CHANGING TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: STRATEGIC DEPTH AND ZERO PROBLEMS WITH NEIGHBOURS

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by

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ABSTRACT

The 2002 elections were one of the important milestones in the modern history of Turkey. Since the election, Turkey has been going through a considerable transformation socially, politically and economically. This transformation process has unavoidably affected Turkish foreign policy. In this conjuncture, as a chief foreign policy advisor to the Prime Minister since 2002 and as Foreign Minister since 2009, Professor Ahmet Davutoglu has played crucial role in shaping the new foreign policy. Davutoglu's doctrine of "Strategic Depth" in Turkish foreign policy was theorized through his academic work of international relations book of the same title in 2001. The main argument of "Strategic Depth" is that a nation's value in world politics is predicated on its geo-strategic location and historical depth. In this respect, Turkey is uniquely endowed both because of its location in geopolitical areas of influence, particularly its control of the Bosporus, and its historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire. This dissertation will initially examine the roots of the new Turkish foreign policy, and then analyze the doctrine of "Strategic Depth" in the context of "Zero Problems with Neighbours" policy.

DEDICATION

With my wholehearted wishes for his success in his life, I dedicate this dissertation to my sweet daughter Pınar Betül as we celebrate his third birthday in August 2011. Happy birthday Pınar Betül.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Decelopment
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
TIKA	Türk İşbirşliği ve Kalkınma İdaresi
TUIK	Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Turkey's international environment has considerably changed since the end of the Cold War. Particularly, the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union during 1989-91 altered the dynamics international relations among regional and global powers (Davutoglu 1998; Hale 2000: 191). In the following two decades, global political and strategic developments redrew the geopolitical landscape surrounding Turkey, and thus, modified its regional foreign policy (Evin et al. 2010: 8). The new conditions have allowed Turkey to play its cards more freely on various tables at once (Alessandri 2010: 12). Social, economic and political transformation in Turkey, beginning with Adnan Menderes and continuing with Turgut Ozal, has accelerated under the administration of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Nine years of single-party government have led to sustained economic growth, hence, generated a new sense of confidence in the country. In this respect, the rhetoric and practice of Turkish foreign policy have been substantially affected by this transformation. The person who stands in the background of the new foreign policy approach and is largely responsible for formulating this dramatic shift is a well-known figure both in political and academic circles, professor in international relations Ahmet Davutoglu (Gaber 2009: 648; The Economist 2010). With his broad theoretical knowledge and strong background in philosophy, political science and international relations, he competently built a sophisticated foreign policy rhetoric vis-à-vis the problems on the ground. As Aras explains, 'there is a consensus that Davutoglu largely changed the rhetoric and practice of Turkish foreign policy, bringing to it a dynamic and multi-dimensional orientation. He set the vision and the

style of the new foreign policy line and provided a framework for pursuing it' (2009: 3). Since his first days in office, he has served as a chief foreign-policy advisor to the Prime Minister Erdogan. With the official appointment of the position of a Foreign Minister on May 1, 2009, Davutoglu characterized Turkey's recent foreign policy initiatives under the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi - AKP) government.

Despite the fact that Davutoglu's ideas and theories strongly affected Turkish foreign policy through changing, Turkey's path in the international arena seeing his vision of "strategic depth" in every Turkish foreign policy decision is a bold assertion. In the field of international relations, an appropriate conjuncture may facilitate decision-making and action. As Karl Marx explained, 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past' (1852). Turkey's domestic conditions and policies and international conjuncture were appropriate for implementation of 'strategic depth'. The national election results of November 3, 2002 quickly altered the conditions in Turkey. After the election, Davutoglu was appointed as chief foreign policy advisor to the prime minister, and then, took an opportunity to shift his theory from rhetoric to practice. The popularity of the AKP government in Turkey and European Union accession process have given the AKP an unprecedented influence on the direction of Turkey's new foreign policy initiatives in a post-9/11 environment. As Sandrin explains, 'the decision of the European Union to accept Turkey as a candidate country at Helsinki and the coming to power of the AKP represented fundamental turning points for Turkey in terms of foreign policy' (2009). As a result, as a chief advisor to the prime minister, and

afterwards as a Foreign Minister, Davutoglu substantially affected Turkish foreign policy.

Davutoglu's notion of "Strategic Depth" in Turkish foreign policy was theorized through his academic work of international relations book of the same title in 2001. The book of strategic depth had been published in thirty-one editions by 2009, gained Davutoglu great popularity both among intellectuals and policy makers (Bengio 2010: 16). The strategic depth doctrine primarily relies on two concepts. These are geographical depth and historical depth. As a result of its historical heritage of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has great geographical depth (Murinson 2006: 947). According to Davutoglu, 'This geographical depth places Turkey right at the centre of many geopolitical areas of influence' (Turkish Daily News 2001). Hence, the doctrine offers an active engagement with all regional systems in the Turkey's neighbourhood.

Despite the new engagement has benefits for the West; it has raised concerns about the possibility of Turkey drifting farther to the East in its ideology and policies (Evin et al. 2010: 5). In this sense, Davutoglu's new vision and style were subject to much discussion and criticism. It is claimed that Turkey's newfound activism in the neighbouring region is a shift of axis in the foreign policy, and Davutoglu's vision is neo-Ottomanist. On the other hand, as Baykal explains, Turkey's moderating role between the East and the West may minimize the likelihood of social, cultural, and political clashes. Such role, therefore, strengthens the relationship between the East and the West (2010: 1).

In fact, as a long-standing member of NATO and a candidate for membership in the European Union, Turkey is a key ally to both the United States and Europe. With its strong ties to the West and serving as a bridge to the East in a volatile, yet strategic, region, Turkey can be invaluable asset for reducing conflict and enhancing peace in the globe. Furthermore, at the global level, Turkey was a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council between the years 2009 and 2010, a G-20 founding member, and current holder of the post of Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Today, Turkey is experiencing an internal transformation in terms of its politics, economics, and identity. This resulted in reconstruction of the previous policy attitudes in policy making circles. Accordingly, Turkey adopted a new course in the foreign policy (Aras and Polat 2007: 471). A new era of Turkish regional diplomacy can be interpreted as deeper engagement with its own neighbourhood more than at any time since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 (Evin et al. 2010: 5). During the ceremony of his appointment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Davutoglu said that Turkish foreign policy has changed "away from crisis-oriented to being based instead on "vision" allowing Turkish policy-makers to identify potential crises before they erupt and devise appropriate policies to tackle them" (Today's Zaman 2009 cited in Gaber 2009: 649). As Israeli academic Ofra Bengio argues, Turkey has been undergoing a "quiet revolution" since 2002, and it has had an impact on both Turkey's domestic and foreign policies (2010: 15).

Aim of Study

This study examines the way in which Turkish foreign policy is transformed. Primarily, it explores how such transformation is realized as Turkey interacts with its neighbouring countries. It also analyzes the new policy's implications for the international community in the light of 'Strategic Depth' doctrine in general; Turkey's zero problems policy with its neighbours in particular. Furthermore, the general conclusion is drawn in the light of the primary argument in the literature. In doing so, on the one hand a new orientation of Turkey's foreign policy will be carefully examined; on the other hand, old approaches explaining Turkish security strategies will be critically reconsidered.

Although it is mainly aimed, in this thesis, to explore the transformation in Turkish foreign policy after the end of the Cold-War, especially after 2002, the following questions are also examined in the course of the research:

- Why did Turkish foreign policy change?
- What are the motivations of new foreign policy?
- What is the doctrine of 'Strategic Depth'?
- How was Turkish foreign policy affected by Davutoglu's 'Strategic Depth' doctrine?
- What are this policy's implications for Turkey's emerging role in the neighbouring countries and the Middle East?
- What are the differences between cold war relations with neighbouring countries and new approach?

- What is ‘zero problems with neighbours’ policy? Is this policy implementable on the ground?
- Does Turkey’s newfound activism in its regional neighbourhood and traditional Western-orientation mean a shift of axis in foreign policy?
- Is Davutoglu’s vision neo-Ottomanist?
- What will new foreign policy perception bring to Turkey in the future?

Research Design and Method

As De Vaus argued, ‘research design is not related to any particular method of collecting data or any particular type of data. Any research design can, in principle, use any type of data collection method and can use either quantitative or qualitative data’ (2001: 16). Hence, research design ‘deals with a logical problem and not a logistical problem’ (Yin 2003: 21). Social research designs may be divided into four broad categories: experimental, longitudinal, cross-sectional, and case study designs (De Vaus 2001: 48-50).

Case study is used as a common design for social research (De Vaus 2001: 231; Yin 2003: 1). ‘The most frequently encountered definitions of case studies have merely repeated the types of topics to which case studies have been applied’ (Yin 2003: 12). In this design, in-depth examination of one case is performed through investigating different aspect of such case and using whatever methods seem convenient. Although there may be a variety of specific purposes and research question, the general aim is to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible. The case study strives to address a particular question by exploiting the wholeness and unity

of the case (Punch 2005: 144). Furthermore, ‘case study researchers aim to identify the various interactive processes at work, to show how they affect the implementation of systems and influence the way an organization functions’ (Bell 2010: 9).

In the light of the explanation above, case study design is used in this research. The dynamics and nature of Turkish foreign policy, and the motivations and implications of the changes in Turkish foreign policy are analyzed as a case. The selected time frame for this study is from 2002 to the present.

Furthermore, the qualitative research method is used as a research method in this study. According to Punch, ‘quantitative research is empirical research where the data are in the form of numbers, qualitative research is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers’ (2005: 3). ‘Quantitative research, therefore, uses numerical data and, typically, has structured and predetermined research questions, conceptual frameworks and designs. On the other hand, qualitative research not only uses non-numerical and unstructured data but also, typically, has research questions and methods which are more general at the start, and become more focused as the study progress’ (2005: 28-29).

It is frequently seen that case studies are mainstream examples of qualitative research (De Vaus 2001: 10). By using case study research, I describe and provide further understanding of changing Turkish foreign policy in the context of ‘Strategic Depth’ doctrine in this dissertation. In addition, I seek to explain the reasons and associations of these developments, and evaluate the effectiveness of the doctrine.

The secondary sources are mainly used such as academic books, articles and surveys, and also media reports such as newspapers and journals. All these sources provide comprehensive information and enable better understanding about the changing Turkish foreign policy.

Structure of the Thesis

There are five chapters in this study. Chapter one, the present chapter, deals with introduction to the thesis. Chapter two, actually, comprises the first part of the dissertation. This chapter describes the political transformation in Turkey and discusses how such transformation led to the emergence of a new regional rhetoric in foreign policy.

In the third chapter, the doctrine of 'Strategic Depth' is described in general terms, and it analyzes the development of the new regional policy by focusing on Turkey's new and more proactive foreign policy line towards the neighbouring countries. Furthermore, in this chapter, I explain the implications of new foreign policy approach in Turkey's immediate neighbourhood.

On the other hand, Turkey's newfound activism is highly criticised both internally and externally. International relations scholars argue that Turkey's new approach in the neighbouring region is a shift of axis in the foreign policy, and Davutoglu's vision is neo-Ottomanist. In the fourth chapter, I evaluate the fairness of such criticism from different logical and theoretical perspectives.

Finally, I summarize the previous four chapters in the chapter five. And make a conclusion about the potential implications of new Turkish foreign policy. The second section is one of the most important parts of this dissertation since it will be carefully elaborated the changing Turkish foreign policy. In this regard, an assessment will be presented in this section.

CHAPTER II

TRANSFORMATION IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY: FROM 'SURROUNDED THE ENEMIES' TO 'ZERO PROBLEMS'

As theorists of international relations agree that foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy, and the transformation in domestic policy has also affected the foreign policy. Turgut Ozal, the first president of Turkey in the post-cold war era laid the foundations of the new foreign policy concept. Such concept is formulated to build contingencies for establishing more friendly relations with neighbouring countries within the framework of western security doctrine. In the Ozal era, so long as western interest is not threatened, major western international powers allowed Turkey to exercise peaceful initiatives with other countries in the Middle East. However, such new doctrine is extended and reformulated, thereby, took its more mature and comprehensive shape under the Justice and Development Party government led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan. This doctrine, known as the Strategic Depth doctrine, gained significant momentum and found particular resonance among the AKP leadership and its core electorate (Murinson 2006: 945-46).

Turkey and the Cold War

After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the new Turkish state learned the lessons from its past mistakes. Unlike the Ottoman sultanate, the new republic saw the West as an example to follow rather than a power to challenge and dominate (Walker 2007). Indeed, on the one hand, the Turkish Republic emerged as a reliable ally of the West, and on the other hand, as a bulwark against Soviet Russia, 'which

was the life's achievement of Mustafa Kemal' in Lord Kinross' words (Gokay 1995: 267). Turkey became a trustworthy ally rather than the 'sick man of Europe due to Ataturk's 'Kemalist' principles which is based on democracy, secularity and a continuous turning towards the West (Baykal 2010: 3). Nevertheless, the Turkish republic emerged as 'a state with a military backbone, possessed of an official ideology, known as Kemalism, committed to statism and a tight information policy and administered by a militantly secular small modernizing elite' (Aras and Gokay 2003: 150-51). Moreover, insufficient human capital in Turkey at the end of the First World War, Kemalist doctrine was mainly formulated by the political elite educated abroad. In order to keep up with the developed world, 'the Republic relied on its uneducated masses to produce and its educated elite to decide' (Baykal 2010: 3). The elitist nature of Turkish foreign policy partly emerged due to such mindset.

During the Cold War, the influence of public in foreign policy formulation was still limited due to security concerns under the Cold War era. Stalin's aggressive moves on the Turkish straits and Eastern Anatolia during the early stages of the Cold War brought Turkey and the West even closer as their interests converged in containing the influence of the Soviet Union (Walker 2007; Baykal 2010: 18-19). In that period, Turkey's geopolitical influence was used as a trump of the Western Block. Meanwhile, ideological cleavages among different social economic classes were prevented by the Cold War, and elitist approach in Turkish foreign policy gained strength. Nevertheless, the end of the Cold War strongly affected Turkish foreign policy, and significantly changed it. With the demise of the Soviet Union and the fading of the bipolar era, Turkey found itself in the position to deal with its neighbours

(Guzeldere 2009: 15; Alessandri 2010: 5). In this context, it was necessary to re-interpret Turkey's geopolitical role.

Although being part of Western security camp, Turkey was relatively isolated from western camp in terms of its semi-open economic structures and poorly developed democratic institutions until the 1980s, and poorly integrated into the world market and inactive on the international stage. State ideology dictated that Turkey was surrounded by enemies which strove to weaken her and, if possible, would also claim territory. This mentality was expressed an old Turkish: “Turks have no friends other than Turks” (Guzeldere 2009: 14). As Kirisci described: “The international environment has traditionally been seen as anarchical and therefore creating the imperative need to be militarily strong and to be prepared to use military force for ‘win-lose’ outcomes” (2006: 100). In addition, Graham Fuller confirms this way of thinking, “While the republic did face genuine external enemies, Kemalist ideology tended to incorporate a fear of external powers and conspiracies as a key element in its world outlook. This paranoia toward the outside world helped both to preserve Turkey's domestic power and to justify an authoritarian approach to guarding the nation against external threats (2008).

Security in Turkey had been considerably treated as an internal problem. Perceived external threats were exaggerated and manipulated by the political elites to sustain their hold on power (Aras 2009: 4). The cliché of “surrounded by enemy” was mostly used to build and justify authoritarian elements in domestic politics. Hence, during the Cold War Turkey generally avoided any potentially long-term commitments and association in the neighbouring regions with the exception of the Baghdad Pact

(Murinson 2006: 945). Redefinition of Turkey's relations with its neighbours can be considered a radical departure from this perception (Gaber 2009: 649).

Ozal Era

'Turkey had started to change not really in 2002, but some twenty years earlier, in the 1980s. Turkey began steering the wheel towards more pluralism internally and greater openness towards the outside world with Turgut Ozal, World Bank economist and founder of the Motherland Party' (Alessandri 2010: 4). The Ozal period, first prime minister (1983-89) and then president (1989-93), was an era of novelty and change in the Turkish politics (Ataman 2002b: 123). In this sense, Turkish foreign policy was subjected a paradigmatic shift from Kemalism to neo- Ottomanism under the leadership of Turgut Ozal during his tenure. His style of governance had so many familiar themes with the concurrent rule of the British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, thus some in Turkey called it Ozalism (Murinson 2006: 946). From the mid-1980s onwards, he restructured the Turkish economy and put his personal stamp on Turkish politics.

Moreover, Turgut Ozal was the first Turkish leader to challenge the role of the military in the field of 'high politics'. After the 1980 coup, Ozal is accredited domestically with smoothing out the military's disengagement from politics. However, 'Ozalism' led to a rediscovery of Turkey's identity in foreign policy as a Muslim country. This clearly meant a revaluation of Turkey's past as empire. Ozal achieved these gains by changing the institutional framework of foreign policy decision making. In addition, he used his discretions as president to remove some powers

from the Foreign Ministry. Ozal also rekindled Turkey's interest in European integration. Turkey's European Union accession process was seen critical for its further development in terms of economy as well as democracy. This also led to a series of new foreign policy initiatives in the neighbouring countries (Ataman 2002a: 122; Murinson 2006: 947; Alessandri 2010: 4).

The concept of the 'Turkish–Islamic synthesis' in Turkey was reintroduced into political discourse by Ozal. (Yesilada 1993 cited in Murinson 2006: 950). The school of Turkish-Islamic synthesis emphasized that Turkish nationalism and Islam are major contributors to the international standing of Turkey. It also pronounced that the historical legacy of the Ottoman past and flourishing Islamic culture is a source of the 'soft power' of the modern Turkish state (Murinson 2006: 950).

Despite many progress in Ozal era, security was still the main determinant in plenty of areas. As Aras and Gokay argues, 'the post-Ottoman Turkish mind has been formed with a security-first approach to societal problems and new security culture placed Islam and Kurds at the core of its cognitive map of threat perception' (2003: 154). Indeed, since the founding of Turkish Republic, political Islam and Kurdish nationalism have been comprehended as twin threats. In the Cold War era, identity problems were masked by the ideological divisions, and the priority within national security goals was the fight against communism. However, in the 1990s, such identity problems re-emerged nationally and internationally (Aras and Polat 2007: 472). The Kurdish problem in particular dramatically affected development of the political process in Turkey (Gokay 2000: 1), and undermined the efforts of democratisation during that period of time. In the 1990s, in terms of foreign policy,

Turkey's relations with Syria and Iran were influenced by the securitized domestic issues of Kurdish separatism and political Islam.

Kurdish separatism and reactionary Islam were parts of the National Security Policy Document as the new national security threats in April 1997. This was a very striking example of securitisation (Aras and Polat 2007: 472-73). In this concrete case, securitisation refers to a process of depoliticisation through which political issues are declared to be security issues. As Weaver emphasized, 'something is a security problem when the elites declare it to be so' (Weaver 1995: 47). In that time, the EU subsequently demanded Turkey to address human rights as a political issue rather than as a national security matter. The Turkish security elite worried about the EU pressure for greater rights for individuals and groups. They also concerned about Turkey's national unity and territorial integrity. Therefore, increasing levels of demand for democratic participation and respect for human rights faced a great resistance by the Turkish State (Aras and Polat 2007: 472-73).

Moreover, securitisation of political issues considerably influenced Turkish foreign policy. 'Excessive securitisation […] maximizes the intensity of the security dilemma with neighbours who do not share the ideological project' (Buzan et al. 1998: 208). 'This was certainly the case in Turkey's relations with Syria and Iran. For many years, Turkey's domestic problems with Kurdish separatism were reflected in its relations with Syria. Likewise, the declaration of reactionary Islam as a national security threat coincided with a major diplomatic crisis with Iran in February 1997' (Aras and Polat 2007: 473).

Although both civilian-military bureaucracy and the successful securitisation of major political issues has dominated Turkey's domestic and foreign policy agenda, Turkey has been experiencing a period of desecuritisation. Desecuritisation is the process of 'moving of issues of the 'security' agenda and back into the realm of public political discourse and 'normal' political dispute and accommodation' (Williams 2003: 523). The AKP governments after 2002 accelerated this desecuritisation process.

AKP and Transformation

Since 2002, when the Justice and Development Party won the parliamentary elections in Turkey with the landslide victory, Turkey has been remarkably transformed socially, politically and economically. As a result of these transformations in the past decade, Turkish foreign policy approach shifted from Hobbesian values to Kantian values. Hobbesian culture, as Kirisci explains, is 'characterised by a deep mistrust of the international system and reliance on self help rather than any cooperative schemes for solving conflicts'. On the other hand, Kantian culture exists 'when states share a body of common values and norms, often associated with pluralist democracies, and enjoy friendly societal relations too' (2006: 100-101).

In this respect, one of the most sensible analysts of Turkish politics in particular and political Islam in general, Graham Fuller emphasizes Turkey's role in the world, and highlights that ideology and nation-building have played dual role in the Turkish foreign policy until the 1990s;

> Decades of Kemalist oriented history instruction indoctrinated the country to think negatively about the Islamic world in general and the Arab world in particular. […] While the republic did face genuine external enemies, Kemalist ideology tended to incorporate a fear of external powers and conspiracies as a key element in its world outlook. This paranoia toward the outside world helped both to preserve Turkey's domestic power and to justify an authoritarian approach to guarding the nation against external threats (2008: 13-29).

Fuller then regards the emergence of the new Turkish foreign policy;

> New social classes within Turkey view their Islamic and Ottoman heritage with greater respect and pride, diluting the country's old, elitist, strictly western orientation. […] The Turkey that the West has grown comfortable with over the past half century actually represents a transient geopolitical aberration from a long term norm to which it is now returning. […] No matter what the future holds, one thing is certain: Turkey as the old, predictable and loyal American ally is a thing of the past' (2008).

Meanwhile, the motivations of the new foreign policy can be examined in terms of political, social and economic transformation, and the rise of civil society and business.

Political Transformation

After Turkey's official recognition as a candidate country by the EU at the Helsinki Summit in 1999, Turkey has been going through a process of serious reforms and political transformation. In this respect, the prospect of EU accession has been a key element in Turkey's internal reform process. In addition, the EU's conditionality

clearly contributed to Turkey's democratic transformation. The coalition government of the time implemented structural reforms in the economy and started a major democratisation program (Aydin and Keyman 2004: 17). These reforms were accelerated by the AKP governments, after 2002. Indeed, Turkey's political landscape was substantially changed by the EU oriented reforms, like greater freedom of expression and protection of individual rights and freedoms in the last decade.

Aras and Polat regards that democratisation and consolidation of stability are two important pillars of Turkey's domestic reform process. In the sphere of civil-military relations, national security, economic liberalisation and stability have significant implications for Turkey's foreign policy (2007: 471). Changes in these areas resulted in a new awareness of the neighbouring countries and a shift from the perception of surrounded the enemies to the zero-problems policy towards this region.

Social and Economic Transformation

The end of the Cold War coincided with the adoption of market economies and intensified globalization in Turkey's neighbourhood. 'The development of new telecommunication and information technologies, along with faster modes of transportation, has led to the increased flow of trade, capital and people across borders' (Evin et al. 2010: 9). As a result, Turkey's external economic environment has considerably changed. Nevertheless, Turkey went through several economic crises during the 1990s and the most important one in 2001. These crises led to an economic reform program championed by Kemal Dervis, then Minister of Economics,

and the same program was continued by the AKP governments. Since then, the Turkish economy has become one of the fastest growing economies among the OECD members (Aras and Polat 2007: 476). Turkey has grown by an incredible amount, from approximately 2 percent of U.S. GDP in 1970 to 5.6 percent by 2008. In the last decade, especially, a dynamic growth has been seen in the Turkish economy, which has expanded by an average of 5.9 percent annually between 2000 and 2008. 'It is clear that Turkey is a regional economic power in its immediate neighbourhood; its GDP amounts to about one fifth of the entire region's' (Evin et al. 2010: 9-23). Moreover, according to Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), Turkish economy soared by 11% in the first quarter of 2011, and Turkey broke the world record with this growth rate, and passed the biggest economies of the world (2011).

Turkey's economic growth has been the result of the open market economy. The opening of the Turkish economy and its rapid growth has triggered equally rapid social and political change. It is indicated in Evin et al. that 'when Turkey operated as a closed-import, substitution oriented economy, it was dominated by a small elite closely allied with the state' (2010: 23-24). In the last decade, new, dynamic and export-oriented industrialists emerged on a small and medium scale especially in traditionally conservative Anatolian cities, due to the policies oriented towards greater liberalization and a shift to export-oriented industrialization (Aras and Gokay 2003: 157). It is so-called "Anatolian Tigers" which are the clear implications of the liberalization of the Turkish market and the transformation of the economy into an export-oriented system.

Furthermore, the growth of the Turkish economy and the opening up of the Turkish economic and social space has resulted in the alteration of the traditional players in Turkish foreign policymaking. The emergence of new players has also affected the style as well as content of Turkish foreign policy. Institutionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has become a critical player supportive of Turkey's expanded international role by leaving its conservative approaches. As another state body, The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) have become involved in shaping Turkey's external relations (Evin et al. 2010: 24).

This social and economic transformation prepared the ground for the AKP victory. The centre which is the combination of the civil servants, soldiers, bureaucrats, intellectuals, and state-protected industrialists and businessmen started to break up in the 1970s by assuming new social and cultural characteristics. Persistent movement from the periphery towards the centre was the major factor for this transformation. Some of those social groups that gain more and more socio-economic mobility moved to the cities in large numbers. These important sections of the young and dynamic middle class have become effective social and economic actors through their business activities and entrepreneurship (Aras and Gokay 2003: 156). Namely 'the new Anatolian elite' differs from the previous political elite in terms of mentality and perception of the world. 'They have fairly rapidly projected their principles to the foreign policy arena, thanks partly to the army taking a much less active role in politics than hitherto' (Baykal 2010: 3).

In this conjuncture, the elitist nature of Turkish politics has been successfully transformed by the AKP government. Without the willingness of the AKP to transform

Turkey many developments would have been possible. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's strategy of integrating all segments of the society into Turkish politics was highly successful, and Turkey turned from elitist to mass politics. Indeed, the current president, prime minister and foreign minister come not from the urban elite but from the new "Anatolian elite". They are more Islamic and conservative, and arguably more reflective of the wider Turkish society (Baykal 2010: 4-5).

Civil Society and Business

Alongside Turkey's economic growth, civil society organizations and businesses have also risen substantially. As Kaliber examines that 'the main principles of Turkish foreign policy have traditionally been established by the security elite and government as the political authority has pursued predetermined policies by remaining loyal to the 'red lines' drawn up by the 'foreign' policy and security establishment' (Kaliber 2005: 320). In this environment, the emergence of healthy public debate within the public sphere was prevented by the presentation of political issues as 'existential threats' (Weaver 1995: 56). In the state-centric formulation of Turkey's foreign and security policy, civil society has been largely absent. The EU-oriented reforms facilitated civil society organisations' entry into politics. It also contributed to the widening of normal politics and the narrowing of the boundaries of security dominated realms. Previously exaggerated issues that were isolated from open and rational public debate have started to be discussed within the fields of normal politics. In the context of EU membership process, political and legal reforms have supported civil society groups' entry into foreign policy making process. 'In this process, public opinion and civil society have been able to make their voices heard

on foreign policy issues' (Aras and Polat 2007: 475). In Turkish foreign policy, the influence of civil society can be distinguished, particularly in Turkey-EU relations.

Furthermore, the substantial growth of the societal forces' influence on Turkish politics and foreign policy led to business organisations, think-tanks and NGOs take an active role in foreign policy making process. According to Evin et al., many business organizations, such as the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD), the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON), the Turkish Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD), Turkish Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK), Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM) and Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB) have sought domestic reforms and integration with the EU. In addition, there are a growing number of Turkish think tanks with international links such as the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), the Turkish Economic and Politics Research Foundation (TEPAV), and the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also beginning to develop transnational links, including links with countries in Turkey's neighbourhood. These activities are mostly dominated by development and humanitarian assistance groups such as the Anatolian Development Foundation (AKV), the Foundation for Humanitarian Relief (IHH), and the International Blue Crescent Relief and Development Foundation (IBC) (2010: 24).

Conclusion

The transformation of Turkish foreign policy beginning with the end of the Cold War accelerated in the last decade. The changes in national security understanding, new patterns in civil-military relations, economic growth and the active role of civil society were the main determinants in this transformation. As Aras and Polat underlined, 'the new policy attitude put an end to the need for internal and external enemies' (2007: 477). This led to Turkey's direction increasingly shifted from confrontation to engagement. 'Turkey no longer solely represents a geographic barrier against communism, but rather is transforming itself to meet the various threats emerging from its new geopolitical environment. In this context, Turkey's global role has shifted from a Western geo-strategic military deterrent to an exemplary model of a Muslim-majority, secular and democratic nation' (Walker 2007). Furthermore, Turkey sought a fine balance between security needs and stability goals in the external relations. Turkish policymakers realized that confrontation could lead to sporadic victories. However, Turkey, as one of the emerging actors of the post-Cold War era, would never gain the status felt it deserved in that atmosphere (Alessandri 2010: 5).

Today, Ankara is in the crossroads where its relations with both the West and the East continue without a hierarchical order (Baykal 2010: 19), and wants to redefine its place in 'Afro-Eurasia'. In this context, Turkey consider itself as a centre country, not simply bridge between the West and the East, and strongly oppose the idea of the loyal ally and geo-strategic military deterrent of the West. The doctrine of 'Strategic Depth' of Ahmet Davutoglu sets the main principles of the Turkey's role in

the world. The next chapter will examine this doctrine, particularly in the light of ‘zero problems policy’ with neighbouring countries.

CHAPTER III

STRATEGIC DEPTH AND ZERO PROBLEMS WITH NEIGBOURS

The notion of "Strategic Depth" in Turkish foreign policy means the academic work of Professor Ahmet Davutoglu who published his Turkish international relations book of the same title in 2001. Ahmet Davutoglu, chief advisor to the Prime Minister since 2002, was appointed Foreign Minister of Turkey on May 1, 2009. He is known as the intellectual architect of Turkish foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party government and characterized Turkey's recent foreign policy initiatives. As Aras explains, 'there is a consensus that Davutoglu largely changed the rhetoric and practice of Turkish foreign policy, bringing to it a dynamic and multi-dimensional orientation. He set the vision and the style of the new foreign policy line and provided a framework for pursuing it' (2009: 3).

There is no doubt that Davutoglu's idea and theories have strongly affected Turkish foreign policy, and Turkey's path in the international arena has been changing since 2002. Nevertheless, exaggerating Davutoglu's influence and seeing "strategic depth" in every Turkish foreign policy decision is problematic. In the field of international relations, an appropriate conjuncture may facilitate decision-making and action. Turkey's domestic conditions and policies and international conjuncture were convenient for implementation of 'strategic depth'. The national election results of November 3, 2002 quickly altered the conditions in Turkey. After the election, Davutoglu was appointed chief foreign policy advisor to the prime minister, and then, took an opportunity to implement his theory from rhetoric to practice. The popularity of the AKP government in Turkey and European Union accession process has given

the AKP an unprecedented influence on the direction of Turkey's new foreign policy initiatives in a post-9/11 environment. Thus, as a chief advisor to the prime minister, and afterwards as a Foreign Minister, Davutoglu substantially changed Turkish foreign policy.

Principles of Strategic Depth

The main argument of Davutoglu's book is that geo-strategic location and historical depth are two important elements determining the value of nations in world politics. In this respect, 'Turkey is uniquely endowed both because of its location in geopolitical areas of influence, particularly its control of the Bosporus, and its historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire' (Davutoglu 2001 cited in Walker 2007). As Aras explains, 'the new foreign policy took form under the impact of Davutoglu's re-definition of Turkey's role in the neighbouring regions and in international politics, namely its "strategic depth", with frontiers that have expanded beyond the homeland in the cognitive map of policymaker's minds'. In this new mentality, the territorial limits to Turkish involvement in neighbouring countries have disappeared (2009: 4). After removing the strains of domestic threat perceptions in regional policy, the relationship between 'bordering and othering' (Van Houtum 2005: 674) disappeared and gained a new meaning (Aras and Polat 2007: 477).

According to Ahmet Davutoglu:

> In terms of geography, Turkey occupies a unique space. As a large country in the midst of Afro-Eurasia's vast landmass, it may be defined as a central country with multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one unified character. Like

> Russia, Germany, Iran, and Egypt, Turkey cannot be explained geographically or culturally by associating it with one single region. Turkey's diverse regional composition lends it the capability of manoeuvring in several regions simultaneously; in this sense, it controls an area of influence in its immediate environs (2008: 78).

As a specialist on Turkey and Turkish politics, William Hale also offers an explanation about the importance of Turkey's geographical position;

> Turkey is the only state, apart from Russia, with territory in both Europe and Asia, and is affected by and affects international politics in both south-eastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, in Transcaucasia and the southern regions of the former Soviet Union, and in the northern part of the Middle East. Historically, Turkey's most strategically significant asset has been its control of the straits of Dardanelles and Bosporus, on which Russia had depended for direct maritime access to the Mediterranean, and the only route through which Britain, France and later the United States could challenge Russia in the Black Sea (or try to assist it, during the First World War). […] The fact that Turkey's geographical position is one in which the interests of several great powers intersect has also given its foreign policy-makers a degree of flexibility not open to states which are likely to be dominated by a single great power (the case of Mexico and the United States being an obvious example) (2000: 7).

In the "Strategic Depth", Davutoglu not only proposes a new geo-strategy for Turkish policy makers, but also criticizes the Kemalist foreign policy for its failure to realize the advantages offered by the country's rich history and geographic space (Murinson 2006: 951). He distinguishes eight former empires Britain, Russia, Austro-Hungary, France, Germany, China, Japan and Turkey as countries with historical depth. The problems of ethno-nationalism, separatism and general anti-imperialist dissension in

their respective regions were similarly experienced in these countries. As a result, Turkey possesses a great geographical depth because of its historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire (Davutoglu 2001: 7-8 cited in Murinson 2006: 951-52). To clarify Turkey's special location, he notes:

> Geographical depth is a part of historical depth. For instance, Turkey is not just any old Mediterranean country. One important characteristic that distinguishes Turkey from say Romania or Greece is that Turkey is at the same time a Middle East and Caucasus country. Unlike Germany, Turkey is as much a European country as it is an Asian one. Indeed, Turkey is as much a Black Sea country as it is a Mediterranean one. This geographical depth places Turkey right at the centre of many geopolitical areas of influence (Turkish Daily News 2001).

In the context of 'Strategic Depth', principles of Turkey's new foreign policy are balance between security and democracy, zero problem policy toward Turkey's neighbours, to develop relations with the neighbouring regions and beyond, adherence to a multi-dimensional foreign policy, and rhythmic diplomacy. Since 2002, Turkey has maintained a position of promoting civil liberties without undermining security, and protected civil liberties under all conditions. The successful balance between security and democracy led to the notion that Turkey's democracy is its most important soft power (Davutoglu 2008: 79-83). Turkey's new zero problems policy in the neighbouring regions aims to minimize the problems and maximize the cooperation. 'Turkey's new dynamic and multidimensional foreign policy line is visible on the ground, most notably to date in the country's numerous and significant efforts to address chronic problems in the neighbouring regions' (Aras 2009: 2). Furthermore, Turkey's regional influence extends to the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In this sense, Turkey aims to be

complementary, not in competition in the relations with other global actor. Turkey has hosted the NATO Summit and the OIC Summit since 2003, and has been invited to the Arab League twice. It has an observer status in the African Union (Davutoglu 2008: 82-83).

Zero Problems with Neighbours

Turkey's zero problem policy has a vision of minimizing the problems in the neighbouring regions and avoiding participation in international confrontations. In other words, the new policy aims "maximum cooperation – minimum problem" with the countries in the neighbouring regions (Aras 2009). It is impossible to produce a regional and global foreign policy in a country experiencing constant crises with neighbouring states (Davutoglu 2001: 144-145 cited in European Stability Initiative 2009: 10). Hence, 'instead of a borderline paranoid assessment that Turkey is encircled by unfriendly countries all involved in "playing games over Turkey", Davutoglu establishes "areas of influence" in which Turkey should increase its role as a facilitator by promoting diplomatic relations and setting channels for political dialogue' (Sandrin 2009). As an imitation of the EU's neighbourhood policy, "zero problems" policy has allowed Turkey to reach beyond its immediate borders (Aras and Fidan 2009: 197). In this sense, Turkey's influence extends to the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In this respect, Ankara has attempted to establish good relations with its immediate neighbours by embracing previous rivals such as Armenia, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Russia, and Syria. Turkey has also started to play an increasingly assertive role of regional leadership rather than the Cold War strategy of regional isolation. According to Evin et al., 'between 1991 and

2008, Turkey's trade relations within its neighbourhood considerably increased. While Turkey's level of trade with the EU grew eightfold between 1991 and 2008, it increased more than twentyfold in its immediate neighbourhood. In 1971, Turkish Airlines flew to 17 destinations in 11 countries, overwhelmingly in Western Europe. By 2009, the airline offered a total of 113 flights to 70 countries, including 39 destinations to the former communist block and 23 destinations to the MENA countries' (2010: 19).

In early 2005, the Turkish government started to expand its liberal visa policy toward most neighbours. Since 2009, Turkey has signed a series of bilateral visa-free agreements with countries in its neighbourhood. Those agreements have been reached with Lebanon, Albania, Jordan, Libya, Qatar, and even Syria. Turkey has achieved significant improvement in the bilateral relationship with former enemy Syria and lifted VISA requirements in 2009 It is interesting that an agreement on visa-free travel was also reached with Russia in May 2010 (Evin et al. 2010: 19; Alessandri 2010: 10).

Nevertheless, as Hale regards, 'despite Turkey's current policy of zero problems with neighbours is better than its highly defensive and securitized foreign policy of the past; this new policy puts Ankara in the position of a circus rider who is riding two horses at the same time. He stated that Turkey is in a situation rather like a circus rider who is riding two horses, with one foot on one horse and one foot on the other horse. If the horses are close and going in the same direction, he does fine. But if the two horses go off in different directions then the rider is in a difficult position and he has difficulties standing in the middle' (Karabat 2009). Recent developments in the

Middle East, called “Arab Spring” justified this point of view. Particularly in the Syrian case, Turkey confronted a big dilemma between good relationships and the stability in the region. Turkey government’s attitude to the Syrian unrest is seriously criticised, and it is claimed that ‘zero problem policy’ was collapsed in Syria.

Implications of Zero Problems Policy

Iraq has critical importance for Turkey in the Middle East partly because events in the northern Iraq could be expected to have serious effects on Turkey’s internal Kurdish problem, and partly because of the substantial interdependence of Turkish and Iraqi economies (Hale 2009: 145). Hence, ‘the first important test of Turkish dynamism, inspired by the new spirit in Turkish foreign policy, was the crisis in Iraq in the winter of 2003’ (Murinson 2006: 954). Due to the lack of a UN-mandate and largely in response to public opposition to the war, the Turkey Grand National Assembly rejected to accept American military use of the country’s territory to invade Iraq (Evin et al. 2010: 13). However, Turkey has put great effort to mobilise regional support for a stable Iraqi state, and has been presented by the Turkish policy makers as the only country that can establish constructive relations with all Iraqi actors and Iraqi neighbours. Through the Platform for Iraqi Neighbours, the territorial integrity and political unity of Iraq was agreed by all of Iraq’s neighbours. The platform made the first meeting in Istanbul on 23 January 2003. The main goal of the platform is finding a peaceful solution and to continue its activities after the beginning of the Iraqi war. The representatives of the EU Commission and the United Nations as well as the Secretary General of the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Conference attended some of the platform’s meetings. These meetings have been

taken seriously and requested further regional cooperation on the Iraqi question by the United Nations Security Council (Aras and Polat 2007: 480-81).

Moreover, the implications of the new foreign policy doctrine can be observed in the dramatic improvement of the relations with neighbouring Syria. After a decade of hostility, the Erdogan government started a diplomatic offensive to reach a new comprehension with the Syrian government, among other Arab countries. Afterwards, relations between the two countries intensely improved. In this respect, the two countries signed a significant number of bilateral agreements in Ankara in July 2003. Those agreements cover the economic sphere, duty-free trade, tourism and educational exchange. In December 2003 Syria was visited by a Turkish parliamentary delegation to resume a bilateral dialogue on the contentious issues such as Hatay province and terrorism. These developments were followed by President Bashar Assad's official visit in January 2004. A Syrian head of state, thus, visited to Turkey the first time in 57 years (Murinson 2006: 955). In December 2009, Prime Minister Erdogan, during his visit to Syria, emphasized his vision; Turkey is Syria's economic gateway to Europe, and Syria is Turkey's gateway to the Arab world (Evin et al. 2010: 30).

Turkey had to consider what initiatives it might take in relations with Iran. Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, two countries have been opposite ideological pole; radical Islamism and secularist democracy (Hale 2009: 153). As has been frequently noticed, political Islam and the Kurdish question have historically strained Turkish-Iranian relations (Aras and Polat 2007: 482-83). However, during the AKP governments this relationship underwent a transformation (Murinson 2006: 956), and

the tension between two countries has considerably abated. This has been achieved with deepening energy ties, burgeoning bilateral trade, and intense social interaction between Turkey and Iran (Evin et al. 2010: 12-13). Iran is one of Turkey's most important trading partners in the Middle East. Total trade between two countries reached over US$ 10.2 billion in 2008, while just over US$ 1 in 2000. In addition, Turkey has imported part of its gas needs from Iran through a pipeline. 17 per cent of Turkey's gas imports in 2007 were provided by this pipeline (Hale 2009: 153). Furthermore, Turkey and Iran have become security partners. In July 2004 Prime Minister Erdogan visited Tehran and signed a multi-dimensional cooperation plan. It included a mutual commitment to security cooperation with Iran in the struggle against the PKK, as well as a series of economic agreements. In February 2006, a memorandum of understanding was signed by the Turkish and Iranian security forces to cooperate on the counter terrorism and promote further coordination and security measures against the PKK (Murinson 2006: 957-58). The Kurdish question is now common issue for both countries. Turkey and Iran pursue a peaceful and constructive manner rather than competition for influence become a source of international tension and conflict. As Alessandri explains that 'whether we like it or not, the interests of Turkey and Iran are intertwined on a host of critical issues, from energy relations to the future of Iraq'.

Nevertheless, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and Iran's intention to develop its own nuclear weapons in 2004 results in the most serious problem in relations between Ankara and Tehran. Despite Turkey initially defended Iranian nuclear programme as a pursuit of the peaceful development of nuclear energy; it favoured a completely de-nuclearised Middle East and supported the initiatives of the European

‘troika’ of Britain, France and Germany to persuade Iran to cease its nuclear program without resort to force (Hale 2009: 155). In January 2006 at a press conference in Ankara, the Turkish prime minister exerted diplomatic pressure on Iran by emphasizing his concerns the possibility of using nuclear power as weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, Recep Tayyip Erdogan did not want to irritate its main natural gas supplier and important trade partner (Murinson 2006: 960).

On the other hand, all those transformations, mentioned above, had a very negative impact on relations with Israel (Bengio 2010: 17). Whereas, **'**Ankara recognised Israel in 1949 and until Egypt’s recognition during Camp David Accords in 1978, Turkey was the only Muslim state to have diplomatic relations with both Israel and the Palestinians. While Turkey signed many cooperation agreements with Israel and enhanced bilateral political ties, it also maintained good relations with Palestinians’ (Baykal 2010: 11). Nevertheless, ‘Turkish-Israeli relations have deteriorated from active cooperation to a decidedly cooler, arm’s-length affiliation’ (Evin et al. 2010: 13). Extreme Israeli military actions in Gaza with numerous civilian deaths in May 2004 led to a drastic deterioration in relations. Prime Minister Erdogan openly criticised Israeli policies and declared Israel as a ‘terrorist state’ (Murinson 2006: 959).

Moreover, after the election victory of Hamas of January 2006 in the Palestinian territories, Turkey maintained contact with Hamas, and invited to Ankara in February 2006. Therefore, Hamas’ Damascus-based leader Khaled Meshal and the official representatives of Hamas visited Turkey for a meeting with Turkish officials, including Abdullah Gul (The Journal of Turkish Weekly 2006). However, Turkey’s

holding talks with Hamas deeply concerned Israel. It considered that this gives Hamas an unwarranted legitimacy. Raanan Gissin, former senior advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon spoke to Turkish NTV about Turkey's decision to hold talks with Hamas: 'It is a serious mistake; this visit could have consequences for our links that could be hard to repair' (BBC News 2006). The UN's special reporter on the occupied Palestinian territories, Professor Richard Falk, rightly emphasized the importance of Turkey's HAMAS engagement; 'It is tragic that this effort failed, and was at the time criticized. In retrospect, both the wellbeing of the Gazan civilian population and the security of Israel would have been greatly benefited by taking advantage of the Turkish initiative, and moving to implement the readiness of HAMAS to establish a long-term truce' (2009).

Erdogan's personal criticisms of Shimon Perez at the World Economic Forum in Davos on 29 January 2009, known as "one minute", negatively affected Turkish-Israeli relations. It is claim this event profoundly damaged the strategic partnership with Israel (Al Jazeera English 2009). Indeed, Turkey cancelled Israel's planned NATO military exercise after "one minute" crises (The New York Times 2009). Finally, in May 2010, innocent Turkish people were killed by Israeli commandos in a flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza Strip (BBC News 2010). After this massacre, Turkey withdrew its ambassador to Israel and cancelled three joint military drills. After that, it demanded that Israel apologize for the killing of Turkish civilians and compensate the families of the victims from the flotilla raid (Haaretz 2010). However, Israel has not responded Turkey's request yet.

After the Cold War, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkish-Russian relations have transformed. As Walker explains, Turkey has begun to convert its relationship with the Russia from enemy state to rival regional power. After the emergence of President Putin in Russia and his skepticism of the West, Turkey has been able to develop bilateral relations by establishing closer economic and security cooperation. The AKP government led by Erdogan has turned the President Putin's skepticism of the West into an opportunity, and to present itself as a strong regional partner (2009).

Davutoglu, also, sees Russia as not only a natural ally in Eurasia but also an effective counterbalance to the EU. Pragmatic dealings were established between the two countries instead of the antagonistic tones of historic Turkish-Russian relations. Historical perceptions of Europe described the Turks and the Russians, the two great Eurasian powers in the East, as opposition to each other. However, 'these two European periphery nations now find themselves feeling similarly isolated from the EU'. In addition to this, in view of the transatlantic rift evident in the wake of the American-led second Gulf War has led to noticeably improve the relations between Turkey and Russia (2008).

Furthermore, Aras carefully analyses the Turkish-Russian relations and regards that Ankara tries to avoid taking sides in any "Russia versus the West" struggles. On the other hand, Turkey is developing its own relations with Moscow. Turkey followed this policy dynamically during the Russia-Georgia crisis in August of 2008 (2009: 12). Turkey preferred to remain neutral during the crisis. Nevertheless, due to Georgia is one of the most important partners in the Caucasus, Turkey faced the other dilemma

between relationships Russia and Georgia. Turkey was the first country to recognize Georgia's independence on 16th of December in 1991. President Demirel was then the first foreign statesman to visit Georgia, in June 1992. The bilateral relations developed in the 1990s, based on the idea of establishing transport routes for Caspian energy resources. The oil-pipeline Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and the natural gas pipeline Baku-Tblisi-Erzurum (BTE) are the integral parts of this cooperation. This is the reason that Turkey has an interest in a stable and secure Georgia, and not to jeopardize these important energy supplies. In February 2006, beside gas and oil can move freely between the two countries, free movement of persons for citizens of both countries was facilitated. After the increased trade flow through both the border and the ports, Turkey overtook Russia as Georgia's most important economic partner in 2006 (Guzeldere 2009: 16).

In spite of the fact that Georgia is substantially strategic country for Turkey, during the recent crisis, Prime Minister Erdogan indicated the importance of relations with Russia: "America is our ally and the Russian Federation is an important neighbour. Russia is our number one trade partner. We are obtaining two-thirds of our energy from Russia. We act in accordance to our national interests. [...] We cannot ignore Russia" (Bila 2008).

Ahmet Davutoglu also described the essential relations to Russia as follows:

> "Any other European country can follow certain isolationist policies against Russia. Can Turkey do this? I ask you to understand the geographical conditions of Turkey. If you isolate Russia, economically, can Turkey afford this? ... Unfortunately, we have to admit this fact. Turkey is almost 75-80 percent dependent on Russia [for energy]. We

> don't want to see a Russian-American or Russian-NATO confrontation. ... We don't want to pay the bill of strategic mistakes or miscalculation by Russia, or by Georgia" (Torbakov 2008: 21).

The Caucasus is an area of opportunity for Turkey, but it is also one of dangers (Karpat 1996: 5). The stable Caucasus is crucial for Turkish foreign policy. Turkey wants to become an energy hub through which oil and gas will be transported from East to West, so it has to be very active to achieve stability in the Caucasus. As President Abdullah Gul pronounces; "If there is instability in the Caucasus, it would be sort of like a wall between the East and West; if you have stability in the region, it could be a gate" (Foroohar 2008).

As a result, The 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia exposed the challenges of Turkey's Caucasus policy. During the crisis, while Turkey respects for Georgia's territorial integrity, was not in a position to openly confront Moscow. Hence, Turkey act as a natural mediator between Georgia and Russia, and offered a "Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP)" among three Caucasian states. It can be compared Turkish diplomacy in the Caucasus to, as Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birand argues, a "tightrope dancer" performance (2008).

Azerbaijan is special country in Turkey's Caucasus policy. Turkey and Azerbaijan have common cultural, linguistic and ethnic ties. As Davutoglu emphasized this special position in "Strategic Depth": "Azerbaijan is, generally in the Caucasus and particularly in the Southern Caucasus, the most important strategic ally for Turkey" (Davutoglu 2001: 127). The bilateral relations are often labelled "two states – one nation". This motto was revealed in the latest European song contest. Azerbaijani

singer Nigar Camal, the winner of the Eurovision song contest, waved the Turkish flag on the stage during the final contest along with Azerbaijani flag, and came to the award ceremony with the Turkish flag.

Nevertheless, the cautious rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia negatively affected the Turkish-Azerbaijani relations. Although the Karabakh problem remains unsolved, Turkey considered opening the border. This led to serious tensions between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Eventually, during the official visit to Baku on May 13th, 2009, Prime Minister Erdogan had to ensure the Azeris because of Azerbaijani and domestic pressure: “It is not possible that Turkey opens its border to Armenia before the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is solved” (Guzeldere 2009: 16).

Turkey initiated a process of normalizing relations with Armenia in the context of ‘”zero problems policy”. However, the failure to make progress in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict jeopardized the normalization process between Turkey and Armenia. According to Evin et al., this result renewed tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and seriously undermine regional security in the Caucasus (2010: 38).

Conclusion

Recent developments show that achievement of “zero problems” in Turkey’s relations with its neighbours is quite difficult. On the other hand, as Hale regards, ‘the “zero problems” goal was clearly very hard to achieve if the neighbours were in conflict with one another’. The continuing clashes between Israel and the Palestine,

the ongoing tension between Israel and Syria, and the dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia being clear examples. However, the political development, economic capabilities, dynamic social forces and ability to reconcile Islam and democracy at home are the qualities of the new Turkish Republic. These offer Turkey the possibility to develop and implement active and influential policies in both neighbouring regions and beyond (Gaber 2009: 649). In this sense Turkey's most important soft power tool is its democracy. All these components led to the emergence of Turkey as a new central power.

In the mean time, Turkey's newfound activism is highly criticised both internally and externally in the academic and politic circles. The next chapter will analyze these critics.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICS ABOUT STRATEGIC DEPTH

The foundations, diplomatic style and policy alternatives of this new regional policy initiative are subject to much discussion and criticism by various members of intellectual circles. Some policy analysts contend that Turkey's newfound activism in the neighbouring region is a shift of axis in the foreign policy, and Davutoglu's vision is neo-Ottomanist. In the Western world, there is a perception that Turkey is being lost in a way that it seeks to establish alternative linkages with other regional players in the Middle East. Moreover, some western foreign policy analysts posit that Turkey's previously solid bond with western world came under severe strain as the country experiences several setbacks in its EU membership bid. Thereby, the country is drifting away from secularism and becoming closer to Islamism. Furthermore, active engagement with all regional systems in Turkey's neighbourhood and Davutoglu's emphasis on historic and geographic identity led to neo-Ottomanist approaches.

Shift of Axis

It is frequently argued that Turkey's new foreign policy approach in the regional neighbourhood can be interpreted as alienation from its traditional Western-orientation. Closer linkages with the Iranian regime, overcoming past enmities with Syria, engaging Hamas in Palestine, and strained ties with Israel have been strongly criticised, and these developments led to the debate that domestic, political and societal dynamics of the country drift apart from the West (Alessandri 2010: 3). Such

perceptions are the underlying sources of the notion that Turkey should be blamed of a shift of axis in its foreign policy.

Walker (2007) argues that the relationships with former enemies such as Iran and Syria have been drastically improved while the historically close alliance with Israel has been disregarded. Invitation to Khaled Mashal, the official representative of Hamas, and developing relationships between Turkey and Syria deteriorated Turkish-Israeli relations. In the meantime, Turkey initially defended Iran's right to a peaceful nuclear program despite the international crisis regarding the violations by Iran of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Although Erdogan has clarified earlier position as “The continuation of Iran's nuclear program for peaceful ends is a natural right, but it is impossible to support it if it concerns the development of weapons of mass destruction" (Schleifer 2006), the AKP officials have increasingly emphasized the need for Turkey to have good relations with Iran.

Walker also claimed that ‘many in the region are wary of Turkey being anything more than an agent or functionary of the United States; thus it must build its assets as a "bridge" of trust for both sides’. He is also highly critical that ‘the policy of "strategic depth" makes sense in theory, but it fails in the real world’. Turkey has assumed mutual goodwill on the part of Syria and Iran. However, both Damascus and Tehran have not historically demonstrated benevolent actions toward Ankara. For instance, they have supported terrorist groups, such as PKK and Islamist cells, to undermine secular, democratic and unitary system of Turkey, and intended to discourage its pro-Western foreign policy orientation. The AKP's "strategic depth" policy is considered as opportunity for both countries to gain necessary support of Turkey, the

key regional player as both countries were struggling to overcome the threat of international isolation. While neither Iran nor Syria has changed its negative perception about Turkey's secular democratic regime. Both have waited so long for an opportunity to win Ankara to their side. ‘Syria, which is surrounded by U.S.-occupied Iraq, U.S.-friendly Jordan, and Israel, sees Turkey as the only neighbour that can ease its isolation. Iran likewise faces U.S. military presence in Iraq to the west and Afghanistan to the east, and hopes that a sympathetic regime in Turkey can help it circumvent America's grip’ (2007).

Furthermore, Larrabee and Lesser posit that engagement in the Middle East can complicate Turkey's relationship with Europe and the United States. They claim that Turkey’s deeply involvement in the Middle East could generate more problems for Turkey's Western orientation and identity. Both underline the notion of Turkey as a "bridge" between the West and the Muslim world. Meanwhile, they emphasize Turkey's dual responsibility; its Ottoman past and its secularist and Western-oriented present (2003). They also regard that Turkish engagement in the Middle East is more difficult, but it will not stop it;

> The Middle East will nonetheless continue to be a leading area of activism in Turkey's external policy. Turkish policy toward the region will likely be more assertive, less cautious, and less multilateral in character than elsewhere. […] Turkey will be neither a bridge nor a barrier in relation to the Middle East but rather an increasingly capable and independent actor – a more significant and possibly more difficult regional ally.

Larrabee highlighted Turkey’s role as a bridge in an article of the Journal of Foreign Affairs;

> Turkey's recent focus on the Middle East […] does not mean that Turkey is about to turn its back on the West. Nor is the shift evidence of the "creeping Islamization" of Turkish foreign policy, as some critics claim. Turkey's new activism is a response to structural changes in its security environment since the end of the Cold War. And, if managed properly, it could be an opportunity for Washington and its Western allies to use Turkey as a bridge to the Middle East (2007: 103).

Nevertheless, the assertions that this new policy formulation is a departure from Turkey's Western orientation are rejected by the AKP government. In fact, AKP considers Turkey's regional policies as supplemental to its cooperation with the international institutions and Western nations. Turkish government emphasizes that the European Union and NATO are the most important foundations of Turkish foreign policy in terms of setting balance between security and freedom (Gaber 2009: 652). Indeed, those who criticise the latest Turkish foreign policy approach would be right, if Turkey ignored the West and completely directed to the East.

Furthermore, Aras explains Turkey's active engagement in the Middle East, and argues that Davutoglu's proactive diplomacy, as first stage, targeted to achieve "zero problems" with the Turkey's neighbouring countries, and as a second stage, strife to achieve "maximum cooperation" with such neighbouring countries. According to him, the successful implementation of Davutoglu's foreign policy vision was depend on Turkey's domestic transformation in the background, specifically the consolidation of political and economic stability in the country. In fact, Turkey's domestic reform and growing economic capabilities are likely to be pre-requisite for achieving desired foreign policy steps and winning the label of a peace-promoting state in the regions (2009).

In this context of shift of axis, Turkey's invitation to the Hamas and Hamas leader Khaled Mashal's unofficial visit to Turkey were highly debated. Ankara was accused of taking the wrong position in the Middle East. However, as Aras underlines, HAMAS was democratically elected in the Parliamentary Legislative Elections in 2006, and this result opened a new era in the Palestinian question. HAMAS' refusal to recognize Israel and its unwillingness to abandon the use of suicide bombers in the violent conflict were presented as the main concern of the international community. Then, the US and the EU discussed the possible ways to pressure HAMAS to recognize Israel. Meanwhile**,** Turkey interpreted HAMAS victory in a different way. AKP government, under Davutoglu's guidance, initiated diplomatic engagement with HAMAS to neutralize possible conflicts. The Turkish position is that all related parties should respect the result of democratically conducted elections. According to Turkish policymakers, HAMAS was seeking allies in the Middle East to legitimize its ruling position and remove the economic and political blockade it was facing from the international system (2009). As Turkish journalist Yasemin Congar's expressed, 'In such an environment, without Turkey's intervention, the only possible entry for HAMAS was the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis' (Congar 2006). Davutoglu's expectation was to persuade HAMAS to return to a ceasefire in exchange for Israel's lifting of the blockade of Gaza. Furthermore, Turkey was not alone in its engagement with HAMAS. Countries, such as Russia, South Africa, Venezuela, and Iran also had various degrees of diplomatic interactions. Furthermore these countries declared that Turkey could play a key moderating role between Israel and Arab world, thus, bringing peace to the region (Aras and Polat 2007: 480).

‘Unlike the United States and EU, Turkey is a player “of” and not simply “in” the Middle East and Eurasia’. Its policies can facilitate redeployment these regions geopolitically and ideationally by fostering bilateral and regional integration and staggering their balance of power logic. In addition, by enabling closer relations between its neighbourhood and the West, Turkey would make a contribution integrating the countries in the region into the international system economically and politically (Evin et al. 2010: 30) Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has already been taken part in this exercise. Turkey’s openness to its eastern neighbours led to Turkey becoming a receiving state. Consequently large numbers of people from the former Soviet bloc were able to travel to Turkey as self-employed economic migrants (Aktar and Ogelman 1994: 343). ‘In the Middle East, Turkey’s rapprochement with Syria and Iran can help Syria diversify its alliances, a goal supported by the United States and the EU, without triggering aggressive counter-moves by Tehran. In the Caucasus, Turkey’s improving relations with Armenia, its developing ties to Russia, and its efforts at damage control with Azerbaijan could inject positive momentum in the stalled Karabakh peace process, and help Armenia diversify its international ties’ (Evin et al. 2010: 30).

Meanwhile, some leaders in the mainstream countries of the EU frequently put into question the accessibility and the attractiveness of this goal. As Alessandri indicates that ‘campaigns such as the government of France’s, which have gone so far as to question Turkey’s ‘belonging’ to Europe, have undercut the efforts made by reformers in Turkey – within and without the AKP – while making European public opinion more doubtful and apprehensive’ (2010: 7). For instance, the French president Nicolas Sarkozy has pronounced his dissatisfaction with the possible

Turkish full membership on numerous occasions and strongly advocated that Turkey should eventually be given the status of strategic partner instead: 'I do not believe that Turkey belongs to Europe, and for a simple reason: because it is in Asia Minor. What I wish to offer Turkey is a true partnership with Europe, but not integration into Europe' (Turquie Europeenne 2008 cited in Baykal 2010: 16). Likewise, it has been argued by the president of the European Council Herman Van Rampuy that Turkey might harmfully affect the EU's cultural harmony due to its Muslim nature. In 2004, during a meeting at the Belgian parliament, he expressed that "The universal values which are in force in Europe, and which are also fundamental values of Christianity, will lose vigour with the entry of a large Islamic country such as Turkey" (The Guardian 2010 cited in Baykal 2010: 16). As can be clearly understood from the explanation above, Westerners do not see Turkey as a part of the West, and the argument of "Turkey is being lost" is meaningless.

Neo-Ottomanism

Critics of 'strategic depth' also argue that the Turkey exerts the power over its traditional Ottoman sphere of influence, thus this notion is described as 'neo-Ottomanism'. However, it is not a new concept in Turkey, and its roots go back to the early 1980s with Prime Minister Turgut Ozal. The term neo-Ottomanism was coined in that time by a leading Turkish columnist and academic Cengiz Candar (Murinson 2006: 946). This was an intellectual movement that asserted Turkish quest of dynamic and diversified foreign policy in the region based on the Ottoman historical heritage. Some argue in Turkish academic circles that Turgut Ozal was the leader of the neo-Ottomanists. Ozal and neo-Ottomanists advocated that Turkey should be

Euro-Asian power, not a European state isolated from the East. In this respect, the neo-Ottomans envisaged Turkey as a leader country of Muslim and Turkic worlds and a central power in Eurasia (Ataman 2002b: 133).

The debate over Turkey's historical roots and its identity as a successor state to the Ottoman Empire has been rekindled by the emergence of the AKP as a political power in Turkey. A new vision of Turkey that is not dependent on the West, and actively seeking ways to balance its relationships and alliances within the region, has inevitably resulted in such a perception. (Evin et al. 2010: 22). Those who use the term of 'neo-Ottomanism' refer that the new Turkish foreign policy involves the revitalization of imperial aspirations (Qantara de 2009). Nevertheless, Turkey is the natural inheritor to the Ottoman Empire that once unified the Muslim world. Hence it has the potential to become a cross-regional power to unify and lead the Muslim world once again. Consequently, Turkey is neither simply an "ordinary nation-state" that emerged out of different circumstances nor the designs of foreign powers. On the contrary, Turkey is a regional power in 'its own right, having strong traditions of statehood and broad strategic outreach' (Evin et al. 2010: 23). In addition, the Middle East is a region which has crucial economic and strategic importance for Turkey (Hale 2009: 143). Thus, Turks used the neo-Ottoman thesis in projecting the image of a just and neutral mediator in foreign policy towards the Middle East. Particularly, Turkey broadened new diplomatic efforts to bringing peaceful resolution to the Syrian–Israeli and Israeli–Palestinian disagreements. In this sense, Turkey has undertaken significant missions to arbitrate regional conflicts in the Middle East, (Murinson 2006: 953). An activist approach was taken by the Erdogan government in its relations with its neighbouring countries to the east (Iran) and south (Iraq, Syria),

whilst the bilateral relations with Israel was a cooler period (Helicke 2004 cited Murinson 2006: 954).

Moreover, despite the fact that Turks are not interested in reconstituting a new Ottoman Empire, Turkey's Ottoman inheritance is a critical part of broad strategy formation in contemporary Turkish policy. On the contrary, Turkey is coming to terms with its past, including its Ottoman heir, while being hopeful about the problems it has inherited with that legacy (Evin et al. 2010: 22). As Davutoglu argues that 'No political problem in the region can be resolved without utilizing Ottoman archives' (2001: 331). It means that contemporary Turkish Republic achieves advantage to get intensely involved in the regional politics, and hence it has indubitable right to play active role in the Middle East where Ottoman Turks had once ruled (Gaber 2009: 651). 'Having ruled for the better part of six centuries as the Ottoman Empire, Turkey as a post-imperial successor state has now come to demand a certain level of respect in its international relations' (Evin et al. 2010: 23). Turkey's desire is not the restoration of the Ottoman Empire, though Turkey would like to establish cultural and economic relationships in the former Ottoman territories like between the Commonwealth countries and Britain or the former colonies and France.

On the other hand, the perception of Turks and Turkey has been changing in the Middle East. The results of a recent public opinion survey which was conducted in seven Arab countries revealed that 66 percent of respondents believe that Turkey can be a model for countries in the Middle East. In addition, 78 percent of respondents in the same survey think that Turkey should play a bigger role in the Middle East (Akgun et al. 2011: 12).

Furthermore, the relations between Turkey and the mainstream Western powers, the United States and the European Union, must be taken into account while criticizing new Turkish foreign policy. In three most important strategic issues, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran, Turkey represents a critical partner to the US (Evin et al. 2010: 31). In addition, Turkey remarkably collaborated with US in economic, military, political and social matters. The US is one of the biggest trade partner s of Turkey. Apart from taking an active role in all NATO missions including Bosnia, Turkey is in a close relationship with the US in terms of regional matters (Baykal 2010: 15). President Obama used a trip to Turkey very early in his Presidency as a vehicle for reaching out to the Muslim world (BBC News 2009). Despite Turkey's national interests are changing to lessen the centrality of the US role, Turkish-US relations could remain flourish. For this, US should not try to maintain the old model of the loyal ally and instead allows Turkey to develop its own independent regional relations (Fuller 2004: 63-64).

In the history of the Turkey-EU relations, 2005 were the important turning points. Turkey's EU accession negotiations were opened in Luxemburg on October 4th, 2005. Turkey has not had a serious problem in terms of technical obligations since that time. However, the political negotiations are real problem for Turkey. Whatever steps Turkey takes toward improving record, some actors would continue to set obstacles before Turkey, which will slow down the process. They consider the political process as an opportunity to exploit for their own benefit (Davutoglu 2008: 93). As Walker claims that given the highly symbolic nature of a Muslim-majority secular democracy like Turkey waiting at the doorway of Europe, the larger member

states of the EU cannot ignore the global ramifications of Turkey's accession negotiations. As part of “strategic depth” doctrine, Erdogan emphasizes that Turkish foreign policies should take the EU account, but the EU is not the only alternative (2007).

According to Davutoglu, ‘Turkey cannot demand the EU membership from a position of waiting outside the door. We need to undertake diplomatic initiatives to prepare the ground and foster the psychological atmosphere to achieve this goal’ (Davutoglu 2008: 95). Indeed, Turkey desires the EU membership due to domestic reasons. Turkey has made substantial progress with political reform, in particular through the far-reaching constitutional and legislative changes adopted in recent years. In addition, Turkish economy has been rapidly growing than many European countries. A Turkey which has consolidated political and economic stability will not need to join the EU in the future.

‘As an international player, Turkey was previously seen as having strong muscles, a weak stomach, heart problems and fair-to-middling brain power. In other words it had a powerful army but a weak economy, lacked self confidence and was not good at strategic thinking’ says Davutoglu, who was an academic in the department of international relations at Beykent University before taking on the job of political advisor (Qantara de 2009). Furthermore, in many ways, Turkey can be viewed as “doing the European Neighbourhood Policy for the EU” (Aydin and Tocci 2009 cited in Evin et al. 2010: 31). ‘By indirectly mediating Western influence in the Middle East, Turkey represents a potentially vital asset to accomplishing US and European goals’ (Evin et al. 2010: 31). However, Turkey's global role has shifted from being a

Western geo-strategic military dissuasive to an exemplary model of a Muslim-majority, secular, and democratic country (Walker 2007). Following his election as US President, Barack Obama underlined the importance of Turkey as a bridge country between the East and the West, and indicated that the unique Turkish synthesis of Islam and democracy will help Ankara to mediate important agreements (Hakura 2009). In addition to all this, Turkey is a founding member of the UN (United Nations - 1945), the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development - 1945), the G-20 (The Group of Twenty), OIC (Organisation of the Islamic Conference - 1969), the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe - 1985), the Council of Europe (1949), the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization - 1985), and in 2009 was elected non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council on behalf of the Western European and Others Group (together with Austria). As an associate member of the European Economic Community since 1963 and of the Western European Union since 1992, Turkey officially began formal accession negotiations with the EU on 3 October 2005 (Baykal 2010: 15).

Conclusion

Turkey is abandoning foreign policies associated with modern western values and institutions such as market economic institutions and institutions of liberal democracy that are accumulated in the last 200 years; it is in search of a new place and a new identity in the mutated context of the post-Cold War era. This complex process of transformation does not undermine Turkey's Western orientation, but it tests it again, calling upon Turkish political actors to re-affirm their commitment to cooperation and

integration (Alessandri 2010: 18). Today, Turkey has become more European and more democratic, more conservative and Islamic, and increasingly more nationalistic, all at the same time. Ankara positions itself at the intersection of Asia, Europe, the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus; it seeks to develop a new position for itself as a trans-regional power not exclusively dependent on any one of these regions. Precisely because of this, Turkey's relations with both the United States and the EU hold the promise of becoming stronger, more complex, and more mature (Evin et al. 2010: 39).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that the World has been experiencing the fundamental changes which can be considered as paradigm shift in Turkish foreign policy since last ten years. In this thesis, I tried to shed light on the dynamic and nature of such changes. In this regard, chapter two examined the initial stages and the roots of such transformation in Turkish foreign policy by investigating the Cold War period, as well as Ozal era and recent developments in Turkey. In chapter three, this time, the new foreign policy doctrine, namely 'Strategic Depth' was scrutinized, and the main arguments of Davutoglu was carefully analysed. Moreover, in this chapter, the long and short term implications of this new foreign policy approach for Turkey's immediate neighbourhood were explained. Finally, the advantages and disadvantages of this new policy initiative have been discussed from both domestic and international politics perspective. Critics of this new foreign policy are focused on that Turkey's newfound activism in the neighbouring region is a shift of axis in the foreign policy, and Davutoglu's vision is neo-Ottomanist. Fourth chapter assessed the viability of these critics for 'Strategic Depth' doctrine. Finally, in the last chapter, a general assessment is made about the future implications of "Strategic Depth" doctrine and proper linkages established between different dimensions of this doctrine where it is appropriate.

In Turkey's modern history, in the authoritarian one-party regime until 1945 (Zurcher 204: 176), afterwards in the period of the Cold War, ideological divisions masked such identity problems. Especially, the fight against communism during the long

darkness of the Cold war became the priority within national security goals (Aras and Polat 2007: 472). There is a broad consensus among historians that Democratic Party's landslide victory in 1950 election is a turning point in Turkish political history. Democrats, under the leadership of Adnan Menderes, devoted a great deal of effort to getting the bureaucracy and the military under their control (Zurcher 204: 221). Despite Turkish foreign policy in the post-war period was dominated by the Cold War, the membership of NATO in 1952 largely determined Turkey's position on the ground. As an ally of Western bloc, Turkey initiated to establish Baghdad Pact.

During the 1980s Ozal created a new foreign policy, particularly when the military gradually lost its power over government (Laciner 2009). It is so-called Ozalism or neo-Ottomanism fundamentally affected Turkish foreign policy. After weak coalition governments in the 1990s, AKP became the party of the government with the leading position in the Turkish parliament in November 2003. The Erdogan government's foreign policy under Davutoglu's guidance has sought a 'zero problems policy' for Turkey.

The doctrine of 'Strategic Depth' and particularly 'Zero problems policy', however, have been criticised in both political and academic circles. It is often claimed that this policy make sense in theory, but in the real world it fails. Indeed, some developments in the relations between Turkey and neighbouring countries over the past decade justified those critics. Turkey's most strategic ally in the Caucasus, Azerbaijan led to a dilemma in the Turkey-Armenia relations. Nagorno-Karabakh problem remains an obstacle to establish zero-problem policy between Turkey and Armenia. The continuing clashes between Israel and Palestine and the ongoing tension between

Israel and Syria are the other examples of the hardships to obtain “zero problems” in Turkey’s relations with neighbours.

On the other hand, many commentators and politicians are highly critical that ‘strategic depth’ and “zero-problems with neighbours” collapsed with the crisis in Syria. Despite Turkish diplomats and politicians explain that ‘zero problem policy’ is an ideal, similar to what Ataturk said, ‘Peace at home, peace in the world’, the policy meets its biggest challenge in Syria crises. Due to the sectarian civil war in the southern neighbour likely to affect the stabilization of Turkey’s interests in the region, Turkish leadership decide to send much stronger messages to Damascus, rather than using its soft-power. In this context, foreign minister Davutoglu officially visited to Damascus and met Syrian president Bashar Assad. Nevertheless, in spite of Davutoglu’s suggestions, the Assad regime pursued to use of violence against its own people. As this development clearly shows that Turkey’s "zero problems with neighbours" policy is need of serious revision in the light of Syrian case.

All in all, in spite of recent developments, Turkey has been going through a considerable transformation politically, socially and economically. Today, individual right and freedoms are protected more than ever in Turkey. While military coup on May 27, 1960 was celebrated as a national holiday, Turkey is now judging the military personnel who want to make a military coup. Civil society organisations are more powerful and societal forces take an active role in the policy making process. The Turkish economy has shown remarkable performance in the last decade. According to GDP figures in 2010, Turkey is the 16th largest economy in the world and the 6th largest economy when compared with the EU countries (IMF 2010). In

addition, Turkish economy soared by 11% in the first quarter of 2011 (Turkish Statistical Institute 2011), and broke the world record with this growth rate, and passed the biggest economies of the world.

These transformations have no doubt contributed to Turkey's new proactive and assertive foreign policy. The theory of 'Strategic Depth', which is developed by Ahmet Davutoglu, has shaped the ruling Justice and Development Party's foreign policy perspective. Davutoglu has strong background not only in politics and international relations, but also in philosophy, history, geography as well as cultural studies and economics. He has undoubtedly changed the rhetoric and practice of Turkish foreign policy. Nevertheless, the roots of the new policy go back to Turkey's domestic transformation from 1980s onwards. In addition, domestic pressure and changes in the external environment cannot be ignored. If Davutoglu leadership had not been, change in foreign policy would have been inevitable. However, Davutoglu accelerated this process with strong personality and academic background.

Turkey is now pursuing a more open foreign policy towards neighbouring regions, such as the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Black Sea. In doing so, its policy tools are diplomacy, trade and energy. Turkey's soft power in those regions its democracy. Turkish foreign policymakers comprehended that the Cold War is over, and the new approach is not a zero-sum game.

Today's Turkey is undoubtedly a more mature democracy. In addition, Turkish economy has been rapidly growing than many developed countries. With young and dynamic population, Turkey is looking into the future with greater confidence and

hope. As an influential regional power in Eurasia, Turkey aims to become a global power. It is expected that it greatly contributes to the world peace as a global actor.

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