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**EKSEN KAYMASI TARTIŐMALARINA YENİ SOLUK: TÜRKiYE DIŐ POLİTİKASININ
POLİTİK EKONOMİ PERSPEKTİFİNDEN ANALİZİ**

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TABLE of CONTENT

I.	INTRODUCTION	4
A.	Background information.....	4
B.	Objective	6
C.	Argument.....	6
D.	Content	7
II.	LITERATURE REVIEW	8
1.	The Zero Problems with the Neighbours.....	8
2.	The Strategic Depth Doctrine.....	9
3.	Perspectives explaining new Turkish foreign policy	9
III.	ASSUMPTIONS and HYPOTHESIS	16
IV.	CONTENT ANALYSIS	18
A.	Case Selection:	18
B.	Findings of the Analysis.....	19
1.	The role of trade agreements in the rapprochement between Turkey and Syria	19
2.	The Role of business associations in TFP	24
V.	CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION	33
VI.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	35

ÖZET

Son yıllarda Türkiye'nin dış politikasının batıdan doğuya doğru 'ksen kayması' yaşadığı ile ilgili tartışmalar alevlenmiştir. Literatürde birçok yazar ve akademisyen son on yılda Türkiye'nin dış politikasının doğuya doğru kaydığını ileri sürmüştür. Bizde bu makalede ksen kayması tartışmasına yeni bir bakış açısı sunmaya çalıştık. Literatürdeki birçok çalışma Türkiye'nin yeni dış politikasını Realist ve Konstruktivist teorileri kullanarak incelemiştir. Bu çalışmalar TDP'nı AKP'nin seçimine, devlette ve toplumda artan İslamist düşüncelere bağlamışlardır. Bizde literatüre Türk dış politikasına farklı bir perspektiften bakarak katkı sağladık. TDP'sını politik ekonomi argümanlarını kullanarak inceledik. Bu amaçla 100'den fazla gazete ile politikacıların toplantılardaki konuşmalarının 'content' analizini yaptık. Ulaştığımız sonuç ise şöyledir: Son on yılda Türkiye dış politikası değişime uğramıştır. Ancak bu değişimi sadece politik faktörlere bağlamak yanlıştır. İlk olarak, Türkiye; Suriye, İran ve Irak gibi ülkelerle ticaret anlaşmaları yolu ile yeni ticari ilişkiler kurarak politik problemlerini çözme yoluna gitmiştir. (örnek: Hatay problemi) Buna ek olarak, Türkiye'de son on yılda güçlenen anadoludaki conservative iş adamları 'anatolian tigers' ve dernekleri Türkiye'nin yeni dış politikasının doğuyla daha yakın ilişkiler kurmasına yardımcı olmuştur. Ancak Irak gibi politik problemlerin göz ardı edilemez olduğu ülkelerle bu ekonomik sürecin politik iyileşmeye ulaşması gözlemlenememiştir.

ABSTRACT

The debates on Turkish foreign policy have flared up in the last years. Many of the journalists and academicians claim that the axis of Turkish foreign policy has shifted from West to East, and, many of their studies focus on state-based and identity-based explanations. According to these arguments, the re-election of Justice and Development Party (AKP) and increasing conservative groups within government and the public has given rise to eastern oriented Turkish foreign policy. In this article, we aim to contribute to the literature by analyzing Turkish foreign policy from political economy perspective. We did content analysis of over 100 newspapers and policy speeches of decision-makers. At the end of our research, we found out that the main driver of new Turkish foreign policy is economic considerations. Namely, Turkey solved its political problems with countries as Syria and Iran through establishing trade links via trade agreements. Also, within last decade rising conservative businessmen 'Anatolian tigers' whose economic interest lay in the Middle Eastern region became influential players in Turkish foreign policy. However, we cannot observe similar pattern in Turkey' relations with Iraq since both sides need to take political initiatives to establish close relations.

'Peace at Home, Peace in the World'.

M. Kemal Atatürk

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background information

After the second electoral victory of Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP), plenty of articles and journals have gathered around the question of whether Turkey is experiencing an axis shift meaning that Turkey is moving away from the West towards the East. Even though AKP government consistently rejects these claims by saying that 'Turkey's axis is the whole world, hence there is no axis shift' (Acar and Aydin 2011: 2), considering Turkish policy makers' attitudes and decisions in the last decade, it is clear that Turkey has been following a different foreign policy compared to previous years. The new Turkish foreign policy (TFP) can be understood best by looking at the book called *Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)*¹ written by Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu, in which he claims that Turkey owns a 'strategic depth' in the region because of its historical and cultural ties with the Eastern countries so 'Turkey should be exploiting its position as a "central country" within a vital region of the world, something he felt it had thus far failed to do'. (Handy 2011: 62) Additionally, in his book, Davutoglu presents ideas that, later, constituted AKP government's 'zero problems with the neighbours' doctrine which aims to minimize the problems with neighbouring countries, and, establishing cultural and economic relations to overcome political crisis. Shortly, even though, there is no agreement on the axis shift debates in the literature, the transformation in Turkish foreign policy is obvious.

Within the last decade, the change in the pattern of Turkish foreign trade can be observed. According to data, the EU's share in Turkish foreign trade has been declining since 2005 while the share of Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Russia has been increasing substantially. Specifically, in exports, even though EU remains to be the main exporter of the Turkish products (41,5 %; 2013), its share in Turkish trade has

¹ For more information about the articulation of Turkish foreign policy, see Ahmet Davutoglu's book: Ahmet Davutoglu, 'Strategic Depth', Kure Yayinlari, 2001.

been declining, meanwhile, Middle Eastern and Asian countries' shares have been on the rise. In imports, we can see the similar trend that the EU products were replaced by Eastern ones since early 2000s, and, Sait Akman, who is an expert in international trade, also verified this claim by giving numbers in his article as follows 'total share of the EU-27 was only 38.9 percent in 2010 compared to 52 percent in 1996'. (Akman 2012: 142) Furthermore, under the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the business associations such as Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu-DEİK), and the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association (Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği-MÜSİAD) have become a significant player in Turkish government's policy making process. Therefore, the establishment of new economic relations with Middle Eastern countries and the emergence of influential business actors whose economic interests mainly lie within the region, led Turkey to engage in its neighbouring countries more closely.

Exports by Country Group and Year (Share in Total %)												
Ülke Grubu	Yıl (Share %)										Country Groups	
	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004		TOTAL
TOPLAM	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	TOTAL
A- AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ (AB 28)	41.1	38.0	40.4	40.7	40.2	40.3	40.9	40.9	40.9	40.1	40.1	A- EUROPEAN UNION (EU 28)
B- TÜRKİYE SERBE ST BÖLGELERİ	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	B- FREE ZONE'S IN TURKEY
C- DİĞER ÜLKELER	58.0	61.0	58.7	58.7	58.8	58.7	58.1	58.1	58.1	58.8	58.8	C- OTHER COUNTRIES
1- Diğer Avrupa (AB Harici)	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	1- Other European Countries
2- Kuzey Afrika	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2- North African Countries
3- Diğer Afrika	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.4	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.6	3- Other African Countries
4- Kuzey Amerika	4.3	4.4	4.0	3.7	3.6	3.0	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.2	4- North American Countries
5- Güney Amerika ve Karayipler	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	5- Central America and Caribbean
6- Güney Amerika	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.1	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	6- South American Countries
7- Yakın ve Orta Doğu	27.4	27.8	26.7	26.0	18.8	19.3	14.1	13.2	13.0	12.0	12.0	7- Near and Middle Eastern
8- Diğer Asya	7.8	8.8	7.8	7.8	8.8	8.4	8.8	8.8	4.1	4.0	4.0	8- Other Asian Countries
9- Avustralya ve Yeni Zelanda	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	9- Australia and New Zealand
10- Diğer Ülkeler ve Bölgeler	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.6	1.1	0.8	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	10- Other Countries

Imports by Country Group and Year (Share in Total %)												
Ülke Grubu	Yıl (Share %)										Country Groups	
	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004		TOTAL
TOPLAM	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	TOTAL
A- AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ (AB 28)	36.7	37.3	36.0	36.0	40.2	39.9	40.3	42.0	42.0	40.3	40.3	A- EUROPEAN UNION (EU 28)
B- TÜRKİYE SERBE ST BÖLGELERİ	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	B- FREE ZONE'S IN TURKEY
C- DİĞER ÜLKELER	63.3	62.7	64.0	64.0	59.1	60.4	59.0	57.3	57.3	59.0	59.0	C- OTHER COUNTRIES
1- Diğer Avrupa (AB Harici)	10.4	10.3	10.0	10.2	10.2	11.0	10.1	10.4	11.4	10.1	10.1	1- Other European Countries
2- Kuzey Afrika	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.4	2- North African Countries
3- Diğer Afrika	1.0	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.4	1.4	1.4	3- Other African Countries
4- Kuzey Amerika	8.5	8.4	7.2	7.1	9.0	9.0	8.1	8.0	8.0	8.2	8.2	4- North American Countries
5- Güney Amerika ve Karayipler	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	5- Central America and Caribbean
6- Güney Amerika	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	6- South American Countries
7- Yakın ve Orta Doğu	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	7- Near and Middle Eastern
8- Diğer Asya	21.7	21.0	22.1	21.7	20.4	19.0	19.0	19.4	17.0	16.0	16.0	8- Other Asian Countries
9- Avustralya ve Yeni Zelanda	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9- Australia and New Zealand
10- Diğer Ülkeler ve Bölgeler	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	10- Other Countries

TABLE: Turkish Foreign Trade by Country Groups (%)²

² Data source is Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) website:
http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046

B. Objective

Why do these economic factors matter? Studying Turkey's economic relations with the Middle Eastern countries and the relationship between the state and business associations will help us to understand the underlying dynamics of the new Turkish foreign policy.

The goal of this study is to take a political economy approach and answer the following question: what are the reasons of the reorientation of Turkish foreign policy from West to the East within the last decade? In other words, this paper will explore the economic factors that lie behind the transformation of Turkish foreign policy under the AKP government. We are focusing on a broad time period, 2002-2010 in order to see the changes in Turkish foreign policy more clearly.

C. Argument

We claim that, since early 2000s, Turkish foreign policy has reoriented itself from West to East which can be seen in Turkish government's recent actions such as taking sides with the Middle Eastern countries in the international disputes and initiating friendly relations with its neighbours in the East, meanwhile, having disagreements with its traditional Western allies such as EU, US and Israel. But, why?

We argue that it is because of the economic concerns such as: export-import markets, energy supplies, and businessmen's investments. In this paper, we utilize the theories and notions of political economy in order to explain why Turkish government has taken such a new attitude towards Eastern countries. We will use *neofunctionalist and interdependence theories*, and, Stephen Bell's typology in order to understand Turkey's diplomatic relations with the countries: Syria, Iraq, Iran and European Union.

My argument goes as follows: Firstly, our hypothesis is that even though there is no axis shift as it is assumed by the West, Turkey has been following a new foreign policy

which is mainly affected by the economic factors. Namely, Turkish foreign policy has been experiencing a transformation from pro-Western only approach to multilateral one.

Secondly, we explain why this transformation in Turkish foreign policy has been taking place. Our point is that the establishment of economic interdependence as a result of the regional trade and energy agreements, and, businessmen's large-scale investments in Middle East, who has become influential in policy making throughout years, led Turkish government to follow pro-Eastern policies.

D. Content

The organisation of this paper is as the following. In the first section, we will summarise the literature on Turkish foreign policy in order to illustrate the fewness of the studies that used political economy perspective. In the second section, we will discuss about our hypothesis and expectations. In the third section, we will present the findings of our content analysis of the newspapers. And, lastly, we will sum up the findings of the paper and highlight its contribution to the axis-shift debate.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is evident that since it came to power in 2002, Justice and Development party (AKP) has adopted different foreign policy objectives as *strategic depth doctrine* and *zero problems with the neighbours*, which were formulated by the foreign minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoglu. This new vision in Turkish foreign policy led to the question of whether Turkey is reorienting itself to Middle East. In the literature, apart from few scholars such as Kemal Kirisci and Mustafa Kutluay, we could not find many articles studying on new Turkish foreign policy by using specifically political economy approach. In other words, most of the articles utilized realist and identity-based approaches while explaining Turkey's recent foreign policy actions. Therefore, in this study, we aim to fill this gap in the literature and bring a new perspective into axis-shift debate.

Before we present the articles on Turkish foreign policy, we will define two notions that were developed by Davutoglu because they are frequently mentioned in the literature.

1. The Zero Problems with the Neighbours

In the articulation of new Turkish foreign policy, *zero problems with the neighbours* doctrine has played a significant role. Over the last decade, we have seen Turkey's endeavours to solve the political problems such as Hatay dispute and water problem with the neighbouring countries. Additionally, Turkey has actively involved in peace talks between conflicting countries such as Syria-Israel. Even though, it is hard to say whether this new policy is the result or the reason of the increasing economic relations with Middle Eastern countries as Kirisci and Kaptanoglu put it 'typical chicken and egg question' (Kirisci and Kaptanoglu 2011: 715), we can claim that one would not be possible without the other. And, the establishment of economic integration facilitated the implementation of zero problems policy.

2. The Strategic Depth Doctrine

Davutoglu's second notion is *strategic depth* that he used while formulating new Turkish foreign policy. According to this doctrine, Turkey has a strategic depth stemming from its cultural and historical links with the neighbouring countries, and, its geographic location. However, according to Davutoglu, Turkey has failed to take advantage of this opportunity, thereby, he developed strategic plans with the aim of utilizing Turkey's strategic depth to establish economic and political relations with the countries in the region.

3. Perspectives explaining new Turkish foreign policy

a) *Neorealist perspective of Turkish foreign policy*

According to the neorealist theory, as developed by Kenneth Waltz, the international arena consists of power struggles, therefore, it is such an 'anarchic order' (Waltz 1988: 624), so countries should follow their self-interests and take measures to preserve their own security. Some scholars, who take this approach, can visualize the new Turkish foreign policy as aspiration for becoming global powerful player. Considering the speeches of Turkish foreign policy makers and investments in defence industry in the recent years, it is not wrong to say that Turkey does aim to become a global actor. It is also apparent in defence minister of Turkey Vecdi Gonul's one of the speeches '...the engine of the new version of F-135 jets will be produced in Turkey. The defence minister of Turkey, Vecdi Gonul, says this is an indicator that Turkey is going beyond its border and becoming a global player'. (Sarac 2010)³ In addition, we can see the signs of realist view in Davutoglu's book named 'Strategic Depth' in which he 'likens the structure of world to a chess game'. (Sarac 2010) Namely, in his book, he points out the different power structures in the international arena and their struggle to survive that shows similarities with the realist notion of anarchy.

³ <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/turkish-foreign-policy-in-theory-and-practice.html>

Additionally, in the literature, scholars, who have adopted a realist view in elucidating new Turkish Foreign Policy, put forward security-based explanations. They argue that the emergence of the multipolar world as a result of collapse of Soviet Union enabled regional powers as Turkey to follow active and multi-dimensional foreign policy. Namely, the papers, which adopted this approach, discuss the influence of the changes in power structures in the 21st century, as Mustafa Kutlay puts it 'power shift' (Kutluay 2011: 68), on new Turkish foreign policy. Even though realist perspective takes into consideration the effects of the economic changes within the last decade, it does not pay enough attention to economic factors lying behind the new Turkish foreign policy.

b) Identity-based perspective of Turkish foreign policy

In the literature, there are numerous articles focusing on identity-based explanations while studying the new Turkish foreign policy. According to this approach, the Islamic roots of Justice and Development Party (AKP) is the reason of the government's positive attitude towards Muslim countries. In addition, the rising popularity of Erdogan throughout Middle East due to his Islamist background facilitated the establishment of close relations with the Middle Eastern countries. To exemplify, Yucel Bozdaglioglu adopts identity-based approach in explaining the new Turkish foreign policy. He points out the relationship between the Turkish foreign policy and 'domestic identity considerations'. (Bozdaglioglu 2008: 72) Namely, he claims that the previous pro-Western foreign policy of Turkey was a part of the Westernization project of the Kemalist regime, however, with the rise of AKP, this attitude has changed and it has also affected the TFP. According to him, 'AKP leaders see Turkey's relations with the West as complementary to its relations with the Middle East, not as an alternative'. (Bozdaglioglu 2008: 71) Thus, in the last decade, Turkey's deteriorating relations with EU and US '...lies in the prominence of ideological concerns in the AKP foreign policy'. (Bozdaglioglu 2008: 69)

Some scholars interpret the new Turkish foreign policy as a manifestation of Neo-Ottomanism which is a term firstly used to describe Turgut Ozal's pro-active Middle Eastern policy in 1990s. Generally, it implies Turkey's 'intense and advanced engagement with the areas formerly under the Ottoman rule'. (Ozturk 2013: 1)

Therefore, to some, the similarity between Davutoglu's strategic depth doctrine and Turgut Ozal's foreign policy underpins the argument that AKP government adopts a Neo-Ottomanist ideology. For instance, Michael Rubin analyses the Turkish newspapers and he states that 'behind rhetoric of bridging East and West, the AKP is enacting a policy of "neo-Ottomanism".' (Rubin 2004: 1)⁴ On the other hand, some scholars as Bulent Aras criticised the neo-Ottomanist attribution to Turkish foreign policy by saying that 'it would be misleading to consider neo-Ottomanism as the primary motive behind Davutoglu's geo-political imagination'. (Aras 2009: 7)

Even though identity-based perspective has some explanatory power, the new Turkish foreign policy cannot be understood fully without a reference to the economic factors.

c) Political Economy perspective of Turkish Foreign Policy

Even though they are few, there are articles focusing on the economic considerations and role of business associations while explaining the new Turkish foreign policy. Some of them are Kemal Kirisci's 'The Transformation of Turkish foreign policy: The rise of trading state', Mustafa Kutlay's 'Economy as the "Practical Hand" of "New Turkish Foreign Policy": A Political Economy Explanation', and Altay Atli's 'Businessmen as Diplomats: The Role of Business Associations in Turkey's Foreign Economic Policy' etc.

(1) Rosecrance's notion of trading state and Putnam's idea of two level diplomatic games

One of the articles written by Kemal Kirisci adopts Richard Rosecrance's notion of *trading state* and Robert Putnam's idea of *two-level diplomatic games* in order to analyse Turkish foreign policy making process.⁵ According Rosecrance, with the end of World Wars, new era has begun in which the relationship between countries has been

⁴ <http://www.meforum.org/628/shifting-slides>

⁵ Kemal Kirişçi, 'The transformation of Turkish foreign policy: The rise of the trading state', (Boğaziçi university: Istanbul, 2009).

highly dominated by the trade links. In addition, he claims that this trading world gave rise to the emergence of the 'trading state'⁶ that don't engage in military conflicts because of their potential harm on the economies and the involvement of various actors in the decision-making process who give privilege to economic considerations. Kirisci applies Rosecrance's notion to the Turkish case and he argues that Turkey's new foreign policy is the result of its process of becoming trading state. He points out the role of economic factors in the Turkish foreign policy as follows, 'Turkish foreign policy in the last couple of years has increasingly been shaped by economic considerations- such as export markets, investment opportunities, tourism, energy supplies and the like.' (Kirisci 2009: 39)

Furthermore, Kirisci refers to Robert D. Putnam's concept of *two level diplomatic games*. According to Putnam, policy-making negotiations involve two levels: (1) within state and (2) between the state and its constituencies.⁷ Thus, it can be claimed the foreign policy is not constrained to the negotiations between policy-makers. And, Kirisci utilized this notion to examine the impact of Turkish business associations on the foreign policy-making process.

Kirisci's arguments and two concepts mentioned above are useful in understanding the new Turkish foreign policy. Hence, we will use some of them while analysing Turkey's relations with the countries such as Syria, Iraq and Iran.

(2) State-businessmen relationship and Turkish foreign policy

The other article, which was written by Altay Atli, explores the relationship between state and business groups in order to shed light on the Turkish foreign policy-making process. In the paper, Atli makes reference to Stephen Bell's categorization of business associations' roles which are as the following:

- (1) Limited quasi-public roles or state service functions: collecting information and passing it on to policy makers, expressing the opinion

⁶Richard Rosecrance, 'The Rise of the Trading State : Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World', (New York: Basic Books, 1986)

⁷ For more information, Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games', (International Organizations, 1988)

of the business community, sitting on state advisory bodies, explaining public policy decisions to members, and trialing proposed new legislation; (2) Policy formulation: the association is entitled to a public status and in collaboration with public officials and politicians, it plays a formal role in the shaping of public policy; and (3) Policy implementation: a formal quasi-public role in implementing public policy.⁸

Atli uses this typology to find out to what extent business associations are influential in policy-making process. After his analysis, he reached the conclusion that even though Turkish business associations perform the duties that are defined under the Bell's first and second item, they have a limited power in Bell's third item of 'policy implementation'. Namely, Atli claims that the business groups involve in policy-making process via arranging large-scale business events, participating state visits to abroad and their representation in intergovernmental meetings, however, policy implementation is undertaken by politicians.

Furthermore, he points out the significance of economic relations in foreign policy under the AKP government as follows, '...new foreign policy paradigm adopted by the AKP government, which involved "constructive engagement in its neighbourhood and beyond" and relied on the improvement of bilateral economic and commercial relations as a tool of engagement'. (Atli 2011: 116)

Kemal Kirisci and Neslihan Kaptanoglu also examine the business associations' role in Turkey's recent relations with the neighbouring countries. For example, they claim that AKP's efforts to improve relations with countries as Greece and Syria is a manifestation of '...business- and trade-oriented actors increasingly began to shape foreign policy making with respect to these countries...' (Kirisci and Kaptanoglu 2011: 716) Additionally, they regard the Turkey's mediation efforts in the region and its vote against UN sanctions on Iran as the result of economic concerns.

⁸ Altay Atli, 'Businessmen as Diplomats: The Role of Business Associations in Turkey's Foreign Economic Policy', (Insight Turkey, 2011)

(3) Functionalism and Interdependence theory

Another article, which was written by Mustafa Kutlay, adopts two interlinked political economy approaches: functionalism and interdependence⁹ in explaining new Turkish foreign policy. According to neofunctionalist theory, economic integration between countries facilitates the cooperation in political fields that is also defined as a spill over from low politics to high politics. Thus, in the light of this theory, it can be argued that establishment of trade relations with Middle Eastern countries and large-scale investments of Turkish companies in the region brought about the rapprochement between Turkey and its neighbours in the region. Kutlay gives an example to this argument by referring to the improving relations between Turkey and Syria within the last decade, 'the recent political openings have found their ways via bilateral economic relations. For example, Turkey's engagement with Syria [in 2009] resulted in the reciprocal abolishment of visa requirements... Turkish Syrian businessmen are preparing for joint projects in the tourism and industrial sectors'. (Kutlay 2011: 78) In other words, it is claimed that AK Party uses its economic relations with the Middle Eastern countries in order to solve political problems. According to interdependence theory, which have similar arguments with neofunctionalism, "states are by no means the only actors in world politics".¹⁰ (Kutlay 2011: 71) In addition, interdependence theory puts importance to the multiple channels in decision-making process including business actors that is regarded as relevant for the new Turkish foreign policy by Kutlay. Shortly, Mustafa Kutlay argues that AKP government's logic shows similarities with functionalist and interdependence approaches, thereby, Turkey's active foreign policy is the result of it. And, he calls economics as the 'practical hand of Turkish policy-makers to solve the disputes in high political issues'. (Kutlay 2011: 85)

Now, we are moving on to the next section.

⁹ Mustafa Kutlay, 'Economy as the "Practical Hand" of "New Turkish Foreign Policy": A Political Economy Explanation', (Insight Turkey, 2011)

¹⁰ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, 'An Introduction' in Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (eds.), 'Transnational Relations and World Politics', (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973)

III. ASSUMPTIONS and HYPOTHESIS

In this study, we aim to explore the impact of bilateral trade and energy agreements with the countries in the region and business associations on the Turkey's new foreign policy consisting of rapprochement and 'constructive engagement in its neighbourhood'. (Davutoglu 2009: 13) Specifically, we analyse Turkey's economic and diplomatic relations with the following countries: Syria, Iraq, Iran and the European Union because, since 2002, they constitute the significant part of Turkish foreign policy. Additionally, the debates concerning Turkey's shift of axis from West to East have specifically gathered around these countries and we believe that even though there is no axis shift as it is claimed by some groups, since 2002, Turkey has been trying a new foreign policy that is mainly shaped by two factors: (1) trade and energy relationship with countries in the region, (2) conservative business class. Through the content analysis of the newspapers and speeches of policy-makers and businessmen, this paper intends to demonstrate how economic and commercial relations play a key role in the realization of AKP government's foreign policy objectives. While doing text analysis, we employ the neofunctionalist ideas and Stephen Bell's typology.

According to neofunctionalist theory, economic integration has a potential to spill over into other fields as politics. Therefore, in this paper, we examine specifically the regional trade agreements between Turkey and Syria: *Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement*, and *Double Taxation Prevention Treatment* (2004) in terms of their political consequences meaning that whether they brought about political integration or resolution of conflicts between these countries by functioning as a dialogue platform or not. With this objective, we investigate the content of related texts; the letters of agreement, newspapers and policy speeches since 2004, to see whether there is a sign of political integration or not.

Additionally, we argue that, under AKP government, business associations have gained significant power in Turkish policy-making process through three ways: (1) arranging international business events and forums, (2) accompanying state leaders on their official visits, (3) participating in the intergovernmental meetings such as Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting. We also use Stephen Bell's typology in order to

understand the dimension of power that business associations have on the foreign policy-making process. In particular, we focus on two business associations: DEIK and MUSIAD, because we believe that they are the most influential ones in the Turkish foreign policy making process within the last decade. Thus, we do content analysis of the news related to business associations' activities and their chairman's speeches in order to see their relations with the government. Particularly, we focus on these business groups' organisations including Iraq and Iran with the aim of observing their role in Turkey's political relations with these countries. Lastly, we look at the investments of Turkish companies in these two countries so that we can see the size of economic interests at stake if political relations get worse.

Our hypothesis is that Turkish economy become integrated with the Middle Eastern countries via signing regional trade agreements, energy deals and the large-scale investments of business groups which, in turn, necessitated the implementation of new Turkish foreign policy consisting of the zero problems with neighbours and the active engagement with these countries because stability in the region serves best to Turkey's economic interests. Hence, while doing content analysis, we have three expectations. Firstly, we anticipate that these trade agreements between Syria and Turkey has helped them to solve the inherited problems over the Hatay region. Secondly, we expect to see that DEIK and MUSIAD facilitated the reconciliation process between Turkey and Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq and Iran by arranging international business events and interacting with the state directly. Thirdly, we expect to observe decreasing pattern in EU's export and import shares in total Turkish foreign trade so that we can argue that close political relations with the East is the result of these new trade relations and not related to AKP's ideology or its Islamic roots. Namely, as a result of the economic integration with the Middle Eastern region, Turkey needed to take a stand with Middle Eastern countries in some international disputes in order to protect its economic interests, however, this also caused conflicts with the Western World. However, it was not desired since Turkey takes its political and economic power in the region mainly from its ties with the West.

IV. CONTENT ANALYSIS

A. Case Selection:

In this study, we chose Turkey as our case because of its unique situation. Turkey has been regarded as an exception to Samuel Huntington's argument of *clash of civilisations* in which he assumes that 'cultural and religious identities will be a source of conflict in the post-Cold War World'.¹¹ Even after the 9/11 attacks when Huntington's arguments has discussed again, Turkey was excluded from these discussions because of its close ties with the Western world. However, this notion has significantly shifted since 2007 and the concerns about Turkey's turning its back to the West strengthened. Also, many Western scholars and journalists consider the new Turkish foreign policy as an ideology shift by pointing out the Islamic roots of AK Party. In this paper, we focus on the economic factors shaping Turkish foreign policy that can give a different perspective to this debate. Additionally, Turkey is my home country so I am also personally interested in these discussions.

We carry out a content analysis of texts in order to find out a correlation between Turkey's political and economic relations with countries; Syria, Iraq, and Iran by using neofunctionalist theory and Stephen Bell's typology.

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clash_of_Civilizations

B. Findings of the Analysis

1. The role of trade agreements in the rapprochement between Turkey and Syria

Especially, since 2004, we observe an improvement in the political relations between Turkey and Syria, and there are numerous articles, journals, commentaries and speeches discussing this situation. In this paper, we employ the notions of neofunctionalist theory to evaluate the impact of economic factors on the rapprochement between these two countries. In the Syrian case, we expect that free trade agreements; *Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement* and *Double Taxation Prevention Treatment* which were signed in 2004 and other economic factors, created an atmosphere of reconciliation in the relations between Turkey and Syria.

We analysed articles, journals, and commentaries issued between 2004 and 2010. Particularly, we examined approximately 100 news and commentaries which were published in the two renowned Turkish newspapers: *Hurriyet Daily News* and *Today's Zaman*. After free trade agreements were concluded between Turkey and Syria in 2005, we observe numerous initiatives taken by two countries in order to solve the long-standing political problems regarding activities PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), condition of the northern Iraq, water distribution and Hatay province. These initiatives have also been frequently reported and praised by the Turkish media. As a result of our analysis of the news and commentaries, we reached the following conclusions.

Firstly, in 2004, Syrian president, Bashar al Assad's official visit to Turkey in order to sign FTAs had repercussions in the media because he was the first Syrian leader who visited Turkey since 1940s. Turkish media called this visit as a 'historic event'¹² and paid utmost attention. Syrian leader came to Turkey for three days and, during his visit, he met with top Turkish state leaders, Chief of General Staff, and top businessmen. At the end of his three-day visit, two countries agreed to sign FTA as soon as possible. In 2005, *Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement* and *Double Taxation*

¹² <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-syria-take-steps-to-boost-trade.aspx?pageID=438&n=turkey-syria-take-steps-to-boost-trade-2004-01-09>

Prevention Treatment came into force in which ‘Turkey will lift all customs taxes on Syrian industrial imports, however, Syria will be given a 12-year transition period for lifting customs taxes on the country’s imports from Turkey’.¹³ Therefore, in these agreements, we can see that Turkey and Syria endeavoured to establish economic integration. In the Turkish media, many journalists appreciated the AKP government’s efforts to improve the relations with Syria. Additionally, the state leaders of two countries did not only point out the economic benefits of trade agreements but also their potential positive political results. According to one of the news in Hurriyet Daily News:

“The visit by far exceeded our expectations,” Assad told reporters on Thursday, as he wrapped his three-day trip. He was referring not only to agreements signed to boost economic cooperation and bilateral trade but also to mutual understanding reached on several political issues, such as the long-standing water sharing dispute between the two countries as well as a common position on the situation in neighbouring Iraq.¹⁴

Business groups also praised the AKP’s policies in Syria. To exemplify, Halil Sahin, chairman of the Iskenderun Chamber of Industry and Trade (ITSO) emphasized the economic importance of the relations with Syria by saying that ‘Syria is a very important market for Turkey’.¹⁵

Additionally, in the letters of these free trade agreements, two countries’ official borders were defined. And, the disputed Hatay province was included within the Turkish official borders. Thus, in the news, it was reported that by signing these free trade agreements, Syria has accepted Hatay’s belongingness to Turkey.¹⁶ Thus, it can be claimed that the trade agreements facilitated the solution of long standing Hatay issue that is also in line with the neofunctionalist argument.

¹³ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/details-of-turkey-syria-fta-come-to-light.aspx?pageID=438&n=details-of-turkey-syria-fta-come-to-light-2005-01-04>

¹⁴ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/assads-visit-buries-old-enmity-opens-new-era.aspx?pageID=438&n=assads-visit-buries-old-enmity-opens-new-era-2004-01-11>

¹⁵ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/syria-is-a-new-and-crucial-market-for-turkey.aspx?pageID=438&n=syria-is-a-new-and-crucial-market-for-turkey-2004-01-12>

¹⁶ <http://yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2004/ocak/06/p01.html>

Moreover, when we analyse PM Erdogan's speeches, we can find the signs of his neofunctionalist logic. The news, which has published in 2004 titled as 'Erdogan: Money and economy has no religion', is as follows:

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday that money and economy did not have a religion, noting that his statements concerning an Islamic Common Market had been received favourably at the Jeddah Economic Summit... Economy and politics were not mutually exclusive, said Erdogan, adding that in the past politics influenced the economy, but now, the trend had reversed. He said a healthy democracy could not exist in a rundown economy, but it could exist in an expanding one.¹⁷

Namely, his statement as '...in the past politics influenced the economy, but now, the trend had reversed',¹⁸ illustrates similarity of his outlook with neofunctionalists who also assume instrumental role of economics in politics.

Secondly, especially since 2004, in the newspapers, we encounter news related to the diplomatic initiatives taken by two sides in order to boost the trade further, and, this demonstrates that economic relations goes hand in hand with the political ones. For instance, after the agreement on FTAs, Syria eased the visa rules for Turkish businessmen that was also published in the newspaper as follows: 'The official Syrian news agency said Turkish businessmen traveling to Syria would be issued visas at ports of entry without having to contact the Syrian embassies. The measure is aimed at "promoting friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries".'¹⁹ Then, few months later, another agreement was signed in which Turkey allowed Syrians to visit their relatives living in Turkey for the Feast of Sacrifice.²⁰

Furthermore, state minister for foreign trade Kursad Tuzmen, who arranged official visit to Syria in order to talk about the cooperation on trade and energy, was 'accompanied

¹⁷ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-money-and-economy-has-no-religion.aspx?pageID=438&n=erdogan-money-and-economy-has-no-religion-2004-01-21>

¹⁸ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-money-and-economy-has-no-religion.aspx?pageID=438&n=erdogan-money-and-economy-has-no-religion-2004-01-21>

¹⁹ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/in-short.aspx?pageID=438&n=in-short-2004-01-19>

²⁰ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/thousands-of-syrians-to-spend-eid-al-adha-in-turkey.aspx?pageID=438&n=thousands-of-syrians-to-spend-eid-al-adha-in-turkey-2004-01-21>

by a group of 220 businessmen'.²¹ Namely, businessmen's frequent attendance to Turkish leaders' official visits to Syria demonstrates the dimension of economic considerations on Turkish foreign policy. We can see the similar logic in Syrian Prime Minister Naji al-Otri's speech: "We are determined to upgrade our economic relationship to that of the level of strong strategic political relations," said al-Otri, speaking at a Turkey-Syria business council meeting in Istanbul'.²²

After 2007, we observe that the relations between Turkey and Syria has entered into new era. As a result of our analysis, we found out the reflections of this argument in the newspapers. Before 2007, trade agreements and investment projects were more frequently appeared in the newspapers, but, since 2007, news related to the diplomatic relations between Turkey and Syria have been seen more often. However, we can interpret this situation as; the relationship between Turkey and Syria moved on to the next level from economic integration to political cooperation in accordance with neofunctionalist framework. Additionally, since 2007, in the newspapers, we can read plenty of commenters who discuss the change in Turkish foreign policy. One of the commentors, Soner Cagaptay, claimed that '...the party is likely to be more inclined to publicly show its sympathy on Muslim solidarity issues. Subsequently, there will be more frequent Islamist hiccups in Turkish foreign policy...'²³ Even though the economic relations remains to be main driver of Turkish foreign policy towards Syria, AKP's ideology has also become salient since 2007.

The economic and political relations between Turkey and Syria that were published in the news between 2007 and 2010 as follows. Turkey and Syria carried out joint actions against PKK.²⁴ Also, with the purpose of solving water dispute 'Turkey, Iraq and Syria decided to form a 'water institution' to end the related problems in the region',²⁵ that can

²¹ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-offers-free-trade-deal-to-syria.aspx?pageID=438&n=turkey-offers-free-trade-deal-to-syria-2004-03-09>

²² <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-syria-enhance-cooperation.aspx?pageID=438&n=turkey-syria-enhance-cooperation-2004-07-15>

²³ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-reaches-out-to-muslim-neighbors.aspx?pageID=438&n=turkey-reaches-out-to-muslim-neighbors-2008-03-12>

²⁴ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-and-syria-conduct-operations-against-pkk.aspx?pageID=438&n=turkey-and-syria-conduct-operations-against-pkk-2007-04-05>

²⁵ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-iraq-syria-to-form-a-water-institution.aspx?pageID=438&n=turkey-iraq-syria-to-form-a-water-institution-2008-03-13>

be interpreted as Turkey utilizes economic opportunities and interdependence to solve political problems as water dispute.

Furthermore, we can observe from Syrian leaders' speeches published in newspapers that Turkey has gained the confidence of Syria thanks to the resurgence of economic relations by investment projects and trade agreements such as Aleppo Gate Project.²⁶ In 2009, in one of the interviews, Assad expressed his opinion about Turkey as follows "Turkey's support is very important for us. We have full trust. As an example, without even us demanding it, Prime Minister Erdogan explains us in Washington; he conveys our views. This is very important. Besides, the role he played at peace talks with Israel was also very important. Because of this, he is now at a point where he can easily speak on our behalf".²⁷ Assad's statement illustrates the significant shift in the political relationship between Turkey and Syria from period of conflicts in 1990s to cooperation, and, the main trigger of this shift was the economic integration.

Moreover, in 2009, Turkey and Syria participated in joint-energy project called Nabucco that can function as the establishment of common economic interests which in turn can reinforce the political cooperation. Commenter, Cuneyt Ulsever also makes the same argument in his column 'Thanks to the pipelines and ports to be shared, the countries of the region that have great disputes among themselves can attain peace more easily as their economic interests overlap, provided that the cooperating countries are chosen properly. When the interests overlap, the disagreed issues will lose their meaning'.²⁸ Finally, the abolishment of the visa requirements between Turkey and Syria in 2009 can be seen as another sign of the improvement of political relations as a result of the establishment of close economic ties.

In sum, after our examination of newspapers, we reached the conclusion that Turkey has used economic opportunities and interdependency as a tool to resolve the political problems with Syria, and, the solution of Hatay issue can be regarded as a good evidence to this argument. Also, after the establishment of trade links and joint

²⁶ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-firm-to-join-syrian-project.aspx?pageID=438&n=turkish-firm-participates-syrian-project-2009-11-05>

²⁷ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/friendly-chat-with-confident-syrian-leader.aspx?pageID=438&n=friendly-chat-with-confident-syrian-leader-2009-11-08>

²⁸ <http://web.hurriyetdailynews.com/energy-peace-i.aspx?pageID=438&n=energy-peace-i--2009-09-07>

investment projects, we see the easing of visa rules between countries with two aims: boosting trade and political cooperation. The newspapers, that we analysed, appreciated the AKP's policies in Syria especially between 2004 and 2007. However, after 2007, they began to criticize because of AKP's increasing assertiveness in the region. Also, politicians refer ideological considerations and political ties in their speeches more often since 2007. However, we argue that this also supports the neofunctionalist argument because political problems such as Hatay issue and water dispute has been eased with the help of trade agreements and joint economic projects within 2004-2007 time period, thereby, this situation enabled politicians to discuss about further integration in politics.

2. The Role of business associations in TFP

In this section, we analyse newspapers to find an evidence to our argument that business associations have become influential players in Turkey's foreign policy-making process within the last decade. As we mentioned above, this paper adopts two concepts while studying the role of business associations in politics: (1) Stephen Bell's typology, (2) Rosecrance's trading state.

Stephen Bell analyses the relationship between state and businessmen, and, he offers three roles of business associations in politics. These are: '(1) Limited quasi-public roles..., (2) Policy formulation..., and (3) Policy implementation'. (Atli 2011: 110) Therefore, we examine newspapers in order to see to what extent these roles are performed by Turkish business associations and their effect on Turkish foreign policy. Additionally, Richard Rosecrance makes the similar argument in his notion of *trading state*. According to him, in the trading state, various groups such as business associations get involved in the decision making process besides politicians. Hence, if we regard Turkey as a trading state, we expect to see the impact of economic considerations and business groups on its foreign policy decisions with regards to Iraq and Iran.

The Foreign Economic Relations Board (Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu-DEİK), which was established in 1986 under the Ozal administration, is one of the most influential

business associations in Turkey. DEIK's main objectives are defined in its website as follows:

...consult public institutions and organizations to help companies penetrate deeper into their current markets or to access new markets; to organize international events; to set and execute strategies for foreign economic relations; to generate critical information for the business community... to support public diplomacy and to act as a catalyst in developing bilateral and multilateral social relationships, chiefly among these cultural and artistic activities; to represent the Turkish business community in front of international and multinational organizations; and to lobby for Turkey in international platforms.²⁹

Also, it has many founder institutions, one of them is MUSIAD. It carries out plenty of large-scale international business and economic events: Joint Annual Meeting, Business Forum, and Works Council with foreign countries. These 'large-scale international events should be considered an instrument of foreign policy participation, on the grounds that they bring together the executives of business associations, as well as representatives from member companies, together with policy makers, both from Turkey and abroad'. (Atli 2011: 118) Additionally, DEIK is represented in most of Joint Economic Commission meetings.

The Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (Mustakil Sanayici ve Isadamlari Dernegi- MUSIAD) was established in 1990 by conservative small and medium scale businessmen mostly located in Anatolia. It has five goals that are written in its website: (1) Personal Development, (2) Improvement in Business Systems in Turkey, (3) Sectorial Development, (4) Cultural and Moral Values' Improvement in the Business World, (5) Community Development.³⁰ MUSIAD also arranges various international business events with the participation of state leaders: International Trade Fair and Business Forum.

²⁹ <http://en.deik.org.tr/287/DeikHakkinda.html>

³⁰ Unfortunately, MUSIAD's English website is not available. For the Turkish version, here is the following link:

<http://www.musiad.org.tr/tr-tr/musiadla-tanisin/amaclar>

Both business associations participate Turkish state leaders' official visits to abroad. We analyse these two because they has been playing significant role in Turkish foreign policy making process in the last decade. In the next section, we present our research findings as a result of our content analysis of the newspapers related to Iraq and Iran.

a) Iraq:

Turkey has been having several political problems with Iraq over the last two decades. Generally, these are: (1) Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and terror, (2) Mosul and Kirkuk issue, (3) water dispute. In March 2003, USA's Iraq operation made impossible for Turkey to establish any political and economic relationship. However, Turkey's decision to stay outside of this operation left open the possibility of the cooperation between Turkey and Iraq in the future. After the end of USA's military operation on May 2003, Turkey and Iraq's relations has restarted.

We examined over 90 newspapers on this topic, and, our results are as follows. (1) Both MUSIAD and DEIK perform the first item of Bell's typology *state service function* via arranging international business events and joining Turkish leaders' official visits to Iraq. (2) Business associations fulfil the Bell's second item because they have public status by being represented in intergovernmental meetings. (3) Business groups are not directly involved in the *policy implementation process* that is Bell's third item. (4) Even though economic factors facilitated easing the tension between Turkey and Iraq, deep political problems related to the national security such as governance of northern Iraq and terror problem cannot be solved by establishing economic integration with Iraq.

In our first result, we claim that both MUSIAD and DEIK perform the duties which are defined under Bell's first item. Firstly, in the newspapers, we see many news related to international business events arranged by Turkish business associations. These events provide a dialogue platform for policy makers and businessmen. Among these events, 'MUSIAD International Fair', which is held every year with the support of other business associations, premiership and ministry of economy, aims to bring businessmen and policy makers from Turkey and Middle East together. In the newspapers, we can read numerous news written on the participation of top state leaders and their policy

speeches in these fairs. To exemplify, 13th MUSIAD International Fair was reported in the newspaper as follows: '3, 402 businessmen from 71 countries has participated in 13th MUSIAD International Fair taking place in Istanbul... After the meeting, the chairman of MUSIAD, Omer Cihad Vardan stated the results of the fair in press conference... He pointed out the participation of President Abdullah Gul, Prime Minister R. Tayyip Erdoğan, Iraq president's first advisor Tarık Hasimi and 30 ministers from 22 countries'.³¹ Furthermore, DEIK organizes several international business events. To exemplify, in 2007, 'Turkey-Iraq Cooperation Seminar' and '2nd Iraq International Fair' was held by DEIK. In these events, we see the participation of ministers both from Turkey and Iraq: state minister Kursad Tuzmen, Iraq minister of industry Abdulfalah Al-Sudany, Iraq minister of public works and housing Bayan Dizayeei, Iraq Special representative of DEIK Oguz Celikkol and minister of Iraq petroleum Muhatasan Ekrem Hasan.³²

Additionally, DEIK's and MUSIAD's events are supported by Turkish policy makers such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Undersecretary of Foreign Trade. In these events, politicians from both countries have an opportunity to discuss political matters as well as economic ones. To exemplify, in 2008, DEIK arranged a Turkey-Iraq Works Council meeting with the participation of businessmen and top state leaders as the president of Iraq, Jalal Talabani. In this event, Turkish businessmen expressed the difficulties they faced in Iraqi market and the president promised to ease the conditions for Turkish businessmen and minimize the conflicts related to PKK terror problem.³³ Namely, Turkish businessmen have a direct contact with state leaders, and, they discuss and seek a solution to the political and economic problems together. Especially, Prime Minister Erdogan participates business associations' meetings to discuss political and economic matters. For example, in 2008, Erdogan participated in DEIK's Ordinary Meeting of the General Assembly (Olgan Genel Kurulu) and expressed government's policy initiative on Kurds named 'Democratic Opening' to businessmen. In his speech written in the news, he asked their support to this project by saying that 'In the matter of

³¹ http://www.zaman.com.tr/ekonomi_musiad-fuarina-71-ulkeden-3402-Isadami-katilidi_1043471.html

³² http://www.deik.org.tr/Konseylcerik/2275/_T%C3%BCrk_Irak_%C4%B0%C5%9Fbirli%C4%9Fi_Semineri_ve_II_Irak_Uluslararası%C4%B1_Fuar%C4%B1.html

³³ http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_talabani-turk-Isadamlarini-cagirdi-25-milyar-dolar-aylrdik-yatirim-gelin_662150.html and

<http://www.turkishpress.com/news/219149/>

Democratic Opening, I expect The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (Turkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birligi-TOBB), DEIK and civil society to be active and contribute this process'.³⁴

Secondly, under the AKP government, businessmen have been participating in state leaders' official visits to abroad. In these visits to Iraq, businessmen have chance to discuss the problems in the region with the policy makers both from Turkey and Iraq. For instance, in 2009, foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu and minister of foreign trade Zafer Caglayan visited the city of Erbil with 70 businessmen.³⁵ It was significant visit because Erbil is located in northern Iraq which Turkey had many conflicts with. Thus, state leaders had an opportunity to negotiate the political problems, while, Turkish businessmen could inform Iraqi state leaders directly about the difficulties they faced in the unstable and insecure region.

In our second result, we argue that in Iraq relations Turkish business associations satisfy the Bell's second item of policy formulation meaning that 'business association is given public status and plays a formal role in shaping policy'. (Atli 2011: 120) For example, we believe that participation in Joint Economic Commission meeting gives business associations to public status and role in the decision making process. We examined the newspapers and websites of MUSIAD and DEIK, even though we could not find news related to their participation of this kind of inter-governmental meeting that was held between Turkey and Iraq, we found out news related to working group meetings and organizations arranged by MUSIAD and DEIK with the support of Turkish and Iraqi ministers. To exemplify, in 2008, DEIK organised working group meeting in the honour of Iraq minister of water Abid Al Lateef Jamal Rashed, and, many top level Iraqi bureaucrats and Turkish businessmen have participated.³⁶ Turkey has water disputes with Iraq and numerous Turkish construction firms invested in Iraq to solve the water scarcity problem of Iraq, thereby, we claim that discussions in this meeting were also beneficial for the solution of water problem. Additionally, we can observe the efforts of MUSIAD to contact Iraqi and Turkish policy makers with the aim of

³⁴ http://www.sabah.com.tr/Ekonomi/2009/12/27/deik_genel_kurulu_basladi

³⁵ <http://www.haberdar.com/disisleri-bakani-davutoglu-erbil-de-632512-haberi/>

³⁶ http://www.deik.org.tr/Konseylcerik/2276/Irak_Sui%20C5%9Fleri_Bakan%20C4%B1_Say%20C4%B1n_Abid_Al_Lateef_Jamal_Rashed_onuruna_DE%20C4%B0K_T%20C3%BCrk_Irak_%20C4%B0%20C5%9F_Konseyi_taraf%20C4%B1ndan_verilen_%20C3%A7al%20C4%B1%20C5%9Fma_yeme%20C4%9Fi.html

conveying their problems stemming from political conflicts. For example, in 2010, MUSIAD hosted Bagdat governor Dr. Salah Abdul-Rezzaq. Abdul-Rezzaq pointed out the importance of Turkey for reconstruction of Iraq.³⁷

Lastly, we state that Turkish business associations have rather weak role in the policy implementation level which is the third item of Bell. We look at the Turkish policy implementation process in solving the problems of Kurdish minority, governance of northern Iraq and terror activities by analysing news published since 2004. We reached the conclusion that even though business associations arrange international business events with the participation of Turkish and Iraqi state leaders, join the state visits to abroad, inform policy makers about their opinions on government's policies in Iraq, and host significant Iraqi state leaders, 'implementation is undertaken by public institutions'. (Atli 2011: 121) In other words, even though business associations has a role in easing tension between Turkey and Iraq by bringing politicians together in international events and explaining possible economic harms of conflicts, the policies such as 'Democratic Opening' or military incursion into Iraq were decided by Turkish policy makers and military officials. Also, sometimes businessmen give their support to government's policies on Iraq. As a response to 2007 discussions about military incursion into Iraqi territory, one of the businessmen in Turkish south eastern region made the following statement, "Iraq is a very important region for our trade, but the priority is always our own country," said Abdulkadir Cikmaz, head of the South eastern Anatolia Exporters Union (GAİB).³⁸ This demonstrates the attitude of Turkish businessmen towards government.

In sum, Turkey has deep political problems with Iraq throughout the history, for this reason, business associations could have influenced Turkey's foreign policy decisions related to Iraq on a limited scale. In addition, the neofunctionalist and interdependence notions can explain Turkey's improving relations with Middle East when the political problems with neighbouring countries are minor and do not related to Turkey's national security as in the case of Iraq.

³⁷ <http://www.aktifhaber.com/turkiyeye-milyar-dolarlik-projeler-351803h.htm>

³⁸ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-businessmen-respond-to-the-situation-at-the-iraqi-border.aspx?pageID=438&n=turkish-businessmen-respond-to-the-situation-at-the-iraqi-border-2007-01-31>

b) Iran:

Turkey has had cold political relations with Iran since 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution because Turkey regarded Tehran as a threat to its secular state. After the election of AKP government, the rapprochement process between Turkey and Iran has begun. But Why?

We argue that the economic considerations lie behind this rapprochement process with Iran. Turkey needed to increase its exports to Iran because it constitutes a significant share of Turkish current account deficit due to the natural gas imports from Iran. Thus, AKP government encouraged Anatolian tigers to invest in Iran, thereby, economic links were established between Turkey and Iran. Hence, we argue that economic interests of Anatolian tigers and energy deals led Turkey to follow cooperative policies with Iran over the last decade. Particularly, we explain the Turkey's vote against the UN sanctions on Iran, in 2010, with these economic considerations differently from Western world who interpreted this event as a demonstration of axis-shift in Turkish foreign policy from West to East.

In order to test this argument, we analysed approximately 90 news published between 2004 and 2010, and the websites of MUSIAD and DEIK. In our analysis, we reached the following results: (1) Businessmen, who have economic relations with the Iranian market, perform the duties defined under the Bell's first item because they bring state officials from both countries together by organising international business events, and, they can directly contact with the state leaders through joining in their state visits to Iran. (2) MUSIAD and DEIK also involve in the 'policy formulation process' related to Iran because they are represented at intergovernmental meetings, in this way, they can take part in decision-making process and give advices to the policy-makers regarding Iran. (3) However, business associations have limited power in Bell's third item named 'policy implementation' since this process is mainly undertaken by state officials in Turkey. (4) Turkey doesn't have significant political problems with Iran as in the case of Syria and Iraq, thereby, we can claim that economic concerns, which are Turkish businessmen's huge investments in Iran and Turkey's growing energy need,

brought about AKP government to take sides with Iran in the international disputes against its traditional Western allies.

In our first result, we argue that DEIK and MUSIAD has 'quasi-public roles' (Atli 2011: 110), namely, they can participate in the foreign policy making process via arranging international business events, expressing the opinion of businessmen regarding government's Iran policy and attending state visits to Iran. To exemplify, in 2008, DEIK organised 'Turkey-Iran Business Council' meeting to discuss the problems of Turkish businessmen who do business in Iran. Besides top businessmen, the president of Turkey, Abdullah Gul and the president of Iran, Ahmadinejad also participated in this event. According to Hurriyet news, Ahmadinejad listened to Turkish businessmen's complaints carefully and took a moderate attitude towards them.³⁹ In addition to the topics related to economics such as banking sector, transport and natural gas, state leaders discussed political matters. For instance, Ahmadinejad made the following remark: 'the economic cooperation between Turkey and Iran will be beneficial both for the regional and global peace'.⁴⁰ Additionally, businessmen participate in state leaders' visits to Iran. To exemplify, in 2009, Turkish businessmen has accompanied Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to Iran, and, in this meeting, they discussed the ways of cooperation in economic and political fields. Furthermore, MUSIAD has arranged '12th MUSIAD International Trade Fair' in 2008 with the participation of vast amount of businessmen and ministers. This fair was reported in the newspaper as 'An international fair is expected to bring around 2,500 foreign investors together in the Turkish city of Istanbul, the association organizing the event said on Tuesday. Turkey's Independent Industrialists' & Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD) would host an international fair in Istanbul's CNR Expo Center on October 23-26 and bring together around 2,500 foreign investors'.⁴¹

³⁹This was published in Hurriyet newspaper in 2008. However, the English version of this news is unavailable. I tried to translate correctly. Here is the Turkish version:

<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/9673469.asp>

⁴⁰ This is direct quotation from the newspaper. Unfortunately, English version is unavailable so I tried to translate correctly. Here is the Turkish website link:

<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/9673469.asp>

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<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=RSFLzdOSmlmYkjwetXl+F7wt?newsId=156497&columnistId=0>

There are large-scale investment projects and energy deals between Turkey and Iran. The bilateral trade between Turkey and Iran has been increasing in the last decade from \$1.5 billion to \$7 billion.⁴² Iran purchases chemicals, textiles, and machinery mostly from small and medium-sized businesses in Anatolia, therefore, Iranian market constitutes a significant share of people's income living in the south eastern region. Also, Turkish businessmen involve in the huge construction projects in Iran. For example, Turkish airport construction and management company TAV built Tehran's new international airport and won the right to run its management operations, even though, it failed to secure the right to manage the airport soon after.⁴³ Thus, we claim that not only Anatolian tigers but also Turkish economy in general might be affected negatively by the possible political and military conflicts with Iran.

Furthermore, Turkey has been negotiating with Iran on energy projects since early 2000s such as the establishment of joint-pipeline, because Turkey's energy need has been increasing in parallel with its economic growth and Iran is its second largest natural gas exporter. For example, state minister of Turkey, Cevdet Yilmaz, in his speech at Joint Economic Commission meeting, pointed out the positive political results of the energy cooperation between Turkey and Iran as follows, 'government's attempts to improve ties with Iran aim to render the 21st century "the golden age" of Turkish-Iranian relations by carrying them from the field of energy to larger areas with a spill over effect, which in turn will bring about peace and prosperity to the entire region'.⁴⁴ Shortly, we can see the economic importance of Iran for Turkish economy, thereby, these trade and energy links with Iran cause Turkish government to avoid the undertaking of any risks by conflicting with Iran. And, we give two political results of the economic integration with Iran: (1) Turkey-Iran's cooperation against PKK, (2) Turkey's vote against the UN sanction on Iran.

We claim that the economic integration and energy deals facilitated the political cooperation between Turkey and Iran. One of the examples to this argument is the

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<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=cN94MMHtYE6CDzBQdoZlqKh+?newsId=153079&columnistId=0>

⁴³ For details, see International Crisis Group, 'Turkey and the Middle East', p.17.

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<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=cN94MMHtYE6CDzBQdoZlqKh+?newsId=200505&columnistId=0>

Iran's support to Turkey in its fight against terrorist activities. In the newspaper, the government's statement about Iranian support to Turkey's efforts to stop the PKK terror was reported in 2007 as follows, 'Ankara has noted Tehran's enhanced cooperation in combating members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)'.⁴⁵ Additionally, Turkey's south eastern region, where PKK terrorist activities are centred on, suffers from economic backwardness. Therefore, Ankara hopes that the increasing trade with Iran and joint pipeline projects will contribute to the economic development of the south eastern provinces, thereby, the regional support for the PKK will diminish.⁴⁶ The other example to the argument presented above is Turkey's vote against UN's decision to impose sanctions on Iran because of its nuclear program. By looking at news and policy speeches, we reached the conclusion that economic considerations were the reason of Turkish government's decisions to vote against UN sanctions and not to adhere to unilateral sanctions imposed by other countries such as US. Even though it seemed that Turkey was turning its back to its traditional allies in the West, Turkey could not risk the investment projects and energy deals that are worth millions of dollars just for the sake of being seen close to the West. Also, we cannot disregard the role of DEIK and MUSIAD which have close links with the AKP government. Turkish media also appreciated this government's decision: 'Iran is a huge market of 80 million sitting next to Turkey and it simply does not make any sense to sacrifice potential trade to the game being played by big powers that live thousands of miles away'.⁴⁷

V. CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

This study aims to fill the gap in the literature on the new Turkish foreign policy and offer different insight into the crude axis-sift debate. Even though there is no shift of axis in Turkish foreign policy as it is assumed by some scholars, Turkey has been

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<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=VVIjQePuiAAIAon4u5r9AzEX?newsId=103185&columnistId=0>

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<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=cN94MMHtYE6CDzBQdoZlqKh+?newsId=20292&columnistId=0>

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<http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail.action;jsessionid=cN94MMHtYE6CDzBQdoZlqKh+?newsId=20292&columnistId=0>

following a more assertive and active foreign policy in the first of the 21st century. Additionally, it left pro-Western only foreign policy and reoriented itself towards East in some international disputes. The new Turkish foreign policy is multidimensional, thereby, it is hard to understand it by adopting only realist and identity-based explanations. Hence, in this paper, we studied Turkish foreign policy differently by focusing on the economic considerations shaping Turkish foreign policy since 2002. In this way, we also breathe new life into the axis-shift debate in which many argues that Turkey is turning its back to the West because of the government's ideological shift.

My argument was that the new Turkish foreign policy, consisting of improving political relations with the Middle Eastern countries and active engagement in the international disputes, is mainly driven by the economic considerations such as foreign trade, investment and energy supplies. Therefore, Turkey has improved its political relations with the countries as Syria, Iraq and Iran not with the aim of turning its back to EU or US, because it served its economic interests best. Also, sometimes the government utilized the economic integration as a tool to solve political problems.

We did the content analysis of news published with regard to Middle Eastern countries as Syria, Iraq and Iran to find an evidence to our argument. The results of my content analysis provide a support for our expectation: the new Turkish foreign policy has been mainly shaped by economic concerns and influential business associations. Firstly, we examined newspapers written on Syria over the last decade and we found out that the free trade agreements played crucial part in the solution of Hatay province dispute. Secondly, Iraq is a special case because the relationship between Turkey and Iraq is also related to Turkey's internal problems as Kurdish minority and PKK terror. However, in spite of the significant political problems, the rapprochement process between two countries has begun thanks to the political and economic initiatives taken by the government and business associations. Thirdly, Turkey has neither good nor bad diplomatic relations with Iran throughout the history, but since 2002 the economic integration has strengthened via trade agreements and energy deals and this situation brought about more dialogue and political cooperation. Thus, we explained the Turkey's negative attitude towards sanctions imposed by UN and US in the light of the economic factors such as large-scale investments of Anatolian tigers, energy and trade

agreements. Furthermore, in the newspapers, we observe the positive attitude of media towards government's policies in Middle East. Namely, commenters and journalists praised the government policies because they think that these policies have yielded successful results for the economy and regional peace. Moreover, in our analysis of the speeches of DEİK's and MUSIAD's representatives reported in the newspapers, we found out that they are also highly supportive of AKP government and its policies in Syria, Iraq and Iran. Lastly, in the newspapers, we observe the positive attitude of the leaders of Middle Eastern countries towards Turkey's EU accession and close relations with the Western countries since they see Turkey as a bridge to the West.

Shortly, if the political problems are not related to national security, Turkish government could utilize the economic relations in order to solve political issues and establish political cooperation with its neighbours that is in line with the neofunctionalist assumptions. However, as we read from the newspapers and the speeches of state leaders, Middle Eastern countries value the relations with Turkey because of its growing economy and Western ties, thereby, it should not be forgotten that the new Turkish foreign policy takes its power from its close economic and political relations with the West, especially with EU, for this reason while trying to be close to the East, Turkey should not offend the EU.

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