COLLECTION OF THE THESES

Rada Csaba

From introversion to regional soft power ambitions

An analysis of the transformation in Turkish foreign policy

Ph.D. Dissertation

Advisor:

N. Rózsa Erzsébet, Dr. Habil
Senior Lecturer

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I.   <u>Introduction</u>

"Peace at home, peace in the world".[1] This has been the leading principle of the Turkish foreign policy. It guided the first few decades of the newly established Turkish Republic and has never lost its influence since then. In 1923, not only a new country was established but the leaders faced the challenge of creating a unified nation, a modern political institutional structure and a viable economy on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. Inward-looking governments and virtually isolationist foreign policy orientation served specifically this state-building process.

Even though the 1950s brought democratic transformation and some foreign policy „adventures",[2] Turkey could not leave its foreign policy passivity behind; and the first signs of real activism have not appeared until the mid-1980s. The domestic political and economic problems in the 1960s and the 1970s, as well as the consecutive military coups (1960, 1971, 1980) made it impossible for Turkey to pursue an active foreign policy. The 1980s under the leadership of Prime Minister and later President Turgut Özal brought a visible change in the Turkish political behavioural pattern. Answering to external political and economic pressures, he started a massive liberalization of the economy and the social sectors, which was followed by openness and outward-looking policies. (Öniş 2004) However, after the death of Özal in 1993, his foreign policy initiatives faded away and Turkey slowly downgraded its external exposure, although, it did not return to isolationism.

The changes that happened in the first years of the 2000s, parallel with the success of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP) in the general elections in 2002 were foreseeable but their depth was unexpected. The several-decade-long domestic transformation processes reached to a final point and a new Muslim elite, together with newly emerged social groups demanded drastic changes: a new leadership with a new vision. By 2002 Turkey had been devastated by multiple economic crises, domestic political problems and most of all, the failure of redefining itself after the end of the Cold War. The once very important Western ally lost from its geopolitical importance after the fall of the Soviet Union and by the second half of the decade the EU seemed less eager to embrace it.

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[1] The leading principle of the Turkish foreign policy „Yurtta sulh, cihanda sulh" in Turkish was first phrased by Kemal Mustafa Atatürk in 1931. Source: (The website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic, URL: http://www.mfa.gov.tr/synopsis-of-the-turkish-foreign-policy.en.mfa)

[2] The Kemalist political elite, especially the military did not welcome the populist policies and the foreign policy endeavours of Adnan Menderes, the leader of the Democratic Party. They were especially cautious of the emergence of the Middle East among the foreign policy goals, which contradicted the course of the Kemalist leaders in the previous decade. The Kemalist leadership pursued perfect isolation from the Arab Middle East, based on distrust as a result of their role in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and looked down on them. More on the Menderes period see: (Göktepe)

Nevertheless, the whole international environment changed around Turkey and influenced heavily the internal transformation process. The latter transformation made the domestic environment ripe for the political and further economic changes that led to the electoral victory of the AKP in 2002.

After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq changed the regional environment of Turkey again. After the fall of Iraq, a power and security vacuum emerged in the Middle East. This created the opportunity and the external constraint for Turkey to step up and fill in this vacuum. On the other hand, the domestic changes in Turkey were ripe for a foreign policy change. The one-party AKP government could make independent decisions and was ready to redraw the foreign policy course of Turkey. Both external and internal factors directed Turkey towards a growing activism in foreign policy.

During the 2000s, a new and energetic Turkey appeared that tried to live up to its ambitions both on the regional and the global levels. This change became visible after the second electoral victory of the AKP in 2007. Ahmet Davutoğlu's ambitious foreign policy brought high level of activism. The "zero problems with the neighbours"[3] policy's aim was to create a stable environment for Turkish businesses and to boost ties with countries in the regional vicinity. Turkish leaders started to speak openly about Turkey's soft power, the export of the Turkish democratic model and the ambitions to gain regional influence. Full of self-esteem, the Turkish government declared that by 2023, the 100th anniversary of the Republic, Turkey will have entered the elite group of the 10 biggest economies in the world. (Akdeniz 2013, 2)

Following the beginning of the Arab Spring, the Turkish influence in the Middle East seemed to grow even further. Turkey could use its ongoing regional initiatives to gain more popularity, enhanced by the Turkish government's political rhetoric in which they openly supported the democratic changes in the Middle East. In the first period of the Arab Spring the Turkish leaders managed to even „upgrade" this influence in the region by promoting the Turkish model as an example for the political development. Everything was settled for a Turkish regional political dominance and growing economic influence through „soft" means.

However, at a later stage of the Arab Spring the Turkish image lost some of its sparkle. The international military intervention in Libya supported by the AKP government and the outbreak of the Syrian civil war proved to be game changers. In mid-2012 the Turkish rhetoric about Syria changed and the Turkish leaders started to assert the resignation of the

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[3] Davutoğlu had been discussing his foreign policy strategy in several articles and his book, Stratejik Derinlik (Davutoğlu 2001) even before 2007, but the concept itself was developed later through his speeches and scholarly work (Davutoğlu 2008; Davutoğlu 2011; Davutoğlu 2012)

Assad regime. (Robins 2013, 397) Despite the gradual deterioration of the regional perception of Turkey, the Turkish leadership only modified but did not change the political rhetoric. The Turkish programme of promoting regional stability, the "zero problems policy with the neighbours", could not continue in its original form in the environment of the Arab Spring. Growing criticism emerged from both the Western allies and the Gulf countries, the major economic partners of Turkey. (Sağlam, 2013) Cracks became visible on the domestic field as well. Social polarization and domestic dissatisfaction could not be handled by external successes and the reinvigorated glory of Turkey. The Gezi Park demonstrations that started in May 2013 were triggered by symbolic problems[4], but reflected the polarization of the domestic environment, the contradiction between the Turkish government's rhetoric and the reality. The domestic crackdown, closely followed by the international community, affected the Turkish soft power capabilities rather negatively, and the credibility of democracy promotion was particularly questioned. (Egeresi 2013b, 4-5; Akdeniz 2013, 8)

Taking stock of the foreign policy trends of the Turkish Republic an interesting pattern could be observed. Once isolationist and introverted Turkey has grown up to be an important regional and global actor in certain aspects. This was based not only on growing capabilities, but an emerging domestic will to step out and build influence in the external environment. Not only external, but internal factors influenced Turkish foreign policy. The state-building efforts in the first decades, the political turmoil of the 1960s and the 1970s and the military coups were all incentives of foreign policy "introversion". The democratic opening in the 1950s and the emergence of a new Anatolian elite motivated an – at least partially – foreign policy opening. (Göktepe) The strengthening of the new elite, the growing power of the religious constituency and the demise of the old elite group(s) all led to the emergence of the AKP with new foreign policy ambitions. Powered by the interests of a new electoral voter bases and the new religious economic elite, the AKP started to pursue new foreign policy goals and influence in the neighbouring regions. However, social polarization and the decade long discontent burst out in the Gezi Park further curbing the opportunities of the Turkish foreign policy.

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[4] It was triggered by the government's plan to build a shopping mall resembling a military building from the Ottoman era in the heart of Istanbul and a new law banning the vending of alcohol after 10 pm in convenience stores. (Egeresi 2013b, 2-3) These symbolic issues represented the dissatisfaction of the young secular generations with the AKP government.

II.   <u>Hypotheses and methodology</u>

The dissertation aims at examining the course of Turkish foreign policy in three different periods. The main focus of the dissertation is essentially the transformation process of Turkish foreign policy; it tries to give a comprehensive explanation of how a country with an introverted foreign policy would suddenly ambition regional leadership (in the Middle East); and where the limits of such a political, military and economic endeavour are. At the same time – as it will be seen from the theoretical framework – it must be understood which concept was applied for Turkey to generate such endeavour. The dissertation aims at addressing these comprehensive research questions and approaching the answers by means of employing three hypotheses below.

The objective of this work is to give an overarching assessment on the extent to which the internal and external environment of Turkey affected Turkish foreign policy and on how these two components created an ambitious „soft power" from an isolationist country. The chosen theoretical framework is suitable to explain what went wrong in 2012, and what are the consequences of these changes from the perspective of Turkish foreign policy and regional influence?

1st hypothesis: *By the beginning of the 2000s a radical change was inevitable in the Turkish foreign policy approach. Both external and domestic incentives predestined foreign policy activism.*

2nd hypothesis: *Due to the transformation of Turkey's external environment and the change in the balance of power in the Turkish society, both asserted Turkey to ambition regional soft power in the Middle East.*

3rd hypothesis: *Turkish foreign policy ambitions became limited by both regional upheavals and the domestic discontent inside the Turkish society after the escalation of the Arab Spring.*

Theoretical background

The dissertation used two different theories for the analysis, Randall Schweller's neo-classical realist theory (Schweller 2004) and Joseph Nye's soft power explanation. (Nye 2004; Nye 2011) The main schools of international political theories, the realist and the

liberal traditions left a gap open in explaining states' foreign policy decisions. They didn't give sufficient explanations on the specific role of the state in foreign policy decisions and the nature of the interactions between the systemic and the unit level variables. (Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro 2009, 11-12; Schweller 2003, 311-322; Rose 1998, 145-147) Neo-classical realism works with explicit distinction between state and society and assumes that the state's foreign policy responses to international constraints are the results of state-society interactions. Systemic pressures are translated through unit level intervening variables, primarily the decision-makers' perceptions and the domestic state structure. (Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro 2009, 4) The decisions are made by actual existing leaders or elite groups, based on their assessment of the international incentives. (Rose 1998, 157-161; Schweller 2003, 332-336)

Randall Schweller used four unit-level factors to explain states' foreign and security policy choices for a change in the external environment. These factors are elite consensus/ disagreement, the regime's vulnerability, level of social cohesion and the cohesion of the elite groups. Social cohesion and the regime's vulnerability show to what extent the society and the main interest groups accept the incumbent political power, and how much the government is influenced by the interests of different groups. Elite consensus and elite cohesion gives an answer how much the elite creates one group and to what extent clashes inside the elite group and the different decision makers influence the foreign policy outcome. (Schweller 2004, 170-181) The dissertation introduced these four factors in the analysis of the Turkish foreign policy decision-making process. The Turkish leadership had to work through domestic political institutions, mobilize certain parts of the society and maintain the interest of important stakeholders in their efforts to answer the constraints posed by the regional or the global environment.

According to Nye's theory of soft power (Nye 2004; Nye 2011) there are three ways to achieve a country's goals: first, by using coercion or threat (eventually also by using war as a foreign policy tool); second, economic pressure, financial incentives can be useful tools as well; third, by the use of the country's soft power. In general, military capacities are associated with power, thus the bigger and more developed the army of a country is, the more threat it projects and the more security it can create for itself. Although in the information age military power and power projection still remained necessary, the emphasis has shifted to the soft power means. (Nye 2011, 39-48) In Nye's framework economic power holds an intermediary position. A well working economy and credible development can create soft power as well. (Nye 2011, 52)

Soft power explains areas of influence and attraction, which are not directly connected to the hard power capacities of a country. There are multiple sources of soft power, or sources of attraction. Nye puts them into three categories: a country's culture, its political values and the conduct of foreign policy. (Nye 2004, 11) It is hard to deny the effect of the Turkish culture and the embeddedness of it in its region. Even though the Ottoman history has negative connotations and collective memory in the area, it still provides for the cultural commonalities, where the Turkish cultural products still fall on a fertile ground. Speaking about the political values, Turkey's democratic traditions and history are undebatable, even though there have been important discrepancies in the history of Turkish development. A political system that prioritizes freedom and liberty, fundamental rights and provides the citizens with the right of political choice is much more attractive for external viewers than any autarchic versions. Based on this, one of the main pillars of Turkey's soft power is its democratic experience. (Kalin 2011, 9)

Methodology

With the application of the theoretical background on Turkish foreign policy the dissertation tries to give an answer to the main research question: on what basis has the Turkish foreign policy transformed? According to Schweller's theory, the external independent factors are processed inside a country and influence the decision-makers of foreign policy.

Factors of analysis in the dissertation				
Independent variable	Changes in the external environment of Turkey			
Type of the external incentive		security-related	economy-realted	political
Nature of the changes	threat or opportunity			
Dependent variables	elite consensus	elite cohesion	social cohesion	regime's vulnerability
Factors examined by the dissertation	homogenity of the governing political elite group	competition of the Kemalist and the newly emerged devout Muslim political elite groups	relationship of the Kemalist and the devout Muslim social groups	political legitimacy of the leadership, the political support from the society
	relationship between the governing political elite with the business and the military elite	relationship between the old and the new business elite groups	relationship of the majority of the Turkish society and the Kurdish minority	military's role in questioning the govenrment's legitimacy
		military as an indpenedent factor		

The dissertation analyses the transformation of Turkish foreign policy in three different periods. The three hypotheses underline that the changes are influenced both by external and internal factors. The external environment constitutes the independent variable throughout all three periods. Every state is influenced by certain factors from the external environment, but in their foreign policy they are most sensitive to security-related, economic and political incentives. These external influences may be categorized into two main groups: the threats or challenges that the state must give an answer to in order to provide its own existential or economic security; and the opportunities, in case a country has the possibility to gain security, economic turnover or political influence.

In the first period of the analysis (from the establishment of the Turkish Republic until the beginning of the 2000s), the main external factor was the environment created by the Cold War that brought a certain level of both threat and predictability in the system. With the end of the Cold War the external environment lost its stability and several security threats emerged both in the economic and the political-military spectrum. Turkey lost from its geopolitical significance that it had possessed earlier; the external environment claimed a growing activity from the Turkish leadership in order to guarantee the interests of the country and its security.

The second period of the analysis focuses on the new challenges and the opportunities in the Middle East, that emerged in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the war in Iraq. Iraq meant both a serious security threat and a power vacuum that generated regional competition, as well as an opportunity. At the same time the, strengthening civilizational discourse in the West vis-à-vis the Muslim world made it possible for Turkey to see a more cooperative face of majority of the countries in the Middle East. On the other hand, the positive responses from the EU until 2006 triggered important internal changes in Turkey and later the slow-down in the negotiations spurred the Eastern turn for Turkish foreign policy. The challenges and the opportunities created an environment, where Turkey could become a strong regional factor.

The third and shortest period of examination is the one which covers the period of the Arab Spring. After 2011, the external environment in the immediate vicinity of Turkey flamed up. The series of demonstrations and the regime changes in the region brought serious economic, political and security threats. The instabilities questioned the good cooperation with certain countries and the evolving civil wars in Syria and Libya meant very real security threats. On the other hand, the Arab Spring held out the hopes of expanding Turkey's regional power position and influence.

Following the chosen theory, the external environment creates the independent variables that influence several internal factors. The foreign policy decision-makers are

affected by the dependent variables in the domestic arena. Looking at the domestic environment of Turkey, Schweller's four factors – not necessarily in the order of Schweller's logic – are applied. From the point of view of the social cohesion, the transformation inside the society during the period of examination has a significant influencing power on the policy makers understanding and perceiving the newly arising foreign policy considerations. The Turkish society is not homogenous, it has strong cleavages; the strongest fault-line is along cultural and religious differences. The first element that the dissertation examined in all three periods of the analysis is how the relationship between the secular, mainly Kemalist groups evolved in antagonism to the conservative, devout Muslim groups. Their power balance and different interests had a strong effect on the understanding of the external environment and the foreign policy responses. In this context the other fault-line that influenced the Turkish decision-makers, was the relationship between the regime and the Kurds, as well as between the majority of the Turkish population and the Kurdish minority.

The cleavage along the religious and cultural line has existed in Turkey on the elite level as well. The Turkish society is built up on an elitist and exclusive social structure. The elites have originally been distanced from the rest of society. For decades, the Kemalist elite groups held on to all political positions and they controlled the most important segments of the economy. With the transformation of the society, a new devout Muslim elite started to emerge. The competitive relationship between the old and the new elite groups defined the elite cohesion in Turkey and their relative power changes affected Turkey's foreign policy orientation. The military gives an unavoidable element of the fraction between the elite groups in the analysis. The military created its own political role and institutions, and consequently became impossible to circumvent in the strategic questions, including foreign policy orientation.

The expansion of the institutional autonomy of the military became a tool of reducing civil control. As a result, the regime's vulnerability relied partially on the military's will and the power to remove the incumbent government. The dissertation examined the military's role also from this perspective, how much they could intervene in different periods against the regime's political decisions. The regime's vulnerability was also examined through the political support of the political groups in power. Their political legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of society creates an indication of their room for manoeuvre in foreign policy.

Last, it was also important to understand, to what extent the governing elite group was hindered by its own internal fractures and how much the decision-makers can agree on the main policy lines. In the Turkish context, two questions became interesting; first, the

consensus inside the political governing elite groups and their own relations with the military; second, the relations of the business and the political elite.

The dissertation used qualitative analysis to describe the transformation of Turkish foreign policy. The choice of topic made this approach essential, yet inevitable, since a quantitative analysis of both external and internal factors would make the basis of the main arguments far-fetched and artificial. Another reason for this is that the variables used by this work are hardly quantifiable. The qualitative analysis covered the political discourses of decision makers, official documents, media sources and several secondary sources and previous analyses form other authors.

III. <u>Results</u>

The first hypothesis – from quietist to active foreign policy

The establishment of the Turkish Republic brought about a new state in a new environment. The founders' main concern was to create a relatively stable state structure and to establish a functioning institutional system following the Western ideals. Consequently, the first period after the establishment of the state meant isolationism. "Peace at home, peace in the world" defined the external and internal needs of the new Turkish state. After the first period, the external environment was futile and hectic. The course of World War II and the Cold War did not change the level of threat that led to the continuation of Turkey's cautious foreign policy line. Until the 1990s Turkey's external environment was characterized by a constant, but predictable threat. The foreign policy answer of Turkey for the external threats was a Western-looking approach and the separation from the immediate neighbours in the Middle East.

The 1990s brought a remarkable change in the regional environment of Turkey. From the middle of the 1980s the tensions eased between the Eastern and the Western Blocks, consequently the Arab countries, which were allies of the Soviet Union became more open for cooperation with Western allies. Turgut Özal, the first civilian prime minister after the 1980 coup started a new foreign policy approach and started the global political and economic opening of Turkey. (Laçiner 2009)

The end of the Cold War brought both serious security threats to the immediate neighbourhood of the country and the decline of Turkey's geostrategic importance. The 1990s started with the Yugoslav wars, the Gulf War and the Armenian-Azeri conflict, all on the

borders of Turkey. These external factors, coupled with the Kurdish insurgency, created a demand for foreign policy activism. With the Gulf War, enhanced activity became necessary towards Iraq to handle the Kurdish claims for independence. The increase of nationalistic sentiments inside the Turkish society also contributed to this process.

Following the main theoretical background of the dissertation, the external incentives are filtered through the internal variables. After 1923, a strong gap emerged between the Turkish political-economic elite of the main cities and the Anatolian masses. The Kemalist elite concentrated on the nation-building processes, and followed an inward-looking foreign policy approach. The Cold War environment and the threats coming from the Soviet proxies triggered attraction towards the West and a certain level of inactivity in foreign policy, especially in Turkey's neighbourhood. As a result of the "Inönü-doctrine"[5], Turkey limited its interactions with the neighbouring regions until the mid-1980s. (Mufti 2009, 31-32)

The social gap between the Anatolian masses and the political elite remained wide for a long period. However, external influences on the Turkish society triggered social transformation. The accession to the NATO obliged Turkey for industrialization and infrastructural developments. (Berik and Bilginsoy 1996, 40-43) The more conservative and religious masses in the countryside started to move to provincial population centres and bigger cities; the Turkish periphery slowly took over the centre. (Mardin 1973; Mardin 2005) The political parties followed this change and new parties that answered the needs of the newly urbanized groups could gain strength. The new political groups were more open-minded to active foreign policy and trade towards the East, based on ideological, religious reasons and on their economic interests. In the 1980s the tensions decreased with the Soviet allies in the Middle East, which made an open foreign policy orientation possible. During the 1990s, due to internal problems, the often changing governments and the financial crises, Turkish foreign policy did not step out of the quietist pattern. The ambitions of Turgut Özal in the beginning of the decade, to make Turkey a strong regional factor in all directions slowly faded away. (Göktepe) The February 28 process underlined that neither the external, nor the domestic conditions are not given for Turkey to become a strong regional actor. (Aydinli, Özcan and Akyaz 2006)

The Kurdish question played both an external and an internal role in Turkey's foreign policy transformation. The Kurdish question has always been a neuralgic point of Turkish foreign policy. Since the very beginning, the decision-makers aimed at creating a unified

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[5] The four guiding principles of the Middle East policy that can be designated as the "Inönü doctrine" from the name of the second president of the Turkish Republic, were built on the maximum distance possible from the Arab states.

Turkish nation and feared the possible separatist objectives of any minorities. The Kurds became organized and in 1984 started an insurgency in the Eastern areas of Anatolia. They questioned the legitimacy and the policies of the different governments in Ankara and initiated an armed insurgency. The Turkish political and military elite answered this threat with military means. The growing tensions with the Kurds and the cross border features of the conflict triggered also a necessity for a more active foreign policy, which received wide support in the society. The connection between the external pressures and the domestic variable became the most visible in the insurgency of the PKK. (Egeresi 2012)

From the perspective of the elite consensus and the most significant fault-line inside the Turkish elite existed in the Kemalist versus Islamist/Muslim angle. The once leading secularist and Kemalist political groups lost from their power during the 1980s and the 1990s and could not redefine themselves according to the new environment. Though, the military remained an unavoidable segment of the Islamist/Muslim-Kemalist fraction. The military has traditionally been a guardian of the Kemalist notions, and this way the protector of Turkey's independence, and thus the inward-looking foreign policy. (Hale 1994; Ayşegül 2004) Their role was ambiguous, because it had a significant part in the regime's vulnerability. The four military coups in the Turkish republic's history proved the fact that if an incumbent government deviated too much from the Kemalist track, the army would not hesitate to intervene. However, the 1997 coup left the military vulnerable as well, which opened the way for meaningful changes and thus a rather activist foreign policy.

By the end of the 1990s, a relatively cohesive elite group was in the making. The new political elite of the Muslim conservative and Islamist politicians grew stronger and stronger. The Islamist movements slowly penetrated the whole society and gained their support in the cities of Anatolia and the wider countryside, and eventually in the main Kemalist strongholds of Istanbul and Ankara as well. This elite had different political ideals and different foreign policy orientation.

Parallel to the strengthening of the new political elite, the new Muslim conservative business elite gained power as well, mainly from the cities and regional centres of Anatolia. Besides the original Kemalist, exclusive business elite that was concentrated in Istanbul and the main cities, from the end of the 1970s a new group of businessmen started to emerge, different in its character. The Muslim entrepreneurs from Anatolian cities and towns started to become influential factors and used their informal networks of Islamic solidarity in order to reach their interests. In contrast to the old business elite, the Anatolian bourgeoisie projected an Eastward-looking strategy; they have built up strong relations with the neighbouring Middle Eastern region and searched opportunities in the Muslim countries of the fast growing

Southeast Asia. (Acar, Demir and Torpak 2004; Adas 2006; ESI 2005) New trading partners from the East gained importance and previously neglected regions, such as the Middle East and North Africa became (re)discovered. Numerous small and medium sized companies grew strong and diversified their trade relations. Their main interest was and is a stable environment for economic growth and government support for expansion abroad. The AKP provided the necessary background for the emergence of Turkish companies in both the neighbouring and farther regions in the third world. It became apparent that the interests of the business elite heavily influenced Turkish foreign policy decisions as well. By the beginning of the 2000s an elemental change in the foreign policy orientation of Turkey became inevitable and predictable.

The second hypothesis – Turkey as a rising regional "soft" power

The transformation of Turkish foreign policy did not come immediately as a result of the AKP's rise to power in 2002, but rather manifested from the middle of the decade. This argument was connected to the second hypothesis of the dissertation. Turkey started to follow an active foreign policy course and ambitioned a leading regional role. From the end of the decade the Turkish government started to speak openly about the soft power of the country.

New conduct of foreign policy – the concept of the strategic depth

The strategic concept behind this new and active foreign policy was created by Ahmet Davutoğlu. The main aim of his vision was to elevate Turkey to be a regional political power, and in the longer run, a role-player in global politics. Davutoğlu articulated that Turkey would transform into a strong actor through the exercise of its soft power. The geostrategic location of the country and its regional cultural connections, its capabilities, the region's common history with the Ottoman Empire and the similarities in their identity all mounted up to the fact that Turkey has all the important assets in hand to achieve regional leadership.
Davutoğlu's concept on foreign policy laid down the following main pillars (Davutoğlu 2008; 79-84; Hursoy 2011, 151; Murinson 2006, 951-952):

- multidimensional foreign policy in accordance with the interests of global powers;
- "zero problems with the neighbours" policy;

- promoting the most important values and norms through foreign policy in the region, and through the increase of influence. To this end Turkish diplomacy must reconcile the concepts of liberalism and democracy with the notion of security;

- rhythmic diplomacy, a never seen activity to be established towards abroad, with the tools of classical diplomacy and introducing other, new tools as well;

- Turkish foreign policy must rely on the interdependence in the economies of the region's countries.

The concept placed the pursuit for international security and peace and regional stability through multilateral cooperation in the centre of Turkish foreign policy. Davutoğlu's concept of the strategic depth was built on new geographical imagination, which had been supported by the changing external and internal conditions. Turkey which had become one of the important actors in the regional order and the global system experienced this transformation in tandem with its unique conditions. (Kalin 2011, 6) This is a new non-Euro-centric perspective, in which Turkey had become one of the important actors in the regional order and the global system. A new Turkey emerged in the 2000s as a result of a new geopolitical imagination on the one hand and Turkey's economic and security-based priorities on the other.

It is clear that Turkey explicitly pursued soft power ambitions primarily in its regional vicinity, but at the same time it disposed of global power ambitions. The proactive diplomacy of the AKP, the effort for regional stabilization and mediation, the democracy promotion and cultural projection, the increasing economic and development outreach programme all induced a positive return from the region. Following Nye's soft power theory, it can be stated that Turkish foreign policy makers started to use those tools deliberately that generate positive influence from the subject countries. The most effective tool remained however, the success of the Turkish economy. The attractiveness of Turkey as a regional economic engine was only elevated by the political steps, cultural influences, development programmes or the mediation in conflicts. Turkey reached a strong political and economic position in the region using soft power tools by the beginning of the 2010s.

External and internal factors motivating Turkish foreign policy during the first and the second AKP governments

The beginning of the 2000s changed the external environment of Turkey both in the West and the East. The EU responded positively to the Turkish request for accession and the

country became an EU candidate. Parallel to this, the 9/11 attacks and the international interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq made the traditional Turkish foreign policy behaviour obsolete. The fall of Saddam Hussein's regime generated a power vacuum and as a result, the reorganization of regional balance of power. The new Syrian leader, Bashar Al-Assad showed more readiness for cooperation with Turkey and Iran, and conveyed messages of both competition and cooperation. The power gap and the changed environment created a new challenge but at the same time an opportunity for Turkey. Iraq, Iran, Israel, Syria and Lebanon became the immediate targets of the Turkish regional policies that aimed at extending Turkish influence. The main reasons behind it were both the security and the economic interests of Turkey.

The EU also played a remarkable role as an influencing factor on Turkish foreign policy behaviour. In the first half of the 2000s the successive Turkish governments followed a track that aimed at the earliest possible accession to the European Union. (Usul 2008) To achieve this aim several difficult domestic reform packages went through and Turkey fulfilled more and more from the accession criteria. (Usul 2008) As a result, the Turkish domestic power relations changed and the military – alongside with the old elite – lost from its power and a more democratic Turkey had emerged by the middle of the decade, when the accession negotiations were finally launched. However, less than a year after the positive decision that Turkey could start the accession negotiations, the EU suspended them in several chapters. This negative development motivated Turkey to pay more attention to the Eastern relations. (Hale and Özbudun 2009, 127)

The transformation process inside the Turkish society continued in the 2000s. The strengthening of the society's periphery grew together with the political consciousness of the marginalized groups. The population in the countryside searched for the representation of their devout religious value system and their interest in development. The AKP proved to be a suitable candidate for their representation, thus gained more and more popularity in the successive elections. The AKP's influence was underpinned by the support of the Anatolian bourgeoisie. New challenges emerged in this period, the polarization of the society along religious and cultural cleavages continued. The growing support for the AKP governments in 2007 and 2011 showed that the society could not and did not want to question the government's legitimacy. The growing popularity of the government was a result of its successes in its foreign policy and economic growth. The developing business relations with the Eastern neighbourhood, the economy's fast growth all contributed to the regional popularity of Turkey. As a result of the successes in the East and the Turkish society's

dissatisfaction with the EU negotiations, the majority of the population articulated an opinion of concentrating more energy to the Eastern relations.

The Kurdish question remained a strong motivation both as an internal and an external factor. The AKP tried to follow a different approach in tackling the Kurdish issue, but without major successes. The AKP neglected the Kurdish question on a religious-cultural basis and rather contributed to it. As an external factor, the PKK's insurgency was strengthened from the territory of Iraq. (Egeresi 2012; Egeresi 2013c) Turkey initiated both a military response and cross-border diplomatic pressure. The external threats and incentives and the society's interests all led to a more active Turkish foreign policy role towards the East. (Egeresi 2012; Egeresi 2013c)

The antagonism of the old and the new elite groups almost led to the collapse of the AKP government in 2007. This happened despite the support of the majority by the society and underlined the government's vulnerabilities. Even though the political power of the old elite was slowly decreasing, they still disposed of key positions in the state structure. The military remained the most important factor on the regime's vulnerability. In order to stabilize its power, the AKP had to both weaken and comfort the old elite. The EU reforms proved to be an excellent tool for this, with the EU reform packages the government slowly acquired control of the privileges of the army and strengthened the civil control over it. After 2007, the government slowly played down the role of the secular elite in most of the areas, thus the regime's vulnerability decreased remarkably. It was not only the business elite that supported the Turkish policies, but most of the civil organizations and influential political and civil oriented groups as well. The strongest of these was the Hizmet Movement that played a crucial role in weakening the military's role and as well as became critical in helping the AKP in its ambitions to play the role of a regional leader. (Balci 2014; Park 2008) The umbrella of the Hizmet Movement spread the positive image of Turkey, played a source of attraction and influence and helped the Turkish businesses to emerge in new markets.

In the examination of the elite consensus the structure of the AKP's political leadership was observed. The Turkish political culture is by definition elitist and centred around strong personalities. This is not different in the case of the AKP itself, the political leadership has been built around the main leader, the prime minister and his closest circles. During the 2000s, after the AKP's rise to government, the political power of the prime minister also grew and the main strategic lines of the foreign policy were defined by him and his advisors. Even though in the beginning, Abdullah Gül played a really strong role in the party, his role as a foreign minister did not create a strong different line, he basically followed the route that was declared by the prime minister. (Yavuz 2009, 123-136) On the other hand,

a new personality, the foreign policy advisor, Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu became very influential and developed the new foreign policy of Turkey, based on the interests of the new political and economic elite.

The third hypothesis – Turkish regional soft power in question

By 2011, Turkey became an influential and an admired political focal point in the Middle East. At the same time, the extraordinary growth of the Turkish economy positively affected the economies of the whole region. Turkish investments penetrated almost all of the regional markets; Turkish investors especially favoured Libya and Syria. The Turkish government's domestic political support remained strong, which was further underpinned by the strengthening of the new business elite and the fact that the old Kemalist political elite had become somewhat side-lined. The start of the Arab Spring in 2011 brought a fundamental change in the whole region, which seemed an excellent opportunity for Turkey to extend its soft power and to emerge as a normative power that could show the way towards real democratization for the Arab people. However, after the first year external and internal problems distorted the regional image of Turkey. The "Ankara Moment"[6] seemed to be over, the "zero problems with the neighbours" policy became impossible to follow. Inside Turkey the secular opposition groups started to voice their discontent and people moved to the streets of Istanbul both in 2012 and 2013. The crackdown on the demonstrators and some antidemocratic practices influenced negatively Turkey's positive regional image.

Turkey could not accommodate to the new realities after 2012. The Egyptian-Turkish relations severed that affected Turkey's connections to other Arab countries and brought the displeasure of some leaders in the Gulf area. (Sağlam 2013) Turkish foreign policy practice and the Turkish model became partially questioned. Earlier the regional stabilization efforts and the economic initiatives all contributed to the image of a positive regional leader. However, the foreign policy acts of Turkey and the tensions inside the Turkish society started to contradict the foreign policy ambitions.

Social cohesion can be perceived in the meaning that the government enjoys high support from the society gives space to manoeuvre to make its own foreign policy decisions. High ratios of the AKP voters were from the Anatolian rural population and were concerned rather by the domestic politics and not the foreign policies. However, the different scandals

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[6] Bank and Karadağ (2013) designate the period between 2007 and 2011 as the "Ankara Moment", they define this period as the most successful foreign policy era and a time of strengthening Turkish regional and global influence.

and the Gezi Park protests showed growing vulnerability of the government, and that the AKP controlled with undemocratic measures, which harmed the AKP's own foreign policy and economic goals. At this point the domestic political environment contradicted the AKP's foreign policy ambitions that hindered achievement of the AKP's ambitious plans.

Both the dynamic economic growth and the growing regional political influence depended on political stability and predictability. The democratic deficit of Turkey demolished the credibility of the Turkish support of democratic changes. The economy was hit by the domestic instabilities as well. As a result of the external and the internal changes, Turkey's fast rise started to slow down. The Arab Spring changed the external environment in which the Turkish foreign policy lost from its attractiveness.

IV. <u>Afterword</u>

Overall the dissertation explored both the external and the internal underlying causes of the transformation of Turkish foreign policy. The radical shift from a rather introverted foreign policy of Turkey became inevitable by the beginning of the 2000s and the AKP government became willing and capable of reacting to the new ambitions. The dissertation examined the new conduct of the AKP's foreign policy and its regional, Middle Eastern "soft power" ambitions. The main aim of the dissertation was not to make a critical review or assessment, whether Turkey reached a level of being a regional soft power. The main focus of the dissertation was rather to understand, how Turkish foreign policy changed and which factors affected it the most. Today, Turkey is a strong political and economic factor in the region with certain global outreach.

After 2002 several scholarly works were published focusing on the transformation of Turkish foreign policy strategy and its different segments. There is an abundance of works dealing with the sudden change of the Turkish foreign policy behaviour shaped by both emerging foreign policy activism and reprioritization of the foreign policy goals. However, the different explanations suffered from serious shortcomings, despite the explanatory capacity, forgetting the complex relationship between the domestic and the external factors shaping Turkish foreign policy. The author sincerely hopes that this research gives a comprehensive description of the changes behind the transformation of Turkish foreign policy and a well-established ground for further research on the understanding of Turkey as a rising regional power.

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