, the unprecedented emergence of an Islamist at the pinnacle of power raises a warning flag for Americans, who can do much to help insure that Turkey does not become "lost."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Çevik Bir and Martin Sherman, "Formula for Stability: Turkey Plus Israel." *The Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 2002, 23-32.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Alan Makovsky, "How to Deal with Erbakan." *The Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1997, 3-8.

As in Bir's article, Makovsky emphasizes Turkey's identity and the necessity of Turkey to stay away from any interaction with Iran.

The civilianization of Turkey's civil-military relations dramatically impacted the Turkey's foreign policy. Foreign and security policy making became a venue for civilian authorities, and public opinion began to play an important role in determining that policy. The civil-ization of foreign policy also included institutional measures to stop the impact of foreign policy. The structure of National Security Council changed to decrease the number of military members and increase the civilian elected leaders. While the Hamas visit was taking place the AK Party government still did not achieve full civilian control of military, -another military intervention took place in April 2007 ahead of presidential elections in Turkey. However they succeed to open a space for the civilians to be more active in foreign policy making of the country. This was a significant change from the previous episodes of the foreign policy making in Turkish history. The input of civilians who are accountable to electorates and who are susceptible to the public opinion started to transform the foreign policy identity of the state as a whole. In fact, the Hamas visit with the reactions of high level generals demonstrated that Turkish-Israeli relations were taking place in the faultline of civil-military relations. The military was not the only party that reacted to the visit: harsh criticism flowed from other institutions that represented state identity, including the presidency and the ultra-secular opposition. Although President Ahmet Necdet Sezer was not as vocal as Turkey's military generals about the visit, he still he refused to meet with Hamas' elected leader upon his visit to Palestine, a move interpreted as a deliberate snub to the government in Gaza.<sup>13</sup> As a result, it appeared that President Sezer stood beside the military instead of his civilian colleagues on the issue.

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<sup>13</sup> "Sezer'den Hamas Dersi," *Milliyet*, 2005, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/sezer-den-hamas-dersi/siyaset/haberdetayarsiv/04.06.2006/159385/default.htm>

The ultra-secular opposition in Turkey also supported the decision of the military. As the head of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Deniz Baykal claimed that the AKP administration sidelined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when it invited Khaled Meshaal to visit Turkey. He argued, "Turkey's foreign policy has been dragged into inconsistency through private contacts and formers solidarities." He also stated that such a move could harm the relation between Turkey and the West.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the main opposition party of Turkey mimicked the military in its accusations against the AK Party. The change that was taking place in foreign policy in Turkey also created some discomfort among the opposition ultra-secular groups and parties as well.

Hamas' visit was unprecedented in Turkish foreign policy history, in that the elected government—not the military or foreign policy bureaucracy—took the initiative to invite the group to Ankara. Deniz Baykal was particularly outraged by the administration's choice to bring the group to Ankara. According to Baykal, the government did not alert various organs of state institutions of the visit prior to its occurrence; instead, diplomatic engagement was undertaken in secret.<sup>15</sup> This theme, which had previously been brought up at the time of the Expedition to the East, a series of visits to various Muslim countries by the Refahiyol<sup>16</sup> government, and led to the submission of a parliamentary question regarding these visits at the time, which had become popular once again.<sup>17</sup> The state establishment that, the visit was considered almost a betrayal to these principles, even though high-level officials did not personally receive Khaled Meshaal, followed the

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<sup>14</sup> "Baykal criticizes gov't for Hamas visit," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 18 February 2006.

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/baykal-criticizes-govt-for-hamas-visit.aspx?pageID=438&n=baykal-criticizes-govt-for-hamas-visit-2006-02-18>

<sup>15</sup> "Baykal Sıkıntı Yaratacak," *Radikal*, 18 February 2006,

<http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=179035>

<sup>16</sup> The coalition government formed by the Welfare Party (RP) and the True Path Party (DSP).

<sup>17</sup> "Altından o çıktı," *Hürriyet*, 18 February 2006,

<http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=3952035&tarih=2006-02-18>

traditional structure and conduct of foreign policy making so faithfully. It was something that is regarded as unmatched for the identity of Turkish foreign policy. As mentioned before, the traditional government elite's commitment to "secular foreign policy principles"<sup>18</sup> and action as "a reluctant neighbor"<sup>19</sup> to the Middle East, in the pre-AK Party period generated serious disturbances domestically.

The CHP's claims that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was bypassed were not completely unfounded, as the Ministry of Foreign affairs had long been regarded by secular elites as tool to protect the status quo in Turkey, from which they benefitted.<sup>20</sup> As one writer observes:

The diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarded themselves as foreign policy watchmen. Governments would come and go, but they were there to stay. They had to make sure that the ship of the state would not deviate from its route. Bureaucrats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were ready to undermine the unconcerned plans of the elected politicians.<sup>21</sup>

Secular politicians worked with the Turkish military to keep the country's foreign policy pro-Western and passive.<sup>22</sup> Pro-Western intellectuals, businessmen and journalists were also regarded as potential partners in the fight against civilian foreign policy makers. With the military, these diplomats considered themselves as the strongest protectors of

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<sup>18</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, No. 10, 2008, 8, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cmec10\\_taspinar\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cmec10_taspinar_final.pdf); Hasan Ulusoy, *One Policy, Many Identities: The Consistency of Turkey's Foreign Policy With Special Emphasis on Its Security Dimension in the Post - Cold War Era*. Istanbul: ISIS, 2007, 139.

<sup>19</sup> Henri J. Barkey, ed., *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East*. Washington D.C.:United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996; Philip Robins, "The Foreign Policy of Turkey." *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond A. Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002, 315-336, 321.

<sup>20</sup> Şaban Çalış, "Ulus, Devlet ve Kimlik Labirentinde Türk Dış Politikası." *Liberal Düşünce*, Vol. 4, No. 13, 1999, 5-21.

<sup>21</sup> Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy." *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 1, 1998, 32-50, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Bülent Aras and Aylin Görener, "National Role Conceptions Foreign Policy Orientation: The Ideational Bases of the Justice and Development Party's Foreign Policy Activism in the Middle East." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2010, 73-92, 79.

Turkey's national interests and defense of human rights. Foreign policy was considered too important to be entrusted to civilians; thus, it the state bureaucracy and military paternalistically took control to maintain a passive, isolationist foreign policy oriented to the West.

The AK Party changed that, however, transforming Turkish foreign policy from a passive, isolationist position to proactive engagement in matters relating to the Middle East. Yet this foreign policy activism that flourished under the AK Party should be differentiated from that of the state in the 1990s, when Turkey more actively engaged Syria and others in the region over concerns about the PKK.<sup>23</sup> That so-called activism was adopted by the state in the interests of protecting Turkey's security. As Mufti argues:

Turkish generals turn to foreign policy activism not because they are after a new political regime or empire but because they aim to protect the "Six Arrows," which they believe they have been entrusted with by Atatürk. Even when they appear active in foreign policy, they are in fact reactive, not proactive, and their desire to be active stems not from their ambition but from their fear.<sup>24</sup>

The state of assertiveness and activism in the new foreign policy period, on the other hand, is motivated by a new vision of the region, not by fears such as divisionism, state collapse and theocratization. It should be emphasized that one of the key factors that enabled the paradigm shift in Turkish foreign policy is Turkey's path to democratization under the AK Party. This democratic wave dramatically altered state identity in Turkish foreign policy. When foreign policy was under the control of Kemalist elites, relations with Israel improved largely because the elites believed ties with the country would open doors to Europe and the United States, not because the Turkish electorate demanded it. Moreover, when the Turkish state experienced an identity crisis in the aftermath of the

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<sup>23</sup> Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy." *SAIS Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1999, 92-113; Sabri Sayarı, "Turkey and the Middle East in the 1990s." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1997, 44-55.

<sup>24</sup> Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy." *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 1, 1998, 32-50, 164.



Cold War due to the loss of its frontline status and thus prestige in international affairs, Turkish state representatives also lost their access in Western capitals and failed to challenge the Greek and Armenian lobbies in these capitals about anti-Turkey legislations in their Congresses. In order to provide access to Western capitals, Turkish foreign policy makers decided to approach to Israel, a powerful ally of the West. Losing frontline status also meant losing privileged access to the military and defense industry. The United States and Europe stopped or slowed down the sale of military equipment and weaponry to Turkey. The Turkish defense industry carefully followed the military confrontation between Iraq under Saddam Hussein and the United States, as Saddam Hussein started to fire SCUD missiles at Israeli cities. The heightened military capability of Turkey's neighbors acted as a wake-up call for the domestic defense industry. Consequently, the state establishment launched a rapid military modernization campaign, which also brought Turkey and Israel together, because of the military-industry of the Israeli Defense Forces.

Furthermore, the state establishment considered its burgeoning relations with Israel in 1990s as another anchor for Turkey in its secular and pro-Western orientation. Any resistance to the state's plan to build relations with Israel was considered an attack against Turkey's Kemalist heritage. Although the Turkish state establishment always described the relations with Israel one that was based on mutual interest and not against any third parties in the region, in the cognitive map of Turkish state there was a clear separation between pro-Western Israel and the Arab world. Even though Turkey balanced its efforts of engagement between Palestinians and Israelis, the Turkish elite saw themselves firmly planted on Israel's side out of an unexpected cultural affinity. Starting from 1990s, any ripple in Turkish-Israeli relations was considered as a major threat to Turkey's pro-Western orientation. Thus, during this time, Turkey preferred to continue this Cold War foreign policy orientation instead of pursuing a more autonomous foreign policy. However, in the absence of Western desire to treat Turkey as an equal ally, Turkey tried to form this

link indirectly by improving its relations with the state of Israel. It was an artificial attempt to extend the Cold War mentality and Kemalist identity to the conditions of a changing world and ultimately failed. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, organs of the state structure saw different benefits from engagement with Israel: the military saw the country as a unconditional supporter of military assets; policy makers regarded Israel as a way to court the West; and Kemalists viewed it was a way to consolidate Turkey's Western, secular character. These views lost popularity, however, as the increasing democratization in Turkey transformed Turkish foreign policy identity.<sup>25</sup>

As mentioned above, the invitation to Hamas was one of the first signs that the elected government was willing and able to use its power in foreign policy matters. According to Hakan Yavuz and Mujeeb Khan, this visit only occurred because it “was a great display of self-confidence on the part of Turkey in that it revealed the country's belief that it could bring Hamas to the point of moderation.” They continue:

It was important in that it pointed to the belief that an actor could come to have a say and earn trust through ambitious and unusual diplomatic efforts and in that it highlighted a new style of policymaking. The AK Party would later talk about this style as the soft power of Turkish foreign policy.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, Hamas' visit fueled Western fears of political Islam. Many people—from Israeli President Moshe Katsav to Member of the US House of Representatives and Co-President of the Turkish-American Friendship Group Robert Wexler—claimed that Turkey legitimized a Western-sanctioned terrorist organization by inviting Hamas to visit.<sup>27</sup> A fast, prejudiced and inconsistent analogy was drawn between Hamas and the

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<sup>25</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz ve R. Mujeeb Khan, ““Turkish Foreign Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Duality and the Development (1950-1991).” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1992, 69-94.

<sup>26</sup> Henri J. Barkey, “Turkey and the Great Powers.” *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity, Conflict and Change in the Twenty First Century*, eds. Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem, and Philip Robins, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 239-257, 253-254.

<sup>27</sup> “Hamas Daveti Yanlış oldu,” *Sabah*, April 1, 2006, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2006/04/01/siy111.html>

PKK, and it was argued “the decision of Ankara to grant Hamas with a legitimacy it does not deserve was incomprehensible.”<sup>28</sup>

Yet Western criticism failed to understand the changes at play in Turkey. Many scholars overlooked the nuances shaping Turkish society and assumed that by inviting Meshaal, Turkish officials intended to reorient Turkey to the Syria-Iran axis.<sup>29</sup> This approach unduly emphasized the power of individual actors at the expense of structural factors affecting the decision: namely, a shift toward a more autonomous and regional foreign policy approach as a result Turkey’s political democratization, public empowerment and globalization. Moreover, it overlooked the clear paradigm shift in Turkish foreign policy despite the occupation of Iraq, the work for EU accession and the change of policy concerning Cyprus.<sup>30</sup>

Turkey responded to Western criticism by arguing that placing external sanctions on Gaza’s elected political leaders demonstrated hypocrisy and undermined the West’s commitment to democracy. This argument stemmed from a belief among some that Western powers were trying to disrupt the practice of political Islam, particularly as manifested by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. At the time when it was invited to Turkey, Hamas was looking for allies in the Middle East in order to end the isolation to which it was condemned in the international community and to break the economic and political embargo on it, and the solution would probably be the Iran-Syria and Hezbollah axis should Turkey had chosen not to get involved.

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<sup>28</sup> “Reverberations Still Echoing After Hamas Official Visits Turkey,” *JTA*, February 27, 2006, <http://www.jta.org/2006/02/27/archive/reverberations-still-echoing-after-hamas-official-visits-turkey>; Svante E. Cornell, “What Drives Turkish Foreign Policy?” *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2012, 13-24.

<sup>29</sup> “Meşal Suriye İstihbaratının Parçası”, *Radikal*, February 27, 2006, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=179861>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Another reason for Turkey's engagement with Hamas was to convince the young government to participate in the political process as well as to persuade Hamas to agree to a ceasefire with Israel in exchange for an end to the embargo on Gaza.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, Turkey aimed for to prepare Hamas to be a responsible government now that it had won the popular mandate in the Palestinian territories.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, Turkey worked in line with the principles of crisis prevention and conflict resolution—important aspects of its new foreign policy paradigm—to prevent the likelihood of conflict in response to Western sanctions on Hamas. The following statement by the Foreign Minister reveals clearly the new mode of thinking and vision:

We could close our eyes and wait, but if a crisis occurs in the future, won't Turkey be affected? So what we have done is not that risky. In fact, the USA and Israel should be thankful to us because we are trying to ease the tension. If things continue this way, developments will take place in Palestine to shock the region and the Islamic world in a way even the caricature crisis did not, and they will spread to the entire world. Our messages to Hamas will perhaps lose their meaning in two or three months. Those who criticize us today will then say that Turkey should spend efforts to persuade Hamas, but it will be too late.<sup>33</sup>

The importance of this invitation, which led Washington to ask the question “where is Turkey heading?”<sup>34</sup> in the days and weeks that followed, became clearer when Israel attacked Gaza at the end of 2009 following the sanctions on Hamas. Richard Falk, the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, commented on the tragedy in Gaza due to the Operation Cast Lead:

It is tragic that this effort [Turkey's invitation to Hamas] went futile. It was criticized at the time, but if Turkey's initiative was taken into consideration and the preparedness of Hamas for a long-term ceasefire was utilized, then

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<sup>31</sup> Aras and Görener, 86-87.

<sup>32</sup> Ahmet Sözen, “A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: Transition and Challenges,” *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2010, 103-123, 120.

<sup>33</sup> Ruşen Çakır, “Ahmet Davutoğlu bir kez daha haklı çıktı,” *Vatan*, January 6, 2009, [http://haber.gazetevatan.com/Ahmet\\_Davutoglu\\_bir\\_kez\\_daha\\_hakli\\_cikti\\_216907\\_4/216907/4/yazarlar](http://haber.gazetevatan.com/Ahmet_Davutoglu_bir_kez_daha_hakli_cikti_216907_4/216907/4/yazarlar)

<sup>34</sup> “Wilson says Hamas visit was disappointment,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, May 4, 2006, <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=wilson-says-hamas-visit-was-disappointment-2006-04-05>

both the safety of civilians in Gaza and the security of Israel would have been served.<sup>35</sup>

Following Operation Cast Lead in 2009, Turkish policy makers attempted to mediate the problem between Hamas and Israeli government. If the international community supported Turkey's attempt to bring Hamas to the table, the peace process could take move forward, ending the attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure. Despite the criticisms that Turkey received, the U.S. administration worked with Hamas' interlocutors in Turkey and Qatar to broker a ceasefire agreement between Arab and Israeli parties. Once the ceasefire was achieved, Secretary of State John Kerry acknowledged and lauded Turkish and Qatari participation. Despite this achievement, Turkey was criticized by regional actors for allowing its bias for Hamas interfere with its role as an honest peace broker. The nature of the criticism conjured memories of the harsh words Turkey received upon Khaled Meshaal's visit; yet, Turkey's engagement with Hamas in 2006 proved useful in influencing these negotiations. Turkey was able to establish a rapport with Hamas, but the reason for the failure of negotiation, according to Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, was Israel's unwillingness to accept a sustainable and long-term ceasefire.<sup>36</sup>

The AKP government's responses to domestic and international criticism revealed the new Turkish foreign policy paradigm in which "Middle Eastern policy is not seen as an extension of Western-centeredness."<sup>37</sup> The scope of the Hamas visit was specified in the following words by Erdoğan:

We cannot remain indifferent to the new world order. We should contribute to the restoration of peace in our region and in the world. Turkey cannot be a mere spectator to what goes on around it. The goal of this step is only to achieve Middle Eastern peace, to eliminate those who intend to turn the Middle East into a pool of blood, and to make it a basin for peace. We are

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<sup>35</sup> Aras and Görener, 87.

<sup>36</sup> Jay Solomon, "'U.S. Meets With Qatar, Turkey to Extend Gaza Cease-Fire,'" *WSJ*, July 26, 2014. <http://online.wsj.com/articles/u-s-meets-with-qatar-turkey-to-extend-gaza-cease-fire-1406384053>

<sup>37</sup> Nur Bilge Criss, Turkish Foreign Policy toward the Middle East," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1997, <http://www.gloria-center.org/1997/01/criss-and-bilgin-1997-01-03/>

the ones who are within this basin, not anybody else. We cannot continue to say “Let’s just look on!”<sup>38</sup>

Consequently, Turkey’s new paradigm of an active political engagement at home and abroad brought foreign policy makers to devote extra attention to the Middle East, which had traditionally been considered a theater of little political interest. Turkish officials and as well as the public started to follow regional developments more closely, and the need for information from different parts of the region increased rapidly. Turkish policy makers as well as the Turkish public took an active interest in what was happening between Israel and Palestine, and public opinion pushed the AKP to pursue a policy of mediation in the conflict.

In part because of this pressure, the Turkish government began acting with a greater sense of responsibility for events in the region.<sup>39</sup> In response to criticism from the Turkish opposition about “excessive engagement to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute,” Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül emphasized that Turkey under the AKP was a Turkey at peace with its geography, its history and the demographics of its region and that as a result, Turkey should take a great interest in the Palestinian question. He also stated:

We have the archives, the title deeds, the maps. We have the facts. Why should I not take an interest while those who come from the remotest parts of Europe can? Not taking an interest means not being aware of one’s greatness and power. That is why people who do not have consciousness of history are easily disturbed once Turkey steps out of its shell and tries to assume a little role in global matters.<sup>40</sup>

In short, this new founding paradigm, which suggests a change in how Turkish foreign policy makers position and perceive Turkey in the global context, “not only allows

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<sup>38</sup> “Kimseden icazet Almayız,” *Sabah*, 21 February 2006, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2006/02/21/siy100.html>

<sup>39</sup> Igor Torbakov and Hana Ojanen, “Looking for a new Strategic Identity: Is Turkey Emerging as an Independent Regional Power.” *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs Briefing Paper*, No. 30, May 7, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> “Önemli olan verilen mesajdır,” *Hürriyet*, February 19, 2006, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=3957461>

Turkey to demand accession to the EU and continue its strategic partnership with the USA but at the same time renders it normal for it to sustain contact with actors like Hamas that are non-state, are alienated from the West and have normative democratic legitimacy.”<sup>41</sup> In fact, “it is not appropriate for Turkey to remain in the defensive, assume a defensive position and act as if estranged from the region since it is a center country that is both Asian and European and is also close to Africa through the Eastern Mediterranean.”<sup>42</sup> This would be denying regional responsibility.

On the contrary, as many have stated Turkey “should transition to the position of a country bringing its neighboring regions security and stability. Turkey should ensure its own security by pursuing a more active and constructive role to give its neighbors order, stability and security.”<sup>43</sup> To conclude, one could argue that under the new paradigm, Turkish foreign policy has become less elitist and more open to input from civilian officials and public opinion. The new paradigm also opened the possibility of engaging with informal actors who can play an instrumental role in resolution of regional disputes. In its decision to become a policy maker rather than policy follower in the Middle East, Turkey rejected elements of Western Middle East policy in an effort to establish its autonomy.<sup>44</sup> Another indication of this new paradigm took place when Turkey stand by the legitimate Egyptian government in the face of European and American support for the coup makers following the coup of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, which was against a government that had come to power at the end of the first free and fair election in the history of Egypt. The principles that Turkish government depended on its support for the democratically elected

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<sup>41</sup> Ziya Meral and Jonathan Paris, “Decoding Turkish Foreign Policy Hyperactivity.” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 2010, 75-86, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy,” 78.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>44</sup> Malik Mufti, “From Swamp to Backyard: The Middle East in Turkish Foreign Policy.” *The Middle Enters the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Robert O. Freedman, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002, 80-113.

government in Egypt was not very different from its attempt to integrate Hamas, which won free elections in the Palestinian territories but was threatened with isolation and losing the ability to govern and popularity with its own electorate.



## **CHAPTER 6**

## **THE TEHRAN DECLARATION AND VOTING AGAINST SANCTIONS ON IRAN IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL**

The change in Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East started with Turkey's decision not to accept the launch of U.S. troops into Iraq from its soil. The decision led to a major crisis between Turkey and the United States. During the Iraq War, bilateral relations were highly tense in regards to conflicts in the Middle East in several instances. Turkey, starting with the AK Party government, began to follow a more independent and autonomous foreign policy that prioritizes regional solutions to regional problems. This idea was very much embedded in Ahmet Davutoğlu's theoretical approach to international relations in his earlier works. Later, when he became a foreign policy maker in Turkey, he started to implement this idea. This challenged the mainstream Turkish foreign policy of avoiding regional problems and ignoring any conflict in the region. Meanwhile, the transformation of Turkey's domestic politics and changes in the Middle East increasingly consolidated the shift in the identity of the Turkish state. Although the main dynamic of change was domestic – namely, the democratization of Turkish politics and the novel foreign policy approach that the new leaders brought – the shift in the state's identity was consolidated

through Turkey's interactions with regional actors and states. In fact, the new identity and role of the Turkish state in the Middle East was quickly embraced and welcomed in the region. Thus, external factors strengthened the new identity of the Turkish state and its innovative foreign policy towards the region. The increasing interaction with regional countries made this new identity more salient.

The Neighboring Countries of Iraq meetings created the first significant test for Turkish foreign policy in terms of engaging in relations, meeting its partners and developing a new alternative foreign policy discourse with the Middle East. These meetings helped Turkey to develop a new approach and self-confidence in its relations with its partners and neighbors. With the visit from Hamas officials to Turkey in 2006, Ankara took this position a step further and built a means of communication with a non-state actor from the region, who were considered illegitimate by the majority of Western countries.

While Turkey launched an initiative in the absence of Western support by organizing the Neighboring Countries of Iraq meetings, the Hamas' visit and Turkey's attempt to bring Hamas into the peace process took place despite the opposition from Western countries. However, in both instances, Turkey explained that it was attempting to have a more autonomous and independent foreign policy rather than shifting the axis of its foreign policy. The new state identity of Turkey also led to greater involvement in conflict resolution and the contribution to the peaceful resolution of disputes in the region. With its attempt to resolve the crisis over the Iranian nuclear program, Turkey took one more step for the consolidation of its identity and reached a deal for a nuclear swap, which major international actors failed to successfully achieve. However, Ankara's efforts were met with an unexpected reaction, as the deal was ignored by the major powers of the international system. The nuclear deal demonstrated that Turkey was increasingly becoming a major actor in its region and a significant mediator in resolving not only

conflicts, but also issues of international security. Turkish foreign policy makers' willingness to contribute to this process was partly because of the potential dangers they saw in regards to conflicts in the region. When sectarianism was on the rise in the Middle East, Turkey stayed above any sectarian or ethnic divisions in the region. As a Sunni-majority country, Turkey challenged the existing sectarian divides in the region by trying to broker a deal between the West and a Shia-majority state in order to mitigate the possible suffering of the Shia population in Iran from economic sanctions and, more importantly, from a possible military attack. Just like in the case of the Neighboring Countries of Iraq meetings and Hamas' visit, Turkey's attempt to resolve the crisis was misinterpreted and the region missed a significant opportunity to peacefully resolve this problem. Now, four years after the Tehran Declaration, the U.S. and its European allies are trying to reach a new agreement with Iran. If the nuclear dispute was resolved in 2010 following the Tehran Declaration, the Iranian government could have played a more constructive role in major conflicts in the region, including Syria and Iraq.

Turkey's changing state identity was once again demonstrated in its attempt to play a more constructive role in another conflict in the region. Although Turkey acted independently, it informed Western countries and particularly the United States about the deal that it was trying to broker as part of its international responsibility and other global engagements. However, Turkey's attempt to autonomously contribute to resolving another regional problem resulted in skepticism from Western observers. Turkey again faced accusations of "turning away from the West" and its attempt was considered as a sign of a shift of its axis. Later, when the U.S. sponsored a resolution to impose further sanctions on Iran in the United Nations Security Council, Turkey acted in line with its new identity and voted against the resolution despite the pressure and criticisms from Western governments. Turkish foreign policy makers responded to criticism by stating that whenever there is a possibility of resolving conflict through mediation, the adoption of any punitive actions in

the region would only deteriorate the situation. Turkey, as a regional actor, adopted the responsibility of preventing any escalation that would cause suffering in Iran or any other country in the region. The main motivation behind Turkish foreign policy during the Tehran Declaration and the UNSC voting was no different than its motivations when it initiated the Neighboring Countries of Iraq meetings. In time, Turkey only became more self-confident and assertive in its new foreign policy.

### THE NUCLEAR DEAL

Iran's relations with the Western bloc and the international system have been characterized by constant tension and crisis since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The presidency of reformist Mohammad Khatami between 1997 and 2005 could be considered the exception with a partial improvement in the relations as well as a thaw in terms of the discourse that Iran and the U.S. used against one another. There were statements on both sides which raised expectations for a potential rapprochement between the two countries. During an interview with CNN, Khatami said that the U.S. and Iran needed to create "a crack in the wall of mistrust by exchanging writers, scholars, artists and thinkers." He also stated, "all doors should now be open for such dialogue and understanding and the possibility for contact between Iranian and American citizens."<sup>1</sup> Later, there were several diplomatic gestures from both sides aimed at defreezing the relations. For instance, U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright joined the UN General Assembly session when president Khatami was making his speech, which was unheard of since the hostage crisis. However, these mutual diplomatic gestures did not result in an official restoration of relations or even an unofficial meeting between the leaders of the two countries. For both

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<sup>1</sup> "Khatami suggests warmer relations with U.S.," *CNN*, January 7, 1998, <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9801/07/iran/>

sides, domestic political constraints played an important role in the development of diplomatic relations and communication. The hardliners in Iran and the U.S. Congress were extremely skeptical about such a restoration of ties. With the Bush administration, any hope for the improvement of relations ended because of the hardline neoconservative approach to isolate and change the Iranian regime. Despite Iranian assistance to the U.S. in the war in Afghanistan in the aftermath of September 11, the Bush administration did not want to establish a cooperative relationship with Iran. Moreover, the discourse of democracy promotion, regime change and nation-building espoused by the Bush administration heightened the level of anxiety in Iran in regards to potential U.S. action.

This situation only got worse with the war in Iraq. Although the overthrow of Saddam Hussein was a welcome outcome for Iran, relations between the U.S. and Iran became more complicated with the rise of Shia insurgency and the skepticism of the U.S. about Iran's potential support of some groups within this insurgency. As the number of U.S. casualties increased, the U.S.'s reaction to Iran became stronger. When Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won the presidential elections in 2005, the state of tension and crisis deepened. Ahmadinejad's statements and criticisms of the U.S., as well as his reaction against Israel, created an extremely negative atmosphere in bilateral relations. The Western media particularly magnified Ahmadinejad's controversial statements in regards to the Western world, the Holocaust and Israel, which eliminated all possible paths towards reconciliation between U.S. and Iran.

Western analysts offered many explanations for these crises between the two countries. Most importantly, historical baggage was particularly convoluted, particularly controversial moments in bilateral relations such as the hostage crisis during the Revolution, assassination of opponents of the regime allegedly committed by Iran in Europe in the 1980s, the fatwa on Salman Rushdie after the publication of *Satanic Verses*, Iranian support for non-state armed groups like Hezbollah, Iran's nuclear technology

program, etc. It is obvious that these all contributed to the tension and crises in the relations between Iran and the West.

However, in more recent years, the most poisonous development to relations was Iran's nuclear technology program. The disagreements between Iran and the IAEA, the discovery of hidden nuclear reactors and Israel's constant warnings about a potential pre-emptive strike made the issue a more urgent problem for U.S.-Iranian relations. The security implication of an Iran with a nuclear weapon was regarded with the potential to destabilize the region and upset the regional and international balance of power. The countries in the Gulf and Israel in particular transformed the issue into a major crisis of international security. Alarmist narratives together with a hostile discourse against Iran created a major problem for the international system. Despite owning nuclear weapons for years without any form of accountability, the government of Israel argued that the Iranian program would lead to nuclear proliferation in the region, posing a major security threat to the global community. In addition, several analysts pointed out Iran's potential to weaponize its nuclear program, which could cause a nuclear arms race in the region.

This heightened threat perception of Iran's nuclear program was signaled in 2002 after debates in the foreign policy circle on the potential danger of "rogue states" getting nuclear weapon or any weapons of mass destruction. In a speech in 2002, President Bush placed Iran among countries such as Iraq and North Korea, which he defined as constituting an "axis of evil."<sup>2</sup> President Bush emphasized both the nuclear program and the authoritarian regime in the country as a potential threat to international security. He said:

Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September 11, but we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens. Iran aggressively

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<sup>2</sup> 'Bush State of the Union Address', *CNN.com/Inside Politics*, January 29, 2002, <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/01/29/bush.speech.txt/>

pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom.<sup>3</sup>

In the securitized atmosphere that emerged internationally post-9/11 and the political climate created by the approaching Iraq war, the crisis in U.S.-Iranian relations became more entrenched when Iran's nuclear activities in the power plants of Arak and Natanz were revealed in 2002. The attempt to contain and resolve this crisis led to the birth of a group called the EU-3, originally formed by Germany and France and later joined by the UK. The EU-3 wanted to prevent the crisis from escalating beyond diplomacy, opposed the Iraq war, and aimed to resolve the crisis through negotiation and dialogue.<sup>4</sup>

This group started negotiations with Iran in 2003. According to the plan proposed by the EU-3 during these negotiations, Iran would share detailed information with international observers on the framework, size, and nature of its nuclear program, allow them to conduct independent inspections, terminate its uranium enrichment program, and offer the group guarantees on the matter.<sup>5</sup> The EU-3, in turn, would respect Iran's right to develop civil nuclear technology, and cooperate with Iran in this and other areas.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, these negotiations did not yield a significant result due to disagreement, particularly on the quality and nature of the guarantees that Iran would offer to the EU-3. When Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who embraced a stricter attitude on the nuclear issue than Khatami, was elected president in 2005, the negotiations were terminated.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the EU-3

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Colette Mazzucelli, "EU3- Iranian Nuclear Diplomacy: Implications for US Policy in the Middle East." *European Union Miami Analysis (EUMA) Papers Online*, Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence, Miami, 2007, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



joined other Western countries in supporting the imposition of sanctions by the UN Security Council against Iran, which occurred in 2006.<sup>8</sup>

Although the decision to place sanctions on Iran brought the negotiations to a halt, they were reinitiated in Geneva with the participation of the EU-3 and other members of the UN Security Council, including the U.S., China and Russia. The negotiations accelerated when a new reactor was discovered near the Iranian city of Qum in 2009.<sup>9</sup> As an extension of these negotiations, the IAEA made an offer to Iran in 2009, in which Iran would send Russia 70 percent (1200 kg) of its 3.5 percent enriched uranium, and in return Russia would refine the low-enriched uranium (LEU) from Iran at 20 percent (the rated needed by the Tehran Research Plant) and send it to France. The 20 percent enriched uranium would then be processed to prevent further enrichment, transformed into solid fuel sticks and shipped to Iran.<sup>10</sup> In an effort to maintain diplomacy reached in Geneva and Vienna, Mohammad Baradei, the then-president of the IAEA, proposed that Iran send its LEU to Turkey.<sup>11</sup> However, when no agreement could be met despite the negotiations between Iran and the EU and the proposal by the IAEA, it was clear that the crisis between Iran and the West could deepen and a new wave of sanctions could be instituted by the UN Security Council.

In such an atmosphere, Turkey decided to initiate a diplomatic enterprise to resolve the crisis through negotiations, prevent a new wave of sanctions, and preclude another major conflict that would shake the regional fault lines and bring further instability in the

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<sup>8</sup> See, "Security Council imposes sanctions on Iran for failure to halt uranium enrichment, unanimously adopting Resolution 1737(2006)", *United Nations*, December 23, 2006, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sc8928.doc.htm>

<sup>9</sup> See, "Nuclear Talks lead to rare meeting between US and Iran," *The Guardian*, October 1, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/oct/01/iran-nuclear-geneva-talks>

<sup>10</sup> Bayram Sinkaya, "İran Nükleer Programı Karşısında Türkiye'nin Tutumu ve Uranyum Takası Mutabakatı." *ORSAM Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 18, 2010, 71-79.

<sup>11</sup> "İran, uranyumu Türkiye'ye göndersin," *Milliyet*, November 8, 2009, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Dunya/SonDakika.aspx?aType=SonDakika&ArticleID=1159532>

Middle East. Turkey's position in regards to the crisis with Iran mirrored its approach to other critical issues in international and regional security. Turkey believes that that international system should not infringe on the rights of any nation to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Thus, Turkey consistently urged the Iranian government to cooperate with the IAEA regarding to its nuclear program. However, Turkey strongly opposed any country in the region having nuclear weapons, which would lead to nuclear proliferation throughout the Middle East. To ensure that Turkey – or any other nation in the Middle East – had the right to a potential nuclear energy program and to prevent another destabilizing military campaign in its neighborhood, the Turkish government decided to use diplomacy to contribute to the peaceful resolution of this dispute.

From its earlier dialogue and engagement with the Iranian government, Turkish foreign policy makers had an idea of what could be the possible outcome of such an endeavor and how to broker such an agreement between Iran and the international community. However, when Turkey expressed this willingness to mediate the dispute, many in the Western world believed that it was just a wishful thinking because Turkey supposedly lacked the capacity, expertise and skills to broker such a complicated agreement. It was an unprecedented for Turkey to mediate a significant international conflict with such high risks. In previous crises between Iran and the Western world, Turkey adopted the West's position against Iran, as Turkish foreign policy makers viewed the Iranian regime as a major threat and constantly accused Iran of trying to export its ideology to Turkey by supporting anti-Secular groups. This ultra-secular ideological lens resulted in Turkey's failure to improve its relations with Iran, leading to a serious deficiency in mutual trust between the two countries. In many instances, Turkey tried to take advantage of the crisis between Iran and the West by emphasizing its pro-Western and secular identity. During these years, some foreign policy makers even portrayed Turkey's role as a bulwark against the threat of Iran and an antidote to the Iranian regime in the

Middle East. Although this identity provided limited strategic advantage, it led Turkey to limit its economic, social, political and cultural relations with Iran. Turkey and Iran, two countries of similar demographic and economic potential, could not reap the benefits of sharing one of the most peaceful and secure borders in the Middle East without any territorial disputes. Any form engagement with Iran raised serious concerns among the members of the state establishment.

In every attempt to improve Turkey's relations with Iran, there was substantial criticism about the potential threat to secularism in Turkey. The Turkish military, which was in charge of Turkey's foreign and security policy in most instances, had particularly serious reservations about any form of political or economic engagement with Iran. For instance, the reaction of the Turkish military, opposition and foreign policy bureaucracy against Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's attempts to improve relations with Iran in 1997 is considered one of the reasons for the military coup against him. In fact, improving relations with Iran was almost considered as a political crime punishable by military coup. After many years of ignoring one of the most significant countries in the Middle East, Turkey started to engage with Iran regularly in order to generate a win-win situation.

During this period, while Turkey was trying to restore its ties with Iran through economic and diplomatic interactions, there were serious debates in Washington regarding a potential military intervention in Iran. Neoconservative think tanks, in particular, developed different military scenarios to destroy Iran's nuclear program. The range of potential attacks that was offered by these think tanks include everything from surgical strikes on nuclear sites to a full-scale assault on all nuclear sites and regime strongholds in Tehran in order to eradicate the Iranian regime. Those who supported regime change argued that if air strikes failed, the Iranian regime may accelerate its nuclear weapons program; thus, the overthrow of the regime would be the best option. The escalatory tone of the Israeli government also contributed to this atmosphere in Washington. The emerging

perception in Washington was that more hardline policies were necessary in order to deal with Iran. However, Turkey's approach to the problem varied once again.

Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu both expressed that the issue could still be resolved through diplomatic negotiation, which Turkey was ready to contribute to. Turkey approached Iran to launch a diplomatic dialogue and simultaneously tried to get the support of other countries, such as Brazil, which had a significant degree of experience in dealing with nuclear issues. This created a functioning dynamic that led to the initiation of talks with Iranian officials. Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu both exploited every opportunity to convey that since it was possible to resolve the issue through negotiation, Turkey was against any new sanctions against Iran. New sanctions against Iran would escalate the tension both between Iran and the West, as well as between the actors in the region, and would have extremely negative economic and social repercussions.

Turkey launched this process of negotiation at a very early stage in Ahmadinejad's presidency. When President Ahmadinejad visited Turkey in August 2008, Turkish foreign policy makers aimed to diffuse the tension and pave the way for the resolution of disputes between Iran and other countries. Ahmadinejad argued that Iran's nuclear program was peaceful and that Tehran did not aim to improve its military capability.<sup>12</sup> Ahmadinejad's visit would have previously been a source of tension between the civilian government and the military and would have created a major backlash against the government. However, the changing nature of Turkish foreign policy allowed the civilian government to engage with its neighbors as part of its "zero problems policy" and contribute to attempts to reconcile disputes and differences. In addition, such a visit would have previously been a source of friction for the ultra-secular foreign policy bureaucracy, which considered any

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<sup>12</sup> "Ahmedinejad umutlu" *BBC Turkish*, August 15, 2008,

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/news/story/2008/08/080815\\_iranturkey.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkish/news/story/2008/08/080815_iranturkey.shtml)

relations with the Iranian government as a threat to secularism in Turkey. However, in the changing Turkey, Iran was considered as a neighbor that Ankara had to be on good terms with, regardless of any interference from a third party.

Several agreements on mutual trade and the development of bilateral relations between Turkey and Iran during this period were met with an increasing degree of skepticism in the West. However, Turkish foreign policy makers were very open regarding the meetings' agendas and constantly reiterated that Turkey aimed to improve its economic relations with its neighbor and would not sever its relationship with Iran without evidence of Tehran's wrongdoing or an infringement of international law. Thus, the U.S.'s emphasis on sanctions against Iran made Turkish foreign policy makers extremely uncomfortable. In every possible platform, Turkey expressed that such sanctions would hurt the economy of Turkey and the region as a whole. Turkey also warned the Israeli government not to engage in actions that would escalate tension in the region. Erdoğan flatly denied the rumors about a possible Israeli strike against Iran using Turkish air space, saying that such unauthorized action would greatly disturb Turkish-Israeli relations.<sup>13</sup>

The statements from Turkish foreign policy makers about their willingness to resolve the dispute through diplomatic channels and their readiness to mediate between Iran and the international community generated a debate in Western capitals. Although many in the West believed that Turkey did not have such a capability, they welcomed Ankara's intention to help resolve the conflict.<sup>14</sup> In this period, Mohammel ElBaradei of the IAEA came up with a resolution that would entail an important role for Turkey. ElBaradei contented that there was a serious lack of trust between Iran and the West, which

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<sup>13</sup> Erdoğan'dan İsrail'e 'DEPREM GİBİ' uyarı," *Milliyet*, December 10, 2009, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Siyaset/HaberDetay.aspx?aType=HaberDetay&KategoriID=4&ArticleID=1172406&Date=11.12.2009&b=Erdogandan%20Israile%20DEPREM%20GIBI%20uyari>

<sup>14</sup> Aylin Gürzel, "Turkey's Role in Defusing the Iranian Nuclear Issue." *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2012, 141-152.

could be resolved by the friendly relations between Turkey and Iran. Baradei argued that Iran could transfer highly enriched uranium (HEU) to Turkey, in exchange for LEU for civilian and medical purposes from Russia. Baradei emphasized that Iran did trust Turkey on this subject and that there were excellent relations between Turkey and the U.S.; thus, Turkey could play a critical role.<sup>15</sup> Baradei's proposal was given the green light from both Russia and the United States. Following these signals, Turkey started to be actively involved in this process. Shortly after the statements from the U.S. and Russia, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu announced that Turkey was ready to stock the HEU for a definite period of time.<sup>16</sup> However, the Iranians initially rejected this proposal. Iranian Foreign Minister Muttaki stated that Iran would not send its nuclear materials outside of its borders.

Nevertheless, Turkey did not stop its efforts to resolve the problem through negotiations. Turkey's new foreign policy gained considerable experience in mediation during this time. Turkey's endeavors in regards to Iran were partly an attempt to develop its foreign policy. It was not trying to situate itself inherently against the Western position on the Iranian nuclear program and thus Turkish foreign policy makers tried to communicate with their counterparts about the negotiations from the very beginning. One of the first of such conversation took place when President Obama met with Prime Minister Erdoğan in December 2009. In the press conference, President Obama stated that "Turkey could be an important player in trying to move Iran in the direction of pursuing peaceful nuclear energy while providing assurances that it will abide by international rules and norms." In return, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan also stated that Turkey wanted to contribute to the resolution of disputes in the region.<sup>17</sup> Turkey was not only communicating

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<sup>15</sup> "İran'la nükleer çözümde Türkiye sürprizi," *Hürriyet*, November 10, 2014, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/12888576.asp>

<sup>16</sup> Sinkaya.

<sup>17</sup> Carol Migdalovitz, "Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and U.S. Views." *CRS Report for Congress*, November 28, 2010.

with the U.S. administration; Prime Minister Erdoğan also held numerous meetings with his counterparts in the West in order to inform and exchange views about a potential resolution of the deadlock. Moreover, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu engaged in shuttle diplomacy between Tehran and the Western capitals about the details of the agreement. Through this constant communication, Turkey acted responsibly and tried to be an honest broker in this very complicated conflict between Iran and the West. It also conveyed to both the Western capitals and Tehran that the Turkish government was a neutral arbiter and did not favor one parties over the other. Instead, Turkey endorsed a viewpoint that would have brought stability and economic prosperity to the region.

Following Iran's rejection of the offer, one of the turning points for the nuclear negotiations occurred during the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC in April 2010. For the past eight years, Turkey had tried to form multilateral forums and resolve issues through multilateral dialogue. Turkish foreign policy makers tried to use this forum in order to raise the possibility of a peaceful resolution to Iran's nuclear program again, while the U.S administration was trying to convince the participant countries to impose additional economic sanctions. During its meetings, Turkey found an important ally, Brazil, which shared similar views with Turkey about finding a solution to the nuclear dilemma. Brazil, as one of the countries that supported the resolution of disputes in the region through diplomatic means, endorsed Turkey's proposal. During the Nuclear Security Summit, the leaders of the two countries decided to cooperate on this issue. They also decided to communicate with President Obama in regards to the negotiations and asked for his support for their initiative.<sup>18</sup>

For example, in a statement on April 15, 2010, Prime Minister Erdoğan expressed that Turkey and Brazil held similar views on the matter and signaled that they could launch

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<sup>18</sup> Sinkaya.

a common initiative to resolve the problem through peaceful means.<sup>19</sup> Shortly after, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu assessed the talks between the P5+1 and Iran, where Iran's demand that the exchange take place within its borders was rejected by the West, arguing that "Turkey is ready to act as mediator on the issue of uranium enrichment and hopes that the process will result to the benefit of everyone."<sup>20</sup> The Brazilian government also expressed its willingness to contribute to the dispute's resolution through negotiations. On April 28, 2010, Brazil proposed to mediate along with Turkey to overcome the crisis between Iran and the West.<sup>21</sup>

Turkey's mediation in a dispute between a country of the region and the West was a significant development in Turkish foreign policy. In the Neighboring Countries of Iraq Summit, Turkey attempted to resolve a problem – the Iraq war – through engagement with regional actors, whereas the visit of Hamas was intended to include a Palestinian political party in the peace process. Now, Turkey was taking their efforts one step further by attempting to mediate a major international dilemma between a country in the region and the international community. It was a problem that other major players in the international system had so far failed to resolve despite their clout, leverage and power. In addition, Turkey was cooperating on this issue with a country in South America, a region unnoticed by Turkish foreign policy for the most of its history. Partnership with a South American nation demonstrated the international opening of Turkey's foreign policy in the last decade. Regardless of whether an agreement was reached, the process itself demonstrates a major transformation in Turkish foreign policy and the nation's identity.

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<sup>19</sup> "İran için ortak hareket," *Hürriyet*, 15 April 2010,

<http://arama.hurriyet.com.tr/arsivnews.aspx?id=14422148>

<sup>20</sup> "İran'la uranyum anlaşması için arabuluculuğa hazırız," *Yeni Şafak*, April 20, 2010,

<http://yenisafak.com.tr/dunya-haber/iranla-uranyum-anlasmasi-icin-arabulucu-20.04.2010-253137>

<sup>21</sup> "Brezilya: Türkiye ile arabuluculuk yapabiliriz," *NTVMSNBC*, April 28, 2010,

<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25087925/>



Following these statements, on April 20, 2010, President Obama wrote a letter to President Lula and Prime Minister Erdoğan on the nuclear negotiations. In the letter to Lula, President Obama discussed the conversation that he and Prime Minister Erdoğan had during the Nuclear Security Summit and offered his position on the negotiations. He wrote:

I agree with you that the TRR is an opportunity to pave the way for a broader dialogue in dealing with the more fundamental concerns of the international community regarding Iran's overall nuclear program. From the beginning, I have viewed Iran's request as a clear and tangible opportunity to begin to build mutual trust and confidence, and thereby create time and space for a constructive diplomatic process. That is why the United States so strongly supported the proposal put forth by former International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General El-Baradei.

The IAEA's proposal was crafted to be fair and balanced, and for both sides to gain trust and confidence. For us, Iran's agreement to transfer 1,200 kg of Iran's low-enriched uranium (LEU) out of the country would build confidence and reduce regional tensions by substantially reducing Iran's LEU stockpile. I want to underscore that this element is of fundamental importance for the United States. For Iran, it would receive the nuclear fuel requested to ensure continued operation of the TRR to produce needed medical isotopes and, by using its own material, Iran would begin to demonstrate peaceful nuclear intent. Notwithstanding Iran's continuing defiance of the United Nations Security Council resolutions mandating that it cease its enrichment of uranium, we were prepared to support and facilitate action on a proposal that would provide Iran nuclear fuel using uranium enriched by Iran — a demonstration of our willingness to be creative in pursuing a way to build mutual confidence.”

Following this letter, Turkey and Brazil started to conduct shuttle diplomacy to find a common ground between Iran's requests and the P5+1's conditions. The Iranian side, which rejected the earlier proposal by Baradei, decided to negotiate the terms of this agreement with the mediation of Brazil and Turkey. Iranian President Ahmadinejad publicly acknowledged this effort when he came to New York for a UN Conference. Ahmadinejad stated that Iran would approach an agreement favorably if the other side

demonstrated similar sincerity.<sup>22</sup> While Turkey and Brazil were trying to broker the deal with Iran, the U.S. was leading an effort to impose another set of sanctions on Iran in the UN Security Council. Turkey opposed any new sanctions or escalatory action that would endanger an agreement.

While opposing the sanctions, diplomacy between Turkey, Brazil and Iran was complicated by Iran's insistence on certain issues. The process was almost halted in several instances. Nevertheless, on May 17, 2010, all agreed on the conditions and signed the Tehran Declaration. When the content of the common declaration is analyzed, it is clear that the Western demands were, in fact, mostly met. Articles 5, 6, and 7 of the declaration replicated the exchange formula previously proposed by the IAEA with the approval of the West. These articles suggested the transfer of 1200 kg of LEU from Iran to Turkey, the transformation of this uranium into the 120 kg of fuel needed by the Tehran Research Plant, and the shipment of this fuel to Iran.<sup>23</sup>

Immediately after the ceremony, Iranian President Ahmadinejad said he was glad that an agreement was reached and expressed his gratitude to Turkey and Brazil for their efforts to broker the agreement. He called the pact a diplomatic victory for the Iranian government. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu told the press that there was no need for additional sanctions or international pressure on Iran.<sup>24</sup> All parties stated that if the agreement was recognized by the Vienna group, Iran would start transferring its uranium the following month.

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<sup>22</sup> Sinkaya.

<sup>23</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "17 Mayıs 2010 tarihli Türkiye, İran ve Brezilya Dışişleri Bakanları Ortak Deklarasyonu,"

[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/17-Mayis-2010-tarihli-turkiye\\_-iran-brezilya-disisleri-bakanlari-ortak-deklarasyonu.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/17-Mayis-2010-tarihli-turkiye_-iran-brezilya-disisleri-bakanlari-ortak-deklarasyonu.tr.mfa)

<sup>24</sup> "İran, Türkiye ve Brezilya ile nükleer anlaşmayı imzaladı," *BBC Turkish*, May 17, 2010, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2010/05/100517\\_turkey\\_iran.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/turkce/haberler/2010/05/100517_turkey_iran.shtml)

Although the articles of the agreement mirrored the framework of previous negotiations between the West and Iran, Western authorities approached the agreement with a critical perspective. The French government stated that the IAEA needed to make the final decision about the agreement, whereas the German government said that such an agreement would not solve the problem of Iran's nuclear program. The reaction of the U.S. administration was even more critical. In a statement on May 18, 2010, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton argued that Iran only consented to the agreement to avoid the additional sanctions that Russia and China had agreed upon in the UN Security Council. Therefore, she made it clear that the agreement would not prevent the imposition of sanctions by the UN Security Council.<sup>25</sup> The day after the Tehran memorandum, Secretary Clinton announced that the Security Council had agreed to pass a new round of sanctions. Of course the harshest critic of the agreement was Israel. The Israeli government called the Brazilian and Turkish attempt to resolve the issue a manipulation.

In this atmosphere, the UN Security Council addressed sanctions against Iran on June 9, 2010. The U.S. administration tried to pressure Turkey to vote 'yes.' Although Turkey was not a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it was important for the Obama administration that Turkey voted on the side of the U.S. to create unanimity. However, Turkish foreign policy would no longer bandwagon to every U.S.-led initiative in international organizations. The Turkish government had put its credibility on the line for this agreement and was willing to abide by its principles and reject new sanctions or escalatory measures that would destabilize the region. This was another demonstration of Turkey's new foreign policy identity that supports regional solutions for regional problems. Just like in the case of the Neighbors of Iraq initiative and Hamas' visit, Turkish foreign policy makers argued that Turkey's position was not anti-Western or anti-U.S., but

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<sup>25</sup> "Clinton attacks Turkey-Brazil deal with Iran," *Financial Times*, May 18, 2010, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/58caa4b4-62a4-11df-b1d1-00144feab49a.html#axzz2bl38PAVy>

for the peaceful resolution of disputes and regional stability. Turkey's new state identity informed its national interest to follow a more peaceful and autonomous foreign policy in the region.

Under these circumstances, the UN Security Council vote turned into a major confrontation in regards to the Iranian nuclear program. While all the permanent members voted affirmative in the UN Security Council, Turkey continued to pursue its policy of engagement despite pressures against it. Eventually, 12 countries voted 'yes' for the sanctions. Two countries, Turkey and Brazil, voted against the measure and Lebanon abstained.<sup>26</sup> During the meeting, the Brazilian and Turkish ambassadors to the UN underlined the problems with a new set of sanctions on Iran. The Brazilian ambassador stated: "We do not see sanctions as an effective instrument in this case. They will most probably lead to the suffering of the people of Iran and will play into the hands of people on all sides who do not want dialogue to prevail." In addition, the Turkish ambassador expressed disappointment about the reluctance of other countries to take into account the Tehran declaration and stated that Turkey was deeply concerned about the consequences of these sanctions on the people in the region.<sup>27</sup> This was a major departure from Turkey's earlier pattern of voting in the UN Security Council and other international organizations. It demonstrated that Turkey's new foreign policy identity would not shy away from standing behind its policies, despite the reaction or pressure from the U.S. or the EU. Despite the explanation of Turkish foreign policy makers, the 'no' vote was regarded as another signal of Turkey's "axis shift" by the Western media and think tank circles. It was even portrayed as a sign of Turkey's willingness to turn away from the Western security establishment and build alliances with states like Iran and Russia.

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<sup>26</sup> See, "Security Council imposes additional sanctions on Iran: Voting 12 in favour to 2 against, with 1 abstention", *United Nations*, June 9, 2010, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2010/sc9948.doc.htm>

<sup>27</sup> "UN votes for new sanctions on Iran over nuclear issue," *BBC*, June 9, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10276276>

Addressing the vote on the June 10<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister Erdoğan also emphasized the impact of this new state identity on Turkey's decision to vote 'no' in the UN Security Council. He stated, "If we had not voted no, we would have refused our identity, we would have refused our signatures, and this would be dishonorable. We could not afford this dishonorable behavior. We do not want to be part of this mistake. History would not forgive us."<sup>28</sup> Foreign Minister Davutoğlu, on the other hand, stated: "We are the only UN Security Council country neighboring Iran. It is always us who has to pay the price for sanctions. We made sure with our vote no that the agreement would remain on the table."

These statements pointed to three important points concerning Turkey's new foreign policy. First, Turkey's credibility and image as an independent actor has a special importance to the extent that even traditional allies could be confronted when Turkey's national and regional interests are at stake. Second, it showed that Turkey had abandoned its traditional, pro-Western foreign policy, which aimed at pleasing its allies, particularly the U.S., even at the expense of surrendering its own priorities and regional stability. In any event, the fact that Turkey voted against the UN Security Council's sanctions on Iran pointed to a turning point based on many different factors. Third, Turkey's position was impacted by its new state identity.

Turkey's performance on the Iranian nuclear issue, particularly its solution method and cooperation with Brazil, revealed many points regarding the AK Party's foreign policy. First of all, this initiative with Brazil became more meaningful in light of the fact that the Iranian nuclear issue was one of the most hotly-debated subjects that kept the international system busy and nearly all actors who were involved in the process had a global character. Turkey's decision to take initiative in such a global issue showed that it would be different from other rising powers, whose ascendance could generally only be

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<sup>28</sup> "Hayır demeseydik onursuz olurduk," *T24*, June 10, 2010, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/hayir-demeseydik-onursuz-olurduk/80128>

seen through economic indicators. In other words, Turkey revealed that it was willing to wield its power on regional and global matters and take initiative, and if a conflict arose between the agendas of the traditional powers of the international system, it would remain loyal to its own agenda. This picture strengthened Turkey's perception as a principled, independent power, which expanded its credibility and space to exercise soft power.

On the other hand, a strong geopolitical ground existed on which Turkey's desire to seek a solution to the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomacy was based. This geopolitical ground had economic, energy and security dimensions. The improvement in Turkish-Iranian relations was an important factor in Ankara's attempt to resolve this issue through peaceful means. Trade relations between the two countries rose from slightly above \$1 billion in 2000 to more than \$10 billion in 2010.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Turkey's energy needs as a developing economy has been steadily increasing each year. Iran was Turkey's second largest energy provider after Russia at the time, meeting 20 percent of its energy needs.<sup>30</sup> If Turkey had agreed to the sanctions, relations between the two countries would have received a sharp blow, risking the energy provided by Iran and perhaps making even more Turkey dependent on Russia, which would create security issues. Lastly, Turkey and Iran collaborated against the PKK and the PJAK by sharing intelligence. Therefore, there were realpolitik and normative grounds on which Turkey's efforts to conduct diplomacy for the resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue were based.

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<sup>29</sup> "Turkey, Iran aim to triple trade volume to \$30 bln," *Sunday's Zaman*, February 7, 2011, [http://www.todayszaman.com/latest-news\\_turkey-iran-aim-to-triple-trade-volume-to-30-bln\\_234803.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/latest-news_turkey-iran-aim-to-triple-trade-volume-to-30-bln_234803.html)

<sup>30</sup> Meliha Benli Altunışık, "Turkey's Changing Middle East Policy." UNISCI Discussion Papers, No.23, May 2010.

## FULL TEXT OF THE TEHRAN DECLARATION

### JOINT DECLARATION BY IRAN, TURKEY AND BRAZIL

(May 17, 2010)

Having met in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, the undersigned have agreed on the following Declaration:

1. We reaffirm our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and in accordance with the related articles of the NPT, recall the right of all State Parties, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy (as well as nuclear fuel cycle including enrichment activities) for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

2. We express our strong conviction that we have the opportunity now to begin a forward looking process that will create a positive, constructive, non-confrontational atmosphere leading to an era of interaction and cooperation.

3. We believe that the nuclear fuel exchange is instrumental in initiating cooperation in different areas, especially with regard to peaceful nuclear cooperation including nuclear power plant and research reactors construction.

4. Based on this point the nuclear fuel exchange is a starting point to begin cooperation and a positive constructive move forward among nations. Such a move should lead to positive interaction and cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear activities replacing and avoiding all kinds of confrontation through refraining from measures, actions and rhetorical statements that would jeopardize Iran's rights and obligations under the

NPT.

5. Based on the above, in order to facilitate the nuclear cooperation mentioned above, the Islamic Republic of Iran agrees to deposit 1200 kg LEU in Turkey. While in Turkey this LEU will continue to be the property of Iran. Iran and the IAEA may station observers to monitor the safekeeping of the LEU in Turkey.

6. Iran will notify the IAEA in writing through official channels of its agreement with the above within seven days following the date of this declaration. Upon the positive response of the Vienna Group (US, Russia, France and the IAEA) further details of the exchange will be elaborated through a written agreement and proper arrangement between Iran and the Vienna Group that specifically committed themselves to deliver 120 kg of fuel needed for the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR).

7. When the Vienna Group declares its commitment to this provision, then both parties would commit themselves to the implementation of the agreement mentioned in item 6. Islamic Republic of Iran expressed its readiness to deposit its LEU (1200 kg) within one month. On the basis of the same agreement the Vienna Group should deliver 120 kg fuel required for TRR in no later than one year.

8. In case the provisions of this Declaration are not respected Turkey, upon the request of Iran, will return swiftly and unconditionally Iran's LEU to Iran.

9. We welcome the decision of the Islamic Republic of Iran to continue as in the past their talks with the 5+1 countries in Turkey on the common concerns based on collective commitments according to the common points of their proposals.

10. Turkey and Brazil appreciated Iran's commitment to the NPT and its constructive role in pursuing the realization of nuclear rights of its member states. The



Islamic Republic of Iran likewise appreciated the constructive efforts of the friendly countries Turkey and Brazil in creating the conducive environment for realization of Iran's nuclear rights.

## **CHAPTER 7**

## **CONCLUSION: TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE AK PARTY ERA: A PARADIGM SHIFT AND POSSIBILITIES**

From the day that Turkey embraced the multi-party system until 2002, Turkey's foreign policy consisted of debates and policies regarding only three issues: NATO, Cyprus and the PKK. Of these three topics, the intervention in Cyprus and the fight against the PKK can, to some extent, be considered proactive policies. Turkey's decision to join the NATO, however, can be regarded as a passive relationship in the post-WWII global order. When the AK Party came to power, a profound change took place regarding proactive policy topics, while no such change has been observed in the area of mainstream Turkish foreign policy. In other words, while the AK Party has maintained its relations with NATO and took important steps in the process of integration with the European Union, it instituted radical policy change in the approaches corresponding to local and regional problems.

The AK Party launched its first term in office with its foreign policy agenda. When the AK Party came to power in November 2002, only about a year after the 9/11 attacks, Afghanistan was under occupation and the countdown to the invasion of Iraq had begun. Domestic policy was not the first order of business for the AK Party, which was perceived as an "Islamist Party" that came in to power when the world was dealing with the

aftermath of 9/11. On the contrary, it was confronted by serious foreign policy crises, such as the Iraq War. The AK Party leadership, who had only a few months of experience, started to commute between Washington and Ankara to negotiate a deal to allow the launching of U.S. troops from Turkish soil.

The U.S. administration, which had hitherto enjoyed Turkey's almost unconditional support in most foreign policy affairs, expected that the AK Party would follow suit. The United States believed that it could use its close ties to the secular, civil and military establishment's power to strong-arm Turkey into supporting American policy in Iraq, even if the sitting government disagreed. U.S. political elites and analysts were shocked and disappointed when the bill to open a 'second front' in Northern Iraq for the U.S. was rejected in the TBMM on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003.<sup>1</sup> Instead of trying to understand the main dynamics that led to this decision and trying to grasp Turkey's new approach to foreign policy, American pundits claimed that the refusal was motivated by the identity politics of the founding cadres of the AK Party, who rose up from the ranks of the Islamist tradition. This was also seen as an axis shift in Turkish politics. In fact, the claim that the U.S. authorities resented the secular establishment, especially the military, for allowing this political landscape to emerge could easily be made.<sup>2</sup>

During this period, the AK Party diversified Turkish foreign policy making, which had remained stagnant within those three issues, then gradually transitioned from following a passive, reactive and status quo-oriented foreign policy to pursuing a proactive and, in some instances, revisionist foreign policy. It would be safe to say that as of today, the AK Party follows the same pro-active position in most regional and, occasionally, international

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<sup>1</sup> See, "Turkey snubs U.S., rejects troops," *Chicago Tribune*, March 2, 2003, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-03-02/news/0303020278\\_1\\_turkish-parliament-turkish-constitution-prime-minister-abdullah-gul](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-03-02/news/0303020278_1_turkish-parliament-turkish-constitution-prime-minister-abdullah-gul)

<sup>2</sup> See "ABD'den Özkök'e şükran mektubu," *Sabah*, June 28, 2003.

<http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2003/06/28/w/p06.html>; "Hatanızı Kabul Edin," *Hürriyet*, 7 May 2003.

problems. The diversification includes both region and issue area. Turkey has been very vocal in its criticism of the human rights abuses in Myanmar and China and also very critical to the overthrow of the democratically elected government in Egypt. It also included different foreign policy initiatives towards Latin America And Africa. This diversification and increased engagement with actors in the region as well as in the globe dramatically influenced the identity of the Turkish state.

In the meantime, domestic democratic reforms in Turkey, which increased public leverage over foreign policy also contributed to the consolidation of Turkey's new identity. This new identity was shaped by the AK Party's vision, democratic domestic reforms and public opinion. It informed a new kind of foreign policy, which was more autonomous, engaging and proactive than mainstream Turkish foreign policy. However, what strengthened this new identity and helped it overcome the previous state identity was the interaction of the Turkish state with other actors in the region and the international system. The new foreign policy informed by this state identity demonstrated itself in different instances. In relation with the Middle Eastern countries, it showed that Turkey has gradually abandoned its non-intervention and non-interference policies and has started to engage with both state and non-state actors in the Middle East. This socialization with regional actors reaffirms Turkey's new state identity and reinforces its new role in the Middle East. As it started to be considered a major actor in the region, Turkey further internalized this new identity. This domestic construction and external reinforcement of Turkey's new identity allowed Ankara to stand firm against Western criticism and pressure to revert back to its traditional foreign policy line. Despite all the political and media campaigns, Turkey preferred to maintain its autonomous and pro-active foreign policy with a regional focus. In the previously mentioned cases, Turkey tried to assert this new identity through a gradual opening to the West and a reinforcement of its independence in foreign

policy. In all three instances, Turkey acted independently, without considering their actions as anti-Western.

### THE SEARCH FOR FOREIGN POLICY AUTONOMY AND THE SHIFT OF AXIS DEBATE

By adopting a proactive foreign policy approach, the AK Party made it clear that it would not refrain from pursuing different policies than those of the West, which had previously constituted the main reference point for Turkish foreign and security policy. This did not stem from an anti-Western motive that lacked philosophical and political depth. On the contrary, the intellectual foundation of this new foreign policy reflected the historical conception of Turkey's new political leaders, the meaning that they attributed to Turkey's geographical location, and their multi-cultural understanding. This approach manifests itself most clearly in the concept "center country" developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu, the main intellectual architect of the AK Party's foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

Many policies that resulted from Turkey's vision of becoming a "center country" led to the emergence of a debate in the West on whether Turkey was shifting its axis. This new debate can only be understood if the logic on which Turkey's pre-AK Party foreign policy rests is clearly interpreted. Reflecting the identity that it engrained within the new state through its nation-building process, the Kemalists understanding of foreign policy positioned its relations with almost all neighboring regions within a security and threat paradigm, while establishing passive, unilateral relations with the West. During this era, the Middle East was regarded as the geography of Islamist and Kurdish identities and ideologies, which were other-ized and thus seen as a threat to Turkey's pro-Western

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<sup>3</sup> For the concept of center country and a comprehensive analysis of the elements upon which it is based, see Şaban Kardaş, *From Zero Problems to Leading the Change: Making Sense of Transformation in Turkey's Regional Policy*, TEPAV Turkey Policy Brief Series, 2012.

orientation.<sup>4</sup> This approach is seen most clearly in the depiction of the Middle East by the Kemalist elites as a “swampland.”<sup>5</sup> In addition, Central Asia and the Caucasus were seen as the natural backyard of Russia, an actor to be avoided, and despite a brief moment of activism exhibited after the end of the Cold War, superficial relations were developed that lacked a clear strategic vision. Thus, until the AK Party came to power, Turkey’s foreign policy elites read the geography in which Turkey was situated within a security framework and kept its relations with the region at the lowest possible level.

On the other hand, the AK Party believed that the Afro-Eurasian area was the leading region in the world politically, economically, and in terms of energy resources, and that as Turkey was located at the crossroad of the three continents, it had the potential of a “center country” due to both its geographical location and its historical experience.<sup>6</sup> Such an approach made it necessary to interpret the surrounding geographies not with a security perception but from a perspective of opportunity in order to develop improved, strategic and multi-dimensional relations with these geographies and become involved in regional developments with a more active, initiating role. The most important feature of this new policy was that the policymaking process was first filtered by Ankara and not by Washington, Brussels or NATO. The fact that the policymaking process gained a Turkey-centered nature suggested that more divergence from the foreign policies pursued by the West was now possible. Every incidence of divergence in foreign policy priorities and practices between Turkey and Western countries contributed to a discourse about Turkey shifting its axis. Turkey’s attempts, as an autonomous and proactive actor, to establish

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<sup>4</sup> For an assessment of the geographies, ideas, and identities securitized by the Kemalist nation-state ideology, see Galip Dalay, “Kurdish Peace Process: The latest phase of de-securitisation politics,” *Al Jazeera Opinion*, May 14, 2003, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/05/2013514154722778273.html>

<sup>5</sup> For an assessment of the depiction of the Middle East as a “swampland” by Turkish foreign policy, see Taha Özhan, “Kemalizm’e Ricat!,” *Star Açık Görüş*, July 27, 2013, <http://haber.stargazete.com/acikgorus/kemalizme-ricat/haber-776381>

<sup>6</sup> Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik*, introduction.

closer and healthier relations with regional countries and to determine and implement a foreign policy approach in line with its own priorities, values, and strategic vision led to Western accusations of shifting its axis. In the last few years, we witnessed similar forms of shift of axis debates about Turkish foreign policy. Both during the civil war in Syria and the coup in Egypt, Turkey's positions were criticized as turning away from the West and an example of shift of axis. However again the future studies in these two crises will demonstrate that it was another show of the autonomy of Turkish foreign policy. Although Turkey never gave up its positions in the Western world, these policy divergences always considered as a major shift from its Western orientation.

The shift of axis debate did not simply occur with regard to a single incident or a limited period of time. Instead, whenever the AK Party displayed a deviation from the codes of "traditional" Turkish foreign policy, it became the target of "shift of axis" accusations. In other words, the "shift of axis" debate was the expression of the feeling of disturbance caused by the paradigm shift in Turkish foreign policy. A healthier approach to analyzing the paradigm shift in the AK Party's foreign policy—rather than taking the easy route of reductionist analysis—would have required a closer examination of critical turning points. This study tried to contribute to the effort to understand Turkey's new foreign policy and state identity.



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