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The Interplay between International and Domestic Factors in  
Turkey's Grand Strategy-Making: Activism, Disappointment,  
and Readjustment

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## ABSTRACT

With the end of the Cold War, Turkey's grand strategic behaviour gradually shifted from isolationism and reluctance to activism. This thesis primarily focuses on the peak period of this activism under the Justice and Development Party governments, covering a period from 2002 (the JDP's first election victory) up to late 2016.

This thesis explores the motivations behind Turkey's grand strategic activism and why the JDP era witnessed its zenith. I argue that fluctuations in Turkey's relative power position in response to the changes at the international level stand out as key factors in making sense of this shift, while domestic transformations enabled the country to pursue an activist grand strategy more effectively. The thesis positions itself against primordialist accounts—which attribute this shift to ideological and ethno-religious motivations in the form of “Islamism” or “Neo-Ottomanism”. At the same time, it also rejects strict “third image” theoretical approaches such as Waltzian realism and incorporates the domestic level into its realist analysis. Taking a neoclassical realist approach, international and domestic levels are investigated in terms of their effects on the configuration and implementation of Turkey's new grand strategy.

In order to explore and evaluate the primary catalysts behind the behaviour reflecting Turkey's grand strategic shift, three case studies will be analysed in this thesis: the Turkish-Iranian, Turkish-Israeli and Turkish-EU relationships. These particular cases, which are more usually analysed through primordialist lenses, act as useful battlefields on which to compare the explanatory powers of primordialism and neoclassical realism (NCR). This thesis is expected to open up a significant area for future research on the concept of grand strategy, theoretical approaches to it and the explanatory power of NCR within the context of rising powers and Turkish foreign policy. In theoretical terms, the thesis not only offers a comprehensive approach to NCR itself (which is currently an amalgam of several different approaches) but also extends NCR's empirical reach and offers a middle ground between realist analysis and culturalist readings of Turkey and its grand strategy.

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## CONTENTS

<b><i>Chapter 1: The Phenomenon of the “New Turkey” and its Grand Strategy</i></b> .....	1
Research Puzzle: Motivations behind Turkey’s New Grand Strategic Behaviour and Theoretical Debate .....	4
Methodology .....	9
Outline of the Thesis .....	13
<b><i>Chapter 2: Rival Explanations and Important Concepts</i></b> .....	15
Primordialist Explanations, Neoclassical Realism, and Making Sense of Turkey’s Grand Strategic Behaviour.....	15
Turkey and Primordialist Explanations: A Value-Driven Ethno-Religious Shift? ....	18
a- The JDP and Islamism .....	20
b- Value-Driven Neo-Ottoman Discourse .....	22
Weaknesses of Primordialism in Analysing the Shifts in Turkey’s Grand Strategy.....	26
Neoclassical Realism within the Broader Realist School.....	30
The Concept of Grand strategy and Neoclassical Realist Scholarship .....	34
Turkey’s Grand Strategy and Neoclassical Realism’s Explanatory Power.....	35
Major Factors Explaining the Shift in Turkish Grand Strategy .....	36
Changes at the International Level, Relative Power Fluctuations, and Emerging Windows of Opportunity .....	39
Domestic Factors as Multipliers .....	45
1) The JDP and Conservative Businessmen/“Anatolian Tigers” .....	48
Rising Businessmen Associations: MÜSIAD and TUSKON .....	55
2) Increasing the “Autonomy of the Civilian Elected Executive”: Transformation of Civil-Military Relationship .....	66
Historical Background to the Military’s Influence over Policy-Making in the Turkish Case.....	69

<b>Chapter 3: The Turkish-Iranian Relationship: A Period of Overall Rapprochement with Realpolitik Limits</b> .....	79
Turkey's Return to the "Arc of Crisis" .....	80
Historical Background: A Self-Perpetuating Cycle of Rivalry and Cooperation .....	82
Iranian Exit from the Allied Camp: an Old Friend Becomes a Threat .....	84
Making Sense of the Change in Turkey–Iran Relations .....	87
Major International and Regional Developments and the Bilateral Relations.....	87
<b>a-</b> End of the Cold War and Competition.....	88
Competition over the Ex-Soviet Area .....	88
Energy Transportation and Interdependence.....	91
<b>b-</b> The Iraq War, Changing Regional Dynamics and External Intervention .....	97
<b>c-</b> The Iranian Nuclear Programme .....	100
Turkey's Position on the Iranian Nuclear Programme: Utilising an Opportunity or Backing a Co-religious Entity? .....	105
<b>d-</b> The Arab Spring/Awakening and the Ballistic Missile Defence System (BMDS) Controversy .....	109
The Arab Spring and the Internationalisation of the Syrian Civil War.....	109
The BMDS Controversy.....	117
The JDP Era: Increasing Levels of Economic Interaction, Fading Military Alarmism .....	120
Closer Economic Relations and the Role of Conservative Businessmen.....	120
Increasing Autonomy of the Civilian Policy-Makers and its Impact on the Relationship .....	124
Concluding Remarks: Assessing the Strength of NCR vis-à-vis Primordialist/Naïve Culturalist Accounts .....	127
<b>Chapter 4: The Turkish-Israeli Relationship: From Partners to Foes and towards Interest-Driven Rapprochement</b> .....	131
The Turkish-Israeli Relationship: Do Old Friends Make the Worst Enemies? .....	132
Historical Background .....	133
The Cold War Era .....	134
Making Sense of Changes in Turkey-Israel Relations .....	138
Major International and Regional Developments as Critical Junctures.....	138
<b>a-</b> The End of the Cold War, the Oslo Accords and Turkey's Revision of Its Middle East Policy .....	138
The "Generals' Agreements" and the Era of Strategic Partnership .....	139
Making Sense of the Rapprochement in the 1990s .....	144
<b>b-</b> Reshuffling the Cards: the Iraq War and its Aftermath .....	148



The Question of Northern Iraq and the First Major Blow to the Relationship .....	148
The Other Side of the Coin: Controlling the Tension up to 2010 .....	153
<b>c-</b> The Iranian Nuclear Programme .....	155
<b>d-</b> Operation Cast Lead and Its Aftermath .....	157
<b>e-</b> Developments that Further Deteriorated the Relationship in the post-Operation Cast Lead Era .....	160
The Israeli-Greek Cypriot Relationship .....	160
The Mavi Marmara Flotilla Raid.....	162
<b>f-</b> Towards a Pragmatic Re-evaluation of the Relationship: The Arab Spring and Beyond.....	164
Domestic Level: Coalitions between Businessmen and Political Figures and Shifting Civil-Military Power Calculus .....	171
Business: Pragmatic Economic Relationship amidst Political Tension .....	171
The Military's Loss of Influence .....	175
Concluding Remarks: Assessing the Strength of NCR vis-à-vis Primordialist/Naïve Culturalist Accounts .....	178
<b><i>Chapter 5: The Turkish-EU Relationship: Stagnation, Realpolitik Stalemate, Bargaining and Mistrust</i></b> .....	183
Historical Background .....	187
Making Sense of Changes in Turkey-EU Relations .....	190
Critical Junctures: Major International and Regional Developments .....	190
a- Late 1990s and Early 2000s: Souring Relations and the Goal of “Re- Unification of Europe” .....	191
b- 9/11 and European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) .....	194
The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)/Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and Its Impact on the Turkish-EU Relationship.....	196
c- Start of the Official Accession Negotiations between the EU and Turkey in 2005 .....	201
d- The EU's Fifth Enlargement Wave: The Cyprus Question and Stalemate .....	203
e- Deterioration and Bargaining: Post-2013 Era .....	210
Domestic Level: Coalitions between Conservative Businessmen and the JDP and Shifting Civil-Military Power Calculus .....	215
Domestic Coalitions between the JDP and Conservative Businessmen and the Turkish-EU Economic Relationship .....	217
Military-Civil Power Calculus: Reforms and Discontent on the Rise amongst the Old Elite Including the Military .....	221

Concluding Remarks: Assessing the Strength of NCR and the post-2013 Environment in the Bilateral Relationship .....	228
<b><i>Conclusion: From “Zero Problems” to “Precious Loneliness” and “Strategic Flexibility”</i></b> .....	235
“New Turkey” and Shifting Grand Strategic Formulations .....	235
Summarising the Analysis and the Explanatory Power of Neoclassical Realism .....	238
1) The Turkish-Iranian Relationship .....	238
2) The Turkish-Israeli Relationship .....	241
3) The Turkish-EU Relationship .....	244
Sustainability of Turkey’s Activism .....	247
Changing Regional and International Dynamics: From “Zero Problems” to “Precious Loneliness” and to Having “More Friends and Fewer Enemies” .....	248
The Domestic Dimension: Shattering and Emerging Coalitions, and Louder Critical Voices .....	256
Contributions of the Research to Academic and Policy Debates and to the Future Research Agenda .....	260
Bibliography .....	268
Articles & Op-Eds (Including Online Articles, Briefs, and Op-Eds).....	268
Books & Reports .....	301
News .....	306
Interviews .....	315
Online Sources .....	317

## **Chapter 1: The Phenomenon of the “New Turkey” and its Grand Strategy**

Since the Cold War, the number of studies on Turkey and its changing policy line has gradually increased, reaching its zenith in the post-2002 era. This is mainly due to Turkey’s pursuit of a more engagement-oriented foreign policy and economic approach,<sup>1</sup> which has attracted a great deal of international attention after decades of limited manoeuvrability during the Cold War.<sup>2</sup>

In the Cold War era, Turkey’s international profile was largely shaped by the rigid bipolar power structure of the international system, which forced Turkey to adopt a policy line that followed the policy preferences of the US-led bloc in order to defy potential Soviet aggression. Given Soviet demands in 1945 in return for renewing its 1920 Treaty of Friendship with Turkey—which included ceding the cities of Kars and Ardahan to Russia and the construction of Soviet bases in the Straits for joint control of the waterway—this concern does not seem unfounded.<sup>3</sup> Turkey also avoided any actions that may have triggered inter-bloc tensions. As a member of NATO, Turkey kept some 24 Soviet divisions occupied and provided “important

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, activism in grand strategic behaviour and foreign policy-making is used to refer to proactive policies resulting from increasing relative power capabilities which are intended to maximise Turkey’s power and influence abroad. The term implies engagement rather than isolation, participation rather than absence, and taking initiatives rather than remaining aloof. Activism enables Turkey to produce its own policy options rather than simply reacting to surrounding geopolitical developments or complying with the policies of others.

<sup>2</sup> For Morgenthau’s views on the loss of the manoeuvrability of the “lesser powers” during the Cold War, see Richard Little, “The Balance of Power in Politics Among Nations” in Williams, 2010, p.154–155. On this point see also Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2003), p.136. They both argue that in order to secure their position, lesser powers found themselves in a situation where they felt obliged to “lend allegiance” to one or the other of the leaders, thus losing their ability to manoeuvre in line with their own calculations.

<sup>3</sup> These demands were characterised as “inappropriate and incorrect statements” by the Soviet President Podgorny in 1965. See Meliha Benli Altunışık & Özlem Tür, *Turkey: Challenges of Continuity and Change* (Oxon: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 102-103. Also see William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774* (3rd. edition) (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), p. 80.

bases and facilities for the forward deployment of nuclear weapons and the monitoring of Soviet compliance with arms control agreements”.<sup>4</sup>

With the end of the Cold War, “the well-known parameters of Turkish foreign policy”<sup>5</sup> changed, and Turkey saw the emergence of new windows of opportunity. It strove eagerly to become more deeply engaged with its environs in order to raise its own regional and global profile by making the most of fluctuations in its relative power position. However, Turkey’s journey from what Kirişçi called “post-Cold War warrior”,<sup>6</sup> fostering disagreements with almost all of its neighbours in the immediate post-Cold War years, to a more engagement-minded approach was not an easy one in any respect. The shift in Turkey’s grand strategy that I analyse in this thesis was first attempted by Turgut Özal, who, according to Cengiz Çandar, was “the man who carried Turkey from the twentieth century into the twenty-first century”; during a period that coincided with the late Cold War and the immediate post-Cold War eras (1983–1993). This policy line was to some extent followed by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ismail Cem between 1997 and 2002.<sup>7</sup> He strove to settle Turkey’s problems with its neighbours and achieve greater engagement with these regions with a win-win approach, allowing the JDP to use this policy line as a launching pad for further activism and a deeper engagement with Turkey’s surroundings.<sup>8</sup>

Park refers to this emerging grand strategic attitude under the JDP rule as a departure from the “somewhat cautious, regionally aloof, occasionally ‘hard’, and one-dimensionally West-inclined foreign policy attributed to the Turkish Republic’s

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<sup>4</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee & Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Altunışık & Tür, p. 113.

<sup>6</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, “Turkey’s ‘Demonstrative Effect’ and the Transformation of the Middle East”, *Insight Turkey* 13:2 (2011), pp. 33–55, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Pınar Bilgin and Ali Bilgiç, “Turkey’s ‘New’ Foreign Policy toward Eurasia”, *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 52:2 (2011), pp. 173–195, p. 192.

<sup>8</sup> Özlem Tür, personal communication, 28/4/2016.

Kemalist past.”<sup>9</sup> The era under JDP rule is regarded as the zenith of the decades-old effort to pursue this activist grand strategic attitude, and marked a time in which Turkey’s new grand strategic policy line reflected increasing “self-confidence” and the “rediscovery” of its surroundings in both political and economic terms.<sup>10</sup> The former PM Ahmet Davutoğlu<sup>11</sup> defined this new grand strategic approach as “...zero problems with neighbours, a multidimensional foreign policy, a pro-active regional foreign policy, an altogether new diplomatic style and rhythmic diplomacy”.<sup>12</sup>

Several key developments and processes underline Turkey’s activist grand strategy. The number of mediation efforts Turkey made in the Middle East has increased, from early efforts between Syria and Israel to its efforts to mediate between the West and Iran regarding Iran’s nuclear programme.<sup>13</sup> Turkey’s ambition to act as an energy corridor, transferring Caspian oil and gas to the West via cross-country pipelines, has been greater than ever.<sup>14</sup> Turkey has also developed working relationships with other powerful actors in neighbouring regions, including Russia and Iran, although realpolitik limits to these relationships have been set by clashing views over the future of Syria following the start of the Syrian Civil War. Levels of diplomatic representation (as measured by the booming number of new diplomatic

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<sup>9</sup> Bill Park, “Turkey’s ‘New’ Foreign Policy: Newly Influential or Just Over-active?”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 19:2 (2014), pp. 161–164, p. 161.

<sup>10</sup> Svante E. Cornell, “What Drives Turkish Foreign Policy”, *Middle East Quarterly* 19:1(2012), pp. 13–24.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, a professor of International Relations, served as the Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister since 2002, then as Minister of Foreign Affairs between 2009 and 2014. Between August 2014 and May 2016, he served as the Prime Minister of Turkey.

<sup>12</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Zero problems in a New Era”, *Foreign Policy Magazine* (USA), March 21, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> See İker Aytürk, “The Coming of an Ice Age? Turkish-Israeli Relations since 2002”, *Turkish Studies* 12:4 (2011); and Aylin Gürzel, “Turkey’s Role in Defusing the Iranian Nuclear Issue”, *The Washington Quarterly*, 35:3 (2012), pp. 141–152.

<sup>14</sup> See Ali Tekin and Paul Andrew Williams, *Geo-politics of the Euro-Asia Energy Nexus—The European Union, Russia and Turkey* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke: 2011; Katinka Barysch, “Turkey’s Role in European Energy Security”, *Centre for European Reform Essays* (2007); Stephen Larrabee, “Turkey’s Eurasian Agenda”, *The Washington Quarterly*, 34:1 (2011), pp. 103–120; Gareth Winrow, “Turkish National Interests” in Yelena Kalyuzhnova, Amy Myers Jaffe, Dov Lynch, Robin C. Sickles (eds.), *Energy in the Caspian Region: Present and Future*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 234–250; Gökhan Bacık, “Turkey and the Pipeline Politics”, *Turkish Studies*, 7:2 (2006), pp. 293–306

missions) and economic activity (as measured by unprecedented levels of trade in both the Caribbean and Africa) have also dramatically increased.<sup>15</sup> In these regions, Turkey had no previous record of interaction, negligible diplomatic representation and little economic presence.

Davutoğlu, widely believed to be one of the key masterminds behind Turkey's activism during the JDP era, formulated this activist theme as the doctrine of "strategic depth".<sup>16</sup> His activist policy line brought some important achievements, but Turkey gradually came to realise—especially with the internationalisation of the Syrian civil war—that the "zero problems policy with neighbours" aspect of this doctrine seemed destined to fail in a region where almost all actors experience tension, crises or conflict with other important players.

This thesis primarily aims at addressing theoretical debates on the motivations behind Turkey's changing grand strategic attitude over time. Existing explanations will be challenged and new causal explanations will be presented and tested. The following section will engage more fully with the concept behind this research puzzle.

### **Research Puzzle: Motivations behind Turkey's New Grand Strategic Behaviour and Theoretical Debate**

Analysing a shift or shifts in the attitude of people, communities or states requires an investigation of the factors, motivations, and actors that shape and re-shape such shifts. As such, grand strategic shifts undergone by a state over time require a

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<sup>15</sup> See Foreign Ministry's briefs, "Turkey's relations with the Latin American and the Caribbean Countries" at <[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i\\_turkey\\_s-relations-with-the-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-countries.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i_turkey_s-relations-with-the-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-countries.en.mfa)> and "Turkey-Africa Relations" at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>, (accessed 30/06/2014.)

<sup>16</sup> The policy was named after his eponymous book *Stratejik Derinlik* [Strategic Depth], İstanbul: Küre Yayınları.

thorough analysis in order to identify the most influential factors, and to make sense of the resulting changes and their knock-on effects. There are usually several conflicting lines of argument presented with respect to any particular case, which means that identifying these conflicting approaches and evaluating their explanatory power is an important component of the effort to make sense of changing attitudes. The grand strategic shifts any state experiences, and an analysis of these shifts, offers insights not only into that state's changing external and internal settings which have engendered the grand strategic shift, but also into comparable shifts experienced in similar cases.

In order to analyse grand strategy and alterations to it, it is firstly necessary to define and engage with the concept of "grand strategy". There are basically two approaches. The first is a militarist approach which limits the concept to a wartime context and defines it only in terms of wartime goals. The second is a more holistic approach which sees the concept as a broader long-term political strategy that may or may not include wartime scenarios. According to this latter approach, the goal of raising a state's profile can be achieved by utilising all possible international and domestic shifts and developments. As an important defender of the term's militaristic definition, Sir Michael Howard refers to grand strategy only as a strategic endeavour directed towards wartime achievements within a limited time frame:

Grand Strategy... consisted basically in the mobilisation and deployment of national resources of wealth, manpower and industrial capacity,

together with those of allied and where feasible, of neutral powers, for the purpose of achieving the goals of policy in wartime.<sup>17</sup>

I consider this militarist definition to be too narrow in scope, and will instead embrace a more comprehensive version of the concept of grand strategy in this thesis.

Morgenthau's denouncement of war as an irrational foreign policy instrument in contemporary world affairs<sup>18</sup> supports the idea that any grand strategy needs to be re-evaluated in the light of the relationship between political ends and military means, and should move beyond war-oriented calculations. As such, limiting the scope of grand strategy to wartime seems outmoded and simplistic in terms of analysing the components of a state's power and the scope of its strategies.

In line with such an approach, Captain Liddle Hart states that grand strategy is a concept that refers to the long-term use of any tool a state possesses in order to advance its interests.<sup>19</sup> Mark Brawley shares this assumption, and argues that the concept refers to the use of all possible means in order to advance state interests at home and abroad during peacetime as well as wartime.<sup>20</sup>

In this thesis, the concept of grand strategy is defined as an overall effort to use all assets—including day-to-day or long-term foreign policy choices, economic devices and extraction and mobilisation capacities—at the disposal of any state, with

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<sup>17</sup> Sir Michael Howard, "Grand Strategy in the Twentieth Century", *Defence Studies* 1:1 (Spring 2001), pp.1–10, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> Chris Brown, "The Twilight of International Morality? Hans J. Morgenthau and Carl Schmitt on the end of *Jus Publicum Europeum*" in Michael C. Williams, ed., *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 42–62, at p.52; Hans Morgenthau, "Power Politics", in Freda Kirchway, ed., *The Atomic Era – Can it Bring Peace and Abundance?*, New York: Medill McBride, 1950, p.37.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas Kitchen, "Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation", *Review of International Studies*, 36:1 (2010), pp. 117–143, p. 120.

<sup>20</sup> Mark R. Brawley, *Political Economy and Grand Strategy: A Neoclassical Realist View* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 3.



the ultimate goal of power-maximisation. This definition includes not only keeping regimes and structures in place with a survival-centred focus, but also projecting state power abroad in order to pursue more ambitious goals. Drawing from this holistic approach to grand strategy and the external and internal factors that engender and reshape it, the question this research will address is whether changes in Turkey's grand strategy have come about as a result of religious revivalism (as simplistic culturalist and/or ideology-driven accounts argue) or (as realists would argue) a by-product of changing power- and interest-driven calculations.

Primordialist accounts regard grand strategic shifts as a result of state changes in ideological and value-driven preferences that shape their alliances and rivalries. If the ruling elite are replaced by another group of elite with different ideological preferences, then grand strategic choices as well as particular foreign policy moves will undergo significant changes. In the Turkish case, such an analysis implies that the replacement of the Kemalist and aggressive secular elite by the JDP—comprising a new group of policy-makers, mostly with Islamist backgrounds—has resulted in tectonic foreign policy changes, altering the country's grand strategic positioning. On the other hand, realists would argue that such a change can only occur due to changing power-driven calculations in response to fluctuations in relative power, either as an irresistible feature of humankind, or as a result of anarchy in the international system. Therefore the shift Turkey experienced (and is still experiencing) needs to be primarily interpreted in terms of its changing systemic power position in response to changes in its surroundings and in the broader international and global system, causing fluctuations in its relative power.

I argue that rather than a value-driven shift, Turkey's activism reflects a far more realist one. In line with this position, this research positions itself against the

primordialist approach and embraces a realist reading of the process in terms of the way it engenders and drives Turkey's activism. Morgenthau argued that "The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power."<sup>21</sup> In Ancient Greece, "the real cause of the Peloponnesian War was the growth of the power of Athens".<sup>22</sup> Increasing relative power is mostly followed by an activist grand strategy and a stronger desire to extend power and influence abroad. This law held true in ancient Greece. The Athenians rightly ascribed it to human nature, and as such, it has maintained its centrality over the ensuing millennia.<sup>23</sup> Operating under anarchy, primary actors—mostly states, as purposive and unitary actors—pursue their interests rationally.<sup>24</sup> Power-maximisation is the key to a successful pursuit of national interest, and the scope of national interests will expand and evolve in line with the changes in relative power. With the end of the Cold War, Turkey found itself in an era defined by greater manoeuvrability and the sudden absence of previously rigid bipolar settings. In line with fluctuations in its own and its regional rivals' power, and to take advantage of these fluctuations to raise its profile, Turkey's grand strategic approach became a great deal more actively oriented.

The research's selected theoretical framework, namely neoclassical realism (NCR), incorporates both international and domestic factors in its analysis. It accepts that the primary impact of changes will be at the international level, and their impact on the relative power position of a particular state will be the main cause of changes in state behaviour. However, it also accepts that domestic factors can also affect the state's ability to pursue its desired goals. In line with this assumption, investigating

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<sup>21</sup> Morgenthau, 1954, p.5.

<sup>22</sup> Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Rex Warner (Harmondsworth: PenguinBooks, 1986) book 1 chapter 23; Rose, 1998, pp. 153–154 and Jonathan Monten, "Thucydides and Modern Realism", *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (2006), pp. 3–25, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> See Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, book 5 chapter 105 and Monten, 2006, p.11.

<sup>24</sup> Monten, 2006, p. 8.

changes at both international and domestic levels would provide a more comprehensive understanding of why Turkey pursued an activist grand strategy in the post-Cold war era, and why the country experienced the zenith of this activism abroad under the JDP rule.

With its detailed analysis of Turkey's changing grand strategic attitude and the motivations behind these shifts, especially in the period under the JDP rule, this thesis has the potential to attract a broad audience. This audience would consist not only of scholars and policy-makers dealing with Turkey's foreign policy attitudes and grand strategy, but also of scholars whose primary focus is IR theory. The research also addresses an audience focussing on the analyses of how lesser powers acted in the post-Cold War era in general, even if they are not studying the particular case of Turkey.

### **Methodology**

In my research I rely mostly on a qualitative approach to analyse the shift in Turkey's grand strategic behaviour. I use primary sources including speeches, statements, and public addresses of leaders of political parties, business associations and military figures. The research also incorporates dozens of interviews with experts, scholars, diplomats and journalists with expertise on Turkey and/or Turkey's domestic transformations and relations with the selected actors. A list of the interviewees from different ideological standpoints and professions is provided in the acknowledgements section. I also use secondary sources on the country's grand strategic behaviour as well as on rival theoretical approaches. I begin by studying academic articles and

books to lay the theoretical groundwork and to clarify the research's theoretical Neoclassical Realist approach within the broader realist school of thought. From there I move on to analyse three relationship-based case studies.

Gerring describes the case study as: “an intensive study of a single case (or a small set of cases) with an aim to generalize across a larger set of cases of the same general type”.<sup>25</sup> In this research, three case studies covering specific bilateral relationships are analysed in order to conduct a small-n cross-case analysis. These case studies will consider the Turkish-Iranian, Turkish-Israeli and Turkish-EU relationships. The relationships are analysed within a time frame covering the late 1990s to 2016 (with a primary focus on the period from 2002 onwards). Their identity-heavy backgrounds and power- and interest-driven adjustments allow these case studies act as theoretical “battlefields” between value-driven accounts and realist analyses. The aim of the case studies is not only to make sense of the shift Turkey's grand strategy has undergone, but also to present a causal mechanism that can be generalised to other cases,

Choosing the right cases to explain the phenomena on which a particular research focuses is about choosing cases that experience change in the selected variables.<sup>26</sup> By doing this, a “purposive selection” of the most analytically valuable cases—ones that have a causal relevance representative of a broader universe—can be undertaken.<sup>27</sup> This research therefore chooses the relationships that have been influenced by the changes in the variables upon which the research concentrates,

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<sup>25</sup> Gerring, 2007, p. 65.

<sup>26</sup> Seawright and Gerring, 2008, p. 296.

<sup>27</sup> John Gerring, “Case Selection for Case-study Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques” in Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Henry Brady and David Collier, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) pp. 645–684, 645.

namely external shifts, domestic coalitions, and the reconfiguration of the civil-military power calculus.

In terms of the construction of case study chapters, each case study chapter begins with a brief historical background, presented in order to showcase the contrast before and after the selected critical junctures. Following that, selected critical junctures and the ways in which they affected their relationships with Turkey and Turkey's behaviour will be analysed. Afterwards, in line with the research emphasis on the domestic level, the ways in which selected domestic factors and the changes they underwent affected Turkey's pursuit of shifting attitudes towards the selected three actors will be discussed. This will be followed by sections focusing on the ways in which the selected variables impacted on Turkey's foreign policy regarding certain actors in particular and its grand strategy in general. Each chapter will close by considering whether or not those variables succeeded in explaining the shift, or whether primordialist accounts could offer a better explanation. To summarise, an analysis based on the impact of the selected variables will be presented after a brief historical background on the case studies selected, showing commonalities and continuities over time, followed by a theoretical discussion centred on rival explanations.

Van Evera notes that "testing theories" is one of the purposes case studies successfully serve.<sup>28</sup> According to Bennett and George,<sup>29</sup> in-depth analysis is also considered to be particularly useful when attempting to challenge existing theories. Theoretical claims and expectations which are closely linked to empirical data and causal mechanisms will be rendered more visible through closer observation, which is

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<sup>28</sup> Van Evera, 1997, p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander George & Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), p.215.

why the specific case studies were chosen for analysis in this research.<sup>30</sup> Studying multiple cases makes it possible to build a logical chain of evidence,<sup>31</sup> and it should be possible to construct stronger hypotheses or challenge existing ones by taking a closer look at the causal mechanisms in each case study and by triangulating between case studies.<sup>32</sup> This research will therefore be able to challenge existing explanations, thereby testing the explanatory power of primordialism and neoclassical realism.<sup>33</sup>

A clear theoretical framework sits at the dividing line between chronological accounts of events over a specific period of time and the ways in which we make sense of them. Here, neoclassical realism will be presented as a theoretical framework that challenges its rivals with higher exploratory power thus a comprehensive framework.

In terms of the limitations of this research, a broader list of case studies is deliberately avoided. The reason for this is that such a study would be over-ambitious in terms of the research's geographical scope, and would far exceed the physical limits of this thesis. Instead, the research has selected three key bilateral relationships and will examine them in the ways outlined above. This will make it easier to measure the impacts of specific factors on Turkey's grand strategy. Any analysis performed under a wider geographical and geopolitical remit—such as Turkey's new attitudes towards the Middle East and the Caucasus—would suffer from over-generalisation and a consequent necessity to simplify. Analysing fewer cases in greater depth allows the thesis to display the impact of the chosen theoretical tools and factors of the study and is more illustrative of the research's theoretical positioning and its explanatory power.

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<sup>30</sup> Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp.226–228.

<sup>31</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1984). Also see Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (London: Sage Publications, 2014).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.19

<sup>33</sup> George & Bennett, 2005, p. 24 and 91–92

Therefore, by narrowing its focus for the sake of depth and accuracy in its arguments and greater precision in its assumptions, limiting the work to three important and contrasting case studies reinforces the ability of the research to explain broader arguments and assumptions.

For similar reasons, the time period has been limited to the last two decades with a much higher emphasis on the more recent one. The number of observed domestic factors was limited to two in order to analyse the most important factors and to focus on the components and critical junctures which principally affected the shifts in Turkey's grand strategies. But even under such controls, the pace of events and changes in Turkey and its surrounding regions has made the task of obtaining the most up-to-date information and producing a contemporary analysis a very difficult one. However, the research has made a great effort to remain relevant, in order to act as one of the most up-to-date studies so far in terms of setting events against a theoretical framework.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

In the following chapter I will present the rival theoretical frameworks in depth and engage with the main concepts of the thesis, such as “windows of opportunity”, “state autonomy”<sup>34</sup> and “grand strategy”. A detailed examination of Neoclassical Realism, with references to several eminent IR scholars such as Snyder, Schweller, Zakaria and Van Evera will also form an important part of the chapter. I will investigate how and

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<sup>34</sup> The term refers to the elected executive's ability to extract the resources it needs and channel them to respond to systemic changes when it considers them beneficial without being prevented by other interest groups or cliques. See Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: the Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

where neoclassical realism positions itself in both the realist school and in broader IR theory literature, and how it can be used to understand the Turkish case in particular.

In the subsequent case study chapters, I analyse the impact of international developments and Turkey's changing attitude towards Iran, Israel and the EU. In each chapter, after providing a brief historical background, I will elaborate on critical junctures and their consequences. Following that, I explore the impact of the selected domestic factors—the coalitions between statesmen and conservative businessmen and the demise of the military's influence over policy-making—as multipliers of Turkey's ability to pursue its changing policy preferences. Lastly, I will engage with the theoretical debate on Turkey, concentrating on the theoretical differences between culture and value-driven analyses and NCR.

In the final chapter, I provide an analysis of the way neoclassical realism has helped make sense of Turkey's grand strategic activism. I then present an analysis of the sustainability of Turkey's new grand strategic approach in the light of the current state of affairs at both domestic and international levels. Lastly, a detailed section will be presented on the expected contributions of this research to the literature on Turkey, to IR theory in general and neoclassical realism in particular, and to the concept of grand strategy as well as academic and policy debates.



## **Chapter 2: Rival Explanations and Important Concepts**

The introduction offered an insight into shifts in Turkey's grand strategic behaviour, and touched upon rival explanations before laying out the structure and approach of the thesis in general.

The main goal of this chapter is to introduce and further explore the theoretical groundwork, engage with the rival explanations in much more detail, provide a literature review and present the conceptual frameworks I will use to structure the case study chapters. I will start by considering primordialist arguments and relevant literature on Turkey's shifting grand strategic attitude. Then, in accordance with my approach to analysing grand strategy through the lens of neoclassical realism, I will elaborate on NCR. After that, I will offer a closer examination of the shift in grand strategic behaviour in the specific context of Turkey by analysing the changes at both international and domestic levels.<sup>1</sup>

### **Primordialist Explanations, Neoclassical Realism, and Making Sense of Turkey's Grand Strategic Behaviour**

Primordialism refers to religion, culture, tradition, ethnicity and history in general as the key independent variables affecting policy outcomes.<sup>2</sup> The core primordialist

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony F. Lang, Jr., "Morgenthau, Agency, and Aristotle", in Michael C. Williams, ed., *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 18–42, p. 28; William E. Scheuerman, *Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 42 and 78; Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 57; Oliver Jütensonke, "The Image of Law in Politics Among Nations" in Williams, ed., *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*, pp. 93–118 at p. 107; . H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, p.19.

<sup>2</sup> Eva Bellin, "Faith in Politics: New Trends in the Study of Religion and Politics", *World Politics* 60:2 (2008), pp. 315–347. See also Ronald Grigor Suny, "Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for

assumption is that differences and similarities in the religious and ethnic values of various actors determine their choice of allies and enemies, acting as the main independent variable in policy-making processes.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most popular defenders of this line of argument is Samuel Huntington, who, in his *Clash of Civilizations*, argued that in the post-Cold War era, the lines of conflict and cooperation would be drawn along religious boundaries.<sup>4</sup> Huntington argued that “in the modern world, religion is central, perhaps the central, force that motivates and mobilizes people.”<sup>5</sup> He goes on to draw imaginary boundaries along “civilizational” lines, which in reality reflect the religious boundaries between Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Hinduism, Sub-Saharan Africa and so on,<sup>6</sup> showing the way he frames ethnicity and more importantly religion at the top of his interpretation of the “new world” in the post-Cold War era. Since only one of Huntington’s groupings, namely the Sub-Saharan African civilisation, does not follow an explicit religious affiliation, it can be concluded that religion also triumphs over ethnicity in his definition of the ultimate motivation for social groups—up to and including states.

Several key international developments have reinforced this primordialist reading of the world. For instance, the proclamation of the State of Israel and ensuing decades of conflict between the Arab states and Israel have highlighted religion’s continuing influence in international politics. To primordialists, the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 signalled nothing less than the “return of religion” or the

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New Nations”, *The Journal of Modern History* 73: 4 (2001), pp. 862–896 and Patricia Springborg, “Politics, Primordialism, and Orientalism: Marx, Aristotle, and the Myth of the Gemeinschaft”, *The American Political Science Review* 80: 1 (1986), pp. 185–211.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas Hasenclever and Volker Rittberger, “Does Religion Make a Difference? Theoretical Approaches to the Impact of Faith on Political Conflict”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29:3 (2000), pp. 641–674, pp. 641–643.

<sup>4</sup> Sabina A Stein, “Competing Political Science Perspectives on the Role of Religion in Conflict”, *Politorbis* 52:2 (2011), pp. 21–26 and Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000, p. 643.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”, *Foreign Affairs*, 72:3 (1993), pp. 22–49, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 28.

“global resurgence of religion”,<sup>7</sup> while religiously intensified conflicts in the former Yugoslavia offered further empirical ammunition to the primordialist approach. Such events drove sociologist Peter Berger to revise his stance from his 1968 opinion that religions would lose their importance in time to his confession in 1999 that he was wrong and the world is as “furiously religious as it ever was”.<sup>8</sup> The terror attacks of 9/11, which were defined as being religiously-motivated, provided the most important empirical ammunition to the primordialist approach, sparking a post-9/11 growth in debates about the role of religion in international relations.

However, it is also a widely held argument that world politics seriously challenges the validity of primordialism. One of the primordialists’ most popular case studies is Iran, with its clear official religious orientation and the numerous statements made by its leaders. However, many studies have concluded that Iran—from the famous “Contra-Iran affair”, referring to Iran’s covert cooperation with the “Great Satan” and the “lesser Satan” (the United States and Israel respectively), to its high levels of trade with the Christian West—is in fact an important demonstration of the limitations of such approaches. The country’s cooperation with Armenia against predominantly Muslim Azerbaijan and its pro-Russian policy regarding the Chechnya question is seen as some other examples of these limitations.<sup>9</sup> In *The Limits of Culture*, a major study on how primordialism frequently fails to explain state behaviour, Shaffer and Ansari show how Iranian policy is in fact far from

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<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Haynes, “Religion and International Relations after ‘9/11’”, *Democratization* 12:3 (2005), pp. 398–413, p. 398 and Bassam Tibi, “Post-Bipolar Order in Crisis: The Challenge of Politicised Islam”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29:3 (2000), pp. 843–859.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Berger, “The Desecularization of the World: An Overview”, in Peter Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington DC: Eerdmans/Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ruhi Ramazani, “Iran’s Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations”, *Middle East Journal* 43: 2 (1989), pp. 202–217, p. 213; Ruhi Ramazani, “Ideology and Pragmatism in Iran’s Foreign Policy”, *Middle East Journal* 58: 4 (2004), pp. 549–559, pp. 556–559; Tibi, 2000; Brenda Shaffer, “The Islamic Republic of Iran: Is It Really?” in Brenda Shaffer, ed., *The Limits of Culture: Islam and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), pp. 219–240, p. 221–229.

primordialist. There are further cases showing the limits of primordialist explanations, even in respect of the cases primordialism is widely used to make sense of. Cornell, for example, shows how Pakistani politics, despite being run under the banner of religion, maintains a clear *realpolitik* line. Suny offers a detailed analysis of the post-Soviet Turkic states that constructs their identities via their preferred policy choices and their allies and enemies, rather than by following “ancient” ethnic or religious codes in analysing their interactions with other states.<sup>10</sup>

However, from rationalizing the Global War on Terror to dealing with the immigrant question in Europe, and from making sense of apparently endless Middle Eastern conflict to analysing individual countries such as Turkey, the primordialist approach has gained a certain amount of credence—more especially outside academia, but also to some extent within academic circles.<sup>11</sup> In their explanations of the phenomenon of the “New Turkey”, primordialist accounts argue that ideology and values act as the ultimate motivation behind the shift. The next section will engage with that assumption in relation to shifts in Turkey’s grand strategic attitude.

### **Turkey and Primordialist Explanations: A Value-Driven Ethno-Religious Shift?**

The overarching argument of the primordialist approach to Turkey’s grand strategic shift attributes it to Islamism and *ummah*<sup>12</sup>-oriented policy-making, or a sense of neo-Ottomanism with the ultimate goal of reviving Turkey’s Ottoman past. These two

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<sup>10</sup> See Brenda Shaffer, “The Islamic Republic of Iran: Is It Really?”, pp. 219–240; Ali M. Ansari, “Civilizational Identity and Foreign Policy: The Case of Iran”, pp. 241–262; Svante E. Cornell, “Pakistan’s Foreign Policy: Islamic or Pragmatic?”, pp. 291–324; and Ronald Grigor Suny, “History and Foreign Policy: From Constructed Identities to ‘Ancient Hatreds’ East of the Caspian”, in Shaffer, ed., *The Limits of Culture*, pp. 83–110, respectively.

<sup>11</sup> Haynes, 2005 and Stein, 2011, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> The term “*ummah*” refers to the “nation of believers”, a key Islamic concept.

concepts are frequently used interchangeably or at least in conjunction with each other as they both follow a similar value-driven mindset.<sup>13</sup>

Primordialist accounts have their own explanations for the dramatic shifts in Turkey's particular bilateral relationships. The three selected cases stand out as being particularly illustrative within this context. Turkey, during the JDP rule, has been politically ruled by conservative democrats, of whom almost the entire senior cadre has an Islamist background.<sup>14</sup> As one would expect from such an identity- and ideology-centred political outlook, Turkey has significantly improved its relations with Iran as another dominantly Muslim-populated country, whilst its relations with Israel have deteriorated. Turkey has at best a stagnant relationship with the EU, towards which previous Islamist movements had serious ideology- and identity-driven objections. These new dynamics have reinforced ideology-driven efforts to explain "New Turkey" and encouraged studies, op-eds, articles and books to adopt such a theoretical viewpoint.<sup>15</sup> The following sections engage with primordialist assumptions

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<sup>13</sup> Ziya Öniş, "Multiple Faces of the New Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique," *Insight Turkey* 13:1 (2011), pp. 47–65, pp. 47–48. On the debates surrounding the 'shift of axis', also see Meliha B. Altunışık and Lenore G. Martin, "Making Sense of Turkish foreign Policy in the Middle East under AKP", *Turkish Studies* 12:4 (2011), 569–587, p. 572; Bülent Aras, "Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SETA Policy Brief* 32, (May 2009), p. 8; Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country Turkey: Between Secularism and Islamism*, (California: Hoover Institute Press, 2010), p. 106–117.

<sup>14</sup> As the leading Islamist political figure in Turkey, Necmettin Erbakan was the key figure in Turkey's Islamist political movement from the 1970s. His political parties were banned one after another—the National Order Party, the National Salvation Party, the Welfare Party, the Virtue Party and the Felicity Party (which is still active on Turkey's political scene)—until his death in 2011. However, the JDP evolved from Erbakan's political philosophies and was founded in 2001 by the "reformist" wing of the Virtue Party. With respect to the differences between Erbakan-led Islamist political parties and the JDP as a conservative democrat party, see Hale and Özbudun, 2010, p. 20–33. On the emergence of the JDP, see also Stein, 2014, p. 1–11.

<sup>15</sup> For some examples of such an approach, see Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism", *Carnegie Papers* 10, (September 2008), p. 1–15. On this concept, see also Bulent Aras, "Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SETA Policy Brief* 32, (May 2009), p. 6; Cengiz Çandar, "Turkey's Soft Power Strategy: A New Vision for a Multipolar World" in *SETA Brief*, No.38 (2009), p. 4; Ahmet Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: Transition and Challenges", *Turkish Studies* 11: 1 (2010), pp.103–123, pp. 108 and 119; Zeyno Baran, *Torn Country Turkey: Between Secularism and Islamism*, p. 116–117; Soner Çağaptay, "When Islamist foreign policies hurt Muslims", *LA Times*, 7/12/2009 <<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/dec/07/opinion/la-oe-cagaptay7-2009dec07>>, accessed

and the JDP's relationship with Islamism and its Neo-Ottoman discourse in more detail.

*a- The JDP and Islamism*

According to primordialist or naïve culturalist approaches, the JDP—with its leading figures' Islamist backgrounds—has worked to “Islamise” Turkish grand strategy. The JDP was founded by a leading trio of politicians—Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül and Bülent Arınç—who led the reformist movement within the Erbakanist tradition. Therefore, the JDP's leading figures, with their Islamist political backgrounds within an Islamist political movement which had been led for decades by Necmettin Erbakan, were expected to pursue a similar Islamist approach despite their constant reiteration that the party has nothing to do with Erbakanist policy line and regarded itself as a conservative democrat political party. As an important example of assessments drawn from this approach, Cornell argued that:

Erdogan and Davutoglu set out as pan-Islamists, which is truly the root of Davutoglu's ideology, a naïve belief that Muslims have the same interests, should be united, and all splits among Muslims are the result of nasty imperialists and/or Jews. ...it is to me beyond any doubt that this [Turkey's new grand strategy] has been an ideologically motivated policy...2008-11 was the period of Pan-Islamism, which ended with the Arab uprisings, which led to a period of Sunni sectarian policies lasting to the present,

though in a more and more reactive way as Turkey's ability to manoeuvre has been cut down in Egypt, Iraq and Syria.<sup>16</sup>

Even though there has always been a tendency to reject Erbakanist roots and religion in general as a founding political principle of the JDP, speeches and statements to the contrary have been far from absent, enriching the empirical ammunition of primordialist approaches.

To mention some examples, former PM Davutoğlu once stated: "Since the end of the Ottoman Empire, Muslims have gotten the short end of the stick, and the JDP is here to correct all that".<sup>17</sup> This statement appears to stand as a strong reference to the tension between the Muslim civilisation and the external "other", in which Turkey positions itself within the camp labelled as the Muslim world. Furthermore, according to Davutoğlu's statement, Turkey appears eager to act as a representative for the Muslim world in order to improve the situation of the Muslims in the international system. Drawing from this statement, Islam stands out not only as Turkey's defining characteristic, but also an important source of motivation in Turkish policy-making. The JDP's rhetoric about the Palestinian cause led Hamas leader Mashal to name Erdoğan as a "leader of the Islamic world". Rashid Al-Ghannouchi, leader of Tunisia's Ennahda Movement, considered the JDP era as a "return to the heart of the ummah"<sup>18</sup> and as a "successful modern Muslim administration,"<sup>19</sup> empirically reinforcing Turkey's Islamist credentials. The JDP occasionally uses religiously-

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<sup>16</sup> Svante Cornell, personal communication, 17/2/2016.

<sup>17</sup> Sally Mcnamara, Ariel Cohen, James Philips, "Countering Turkey's Strategic Drift", *Backgrounders*, No. 2442, July 26, 2010, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Burhanettin Duran, "Understanding the AK Party's Identity Politics: A Civilizational Discourse and its Limitations", *Insight Turkey* 15:1 (2013), pp. 91–109, p. 94.

<sup>19</sup> Stein, 2014, p. 37.

oriented rhetoric, and this rhetoric is warmly embraced by religiously-oriented political groupings abroad.

Embracing other actors within the Muslim world in both political and economic terms has been an important facet of leading JDP figures' public speeches. Erdoğan's address at Cairo University echoed his famous public address on the balcony of the JDP's headquarters after the party's election victory in 2011. In that address, he stated that Gaza, Ramallah, Damascus, Mecca, Madina, Istanbul, and Diyarbakır were all "brothers", and his references to the atrocities happening in these cities stressed the strong tone of Islamic fraternity that underlay his thinking.<sup>20</sup> His call for "raising a religious generation"<sup>21</sup>, his defence of Sudanese leader Bashir in 2009 when he said that "a Muslim cannot commit suicide"<sup>22</sup> and similar statements further strengthened the empirical basis of a value and ideology-based assessment of the "new Turkey".

#### *b- Value-Driven Neo-Ottoman Discourse*

"Neo-Ottomanism" is a concept that is mentioned in many studies, and mainly refers to a grand strategic approach with direct links to Turkey's Ottoman past. The concept of "Neo-Ottomanism", first coined during the early 1990s, refers mainly to Turgut Özal's foreign policy approach.<sup>23</sup> However, it is argued that the concept has been

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<sup>20</sup> Duran, 2013, p. 94-95.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>22</sup> Cornell, 2012, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Turgut Özal (1927-1993) was Turkey's eighth President. He graduated from Istanbul Technical University, then studied economics in the United States. He served as the head of the State Planning Organization (SPO) for two terms, worked at the World Bank and at the Sabancı Holding Company. In 1983, he formed the Motherland Party, which won the first free multi-party elections after the coup in 1980. The party was the leading political party between 1983 and 1993, with significant levels of public support in several elections of around 30 to 45 percent. The party, with its centre-right stance and emphasis on economic improvement, can be regarded as the predecessor of the JDP. Similarly its leader, Turgut Özal, who served as Prime Minister between 1983 and 1989 and as President between 1989 and 1993, can be broadly regarded as the predecessor to Recep Tayyip



further developed by the JDP, which has put a great deal of effort into its pursuit of this concept.<sup>24</sup> Fuller defines the term as “a renewed interest in the former territories and people of the Empire, which includes Muslims who were part of the Empire”.<sup>25</sup> This conceptualisation argues that Turkey’s pursuit of Western identity and closer integration with the West has been replaced by nostalgic sense of Islamism and the pursuit of the country’s Ottoman past as a result of a major “shift of axis”.<sup>26</sup> Taheri argues that Erdoğan is pursuing neo-Ottomanism as a way of fulfilling Turkey’s “historical responsibility” to the former Ottoman Empire<sup>27</sup> by disguising it as Islamist endeavour.<sup>28</sup>

There are numerous examples of statements that empirically reinforce primordialist explanations in the JDP era. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs between 2009 and 2014 and as Prime Minister from late 2014 to mid-2016, referred to the last century as a parenthesis setting Turkey apart from its Ottoman past, a separation to which Turkey is determined to put an end.<sup>29</sup> Davutoğlu refers to the Republican era’s policy of distancing the country from the former

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Erdoğan, due to not only to their ideological similarities but also to their focus on economic improvement and domestic reformation as well as increasing involvement in neighbouring regions.

<sup>24</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, “Turkey’s Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism”, *Carnegie Papers* 10, (September 2008), p. 1–15. On this concept, see also Bülent Aras, 2009, p. 6; Cengiz Çandar, “Turkey’s Soft Power Strategy: A New Vision for a Multipolar World” in *SETA Brief*, No.38 (2009), p. 4; Ahmet Sözen, 2010, p. 108 and 119; Zeyno Baran, 2010, p. 116–117; Nora Fisher Onar, “Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy”, *EDAM Discussion Paper Series* 3, (2009). Also see Nur Bilge Criss, “Parameters of Turkish Foreign Policy under the AKP Governments”, *UNISCI Discussion Papers* 23 (2010), pp. 9–22.

<sup>25</sup> Graham Fuller, *Turkey Faces East: New orientations toward the Middle East and the Old Soviet Union* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1992), p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, “A New Ottoman Empire?”, *Forbes*, 06/02/2009, <<http://www.forbes.com/2009/06/02/ahmet-davutoglu-turkey-obama-opinions-contributors-ottoman-empire.html>>, accessed 18/08/2013.

<sup>27</sup> Tarık Oğuzlu, “Middle Easternization of Turkey’s Foreign Policy: Does Turkey Dissociate from the West?”, *Turkish Studies* 9:1 (2008), pp. 3–20, p.13.

<sup>28</sup> Amir Taheri, “Turkey and the Neo-Ottoman Dream”, *Al Arabiya*, 06/08/2011, <<http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2011/08/06/161026.html>>, accessed 12/07/2012.

<sup>29</sup> Tulin Daloğlu, “Davutoglu Invokes Ottomanism as New Mideast Order”, *Al Monitor*, 10/03/2013, <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/turkey-davutoglu-ottoman-new-order-mideast.html#>>, accessed 01/02/2014.

Ottoman space as regretful, and emphasises his desire to revive this link based on the historical borders of the Ottoman Empire. As a key figure since 2002, and as a politician considered one of the masterminds behind the ruling party's foreign policy choices, Davutoğlu uses the term “restoration” when referring to the JDP's mission to revisit Turkey's relationship with the former Ottoman space, a word that carries with it the nostalgic sense of reinventing something better that existed in the past—in this case the Ottoman era.<sup>30</sup>

In a similar vein, Davutoğlu also stated that “Beyond representing the 70 million people of Turkey, we have a historic debt to those lands where there are Turks or which was related to our land in the past. We have to repay this debt in the best way”.<sup>31</sup> Here, references to the people beyond Turkey's population—as well as the use of the term “debt” regarding Turks living outside the country and to those who are “related to our land”—clearly highlight another direct reference to the Ottoman past. He further stated that: “We are a society with historical depth, and everything produced in historical depth, even if it is eclipsed at a certain conjuncture of time, may manifest itself again later”. The reference to this “historical depth” again underlines Davutoğlu's allusions to the Ottoman connection. He mentions Turkey's “historical responsibility” with respect to developments in the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East—areas which share the experience of centuries-long Ottoman rule.<sup>32</sup>

At a conference in Sarajevo, Davutoğlu stated that “... the Ottoman Balkans were a successful part of history and now should be reborn...” in a speech referring to

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<sup>30</sup> Çınar Kiperapr, “Sultan Erdogan: Turkey's Rebranding Into the New, Old Ottoman Empire”, <<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/sultan-erdogan-turkeys-rebranding-into-the-new-old-ottoman-empire/274724/>>, accessed 12/03/2014.

<sup>31</sup> Srdja Trifkovic, “Neo-Ottomanism in Action: Turkey as a Regional Power”, *Balkan Studies*, 07/02/2012, <<http://www.balkanstudies.org/articles/neo-ottomanism-action-turkey-regional-power>>, accessed 03/03/2014.

<sup>32</sup> “The “Strategic Depth” that Turkey Needs”, Interview with Ahmet Davutoğlu, *The Turkish Daily News*, 15/12/2001.

the Ottoman era in the Balkans as an era of economic interdependence, collaboration, and political harmony.<sup>33</sup> In the same speech he also noted that:

One western diplomat asked “why are you suddenly parachuting this issue? Why are you involved in Bosnia like parachutes?” I told our ambassador who brought this news to me: “Tell them we didn’t go to Bosnia with parachutes, we went by horse and stayed there with the Bosnians sharing the same destiny!”<sup>34</sup>

Here, “going to Bosnia by horse and staying there” is another direct reference to the Ottoman past, and Davutoğlu’s emphasis on the success of the Ottoman era underlines his appraisal of it. In 2006 another important figure, Turkish State Minister Kürşad Tüzmen, stated that “...the AKP government wished to cultivate a relationship with peoples that once lived in the Ottoman geography based on cooperation and respect. This conveyed a soft-power approach to neo-Ottomanism.”<sup>35</sup> The statement highlighted the JDP’s desire to establish closer links with the former Ottoman space whilst at the same time carefully referring to “cooperation and respect” in an effort to downgrade any possible sense of “imperial tone”.

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<sup>33</sup> Nicolas Panayiotides, “Turkey between Introversion and Regional Hegemony from Ozal to Davutoglu”, *The Cyprus Journal of Sciences* 8 (2010), pp. 23–38, p. 28. On Turkey’s activism in the Balkans, which is used as an empirical starting point for the ethno-religious assessment of Neo-Ottomanism, see Zarko Petrovic and Dusan Reljic, “Turkish Interests and Involvement in the Western Balkans: A Score-Card”, *Insight Turkey* 13:3 (2011), pp. 159–172; Erhan Türbedar, “Turkey’s New Activism in the Western Balkans: Ambitions and Obstacles”, *Insight Turkey* 13:3 (2011), pp. 139–158; Dimitar Bechev, “Turkey in the Balkans: Taking a Broader View”, *Insight Turkey* 14:1 (2012), pp. 131–146.

<sup>34</sup> Gökhan Saz, “The Political Implications of the European Integration of Turkey: Political Scenarios and Major Stumbling Blocks”, *European Journal of Social Science* 20:1 (2011), pp. 47–80, p. 62.

<sup>35</sup> Criss, 2010, p. 14.

In spite of all these and many similar statements from Turkey's leading figures, the question of whether primordialism still enjoys a major explanatory position with respect to Turkey will be addressed in the next section.

### *Weaknesses of Primordialism in Analysing the Shifts in Turkey's Grand Strategy*

The overarching argument of this research is that primordialist approaches suffer from serious weaknesses and cannot provide a comprehensive explanatory framework for the shifts in Turkey's grand strategy. Studying a country like Turkey, which has hosted both NATO and OIC (Organisation of the Islamic Conference) summits, requires much closer observation and analysis in order to avoid over-simplifications and over-generalizations.

Shaffer argues that "If Islam is the defining force in a Muslim-populated state, then...these states should be willing to make significant material sacrifices and take security risks to promote their religious beliefs".<sup>36</sup> Shifts in Turkey's grand strategic position are in fact a long way from Shaffer's definition of religiously motivated grand strategic moves. Instead, they seem to be more pragmatic and opportunistic, adopting policies that best serve Turkey's goal of power-maximisation across multiple regions. Turkey did not just seek to improve its relations with predominantly Muslim-populated neighbouring countries, but eagerly strove towards acquiring a higher profile in every theatre in which it perceived an opportunity to engage itself, whilst simultaneously trying to utilise each emerging window of opportunity in its surroundings.

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<sup>36</sup> Brenda Shaffer, "Is There a Muslim Foreign Policy?", *Current History*, November 2002, <<http://belfercenter.hks.harvard.edu/files/currenthistory%20article%2011.02.pdf>>, accessed 12/12/2013.

According to Simpson, “As the Erdogan years in Turkey have attempted to turn Turkey from a once secular country into a de facto Islamist country, the West and Turkey seem to be on a collision course...”<sup>37</sup> The argument that the JDP has been eager to improve Turkey’s relations with its Muslim neighbours<sup>38</sup> is a common theme in similar studies—although the argument seems prejudicial, based as it is on questionable empirical data. For instance, as an important example of Turkey’s much closer relationship with particular non-Muslim actors in this era, the dramatic increase in the Turkish-Russian economic activity has been accompanied by a much closer political relationship. This lasted until the two nations faced a crisis over Turkey’s downing of a Russian jet in 2015 due to the aircraft’s alleged repeated transgression of Turkish airspace, although the atmosphere began to relax in August 2016 with Erdoğan’s visit to Moscow.<sup>39</sup> The increasing number of Turkish diplomatic representations to Caribbean and African countries,<sup>40</sup> as well as efforts to improve

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<sup>37</sup> Simpson, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Efraim Inbar, “Israeli-Turkish Tensions and Beyond”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 8:3 (2009), pp. 27–35.

<sup>39</sup> Göktuğ Sönmez, *Energy dependency and a Route Map Within the Context of the Recent Turkey-Russia Crisis*, ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs, No. 36, December 2015 and “Putin mends broken relations with Turkey’s Erdogan”, 9/8/2016, *BBC*, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37018562>>, accessed 11/8/2016; “Russia’s Putin and Turkey’s Erdogan meet after damaging rift”, 9/8/2016, *CNN*, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/08/09/world/russia-putin-turkey-erdogan-meeting/>>, accessed 10/8/2016; “Erdoğan and Putin discuss closer ties in first meeting since jet downing”, 9/8/2016, *The Guardian*, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/09/erdogan-meets-putin-leaders-seek-mend-ties-jet-downing-russia-turkey>>, accessed 10/8/2016; “Russia and Turkey Vow to Repair Ties as West Watches Nervously”, 9/8/2016, *New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/10/world/europe/putin-erdogan-russia-turkey.html>>, accessed 11/8/2016.

<sup>40</sup> See “Turkey-Russia Eye Increased Trade, Joint Auto Production”, <<http://www.invest.gov.tr/en-US/infocenter/news/Pages/261113-turkey-russia-joint-auto-production.aspx>>, 26/11/2013, accessed 8/12/2014 and Foreign Ministry’s statistics on “Turkey’s Commercial and Economic Relations With Russian Federation”, <[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey\\_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-russian-federation.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-russian-federation.en.mfa)>, accessed 6/12/2014. According to these, trade with Russia increased from around \$4 billion in 2002 to \$35 billion in 2012. See also Foreign Ministry’s briefs, “Turkey’s relations with the Latin American and the Caribbean Countries” at <[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i\\_turkey\\_s-relations-with-the-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-countries.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i_turkey_s-relations-with-the-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-countries.en.mfa)> and “Turkey-Africa Relations” at <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>>, accessed 30/06/2014. In line with these, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs statistics, trade with Africa increased from almost \$3 billion in 2002 to almost \$20 billion in 2012, and in the same era, trade with the Caribbean increased 9-fold and reached around \$8 billion. In the same period, in both regions, the number of Turkey’s diplomatic representations, including embassies and consulates, almost doubled and now Turkey has representations in almost all

relations with Armenia and Greece,<sup>41</sup> are other significant examples acting as contradictions to primordialist theory.

Even the most faithful supporters of Turkey's pursuit of an "Islamic grand strategy" cannot fail to recognise the empirical weaknesses of their theoretical framework. For example, Soner Çağaptay, an ardent defender of such a position, argues that:

Russian violence in Chechnya continues, yet the JDP seems not to be bothered by the Chechen Muslims' suffering. Despite Russia's northern Caucasus policies, the rapport between Russian leader Vladimir Putin and Erdogan and commercial ties have cemented Turkish-Russian ties. Russia has become Turkey's No. 1 trading partner, replacing Germany.<sup>42</sup>

From controversies over the positioning of the Ballistic Missile Defence System (BMDS) in Turkey to Turkey's interest-driven engagement during the Arab Spring; from its continuing commitment to EU reforms and its maintenance of economic ties

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Caribbean countries. See *Sorumluluk ve Vizyon: 2014 Yılına Giren Türk Dış Politikası* [Responsibility and Vision: Turkish Foreign Policy towards 2014], Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <<http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/sorumlulukvevizyon-2014.pdf>> accessed 20/1/2015.

<sup>41</sup> See "Turkey-Armenia Relations", European Parliament Directorate-General for External Policies (October, 2013); Fulya Memişoğlu, "Easing Mental Barriers in Turkey-Armenia Relations: The Role of Civil Society", TESEV Foreign Policy Programme (2012); Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey's New Geopolitics", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 52:2 (2010) pp. 157–180; Bahar Rumelili, "Transforming Conflicts on EU Borders: the Case of Greek-Turkish Relations", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 45:1 (2007), pp. 105–126; Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: Rhetoric or Reality?", *Political Science Quarterly* 123:1 (2008), pp. 123–149; Emiliano Alessandri, "Turkey's New Foreign Policy and the Future of Turkey-EU Relations", *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs* 45:3 (2010), pp. 85–100.

<sup>42</sup> Soner Çağaptay, "When Islamist foreign policies hurt Muslims", *LA Times*, 7/12/2009 <<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/dec/07/opinion/la-oe-cagaptay7-2009dec07>>, accessed 06/07/2013.

with Israel (even during the height of political tension), there is nothing to indicate a dramatic ideology or a religion-driven shift of axis.

Shortcomings to the primordialist neo-Ottoman viewpoint are just as numerous. The term “neo-Ottoman” was popularised in the Özal era, with Özal seen as the architect of an activist grand strategy designed to end Turkey’s isolation from the Middle East. Özal “was a man for economic liberalization and Turkey’s strategic place in the Middle East”.<sup>43</sup> He also aimed to engage with the former Soviet Union with the goal of making Turkey a more influential player in the post-Cold War era by utilising Turkey’s cultural and historical assets.<sup>44</sup> Thus, even the earliest mentions of the “neo-Ottoman” label actually indicate an attitude that was strictly interest-driven.

Later mentions of the same “neo-Ottoman” stance were broadly attributed to Ahmet Davutoğlu, and referred to his effort to replicate the “glorious achievement [of] the Muslim Turks”.<sup>45</sup> The label is also used with reference to the threats it occasionally poses to Turkey’s material achievements. The argument suggests that if such an ethno-religious endeavour, based on “Ottoman legacy and Islamic tradition”,<sup>46</sup> were to triumph over Turkey’s efforts towards power-maximisation, it would do the country more harm than good.

Onar argues that Turkey pursued a Neo-Ottomanist grand strategy to match its cultural assets, not to advance its influence abroad. However, the problem with this argument—as she admits herself—is that this reading of Turkey’s grand strategy

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<sup>43</sup> Norman Stone, *Turkey: A Short History* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2010), 162.

<sup>44</sup> Cengiz Çandar, “Turgut Özal: The Ottoman of the 21st Century”, *Sabah*, 28/4/1992; Alexander Murinson, “The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 42:6 (2006), pp. 945–964, p. 946–947; Lerna Yanık, “Constructing Turkish “Exceptionalism”: Discourses of Liminality and Hybridity in Post-Cold War Turkish Foreign Policy”, *Political Geography* 30 (2011), pp. 80–89, p. 84; Cengiz Çandar, “Turgut Özal Twenty Years After: The Man and the Politician”, *Insight Turkey* 15:2 (2013), pp. 27–36.

<sup>45</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, “Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux: The Rise of Neo-Ottomanism”, *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 7:12 (1998), pp. 19–41, p. 23; Yanık, 2011, p. 84–85.

<sup>46</sup> Sinan Ülgen, “A Place in the Sun or Fifteen Minutes of Fame?: Understanding Turkey’s New Foreign Policy”, *Carnegie Papers* 1 (December 2010), p. 5.

emerged in the 1990s at a time when Turkey was beginning to pursue its own interest-driven policy choices in response to a significant systemic external shift—the end of the Cold War, a timing which seems far from coincidental. Having the same values and cultural assets, this particular timing itself says a great deal about the underlying motivations behind such a transformation. A new era was beginning in the former Soviet space and in the Middle East, and this timing weakens Onar’s culturalist account, which was based on the claim that the shift centred on changing identity perceptions and the increasing importance of religious and cultural motivations in policy-making. A further problem is that while Onar ascribes such a change to factors of culture and identity, she also alludes to closer ties with Russia and increasing trade with Georgia as a way of advancing Neo-Ottomanism. However, neither of these moves accord with Onar’s choice of cultural assets (referring to a high commitment to Ottoman values and historical experience), on which she based her argument of Turkey’s Neo-Ottomanist grand strategy.<sup>47</sup>

Criticising such over-simplified culturalist approaches, this thesis embraces its own version of neoclassical realism, which has strong parallels to the way in which Zakaria understands the theoretical framework—of which details will be presented over the course of the following sections.

### **Neoclassical Realism within the Broader Realist School**

Realists do not deny that domestic politics influences foreign policy, but they contend that the pressures of [international] competition weigh

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<sup>47</sup> See Nora Fisher Onar, “Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy”, *EDAM Discussion Paper Series* 3, (2009).



more heavily than ideological preferences or internal political pressures.

Kenneth Waltz<sup>48</sup>

Starting particularly from the end of the Cold War, critiques of Waltzian realism paved the way for theoretical endeavours investigating both international and domestic influences and the ways in which they help explain state behaviour.<sup>49</sup> Robert Jervis notes that the popularity of Neorealism has been in free fall since the end of bipolarity.<sup>50</sup> Neorealism's neglect of domestic factors—as opposed to these factors' places in the Classical Realist school—further reinforced criticisms about its deterministic “billiard balls” analogy,<sup>51</sup> pushing for a revision which would examine the domestic level more closely. Thucydides, as the shared ancestor of the realist school, argued that domestic cultural and political differences among city-states affected the way the Peloponnesian War started and was fought.<sup>52</sup> Waltz himself admits the weaknesses of a strict “third image” foreign policy analysis that focuses only on the international level, and notes that the understanding of the forces that determine particular foreign policies will be incomplete without examining the “first and second images”, referring to individual and state levels.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, even though the billiard balls analogy contains significant truths in its reference to the impact of the contours of the broader billiard table and the interactions between the movement of

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<sup>48</sup> Kenneth Waltz, “A Response to My Critics” in Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 329 as mentioned in Fareed Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics”, *International Security* 17 (1992), pp. 177–198, p. 180.

<sup>49</sup> Michael C. Williams, ed., *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Jervis, “Realism in the Study of World Politics”, *International Organization* 52:4, (Autumn 1998), pp.971–991, at p.980.

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 96–97.

<sup>52</sup> See Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Rex Warner (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986) and Laurie M. Johnson Bagby, “The Use and Abuse of Thucydides in International Relations”, *International Organization* 48:1 (1994), pp.131–153, at p.132–136.

<sup>53</sup> Rose, 1998, p.165–166.

each ball, its deterministic nature needs re-evaluation. The reason behind such a need is that “the spin, speed and bounce of the balls” will also depend on the material the balls are made of, a reference to each country’s individual domestic dynamics.<sup>54</sup>

As an important consequence of criticisms on Neorealism, Neoclassical Realism (NCR) emerged as a theoretical effort to revisit neorealist determinism within the boundaries of the realist school. NCR offers a modification of Neorealist determinism by taking a renewed interest in classical realism’s emphasis on other factors, ranging from domestic circumstances to the role of ideas.

The term “Neoclassical Realism” implies that the concept relates to “Classical Realism” but entails new ideations of that philosophy. NCR shares a classical realist emphasis on power-seeking and the selfish nature of individuals and communities, without ignoring Neorealism’s emphasis on systemic and structural influences. It thus follows that in order to respond to problems arising from international anarchy, states would behave as Thucydides, Morgenthau and Carr expected them to—by expanding their influence to seek more power in order to achieve their interests. Morgenthau’s imperfect political animal<sup>55</sup> is always selfish and its actions are motivated by self-interest; there is no prospect of correcting these flaws now or in the future, and we will inevitably compete for scarce resources driven by an *animus dominandi*<sup>56</sup> (a desire for power).<sup>57</sup> According to Kenneth Thompson, “human nature has not changed since the days of classical antiquity”. This reflects Niebuhr’s, Treitschke’s and

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<sup>54</sup> See Zakaria, 1998, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> William E. Scheuerman, *Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 2 and p.10; Anthony F. Lang, Jr., “Morgenthau, Agency, and Aristotle”, in Williams, ed., *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*, pp. 18–42 at p.27. Also see Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2003), p. 592. For Niebuhr’s and Treitschke’s views on this see Donnelly, 2000, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Lang, Jr., “Morgenthau, Agency, and Aristotle” in Williams, ed., *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations*, p. 28; Scheuerman, 2009, p. 42.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen Walt, “The Progressive Power of Realism” in John A. Vasquez & Colin Elman, *Realism and the Balance of Power: A New Debate* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2003), p. 61.

Morgenthau's pessimistic view of human nature as being driven by an uncontrollable desire for power, which will translate into a desire for even more power and influence in line with the Athenian thesis in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*.<sup>58</sup>

NCR shares such common realist assumptions about power, interest and state behaviour, and argues that "states conduct their foreign policy for strategic reasons, as a consequence of international pulls and pushes."<sup>59</sup> It also re-introduces domestic and immaterial elements which were emphasised in Classical Realism in the past but were ignored during the "Waltzian reign". As such, NCR offers a promising framework in terms of acting as a middle ground between realism and value-based accounts, since it makes room for values that have found their way to policy-making circles as secondary factors after state's demands for power. It offers room for the examination of ideas and values and their impact on domestic factors and actors, in the same way as its classical realist ancestors did. This ability to act as a middle ground is even more important for countries such as Turkey, where policy moves are often ascribed to ideology and values.

In the next section, in order to link the research's theoretical stance with the conceptualisation of the term "grand strategy", I will show the parallels between the concept of grand strategy and NCR's two-dimensional approach before moving on to explore NCR's potential to explain the changes and continuities in Turkey's grand strategy by looking at the changes at both of these levels.

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<sup>58</sup> See Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Rex Warner (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), book 5 chapter 105; *Donnelly, 2000, p. 57 and Monten, 2006, p. 11.*

<sup>59</sup> Zakaria, 1992, p. 179.

## The Concept of Grand strategy and Neoclassical Realist Scholarship

The concept of grand strategy, with its focus on both international and domestic levels and the ultimate goal of power-maximisation, has strong parallels with the neoclassical realist approach. NCR emphasises a two-dimensional theoretical reading of state behaviour, with references to the shifts at both domestic and international level.

From as far back as Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the role of a state's relative power as an enabling or constraining factor in the making of its grand strategic preferences has been fundamentally influential.<sup>60</sup> Once a political actor perceives that it can advance its influence by using a comparatively advantageous power position, an activist policy line will be pursued.<sup>61</sup> From a historical viewpoint, changes at the international level in the form of shifting balances of power, shifts in relative power positions due to the elimination or demise of rivals or systemic structural shifts have all played roles in the rise and fall of the Great Britain, France and Germany,<sup>62</sup> as well as accounting for fluctuations in the grand strategies of China and the United States.<sup>63</sup>

The degree of success in the pursuit of grand strategy is also affected by domestic factors, drawing parallels with the basic assumptions of neoclassical realism. These domestic factors include the importance of using a nation's economic resources—the "extraction and mobilization capacity"<sup>64</sup>—as well as the executive's

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<sup>60</sup> Athanassios Platias and Constantinos Koliopoulos, 2002, p.380-381.

<sup>61</sup> See Monten, 2006, p. 11.

<sup>62</sup> See Jack Snyder, *Myths Of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 66–112 and p. 153–212; and Schweller, 2008, p. 69–85.

<sup>63</sup> See Christensen, 1996.

<sup>64</sup> On the terms "extraction and mobilization capacity", see Aron, 2003, p.49 and Christensen, 1996, p. 11. Aron argues that state's mobilisation capacity is the ultimate determinant of how much power it can mobilise to pursue the goals it deems beneficial in terms of power-maximisation, pointing to a

ability to rally them as and when necessary in the pursuit of state policy goals. This has direct links to the concept of the “autonomy of the state apparatus” or the “autonomy of the elected executive”<sup>65</sup> which refers to the ability of the state’s legal and bureaucratic apparatus to obtain the upper hand in both policy-making and the extraction and mobilisation of national wealth for policy goals.<sup>66</sup>

In the next section, I will provide the empirical context that links the basic assumptions of NCR to grand strategy using the specific case of Turkey’s shifting grand strategy and the transformations in its domestic environment.

#### *Turkey’s Grand Strategy and Neoclassical Realism’s Explanatory Power*

Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman note that “there is no single neoclassical realist theory of foreign policy, but rather a diversity of neoclassical realist theories”.<sup>67</sup> In terms of my stance regarding this diversity, this thesis rejects the use of domestic factors simply as transmission belts through which the impacts of international developments are filtered before becoming foreign policy outcomes.<sup>68</sup> Instead they will be considered as multipliers. I also seek to avoid taking a stance that would be almost indistinguishable from *innenpolitik*<sup>69</sup> in emphasising domestic factors as the ultimate

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difference between “national power” and the portion of this which could be used by the state, or “state power”.

<sup>65</sup> See Freedman, 2001, p. 11; Timothy Andrews Sayle, “Defining and Teaching Grand Strategy”, *The Telegram* 4 (January 2011); and Qin Yaqing, “A Response to Yong Deng: Power, Perception, and the Cultural Lens”, *Asian Affairs* 28: 3 (Fall, 2001), pp. 155–158, p. 155. For more information about the term autonomy of the state apparatus, see Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: the Unusual Origins of America’s World Role* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 35–39.

<sup>66</sup> Also see Hal Brands, “Evaluating Brazilian Grand Strategy under Lula”, *Comparative Strategy*, 30:1 (2011), pp.28–49, at p.44; Athanassios Platias and Constantinos Koliopoulos, “Grand Strategies Clashing: Athenian and Spartan Strategies in Thucydides’ “History of the Peloponnesian War”, *Comparative Strategy* 12 (2002), pp. 377–399, at p.378.

<sup>67</sup> Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> Schweller, 2006, p. 6–9.

<sup>69</sup> Rose, 1998, p. 148–150 and Graham T. Allison, *The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1971, Ch.1, Ch.3 and Ch.5. On BPM, OPM and the link between

reason behind foreign policy outcomes, as in the case of Snyder's *Myths of Empire*.<sup>70</sup> Instead, I embrace a more "realist" version of neoclassical realism, similar to that presented by Fareed Zakaria in his book *From Wealth to Power*.<sup>71</sup> Within the context of this approach, the international level is the primary driving factor affecting state behaviour. However, domestic factors act as multipliers which either increase or decrease the state's ability to pursue its grand strategic choices and particular policy shifts.

In line with this research's focus on both international and domestic levels, I will present in the next section an insight into the shifting external and internal settings within the particular context of Turkey's grand strategy.

### Major Factors Explaining the Shift in Turkish Grand Strategy

The Turkish experience of grand strategic shifts has been primarily affected by international changes and consequent fluctuations in the country's relative power. These changes and fluctuations have allowed Turkey to revisit "systemic contours"<sup>72</sup> which had previously limited its options, especially during the Cold War. The Turkish case reinforces Wohlforth's assumption that "Change in state behaviour is...

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domestic and foreign policy-making processes see also Cheng Li, "China's Team of Rivals", *Foreign Policy*, (February, 16, 2009) and James K. Glassman, "How to Win the War of Ideas", *Foreign Policy*, (March 10, 2010).

<sup>70</sup> On this criticism, see Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics", *International Security*, 17 (1992), pp. 177–198. He argues that Snyder's study is illuminating and promising in terms of his detailed analysis of domestic politics. However, by almost completely ignoring the impact of the international level, shifts in relative advantage and systemic circumstances, he moves quite close to the *Innenpolitik* approach which argues that domestic politics is the answer to the question "What makes foreign policy of states?" Zakaria further argues that the problem is not simply his omission of Realist boundaries, but actually that the differences in his selected cases do not stem primarily from the differences in their domestic politics but rather from their position in the system, their material power and relative advantage over potential rivals.

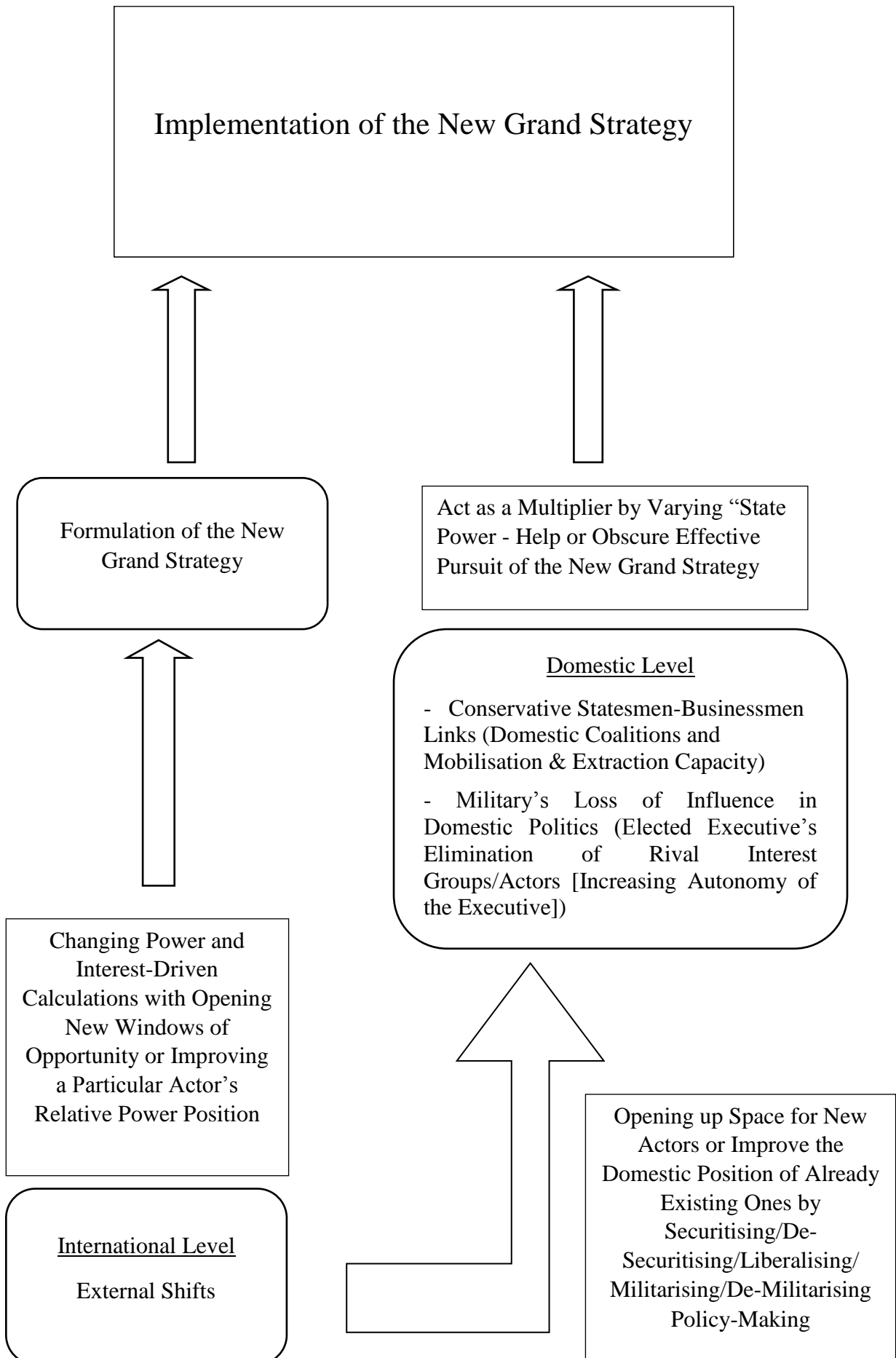
<sup>71</sup> Zakaria, 1999.

<sup>72</sup> Rose, 1998, p.147.

conditioned by changes in relative power”.<sup>73</sup> Not only did external developments encourage and occasionally force Turkey to act more eagerly within a broader geopolitical scope, but internal transformations helped the country to pursue an activist foreign policy line more effectively. In an era in which Turkey found new opportunities in its surrounding regions, the domestic environment gradually became more and more conducive to making the most of the changes at the international level, reaching a peak point under the Justice and Development Party government.

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<sup>73</sup> William Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War", *International Security* 19:3 (1994–1995), pp. 91–129, p. 96.





*Changes at the International Level, Relative Power Fluctuations, and Emerging Windows of Opportunity*

“The idea of interest is indeed the essence of politics,”<sup>1</sup> and all political actors strive to achieve greater power in order to pursue their interests more effectively.<sup>2</sup> However, the power that enables actors to achieve their ends in military, economic, or political terms does not automatically offer one state the upper hand over another. The expansion of an individual state’s power will only fully benefit that state when it provides itself with a relative advantage over other states. Power is a function not only of a state’s own strength, but also of the relative strengths of other states.<sup>3</sup> Aron argues that on an international scale, power is the capacity of one political unit to impose its will upon others; therefore it is not an absolute in its own right, but is instead a human relationship with a strong reliance on the presence of other states against which it can compare its relative power.<sup>4</sup> In world politics under anarchic settings—where power defines interests and thus has a direct impact on the scope and ambition of grand strategic choices—changes in relative power act as the key independent variable within the context of particular states’ grand strategies.

Drawing from this assumption, the way in which the changing power positions of particular states in the post-Cold War era affected their grand strategy in general and Turkey’s grand strategy in particular is noteworthy. The assumption that lesser powers had fewer policy options to pursue during the Cold War due to their lack of manoeuvrability can be traced back to the Peloponnesian War, where alliances with great powers became a necessity for smaller entities in order to survive during wartime, and for whom neutrality was

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<sup>1</sup> Scheuerman, 2009, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Carr, 2001, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Donnely, 2000, p.60.

<sup>4</sup> Aron, 2003, p.47.

consequently not an option.<sup>5</sup> Drawing from this assumption, lesser powers' manoeuvrability increased with the end of the Cold War, and emerging windows of opportunity enabled them to play, or at least strive to play, different and possibly more influential roles. As one of the "lesser powers" during the Cold War, its conclusion presented Turkey with a vast area for political manoeuvre—especially in the former Soviet space and the Middle East, where economic opportunities emerged in former Soviet-controlled areas, and the removal of bloc-based barriers enabled economic and political interactivity with both regions.<sup>6</sup>

Following the dissolution of the USSR, Turkey re-discovered a "Turkic world" composed of the newly independent states of Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Turkey's expectation was that it would benefit economically and politically from this new environment due to kinship and linguistic ties. However, this proved to be an over-ambitious goal, and eventually caused disappointment. On another front, Turkey took advantage of the opportunity to revise its attitude to the Middle Eastern powers, some of which (including Egypt, Iraq and Syria) enjoyed quite a close relationship with the USSR during the Cold War. The end of the Cold War made facilitating closer contact with these actors possible.

The independence of the Turkic states was regarded as an important window of opportunity for Turkey—something that could open a vast market for Turkey's economic activism, which was in its "silver age" under the Özal administration. Özal's desire to interact with the Turkic world was coupled with the growing spirit of entrepreneurship. However, Turkey's economic capabilities were quite limited at the time, especially when compared to the "golden era" of the last decade, which was marked by much higher business involvement

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<sup>5</sup> Raymond Aron, "Thucydides and the Historical Narrative" in *Miriam Bernheim Conant, ed., Politics and History: Selected Essays by Raymond Aron*, (New York: The Free Press, 1978,) pp. 20–47 at p.28.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen A. Cook also argues likewise in his article, "The USA, Turkey, and the Middle East: Continuities, Challenges, and Opportunities", *Turkish Studies* 12: 4 (2011), pp. 717–726, p.724.

and greater economic reach and capabilities. States in the Turkic world were also expected to look to Turkey as a model which would inspire and assist them in their pursuit of consolidating and strengthening their independence. However, Turkish expansionism produced a mixed set of results, bringing overall disappointment. Turkey's economic power and political capabilities were limited in comparison to other "newcomers" to the region such as the United States, the EU and China—greater powers seeking to influence or control this new and geopolitically important theatre. In addition, many Central Asian rulers (most of whom were ex-Soviet autocrats) simply did not want to follow the "Turkish model" and start a democratisation process; instead, they wanted to consolidate their power. Turkey's approach was also considered patronizing, while Russia's influence over the economic and political spheres of the Turkic countries remained strong.<sup>7</sup> Even though activism in this theatre brought Turkey closer to this newly independent "Turkic world" both politically and economically, the overall outcome was not as successful as expected due to these limitations.

With respect to the revision of Turkey's position vis-à-vis the Middle East, structural relaxation due to the absence of bloc-based barriers offered Turkey another opportunity to adopt a role as an influential regional power in a different theatre. As a NATO ally, Turkey had already enjoyed a high level of deterrence against neighbours such as Syria, Iraq, and Iran, with which it experienced occasional points of tension. Turkey's level of deterrence further increased at the end of the Cold War, allowing Turkey to alter its primary military focus. Some indicators of this shifting military view included the redeployment of Turkish troops from the Northern region following the disappearance of any meaningful Soviet threat. Turkey's re-deployment of 100,000 military troops to its southern and south eastern border was its second largest troop movement since the Cyprus Operation of 1974.<sup>8</sup> On these changing dynamics in Turkey's surroundings, Hale notes that: "Having been previously

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<sup>7</sup> Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 100–101.

<sup>8</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Bridge or Barrier?: Turkey and the West after the Cold War", RAND Corporation (1992), p. 30.

surrounded on three sides by what was, in effect, a single state far more powerful than itself, Turkey was now surrounded by smaller neighbours that were weaker than itself both militarily and economically.”<sup>9</sup> Another important development linking the end of the Cold War and Turkey’s relationship with the Middle East was the Conventional Forces of Europe (CFE) Treaty. The Treaty came into force in 1990 and allowed Turkey to keep some of its heavy military assets in its Southern region thanks to the exclusion clause in the treaty, which had been put in place due to the PKK attacks in the region.<sup>10</sup> Turkey also acquired the surplus military arsenal of other NATO members, which needed to be dismantled under the obligations of the Treaty. Turkey was thus able to modernise its Korean War and early 1960s military equipment by the acquisition of “roughly 1050 M-60 and Leopard tanks, 700 armoured combat vehicles, 70 110-mm artillery pieces, 40 F-4 fighters, Cobra attack helicopters and Roland surface-to-air missiles.”<sup>11</sup> These major military developments further increased Turkey’s deterrence strength, especially towards the Middle East, by highlighting its military superiority over its neighbours. This in turn had the effect of changing Turkey’s leverage in matters such as the Turkish-Syrian tension in 1998 that resulted from Syrian support of the PKK and Syria’s harbouring of its leader, Öcalan.<sup>12</sup> The era also witnessed one of Turkey’s highest levels of military spending in terms of both percentage GDP and total expenditure.<sup>13</sup> The Gulf War in 1991 underscored Turkey’s “return to the Middle East”, with permission given to the US to use joint air bases in southeast Turkey, highlighting Turkey’s

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<sup>9</sup> Hale, 2013, p. 135.

<sup>10</sup> Kibaroglu, 2009, p. 69–70 and Robins, 2003, p. 21–25.

<sup>11</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, *Global Security Watch -Turkey: A Reference Handbook*, (London: Praeger Security International, 2009), p. 69–70; Hale, 2000, p. 232–233; Richard A. Falkenrath, “The CFE Flank Dispute: Waiting in the Wings”, *International Security* 19:4 (1995), pp. 118–144. Alan Makovsky, “The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy”, *SAIS Review* 19:1 (1999), pp. 92–113; Ian O. Lesser, “Bridge or Barrier?: Turkey and the West after the Cold War”, RAND Corporation, 1992, p. 26–31. The numbers are as follows in Robins, 2003, p. 192: “1057 M-60 Leopard main battle tanks from the US, Germany, and the Netherlands, 72 M-110 artillery pieces and 600 M-113 armoured combat vehicles.”

<sup>12</sup> See Kibaroglu, 2009, p. 70–74.

<sup>13</sup> In the late 1990s, which was a period of increasing terrorist attacks by the PKK, Turkey’s military spending accounted for almost 4 percent of its GDP, around \$20 billion dollars. See Stockholm International Peace Research Institute’s Military Expenditure Database, <<http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>>, accessed 22/12/2014.

active involvement in the coalition.<sup>14</sup> In this environment, developments following the Gulf War included a closer relationship with Israel and more recently (since 2002 and up until the Arab Spring) a rapprochement with Iraq, Iran, and Syria<sup>15</sup> that brought with it a significant boom in trade volumes, further reinforcing Turkey's "return to the region".

As far as Turkey's relationship with the EU was concerned, the immediate post-Cold War period was a disappointing time for Turkey. The EU prioritised the integration of the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) over Turkey's accession in order to destroy the remnants of the Iron Curtain and re-unify Europe after decades of division. The negative impact of this on Turkey-EU relations reached its zenith at the Luxembourg Council of 1997, from which Turkey was side-lined while other potential members were enlisted. In response, Turkey suspended political dialogue with the EU. The relationship began to recover with the Helsinki Council in 1999, when Turkey was also granted the same status as the CEECs. However, tensions between Turkey and the EU grew again because of the fifth enlargement wave of the EU, which recognised the Greek Cypriot government as the only representative of Cyprus in the face of Turkey's harsh criticism. The Turkey-EU relationship has gradually lost momentum in spite of the reform efforts that brought official membership status to Turkey in 2005. However, the political stagnation of Turkey's relationship with the EU did not result in a critical severing of the relationship—mainly due to continuing and significant economic activity, which maintained the EU's position as Turkey's No.1 trading partner and Turkey's continued commitment to institutional and legal harmonisation with the EU institutions and *acquis*.

The Global War on Terror (GWOT) proved another significant critical juncture for Turkey, since the 2003 Iraq War—an extension of the GWOT—was of great importance in

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<sup>14</sup> Hale, 2000, p. 219–223 and Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy Since the Cold War* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., 2003), p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Stein, 2014, p. 11.

terms of how it contributed to the emergence of new dynamics in Turkey's many bilateral relationships, including those with Israel, Iran, and Iraq. Turkey's power- and security-related concerns focused on the issue of Northern Iraq. The potential spill-over effects of the emergence of an independent Kurdish state in the region required Turkey to revise its attitude towards two major Middle Eastern actors, namely Iran and Israel. Iran and Turkey realised that they shared a stance on preventing the dissolution of Iraq due to these potential spill-over effects on their own countries' security and their common desire for the withdrawal of any external actors from Iraq as soon as possible.

The war, while pushing Iran and Turkey closer to each other because of their shared concerns, also had a significant impact upon the Turkish-Israeli relationship. Israel's perceived support for an independent Kurdish entity in Northern Iraq resulted in a gradual deterioration of the bilateral relationship between Turkey and Israel. The damaged relationship suffered from several other crises over the following years, including Erdoğan's harsh criticism of the Israeli Operation Cast Lead, his storming out of the Davos Economic Forum,<sup>16</sup> and the Flotilla Raid.<sup>17</sup> The regional clash of interests between the two countries reached a point where joint military exercises and military modernisation projects were indefinitely cancelled and diplomatic relations and economic ties were downgraded. In the meantime, especially up until the civil war in Syria, Turkey's relations with countries that might provoke Israeli concerns (notably Iran and Syria) significantly improved.

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<sup>16</sup> Tarık Oğuzlu, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkish-Israeli Relations: A Structural Realist Account", *Mediterranean Politics*, 15, vol. 2 (2010), pp. 273–288; İlker Aytürk, "The Coming of an Ice Age? Turkish-Israeli Relations since 2002", *Turkish Studies* 12: 4 (2011), pp. 675–687, p. 678; İlker Aytürk, "Between Crises and Cooperation: the Future of Turkish-Israeli Relationship", *Insight Turkey*, 11:2 (2009), pp.57–74.

<sup>17</sup> Eligür, 2012, pp. 447–448, Sabrina Tavernise, "Raid Jeopardizes Turkey Relations", *New York Times*, 31/5/2010, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/world/middleeast/01turkey.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/world/middleeast/01turkey.html?_r=0)>, accessed 12/07/2012 ; Roger Cohen, "Israel Isolates Itself", *New York Times*, 5/9/2011, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/opinion/06iht-edcohen06.html?\\_r=2&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/opinion/06iht-edcohen06.html?_r=2&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss)>, accessed 07/06/2013.

As well as these tectonic and critical junctures, which had significant impacts upon Turkey's grand strategic attitude, each case study chapter in this thesis will examine several other critical junctures at the international level that had affected Turkey's attitude towards the three actors selected for case study analyses. But in general terms, the key to understanding Turkey's striving for an activist grand strategy has been the changing systemic and regional circumstances that have enabled and to some extent forced Turkey to pursue diverse goals in different regions and required policy revisions vis-à-vis other actors such as Iran, Israel and the EU.

### *Domestic Factors as Multipliers*

The shift in Turkey's grand strategic attitude came primarily in response to changing international circumstances in the regions and countries that surrounded Turkey, with an additional push (or multiplier effect) stemming from domestic changes. Firstly, overall economic growth and stronger ties between conservative businessmen and statesmen allowed policy-makers to reinforce foreign policy shifts with an economic dimension at a practical level, by increasing their extraction and mobilisation capacities. Secondly, civilian policy-makers' increased control over state apparatus and the demise of the military as an important and longstanding policy-making actor with a direct influence over the civilian establishment contributed to increasing autonomy of the elected executive, allowing politicians and statesmen to pursue their goals more effectively and more flexibly.

State control over resources is an important indicator of state power. The state must possess adequate resources to begin with, but it is equally important that it has the capacity to extract and mobilise them when necessary to increase the efficacy of its policy steps. The more a state can mobilise its national power, the more it can translate national power into

state power. National power consists of major economic indicators such as GNP and GDP, which can easily be converted into military power when necessary, and can also affect the level of economic interactivity abroad as a result of increasing domestic prosperity.<sup>18</sup> In summary, therefore, the power a state possesses within its boundaries does not automatically equal the power that the state can utilise. Its capacity to turn the former into the latter directly affects its ability to channel necessary resources to achieve desired ends.

As far as Turkey's economic improvement is concerned, in 2002 the country's GDP per capita was \$3,492. By 2015 this figure had risen to approximately \$10,500.<sup>19</sup> In terms of Turkey's transformation into a "trading state"<sup>20</sup> over the last decade, the level of international economic activity it conducts increased dramatically, with foreign trade constituting 45 percent of its GDP in 2008 compared to only 13 percent in 1975. The country's total foreign trade increased from around \$72 billion in 2001 to \$389 billion in 2012.<sup>21</sup> This picture contrasts strongly with the economic inactivity of the Cold War years, when Turkey was at best a negligible economic actor, with a trade volume of just \$1 billion in 1970, growing to \$10 billion in 1980. By 2015, Turkey's trade volume had reached \$351 billion.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Zakaria, 1998, p. 19. For instance, \$18 billion (the military spending of Turkey in 2010) accounted for 2.4 percent of its GDP. In comparison, \$9.9 billion accounted for 2.9 percent of its GDP in 1988 while around \$20 billion had accounted for almost 4 percent of its GDP in 2003. Comparing the late 1990s and the 2002–2011 period it can be concluded that, even though the gross amount was kept fairly constant, the percentage of GDP it accounted for gradually diminished. See Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's Military Expenditure Database, <<http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>>, accessed 22/12/2014. Similarly, Turkey's total defence and aviation turnover rose from around \$2 billion in 2006 to almost \$5 billion in 2012, and its spending on R&D in defence industry rose from \$49 million in 2002 to more than \$750 million in 2012. See Undersecretariat for Defence Industries webpage, "Today's Turkish Defence Industry", <<http://www.ssm.gov.tr/home/tdi/Sayfalar/today.aspx>>, accessed 10/12/2014

<sup>19</sup> Erdal Tanas Karagöl, "The Turkish Economy During the Justice and Development Party Decade", *Insight Turkey* 15:4 (2013), pp. 115–129, p. 117.

<sup>20</sup> A term coined by Richard Rosecrance in Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World*, (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> Seymen Atasoy, "The Turkish Example: A Model for Change in the Middle East?", *Middle East Policy* 18: 3 (Fall 2011), pp.86-100, p.91. Also see Abdülkadir Civan, Savaş Genç, Davut Taşer, and Sinem Atakul, "The Effect of New Turkish Foreign Policy on International Trade", *Insight Turkey* 15:3 (2013), pp. 107–122, p. 109.

<sup>22</sup> Data retrieved from the Turkish Statistical Institute.

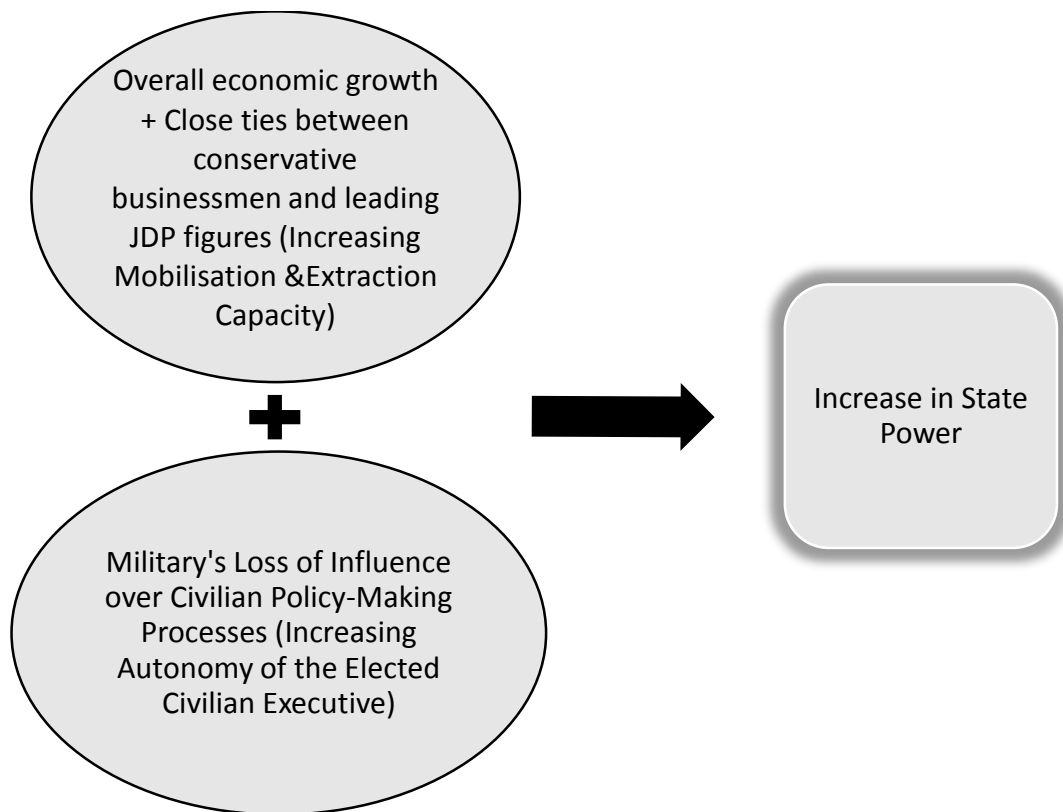


In addition to the former Soviet countries and the Middle East, Turkey has enjoyed much higher levels of economic interactivity with Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Africa.<sup>23</sup> This economic activism has reinforced Turkey's power-maximisation efforts abroad, whilst also helping its efforts to pursue a more balanced geopolitical and grand strategic approach. Plus, along with its rising economic profile, Turkey's national or latent power increased, manifesting itself as greater international power. This ability to turn economic power into political power mainly stemmed from close statesmen-businessmen links which will be investigated in detail in the following section.

In addition to overall improvements in Turkey's economic landscape, close ties between small and medium Anatolian entrepreneurs and the JDP allowed the ruling elite to mobilise necessary resources for their policy goals and enjoy these groups' electoral support. In turn, these entrepreneurs were given the opportunity not only to have their say as MPs and members of the JDP, but also to expand their businesses abroad.

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<sup>23</sup> See "Turkey-Russia Eye Increased Trade, Joint Auto Production", <<http://www.invest.gov.tr/en-US/infocenter/news/Pages/261113-turkey-russia-joint-auto-production.aspx>>, 26/11/2013, accessed 8/12/2014 and Foreign Ministry's statistics on "Turkey's Commercial and Economic Relations With Russian Federation", <[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey\\_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-russian-federation.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-russian-federation.en.mfa)>, accessed 6/12/2014. According to these, trade with Russia increased from around \$4 billion in 2002 to \$35 billion in 2012. Also see, Foreign Ministry's briefs, "Turkey's relations with the Latin American and the Caribbean Countries" at <[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i\\_turkey\\_s-relations-with-the-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-countries.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i_turkey_s-relations-with-the-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-countries.en.mfa)> and "Turkey-Africa Relations" at <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>>, accessed 30/06/2014. In line with these, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stats, trade with Africa increased from almost \$3 billion in 2002 to almost \$20 billion in 2012 and in the same era, trade with the Caribbean increased 9-fold and reached around \$8 billion. In the same period, in both regions, number of Turkey's diplomatic representation including embassies and consulates almost doubled and now Turkey has representations in almost all countries in both. See *Sorumluluk ve Vizyon: 2014 Yılına Girerken Türk Dış Politikası* [Responsibility and Vision: Turkish Foreign Policy towards 2014], Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <<http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/sorumlulukvevizyon-2014.pdf>> accessed 20/1/2015.



#### 1) The JDP and Conservative Businessmen/“Anatolian Tigers”

On the role of economic activism within the context of Turkey’s grand strategy, Ahmet Davutoğlu—who served as Foreign Minister between 2009 and 2014 and Prime Minister between 2014 and mid-2016—emphasised the role of business associations, stating that: “Turkey’s success is not only the result of state policies, but also the activities of civil society, business associations and numerous other organizations, all operating under the new guidance of the new vision”.<sup>24</sup>

The geopolitical orientation of trade serves to reinforce or challenge the efficacy of grand strategic design and widen or restrict its geographic limits. Internationally-oriented businesses can affect the applicability and success of a particular grand strategy by supporting state policies regarding particular countries or limiting the impact of political

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<sup>24</sup> Eligür, 2012, p. 433.

deterioration by maintaining economic links in the face of political divergence. The more a state is able mobilise its resources, the more successfully it can pursue its desired policy preferences with a supporting economic dimension or a “practical hand.”<sup>25</sup> Links between political elites and businessmen can act as an important catalyst within this context.

Jack Snyder’s *Myths of Empire*<sup>26</sup> is a highly useful source for understanding the implications of links between business coalitions and the ruling elite in the pursuit of grand strategic choices. By analysing the key dynamics and motives behind the expansionist policies of leading powers, Snyder argues that domestic politics have always played a significant role, producing certain policy outcomes, including the expansion of political and economic influence. These outcomes can then take the form of expansionist policies, which if over-extended may result in exceeding the feasible limits that a power can reach, or self-encirclement by making more and more enemies. Coalitions are usually formed between military and political elites or between industrialists and political figures, but they may also take the form of “hijacking” state mechanisms by imperialist military or internationalist business groups.

Snyder examines Japan, Germany, Great Britain, the USSR and the United States in order to support his theoretical position. He argues that Germany’s aggressive attitude in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a direct result of coalitions between imperialist militarily-oriented interest groups and the ruling elite,<sup>27</sup> which worked together to raise Germany’s position in the great imperialist game between European powers. In contrast, Japanese overexpansion in the 1930s came as a result of power resting in the hands of the military, which was given a dominant role in the process of the Meiji restoration. The resulting attitude

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<sup>25</sup> Mustafa Kutlay, “Economy as the ‘Practical Hand’ of ‘New Turkish Foreign Policy’: A Political Economy Explanation”, *Insight Turkey* 13:1(2011), pp. 67-88,.

<sup>26</sup> Snyder, 1991.

<sup>27</sup> Snyder, 1991, p. 108–111.

pushed Japan into a costly campaign of expansion in the 1930s and led to its eventual defeat in World War II.<sup>28</sup> In all the cases Snyder chooses to analyse, he argues that either the existence or the absence of domestic coalitions (in terms of centralised state structures offering more direct control to the leadership over policy choices) caused shifts in grand strategy.

Giving domestic politics pride of place, Snyder's *Innenpolitik* approach as the source of state behaviour stands in stark contrast to the *Aussenpolitik* approach which argues that external considerations of material power determine state behaviour.<sup>29</sup> Like Zakaria, I position the theoretical standing of my research against Snyder's approach. Zakaria rightly argues that differences between expansionist policies pursued by Japan, Germany or Great Britain do not point to the influence of domestic groups. Instead, they should be attributed to the position of states within the structure as a whole, taking into account the relative power they enjoy and the presence or absence of rival powers which directly affected the fate of their expansionist ambitions. But despite disagreeing with Snyder, I find his concept of coalitions useful, not as the ultimate determinant of grand strategic outcome, as *Myths of Empire* suggests, but as an important domestic factor that can act as a multiplier to the state's ability to pursue a particular policy choice vis-à-vis certain actors.

For decades, Turkey stood as a symbolic example of a "late, late industrialized/developed" country.<sup>30</sup> This general classification was defined by Snyder to refer to states with a centralised governing mechanism which experiences the occasional emergence of powerful cartels within a system plagued by weak democratic institutions. Up until the 1950s, Turkey's political and economic environment was hyper-centralized, and the Republican People's Party (RPP) was the only political party with unquestionable leadership skills and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 146–152.

<sup>29</sup> Monten, 2006, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Snyder, 1991, p. 18.

principles,<sup>31</sup> and which therefore had a free hand to organise a state-planned economy.

Turkey was a country that had been devastated by several wars, with World War I and the Independence War probably the most serious. Under these circumstances, coupled with wartime economic devastation, the private sector was largely absent and even state-controlled economic activity was relatively limited.<sup>32</sup> However, changes at the international level can initiate and support the rise of economic coalitions by offering new opportunities for internationalist businessmen both domestically and abroad. In the Turkish case, new markets emerged with the end of the Cold War, including the predominantly Muslim and Turkic post-Soviet markets, which encouraged the entrepreneurial spirit of nationalist and religious businessmen. Meanwhile, the bloc-based mentality came to an end in both economic and political terms, enabling Turkey to engage with its neighbours more deeply.

The gradual de-securitisation of Turkish politics after the Cold War, in conjunction with the slow but constant growth of civil power against the military, also enabled former peripheral organisations—including conservative and Islamist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Anatolia—which took the chance to organise under broader and stronger organisational umbrellas, setting the tone for a developing link between business and politics. From the 1990s, Turkey's economic and political arenas became more vibrant, reflecting a growing enthusiasm for wider political participation. The growth of NGOs in Turkey, including business associations,<sup>33</sup> in a much more diverse political environment

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<sup>31</sup> Some features here are reminiscent of Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Anderson argues that the nation-building processes aim to replace religion with the nation-state and direct people's loyalty to another focal point to control more secular aspects of the nation-building process.

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed analysis of the era, see Güneri Akalın, "The Turkish Economic Development since 1923: Achievements and Failures", *Turkish Public Administration Annual* 20–21 (1994–1995), pp. 91–107.

<sup>33</sup> While the coup of 1980 closed down more than 20,000 of Turkey's 38,000 NGOs, the number gradually increased and has now reached around 104,000. See Sefa Şimşek, "The Transformation of Civil Society in Turkey: From Quantity to Quality", *Turkish Studies* 5:3 (2004), pp. 46–74 and "Bozkır: STK Sayısı Cumhuriyet Tarihinin Rekoru" [Bozkır: Number of NGOs Highest in the History of the Republic of Turkey], *İHA*, 24/3/2015, <<http://www.ih.com.tr/haber-bozkir-stk-sayisi-cumhuriyet-tarihinin-rekoru-449507/>>, accessed 2/4/2015. Here, it is important to note that constitutional amendments in the 1990s helped "Islamist" groups to

distanced Turkey further from the characteristics of Snyder's "late, late industrialized/developed" countries. Old political parties were restored after the 1980 coup and new parties arose. Three parties contested the first election after the coup in 1983; this number rose to 13 in 1995, and there are more than 80 at present. The new atmosphere matched the rise of the neoliberal and internationalist entrepreneurialism thanks to the emergence of significant economic opportunities in the post-Cold War world, particularly in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

The Anatolian Tigers was a group of Anatolia-based companies (mainly SMEs) with generally conservative ideological affiliations. We now know most of these companies as members of conservative businessmen associations such as MÜSİAD and TUSKON. So while economic liberalisation provided businessmen with the opportunity for domestic expansion, dramatic changes in foreign markets in the post-Cold War era also offered them the chance to expand abroad. Shifts in external settings were therefore vital in terms of enabling Turkey's conservative business associations to exert a far greater influence. Political parties led by conservative leaders such as Özal and Erbakan strove for political power in the belief that the old elite had enjoyed power due to their close ties with military, business and bureaucratic circles. At the same time, Turkey's new business class began competing more vigorously for a share in the economy that they had previously been beyond their reach.<sup>34</sup>

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organise as NGOs. See Ayşe Kadioğlu, "Civil Society, Islam, and Democracy in Turkey: A Study of Three Islamic Non-Governmental Organizations", *The Muslim World* 95 (2005), pp. 23–41.

<sup>34</sup> On Turgut Özal and Erbakan's eras and their struggle to find a place in the political arena and subsequent efforts to transform it, see Ziya Öniş, "Turgut Özal and his Economic Legacy: Turkish Neo-Liberalism in Critical Perspective" *Middle Eastern Studies* 40:4 (2004), pp. 113–134; Ergun Özbudun, "Turkey: How Far from Consolidation?", *Journal of Democracy* 7:3 (1996), pp. 123–138; Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, "The Motherland Party: The Challenge of Institutionalization in a Charismatic Leader Party", *Turkish Studies* 3:1 (2002), pp. 41–61; Feroz Ahmad, "The Transition to Democracy in Turkey", *Third World Quarterly*, 7:2 (1985), pp. 211–226; Feroz Ahmad, "Islamic Reassertion in Turkey", *Third World Quarterly*, 10:2 (1988), pp. 750–769; Hakan Yavuz, "Political Islam and the Welfare Party", *Comparative Politics* 30:1(1997), pp. 63–82; Haldun Günalp, "Political Islam in Turkey: The Rise and Fall of the Refah Party", *The Muslim World* 89:1 (1999), pp. 22–41; Morton Abramowitz., "Turkey After Özal", *Foreign Policy* 91 (1993), pp. 164–181; Gerassimos Karabelias, "Dictating the Upper Tide: Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Özal Decade, 1993-2003", *Turkish Studies* 9:3(2008), pp. 457–473.

Historically, Turkey's conservative businessmen sided with conservative political parties, which provided them with official encouragement and support while politicians enjoyed their electoral and economic support in return. However, Turkey's comparatively limited economic capabilities in the immediate post-Cold War era up to 2002 prevented such associations from being as active as they became during the JDP era.<sup>35</sup> Even though their share in Turkey's overall foreign trade might be not as big as TÜSİAD's figures suggest,<sup>36</sup> their influence is still far from negligible. For instance, in an interview conducted by the author, Professor Özlem Tür mentioned that she was one of the people who accompanied Erdoğan to Yemen on a flight filled with TUSKON members before the Erdoğan-Gülen split. These businessmen successfully lobbied to lift the visa regime between the two countries, and were delighted by the ready compliance of both countries. TUSKON members were looking to conduct business in "virgin lands"—the Middle East from Syria to Yemen and from the Caribbean to the ex-Soviet area. Numerous cases where MÜSİAD successfully lobbied for similar ends can easily be found. From this it can be concluded that Tür considered that the level of influence of Turkey's conservative business associations to be much higher than their share in Turkey's overall foreign trade might suggest.<sup>37</sup>

The JDP has a reputation as a "pro-private sector party",<sup>38</sup> and half of the party's Executive Board describe themselves as "businessmen" or "merchants".<sup>39</sup> The party has a lot of businessmen MPs, including several former heads of MÜSİAD, and has challenged the pre-existing sense of Kemalist étatism in the economic sphere,<sup>40</sup> helping Turkey reduce the EU's concerns. The shared vision of the JDP and the Anatolian Tigers has contributed to a

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<sup>35</sup> Mustafa Kutlay, associate professor, TOBB University, personal communication, 8/4/2016.

<sup>36</sup> Mustafa Kutlay, personal communication, 8/4/2016 and Özlem Tür, personal communication, 28/4/2016.

<sup>37</sup> Özlem Tür, personal communication, 28/4/2016.

<sup>38</sup> Henri Barkey and Yasemin Çongar, "Deciphering Turkey's Elections: The Making of a Revolution", *World Policy Journal*, 24: 3 (Fall, 2007), pp. 63–73, p. 66.

<sup>39</sup> Seda Demiralp, "The Rise of Islamic Capital and the Decline of Islamic Radicalism in Turkey", *Comparative Politics*, 41: 3 (April 2009), pp. 315–335, p. 328.

<sup>40</sup> On Kemalist étatism, see Ömer Celâl Sarc, "Economic Policy of the New Turkey", *Middle East Journal*, 2:4 (October 1948), pp. 430–446.

more successful mobilisation of Turkey's economic potential in order to reinforce the country's foreign policy choices. This has engendered a new grand strategy with a geopolitical scope that is broader than ever, and of which economic activity is an essential part. Turkish businessmen and politicians share a common conservative intellectual outlook<sup>41</sup> and a critical stance against the mindset of the old elite due to their isolationism, securitised foreign policy approach and alarmist attitude towards different ethnic, political and religious groups and ideologies.<sup>42</sup> The new alliance also shared a desire to see Turkey become an integral part of and a leading actor in the Middle East as well as an active player in the Balkans, Central Asia and the Caucasus. In economic terms, this has led to an expansion in business abroad for these associations with the government's direct support.<sup>43</sup>

With regard to Turkey's geopolitically broader economic reach and dramatically higher profile, there are two leading conservative and/or Islamist businessmen associations which deserve to be considered at some length in this thesis, namely MÜSİAD (the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association) and TUSKON (the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey). In the post-2013 era, however, TUSKON's image was seriously damaged because of accusations directed at Fethullah Gülen and NGOs with close ties to him about their clandestine plans to "hijack" the state establishment. This deterioration of the association's image and the Gülen movement reached its zenith with the coup attempt of July 15, 2016. However, due to the role TUSKON played during the JDP era and its role in terms of reinforcing Turkey's grand strategy abroad as a "practical hand", providing the JDP full support both domestically and internationally until 2013, TUSKON needs to be included in any analysis of Turkey's grand strategy since 2002. It also stands out

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<sup>41</sup> Karasipahi, 2009, pp. 104-105.

<sup>42</sup> William Hale, "Nationalism, Democracy, and Islam in Turkey: The Unfinished Story", *The Middle East Journal* 64: 1 (Winter 2010), pp.127-133.

<sup>43</sup> Etel Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century's Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p.10.



as one of the key actors that took a clear anti-Erdoğan and pro-Gülen stance after 2013 and gradually became more aggressive as the Erdoğan-Gülen split proceeded, leading to its removal from the economic arena to a great extent. The organisation had been encouraged and supported prior to 2013 by the JDP, especially in terms of its investments in Africa and the Caribbean and vice versa. The ups and downs of TUSKON's relationship with the JDP and its final deterioration will be discussed at greater length in the next section. Meanwhile, MÜSİAD succeeded in retaining its privileged position within this context following the Gülen-Erdoğan split in 2014. The next section will investigate these two associations in detail.

### Rising Businessmen Associations: MÜSİAD and TUSKON

#### *a- MÜSİAD*

MÜSİAD is a business association composed of SMEs, and is the body that is most representative of the so-called “Anatolian Tigers”. MÜSİAD was founded in 1990 by a group of twelve religiously motivated businessmen who decided to organise themselves under the banner of a new business association rather than joining the already established TÜSİAD. The reason behind their decision was that they considered TÜSİAD to represent a policy line that was statist, “Kemalist in nature,”<sup>44</sup> and aggressively secular, with close ties to the old elite, including the military.<sup>45</sup> This image of TÜSİAD was fostered by the association's

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<sup>44</sup> Robins, 2003, p. 86.

<sup>45</sup> See Berrin Koyuncu Lorasdağı, “The Relationship between Islam and Globalization in Turkey in the Post-1990 Period: The Case of MÜSİAD”, *bilig* 52 (2010), pp. 105–128; Yeşim Arat “Politics and Big Business: Janus Faced Link to the State” in Metin Heper, ed. *Strong State and Economic Interest Groups: The Post-1980 Turkish Experience* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), pp. 135–147; Ayşe Buğra “Class, Culture, and State: An Analysis of Interest Representation By Two Turkish Business Associations”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30 (1998), pp. 521–539; Ziya Öniş, “The Political Economy of Islamic Resurgence in Turkey: The Rise of Welfare Party in Perspective”, *Third World Quarterly* 18:4 (1997), pp. 743–766.

supportive stance regarding the military coup in 1980 and the post-modern coup or “silent coup”<sup>46</sup> of February 28, 1997. In these coups, TÜSİAD supported the military’s policy line, as well as endorsing the pressure the military put the government under during the latter coup, forcing Necmettin Erbakan to resign. These criticisms were also levelled at the group by İshak Alaton, a leading businessman who is himself a member of TÜSİAD.<sup>47</sup>

MÜSİAD’s outlook, according to its former leader and founding Chairman Erol Yazar, was to represent businessmen who were “affiliated with the values adopted by the Muslim population of Turkey and its national culture”.<sup>48</sup> In the association’s brochure, under the section “Our Identity”, a picture of minaret in front of skyscrapers in Istanbul stands as a poignant symbol of MÜSİAD’s self-identification, values and desire for greater economic activism without ignoring cultural values. The organisation’s mission statement talks of “being loyal to faith and to the thousand year old values of the people of Turkey”, offering the reader a deeper idea about its self-positioning and ideological stance.<sup>49</sup> Erol Yazar highlights the ideational stance of the organisation, stating that “the beautiful things that were once gained with the Quran were lost one by one as Muslims moved away from it and the degeneration that appeared in political, economic and social life—immorality, self-interest, and injustice—dried up their tree of civilization”.<sup>50</sup>

MÜSİAD was the first organisation of its kind to represent the vast number of SMEs of Anatolia, which were becoming increasingly vocal about their religious affiliations and which

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<sup>46</sup> Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. xv.

<sup>47</sup> “İshak Alaton’dan TÜSİAD’a: Hepinizden utanıyorum”[“İshak Alaton to TÜSİAD: I’m Ashamed of All of You], 23/01/2014, Cumhuriyet, <[http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/ekonomi/32595/ishak\\_Alaton\\_dan\\_TUSiAD\\_a\\_\\_Hepinizden\\_utaniyorum.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/ekonomi/32595/ishak_Alaton_dan_TUSiAD_a__Hepinizden_utaniyorum.html)>, accessed 12/6/2014 and Doğan Akın, “MÜSİAD’cı bir TÜSİAD üyesi olarak İshak Alaton”[İshak Alaton as a pro-MÜSİAD TÜSİAD member], 10/5/2012, T24, <<http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/dogan-akin/musiadci-bir-tusiad-uyesi-olarak-ishak-alaton,5101>>, accessed 4/9/2013.

<sup>48</sup> “MÜSİAD Genel Başkanı Erol Yazar ile MÜSİAD ve Türkiye’nin Meseleleri Üzerine... “Türkiye Faiz Batağında” [On MÜSİAD and Turkey’s Issues with the Head of MÜSİAD Erol Yazar... Turkey is in the Interest Swamp], *Altınoluk* 96:44 (1994), <<http://dergi.altinoluk.com/index.php?sayfa=yillar&MakaleNo=d096s044m1>>, accessed 21/2/2013.

<sup>49</sup> MÜSİAD Brochure, <[http://www.musiad.org.tr/tanitimkitapcigi\\_tr\\_en/default.html](http://www.musiad.org.tr/tanitimkitapcigi_tr_en/default.html)>, accessed 23/12/2012.

<sup>50</sup> MÜSİAD Bulletin, Fair-Forum Special Issue 31 (1999).

had been at the periphery both economically and politically up until the 1990s. The organisation gradually raised its profile as it came to reflect the transformation that was taking place in the political arena. With the rise of conservative and Islamist parties, it established closer ties to important figures such as Turgut Özal and Necmettin Erbakan. The organisation enjoyed a gradual rise in profile, partly due to Özal's centre-right Motherland Party's market liberalisations, which enabled the mushrooming of private-enterprises and the encouragement of entrepreneurship. The organisation also enjoyed a close relationship with Erbakan and his Welfare Party. Both Özal and Erbakan emphasized the importance of economic activism and more precisely the spirit of entrepreneurship, especially with regard to economic activities abroad. Both politicians shared strong conservative and/or "Islamist" ideological affiliations, which brought them closer to MÜSİAD and vice versa. The last decade can be seen as the "golden age" of MÜSİAD's links to the ruling elite. This was thanks to the fact that the political party to which it has closest ties, the JDP, enjoyed far greater electoral support than Erbakan and has survived for much longer in government than Özal.

Hakan Yavuz noted that "Islam has become the oppositional identity for the excluded sectors of Turkish society."<sup>51</sup> This oppositional identity began searching more actively for its share in the political and the economic arena, and MÜSİAD became an important symbol of this search in the business world.

MÜSİAD is now active in 63 countries, and represents more than 8000 members and almost 36,000 businesses with a combined labour force of 1.6 million. Member companies account for 18 percent of Turkey's GNP, while its exports have reached a remarkable \$17 billion dollars.<sup>52</sup> MÜSİAD has branches and partner organisations not only in countries with

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<sup>51</sup> Hakan Yavuz, "Cleansing Islam from the Public Sphere", *Journal of International Affairs* 54:1 (2000), pp. 21–42, at p.22

<sup>52</sup> See MÜSİAD International Business Fair webpage, <<http://www.musiadfair.com/?p=musiad>>, accessed 8/1/2015.

predominantly Muslim populations, but also in Europe, with offices in numerous cities including Munich, London, Copenhagen, Brussels, Paris and Milan. It also has branches in the US, in Washington DC and New Jersey.<sup>53</sup>

The International Business Fairs which MÜSİAD organises have been important focal points, where the organisation keeps in touch with the Muslim world and establishes and strengthens economic links with it. From their inception in 1993, these fairs are now run annually, and have enjoyed a gradual increase in visitor and participant numbers. The 14<sup>th</sup> fair in 2012 attracted more than 1.8 million visitors and 735 companies from 92 countries, who came from as far afield as Malaysia and Senegal.<sup>54</sup> The participation of significant figures from the government to these fairs, including Minister of Economy Zafer Çağlayan and Prime Minister Erdoğan himself has encouraged the association's efforts to raise its profile as an important international business entity. Even more illustrative of the encouragement and support MÜSİAD received; newly elected President Erdoğan and the then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu participated in the 15<sup>th</sup> fair in 2014 as keynote speakers.<sup>55</sup> Such events therefore offer a precious opportunity for MÜSİAD to show off its prestige and underline its links with the ruling elite. Along with business fairs, businessmen trips and political encouragement, MÜSİAD also enjoyed direct channels into the JDP, allowing the organisation to increase its influence further. MÜSİAD has long been active in terms of political involvement. The businessmen whom we now know as MÜSİAD members had been quite close to Erbakan since the 1970s, and almost all conservative political figures and parties not only did business together but also socialised together. In 1996, under the roof of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, there were 22 MÜSİAD members as MPs, of which 17 came from the Islamist Welfare Party. When the JDP was founded following the split with

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<sup>53</sup> See MÜSİAD webpage, "Branches", <<http://www.musiad.org.tr/en/branches>>, accessed 3/2/2013.

<sup>54</sup> MÜSİAD International Business Fair webpage, <<http://www.musiadfair.com/?p=musiad>>, accessed 8/1/2015.

<sup>55</sup> See MÜSİAD International Business Fair webpage for the programme of the 15<sup>th</sup> Fair, <<http://www.musiadfair.com/?p=program>>, accessed 8/1/2015.

the “reformist wing” of the Virtue Party, 28 out of 31 MÜSİAD members in the Virtue Party chose to side with the “reformist wing”. Six MÜSİAD members were among the founders of this new political party. With the JDP’s first election victory in 2002, more than twenty MÜSİAD members became MPs. In the 2009 local elections, MÜSİAD succeeded in electing some of its members as district mayors in several cities including Sakarya, Gaziantep, İstanbul and Kayseri, as well as a metropolitan mayor in Kayseri and a town mayor in Malatya. In 2007, 30 MÜSİAD members became JDP MPs. In 2011, this number was 26 in 2011. In terms of local chambers of commerce, MÜSİAD’s influence was no less impressive. Erdoğan himself a close friend of MÜSİAD, playing a significant role in MÜSİAD’s foundation, whilst Abdullah Gül was a consultant MÜSİAD affiliate and Ali Babacan was a member of the organisation’s Kayseri branch. From Konya to İstanbul, the organisation gradually came to dominate chambers of commerce and industry, to the extent that in 2013 the rivalry for the position of president in the Istanbul Chamber of Industry was between two MÜSİAD members, ensuring that the organisation would enjoy a superior position over substantially influential holdings such as Sabancı, Koç, and others. Moreover, the former head of the organisation between 2008 and 2012, Ömer Cihad Vardan, became the head of the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) in 2014. This is a key institution that encourages and promotes Turkish business abroad, and one with which Turkish businessmen—regardless of secular, ideological or political affiliation—have to work together in order to be able to attain their desired trade goals and retain a strong presence abroad.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See Kılıç Buğra Kanat, Ahmet Selim Tekelioğlu and Kadir Üstün (eds.), *Politics and Foreign Policy in Turkey: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Ankara: SETA Publications, 2015) ; Yusuf Sarfati, *Mobilizing Religion in Middle East Politics: A Comparative Study of Israel and Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 2014)

Through this political and bureaucratic presence and leverage, as well as with direct government encouragement, the association took the opportunity to have a secondary influence over policy making after the primary motive of Turkey's *animus dominandi*.

*b- TUSKON*

TUSKON is another important business association, the profile of which grew during the JDP era until 2013, when Erdoğan-Gülen<sup>57</sup> split resulted in a hostile relationship between the two. TUSKON is the umbrella organization for seven regional federations (corresponding with Turkey's seven geographical regions), which cover a total of 211 voluntary business associations and around 55,000 entrepreneurs. TUSKON's members are its regional federations, rather than associations or individual companies.<sup>58</sup> Founded in 2005, TUSKON defines its goal as "making the Turkish economy and businessmen an effective part of the global economy..."<sup>59</sup> It played a major role in fostering closer ties with neighbouring regions as well as establishing contacts with Latin America and Africa. Its role was therefore central in helping Turkey achieve a new sense of economic activism with a broader geographic outlook. TUSKON has offices in Brussels, Moscow, Beijing and Washington D.C. Rızanur Meral, the head of the association, had publicly praised the JDP numerous times for its contribution to Turkey's stability and called on businesses to support the government. The then Prime Minister Erdoğan<sup>60</sup> also praised TUSKON's activities abroad on several

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<sup>57</sup> Fetullah Gülen, a retired preacher residing in the US and is accused of having a clandestine agenda and in line with it, trying to paralyse Turkey's state mechanism through infiltrations into strategic institutions for more than four decades and a direct coup attempt of July 15, 2016.

<sup>58</sup> See TUSKON webpage, <<http://www.tuskon.org/?p=content&cl=kurumsal&l=kurumsal>>, accessed 4/6/2014.

<sup>59</sup> Altay Atlı, "Businessmen as Diplomats: The Role of Business Associations in Turkey's Foreign Economic Policy", *Insight Turkey* 13:1 (2011), pp. 109–128, p. 116.

<sup>60</sup> At the time of writing he serves as the 12<sup>th</sup> President of Turkey since August, 2014.

occasions when he was in office, and offered them much encouragement.<sup>61</sup> In several interviews, while admitting that most of TUSKON's members have a conservative ideological stance, Meral refrained from defining the organisation itself as "conservative" while stressing the good relationship between the JDP and TUSKON as an important part of the organisation's success, and as something to be encouraged and perpetuated.<sup>62</sup>

Having received encouragement and support from the Undersecretariat of Foreign Trade from the Ministry of Economy, the Turkish Exporters Assembly, and the then Prime Minister Erdoğan, TUSKON's activities grew to establish new contacts with markets in Latin America, Africa, and the former Soviet area. The organisation's principal events were its "Foreign Trade Bridge" meetings, which were similar to MÜSİAD's International Business Fairs. The first Foreign Trade Bridge summit in 2009 attracted more than 5,000 participant businessmen from more than 130 countries. Since 2006, TUSKON has organized trade summits with Eurasian, Asia-Pacific and African countries.<sup>63</sup> The volume of trade with African countries has increased from \$5.4 billion in 2003 to \$17 billion in 2012, and TUSKON has been a key player in this growth. It not only conducts ever-increasing levels of economic activity in African countries, but also encourages and contributes to further growth by sending delegations and by organising meetings through its World Trade Bridge.<sup>64</sup> In 2010 and 2011, two Trade Bridge summits were devoted entirely to economic relations with

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<sup>61</sup> Özlem Tür, "Economic Relations with the Middle East Under the AKP- Trade, Business Community and Reintegration with Neighbouring Zones", *Turkish Studies* 12: 4 (2011), pp. 589–602, p. 599. The relationship between the government and TUSKON has experienced a sharp decline since 2013 due to allegations of a parallel structure within the state, of which TUSKON is claimed to be the flagship in the economic realm.

<sup>62</sup> See "TUSKON Başkanı Meral: 'Avrupalı işadamları akın akın Anadolu'ya geliyor'" [TUSKON Head Meral: 'European Businessmen Come to Turkey in Crowds'], 25/5/2011, *Euractiv*, <<http://www.euractiv.com.tr/yazici-sayfasi/interview/tuskon-baskani-meral-avrupali-isadamlari-akin-akin-anadoluya-geliyor-018425>>, accessed 2/6/2012; "Rızanur Meral'le Sohbet" ["Conversation with Rızanur Meral], TÜSİAB, 7/2011, <<http://www.tusiab.az/makale/53/rizanur-meral-le-sohbet#.VXxAivmqkko>>, accessed 6/8/2012; "Röportaj: Rıza Nur Meral" ["Interview: Rıza Nur Meral], *HÜRSİAD Bülten* 3:5 (2011), pp. 82–84. After 2014, since the organisation is known with its close ties to Fethullah Gülen, the feud between Erdoğan and Gülen has changed this picture dramatically, plaguing JDP-TUSKON relationship with tension.

<sup>63</sup> Atli, 2011, p. 118.

<sup>64</sup> Mehmet Özkan, "Turkey's Religious and Socio-Political Depth in Africa" *Emerging Powers in Africa*, LSE IDEAS Special Report 16 (2013), pp. 45-50, p. 46.

Africa, attracting more than 1000 participants from more than 40 countries. In 2012, TUSKON conducted three ambitious “Trade Bridge” projects—namely Turkey-Africa, Turkey-Pacific and Turkey-Eurasia—in order to foster trade with countries in these regions and add new sectors to Turkey’s pre-existing bilateral trade and investment portfolio.<sup>65</sup>

In response to the encouragement and support it received from the ruling elite, TUSKON was characterised as “always supporting and never challenging the government’s position”, and TUSKON’s privileged position was attributed to this fact.<sup>66</sup> The organisation’s goal seemed to be to influence Turkey’s economic atmosphere not only in terms of the country’s domestic economy but also in terms of the expansion of its economic reach. The organisation’s “Foundation Story” states that the seven founding federations “have the mission of constituting an expansion at economic policies”.<sup>67</sup>

However, since 2013 the relationship between TUSKON and the JDP has deteriorated significantly due to allegations of malicious and clandestine activities of groups and individuals affiliated with Fethullah Gülen, a retired preacher living in the United States. These allegations have affected TUSKON directly as the economic flagship of Gülenist movement, and the resulting tension has significantly affected the association’s profile by depriving it of government support. This may be one of the reasons for a sharp downturn in participant numbers at the World Trade Bridge summits, from 5250 businessmen in 2009 to only 1400 in 2014.<sup>68</sup>

A more detailed look at the Erdoğan-Gülen split, which directly affected TUSKON’s profile, is worth presenting here. When the JDP came to power in 2002, a close alliance

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<sup>65</sup> See TUSKON webpage on the World Trade Bridge Summits conducted in the past, <<http://www.tuskonwtb.com/?p=contents>>, accessed 6/12/2014.

<sup>66</sup> Atli, 2011, p. 124.

<sup>67</sup> TUSKON Foundation Story, <<http://www.tuskon.org/?p=content&cl=kurumsal&i=27>>, accessed 7/12/2014.

<sup>68</sup> See TUSKON webpage on the World Trade Bridge Summits conducted in the past, <<http://www.tuskonwtb.com/?p=contents>>, accessed 6/12/2014.



between the JDP and the Gülen movement and its affiliates in the police and judiciary was forged. In line with this alliance, the JDP helped people affiliated with the organisation to further infiltrate state institutions and consolidate their power against the old elite and the aggressive secular wing of the military. This alliance between the two benefitted the Gülenists in having a much more supportive government behind them than any other previous ones. It also benefitted the JDP on several occasions, such as in 2008 when the JDP survived the Constitutional Court's closure bid thanks to Gülenist judges who voted against the case. The increasing power of the movement in judicial circles also resulted in the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials. These trials were based on accusations of alleged coup plans by high-ranking military officials, and as recent re-trials proved, relied on mostly forged and fabricated evidence,<sup>69</sup> which nonetheless inflicted a significant damage to the military's image. The Gülen movement's support also contributed to the JDP's victory in the constitutional referendum in 2010, which in turn further improved the Gülenists' position in judicial institutions thanks to substantial changes in the judicial system with the constitutional amendments. In terms of political influence, the movement was thought to have around 60 MPs before 2013 and even around 15 after the group's tension with the JDP reached a critical point in December 2013. Among those, some leading figures—including Hüseyin Çelik, İdris Naim Şahin, Erkan Mumcu, Bülent Arınç, Sadullah Ergin, and Suat Kılıç, who served as MPs and Ministers—are widely believed to have strong ties with the group and opened up both political and economic space for it.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ayşe Şahin, "Court acquits all 236 suspects in Sledgehammer coup trial", 31/3/2016, *Daily Sabah*..

<sup>70</sup> See "Meclis'te Fethullah Gülen'in Kaç Milletvekili Var?", 29/11/2010, *Oda TV*, <<http://odatv.com/mecliste-fethullah-gulenin-kac-milletvekili-var-2911101200.html>>, accessed 12/6/2013; Fatih Altaylı, "Koalisyonun Sonu", 28/11/2015, *Habertürk*, <<http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/fatih-altayli-1001/898542-koalisyonun-sonu>>, accessed 2/6/2015; "Bülent Arınç, Sadullah Ergin, Hüseyin Çelik, Suat Kılıç'a FETÖ suç duyurusu", 3/8/2016, *Habertürk*, <<http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1276330-bulent-arinc-sadullah-ergin-huseyin-celik-suat-kilica-feto-suc-duyurusu>>, accessed, 12/8/2016..

This alliance benefitted both sides for some years, but gradually lost its momentum and moved towards collapse and more recently an open hostility step by step. The first incident that signalled a crisis between the two partners came with the new party list prepared by Erdoğan for the election in 2011. In this list of between 60 and 70 Gülenist MPs, only a few managed to save their seats. The second point of tension centred on the Turkish National Intelligence Organisation (MİT). In early 2012, intel chief Hakan Fidan—known to be someone with whom Erdoğan had a close relationship—was called by a Gülenist prosecutor to testify because of the negotiations conducted between the government and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Fidan has been subject to a significant amount of criticism from the Gülenists, who wanted a stronger presence in the MİT, a goal to which Fidan was seen as an obstacle. Meanwhile, the government's decision in late 2013 to close down weekend courses and preparatory schools (of which almost a quarter belonged to the Gülen movement) was the first attempt against the movement by the government. These schools have long been regarded as providing the movement not only with required financial power, but also with educated and qualified human capital. Unsurprisingly, pro-Gülen media harshly criticised the decision, and began to confront the government more vocally than ever. Hakan Şükür, a retired football star and a famous pro-Gülen figure who also served as a JDP MP, resigned following the government's decision about these educational institutions. Just after his resignation, dozens of individuals were arrested in an early morning raid, with accusations of being part of “illicit back-door trade” with Iran. Individuals arrested included the CEO of Halkbank and the sons of three JDP ministers, namely Minister of the Interior Muammer Güler, Minister of Environment and Urban Planning Erdoğan Bayraktar, and Minister of Economy Zafer Çağlayan. The then Minister and chief negotiator for European Union Egemen Bağış was also accused of involvement and close ties with Reza Zarrab, as the intermediary of this process. The ministers accused were removed by the JDP in a cabinet

reshuffle, while the incident was referred to as a “coup attempt” carried out by Gülenists. In the later stages of the coup, it was argued that Gülenist police and judges would have concentrated on Erdoğan and his family with the goal of trying anyone based on accusations about back-door trading with Iran and corruption. As Turkey moved closer to its election in 2014, audiotapes were uploaded to YouTube almost on a daily basis about the leading JDP figures’ corruption and nepotism. The last one, however, was probably the most damaging and controversial, and was a recording of the then PM Ahmet Davutoğlu, intel chiefs and top brass discussing Turkey’s options regarding Syria. The wiretapping was referred to as a Gülenist attack against Turkey’s national security.

Since that time, Erdoğan’s supporters have complained of a “parallel state” running within Turkey which allegedly acts according to its own internal hierarchy and uses state power for its own clandestine goals. Several journalists from the Gülenist *Zaman* newspaper have been tried, the newspaper itself was seized by the government and several leading Gülenist businessmen were either arrested or fled the country. As a result, Gülen-aligned businesses have been largely excluded from Turkey’s economic picture. The coup attempt of July 15, 2016 marked the high point of the fight between the JDP and Gülenists who, according to the evidence and testimonies so far, were believed to be the leading—if not the only—group behind the coup attempt. In the attempt, tanks, helicopters and jets attacked the Parliament, the headquarters of MIT and the Special Forces, killing more than two hundred people and injuring more than two thousand who stood against the attempted coup. Following the attempt, all four political parties with MPs in the Parliament unanimously and harshly condemned the attack; most of the military labelled the junta as “traitors”; and people continued to stay on the streets for weeks in order to prevent any further attempts and show their stance against the failed attempt. More than fifty thousand people from bureaucracy, military, the police and judicial institutions were either sacked, suspended or arrested and a

three month state of emergency was announced in order to combat Gülenist infiltration more effectively. At the time of writing, interrogations and arrests continue, and an increasing number of testimonies seem to confirm the accusations of Gülenist links in the attempt.<sup>71</sup>

Due to this total destruction of the dynamics of the old alliance, TUSKON lost its powerful position as a government partner reinforcing its policies abroad and broadening its own economic reach in return. It is very difficult to imagine the organisation recovering in the foreseeable future.<sup>72</sup> However, the association's previous close contact with the JDP is still important in explaining the rise of the association, which coincided with an era that marked the high point of Turkey's economic activity abroad. TUSKON played a strong role within the context of broadening the scope of Turkey's new grand strategic behaviour—especially as regards Latin America and Africa—as a key pro-JDP business association prior to the start of the intensification of the conflict between the two sides in 2013, thus affording it an important place in any analysis of Turkey's ambitious economic profile within the context of its activist grand strategy.

## 2) Increasing the “Autonomy of the Civilian Elected Executive”: Transformation of Civil-Military Relationship

High levels of military authority and control over domestic politics can be challenged by a reduction in securitisation and progress towards democratisation. Civil authorities can then

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<sup>71</sup> “Testimonies reveal Gulen's role in Turkey's failed coup”, 28/7/2016, Anadolu Agency, <<http://aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/testimonies-reveal-gulen-s-role-in-turkeys-failed-coup/617638>>, accessed 28/7/2016.

<sup>72</sup> For more information on the Erdoğan-Gülen rift, see Mustafa Akyol, “What you should know about Turkey's AKP-Gulen conflict”, 1/3/2014, *Al-Monitor*, <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/akp-gulen-conflict-guide.html#ixzz471t9QJP7>>, accessed 2/4/2016; M. Kemal Kaya and Svante E. Cornell, “The Big Split: The Differences that Led Erdogan and the Gulen Movement to Part Ways”, *The Turkey Analyst*, <<http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/296-the-big-split-the-differences-that-led-erdogan-and-the-gulen-movement-to-part-ways.html>>, accessed 2/2/2016; Balci, “What Are the Consequences of the Split Between Erdogan and Gülen on Turkey's Foreign Policy?”; Ruşen Çakır and Semih Sakallı, *100 Soruda Erdoğan-Gülen Savaşı* (Metis Yayıncılık: İstanbul, 2014)

pursue policies more flexibly in line with a shifting grand strategic vision, without missing the chance of capitalising on day-to-day changes due to the military's fixed and securitised policy preferences. They can do so without being concerned about the military's possible reaction because of the challenges they pose to its mostly securitised and fixed policy choices.

Turkey, for a fairly extended period, experienced the status of what Lasswell referred to as a "garrison state"—a semi-dictatorial society in which "the specialists on violence are the most powerful group".<sup>73</sup> From the early nineteenth century, the military's control over policy-making and over the civilian authorities gradually increased.<sup>74</sup> A strong sense of paranoia concerning Turkey's neighbouring regions and Western powers held sway due to the national memories of the declining decades of the Ottoman Empire. This became known as "Sèvres syndrome"—a term that refers to a desire to stay away from international developments as much as possible due to an overarching sense of distrust towards the other actors in the system. This feeling mainly stemmed from the memories of WWI, after which came "division, subjugation, and humiliation" and the feeling of being surrounded by enemies in every direction.<sup>75</sup> The military stood as a privileged group that held sway over policy-making, but due to its weaknesses at that point and recent memories of war it lacked both the opportunity and the means to push the state towards the aggressive attitudes of Japan or Germany. Instead, the military focused on consolidating its power domestically. During the Cold War, in the face of a perceived direct threat from the USSR and the need to stay within the contours delineated by the bi-polar structural settings, the greater picture underwent very

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<sup>73</sup> Harold Lasswell, "The Garrison State", *The American Journal of Sociology*, 46:4 (1941), pp. 455–468.

<sup>74</sup> See William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (Oxon: Routledge, 1994); William Hale, "The Turkish Republic and Its Army, 1923–1960", *Turkish Studies* 12:2 (2011), pp. 191–201; Metin Heper, "The Ottoman Legacy and Turkish Politics", *Journal of International Affairs* 54:1 (2000), pp. 63–82; George S. Harris, "The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics", *Middle East Journal*, 19: 1(1965), pp. 54–66; Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Army and the Founding of the Turkish Republic", *World Politics* 11:4 (1959), pp. 513–552;

<sup>75</sup> Robins, 2003, p. 104.

little change in terms of military influence. The military's way of thinking showed parallels with von der Goltz's views on the commanders' right to exercise political influence and their superiority over civilian policy-makers. Military commanders, von der Goltz believed, ought to be more than just loyal servants of the state; they need to have a "superior position in the state" and should enjoy the status of *noblesse oblige*.<sup>76</sup> The idea of what Feaver called "the civilians' right to be wrong" became open to doubt. In an ideal civil-military relationship, according to him "...officers are professionals, like highly trained surgeons" and a statesman can "freely decide whether or not to have an operation ... he may choose one doctor over another, and he may even make a decision among different surgical options..."<sup>77</sup> However, those were very early days in Turkey's ability to restrain the military. The idea that apart from providing necessary raw material to the civilian authorities, the military has no right to intervene in political decision-making processes—or try to "punish" civilian authorities even if their policy choices do not coincide with the military's preferences—was comparatively new.<sup>78</sup>

Zakaria argues that state power is a function of "the autonomy of the executive", among other factors, referring to the control of the elected executive over the extraction and mobilisation of national resources with no powerful rival claims on that executive. In Zakaria's case, this alludes to the system of checks and balances that exists among the Presidency, the Senate and Congress in the United States. Here, the Presidency fights to achieve a better position vis-à-vis powerful rivals, which occasionally prevent the President from "exercising his will"<sup>79</sup> in order to be able to make the most of emerging windows of

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<sup>76</sup> Colmar von der Goltz, *The Nation in Arms: A Treatise on Modern Military Systems and the Conduct of War*, tr. Philip Ashworth (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), pp. 23–24.

<sup>77</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2002), p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 65–66.

<sup>79</sup> Zakaria, 1998, p. 11.

opportunity by operationalising policy choices.<sup>80</sup> In Turkey's case, considering its experience of the last centuries of the Ottoman Empire and the history of the Republic of Turkey, the determinant of this autonomy has been the relationship between the military and the executive and/or the elected civilian policy-makers. Since the military has historically played a significant role in Turkish politics by defining "national interest" and regulating domestic politics, a gradual decrease in its influence became one of the main factors providing the elected civilian executive with more autonomy and control over domestic and foreign policy-making. In the next section, I will provide a closer look at the military's influence in Turkish politics and explore the gradual loss of this influence over recent decades.

#### *Historical Background to the Military's Influence over Policy-Making in the Turkish Case*

"There is no honour of the army, honour of the judiciary, or the Council of State any more than there is an honour of farmers or cigar sellers. The army is composed of civilians, clothed in a certain fashion and subordinated to a special regime for a certain purpose. Men are neither better nor worse if they wear red pants or grey, a képi or a bowler hat."

Georges Clemenceau, *The Tiger*<sup>81</sup>

The military has a strong tradition of intervention in Turkish politics, a tradition that dates back to the last centuries of the Ottoman Empire. As Huntington suggests, "the main causes

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<sup>80</sup> See, Zakaria, 1998.

<sup>81</sup> Georges Clemenceau served as minister of interior and premier of France in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century; minister of interior between 1903 and 1906 and premier between 1906 and 1909 and between 1917 and 1920. For this quote, see Cohen, 2002, p. 58.

of military intervention in politics are not military but political... they reflect the political and institutional characteristics of the country concerned, and not just those of the military establishment.”<sup>82</sup>

In the late Ottoman era, with the rise of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), military influence over politics reached the point where the armed forces were able to directly affect the policies and challenge the Sultan’s position of pre-eminence. Following the CUP’s coup d’état in 1913, a “dictatorial triumvirate” began, an era in which Enver Pasha, Talat Pasha and Cemal Pasha ruled the country *de facto* with a highly aggressive attitude vis-à-vis any opposing force and civilian ruling figures. Military influence over civilian policy-making reached its peak when Enver Pasha signed a secret treaty with Germany without even informing the Sultan. With the treaty, the Ottoman Empire sided with Germany in WWI. By doing this, Pasha changed the Ottoman Empire’s balancing strategy among European great powers and significantly contributed to the collapse of the Empire. Putting aside any historical implications, Pasha’s secret treaty was also one of the most striking examples of how much power a rival domestic interest group or actor can wield, when given unchallenged authority over actual policy-makers. The Empire was forced into a war on numerous fronts and in numerous theatres which would ultimately provide its undoing—without the highest political authority knowing about the alliance in the first place. In order to trace the extraordinary power of Turkey’s military in domestic politics, it should be kept in mind that almost without a single exception, the first elite groups of the republican era had either direct involvement in or indirect links to the CUP and its ideological narrative.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Hale, 1994, p. 304.

<sup>83</sup> For detailed information about the Young Turks, the CUP and this era, see M. Şükrü Hanioglu, “Civil-Military Relations in the Second Constitutional Period, 1908-1918”, *Turkish Studies*, 12:2 (2011), pp. 177–189; Ulrich Trumpener, “Turkey’s Entry into World War I: An Assessment of Responsibilities”, *The Journal of Modern History* 34:4, (1962), pp. 369–380; Charles D. Haley, “The Desperate Ottoman: Enver Paşa and the German Empire-1”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 30:1 (1994), pp.1–51; Charles D. Haley, “The Desperate Ottoman: Enver



From the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey until 1950, the military's authority over politics grew. Since the new leading elite was almost completely composed of members of the old military establishment, the result was a clearly defined hierarchy that reflected an undisputable harmony of interest between the military and the political leadership. The iron fist of the new elite had successfully eliminated rival groups (mainly composed of former military officials with opposing views) in order to seize power. The People's Party (later the "Republican People's Party") held a monopoly over the political system in the early Republican era, with no other political parties able to survive the PP's harsh policies and bans on running for elections. The military, therefore, had a face and a voice that represented itself in a civil establishment made up of members of the military establishment from only a few decades before.<sup>84</sup> An example of how the military was viewed in this new atmosphere can be seen in Mustafa Kemal's speech in Konya in 1931:

Whenever the Turkish nation has wanted to take a step up, it has always looked to the army...as the leader of movements to achieve lofty national ideals...When speaking of the army, I am speaking of the intelligentsia of the Turkish nation who are the true owners of this country...The Turkish nation ... considers its army the guardian of its ideals.<sup>85</sup>

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Paşa and the German Empire-2", *Middle Eastern Studies* 30:2 (1994), pp.224–251; Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Ottoman Empire and the Armistice of Moudros", in Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (eds.), *At the Eleventh Hour: Reflections, Hopes, and Anxieties at the Closing of the Great War, 1918* (London: Leo Cooper, 1998), pp. 266–275; Ernest Edmondson Ramsaur, Jr., *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957; Stone, 2010, p. 130-152; Altunışık & Tür, 2005, pp. 8-10; William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 13-58.

<sup>84</sup> On this era, see William Hale, "The Turkish Republic and Its Army, 1923–1960", *Turkish Studies* 12:2 (2011), pp. 191–201; George S. Harris, "The Role of the Military in Turkish Politics", *Middle East Journal*, 19: 1(1965), pp. 54–66; Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Army and the Founding of the Turkish Republic", *World Politics* 11:4 (1959), pp. 513–552

<sup>85</sup> See Harris, 1965, p. 56, footnote 4.

However, the Democrat Party's time in office under Menderes, which lasted from 1950 until the coup of 1960, ended what Hale referred to as the symbiotic relationship between the ruling elite and the military. The equation: "the RPP + Army = Power" no longer applied.<sup>86</sup> Unsurprisingly, the military in general and middle-ranking military officials in particular were irritated by the new power calculus and the shift in power from the RPP to the conservative Democrat Party. They regarded it as a challenge not only to their position but also to the very characteristics of the state. These middle-ranking officers, working in conjunction with a conspiratorial organization composed of younger officers, toppled the Democrat Party government on May 27 1960, after obtaining support from high-ranking officers and generals. Following the coup, former Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, Minister of Finance Hasan Polatkan and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes were executed "despite pleas from the Pope, President Eisenhower and the Queen of England".<sup>87</sup>

A controversial coup in 1971 managed to change the government with a memorandum issued by high-ranking officials.<sup>88</sup> From 1973, Turkey was led by fragile coalition governments which possessed little or no coherent structure.<sup>89</sup> These weak coalitions were later regarded as the reason behind further increase in street violence between leftist and rightist groups, which raised concerns across Turkish society as a whole. The general discontent arising from economic problems and the increasing gap between social groups prepared the ground for the military to act in the name of its stated mission "to guard the state and the regime". In this atmosphere, another major intervention from the military came in the form of the coup of September 12 1980. When strict controls and curfews were imposed after the coup with the aim of preventing street violence, the question remained as to why the military—with its clear ability to stop the state of quasi-civil war between rightist and leftist

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<sup>86</sup> Hale, 2011, p.197.

<sup>87</sup> Stone, 2010, p. 160. On the coup, also see Hale, 1994, p. 88-113.

<sup>88</sup> Altunışık & Tür, 2005, p. 37-38.

<sup>89</sup> For the era between 1970 and 73, see Hale, 1994, p. 153-211.

youth groups which characterised most of the 1970s—had refrained from doing so without taking over political control earlier. Demirel argued that “according to Mr. [Kenan] Evren, the more blood was spilled, the more justification there would be for the intervention plan. This was the arrangement which was entered into, the game played against the state...”<sup>90</sup> In the final analysis, however desirable the relative tranquillity was for most of the public afterwards, the coup of 1980 became yet another event in which the Turkish military proved its interventionist character based on its self-assumed responsibilities.<sup>91</sup>

Desch, in *Civilian Control of the Military*, investigates more than twenty cases of civil-military relationships from different parts of the world, and concludes that civilian control weakens in the face of internal threat. However, if the civilian authority is powerful and stable, it will consolidate its control over the military when threatened by external forces.<sup>92</sup> Considering the internal uprisings the Ottoman Empire faced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the military’s growing influence should come as no surprise. Even though external hostilities were no less threatening in the same era, unstable civilian control and the fading authority of the ruling elite in the last years of the Ottoman Empire matched Desch’s expected theories of civilian control over the military in the face of external threat. In a similar way, the Republic of Turkey (putting aside the interwar years) was first challenged by a serious external threat during the Cold War in the form of possible aggression from the USSR. At the time, Turkey did not possess a strong and stable state mechanism, and

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<sup>90</sup> Hale, 1994, p. 240.

<sup>91</sup> On this era and the coup of September 12 1980, see Gerassimos Karabelias, “The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations in Post-War Turkey, 1980–1995”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 35:4 (1999), pp.130–151; Harris, 2011, p. 203–213; General Secretariat of the National Security Council, *12 September in Turkey: Before and After*(Ankara: Ongun Kardeşler Printing House, 1982); Mehmet Ali Birand, *The general's coup in Turkey: An inside story of 12 September 1980* (London: Brassey’s Defence Publishers, 1987); Frank Tachau and Metin Heper, “The State, Politics, and the Military in Turkey”, *Comparative Politics* 16:1 (1983), pp. 17–33; Taner Demirel, “The Turkish Military’s Decision to Intervene: 12 September 1980”, *Armed Forces and Society* 29:2 (2003), pp.253–280.

<sup>92</sup> Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 19–21 and 113–120. Also see Tanel Demirel, “Soldiers and civilians: the Dilemma of Turkish Democracy”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 40:1 (2004), pp. 127–150.

numerous governments formed and dissolved within a quite short period. Coups and a weak economic structure and state mechanism unsurprisingly reinforced the military's superior position over the civilian authorities. From the late 1980s and early 1990s, the internal threat in the form of PKK terrorism helped the military to consolidate and even strengthen its position.

Of the eight Turkish presidents up to Özal, six were high-ranking military officers, a tradition which changed with Özal and the next four civilian presidents. The only civilian president before Özal was Celal Bayar who was deposed in 1960 following the coup.<sup>93</sup> Özal strove to re-civilianise Turkish domestic politics. The relaxation at international levels brought about by the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact significantly helped the re-configuration of the civil-military relationship in favour of the civil authorities, and this revision was reinforced by the rising rhetorical power of democracy, the softening of Western security cultures and the rise of political liberal narrative in domestic politics.<sup>94</sup> However, in the late 1990s the military was still one of the key decision-makers along with the president, the prime minister and the foreign minister, as evidenced by the “silent coup” of February 28, 1997. The military's success in consolidating its privileged position came primarily because of the rise in number of PKK terrorist attacks during these years.<sup>95</sup> Philip Robins notes that this era witnessed a process of “de-democratization” in Turkey, and the country “in many respects, whether in terms of an authoritarian ideology, a deified political leader, the enduring role of the military and the primacy of the state, appeared more to resemble the former East European states than their post-Communist successors”.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Hale, 1994, p. 288.

<sup>94</sup> Sözen, 2010, p.113. Also see Cizre, 2011, p.68.

<sup>95</sup> Hale, 2000, p. 205.

<sup>96</sup> Robins, 2003, p. 13.

In the last years of the millennium, the picture gradually began to shift. Turkey's relationship with Greece, Armenia, Syria and Iran began to improve, and the PKK leader, Öcalan, was captured. These factors, coupled with the post-Cold War environment, moved control more firmly into civil hands, and the shift reached its zenith under the JDP governments after 2002, thanks also in part to the reforms demanded by the EU regarding civil-military relations.

*Gradual Increase in the Autonomy of the Elected Executive and the JDP Era as its Zenith*

The JDP realised that it had seized a precious opportunity to re-configure the civil-military relationship—partly thanks to Özal's previous efforts, which laid an important ground already as well as rising public discontent with military control over elected civilian political actors. The JDP's survival instinct against military dominance was one of the major factors that shaped this process.<sup>97</sup> The JDP's commitment to the reforms demanded by the EU—including those related to civil-military relationship—also played an important role. A detailed list of these reforms is provided in the chapter on the Turkish-EU relationship, but to give an example here the EU insisted that Turkey should amend certain legal documents, such as Article 35 of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) Internal Service Law, Article 85 of the Internal Service Regulations, and Article 2a of the Law on the National Security Council. These laws had been used since 1961 by the military to consolidate its control over the elected civilian policy-makers. The military had long provided frequent “recommendations”<sup>98</sup> via so-called “red books”<sup>99</sup> which had periodically defined external and internal threats to Turkey. According to Article 118 of the 1982 constitution, the NSC's “suggestions” were to

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<sup>97</sup> Kardas, 2008, p.183.

<sup>98</sup> Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 28 and Robins, 2003, p. 75–76.

<sup>99</sup> Müge Aknur (2013), “Civil-Military Relations During the AK Party Era: Major Developments and Challenges”, *Insight Turkey* 15:4, pp. 131–150.

be given “priority consideration” by the government.<sup>100</sup> Since these articles had effectively justified any military intervention by referring to the military’s “duty” to defend not only the country but also the regime “from internal and external threats”, amending them was a major step which deprived the military of its legal justification to intervene in civilian policy-making.<sup>101</sup>

Still, in 2007, Turkey’s presidential elections caused tension between the JDP and the military over who would be the JDP’s candidate for the presidential election. The official website of the Turkish Armed Forces published an “E-ultimatum” stating the military’s concerns about the election process and noting that the Turkish Armed Forces was a party to all debates as a defender of laicism. This emphasis on laicism was interpreted as a warning to any potential JDP candidate whose spouse wore a headscarf. The military promised “to act with precision and determination if and when necessary”—a promise that could easily be interpreted as a threat. However, this was to no avail, since the election of the JDP’s candidate Abdullah Gül went ahead, resulting in a further loss of prestige for the military in the eyes of the public.

From then onwards, the balance tilted quite visibly. In 2008, a court case supported by the old elite including the hawkish wing of the military aimed at banning the JDP was rejected by the Constitutional Court. Following that, legal inspections were conducted on alleged military coup plans. Within this context, in addition to the famous Ergenekon case, two other alleged plans were revealed later: “The Glove” in 2008 and “The Sledgehammer” in 2010, both of which triggered new waves of legal action against those allegedly involved in the plans.<sup>102</sup> Although some of the evidence taken into consideration during these trials

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<sup>100</sup> Hale, 1994, p. 258.

<sup>101</sup> Kirsty Hughes, “Turkish Democracy under Siege”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43: 22 (2008), pp. 16–19 and Taşpınar, 2007, p.115.

<sup>102</sup> Aydınli, 2011, p. 228–235. On this era of also see Gerassimos Karabelias, 2008; Heper, 2005; Aydınli, 2009; Cizre, 2011, pp.57–75.

was later proved to be fabricated, the process helped ease the problems the government was experiencing in trying to end the military's judicial autonomy—which it finally managed to do in 2009—as well as seriously challenging its overall privileged position and influence in domestic politics. Moreover, the government raised its level of influence by the decision to involve itself with the promotion of high-ranking military officers from 2010 onwards.<sup>103</sup> Overall, the civil-military relationship changed to a great extent during this era. Regarding the changing atmosphere in the civil-military relationship, Paul Kubicek concluded that “I believe that in the early 2000s... the power of the military has been radically reduced”.<sup>104</sup>

Turkey, from the Özal era onwards, and especially during the JDP rule, experienced a dramatic departure from its former character as a “garrison state”. Civil authorities gradually achieved their right “to be wrong” in a new power calculus. Over the last decade, the military has gradually moved to the position of “valued and respected servants of the state and its citizenry”, which is “accountable before the law” and “obedient and supportive of democratic polity” within the borders drawn by the constitution. Meanwhile the JDP seems to have taken a huge step forward by achieving what Barany refers to as “the aim of democratizers”, which is to “roll back” the privileged status of the military.<sup>105</sup> The gradually increasing civilian control over the military was coupled with the military's fading influence over civilian policy-making processes. The coup attempt of July 15, 2016—when most of the military vocally opposed the attempt and stood with the democratically elected government—points to an overall change in the civil-military relationship in Turkey. Some post-attempt steps have the potential to act as further improvements in terms of civilian control of the military. These steps so far include military high schools being shut down, war academies are to be merged under a new National Defence University, land, air and naval forces will be brought

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<sup>103</sup> Cizre, 2011, pp. 66–67.

<sup>104</sup> Paul Kubicek, personal communication, 20/2/2016.

<sup>105</sup> Zoltan Barany, *The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 33.

under the Ministry of Defence, Coast Guard and Gendarmerie General Command will be brought under the control of the Interior Ministry and military hospitals will be brought under the Ministry of Health. All in all, after decades of effort, the result is a more autonomous executive, mirroring the example of the United States discussed by Zakaria in *From Wealth to Power*. Combined with close links between statesmen and businessmen, these political moves have significantly contributed to an increase in the power of the ruling elite to pursue their policy choices more confidently and effectively.

This chapter engaged with rival theoretical frameworks and the main concepts. In doing this, their relevance to the Turkish situation was also presented, along with a detailed look at actors, incidents and changing patterns. Key international and domestic dynamics and how to incorporate them for a comprehensive analysis will be useful in making sense of grand strategic shifts. In the light of the research's emphasis on both international and domestic levels, the following three chapters, by investigating the shifts and continuities at both levels, will analyse the changing patterns of the Turkish-Iranian, Turkish-Israeli and the Turkish-EU relationships respectively. By aligning themselves with the causal mechanism provided in this chapter, these chapters will look at critical junctures and changing dynamics at both international and domestic levels. They will then engage with a theoretical debate on whether culturalist arguments have the potential to make sense of the Turkish case or whether the proposed neoclassical realist causal mechanism is better prepared to take up this challenge.



### **Chapter 3: The Turkish-Iranian Relationship: A Period of Overall Rapprochement with Realpolitik Limits**

The previous chapter elaborated on the dissertation's theoretical research question as well as looking at other major factors, actors, and shifts relevant to this research. This was followed by an empirical discussion on the impact of international and domestic factors, particularly on Turkey. While changing international dynamics provided Turkey with temporary windows of opportunity and/or caused occasional losses, domestic factors impacted on the implementation of its revised policy choices in response to these.

In this chapter I will investigate the relationship between Turkey and Iran. After presenting the historical background, I will identify certain regional and international changes as critical junctures in the relationship, and consider their impact. I will also analyse changes Turkey experienced at domestic levels that influenced its changing attitude towards Iran.

In general terms, Turkey's relationship with Iran moved from an era of tension in the 1990s, through a time of recent rapprochement, before transforming into a controlled era of low-intensity controlled tension in the post-Arab Spring era. By analysing the reasons behind these changes, I will address the question of whether the primary motivation behind Turkey's shifting attitude to Iran has been values, ideology and culture, or self-interest and the desire for power.

## **Turkey's Return to the "Arc of Crisis"**

Aaron Stein states that since its foundation, Turkey's "preference" has been "non-intervention and neutrality in the areas which, until the First World War, had formed part of the Istanbul-centred Ottoman Empire." However, this "benign neglect" was rejected by the JDP in favour of a "proactive foreign policy aimed at creating 'strategic depth' by expanding Turkey's zone of influence in the Middle East..."<sup>1</sup> Turkey's previous grand strategic policy of keeping its distance from the "arc of crisis"<sup>2</sup> (a term coined by Brzezinski with reference to the Middle East) came gradually to an end, and Turkey's changing relationship with Iran was an important component of this transformation. Hale considers Turkey's position on the Middle East during the Cold War era as "stay[ing] on the edge of regional subsystem",<sup>3</sup> a position that stemmed mainly from Turkey's external restraints under the bipolar Cold War settings. Turkey's return to the "arc of crisis" began with the end of the Cold War and consolidated itself due to changing international and domestic dynamics over the following years. Turkey's return to the region was oriented principally by power and interest issues; Rabasa and Larrabee argue that:

Turkey's greater focus on the Middle East does not mean that it is turning its back on the West. Turkey remains strongly anchored in Western institutions, especially NATO. Nor does it reflect an "Islamization" of Turkish foreign policy, as some observers fear (although there are certainly elements within the AKP [abbreviation of the JDP in Turkish, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi] whose foreign-policy views are religiously motivated). Rather, it is primarily a response to

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<sup>1</sup> Stein, 2014, p. 2–3

<sup>2</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Iran: The Crescent of Crisis", *Time*, 15/01/1979, <<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,919995,00.html>>, accessed 13/06/2012.

<sup>3</sup> William Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis", *International Affairs* 68: 4 (1992), pp. 679–692, p. 679.

structural changes in Turkey's security environment since the end of the Cold War.<sup>4</sup>

Responding to the post-Cold War atmosphere and the elimination of the threat of Soviet aggression, Turkey moved its troops from its northern and north-eastern borders and repositioned them in the southern and south-eastern regions of the country, increasing its level of military deterrence against its Middle Eastern neighbours. Turkey then took part in the Gulf War as a symbolic display of its return to the region. It also established closer links with Israel in the late 1990s in its search for regional cooperation against the PKK, and conducted cross-border operations in Iraq when necessary.<sup>5</sup> By increasing its involvement during the JDP rule—from the post-Iraq War reconstruction efforts via mediation to engagement during the Arab Spring and its aftermath—Turkey seemed to be on the ascendant in the region.

During the last decade, a significant dimension of Turkey's widening engagement with the Middle East has been its relationship with Iran. Turkey's activist grand strategy was aimed towards power-maximisation through increasing levels of involvement in its environs as soon as its relative power position allowed it to play a more active role. This overarching attitude was reflected in its relationship with Iran, too. For a while, the two countries enjoyed a much closer relationship, both politically and economically. However, the next wave of clashing interests, stemming from the Ballistic Missile Defence System (BMDS) crisis and their competition over the MENA region in the Arab Spring era and beyond, showed realpolitik limits of this relationship in more recent times.

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<sup>4</sup> Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008, p. 87

<sup>5</sup> Graham E. Fuller, "The Fate of the Kurds", *Foreign Affairs*, 72:2 (Spring, 1993), pp.108–121, p. 115. Lenore Martin, "Turkey's National Security in the Middle East", *Turkish Studies* 1:1 (2000), pp. 83–106, p. 84–85.

To make better sense of Turkey's shifts and their timing, an insight into the historical background and the dynamics of the Turkish-Iranian relationship from the interwar period to the Cold War will be presented in the next section.

### Historical Background: A Self-Perpetuating Cycle of Rivalry and Cooperation

Iran and Turkey enjoyed close contact during the interwar period, mostly because of the shared political and social programmes of Mustafa Kemal and Reza Pahlavi, both of whom were trying to promote the modernisation, industrialisation and Westernisation of their countries and peoples. This was aimed not only at challenging traditional state structure, but also at changing their peoples' way of thinking.<sup>6</sup> In Mozaffarpour's words, the two countries are, along with Egypt, Middle Eastern nation-states that touched modernity through constitutionalism and Westernisation. Turkey and Iran also played the role of a bridge for each other, exchanging new norms and values.<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that their newly established regimes differed in nature—one being a democratic republic (although it had only one political party and banned any effort at democratic challenge) and the other a monarchy—they both shared an absolutist attitude, a monopoly over policy-making and a strict commitment for the top-down reformation of their societies.

In the interwar period, both countries focused on internal reform and restructuring efforts, from importing legal codes from various Western countries to limiting the role played by religion in social life.<sup>8</sup> Neither country had a particularly high international profile, so the range of steps they could take to cooperate in a bilateral or regional sense was quite limited during this era. The only exception was the modest and short-lived Saadabad Pact of 1937

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<sup>6</sup> Bayram Sinkaya, personal communication, 9/3/2016.

<sup>7</sup> Nematollah Hamid Mozaffarpour, Head of the Turkish Policy Section at the Iranian Embassy in Ankara, personal communication, 4/5/2016.

<sup>8</sup> Richard H. Pfaff, "Disengagement from Traditionalism in Turkey and Iran", *The Western Political Quarterly* 16:1 (March, 1963), pp. 79–98, at p. 87–88.

between Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Afghanistan,<sup>9</sup> which was primarily aimed at preventing mutual antagonism and resolving border disputes. In this era, due to their low profile and inward-looking political approach, “neither Shah Reza Pahlavi’s much-celebrated visit to Turkey in 1934 nor the Saadabad Pact turned into a full-fledged partnership”.<sup>10</sup> For closer cooperation based on a shared feeling of insecurity, they had to wait until the end of WWII and the beginning of the Cold War.

After the Second World War, Turkey and Iran grew closer to help forge regional initiatives in their struggle to defy the growing communist threat. The Cold War increased their level of cooperation. Both states’ Western orientation made them allies until the revolution in Iran in 1979. Both countries aligned themselves with the Western bloc and took advantage of this alliance to facilitate much closer ties with each other due to their shared threat perception of a Soviet aggression.<sup>11</sup> One of the most symbolic examples of this regional cooperation was their alliance (which also included Iraq) under the Baghdad Pact of 1955. The pact was renamed CENTO in 1959 after Iraq’s Free Officers’ coup of 1958, which led to the withdrawal of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact. The pact was supported by the Western powers to prevent Soviets from destabilising regional powers in order to provide its allies with the upper hand and, if possible, export its regime and expand its sphere of influence.<sup>12</sup> The Turkish-Iranian cooperation became more solid than ever under the US “Northern Tier” policy. The policy line was coined by the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles,<sup>13</sup> devised to contain the perceived communist threat against a tier of allies including Greece, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. In this era, while Iran “was equipped with enough military hardware by NATO

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<sup>9</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Süleyman Elik, 2011, p. 644.

<sup>10</sup> Barın Kayaoğlu, “The Limits of Turkish–Iranian Cooperation, 1974–80”, *Iranian Studies*, 47:3 (2014), pp. 463–478, p.463.

<sup>11</sup> Davut Turan, General Coordinator at South Azerbaijan Social-Cultural Studies Center, personal communication, 8/2/2016.

<sup>12</sup> John Calabrese, “Turkey and Iran: Limits of a Stable Relationship”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25:1 (May, 1998), pp. 75–94, at p.77. Also, see Mustafa Kibaroglu, 2009, p. 153.

<sup>13</sup> Ehteshami and Elik, 2011, p. 648.

countries to act as the policeman of the Persian Gulf”; Turkey “was the bulwark against Soviet intrusion into eastern Europe”.<sup>14</sup>

Even during this era, the military imbalance in favour of Turkey as a NATO member and the Shah’s ambition to make Iran the leading power in the region signalled the potential for rivalry between the two countries. In terms of regional supremacy, their relationship was shaped by an implicit rivalry which had to remain muted and controlled by larger-scale structural dynamics.<sup>15</sup> Iran gradually replaced Turkey as the United States’ main ally in the region due to growing tension between the US and Turkey over the Cyprus question, which led to the suspension of the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) between the US and Turkey in 1975, leading in turn to the closing of US bases in Turkey.<sup>16</sup> Sinkaya considered Iran as a more attractive partner in the region, and the Nixon Doctrine of 1972 was primarily focused on this.<sup>17</sup> However, Turkey and Iran’s perceived level of mutual threat was relatively limited due to their common stance in the same broader alliance. From 1979 onwards, however, the situation changed dramatically.

### *Iranian Exit from the Allied Camp: an Old Friend Becomes a Threat*

The main danger to the positive atmosphere in the Turkey-Iran relationship during the Cold War was a communist takeover of either side or a voluntary exit from the bloc. The second possibility manifested itself after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The shockwaves of the revolution impacted upon Turkey’s perceptions of Iran directly. The emergence of a new Iran, with an ambition to increase its own regional influence and a hostile attitude towards

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<sup>14</sup> Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, personal communication, 23/3/2016.

<sup>15</sup> Davut Turan, personal communication, 8/2/2016.

<sup>16</sup> Kayaoğlu, 2014, p. 468–470.

<sup>17</sup> Sinkaya, personal communication, 9/3/2016.

Turkey resulted in a dramatic deterioration in the relationship between the two countries. Iran was no longer an ally, and the bilateral relationship now had the potential for an intense rivalry for regional influence, with no short-term possibility of improvement.

For more than two decades, starting with the revolution in 1979 and lasting until the rapprochement of more recent times, Turkey perceived two major threats from Iran: the danger of the Iranian export of its new regime and the possibility that the Kurdish influence in the region might increase under the new post-revolutionary structure,<sup>18</sup> which could support the PKK to destabilise Turkey. Recalling the domino theory concept and the goal of a socialist world revolution, the two concepts of Bolshevism, the alleged Iranian efforts to export its revolution raised concerns in Turkey.<sup>19</sup> Mozaffarpour shared an anecdote about meeting the Turkish consul general in Tabriz thirty years after the revolution, when he admitted that Turkey's attitude was an exaggerated one, based on paranoia.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, this suspicion and alarmist attitude was still the norm in the 1990s. Turkey's assertive secular outlook during that period made it the perfect "other" for Iran in its immediate neighbourhood. A third concern can be added to this list; this "new Iran", with new ambitions and foreign policy goals, might have challenged Turkey not only by threatening its border security, but also by aligning with the USSR and exposing Turkey to a threat from both sides—the USSR from the north and Iran from the south east.

The only partial relaxation in this period of bilateral tension came during the Erbakan-Çiller coalition government in Turkey. Islamist Erbakan strived to improve bilateral ties and

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Olson, *Turkey-Iran Relations, 1979-2004: Revolution, Ideology, War, Coups and Geopolitics*, (California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2004), at p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Ali Balcı and Tuncay Kardaş "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey's Relations with Israel: An Analysis of 'Securitization'", *Insight Turkey*, 14: 2(2012), pp. 99–120, p. 104-105; Ünal Gündoğan, "Geçmişten Bugüne İran İslam Devrimi: Genel Değerlendirme", *Ortadoğu Analiz* 3:29 (2011), pp. 93–99; Calabrese, 1998, p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> Nematollah Hamid Mozaffarpour, personal communication, 4/5/2016.

desecuritise the relationship.<sup>21</sup> The period began with the symbolic first visit of Erbakan as Turkey's Prime Minister to Iran and the resulting surge of sympathy on the Iranian side towards Erbakan's leadership.<sup>22</sup> The era, according to Turan, also coincided with the rise of pragmatist politicians in Iran led by Rafsanjani in conjunction with Iran's realisation of its need to economically restore the country after the war with Iraq between 1980 and 1988.<sup>23</sup> This comparatively positive atmosphere came to an abrupt end with a heightening of tension between the two countries due to Iran's alleged direct support to Islamist groups in Turkey, and with Erbakan's downfall after the military's "post-modern coup" in 1997. The main reason behind his downfall was that:

The power base of Erbakan was not strong enough to resist the opposition of the anti-Islamist elite and in particular the staunchly secular higher echelons of the Turkish military that are endowed with the constitutional mandate to uphold the Kemalist system in the country.<sup>24</sup>

Erbakan was accused of having a secret agenda to turn Turkey into a theocratic state with the help of Iran, which brought the end of a brief period of relaxation in the bilateral relationship.

All in all, Iran's exit from the Allied camp after the revolution accompanied by an anti-Western political rhetoric changed the very nature of its bilateral relationship with Turkey, transforming it into an intense rivalry, if not hostility.

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<sup>21</sup> The era under the coalition government formed by Necmettin Erbakan's "Islamist" Welfare Party and Tansu Çiller's "Centre-Right" True Path Party lasted one year from June 1996 to June 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Olson, 2004, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> Turan, personal communication, 8/2/2016.

<sup>24</sup> Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, personal communication, 23/3/2016.



## **Making Sense of the Change in Turkey–Iran Relations**

### **Major International and Regional Developments and the Bilateral Relations**

International and regional developments such as the end of the Cold War, the Iraq War in 2003 and its aftermath, the Iranian nuclear programme and the more recent Arab Spring have all affected the Turkey–Iran relationship by altering Turkey’s interest-driven calculations and relative power position in the region.

The overall rapprochement between the two countries is in stark contrast with the deteriorated atmosphere in the 1990s. This new atmosphere stemmed from two main factors: firstly, the power and interest-based revisions in Turkey’s stance vis-à-vis Iran in the face of changing regional and global circumstances, and secondly the “desecuritisation” of Turkey’s relationship with Iran, thanks to the demise of the military’s influence over policy-making which traditionally acted as a key anti-Iran actor. This process of desecuritisation has been underscored by increasing economic involvement, thanks to close ties between statesmen who have encouraged business to flourish with neighbouring regions.

The way to this era of overall rapprochement with realpolitik limits, however, was not a linear and easy one. To begin with, the end of the Cold War brought competition over the former Soviet space. Turkey and Iran, striving for regional leadership in their own different ways, saw each other as rivals that needed to be kept in check. Each tried to establish as many channels of communication as possible with the former Soviet countries in order to enter this new theatre with a more advantageous position and a higher profile than the other.

### **a- *End of the Cold War and Competition***

#### **Competition over the Ex-Soviet Area**

The end of the Cold War signalled the beginning of a new “great game” centring on the Caucasus and Central Asia. The region is rich in energy resources, geostrategically important and economically promising with its thriving new markets. Iran and Turkey each considered that they possessed the vital important historical and cultural assets required to enter this theatre, coupled with their geographical proximity. They inevitably found themselves in a competition for the role of superior newcomer. Turkey had the upper hand in terms of linguistic and kinship ties, although ethnic and linguistic ties with the region also enabled Iran to perceive a window of opportunity for itself, as exemplified by its linguistic ties with Tajikistan. However, Iran lacked any serious outside support for its new quest in the region.<sup>25</sup> Turkey therefore perceived itself as possessing a relative advantage, not only against Iran but also against the supposedly fallen great power, Russia, in a region that was living in a power vacuum. The question at the end of the Cold War was which state could obtain the most benefit from the new environment and achieve a relative advantage over the other. This power could also raise its global profile by carrying Caspian hydrocarbon resources to the international market and reach out to the newly emerging states.

The post-Cold War situation in the Caucasus and Central Asia gradually forced both countries to become aware of their limitations in influencing this new “great game”. Nevertheless, until they realised that they were not in a position to be the leading game changers, nor were they going to pose serious challenges to major players, their competition over this region and its newly independent and predominantly Muslim countries was intense in the immediate post-Cold War period. Turkey’s enthusiasm for the newly independent

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<sup>25</sup> Mustafa Aydın, “Between Euphoria and Realpolitik: Turkish Policy toward Central Asia and the Caucasus” in Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydın (eds.), *Turkey’s Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), pp. 139–160.

Turkic republics found strong support from the US and the EU, both of which Turkey as a suitable player to help socialise these republics and help integrate them into the greater global community and the international system. The country also stood out as a key energy transit route. This support allowed Turkey to operationalise important energy projects, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline in the immediate post-Cold War era, carrying Azeri oil via Georgia to the city of Adana to be transferred to Europe.<sup>26</sup> This became known as the “deal of the century”, a project from which Iran was excluded, primarily due to American objections. Meanwhile, Turkey had ambitions for a unified Turkic world with Turkey at its head which could challenge Russia’s position in the region. However, Central Asian republics often viewed Turkey’s efforts as patronising, and as something that did not offer the bright future they sought after decades of Soviet repression. Nevertheless, Turkey’s bid for the region—thanks to Western support and encouragement—appeared more promising than Iranian ambitions. The Turkic Summits and Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) proved to be the most influential avenues for improving Turkey’s standing in the region during the 1990s.<sup>27</sup>

Iran sought to act as a bridge between the two energy producing regions of the Caspian region and the Gulf, carrying their energy resources to energy hungry regions and growing economies, and to pursue its own goal of becoming a model for the region. However, Iran’s bid for power and influence lacked the substantial outside support that Turkey was receiving from the West. To compete with Turkey’s efforts, initiatives to establish a Caspian Sea Cooperation Organisation and an Association of Persian-Language Speakers were put

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<sup>26</sup> Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 109.

<sup>27</sup> On Turkey’s entrance to this new theatre and its consequences, see Mustafa Aydın, “Between Euphoria and Realpolitik: Turkish Policy toward Central Asia and the Caucasus” in Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydın (eds.), *Turkey’s Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Company: 2003), pp. 139–160; Kibaroglu, 2009, pp. 65–67; Graham Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press: 2008), pp. 129–145 and Bülent Aras, “Turkey’s Relations with Iran in the Post-Cold War Era” in Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydın (eds.), *Turkey’s Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Company: 2003), pp. 181–199.

forward by Iran. However, even the most successful Iranian initiative in the region, the Economic Cooperation Organisation (which was co-initiated by Iran) did not seem so “Persian” when Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan joined in 1992. The organisation was considered a successor to the old Regional Cooperation of Development, which was founded by Turkey, Iran and Pakistan and functioned between 1964 and 1979. Iran’s relative failure also stemmed from the strictly secular elite in the region who were at best suspicious of Iran’s entrance to the theatre. Other reasons include Iran’s comparatively hesitant steps in the region in order not to alienate Russia due to the two countries’ close nuclear relationship and its lack of required financial resources. The pre-nuclear deal US efforts to isolate Iran worked to ensure that it had little political influence and prevented it from cutting energy deals with other countries in the region.

As a facet of the Turkish-Iranian rivalry, the question over the status of the Caspian clearly showcased Turkey’s interest-driven attitude. Turkey’s position has been a thorn in Iran’s side within the context of the disputes along its shores. With respect to disagreements over the Caspian question, it should be noted that Turkey’s support for Azerbaijan probably stemmed from more than just from a feeling of kinship, but had to do with the fact that the state-run oil company TPAO had a 6.75% share in the consortium developing the Azeri, Chirag and Guneshli oil fields and a 9% share in Shah Deniz natural gas field.<sup>28</sup> Despite the shared cultural ties and common regional perspectives that were working to bring Azerbaijan and Turkey closer, isolating the dispute over the status of the Caspian Sea (which directly affects the amount of energy reserves under the control of respective littoral states) from Turkey’s interests would have been a rather naïve move. Against Turkey’s military, political and economic cooperation with Azerbaijan and Georgia, Iran’s close contact with Armenia and Russia over the question of Nagorno-Karabakh could also be regarded as a facet of the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 189.

two countries' competition in the region. Iran's siding with Armenia and Russia—rather than with Azerbaijan's predominantly Muslim Shi'a population—shows the limits of culture and ideology when interests are at stake.<sup>29</sup>

Instead of cooperating to help the newly independent mostly Muslim-populated former Soviet countries, or support particular states based on sectarian affinities, Turkey and Iran chose to enter this new theatre with a competitive attitude over energy transportation and economic projects, vying for whatever external support they could muster in order to become the superior newcomer. Their clash was not based on Shi'a–Sunni competition, as power and economic superiority trumps over ideological dimension. Instead they supported parties regardless of their sectarian or religious affinities, with Iran supporting non-Muslim players such as Armenia, and Turkey supporting Georgia as a non-Muslim entity. As such, Turkey's grand strategy, in areas where it diverged from that of Iran, shows that pragmatic realpolitik concerns triumph over values and religious or historical sympathies. This allows us to trace interest-driven policy-making in this bilateral relationship back to the 1990s.

### Energy Transportation and Interdependence

Another consequence of the end of the Cold War was the emergence of a Turkish desire to play a key role in energy politics, setting itself up as an energy hub linking the Caspian basin's energy resources with the European market. In the post-Cold War power vacuum, Turkey assumed that it could carry the energy resources of the Turkic republics to the West, raise its global profile and enjoy high energy revenues and increasing influence in both the former Soviet territories and Europe. Turkey envisaged its role as helping Europe to achieve diversification of energy supply whilst integrating the newly-independent Turkic republics

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<sup>29</sup> Brenda Shaffer, "The Islamic Republic of Iran: Is It Really?", in Brenda Shaffer, 2006, pp. 219–240, p. 219 and pp. 229–234.

with the global community. In turn, Turkey would raise its flow of income considerably as well as improving its international bargaining position.

Turkey's own energy demand has also risen sharply, and this has become an important motivating factor within this context. Turkey suffers from lack of substantial indigenous energy resources when compared to its neighbouring regions, which in terms of oil and natural gas account for almost 70 percent of world's energy reserves.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, it lacks necessary storage<sup>31</sup> and LNG facilities<sup>32</sup> and has not yet started to use nuclear energy. Coupled with a limited use of renewables,<sup>33</sup> Turkey remains heavily dependent on fossil fuels and pipeline projects. It is almost totally dependent on imports for natural gas, as almost half of its electricity production depends on natural gas.<sup>34</sup> Due to its close proximity to fossil fuel reserves and its comparative security and stability, Turkey is eagerly striving to act as a key energy player, an influential "energy transit state"<sup>35</sup> or an energy hub. According to Gareth Winrow, nuclear plant constructions are delayed and renewables are obscured by bureaucratic difficulties in a country "endowed by little crude oil or natural gas". Winrow comments that "Turkey will likely remain greatly dependent on gas imports for power production in the

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<sup>30</sup> Katinka Barysch, "Turkey's Role in European Energy Security", Centre for European Reform Essays (2007), p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> See Gareth M. Winrow, "The Southern Gas Corridor and Turkey's Role as an Energy Transit State and Energy Hub", *Insight Turkey* 15:1(2013), pp. 145–163, p. 154. Currently, Turkey has a storage capacity of 10 bcm at most. Considering its energy demand of around 50 bcma and growing energy demand, a modest recent step was taken to construct a storage capacity near the Tuz Lake which will be constructed by China's Tianchen Engineering Company and expected to be operational in 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Turkey has only two LNG processing facilities for now, Aliaga and Ereğli, with a total of 12 bcma capacity. Even though its LNG use increased by around 26 percent between 2005 and 2013, it only accounts for around 15 per cent of its overall gas consumption. In a personal communication with the author, Jonathan Stern, on 18/2/2016, also referred to the need for increasing the number of storage facilities as a key way out. However, due to its costs and time-demanding nature, he admitted that even in the medium-term, achieving this goal might not be possible.

<sup>33</sup> Gökтуğ Sönmez, Energy dependency and a Route Map within the Context of the Recent Turkey-Russia Crisis, *ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs*, No. 36, December 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Dr Cenk Pala, energy expert currently working at ENERJISA with years of experience in the sector at BOTAŞ and EoN, personal communication, 10/3/2016.

<sup>35</sup> See Winrow, 2013, p. 152. A successful "energy transit state" can use some of the energy resources it carries for its own domestic use, sometimes at discounted rates, whilst maintaining good relations with both demand and supply sides of the equation and avoid disruption of the energy flow.

foreseeable future.”<sup>36</sup> This has resulted in an energy policy that emphasises both the satisfaction of Turkey’s own energy demands and the ability to generate income from transit revenues by acting as an energy hub within the context of an East-West energy corridor.

Being an energy hub “offers Turkey extensive influence on a web of oil and gas pipelines as well as LNG trade, not only in terms of its ability to influence transit terms and conditions, but also to re-export some of [the] hydrocarbons passing through this system”.<sup>37</sup> However, Jonathan Stern rightly argues that Turkey might not get the opportunity to act as an “energy hub” in its truest sense due to the lack of liberalisation in its own energy market. Both Gareth Winrow and Cenk Pala share this view and consider that the monopolistic nature of Turkey’s energy market is a barrier to Turkey’s progress in becoming an energy hub, and a key reason for Turkey’s inefficient energy consumption.<sup>38</sup> According to Stern, Turkey could act as a “crossroads for energy” rather than an energy hub which would offer the country its first step towards a competitive gas market which “BOTAŞ can manipulate by playing one supplier off against another,”<sup>39</sup> thereby contributing to Turkey’s energy profile.

Towards the goal of both satisfying its own growing energy demand and act as a “crossroads for energy”, Turkey succeeded in forming energy links with Iraq via the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık oil pipeline, with Iran via the Tabriz-Ankara natural gas pipeline and with Egypt via the proposed extension of the Arab Gas Pipeline. Such links offer Turkey a great opportunity to act as a key transit route for Middle Eastern energy resources heading to the West, along with the Caspian resources. Expanding the recent TANAP capacity and adding Iranian gas after the sanctions were lifted is an option Turkish policy-makers might need to seriously consider in order to add more resources to the Azerbaijani gas and use the pipeline

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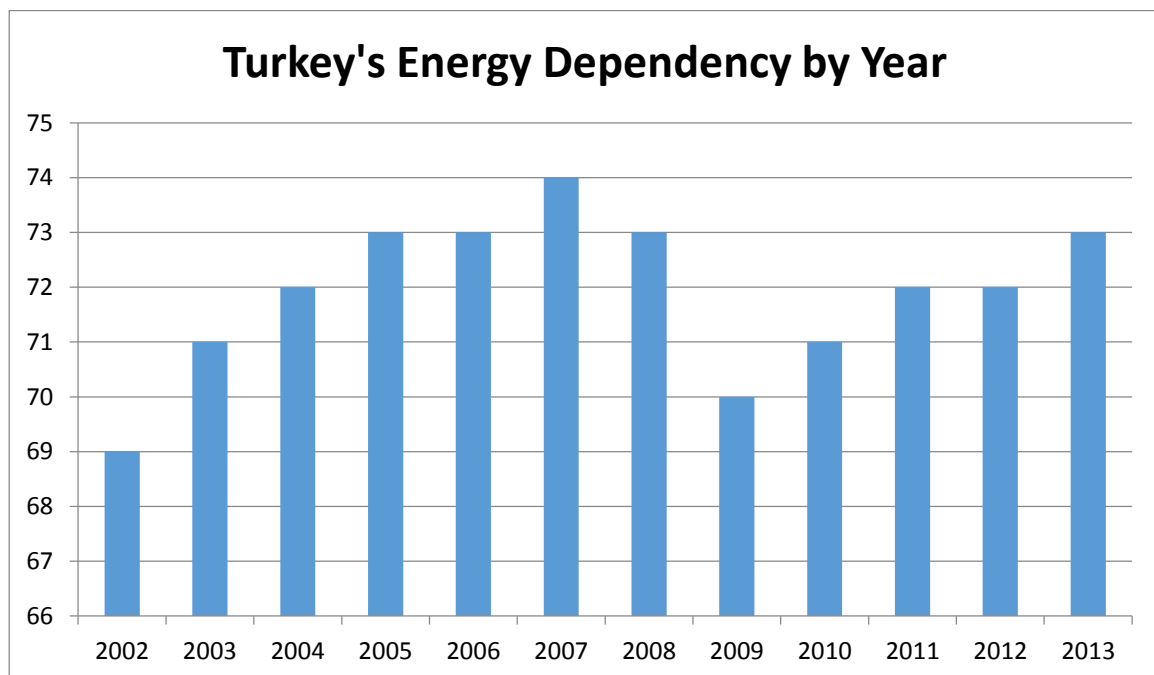
<sup>36</sup> Gareth Winrow, personal communication, 22/2/2016.

<sup>37</sup> See Mert Bilgin, “Turkey’s energy strategy: What difference does it make to become an energy transit corridor, hub or center?,” UNISCI Discussion Papers, No. 23 (Madrid: Research Unit on International Security and Cooperation [UNISCI], 2010).

<sup>38</sup> Winrow, personal communication, 22/2/2016 and Cenk Pala, personal communication, 10/3/2016.

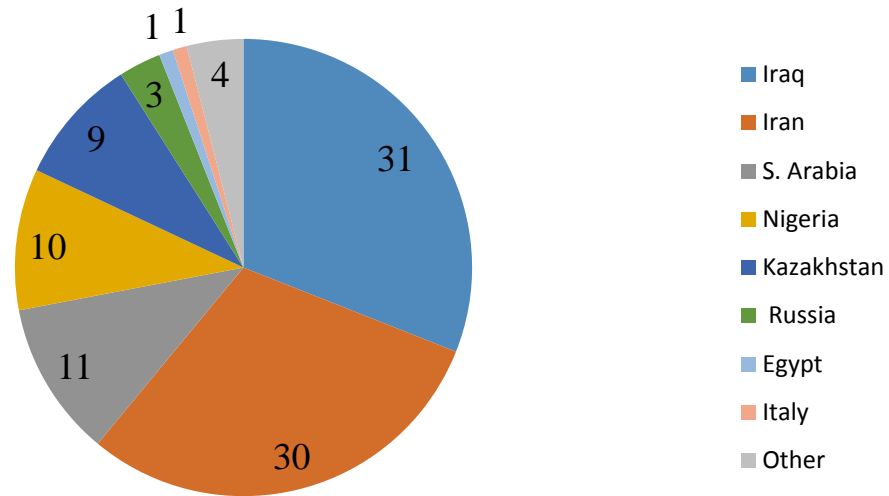
<sup>39</sup> Jonathan Stern, personal communication, 18/2/2016.

as an important leg of the East-West energy corridor. The possibility of realising the “Turkish Stream” pipeline (instead of the cancelled South Stream pipeline) offered Turkey the opportunity to act as a key energy player with its expected 63bcm/a impressive capacity. However, in the wake of the Turkish-Russian “jet crisis” the project has been shelved for some time before discussions about the project restarted following the Putin-Erdoğan meeting in early August, 2016. Overall Turkey’s proximity to the energy-rich regions and the growing energy demands in the East and Far East makes it a potential key alternative for the West to have access to the Caspian and the Middle Eastern gas. The Western markets’ need for diversification enables Turkey to consolidate its potential for the foreseeable future as a key transit country.

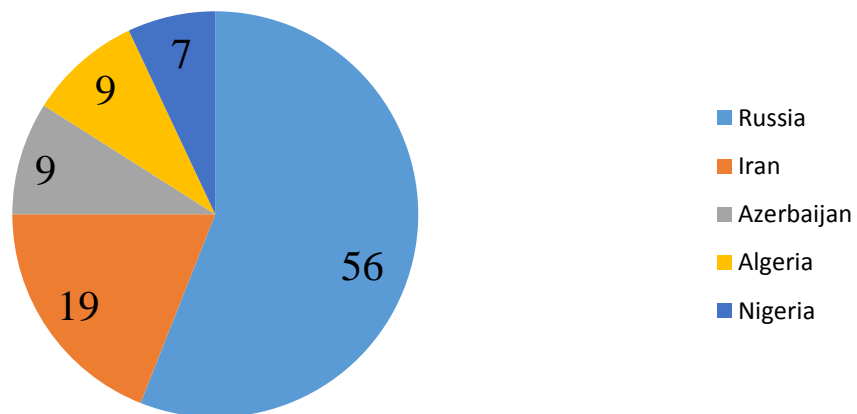




**Turkey's Oil Imports by Country, %, 2014**



**Turkey's Natural Gas Export by Country, %, 2014**



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Within this context, the Turkish dependency on Iranian natural gas and the Iranian dependency on Turkey as a transit route for energy revenues (either in the form of money or gold) has helped nurture an interdependent energy relationship. Almost one-fifth of Turkey's

<sup>40</sup> Data from Ham Petrol ve Doğalgaz Sektör Raporu, *Türkiye Petrolleri*, Mayıs 2015..

natural gas imports come from Iran.<sup>41</sup> Turkey's general dependency on imported energy as a growing economy—and Iran's significance in this context—was highlighted by Davutoğlu when he described Turkey's need for Iranian energy as a “natural extension of Turkey's national interests”.<sup>42</sup> But in the past, Iran has shut off its supply at a time when Western efforts were being made to change Turkey's position on the Iranian programme.<sup>43</sup> This shows that along with Turkey's dependency on Russian gas, its dependency on Iranian gas is also at times challenging, and bears serious risks for the future because of the potential for serious clashes between the two parties.

The main institutional link between Turkey and Iran as far as energy transportation is concerned is a 25-year agreement signed in 1996 for \$23 billion worth of natural gas, which started to flow in 2001 along with a pipeline construction scheme.<sup>44</sup> Iranian natural gas was regarded as an important option to limit Turkey's over-reliance on Russian natural gas, which currently accounts for more than half of Turkey's gas imports. In 2007, an agreement between Turkey and Iran stated that the Turkish Petroleum Company could prospect for oil and natural gas in Iran and a Turkey–Turkmenistan gas pipeline would be constructed via Iran. This agreement remained in the balance in the pre-nuclear deal tension between Iran and the West, although a recent proposal to export natural gas to Europe may help deepen this bilateral energy relationship.<sup>45</sup> Turkey, even in the face of sanctions, strove to further utilise Iranian energy—as exemplified by the bilateral MoU in 2007 to construct a new pipeline to

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<sup>41</sup> Tuncay Babalı, “The Role of Energy in Turkey's Relations with Russia and Iran”, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, <[http://csis.org/files/attachments/120529\\_Babali\\_Turkey\\_Energy.pdf](http://csis.org/files/attachments/120529_Babali_Turkey_Energy.pdf)>, accessed 15/06/2013.

<sup>42</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, 2008, p. 91.

<sup>43</sup> Kibaroglu, 2009, p. 162.

<sup>44</sup> Calabrese, 1998, p.83. Also, see Stephen F. Larrabee, “Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East”, *Foreign Affairs* 86: 4 (2007), pp.104–106, p.108 and Kibaroglu, *Global Security Watch -Turkey: A Reference Handbook*, p. 161. Here, Kibaroglu also mentions another agreement that both parties decided to increase bilateral trade to \$2.5 billion a year.

<sup>45</sup> Larrabee, 2007, p.108.

carry around 30bcm and TPAO's entrance to the Iranian energy production market in the South Pars field. Renowned energy expert Gareth Winrow states that:

Given the problems between Turkey and Iran, the lifting of sanctions is unlikely to have little immediate impact. Iran will still need to satisfy its own rising energy needs. It is likely that Iranian gas will be exported to nearby markets in the Gulf. Iranian LNG may eventually find its place on the world market if half-built facilities are completed.

For Winrow, the Turkish-Iranian energy relationship would not significantly improve, even in the post-sanctions era,<sup>46</sup> due to problems related to “pricing, quality, and the Iranian practice of reducing gas exports to Turkey in winter months.” Cornell shares this view: “since the Iranian gas market is so primitive, it [closer Turkish-Iranian energy cooperation] will take a long time to develop, and Iranian domestic consumption will make it difficult to provide any large quantities of gas to Europe.”<sup>47</sup>

#### **b- *The Iraq War, Changing Regional Dynamics and External Intervention***

Major global and regional changes have altered state behaviour in order to maximise power or eliminate threats to established power positions. Countries with a geographical proximity to battlefields are expected to be especially cautious when evaluating such changes either as an opportunity to improve their standing and raise their profiles or as dangerous developments that require a new attitude more suited to damage limitation. The Global War

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<sup>46</sup> Gareth Winrow, personal communication, 22/2/2016. Also see Göktuğ Sönmez, “Nuclear Deal: Historical Background, Implications for the Region and Turkish-Iranian Relations”, *ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs* 29 (2015), p. 3–6.

<sup>47</sup> Cornell, personal communication, 17/2/2016.

on Terror (GWOT) and the Iraq War of 2003 caused a great deal of anxiety in Iran due to the concern about being surrounded or “contained”. For Turkey, the GWOT presented an atmosphere that could eliminate Turkish concerns over the potential loss of geopolitical importance in the post-Cold War era. The Iraq War, however, brought with it the risk of triggering a spill-over effect and destabilising the region in general and Turkey in particular. Iranian concerns about encirclement<sup>48</sup> were accompanied by the Turkish concerns about an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq. Both countries shared concerns about the potential impact of post-war instability in Iraq, which could affect their own internal stability. Thus, under what Nematollah Mozaffarpour referred to as “new Sykes-Picot arrangements”, threatening the security and stability of regional powers, the two countries found themselves sharing a common stance against the possibility of an independent Kurdistan.<sup>49</sup>

Even though the operation in Afghanistan led to the demise of an anti-Shi’a government, it also signalled the first steps towards containing Iran. The Iraq War, which toppled another nemesis of Iran in the form of Saddam Hussein, was a further step towards that end. However, from the Iranian point of view, the war was conducted by the US and Israel, which made the overall atmosphere more threatening for Iran, especially considering the US presence in the Gulf and in Saudi Arabia and the strategic partnership between Turkey and the US. Moreover, the post-9/11 presence of the US in Central Asia and its increasing participation in military training and assistance programmes in the Caucasus compounded Iran’s feelings of becoming totally encircled.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See Shireen Hunter, “Iran’s Pragmatic Regional Policy”, *Journal of International Affairs* 56: 2 (2003), pp. 133–147; Kayhan Barzegar, “Understanding the Roots of Iranian Foreign Policy in the New Iraq”, *Middle East Policy* 12:2 (2005), pp. 49–57; Bradley L. Bowman, “The ‘Demand-Side’: Avoiding a Nuclear-Armed Iran”, *Orbis* 52:4 (2008), pp. 627–642, p. 631–633.

<sup>49</sup> Mozaffarpour, personal communication, 4/5/2016.

<sup>50</sup> See Enayatollah Yazdani and Rizwan Hussain, “United States’ Policy towards Iran after the Islamic Revolution: An Iranian Perspective”, *International Studies* 43: 3 (2006), pp. 267–289.

The Iraq War dramatically affected the Turkish position, too, due to its concerns about a dissolved Iraq and the proclamation of an independent Kurdish entity. Clashing views and the 1 March crisis<sup>51</sup> signalled a low point in the Turkish-US relationship, while Turkey and Iran's shared stance for a unitary structure in Iraq and their demand for the withdrawal of external powers as soon as possible pushed the two countries closer together. The German Marshall Fund's poll showed that 81 percent of Turks did not approve the war or Bush's policies. Similarly, the Dew Charitable Trust's poll in 2006 showed that only 12 percent of Turks viewed the US in a positive light.<sup>52</sup> On July 4, 2003, the American detention of a team of eleven Turkish Special Forces in Suleimaniyah on Independence Day—a team that had been there since the Gulf War—worsened this picture further and inflamed public sentiments.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, US reluctance to support Turkey's cause against the PKK in Northern Iraq caused a further deterioration in Turkey-US relations. The reluctance on the part of the US might have been primarily due to the strong Kurdish support it enjoyed during the invasion and because of the risk of further destabilising the region with a clash between Turkey and the PKK in Northern Iraq.<sup>54</sup> The US went further during this period, warning Turkey about cross-border military activities. Unsurprisingly, Turkey found this warning unacceptable since the PKK managed to acquire safe havens in the region directly because of the US moves during and after the Gulf War, such as the declaration of no-fly-zone in the region (the north of the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The crisis emerged due to the failure to get necessary support from the Turkish parliament for a resolution allowing deployment of US troops in Turkey, their passage to Iraq and including participation of Turkish forces. See Olson, 2004, p. 185–187.

<sup>52</sup> Larrabee, 2007, p.104–106.

<sup>53</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this event see Olson, 2004, p.249.

<sup>54</sup> Larrabee, 2007, p.106.

<sup>55</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu and Barış Çağlar, "Implications of a Nuclear Iran for Turkey", *Middle East Policy* 15: 4 (2008), pp. 59–80, p. 62.

Ahmet Davutoğlu stated that Turkey's primary concern in Iraq's post-war reconstruction was the question of Northern Iraq and the PKK,<sup>56</sup> both of which showed Turkey's prioritisation of its own interest-driven concerns and the threats it perceived against its own regional standing. Turkey realised that as far as the question of Iraq's unity and future was concerned, it had more in common with Iran than with the US or Israel, despite the fact that the two occasionally clashed over which factions, political parties, and figures they support.<sup>57</sup> Referring to this environment as a situation that engendered probably the most successful rapprochement between the two, Oğuzlu notes that "The imperial tone of American undertakings in the region has brought the two closer in the strategic sense of countering the West's influence in their backyards".<sup>58</sup> Turkey and Iran both concluded that unilateral external intervention in the region was no less dangerous to their position than dealing with pre-war Iraq had been, considering the additional potential spill-over effects.

Turkey distanced itself from American and Israeli policies concerning the war and the post-war reconstruction, and shared its stance with Iran. Thus, the Iraq War was one of the international developments which caused Turkey to revise its attitude towards Iran based on its own interest-driven calculations about its power position and security in an era of higher levels of engagement with the MENA region. Thus, the Iraq War can be regarded as a major incident pushing the two towards rapprochement.

### **c- *The Iranian Nuclear Programme***

Over the last decade, one of the issues which brought the two parties closer was the Iranian nuclear programme. For years prior to the comprehensive nuclear deal of 2015 which settled

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<sup>56</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, 2008, p. 86.

<sup>57</sup> Gülden S. Ayman, "Regional Aspirations and Limits of Power-Turkish-Iranian Relations in the New Middle East", *Hellenic Studies* 20: 1 (2012), p. 7–12.

<sup>58</sup> Tarik Oğuzlu, "Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy", *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61:1 (March, 2007), pp. 81–97, p.94.

the question of the Iranian nuclear programme for the foreseeable future, Iran's programme formed a flashpoint for the UN, Europe, Russia, China, the US, the IAEA, and regional powers. The Iranian desire for nuclear energy was not new; Pahlavi wanted to have nuclear power in order to improve its country's standing and help it act as the leading regional power.<sup>59</sup> Iran received support from the US (which also provided the Shah with his first reactor) as a part of the "Atoms for Peace" initiative in return for the country's stance against communism.<sup>60</sup> France and West Germany also helped Iran in the years before the revolution, the turning point after which Iran lost this support from those countries.<sup>61</sup> The Iranian nuclear programme, which was resurrected after the Iraq-Iran War, entered into a new phase with the 1995 Russian-Iranian deal. This deal included not only providing Iranian scientists with the nuclear know-how but also the construction of the Bushehr plant.<sup>62</sup> The deal had been on the table during the Soviet era in the late 1980s, but was delayed due to the Soviet Union's dissolution and the economic and political difficulties that came with it.<sup>63</sup>

Iran had a difficult time after opposition figures exposed the existence of two clandestine facilities in Natanz and Arak in 2002. Plus, its failure to comply with the IAEA inspections beginning in 2006<sup>64</sup> resulted in UN sanctions. During this process, Turkey either abstained or objected during deliberations that eventually resulted in stricter sanctions against Iran. Turkey's position was to pursue a supportive but cautious policy aiming at helping lower tensions between the West and Iran and making sure that the Iranian nuclear programme was used for peaceful ends. Turkey pursued its policy line through diplomacy,

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<sup>59</sup> Kibaroglu, 2007, p. 225 and p. 230.

<sup>60</sup> See Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions from a Historical Perspective and the Attitude of the West", *Middle Eastern Studies* 43:2 (2007), pp. 223–245, p. 225–234

<sup>61</sup> Kibaroglu, 2007, p. 231–234.

<sup>62</sup> Anton Khlopkov and Anna Lutkova, "The Bushehr NPP: Why Did It Take So Long?", Center for Energy and Security Studies, <<http://ceness-russia.org/data/doc/TheBushehrNPP-WhyDidItTakeSoLong.pdf>>, accessed 27/05/2012.

<sup>63</sup> See Kibaroglu, 2007, pp. 234–235.

<sup>64</sup> Amin Saikal, "The Iran Nuclear Dispute", *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 60:2 (2006), pp. 193–199, at p. 193. Also, see Aylin G. Gürzel and Eyüp Ersoy, "Turkey and Iran's Nuclear Program", *Middle East Policy*, 19:1 (Spring 2012), pp. 37–50, at p. 38.

strengthening social and economic ties while resisting sanctions.<sup>65</sup> Turkish officials occasionally stressed their position and their concerns regarding a military-oriented nuclear programme, but underlined their perception that they did not expect the inclusion of military capabilities from Iran's nuclear growth.

Within this context, one of the most important mediation efforts in which Turkey took part was the Tehran Declaration (The Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Iran and Brazil). This was the so-called “Nuclear Swap Deal” between Turkey, Brazil and Iran, and referred to swapping 1200 kilograms of Iranian low-grade (3.5 percent-enriched) uranium (LEU) for 20 percent-enriched nuclear fuel to be used for energy needs. The deal faced the US objections<sup>66</sup>—even though the idea had previously been proposed by the IAEA and P5+1<sup>67</sup> in the presence of the US delegates—since it did not offer a clear-cut settlement to Iranian enrichment efforts. The main reason behind the US objections was that the deal did not address the question of what would happen to the 20 percent-enriched uranium in Iranian territory, which was of high enough quality to be used in a weapons-grade nuclear programme.<sup>68</sup> As a response, Turkey voted against the UN imposed sanctions in June 2010, along with Brazil.<sup>69</sup>

Turkey's supportive stance regarding the Iranian nuclear programme was underlined several times by the then Prime Minister Erdoğan in front of international audiences, including during his interview in the Kuwaiti El Anba newspaper and his speech at the

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<sup>65</sup> For a more detailed analysis of sanctions, see Andrew Parasiliti, “After Sanctions, Deter and Engage Iran”, *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 52:5 (2010), pp. 13–20, p. 17

<sup>66</sup> However, Sinan Ülgen in his article “The Security Dimension of Turkey's Nuclear Program: Nuclear Diplomacy and Non-Proliferation Policies”, in “The Turkish Model for that Transition to Nuclear Power”, *Ekonomi ve Dış Politika Araştırma Merkezi (EDAM)*, December 9, 2011, pp. 138–181, at p. 156, states that for military purposes, the necessary enrichment level of uranium should be 90 percent, which is called highly enriched uranium.

<sup>67</sup> Mehmet Özkan, “Turkey–Brazil Involvement in Iranian Nuclear Issue: What Is the Big Deal?”, *Strategic Analysis*, 35:1 (2010), pp.26–30, at p. 27

<sup>68</sup> Aylin Gürzel, “Turkey's Role in Defusing the Iranian Nuclear Issue”, *The Washington Quarterly*, 35:3 (2012), pp. 141–152, at p. 141.

<sup>69</sup> Stein, 2014, p.31.



Munich Security Conference in 2008.<sup>70</sup> He stated that “No one has the right to impose anything on anyone with regards to nuclear energy, provided that it is for peaceful purposes”, and added, “Everyone with common sense opposes nuclear weapons”. Similarly, he noted that “We accept that acquiring nuclear technology for peaceful and civilian purposes is a sovereign right for countries. But we have told Iranian authorities numerous times that we are against nuclear weapons”.<sup>71</sup> JDP member Ahmet İnal, who headed the parliamentary Turkish-Iranian Friendship Group, highlighted the Iranian right to advanced nuclear technology and know-how, and underlined Turkey’s support for the programme as long as it was used for peaceful ends.<sup>72</sup>

A comprehensive deal regarding the Iranian nuclear programme came in April 2015, of which the main points were based on the framework agreement of 2013. With the agreement, the question of the Iranian nuclear programme seems to come to an end for the foreseeable future, also thanks to the election victory of the “reformist” Rouhani, who succeeded a much more aggressive Ahmedinejad. According to the April deal, the major points of tension—namely Iran’s enrichment level, nuclear capacity and stockpile—would be closely monitored and limited. Two more controversial points of tension, namely enrichment and heavy water facilities, are also addressed in this deal. The Natanz facility would act as the only enrichment facility, while the heavy water facility in Arak would be redesigned in order to prevent plutonium products from being enriched to weapons-grade levels. Meanwhile, enhanced access would be given to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) officials, used fuel would be exported to prevent it being reprocessed, and the Additional Protocol of

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<sup>70</sup> Kibaroglu and Çağlar, 2008, p. 65. For other statements on Turkey’s belief in the programme’s peaceful ends see Abdülhamit Bilici, “Iran’s Nuke Program for Humanitarian Ends, Erdoğan Says”, *Today’s Zaman*, 28 October 2009, “Erdoğan: West Treats Iran Unfairly”, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 26 October 2009.

<sup>71</sup> “Erdoğan calls for just stance on Iran over nuclear program”, *Today’s Zaman*, January 14, 2010, <<http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-198480-erdogan-calls-for-just-stance-on-iran-over-nuclear-program.html>>, accessed 26/11/2013.

<sup>72</sup> Gürzel and Ersoy, 2012, p. 38.

the NPT would be implemented. In return for these concessions, Iran's primary demand was unsurprisingly the lifting of sanctions, an act that would significantly help its economy. Both the EU and the United States agreed to lift sanctions, and the UN would terminate all related resolutions. According to the final deal, made in July 2015, Iran agreed to reduce its uranium enrichment capacity by two-thirds for a ten-year period at its Natanz facility, from around 20,000 centrifuges to around 6,000. Iran also agreed to cut its stockpile of low and medium-enriched uranium by 96 percent to no more than 300 kg—enriched no more than 3.67 percent—by diluting it or selling it to other countries for 15 years. Iran promised not to build new uranium-enrichment or heavy water facilities for the next 15 years, to redesign its Arak facility in a way that would not allow it produce weapons grade plutonium, and to be subjected to intensive monitoring measures.

In return, the US, UN and EU would terminate all resolutions, sanctions and regulations with respect to Iran. The exception was that ballistic missile technology transfer would continue to be restricted for an eight year period, and a heavy weapons and arms embargo on conventional weapons would remain in place for five years.<sup>73</sup>

Even though the crisis currently appears to be settled, the question remains: what was the motivation behind Turkey's stance regarding the Iranian nuclear programme? This question will be addressed in the next section.

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<sup>73</sup> Göktuğ Sönmez, "Nuclear Deal: Historical Background, Implications for the Region and Turkish-Iranian Relations", *ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs* 29 (2015), p. 7–8.

## Turkey's Position on the Iranian Nuclear Programme: Utilising an Opportunity or Backing a Co-religious Entity?

I argue that there are four main reasons behind Turkey's support for the Iranian nuclear programme for peaceful ends, with additional supporting reasons. A closer look at each of these will show that the support was driven by Turkey's own interest-driven calculations.

Firstly, by defending the Iranian right to make use of nuclear energy for peaceful ends, Turkey seems to be preparing the ground for its own plans for the intensive use of nuclear energy in the near future. Turan argues that Turkey's position regarding the Iranian nuclear programme was cleverly devised in order to legitimise its own position, an argument shared by Mozaffarpour.<sup>74</sup> Sinkaya stated that Turkey viewed the pressure on Iran as a showcase of the challenges Turkey itself might need to face as far as its own future nuclear programme was concerned.<sup>75</sup> Turkey's nuclear programme will significantly contribute to the country's economy by decreasing the amount it pays for oil and natural gas imports, while limiting its current dependency on imports for its energy consumption, with its attendant political and economic risks. Turkey argues that every state has the right to pursue nuclear efforts for peaceful ends, a right stated in Article 4 of the NPT<sup>76</sup>—although the treaty's efficiency and scope are already in question due to the refusal of Israel, Pakistan and India to sign it, and North Korea's withdrawal.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Turan, personal communication, 8/2/2016 and Mozaffarpour, personal communication, 4/5/2016.

<sup>75</sup> Bayram Sinkaya, 9/3/2016.

<sup>76</sup> Article IV of the Non Proliferation Treaty runs as follows: "1. Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty. 2. All the Parties to the Treaty undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Parties to the Treaty in a position to do so shall also co-operate in contributing alone or together with other States or international organizations to the further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, especially in the territories of non-nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty, with due consideration for the needs of the developing areas of the world." For more detailed information on the NPT, see "the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons", <<http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2005/npttreaty.html>>.

<sup>77</sup> Gürzel and Ersoy, 2012, p. 37.

As far as its own efforts to use nuclear energy are concerned, Turkey agreed with Russia in 2009 to construct four nuclear plants near the city of Mersin on the shores of the Mediterranean,<sup>78</sup> and with Japan to build another plant in the coastal city of Sinop on the Black Sea.<sup>79</sup> According to Cenk Pala, nuclear energy is a key tool for limiting Turkey's dependency whereas technological and ecological concerns need to be addressed. For him, a major factor that differentiates the South Korean economy from the Turkish one, which was functioning at around the same level before the Cold War, has been the effective use of nuclear energy along with R&D investment.<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, it is also well-known that Iran has in the past offered to help Turkey develop nuclear facilities and to use nuclear energy.<sup>81</sup> However, with respect to the military use of nuclear technology, Turkey's determined stance for a nuclear-free Middle East has long been supported by the political elite, from the 2010 NPT Review Conference to the G-10 meeting in Berlin in 2011, an idea which was first mentioned by Egypt and Iran in 1974.<sup>82</sup>

Secondly, Turkey considers that the risk of alienating Iran and applying strict sanctions would result in a more aggressive stance on Iran's part. This is perceived as being more risky for Turkey than a nuclear programme in the short run—especially a nuclear programme which is not believed to be directed for military ends and subject to international monitoring anyway. Even if Iran has any long-term clandestine objectives, they would not be an immediate concern for Turkey, and international control over the programme is a measure that could be trusted in the face of any unexpected change of plans. In the first instance, it was the suffering of Iran during its long war with Iraq, coupled with Western indifference

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<sup>78</sup> Ülgen, 2011, p. 152. Especially, in the light of the recent Turkish-Russian jet crisis, Cenk Pala argues that Russian construction of this project would be of high risk. Cenk Pala, personal communication, 10/3/2016.

<sup>79</sup> "Japan signs Turkey nuclear deal", *BBC*, 3/5/2013, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-22398356>>, accessed 18/06/2013.

<sup>80</sup> Cenk Pala, personal communication, 10/3/2016.

<sup>81</sup> Fuller, 2008, p. 74.

<sup>82</sup> Ülgen, 2011, p. 167.

that contributed to the resurrection of its nuclear programme, which had been abandoned after the revolution.<sup>83</sup> This offers a clue to the mentality behind Turkey's sensitivity about Iran's feelings of threat and isolation. For Turkey, a multilateral process of antagonism which might motivate Iran to plan for a military nuclear eventuality should be avoided at all costs. Even though a nuclear Iran would be a bad outcome for Turkey in terms of its security and regional relative power position, the Turkish stance focused on socialising Iran without denying its right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.<sup>84</sup>

A third reason is that the process itself offered Turkey an opportunity to present itself as an important regional player. The other party of the "nuclear swap deal", Brazil, has a similar aim to present itself as a rising power, emphasising the importance of multilateralism. Brazil has also called for a revision of the system of permanent membership in the UN Security Council either by increasing their numbers or questioning their rights of veto—a criticism that is also shared by Turkey, with Erdoğan frequently stating that "the world is bigger than five", referring to the UNSC's 5 powers with the right of veto.<sup>85</sup>

The fourth reason behind Turkey's stance is its mutually important and interdependent energy relationship with Iran.<sup>86</sup> For Turkey, as an almost completely energy dependent country, the severance of the Iranian energy flow would be no less dangerous in the short run than the rumours of clandestine nuclear programmes. More detailed information and analyses with respect to the two countries' energy relationship was discussed earlier, but to add another dimension to the energy framework, we should note that Iran controls the

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<sup>83</sup> Ayman, 2012, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Also, see Ülgen for further details about the emergence and evolution of the NPT, repertoire and historical development of the IAEA and other means to control, limit, inspect or prevent nuclear proliferation.

<sup>85</sup> On the question of reforming the UN Security Council, including criticisms from Brazil and Turkey, see Yehuda Blum, "Proposals for UN Security Council Reform", *The American Journal of International Law* 99: 3 (2005), pp. 632-649 and "Turkey calls for UN security council reform over failure to pressure Syria", *The Guardian*, 13/10/2012, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/13/turkey-un-security-council-reform-syria>>, accessed 23/10/2013.

<sup>86</sup> Stephen Larrabee and Alireza Nader, *Turkish-Iranian Relations in a Changing Middle East*, RAND Corporation, 2013, p. 31–34.

Straits of Hormuz, through which a significant amount of oil transportation flows between the Gulf countries and the rest of the world. Thus, Iran could have the potential to adopt the position that Turkey eagerly strives to achieve—that of a key transit country. As such, Iran has a significant role within the context of Turkey’s energy consumption and the potential to act as an important alternative energy provider from the Middle East to the West. This point is also mentioned by Stein, who argues that “Turkey’s reliance on Iran for energy and its emphasis on increasing bilateral trade have inevitably influenced the AKP’s approach to sanctions”. Therefore, energy dimension can be considered as an important reason for Turkey’s accommodative stance regarding the Iranian nuclear programme.

According to Ünver, another reason can be the two sides’ joint operations against the PKK and the PJAK, which also contributed to Turkey’s milder and occasionally supportive stance and rhetoric.<sup>87</sup> Considering Turkey’s search for regional partners in order to inflict the most possible damage to the PKK and to cope with the organisation more effectively, Iran’s cooperative policy line in this respect—at least until its ceasefire with the PJAK—could have played an important role, forcing Turkey to calculate its steps more delicately during these thorny years.

To summarise, all these reasons illustrate Turkey’s motivation regarding the Iranian nuclear programme, which was to raise its profile by utilising a globally controversial point of tension in order to pursue its own self-interest-driven calculations contrary to what Cornell argued, representing the primordialist point of view indeed: “This [pan-Islamism] motivated the pro-Iranian policies in 2009-10, when Ankara was the chief international support of the Iranian nuclear program”.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Akin Ünver, personal communication, 23/4/2016.

<sup>88</sup> Svante Cornell, personal communication, 17/2/2016.

**d- *The Arab Spring/Awakening and the Ballistic Missile Defence System (BMDS) Controversy***

Recent regional developments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have had a significant impact on the bilateral relationship between Turkey and Iran. The rivalry over which actor will have the upper hand in the region during the Arab Spring and beyond, as well as tension over missile defence systems, have worked to put the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement under question. Coupled with the tension the two experienced over the BMDS controversy, the new atmosphere has seriously endangered the rapprochement they achieved up until 2011.

*The Arab Spring and the Internationalisation of the Syrian Civil War*

Since its very beginning, the Arab Spring has been the biggest blow to the two countries' rapprochement in the last decade.<sup>89</sup> Turan argues that Ayatollah Ali Khamanei—the Supreme Leader of Iran who saw himself as the religious leader of the Muslim world—was always irritated by the photos and posters of Erdoğan carried by people on the Arab streets, a feeling that was shared by the Iranian elite as a whole.<sup>90</sup> The uprisings began in late 2010 in Tunisia, and the toppling of authoritarian leaders and the intensification of demands for reforms and democratization took hold of the region, with the people of Egypt and Libya overthrowing their regimes.<sup>91</sup> When the wave reached Syria, things became complicated for the regional powers and the international community. In Stein's words, "Syria was the centrepiece of the

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<sup>89</sup> On how the Arab Spring affected their relationship, see Özüm S. Uzun, "The 'Arab Spring' and Its Effect on Turkish-Iranian Relations", *OrtadoğuEtütleri*4:2 (January 2013), pp.145–164.

<sup>90</sup> Davut Turan, personal communication, 8/2/2016.

<sup>91</sup> Hale, 2013, p. 242–245; Katerina Dalacoura, "The Arab Uprisings Two Years On: Ideology, Sectarianism and the Changing Balance of Power in the Middle East", *Insight Turkey* 15:1 (2013), pp. 75–89.; Taha Özhan, "The Arab Spring and Turkey: The Camp David Order vs. the New Middle East", *Insight Turkey* 13:4 (2011), pp. 55–64; Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and the Arab Spring: Between Ethics and Self-Interest", *Insight Turkey* 14:3 (2012), pp. 45–63; Dietrich Jung, "Unrest in the Arab World: Four Questions", *Insight Turkey* 13:3 (2011), pp. 1–10.

AKP's foreign policy in the Middle East".<sup>92</sup> Erdoğan, at a meeting in Damascus in 2004, had stated that he could not differentiate between the shining faces of Turks and Syrians, and would thus call them brothers, rather than friends.<sup>93</sup> The two sides' political and economic rapprochement and the lifting of visas between them stand out as a key achievement, considering their experience of coming to the brink of war over Syria's support to Öcalan. This was a significant move in terms of showing the improvement in Turkey's relationships with its neighbours—including the countries with which it had experienced clashes before. In 2004, Assad was the first Syrian president to pay an official visit to Turkey in 57 years. During that visit, he underlined Syria's position against an independent Kurdish entity in Northern Iraq and argued in favour of Iraq's territorial integrity, sharing Turkey's main lines of argument related to the future of Iraq.

The two parties signed a free trade agreement in 2006 and established a "High Level Strategic Cooperation Council" as part of a Quadruple Council involving Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon,<sup>94</sup> where they decided to lift visa requirements. Thanks to this positive atmosphere, the two countries' trading volume almost tripled from \$773 million to \$2.27 billion between 2002 and the start of the Syrian Civil War. In 2003, 154,000 Syrian tourists visited Turkey; by 2010, this number topped half a million.<sup>95</sup> The two countries even formulated the concept of "Shamgen", aiming towards a joint visa regime imitating "Schengen" among Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq.<sup>96</sup> Turkey also played a mediatory role between Syria and Israel in 2008 via indirect peace talks which had been halted after Israel's Operation Cast Lead, which will be discussed at greater length in the chapter on the Turkish-

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<sup>92</sup> Stein, 2014, p. 11.

<sup>93</sup> Aras, 2012, p. 44.

<sup>94</sup> Emre Erşen, "Geopolitical Codes in Davutoğlu's Views toward the Middle East", *Insight Turkey* 16: 1 (2014), pp. 85–101, p. 95.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>96</sup> Birgül Demirtaş, "Turkish-Syrian Relations: From Friend "Esad" to Enemy "Esed", *Middle East Policy* 20: 1 (2013), pp. 111–120, p. 116.



Israeli relationship.<sup>97</sup> Davutoğlu even held up the Turkish-Syrian relationship as a clear example of the success of the “zero problems with neighbours” doctrine.<sup>98</sup>

From encouraging reforms by using its close relationship with Assad in Syria when violence escalated, Turkey’s policy gradually turned into a strictly anti-Assad one between the spring of 2011 and the November of the same year. Erdoğan, for the first time, explicitly called for Assad’s dismissal,<sup>99</sup> likened him to “Hitler, Mussolini, and Ceausescu,”<sup>100</sup> and overtly supported opposition groups, going as far as to host them and directly contribute to the emergence of the Syrian National Council in 2011. The group shared Turkey’s key concerns and announced “three Nos”, objecting to “sectarianism, violence and international intervention.”<sup>101</sup> Turkey also hosted the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood the same year, at which they denounced the Assad regime,<sup>102</sup> supported the Free Syrian Army<sup>103</sup> and insistently demanded Assad’s resignation. In the meantime, the US and Russia had agreed to accept Assad “as a de facto legitimate partner in the disarmament process in Syria” and prioritised the fight against ISIS.<sup>104</sup> The Turkish Embassy in Damascus was closed in 2012 and its consul general in Aleppo was recalled in 2013.<sup>105</sup> A key turning point was the downing of a Turkish F-4 Phantom in June 2012, after which Erdoğan referred to the Syrian crisis as a

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<sup>97</sup> Stein, 2014, p. 14–15.

<sup>98</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007”, *Insight Turkey* 10: 1 (2008), p. 80.

<sup>99</sup> Hamid Ahmadi & Fahimeh Ghorbani, “The Impact of Syrian Crisis on Iran-Turkey Relations”, *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs* 4:1(2014), pp. 59–87, p. 69.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Şebnem Arsu, “Turkish Premier Urges Assad to Quit in Syria”, *New York Times*, 22/11/2011.

<sup>101</sup> Bassam Haddad, “Syria’s Stalemate: The Limits of Regime Resilience”, *Middle East Policy* 19:1 (2012), pp. 85–95.

<sup>102</sup> Damla Aras, “Turkish-Syrian Relations Go Downhill”, *Middle East Quarterly* 19:2(2012), pp. 41–50, p. 48

<sup>103</sup> Aaron Stein & Philipp C. Bleek, “Turkish-Iranian Relations from ‘Friends with Benefits’ to ‘It’s Complicated’”, *Insight Turkey* 14:4 (2012), pp. 137–150, p. 147. On a brief chronology of the formation of the Syrian opposition and its shortcomings, see Ufuk Ulutaş, “The Syrian Opposition in the Making: Capabilities and Limits”, *Insight Turkey* 13:3 (2011), pp. 87–106; Joshua Landis, “The Syrian Uprising of 2011: Why the Assad Regime is Likely to Survive to 2013”, *Middle East Policy* 19:1(2012), pp. 72-84 and Legrenzi Matto and Fred H. Lawson, “Iran and Its Neighbors Since 2003: New Dilemmas”, *Middle East Policy* 21:4 (2014), pp. 105–111..

<sup>104</sup> Stein, 2014, p. 59–71 and Hale, 2013, p. 244–245; Nürşin Ateşoğlu Güney, “A New Challenge for Turkey: Civil War in Syria”, *Insight Turkey* 15:4 (2013), pp. 51–59, p. 55-57.

<sup>105</sup> Yaşar Yakış, “Turkey after the Arab Spring: Policy Dilemmas”, *Middle East Policy* 21:1 (2014), pp. 98–106.

“direct and proximate threat” to Turkey’s security.<sup>106</sup> Following that, Syrian artillery fired upon Akçakale in Şanlıurfa the same year, claiming the lives of five Turkish civilians. In response, Turkey fired shots that killed 34 Syrian military personnel.<sup>107</sup> Turkey’s tough stance and ensuing crisis resulted in a rapid deterioration of the country’s relationship with not only Syria but also Iran. “After a 10-year honeymoon, Turkish-Syrian relations are back to square one.”<sup>108</sup>

A key development that further complicated this picture was the Russian desire for a direct military presence and involvement in what was becoming an internationalised civil war. Russia’s involvement was unsurprising, since “Syria is an important purchaser of Russian equipment, and Tartus is the only naval facility open to Russia in the Mediterranean.”<sup>109</sup> Thus, Russia was also acting in order to defend its “last remaining ally in the Middle East”.<sup>110</sup> The opportunity also provided Russia with a chance to show its continuing desire to be a key player in the Middle East and challenge NATO at a time when the US-led coalition was getting more involved. Russia’s involvement as a “protective shield” for the Assad regime and its veto of the UN sanctions against Syria resulted in demonstrations in Syria on the day Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov visited Damascus where demonstrators shouted “*Shukran* (Thanks) Russia”.<sup>111</sup> The Turkish-Russian relationship deteriorated further, and this deterioration of the relationship reached its zenith with Turkey’s downing of the Russian SU-24 jet on the Syrian border of Turkey in November 2015. Turkey

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<sup>106</sup> Birgül Demirtaş, “Turkish-Syrian Relations: From Friend “Esad” to Enemy “Esed”, *Middle East Policy* 20:1 (2013), pp. 111–120, p.117. Burak Bilgehan Özpek & Yelda Demirağ, “Turkish Foreign Policy after the ‘Arab Spring’: From Agenda-setter State to Agenda-Entrepreneur State”, *Israel Affairs*, 20:3 (2014), pp. 328–346, p. 340.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p. 340.

<sup>108</sup> Aras, 2012, p. 50.

<sup>109</sup> 112–120, p. 115–116. “The Problem with Turkey’s ‘Zero Problems’”, *Middle East Quarterly* 20:1 (2013), pp. 47–56, p 52.

<sup>110</sup> See Dmitri Trenin, “From Damascus to Kabul: Any Common Ground between Turkey and Russia?”, *Insight Turkey* 15:1 (2013), pp. 37–49.

<sup>111</sup> Doğan Ertuğrul, “A Test for Turkey’s Foreign Policy: The Syria Crisis”, *TESEV Foreign Policy Bulletin* (July 2012).

claimed that the Russian jet had repeatedly crossed the border, neglecting Turkey's many warnings.<sup>112</sup> The Syrian Civil War had a negative overall effect on Turkey's grand strategic vision, resulting in the deterioration of relations with Syria and Russia (even though signals of normalisation and improvement in the Turkish-Russian bilateral relationship are strong in the summer of 2016)<sup>113</sup> as well as a period of silent cold war between Turkey and Iran, and a loss of momentum in terms of their rapprochement.

Following the turmoil in Syria, Turkey and Iran experienced a good deal of tension in an era when sectarianism gained further ground in the region, despite Turkey's insistence that its policy line went beyond sects in favour of democracy, reforms, and stability.<sup>114</sup> Thus, the deterioration of the relationship between Turkey and Syria brought a change not only in terms of Turkey's "zero problems" foreign policy with the goal of good neighbourly relations in general, but also in terms of the Turkish-Iranian relationship, too. The tension between Turkey and Iran over the future of Syria has even reached the level of reciprocal accusations of trying to topple the Syrian government and of protecting a dictator who turned against his own people. These represent the two basic lines of criticism directed against each other by Iran and Turkey respectively.<sup>115</sup>

Turkey stresses that external military interference—which became an increasing necessity due to the intensification of the Syrian Civil War—would destabilise the entire region like it did during the Iraq War. This possibility would have serious repercussions for

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<sup>112</sup> Göktuğ Sönmez, Energy dependency and a Route Map Within the Context of the Recent Turkey-Russia Crisis, *ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs*, No. 36, December 2015.

<sup>113</sup> "Putin mends broken relations with Turkey's Erdogan", 9/8/2016, *BBC*, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37018562>>, accessed 11/8/2016.

<sup>114</sup> Bülent Aras & Emirhan Yorulmazlar, "Turkey and Iran after the Arab Spring: Finding a Middle Ground", *Middle East Policy* 21:4 (2014), pp. 112–120, p. 115–116.

<sup>115</sup> "Turkey Warns Iran: You Cannot Threaten Us", *Al Monitor*, August 8, 2012, <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/08/turkey-to-iran-you-cannot-threatenus.html#ixzz2DkE70gRi>>, accessed 18/07/2012.

Turkey in economic terms, since the region accounted for 24 percent of its trade.<sup>116</sup> Instability and failed state structures also offered a safe haven and room to manoeuvre for the groups like ISIS on Syrian soil, affecting both regional and external powers. Furthermore, the risk of Syria providing a new safe haven for the PKK, which would enable it to receive help from an autonomous Kurdish authority in Iraq, was another concern for Turkey.<sup>117</sup>

From the Iranian perspective, however, Turkey is following the US and Western powers' lead by intervening in another country's domestic politics. Russian and Chinese support for the Assad regime strengthens the Iranian position and reinforces its insistence on supporting the Syrian government. Nematollah Mozaffarpour, in a personal conversation with the author, stated that the Arab Spring was regarded from the very beginning mainly as a foreign project from the Iranian perspective. Even though Mozaffarpour admits that the Iranian establishment is well aware of the fact that Assad is a long way from being a liberal democrat, Western powers started to export weapons there using "democratisation and liberalisation" rhetoric reminiscent of the Iraq War of 2003. He further argues that if it is really democracy and liberal values at stake, then the West needs to revisit its policy line regarding Saudi Arabia and Qatar, too. According to Mozaffarpour, the West regards Iran, Syria, and the Hezbollah of Lebanon as parts of the same devil; its head, belt, and tail respectively. Since attacking the head would be too risky and the tail might not be worth the effort, cutting the belt is the wisest choice since it would kill the devil.<sup>118</sup>

For Iran, the fall of its closest ally in the region—which also has an intimate relationship with Lebanon and thus provides Iran an important opportunity to indirectly extend its influence there, too—is regarded as a threatening outcome that might cause a chain reaction which would end its ambitions for regional leadership. With respect to ties between

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<sup>116</sup> Ehteshami and Elik, 2011, p. 657.

<sup>117</sup> Ayman, 2012, p. 17.

<sup>118</sup> Mozaffarpour, personal communication, 4/5/2016.

Iran and Syria, the two countries have long enjoyed a close relationship, standing against Israel and Turkey during the 1990s. Syria has been Iran's only state ally since the Iran-Iraq War, during which the two shared a common stance against Iraq. Since then, Syria has helped Iran avoid regional isolation and allow it to "penetrate the Levant and pressure Israel, especially by providing it with access to Lebanon".<sup>119</sup> Syria has therefore become the ultimate battlefield for the two powers' regional ambitions and their desire to possess a superior position in the region. "The oppositional politics in Syria may have halted a decade of deepening engagement between Turkey and Iran and set the limits for closer relations in the future."<sup>120</sup> The more Assad clings to power—thanks to the external support he receives from Russia, China and Iran—the more Turkey and Iran's differences will become a source of tension. In order to reinforce its position, Iran sent high-ranking officers of the Army of the Republican Guards of the Islamic Revolution to Syria.<sup>121</sup> Iran also brokered a ceasefire with the Iranian branch of the PKK—the PJAK—in late 2011,<sup>122</sup> allowing the organisation to focus on its activities in Syria, Iraq and particularly Turkey. Mozaffarpour insists that Iran does not approach this issue from a religious perspective and argues that DAESH/ISIS emerged not because of Assad but because of the loss of his grip on Syria. As such, cooperation rather than regional conflict would be the best way to solve the Syrian crisis. "If regional cooperation cannot be achieved, the result will not be a rise in Shi'ism or the power of the JDP, but instead Salafism and Wahhabism".<sup>123</sup> With respect to the Iranian approach to the Arab Spring in general, Mehmet Şahin suggests:

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<sup>119</sup> See Thomas Juneau, "Iran Under Rouhani: Still Alone in the World", *Middle East Policy* 21:4 (2014), pp. 92–104.

<sup>120</sup> Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, personal communication, 23/3/2016.

<sup>121</sup> Stein & Bleek, 2012, p. 146.

<sup>122</sup> Cagaptay, 2014, p. 9.

<sup>123</sup> Mozaffarpour, personal communication, 4/5/2016.

Iran's foreign policy is undergoing a new test with the Arab uprisings in the region. In this process, while Iran supports opposition groups in some countries like Bahrain and Yemen when thinking of its own interests, it cozies up to the authoritarian and secular government in some countries such as Syria.<sup>124</sup>

Overall, Turkey's zero problems policy and its "symbolic showcase" or flagship, i.e. the Syrian dimension, seemed failed to a great extent with accompanied deteriorated relations with Iran and Russia. The foreseeable future does not offer a bright prospect, either. Even in a hypothetical post-Assad Syria, Turkey will have to deal with the PYD- the Syrian affiliate of the PKK- which in March 2016 proclaimed a federation in Northern Syria, merging the "cantons" it controlled.<sup>125</sup> Realisation of this complicated picture and its potential dangers, was a direct reason behind Turkey's engagement in the area between Azaz and Jarablus in Northern Syria in August, 2016. Following a diplomatic marathon in July and August, during which Turkey-Russia relations were normalised, Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif and KRG President Barzani visited Turkey, Turkish artillery, tanks and jets started to give direct military support to the Free Syrian Army (FSA) to take control of Jarablus, which was controlled by ISIS, as a first step. The operation, alongside ISIS, also targets PYD advances west of Euphrates where anti-ISIS coalition previously assured Turkey that no PYD presence will be allowed. Timing of the operation not only points to the consequences of Turkey's recent turn to "strategic flexibility" from "precious loneliness" and revisions in its deteriorated relations with particular actors. It also shows how closing windows of opportunity where a rival group (PYD in this case) seem to force states to revise their policies.

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<sup>124</sup> Mehmet Şahin, "Iran: "realistic" foreign policy of a "theocratic and idealistic" state", USAK Yearbook, (Ankara:USAK, 2012), pp. 279–281, p.281.

<sup>125</sup> Cagaptay, 2014, p. 9.

### The BMDS Controversy

Turkey's own strategic positioning and its calculations regarding the gradually increasing instability in the Middle East played a role in its consent to the deployment of radars for NATO's Ballistic Missile Defence Systems (BMDS). This step not only provided NATO with a further deterrent, but also helped secure and consolidate Turkey's power position in the region. At the same time, the system is also expected to strengthen Turkey's defence in case of a potential spill-over from ethnic and sectarian conflicts and weak state mechanisms in the region by further deepening its already close relationship with NATO. In September 2011, Turkey agreed to be part of NATO's BMDS scheme and host one of the "early-warning radars" in Kürecik, Malatya, around 725 km west of the Iranian border. As a system co-hosted by Spain, Portugal, Poland, and Romania, the BMDS aims to protect NATO countries from medium-range missile attacks.

Iran saw the BMDS as a further tool for its containment, rendering Iran vulnerable in case of an attack, referring mainly to a possible surprise attack from Israel.<sup>126</sup> Iranian anxieties regarding the siting of the BDMS radars on Turkish soil caused further damage to the bilateral relationship. In order to limit this damage, Turkey insisted upon the exclusion of any reference to any specific country as being threats against which these radar systems had been installed. As part of the deal, Turkey also strove for control over the equipment on its own soil.<sup>127</sup> However, while Ahmadinejad claimed that the missile system was a way of

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<sup>126</sup> Karen Kaya, "Turkey-Iran Relations After the Arab Spring", *Foreign Military Studies Office*, <<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Turkey-Iran.pdf>>, accessed 4/4/2016, p. 8–9, and Sinkaya, 9/3/2016.

<sup>127</sup> Ülgen, 2011, p. 139 and 165.

protecting Israeli interests against Iran,<sup>128</sup> Brigadier General Ali Hajizadeh went a step further by stating that in case of a threat, Iran would target Turkey and other countries that hosted different components of the system.<sup>129</sup> He also stated that “In today’s world, the Zionist regime conducts its acts with the US, and the US conducts its acts as NATO... The Muslim Turkish people will destroy this system when it’s time.”<sup>130</sup> After Turkey allowed the system to be installed, former Iranian President Ahmadinejad’s 2012 visit to Turkey was cancelled in protest to that decision and the visa waiver program was suspended. The latter was also partly due to Turkey’s condemnation of Iranian statements about Turkey’s support to Syrian opposition and its participation in the US-led coalition in Syria.<sup>131</sup> For Iran, the system was seen as depriving the country of its “capacity for deterrence” against any future attack, and as permission for intelligence sharing between NATO and Israel. With the two combined, Israel would be encouraged to conduct a military attack against Iran.<sup>132</sup> Considering the timing of the instalment of the system, it can be argued that Turkey’s realpolitik concerns were the primary motivation. BMDS controversy, therefore, reinforces the criticism this research directs at primordialist analyses arguing that ideology had the upper hand and Turkey has been pursuing a primarily sectarian and ethno-nationalist policy line.<sup>133</sup>

Therefore, Turkey’s participation in the NATO’s BMDS scheme and the Arab Spring are two important developments showing realpolitik limits of the rapprochement enjoyed by Turkey and Iran over the last decade. As soon as their policy lines began to clash—a factor which is not expected from a primordialist point of view for any reasons other than

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<sup>128</sup> “Ahmadinejad: Missile shields won’t prevent collapse of Zionist regime”, *Haaretz*, October 5, 2011, <<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/ahmadinejad-missile-shields-won-t-prevent-collapse-of-zionist-regime-1.388274>>, accessed 23/03/2013.

<sup>129</sup> “Iran threatens to target NATO missile shield in Turkey”, *Ria Novosti*, November 27, 2011, <<http://en.ria.ru/world/20111127/169065083.html>>, accessed 24/03/2013.

<sup>130</sup> Kaya, p. 9.

<sup>131</sup> Ahmadi & Ghorbani, 2014, pp. 59–87, p. 80–81.

<sup>132</sup> Sinkaya, 2012, p. 153.

<sup>133</sup> Mark L. Haas, personal communication, 20/3/2016.



ideological—their relationship experienced tension and fluctuations, further reinforcing a realist reading of Turkey’s shifting state behaviour vis-à-vis certain actors.

Having explored in detail how external shifts impacted upon Turkish attitudes regarding Iran (and vice versa), the next section will examine the ways in which domestic developments and shifts reinforced or impeded the changes in the relationship during this era.

### **The Domestic Level: Coalitions between Businessmen and Political Figures and the Shifting Civil-Military Power Calculus**

Coalitions between conservative business associations and the JDP helped Turkey utilise its “national power” more effectively. This picture offered Turkey a “practical hand” in its grand strategic shifts. These ties between businessmen and the ruling elite both reinforced closer relations with Iran and deepened economic relationship which can act as a deterrent in case of possible future tension. At the same time, the military’s loss of influence meant that an important actor from the anti-Iran camp would have a lessening impact (or none at all) over this policy line that was changing for the better and the interest-driven approach would more easily the old ideologised and securitised approach. This domestic atmosphere not only contributed significantly to the state’s ability to extract and mobilise necessary resources for such a revision, but also freed policy-makers from the constraints of the possibility “being punished” by coups or indirect interventions by the military if they revised Turkish policies in ways that contradicted the military’s preferences.

### The JDP Era: Increasing Levels of Economic Interaction, Fading Military Alarmism

While the old elite fought to distance itself from Iran, internationalist business groups and the new political elite demanded the opposite. Support from conservative internationalist business groups also helped further Turkey's ambitions to expand the reach of the country's economic activity in the Middle East and the former Soviet space. Their ideological stance provided a further motivation to have a stronger presence in Iran.

### *Closer Economic Relations and the Role of Conservative Businessmen*

In economic terms, Iran has been the most important partner in terms of Turkey's "return to the arc of crisis". Between 2000 and 2010, Iran's share in Turkey's overall trade doubled and reached around 4 percent of Turkey's total trade.<sup>134</sup> Iran, according to Mozaffarpour, is quite satisfied with this picture, as it prefers having closer economic relations with Turkey than with Russia, China or the EU.<sup>135</sup>

Leading figures from both countries argued that this trade could reach \$30 to \$50 billion in the medium-term<sup>136</sup> and was fluctuating between \$10 and 15 billion in 2014 and 2015.<sup>137</sup> However, the impact of the Arab Spring on the bilateral relationship, which also affected the economic picture after 2012, left these ambitious goals open to doubt.

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<sup>134</sup> EsraEruysal, *Economic Relations between Turkey and Iran from 1990 to 2010: A Turkish Perspective*, Master's Dissertation (December 2011), <<http://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12613959/index.pdf>>, accessed 2/12/2014, p. 151.

<sup>135</sup> Mozaffarpour, personal communication, 4/5/2016.

<sup>136</sup> Ehteshami and Elik, 2011, p. 654.

Within this context of closer economic relations with Iran, conservative businessmen played a very important role. This not only helped Turkey's transformation into a "trading state"—in which trade is one of the main policy areas and businessmen are encouraged by the ruling elite following the footsteps in of Özal—but also helped the re-orientation of the country's grand strategic geopolitical scope, which gives much more weight to neighbouring regions than it did before. Conservative businessmen associations' support for the JDP's policy line and the support offered to them in return by the government resulted in an increase in the state's ability to mobilise necessary resources to help pursue its interests.

These associations' impact, in some cases, is quite direct. For instance, business associations repeatedly mentioned the goal of bilateral trade volume of \$30 billion with Iran in the near future, a goal put forward by the former head of MÜSİAD, Ömer Vardan.<sup>138</sup> This goal was endorsed by Erdoğan and echoed on several occasions. Similarly, calls for a common market between the Islamic Conference Organisation member states, an important goal of both Erbakan in the past shared by MÜSİAD, were echoed by Turkey's Economic Minister, Zafer Çağlayan.<sup>139</sup>

Forums and fairs with an emphasis on the Muslim world organised by MÜSİAD also shows how MÜSİAD approaches the bilateral relationship and how it contributed to it. The slogan used for MÜSİAD's International Business Forums has been "Uniting Your Business with the Islamic World",<sup>140</sup> prioritising predominantly Muslim-populated neighbour states in accordance with MÜSİAD's spirit of entrepreneurship. Business trips resulting in multiple

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<sup>138</sup> "Müsiad'dan İran'a 30 Milyar Dolarlık Çağrı" ["\$30 Billion Call from MÜSİAD to Iran"], 26/6/2011, <<http://ekonomi.haber7.com/ekonomi/haber/757865-MÜSİAD8217dan-irana-30-milyar-dolarlik-cagri>>, accessed 21/09/2012.

<sup>139</sup> "İBF: İslam Dünyası Ortak Pazar Kurmalı" ["İBF: Islamic World Should have a Common Market"], *YeniŞafak*, 18/9/2004, <<http://yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2004/eylul/18/e01.html>> and "Çağlayan: İslam İşbirliğiTeşkilatı'nınOrtakPazarOluşturacakYapıyıKurmasıLazım"[Çağlayan: "OIC Should Do the Groundwork for a Common Market"], 10/1/2013 <<http://www.etikhaber.com/siyaset/133493-caglayan-islam-isbirligi-teskilat-n-n-ortak-pazar-olusturacak-yap-y-kurmas-laz-m>>, accessed 12/05/2013.

<sup>140</sup> For the motto of the fair and more, see <<http://www.MÜSİADfair.com/en/#>>.

deals across various sectors are also a major part of the repertoire. The encouragement of political figures for these trips and their participation in them show the level of the cooperation between statesmen and rising businessmen groups. Trips to Iran are no exception. For MÜSİAD in particular, Iran has always been a significant destination for business trips. The last decade witnessed a significant rise in such trips and saw an increase in the number of deals made between Iranian and Turkish businessmen. In 2003, State Minister Kürşad Tüzmen was accompanied by 300 businessmen on his trip to Iran, where contracts worth \$200 million were signed, agreements were reached on reducing taxes and customs duties, and plans were made to set up new cross-border trade points. In 2008 and 2009, Tüzmen, this time as the State Minister for Foreign Trade led similar delegations, during which deals were struck totalling \$550 million.<sup>141</sup> The head of MÜSİAD even went as far as to call for a customs union between the two, and succeeded in negotiating the prospects of increasing trade volumes with Iranian officials in a business trip conducted at the invitation of the mayor of Tabriz in 2011. This visit took place after an Iranian delegation visited Turkey in 2009, during which they concluded many business deals.<sup>142</sup> These efforts succeeded in achieving support at presidential level in Iran, too.<sup>143</sup>

As mentioned earlier, TUSKON primarily focused on African states and the Caribbean through its international business forums. However, TUSKON's activity is not limited to these regions. Its head, Rızanur Meral, also called for higher Turkish economic involvement in Turkey's immediate environs and decreasing customs tax with Iran in order to

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<sup>141</sup> See Esra Eruysal, *Economic Relations between Turkey and Iran from 1990 to 2010: A Turkish Perspective*, Master's Dissertation (December 2011), <<http://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12613959/index.pdf>>, accessed 2/12/2014, p. 145–147.

<sup>142</sup> "MÜSİAD İran'dan Eli Dolu Döndü" ["MÜSİAD Returns from Iran Affluent], *Dünya Bülteni*, 28/6/2011, <<http://www.dunyabulteni.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=165016>>, accessed 18/12/2012. On the Iranian delegations' visit in 2009, see "İranlı İşadamları MÜSİAD Üyeleriyle İşbirliğini Görüştü" ["Iranian Businessmen Met with MÜSİAD Members"], *YeniŞafak*, 9/10/2009, <<http://yenisafak.com.tr/ekonomi-haber/iranli-isadamlari-MUSIAD-uyeleriyle-isbirligini-gorustu-09.10.2009-215399>>, accessed 26/12/2012.

<sup>143</sup> "Ahmedinecad Yatırım Toplantısı Önerdi" [Ahmadinejad Suggested an Investment Meeting], *Milliyet*, 16/8/2008, <<http://ekonomi.milliyet.com.tr/ahmedinecad--yatirim-toplantisi-onerdi/ekonomi/ekonomidetay/16.08.2008/979040/default.htm>>, accessed 16/03/2013.

facilitate more business deals. TUSKON was also against the sanctions imposed on Iran due to the potential economic drawbacks they would bring, and demanded urgent action in order to avoid the costs and risks of increasing oil prices in case the growing alienation of Iran led to a military action.<sup>144</sup> This accorded with Turkey's stance on the question of sanctions. In terms of sanctions and the Turkish-Iranian economic interactivity, MÜSİAD also called for higher levels of trade and Turkish economic involvement with Iran—even if sanctions remain in place—in order to achieve a more integrated position as a trading partner once these sanctions are lifted. This would help hold off challenges from other possible “newcomers” looking to conduct economic interactivity with Iran.<sup>145</sup> Thus, for both associations, Iran always occupied a certain place due not only to its religious positioning, but also to the opportunities it offered in both the sanctions-period and the post-sanctions era for Turkish businessmen.

All in all, in terms of Turkey's relationship with Iran, the rise of the notion of a trading state aiming for economic integration with neighbouring regions in a way that can reinforce policy steps with the incorporation of “Anatolian Tigers” in a more organised manner has strengthened the rapprochement between the two. Closer economic contact via close links between statesmen and businessmen not only played an important role in increasing the state's ability to mobilise economic resources for policy goals in an era of rapprochement, but also acted as an important source of deterrence vis-à-vis Iran in case of a possible tension.

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<sup>144</sup> “İran Ambargosu Bankaları Kilitledi İhracatçılar Acil Çözüm Bekliyor” [Embargo on Iran Locked Down the Banks, Exporters Wait for an Urgent Solution], 29/10/2010, <<http://www.istehaber.com/iran-ambargosu-bankalari-kilitledi-ihracatcilar-acil-cozum-bekliyor/>>, accessed 05/04/2012.

<sup>145</sup> “Ömer Cihad Vardan: Diğer Ülkeler Hücum Etmeden İran'da Olmalıyız” [Ömer Cihad Vardan: We Should be in Iran before other Countries Rush], *YeniŞafak*, 28/6/2011, <<http://yenisafak.com.tr/Ekonomi/?i=327079>>, accessed 30/02/2013.

### *Increasing Autonomy of the Civilian Policy-Makers and its Impact on the Relationship*

In the 1990s, political figures such as Erbakan paid a high price when they tried to forge closer contact with their Iranian counterparts. With the post-modern coup of February 28, 1997, Erbakan was forced to sign an action plan against “Islamist reactionary movements” and then resigned. This move was justified on the grounds that his activities were directed at the regime and unitary structure of Turkey by cooperating with other religiously-motivated entities, Iran being the most prominent of these. Erbakan’s efforts to broaden the scope of cooperation with Iran from the energy sector to defence and security were strictly opposed by the military. With the 1997 post-modern coup which forced resignation of Erbakan, once again it proved its strength.<sup>146</sup> Thus, putting aside some cooperative dimensions of the bilateral relationship in line with Turkey’s perceptions of interest, which included a significant energy link, the military’s critical stance regarding Iran further undermined a relationship that had been plagued with suspicion and mistrust especially since 1979.

The military adopted a critical stance against Iran’s regime and its potential encouragement for Islamist groups in Turkey. It also further securitised the relationship by highlighting the accusations of Iranian support for the PKK. In short, concerns of the old elite and the military were that Iran would try to export its regime and alter the very characteristics of the state structure in Turkey the Turkish system; it can support the PKK, and it can possess WMDs, altering bilateral balance of power and might use them in the future.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar, “Uneasy Neighbors: Turkish-Iranian Relations since the 1979 Islamic Revolution”, *Middle East Policy* 17: 3 (2010), pp. 101–117 p. 109; Altunışık & Tür, 2005, p. 59–62.

<sup>147</sup> For some studies on the military’s security-oriented and alarmist stance against Iran, see Ian Lesser, “Turkey, Iran, and Nuclear Risks” in Henri Sokolski and Patrick Clawson (eds.), *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), pp. 89–112, pp. 96–98.; Bülent Aras, “Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Iran: Ideology and Foreign Policy in Flux”, *Journal of Third World Studies* 18:1 (2001), pp. 105–124, pp. 107–111; Michael M. Gunter, “Turkey and Iran Face off in Kurdistan”, *Middle East Quarterly* 5:1 (1998), pp. 33–40; Gökhan Çetinsaya, “Essential Friends and Natural Enemies: The Historic Roots of Turkish-Iranian Relations”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 7:3 (2003), pp. 116–132, pp. 128–129; Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar, “Uneasy Neighbors: Turkish-Iranian Relations Since the 1979 Islamic

From naming Iran as a terrorist state to extensively referring to its alleged efforts to export its regime, the military approached the relationship with Iran in a rather alarmist manner.<sup>148</sup> Thus, it was not surprising when Mozaffarpour referred to the military as the “most important obstacle” standing in the way of a better relationship between the two countries<sup>149</sup>, The then Chief of Staff Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, who served between 1998 and 2002, even stated that Turkey and Iran would never stand shoulder to shoulder, which as far as the military were concerned, meant “abandoning all thoughts related to civilisation”.<sup>150</sup> In 1997, a brochure was distributed to participants at a briefing organized by the National Security Council—which was the most important mechanism for exerting military influence on civilian decision-makers—entitled “The Spread of Political Islam”. The brochure argued that Turkey’s democratic and secular structure was the only obstacle preventing Iran from turning the Islamic world into a united Shari’a state.<sup>151</sup> In response to the military’s over-involvement in policy-making, and in particular policy-making over Iran, Turkey’s ambassador to Iran, Osman Korutürk, had to reassure Iran that it was the Foreign Ministry’s responsibility, rather than the military’s, to announce official government views. However, the military’s influence and its rigid stance regarding the relationship with Iran unsurprisingly proved much more effective than this statement. This was made more apparent when Korutürk was expelled in retaliation for Turkey’s expulsion of the Iranian consul to Erzurum, Mohammed-Reza Baqeri. Baqeri’s expulsion was due to his speech on the Jerusalem Day, organized by the Welfare Party’s mayor in Sincan—the incident which triggered the post-

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Revolution”, *Middle East Policy* 17:3 (2010), pp. 101–117 pp. 109–110; Özden Zeynep Oktav, “Changing Security Perceptions in Turkish-Iranian Relations”, *Perceptions* 9:2 (2004), pp. 103–117.

<sup>148</sup> Olson, 2004, pp. 28–29; Ali Balci and TuncayKardaş “The Changing Dynamics of Turkey’s Relations with Israel: An Analysis of ‘Securitization’”, *Insight Turkey*, 14: 2(2012), pp. 99–120, pp. 104–105; ÜnalGündoğan, “Geçmişten Bugüne İran İslam Devrimi: Genel Değerlendirme”[“Iranian Islamic Revolution from the Past to the Present: A General Analysis”], *Ortadoğu Analiz* 3:29 (2011), pp. 93–99; Calabrese, 1998, p. 77.

<sup>149</sup> Muzaffarpour, personal communication, 4/5/2016.

<sup>150</sup> “Genelkurmay’dan Mesaj: İran’la Kol Kola Girmeyiz”[Message from the General Staff: We won’t be hand in hand with Iran], *Sabah*, 18/3/2002, <<http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2002/03/18/g01.html>>, accessed 25/3/2013.

<sup>151</sup> Aras, 2001, pp. 108–109.

modern coup of February 28, 1997. The event was harshly criticized by the then Chief of Staff Çevik Bir as being a fundamental threat to Turkey's secular structure.<sup>152</sup> In his first visit following this coup to the US, Bir heightened tension from the military standpoint by referring to Iran as a state that supported terrorism.<sup>153</sup>

As far as military influence was concerned, the JDP era was different from the eras that preceded it. The old dynamics of the civil-military relationship had allowed the military to define national threats, enemies and partners, as was the case with the demonization of Iran and Syria and strategic alliance with Israel. However, the new power calculus between civilians and the military presented a completely different picture. In line with popular Western security structures, the military's advisory role finally became just an advisory one in practice, too. The military, as the most ardent supporter of the hard-line anti-Iranian policy, gradually lost its leverage over civilian policy-makers, and no longer possessed the same amount of power to intervene either directly or indirectly in decision-making processes. The military previously possessed the power to impede closer ties with Iran, either through "advising" governments (most importantly via the powerful National Security Council) or by further contributing to the securitisation of the relationship. The military's alarmist attitude in the past often informed certain foreign policy choices which were designed for the express purpose of keeping Turkey as far as possible from any closer contact with any predominantly Muslim country whilst strengthening regional ties with Israel. All the efforts to desecuritize relations with Turkey's neighbours—particularly Iran and Syria—worked against the military's position. The military viewed such countries as threats to Turkey's secular and unitary character, and thus maintained a securitised mentality. This mentality partly stemmed from the institutional memory of the military during the Cold War and the rigid bi-polar and security-oriented lenses it saw the world through back then.

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<sup>152</sup> Aras, 2001, pp. 107–108.

<sup>153</sup> Olson, 2004, p. 28–29.



The change in the dynamics of the civil-military relationship allowed policy-makers to pursue policy shifts more confidently and effectively, as they did with Iran, rather than feeling obliged to make particular policy choices in line with the military's policy preferences. Especially in the 1990s, the military's black-or-white approach had significantly limited policy-makers' ability to revise foreign policy choices and manoeuvre when faced with unexpected developments.

The new era was thus marked not only by a number of international developments that required a revision in Turkey's relationship with Iran, but also by important changes in Turkey's domestic politics. Whereas close links between conservative businessmen and the JDP helped to carry out revisions in Turkey's attitude toward Iran more effectively with a reinforcing economic dimension, the military's gradual loss of influence allowed the political elite to act without the fear of being toppled or being financially or economically punished as the memories of the post-modern coup of February 1997 suggest.

#### Concluding Remarks: Assessing the Strength of NCR vis-à-vis Primordialist/Nàïve Culturalist Accounts

This research positions itself against naïve culturalist and primordial assumptions about the new Turkey. Mark L Haas, for example, considers that it is the norm for us to witness a rapprochement between Turkey and Iran during Islamist governments and a tension during the Kemalist ones. In line with this assumption, Haas argues that the JDP, as an Islamist party, brought an era of renewed interest in closer relations with Iran. However, if we assume that the rapprochement between the two countries is due simply to ideology and shared values, major flaws will become apparent. For instance, a cultural or ideological explanation

regarding the way the Northern Iraq question that followed the 2003 Iraq War pushed Turkey and Iran towards each other seems quite difficult to explain in that light.<sup>154</sup>

Within the context of the theoretical approach adopted in this research, the question of Northern Iraq is one of the major reasons behind the rapprochement between Turkey and Iran's after 2003. The potential emergence of an independent Kurdish entity and the possibility of a more powerful PKK in Turkey and PJAK in Iran pushed the two sides towards each other. As another significant critical juncture, the Iranian nuclear programme and Turkey's attitude to it were widely discussed. Primordialist accounts have a tendency to argue that the JDP's ideological stance is the reason for Turkey's support for the Iranian nuclear programme.<sup>155</sup> However, rather than ideological affinity, it was the above-mentioned interest-driven reasons that pushed Turkey to pursue such a policy line.

When considering the tension that Turkey and Iran experienced in the Arab Spring era and beyond,<sup>156</sup> the role played by power- and interest-related concerns becomes even more visible. While domestic ideological settings remained constant, this tension clearly indicated how international shifts, with their direct impact on individual states' interest-driven calculations, outweighed ideological assumptions. Unsurprisingly, Turkey and Iran's individual ambitions to fill the power vacuum in the MENA region and claim the position of the leading regional power inflamed their rivalry. The uprising in Syria which turned into a fully-fledged civil war also caused a major blow to the overall rapprochement between the two countries. Iranian concerns were about "losing Syria"—its most reliable regional partner—and the potential rise of Turkey to regional leadership if the Syrian government were to be toppled—whereas Turkey's goal of increasing its influence in the region in a

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<sup>154</sup> Mark L. Haas, *The Clash of Ideologies: Middle Eastern Politics and American Security*, Oxford University Press: New York, 2012), p. 188–189.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p. 191

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 191-192.

power vacuum via like-minded groups and political parties just gave Iran the reason to believe that it should be challenged.

Even though Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamanei stated in 2014 that the two countries were enjoying the peak point of their relationship,<sup>157</sup> the fact of their clashing views regarding the Arab Spring and beyond, the tension over BMDS scheme and their competition over Syria and Iraq say otherwise. A key fracture point was the Russian involvement in the Syrian conflict, which engendered a Russian-Iranian axis that saw itself standing against the Western alliance, which included Turkey. The normalisation signals between Turkey and Russia in the summer of 2016, followed by the Iranian Foreign Minister's visit to Turkey just four days after the meeting between Putin and Erdoğan, may repair some of the tension the relationship endured for the near future. Turkey's announcement that it would participate in air strikes after the meeting between Erdoğan and Putin (it was widely argued that the jet crisis and Russian deployment of air defence systems in Syria was the reason behind Turkey's inability to do so since the jet crisis between Turkey and Russia) and that Iran and Turkey would cooperate in terms of Syria are quite striking developments which need to be monitored.<sup>158</sup> Iran's tacit approval of the Turkish armed forces' support to FSA in Northern Syria in their effort to retake Jarablus from ISIS in August 2016 should also be considered within this recently emerging context.

In addition to the changes stemming from international and regional shifts and subsequent changes in Turkey's policies regarding Iran, domestic factors played an important

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<sup>157</sup> Gawdat Baghat, "Iran-Turkey Energy Cooperation: Strategic Implications", *Middle East Policy* 21:4 (2014), pp. 121–132, p. 122.

<sup>158</sup> See "Turkey 'temporarily' suspends Syria air strikes after Russia spat", 27/11/2015, *Dawn*, <<http://www.dawn.com/news/1222673/turkey-temporarily-suspends-syria-air-strikes-after-russia-spat>>, accessed 13/8/2016; "Turkey to resume airstrikes on ISIS in Syria, asks Russia to fight 'common enemy'", 11/8/2016, *RT*, <<https://www.rt.com/news/355534-turkey-airstrikes-isis-russia/>>, accessed 13/8/2016; "Iran and Turkey agree to cooperate over Syria", 13/8/2016, *Al Jazeera*, <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/iran-turkey-agree-cooperate-syria-160812141119888.html>>, accessed 13/8/2016.

role in expanding Turkey's ability to pursue policies in line with this new attitude. Turkey was trying to make that best of emerging windows of opportunity during this period of changing dynamics. Two major phenomena contributed to the overall rapprochement and Turkey's more flexible attitude toward Iran. These were the close links between the JDP and conservative businessmen and the military's loss of influence over civilian policy-making. Conservative business associations, going beyond the boundaries of pre-established economic links, contributed to rapprochement efforts through rhetorical support and by intensifying their business trips and trade activity. Meanwhile, the military's loss of influence over policy-making as the leading component of the anti-Iran camp helped statesmen emancipate themselves from a rigid, alarmist and ideologically-driven approach adopted by the old elite and the military's occasionally hawkish attitude towards Iran. Moreover, the military's demise contributed to further rapprochement between the two until 2011, showing the secondary importance of shifts at the domestic level. Still, since 2011, interest-driven clashes have resulted in a worsening of the bilateral relationship, even though the military's influence over civilian policy-makers in their policy choices did not undergo any kind of positive change.<sup>159</sup>

A combination of all these factors resulted in a different atmosphere in the Turkish-Iranian relationship, which suffered insecurities that stemmed from interest- and power-related calculations and adjustments. The two "have retained cordial relations characterised by occasional outbreaks of crisis that are quickly contained and ameliorated through diplomatic channels."<sup>160</sup> The next chapter will focus on the relationship between Turkey and Israel especially since the Iraq War, including recent reconciliation, and an exploration of the impact of developments at both international and domestic levels on the relationship.

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<sup>159</sup> The point is also made by Ali Balci in our personal communication, 5/3/2016.

<sup>160</sup> Moghaddam, personal communication, 23/3/2016.

## **Chapter 4: The Turkish-Israeli Relationship: From Partners to Foes and towards Interest-Driven Rapprochement**

The previous chapter investigated the dynamics behind the changes and continuities in the Turkish-Iranian relationship, with a primary focus on Turkey's JDP era. Based on this analysis, I questioned the validity of primordialist ideology and value-centred accounts and demonstrated the explanatory power of a neoclassical realist analysis with its emphasis on power- and interest-driven motivations without ignoring the secondary role of selected domestic factors.

In this chapter, another controversial bilateral relationship, the one between Turkey and Israel, will be analysed. This relationship, once a strategic partnership, has experienced several important points of tension over the last decade, as well as efforts on both sides to normalise it.

The chapter will begin by offering a brief historical background on the bilateral relationship in order to compare the ups and downs in the relationship during the Cold War period. Then, the era of strategic partnership in the 1990s and the escalating tensions of the last decade will be discussed, before touching upon recent normalisation efforts. The chapter will then investigate critical junctures at the international level in the light of their effects on Turkey's attitude toward Israel. These critical junctures include the Iraq War and clashing views over Northern Iraq, their divergence about the Iranian nuclear programme, Operation Cast Lead and its damage to Turkey's mediation efforts, as well as the Arab Spring with the post-Arab Spring re-evaluation of the relationship. The impact of the two principal domestic factors which contributed to the rise of state power will also be discussed; firstly the attitude of conservative businessmen who enjoy close ties to the JDP, and secondly the diminishing

influence of the Turkish military—the most ardent supporters of the Turkish-Israeli strategic partnership in the 1990s. After discussing the recent signs of normalisation in the relationship with possible motivations behind it, I will conclude the chapter by discussing whether values and ideologies or interest-driven adjustments have been the key motivation behind the ups and downs of this bilateral relationship.

### The Turkish-Israeli Relationship: Do Old Friends Make the Worst Enemies?

In terms of Turkey's changing attitudes towards certain actors—especially over the last decade—Turkey's relationship with Israel is probably the most controversial one. The relationship underwent a transformation from cooperation to hostility within less than a decade, and as of mid-2016 is once more on its way to rapprochement.

In the immediate post-Cold War era, close partnership with Israel was one of the most important components of Turkey's grand strategy. To some extent, Turkey's hostile relations with Syria and Iran in this era were also both a reason and consequence of this close bilateral contact.

However, the picture has reversed itself over the last decade, especially leading up to the Arab Spring. Turkey had desecuritised its relations with Syria and Iran to a great extent. However, Turkey's desire to maximise power, pursue its interests and raise its regional profile caused clashes with Israel—although those very same motivations prevented it from totally burning bridges. There seems to exist a non-verbal agreement that while both sides accept that the relationship may not recover fully in the short term, they are aware of the fact that the relationship is not expendable either, which is the reason why keeping channels of communication open seem to be a wise policy choice. The environment in the wake of the Arab Spring (Turkey's deteriorated relationship and tension with Syria, the damage taken by

its relations with Iran and Iraq, and the consequent re-securitisation of Turkey's attitude to its immediate neighbours) offers a fertile ground for a revision in the Turkish-Israeli relationship.

Before investigating the details of the external and internal dynamics affecting the Turkish attitudes towards Israel, I will present a brief historical background in order to compare different phases of the relationship up to the JDP era.

### Historical Background

When the Ottoman Empire welcomed the Sephardim Jews in 1492, they provided safe havens for them far from the atrocities they faced in Spain. This marked the start of a friendly and cooperative bilateral relationship between the Jews and the Turks. According to Israeli chargé d'affaires Amira Oron, this important moment of history has been taught in Israeli schools and the Israeli people still acknowledge and appreciate the Ottoman Empire's help.<sup>1</sup> Amikam Nachmani notes that "Historically, the Jews were never persecuted in Turkey, no Jewish blood had ever been spilled there by Turks and the Turks harboured no traditional enmity towards the Jews".<sup>2</sup> Even when the Ottoman millet system<sup>3</sup> ended after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey and Turkey's nation-building process brought peace, the Jews' situation in Turkey was much better than their situation in Europe.

The Turkish-Israeli relationship entered a new era with the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948. Jewish emigration from Turkey to Palestine before and after the proclamation occurred quite peacefully. Strengthening these ties further, Labour Zionism and Kemalism,

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<sup>1</sup> Amira Oron, personal communication, 25/5/2016.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua Walker, "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 17:4 (2006), pp.60–90, at p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> The demographic system based on a legal and bureaucratic approach to society according to religious belief, allowing the followers of each belief system to practice their religion, have their religious leaders, and be subject to their religious legal systems, not according to ethnic origins.

with their parallel struggles to secularise the two societies after centuries of religion-based identification and to reform their societies' bureaucratic and ideological codes, saw each other as potential partners.<sup>4</sup> Turkey's de facto recognition of the State of Israel in March 1949—their exchange of chargés d'affaires and Turkey's de jure recognition in January 1950—came to be seen by the Arab world as a betrayal.<sup>5</sup> Turkey was the first predominantly Muslim-populated country to recognise the State of Israel. Comparisons were made between Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II's earlier tough stance against Israeli territorial demands over Palestine in return for clearing Ottoman debts at a time of serious economic crisis and the Turkish recognition of Israel.<sup>6</sup> Turkey's response to such criticism was to refer to the Armistice Agreement between Egypt and Israel in February 1949 and negotiations over armistices between other Arab countries and Israel. Turkey argued that those steps meant de facto recognition already.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Cold War Era*

The era between the proclamation of the State of Israel and the 1990s was marked by a delicate balancing effort in terms of Turkey's policy line regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. On one hand, Turkey was trying to distance itself from the Arab Middle East, mainly because of the old elite's insistence on the Kemalist goal of cutting Turkey's ties with its Ottoman past. On the other, it would have been costly in regional and domestic terms to antagonise the Arab world and rely on a relationship with Israel alone. Regionally, such a policy would have serious consequences, especially in terms of Turkey's growing need for energy resources.

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed analysis on the 'religious' political parties in both countries, see Sultan Tepe, "Religious Parties and Democracy: A Comparative Assessment of Israel and Turkey", *Democratization*, 12: 3 (2005), pp. 283-307.

<sup>5</sup> Ofra Bengio and Gencer Özcan, "Old grievances, new fears: Arab perceptions of Turkey and its alignment with Israel", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37: 2 (2001), 50–92 at p. 50 and Bishku, 2006, p. 181.

<sup>6</sup> Bengio and Özcan, 2001, p. 57–58.

<sup>7</sup> Gruen, 1995, p. 45.



Domestically, the Palestine question has captured a great deal of attention in Turkey, not only among Islamist and conservative groups but also among revolutionary leftist groups, making it a valuable asset for achieving electoral success.

Michael Bishku, a leading professor of history at Augusta University and an important scholar of Israel's foreign policy and Turkey-Israel relations, summarises the relationship in the Cold War as follows: "During the late 1950s it [Turkey] collaborated with Israel, Iran and Ethiopia in a 'peripheral alliance' directed against the Arab world, but tried to keep those connections low key."<sup>8</sup> According to Amira Oron, Israel's chargé d'affaires in Ankara, in an "Arab-Muslim ocean", Israel's David Ben-Gurion made the wise choice of fostering a doctrine of cooperation with like-minded countries—including Turkey and Iran—during this era. This doctrine laid the ground for Israel's efforts to promote closer ties with Turkey, and acted as the basis of the future rapprochement between the two countries.

During the 1960s, Turkey attempted to balance its relations with the Arab world and Israel. Over the following two decades, due to its dependence on hydrocarbons which came in part from the Arab world, Turkey attempted to move closer to the Arab states politically and economically, especially after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. In this era the oil crisis acted as a further catalyst for rapprochement with Arab countries.<sup>9</sup> Following the oil crisis, it was not only Turkey which revised its relationship with Israel and the Arab world. Oron states that Israel experienced a similar shift in foreign policy of most of the European powers including France, with which Israel had enjoyed a fairly close relationship up to that point.<sup>10</sup>

Later in the 1970s, Turkey established relations with the PLO and was not particularly supportive of Sadat's peace with Israel; part of that had to do with a continued distrust of

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Bishku, personal communication, 26/2/2016.

<sup>9</sup> Aytürk, personal communication, 12/3/2016.

<sup>10</sup> Amira Oron, personal communication, 25/5/2016.

Egypt's intentions in the Middle East as well as the Turkish dependency on the Arab oil.<sup>11</sup>

Bishku stated that:

In general, since the 1970s, Turkey's closeness of connections with either Israel or countries in the Arab world tended to fluctuate in large part with the price of oil which affected economic conditions in the country; however, in general, since the 1960s it has seen itself as attempting to balance those relations in principle.<sup>12</sup>

In the Cold War era there were other important incidents that shaped the longer term trends in the Turkish-Israeli relationship. Turkey withdrew its chargé d'affaires due to the Suez Crisis in 1956, downgrading its diplomatic relations to second secretary status. In 1980 Turkey closed its embassy in Jerusalem after the Knesset's decision to declare the city (which was the first qiblah or prayer direction of the Muslims) as the capital of Israel. Turkey's constant reiteration of its demands for the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the occupied territories was also a factor that damaged their bilateral relationship.<sup>13</sup>

However, larger-scale Cold War settings held sway over these occasional points of tension. A quartet of countries—the US, Turkey, Israel and Iran (until 1979)—was shaped along structural lines that stemmed from the dynamics of the bipolar international system. This informal alliance was formed in order to defend the Middle East as a whole from the communist threat and to contain the threat if and when necessary. So, despite occasional crises, Ben-Gurion's peripheral alliance doctrine and Cold War dynamics helped maintain a

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Bishku, personal communication, 26/2/2016.

<sup>12</sup> Bishku, personal communication, 26/2/2016.

<sup>13</sup> Bülent Aras, "Turkish Foreign Policy and Jerusalem: Toward a Societal Construction of Foreign Policy", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 22: 4 (2000), pp. 31–58, p. 49. Also see Gruen, 1995, p. 47, Bishku, 2006, p. 183 and Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Palestinian Question in Turkish Foreign Policy from the 1950s to the 1990s", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25: 1 (1993), pp. 91–110, p. 93.

strong relationship between Turkey and Israel during this era.<sup>14</sup> This bilateral relationship was quite important for the US policy in the region, too. Even though the US maintained military presence at the Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, Israel's geographical position at the heart of the Arab world was regarded by the US as a potential natural aircraft carrier and as a key asset in case of possible Soviet penetration into the region.<sup>15</sup> This intertwining strategic and realpolitik calculations of a trilateral relationship pushed the two sides into maintaining their relationship, even as Turkey takes delicate steps with respect to the Arab world in order not to alienate Israel's traditional enemies, on whom it relied for energy resources.

The end of the Cold War switched Turkish attention from the Soviets on its northern borders to the south, due to heightening tensions in the Middle East coupled with Turkey's own challenge of coping with the PKK. Thus, whereas Israel needed "second strike capability" in the region where it felt greatly threatened by its Arab neighbours as well as Iran, Turkey was striving to improve the effectiveness of its fight against the PKK and increase its deterrence against its immediate neighbourhood. Therefore, the relationship between Turkey and Israel seemed to benefit both countries, and paved the way for the bilateral military and defence-related deals in the 1990s. According to İlker Aytürk, a renowned scholar who studied Israeli politics and the Turkish-Israeli relationship, during the Cold War, the relationship was similar to a "secret affair" which would, according to Ben-Gurion, gradually turned into a "full marriage" in the post-Cold War era.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Oron, 25/5/2016.

<sup>15</sup> İlker Aytürk, personal communication, 12/3/2016.

<sup>16</sup> Aytürk, personal communication, 12/3/2016.

## **Making Sense of Changes in Turkey-Israel Relations**

### **Major International and Regional Developments as Critical Junctures**

#### ***a- The End of the Cold War, the Oslo Accords and Turkey's Revision of Its Middle East Policy***

The end of the Cold War reduced Turkey's fears that its political and economic moves in the region would trigger a regional conflict which would have global consequences because of regional powers' alignment with rival camps. Almost simultaneously, the relationship between Israel and the Arab world became more relaxed, which in turn affected the Turkish-Israeli relationship. Aytürk argues that the pattern of the Turkish-Israeli relationship had been shaped in line with the changes in the Arab-Israeli relationship,<sup>17</sup> an assumption proved valid by the timing of the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement after the positive achievements within this context in the 1990s. Thanks to the promising atmosphere of Arab-Israeli relations in the 1990s, Turkey took advantage of the opportunity to improve its relationship with Israel from a more comfortable standpoint. This improvement began after the start of the Arab-Israeli Peace Process in 1991, continued with the Madrid Peace Conference, and was furthered by the 1993 Oslo Accords and the successful peace talks between Jordan and Israel in 1994.<sup>18</sup> Improving relations between the Arab countries and Israel meant that a regional bloc of Arab countries with the potential to isolate Turkey would not be formed if relations between Turkey and Israel became closer still.

Turkey found a partner in Israel that would also provide it with the necessary military and technological expertise it needed. This military support would also come from Israel without echoing the European and to some extent the US criticisms about Turkey's fight against the

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<sup>17</sup> Aytürk, personal communication, 12/3/2016.

<sup>18</sup> Meliha Altunışık, "Turkish-Israeli Rapprochement in the post-Cold War Era", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36: 2 (2000), pp. 172–191, p. 174 and George E. Gruen, "Where is Turkey Heading? Implications for the United States, Israel, and Middle East Peace", *American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy*, 19: 1, pp. 1–13, p. 4.

PKK. Those criticisms had direct consequences such as the suspension of arms shipments by Germany and the US several times in the 1990s.<sup>19</sup> Thanks to their shared concerns, Israel seemed to be the perfect candidate in Turkey's search for an ally in the region on its post-Cold War return to the region. This was not only due to both countries' problematic relations with Iraq, Iran and Syria. Western reluctance to provide Turkey with its required military assets and capabilities within the context of its fight against the PKK acted as a further catalyst. Having Israel as an ally could multiply Turkey's deterrence in its immediate neighbourhood, while also raising Turkey's regional profile.

The Turkish military proved an eager supporter of this partnership with Israel not just because Israel would be a more reliable provider of military hardware and arms than Europe or NATO allies. The military eagerly supported the rapprochement also due to its own critical ideological stance against Turkey's Muslim neighbours. For the military, the relationship was also regarded as a counterweight against "Islamist" groups in Turkey in an era of growing concerns about a religious takeover of Turkey's secular structure. Economic ties between the two countries became much stronger, and the military industry benefitted greatly from this. The most symbolic embodiment of this rapprochement and the military's role in it, was the so-called "Generals' Agreements" in 1996.

#### The "Generals' Agreements" and the Era of Strategic Partnership

The powerful defence establishments of the two countries [Israel and Turkey] are the bureaucratic drivers of the relationship. Both have strong vested interests in

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<sup>19</sup> Robins, 2003, p. 195.

maintaining the centrality of the ties, the Turkish generals for ideological and strategic reasons, the Israelis primarily for matters of military-related commerce.

Philip Robins<sup>20</sup>

Close contact between Israel and a predominantly Muslim-populated country—including the use of its airspace, joint military exercises and intelligence sharing—was exceptional, and such an intimate relationship carried the potential to alter regional power calculus by engendering a new axis.

The era of rapprochement began with the first Turkish ministerial visit to Israel by Abdülkadir Ateş, the then Turkish Minister of Tourism, in 1992. Numerous visits followed over the next few years, right up to presidential level, starting with the Israeli President Ezer Weizman's visit in 1994 as the first official presidential visit to Turkey, and Tansu Çiller's reciprocal visit to Israel as the first serving Prime Minister of Turkey visiting the country.<sup>21</sup> The visits were followed by an important agreement in 1993 focusing on economic cooperation and educational exchanges.<sup>22</sup> In this immediate post-Cold War era, the volume of Turkish-Israeli trade increased by 156 percent between 1992 and 1994, foreshadowing even higher future levels. Meanwhile, the number of Israeli tourists rose from 7,000 in 1986 to 160,000 in 1992 and 350,000 in 1994.<sup>23</sup>

Following these political, educational, social and economic overtures, military cooperation and defence agreements were penned in 1996. Even though Turkish officials had announced in 1992 that improving ties with Israel would not include military cooperation, the

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<sup>20</sup> Robins, 2003, p. 268.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>22</sup> Daniela Huber and Nathalie Tocci, "Behind the Scenes of Turkish-Israeli Breakthrough", *IAI Working Papers*, 13:15 (2013), p.3–4.

<sup>23</sup> Altunışık, 2000, p. 174; Lochery, Neill (1998), "Israel and Turkey: Deepening ties and strategic implications", *Israel Affairs*, 5:1, pp. 45-62.

1996 agreements between the two countries said otherwise. In fact, as early as 1994, the two sides concluded an agreement on intelligence sharing and police cooperation.<sup>24</sup>

In 1996, Turkish defence minister Oltan Sungurlu announced the Turkish-Israeli Military Training and Cooperation Agreement of 21–23 February.<sup>25</sup> This agreement provided Israel with access to Turkish airspace and envisaged military exchanges in the form of Israeli and Turkish pilots visiting one another. These visits would provide Israeli pilots with the experience of long-range flights which they lack due to their country's size. The agreement also foresees eight joint air exercises a year (four in each state).<sup>26</sup> It also referred to joint military exercises and intelligence sharing, and offered Turkish pilots training in advanced military air technologies. Permission was also granted for Israeli naval vessels to use Turkish ports, and military personnel and equipment exchanges would also take place.<sup>27</sup> These newly gained capabilities were extremely important for Israel in case of a possible surprise attack coming from its neighbours, at which point it would have no choice but to use the "Anatolian plateau" as a base for retaliation and would definitely require the experience they can gain with joint manoeuvres and long-range flights.<sup>28</sup>

Another agreement was signed on 26–28 August 1996 focusing on technology transfer and the education of researchers and scholars in the defence sector.<sup>29</sup> Between 1996 and

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<sup>24</sup> Gruen, 1997, p.7.

<sup>25</sup> Robins, 2003, p. 258–265.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, "Turkish-Israeli Military Cooperation: An Assessment", *Washington Institute*, July 1997, <<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/turkish-israeli-military-cooperation-an-assessment>>, accessed 23/06/2013; Robins, 2003, p. 259.

<sup>27</sup> See "Turkey-Israel Defence Agreement", *Strategic Comments*, 2: 6 (1996); Dow Waxman, "Turkey and Israel: A New Balance of Power in the Middle East", *The Washington Quarterly*, 22: 1 (1999), pp.23–32, p. 26; Bishku, 2006, p. 189–190; Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente", *National Interest* (Winter 1997–1998), <<http://www.danielpipes.org/293/a-new-axis-the-emerging-turkish-israeli-entente>>, accessed 18/05/2003. On the era see also Neill Lochery, "Israel and Turkey: Deepening Ties and Strategic Implications, 1995–98", *Israel Affairs* 5:1(1998), pp. 45–62.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Olson, *Turkey's Relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia, 1991–2000: The Kurdish and Islamist Questions*, (California: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001), p. 124.

<sup>29</sup> Altunışık, 2000, p. 187 and Halil Erdemir, "How Worthy Israeli Relations for Turkey?", *Alternatives*, 9: 2 (2010), pp. 24–38, p.32.

1997, the number of visits from both sides increased further, especially among the high commander cadre and ministers of defence, who spent a great deal of effort investigating how to achieve the military goals listed above as effectively as possible. In 1998, a further important step was taken by increasing the number of Turkish military attachés in Tel Aviv to three—the same number as Turkey’s main defence trading partners, namely the US, Germany and France.<sup>30</sup>

### *The Economic Dimension of the Rapprochement*

The economic dimension was an important component of the rapprochement between Turkey and Israel in the 1990s. A significant amount of the era’s economic activity was related to arms sales and military modernisation projects. By encouraging and even pressurising policy-makers for new deals, the Turkish military succeeded in reinforcing the economic dimension of the rapprochement.

The Israeli Defence Industry was asked in 1996 to assist with a five-year project to modernise 54 Turkish Phantom F-4s. These outdated aircraft from the Vietnam War era were to be converted into “Phantom 2000s” with greater manoeuvrability, more fire power and better vision.<sup>31</sup> The total project cost was an estimated \$600–650 million, which included equipping the planes with Popeye-I missiles.<sup>32</sup> The project was part of a broader project which included modernising Turkish artillery, making the deal worth \$2 billion.<sup>33</sup> In 1997, Israel also won a tender to modernise Turkish F-5s,<sup>34</sup> despite heavy criticism from the then

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<sup>30</sup> Robins, 2003, p. 266.

<sup>31</sup> Pipes, 1997–1998 and Robins, 2003, p. 263.

<sup>32</sup> “Turkey-Israel Defence Agreement” and also see George E. Gruen, “Recent Developments in Turkish-Israeli Relations”, *American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy*, 24:4(2002), pp. 301–321, p. 313 and Eisenstadt, 1997.

<sup>33</sup> Bishku, 2006, p. 188.

<sup>34</sup> Altunışık, 2000, p. 188.



Prime Minister Erbakan. He tried to prevent the deal with sharp criticisms about the interest payments. Critical voices from the military high command (including the then Air Force Commander and Chief of the General Staff İsmail Hakkı Karadayı) put pressure on Erbakan, and the deal was signed, offering further proof of how the military was able to control the decisions of elected politicians during that era.<sup>35</sup>

During the Yılmaz-Çiller government that preceded the coalition formed between Erbakan and Çiller,<sup>36</sup> two defence ministers with close ties to their armed forces agreed on the co-production of Popeye II air-to-ground missiles, and the prospect for co-producing Delilah cruise missiles was negotiated the following year. A new free trade agreement was also signed and ratified under this government. Cefi Kamhi, scion of a well-known Jewish Turkish family, was appointed head of the parliamentary Foreign Relations Commission.<sup>37</sup> In 2002, during the coalition between Mesut Yılmaz's Motherland Party, Bülent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party and Devlet Bahçeli's Nationalist Movement Party, Israel Military Industries (IMI) won a deal worth \$688 million to modernise Turkish M-60 tanks.<sup>38</sup> When the economic crisis of the early 2000s dramatically damaged the Turkish economy, another deal—by far the most ambitious of its kind and worth almost \$20 billion, was in the pipeline.<sup>39</sup> As previously mentioned, the two countries also signed a free trade agreement in 1996 which resulted in an impressive increase in bilateral trade between 1996 and 2000, from \$400 million to \$2 billion.<sup>40</sup> When studied over a longer period (1987–2001) this change is

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<sup>35</sup> Gruen, 1997, p.3 and Neill Lochery, "Israel and Turkey: Deepening ties and strategic implications", *Israel Affairs* 5:1, pp. 45–62 (1998), p. 50–51.

<sup>36</sup> Mesut Yılmaz's Motherland Party and Tansu Çiller's True Path Party formed a coalition between March 6, 1996 and June 28, 1996. Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party and Tansu Çiller's True Path Party succeeded it as a coalition again between June 28, 1996 and June 30, 1997.

<sup>37</sup> Mesut Yılmaz's Motherland Party, Bülent Ecevit's Democratic Left Party, and Hüsametdin Cindoruk's Democrat Turkey Party formed a coalition between June 30, 1997 and January 11, 1999.

<sup>38</sup> Gruen, 2002, p. 306–314; Lochery, 1998, p. 52; Efraim Inbar, "Israeli-Turkish Tensions and Their International Ramifications", *Orbis*, 55:1 (2011), pp. 132–146, p. 133.

<sup>39</sup> Erdemir, 2010, p.32.

<sup>40</sup> "Tougher Turkey", *Strategic Comments*, 4:9 (1998) at p. 2 and Bishku, 2006, p. 189.

seen to be even more dramatic, rising from a modest \$54 million to \$2 billion.<sup>41</sup> Agreements on the prevention of double-taxation between the two countries in 1997 and on reciprocal bilateral investment played major roles in this rise.<sup>42</sup>

During the same period, the share of the Arab countries in Turkey's overall trade fell significantly, almost halving between 1987 and 1993 from around 27 percent to 14 percent in terms of exports and from 19 percent to 11 percent in terms of imports.<sup>43</sup> In the face of Turkey's deteriorating relationship with Syria and Iran, it was the Israeli economic partnership that kept hopes alive as far as the Middle Eastern dimension of Turkey's economic interactivity abroad.

#### *Making Sense of the Rapprochement in the 1990s*

Israel and Turkey shared threat perceptions about Syria and Iran, and they both felt alienated or at least isolated in the region, sharing a deep-rooted feeling of being surrounded by hostile neighbours. In order to pursue their interests—be it avoiding an existential threat in the case of Israeli concerns about its Arab neighbours or increasing its relative advantage as well as improving its capability in its fight against the PKK in the case of Turkey—a strong strategic partnership was forged.

While Israel saw Syria and Iran as existential threats, Turkey's concerns about their support for the PKK and alleged Iranian efforts to export its regime helped bring the two countries closer. In the light of this atmosphere it came as no surprise when Turkey's Chief of General Staff, İsmail Hakkı Karadayı, and Prime Minister Çiller stated in 1997 that Iran and

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<sup>41</sup> Özlem Tür, "Turkey and Israel in the 2000s—From cooperation to Conflict", *Israel Studies* 17:3 (2011), pp. 45–66, p.48.

<sup>42</sup> Huber and Tocci, 2013, p.4.

<sup>43</sup> Altunışık, 2000, p. 175 and Bishku, 2006, p. 186.

Syria were the “headquarters of terrorism” in their meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy.<sup>44</sup> Along with these shared concerns, their “sense of otherness”<sup>45</sup> and “fear of marginalization”<sup>46</sup> constituted the basis of their motivation to establish and maintain a close relationship with each other. The timing, coupled with the positive atmosphere in the post-Madrid and Oslo process, was perfect for such a rapprochement in the second half of the 1990s. Oron rightly stated that the same shared concerns would not have made such a close relationship possible, for instance, back in the 1960s.<sup>47</sup>

One of the most vital of Turkey’s motivations for this bilateral relationship was its fight against the PKK, a fight that reached its zenith in the 1990s and coincided with the peak point of its relationship with Israel. Within less than two decades, this question ironically was to turn into the main point of tension between the two countries, devastating the relationship, something which will be covered later in this chapter under the discussion of their clashing views over Northern Iraq. In the 1990s, EU countries and the US were acting at best reluctantly, and chose not to provide necessary technology and equipment transfers to Turkey. Their concerns stemmed from human rights issues, minority treatment and the use of excessive force in Turkey’s fight against terrorism. Such criticisms were directed extensively at Turkey in the 1990s, and resulted in a diminution in Turkey’s expectations of buying necessary military equipment from Germany, France or the UK. Turkish policy-makers therefore felt the need to seek other potential partners which would on one hand provide the necessary assets to tackle terrorism, and on the other not question the ways Turkey chose to

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<sup>44</sup> Olson, 2001, p. 131.

<sup>45</sup> Çevik Bir and Sherman, “Formula for Stability: Turkey plus Israel”, *Middle East Quarterly*, 9: 4 (2002), pp. 23–32, p. 25.

<sup>46</sup> Bülent Aras, “The Academic Perceptions of Turkish-Israeli Relations”, *Alternatives*, 1: 1 (2002), pp. 1–17, p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Oron, personal communication, 25/5/2016.

fight it.<sup>48</sup> This international atmosphere left Israel as an ideal candidate, with its advanced military industry and supportive—or at least indifferent—stance regarding Turkey’s fight against terrorism.<sup>49</sup>

Another shared position for both countries was a common discontent with EU policies. Due to the EU’s controversial stance on the Palestinian-Israeli question, Israel’s attitude towards the Union and its suspicions about the future steps and intentions of European countries forced Israel and the EU into a combative stance.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, the 1997 meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference condemned Turkey’s military raids into Northern Iraq, whilst Arab countries constantly refused to recognise the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Adding to this feeling of regional disappointment, the same year brought disappointment to Turkey on another front, when the EU excluded it from the list of candidate countries to begin negotiations within in 1997 in Helsinki. This served to increase Turkey’s feelings of isolation.<sup>51</sup> With respect to the Turkish and Israeli feelings about the EU, Yücel Bozdağlı argues that:

Although both are heavily integrated into the European economic order through their respective free trade agreements with the European Union, neither has been integrated into the political order and culturally they are not accepted as European either.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Turkey and Israel Strategize”, *Middle East Quarterly*, 9: 1 (Winter 2002), pp. 61–65, at p. 64 and Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Clash of Interest over Northern Iraq Drives Turkish-Israeli Alliance to a Crossroads”, *Middle East Journal*, 59: 2 (2005), pp. 246–264, p. 259–260.

<sup>49</sup> On these motivations behind Turkey’s desire to establish a closer relationship with Israel, also see Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 140.

<sup>50</sup> Oğuzlu, 2010, p. 279–280

<sup>51</sup> “Tougher Turkey”, *Strategic Comments* and Kılıç Buğra Kanat, “Continuity of Change in Turkish Foreign Policy under the JDP Government: The Cases of Bilateral Relations with Israel and Syria”, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 34: 4 (2012), pp. 230–249, p. 238.

<sup>52</sup> Walker, 2006, p. 77.

As a further catalyst for the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement in this era, the Cupertino agreement between Greece and Syria in 1995<sup>53</sup> was perceived as a move to limit Turkey's capability for manoeuvre in the region. The agreement was important in terms of Turkey's regional power position, and was drawn up between the two countries with which Turkey was not enjoying particularly favourable relations at that time due to the crisis in the Aegean Sea with Greece and the question of Syrian support for the PKK. The agreement further reinforced Turkey's "two and a half wars" strategy, which had been devised in preparation for simultaneous fights with Greece, Syria and the PKK if necessary.

For Turkey, the relationship with Israel also provided the support of a strong lobby in Washington D.C.<sup>54</sup> This lobby would not only help Turkey in its diplomatic fight against the Armenian claims about the tragic incidents of 1915. It was also expected to help Turkey with its needed economic support. Thanks to the influence of this lobby, Ariel Sharon assured Kemal Derviş—the former Minister of Economic Affairs between 2001 and 2002 who was in charge of Turkey's recovery from the economic crisis of 2001<sup>55</sup>—that Israel would take every necessary step to provide Turkey with necessary funds. This assurance was interpreted as a reference to direct funding from the US as well as from international monetary organisations in which the US wielded much negotiation power.<sup>56</sup>

The bilateral relationship between Turkey and Israel provided a unique opportunity to end Israel's regional isolation by reaching the "periphery of the Middle East". This term was a conceptualisation which, included Iran up until 1979. In more general terms, the idea was in line with Ben-Gurion's concept of "peripheral states" which underlined the importance of

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.187. Also see Robins, 2003, p. 171.

<sup>54</sup> Altunışık, 2000, p. 174 and Gruen, 2002, p. 317. Ms. Amir Oron also highlighted the importance of the Jewish lobby in Washington as an important factor in closer Turkish-Israeli relationship in the 1990s.

<sup>55</sup> On this crisis, see Altunışık & Tür, p. 85-86 and Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 16.

<sup>56</sup> Olson, 2004, p. 113 and Aytürk, personal communication, 12/3/2016.

neighbouring countries such as Turkey and Iran to Israeli security.<sup>57</sup> The implication of this concept was that Israeli links with these countries may someday turn into a life-line in case of a conflict in the region by allowing Israel to conduct secondary strikes and avoid suffering despite its limited physical assets.<sup>58</sup> Based on this strategic conceptualisation, all the governments in the State of Israel's six decade history have shared the same pragmatic approach in their relations with Turkey, be it Labour or Likud.<sup>59</sup> This was most apparent in the two agreements of 1996, which were negotiated during Rabin's term and concluded under the Peres government.<sup>60</sup>

But what would happen if Turkish and/or Israeli calculations underwent a change and their interests came into conflict? The answer came with the Iraq War of 2003, which brought with it a clash between the two countries over Northern Iraq.

#### *b- Reshuffling the Cards: the Iraq War and its Aftermath*

##### The Question of Northern Iraq and the First Major Blow to the Relationship

Northern Iraq was one of the major points of divergence between Israel and Turkey in the aftermath of the Iraq War in 2003. Divergent views and a clash of interests over the region questioned the fundamental precepts and the very nature of their bilateral relationship.<sup>61</sup>

Turkey and Israel had shared a common stance during the Gulf War in 1991, supporting the operation on a shared belief that Saddam Hussein should be firmly dealt with.<sup>62</sup> However, the war sowed the seeds of the Northern Iraq question due to the emergence of a power vacuum

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<sup>57</sup> David Menashri, "Iran, Israel, and the Middle East Conflict", *Israel Affairs* 12:1 (2006), pp. 107–122, at p.109.

<sup>58</sup> Eligür, 2012, p. 430.

<sup>59</sup> Gruen, 1997, p.7. On party politics in Israel and for a comparative study between so-called religious parties in Israel and Turkey also see Tepe, 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Dan Tschirgi, "Turkey and the Arab World in the New Millennium", in Ismael and Aydın, 2003, pp. 103–119, p.111.

<sup>61</sup> Özlem Tür, personal communication, 28/4/2016.

<sup>62</sup> Bengio, 2009, p.45.

and the degree of autonomy the Kurds achieved under the new Iraqi structure.

Unsurprisingly, the Iraqi Kurds' achievements were not received positively by Turkey due to the potential spill-over effects on Turkey, the country's continuing fight with the PKK, and the prospect of an independent Kurdish state.

In 2001, within the context of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), the prospects for Turkish-Israeli bilateral cooperation were bright. There were rumours that 12 percent of Israeli naval and air forces would be stationed in Turkey, and some of their Chariot-3 tanks would be deployed in south-eastern Turkey as well. Meanwhile, strengthening ties between Israel and Azerbaijan, and the powerful Israeli support for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil pipeline (BTC) signalled a tripartite regional front in the post-9/11 era that stretched from the Caucasus to the Middle East.<sup>63</sup> So it seems no coincidence that while the Turkish-Israeli relationship was entering troubled waters because of the Northern Iraq issue, Eric Edelman was appointed as the third American Jewish ambassador to Turkey in less than a decade, with Wolfowitz (who had a well-earned reputation among the American Jewish lobby) supporting this move in particular and the Turkish-Israeli alliance in general.<sup>64</sup>

There has been growing contact between Kurdish groups in Northern Iraq, the US and Israel, especially since the Gulf War. Turkey's objection to an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq clashed with Israeli policies in the post-Iraq War environment after 2003, which were perceived as supportive of the idea of an independent Kurdish entity in the region. Israel might have perceived a greater advantage in the presence of such an entity in the long-run, as it would limit its over-dependence on its relationship with Turkey, with which Israel had experienced crises in the more distant past and perhaps foresaw future

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<sup>63</sup> Olson, 2004, p.112–113 and 134–135.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 166 and p. 248

crises.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, Turkish media and politicians accused Israel of supporting the PKK militants in the region, where it once helped Turkey to establish listening posts to fight the PKK more effectively.<sup>66</sup> Turkey had strong concerns over the power vacuum that had emerged after the Iraq War—a vacuum that could threaten Iraqi territorial integrity and endanger regional stability in Turkey’s south and south-eastern regions—and adopted a stance against an independent Kurdish entity in the region. However, according to Michael Bishku:

Israel would love to see the establishment of a Kurdish state, whether in Iraq alone or including Syrian territory as well. Such a state would probably establish formal diplomatic relations with Israel and provide a better geostrategic situation for Israel vis-à-vis Iran and adversarial Arab states.<sup>67</sup>

Similarly, Aytürk argued that for Israel, a Kurdish state would be strategically significant for Israeli regional strategy which urges forging close ties with a non-Arab periphery.<sup>68</sup> Amira Oron emphasised Israeli ties with the Kurds in Iraq that had existed since the 1950s and stressed the presence of a Kurdish population in Israel. She considered that Kurds have always been an important partner within the context of this periphery doctrine, despite Israel’s support for Turkish interests and the shared opinion that the PKK is a terrorist organisation.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Oğuzlu, 2010, p. 281.

<sup>66</sup> Eisenstadt, 1997.

<sup>67</sup> Bishku, personal communication, 26/2/2016.

<sup>68</sup> Aytürk, personal communication, 12/3/2016.

<sup>69</sup> Oron, personal communication, 25/5/2016.



For Israel, establishing close contact with non-Arab entities in the region had been an important part of its grand strategy since the proclamation of the State of Israel. As such, many analysts considered that “there is nothing surprising about” Israeli desires to extend this policy line to the Iraqi Kurds. Tūr further argued that it would be more surprising to see Israel not forging a relationship with the Kurds, considering the close contact the two sides enjoyed back in the 1970s.<sup>70</sup> The assumption that Jews and Kurds had a moral affinity (or at least some kind of empathy towards each other since the two communities had both struggled to establish their own states) along with the existence of around 160,000 Kurds with Jewish origin—or vice versa—further contributed to Turkey’s concerns.<sup>71</sup> In 2009, according to a poll conducted by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), 67 per cent of Kurds viewed establishing diplomatic relations with Israel as an important forward step towards independence. Furthermore, the historical links mentioned by Bengio—such as Mullah Mustafa Barzani’s two secret visits to Israel in 1968 and 1975 and Israel’s support to the Kurds in Iraq during their uprisings—historically reinforced these concerns.<sup>72</sup>

As far as Northern Iraq was concerned, the Iranian position was much closer to that of Turkey, and Turkish pressure on Syria to cut off its aid to the PKK before the war was successful.<sup>73</sup> Considering the improvements in its relationships with Iran and Syria during the JDR rule up to the Arab Spring, the necessity for Turkey to return to its previous high level of cooperation with Israel diminished, as did the sense of isolation and otherness that Turkey had once shared with Israel. Similarly, the old sense of being sidelined in the Turkish-EU relationship also decreased following the EU decision to start official talks on Turkey’s accession in 2005—even though those accession talks did not offer high hopes or even short-

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<sup>70</sup> Tūr, personal communication, 28/4/2016.

<sup>71</sup> Kibaroglu, 2005, p.248 and Kibaroglu, 2009, p. 127–128.

<sup>72</sup> Ofra Bengio, “Surprising Ties between Israel and the Kurds”, *Middle East Quarterly* 21:3 (2014), pp. 5- 9.

<sup>73</sup> On the Ceyhan or Adana Agreement in 1998 guaranteeing cutting off Syrian aid to the PKK and its content, see Olson, 2001, p. 114.

term prospects for Turkey. Meanwhile, the gulf between Israel and the EU remained constant. Turkey and Israel's shared sense of otherness therefore underwent a dramatic change.

Over the following years, several other developments damaged the relationship further. For example, the relationship took a serious damage when Erdoğan drew parallels between terrorists and Israel due to the Israeli killing of civilians<sup>74</sup> and after his Ha'aretz interview in 2004, in which he likened the fate of Jews in Spain in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the suffering of the Palestinians at the hands of Israel today.<sup>75</sup> Adding to this tension, the JDP invited Khalid Mashaal, Hamas' leader in exile, to visit Turkey in 2006. On several occasions Mashaal stressed the way Abdulhamid II defied the Zionists over Palestine and how he expected much more activism on Turkey's side with respect to Hamas' fight against Israel.<sup>76</sup> Unsurprisingly, Mashaal's comments faced severe criticism in Israel, while Turkey's harsh criticisms of Israeli actions in Lebanon in 2006<sup>77</sup> further damaged the unique bilateral contact between Israel and Turkey. At the same time, Turkey's policy-makers criticised Israel's nuclear weapons programme heavily, accusing not only Israel but the West of "turning a blind eye to Israeli nuclear weapons"<sup>78</sup> and referring to a nuclear Israel as a threat to regional peace.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Tür, 2011, p.45 and "Turkey Eyes the Middle East", *Strategic Comments*, 10:6 (2004).

<sup>75</sup> Ofra Bengio, "Altercating Interests and Orientations between Israel and Turkey: A view from Israel", *Insight Turkey*, 11: 2 (2009), pp. 43–55, p. 47; Kibaroglu, 2005, p.261; George E. Gruen, "Turkey's Strategic Mideast Initiatives", *American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy*, 26: 6 (2004), pp. 435–456, p. 446.

<sup>76</sup> Aras, 2000, p. 44 and Fuller, 2008, at p.75.

<sup>77</sup> "Turkey's bid to raise influence in the Middle East", *Strategic Comments*, 16: 8.

<sup>78</sup> "Turkey: World is Turning a Blind Eye to Israel's Nuclear Weapons", *Haaretz*, 11/4/2011, <<http://www.haaretz.com/news/turkey-world-is-turning-a-blind-eye-to-israel-s-nuclear-weapons-1.284046>>, accessed 22/7/2013.

<sup>79</sup> "Nuclear Israel is a 'Threat' to Middle East, Says Turkey's Erdoğan", *The Telegraph*, 5/11/2011, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/8809028/Nuclear-Israel-is-a-threat-to-Middle-East-says-Turkeys-Erdogan.html>>, accessed 8/5/2013.

## The Other Side of the Coin: Controlling the Tension up to 2010

While bilateral tension was on the rise in the post-2003 period, there were still subtle signs of hope. In 2003, under the JDP government, the then Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül radioed down his condolences to Israel over a recent suicide bombing while flying with Arab leaders over Iraq. The JDP also expressed vocal support for Israeli endeavours to restart peace negotiations with Palestinians and stated that these negotiations could be hosted in Turkey.<sup>80</sup> After 2003 when the JDP came to power, for the following several years, official visits became as frequent and as high profile as they had been before. In 2003 alone, Israel's Foreign Minister, Minister of Defence and President all visited Turkey. Following these visits indirect talks between Syria and Israel were re-started after an eight-year break following the Syrian refusal to continue talks with Israel that came in the wake of the Second Intifada in 2000.<sup>81</sup> After the bombing of a synagogue in Istanbul, Erdoğan's meeting with the Chief Rabbi was the first of its kind at this level.<sup>82</sup> In 2005, Erdoğan was awarded the Courage to Care Award by the Anti-Defamation League, a leading American Jewish organisation, due to his efforts at mediation in the region after Israel took the decision of withdrawal from Gaza, a decision which was received quite positively by the Turkish elite and the public.<sup>83</sup> These acts calmed concerns about the possibility of an "Islamist" government takeover in Turkey, which would revise relations with Israel on religious grounds.

In 2005, Erdoğan and Sharon even agreed to establish a hotline to share intelligence and cooperate more fully against terrorism. That same year Erdoğan made a visit to Yad

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<sup>80</sup> Bishku, 2006, p. 180.

<sup>81</sup> According to Aytürk, the Second Intifada can also be regarded as a key critical juncture in the bilateral relationship since if Camp David 2 in 2000 succeeded, the relationship will significantly improve. However, after its failure and the beginning of the Intifada, the relationship started to weaken also due to Ecevit's use of the word "genocide" while referring to the Israeli response. Aytürk, personal communication, 12/3/2016.

<sup>82</sup> Gruen, 1997, p.10; Ofra Bengio, "Turkey's Quiet Revolution and Its Impact on Israel", *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, 4: 1 (2010), pp.15-21 and Alon Liel, "Israel-Syrian Negotiations: A New Beginning?", *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, 2: 2 (2008), pp. 7–9.

<sup>83</sup> Eligür, 2012, p. 430.

Vashem following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. Erdoğan's visit to the Holocaust Memorial during his visit to Israel was the first of its kind. In 2007, Shimon Peres became the first Israeli president to address the Turkish National General Assembly. In 2008, the two countries came quite close to finalising a comprehensive agreement on constructing pipelines to transport natural gas and water.<sup>84</sup> In spite of the increasing number of events that set the two countries at odds, they both continued to conduct joint NATO military air exercises, particularly the "Anatolian Eagle" over southern Turkey—a meaningful choice of location designed to irritate Turkey's southern neighbours. These exercises were conducted until 2008, while naval exercises such as Reliant Mermaid were conducted until 2010. These joint exercises began between 2000 and 2001 and were conducted annually thereafter. Furthermore, in spite of the deterioration they experienced, as of 2008, Turkey was still playing a mediatory role between Syria and Israel in their indirect talks with one another.<sup>85</sup>

In 2009, during a visit to the US, Erdoğan met with around fifty representatives from the American Jewish Organization, a meeting that Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, described as a very positive one. Foreign Ministers Kemal Babacan and Tzipi Livni also met, while President Abdullah Gül met with his counterpart Shimon Peres in Copenhagen in December, 2009 where they agreed to take necessary steps to restore the previous positive atmosphere.<sup>86</sup>

However, in spite of the efforts to keep the relationship alive and well, occasional points of tension were . Erdoğan criticised the UN in 2009 in his General Assembly speech for not taking necessary measures with respect to the tragedy in Gaza. Erdoğan rejected

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<sup>84</sup> Huber and Tocci, 2013, p.5.

<sup>85</sup> İlker Aytürk, "The Coming of an Ice Age? Turkish-Israeli Relations since 2002", *Turkish Studies* 12: 4 (2011), pp. 675–687, p. 678. Also see Gruen, 2002, p. 313; İlker Aytürk, "Between Crises and Cooperation: the Future of Turkish-Israeli Relationship", *Insight Turkey*, 11: 2 (2009), pp.57–74, p. 60; Bengio, 2009, p.51. On the Syria-Israel indirect talks, see also Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Mediation: Critical Reflections from the Field", *Middle East Policy* 20: 1(2013), pp. 83–90.

<sup>86</sup> Ofra Bengio, "Turkey's Quiet Revolution and Its Impact on Israel", *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, 4:1 (2010), pp. 15–21, p. 20.

Israeli participation in the Anatolian Eagle exercise of 2009,<sup>87</sup> defying American objections and protests, which eventually resulted in the American withdrawal from the exercise, too. The “low chair affair”, in which the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon intentionally seated Turkish ambassador Oğuz Çelikkol on a lower couch, refused to shake hands with him and made harsh criticisms before cameras, was yet another symbolic blow to efforts to fix the relationship, even though Peres’ pressure on Ayalon resulted in a later apology.<sup>88</sup> Immediately after this incident, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak visited Ankara, where the Turkish prime minister and the president refused to meet him personally, and he was eventually received only by the then Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.<sup>89</sup>

Although these efforts to maintain the momentum of the bilateral relationship did not succeed in subduing the tension completely, they were essential in preventing a complete cut-off in relations and demonstrated both sides’ desire to maintain their contact. Rather than a complete “Islamist” severing of ties with Israel—as an ideology-based argument would suggest—even after a decade of JDP government and despite quite significant points of tension, both countries strove to protect the fundamental aspects of their relationship and make sure any clashes of interests were kept under control.

### *c- The Iranian Nuclear Programme*

Another issue that caused tension between Turkey and Israel was the Iranian nuclear programme. Israel regarded the programme as an existential threat, whereas the Turkish stance, as explained in the previous chapter, supported the Iranian right to use nuclear

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<sup>87</sup> Inbar, 2011, p. 132.

<sup>88</sup> Ayalon, then met with a group of Turkish journalists and claimed that the incident took place unintentionally. Afterwards, he even posed with a Turkish journalist, sitting in a lower chair than her. See Nimrod Goren, “An Unfulfilled Opportunity for Reconciliation: Israel and Turkey during the Arab Spring”, *Insight Turkey* 14: 2 (2012), pp. 121–135, p.124.

<sup>89</sup> Aytürk, 2011, p. 678–680 and Hale, 2013, p. 229–230.

technology for peaceful purposes. Coupled with Turkey's critical stance against Israel for its possession of nuclear weapons, the nuclear issue inflicted serious damage on the relationship.<sup>90</sup>

The Israeli condemnation of Iran's nuclear programme was based on a series of understandable criticisms and concerns. The former Israeli PM Ehud Olmert had stated that "Regarding the threat of nuclear Iran, all options are on the table"—a subtle threat based on the assumption that Iran could possess nuclear weaponry by 2010. Former Israeli Housing Minister Zeev Boim even attacked IAEA Director Mohamed ElBaradei, accusing him of being a "planted agent" serving "the interests of Iran". Former Deputy Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz stated that "If Iran continues with its programme for developing nuclear weapons, we will attack it," and "Attacking Iran, in order to stop its nuclear plans, will be unavoidable."<sup>91</sup>

Turkey's stance was in stark contrast with Israel's policy line and discourse. Both Davutoğlu and Erdoğan repeatedly underlined Turkey's supportive stance on Iran's peaceful nuclear programme and criticised the UN-imposed sanctions. During 2009, when international tension was at its peak and sanctions were in place regarding the Iranian programme (despite strong Iranian criticism), the number of statements from Turkey increased. Meanwhile, agreements worth \$2 billion were signed between Iran and Turkey to establish a crude oil field in Iran, and Erdoğan visited Iran in 2009 where he stated that the two countries shared common views with respect to regional developments.<sup>92</sup> Turkey also harshly criticised Israel for having nuclear weapons, and condemned its aggressive stance

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<sup>90</sup> "Nuclear Israel is a 'Threat' to Middle East, Says Turkey's Erdoğan", *The Telegraph*, 5/11/2011, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/8809028/Nuclear-Israel-is-a-threat-to-Middle-East-says-Turkeys-Erdogan.html>>, accessed 8/5/2013.

<sup>91</sup> See "Olmert says "all options" open against Iran", 1/14/2008, *Reuters*, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL14267899>>, accessed 4/5/2015; "Israeli minister says sack ElBaradei over Iran", 9/3/2008, *Reuters*, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL09395804>>, accessed 5/7/2015; "Israeli minister threatens Iran", 6/6/2008, *BBC*, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7440472.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7440472.stm)>, accessed 1/4/2016.

<sup>92</sup> Inbar, 2011, p. 139

against Iran. Erdoğan attacked Israel by stating that “those who criticize Iran’s nuclear program continue to possess the same weapons”, and continued, “I think that those who take this stance, who want these arrogant sanctions, need to first give these [weapons] up. We shared this opinion with our Iranian friends, our brothers.” He also stated that “Israel is a threat for its region because it has the atomic bomb”.<sup>93</sup> Turkey’s pro-Iranian stance at the UN, as well as its significant role in the “nuclear swap deal” with Brazil caused more anger in Israel in 2010.<sup>94</sup> The question of Iran’s nuclear programme and its links to the shift in Turkish grand strategy was presented in detail in the previous chapter, so this chapter will not go into further detail. However, the level of tension it engendered between Israel and Turkey was quite obvious. Israel perceived the programme as an existential threat,<sup>95</sup> while Turkey adopted a supportive stance towards the Iranian nuclear programme based on its own interest-based motivations.

#### *d- Operation Cast Lead and Its Aftermath*

In 2009, Israel’s Operation Cast Lead claimed more than 1300 Palestinian lives in Gaza, half of them civilians.<sup>96</sup> The operation started in the last few days of 2008 with no warning, and lasted for 22 days. The severity of the operation caused dismay from the Turkish point of view, primarily due to the fact that the operation came at a time when Turkey was putting a lot of effort in the Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations.

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<sup>93</sup> See “Turkey PM: If You Don’t Want Iran to Have Nukes, Give Yours Up”, 31/10/2009, *Haaretz*, <<http://www.haaretz.com/news/turkey-pm-if-you-don-t-want-iran-to-have-nukes-give-yours-up-1.5055>>, accessed 4/8/2015;

“Nuclear Israel is a “threat” to Middle East, says Turkey’s Erdogan”, 5/10/2011, *Telegraph*, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/8809028/Nuclear-Israel-is-a-threat-to-Middle-East-says-Turkeys-Erdogan.html>>, accessed 5/8/2015.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p. 144.

<sup>95</sup> Chuck Freilich, “The United States, Israel, and Iran: Defusing an ‘Existential Threat’”, *Arms Control Today*, 5/11/2008, <[http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008\\_11/freilich](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_11/freilich)>, accessed 12/11/2013.

<sup>96</sup> Eligür, 2012, p. 435–436.

As well as being a tragedy in itself, the operation greatly challenged Turkey's goal of acting as a key player in the region. During indirect talks between Syria and Israel, Turkey played a mediatory role which offered it a chance to raise its profile both as an impartial peace-maker and as a key regional player. However, Turkey's capacity as a facilitator in conducting and monitoring the implementation of any decisions made was debatable from the very beginning, considering its failures to provide the required secrecy and questions about whether it possessed sufficient power to push for and monitor the implementation of a possible deal. With respect to the secrecy issue, the talks put a good deal of domestic pressure on both Assad and Olmert when the talks were publicised. Coupled with Israel's domestic political atmosphere—which pushed Olmert to use these peace talks to cover corruption allegations against him—the possibility of success was very limited indeed.<sup>97</sup> However, Operation Cast Lead had been precipitate and unexpected. Unsurprisingly, Turkey's reaction to it was extremely negative. The peace talks, with Turkey's mediation, were stated as being close to making real progress when the operation started.<sup>98</sup> The first consequence of Operation Cast Lead was that Turkish efforts to lead talks between Israel and Syria within the context of the peace process were halted, a move that showed a loss of faith in Israel as a partner to achieving peace in the region.

Erdoğan, who was Prime Minister at the time, stated that the operation was “disrespectful to us” while peace talks were going on, and after the operation the then Foreign Minister Ali Babacan stated that “continuation of the talks...is naturally impossible.”<sup>99</sup> Harsher rhetorical action was on its way. Erdoğan called the operation a “blow against peace” and a “crime against humanity”, demanding the expulsion of Israel from the UN, criticizing

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<sup>97</sup> Aytürk, personal communication, 12/3/2016.

<sup>98</sup> Özlem Tür, “Turkey and Israel in the 2000s- From Cooperation to Conflict”, *Israel Studies* 17:3(2012), pp. 45-66. On the Syria-Israel indirect talks, also see Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey's Mediation: Critical Reflections from the Field”, *Middle East Policy* 20: 1(2013), pp. 83–90.

<sup>99</sup> Stein, 2014, p. 16.



the Israeli embargo on Hamas and accusing Israel of using excessive force not only against the militants but against civilians too.<sup>100</sup> He later referred to the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment of the Decalogue, “Lo tirtsach/Thou shall not kill”, both in English and in Hebrew, and went on to criticise the UN for allowing Israel to keep its seat.<sup>101</sup> However, the tragic event also provided Turkey with an opportunity to gain popularity in the MENA region by speaking out and positioning itself against Israel, further raising its profile within the context of its return to the region, an opportunity it embraced wholeheartedly. Erdoğan undertook a Middle East tour in December without visiting Israel, and with the additional agenda of condemning Israel and gathering support for Hamas. Following the 2006 Palestinian election, Hamas has been seen by Turkey as the true and democratically elected representative of the Palestinian people. Within this context, Erdoğan’s then advisor Ahmet Davutoğlu’s meeting with Khaled Mashaal in Syria was quite important.<sup>102</sup> During the Operation Cast Lead, Erdoğan stated: “Israel will be cursed for the children and the defenceless women who died under bombs. Israel will be cursed for tears shed by mothers”.<sup>103</sup> This rhetoric caused great concern in Jewish circles, and five American Jewish organisations sent a joint letter to Erdoğan, stating their concerns about the possible rise of anti-Semitism in Turkey and about the increase in the number of copies of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* being sold in Turkey.<sup>104</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the Israeli operation, the famous “Davos Crisis” inflicted a major blow the bilateral relationship. The crisis refers to the Davos Economic Forum in 2009 where Erdoğan stormed out of a debate with Shimon Peres. With this, Turkey’s image

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<sup>100</sup> Oğuzlu, 2010, p. 275; Carol Migdalovitz, “AKP’s Domestically-Driven Foreign Policy”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 9: 4 (2010), pp. 37–45, p. 39; Bengio, 2009, p.52.

<sup>101</sup> Aytürk, 2011, p. 678.

<sup>102</sup> Eligür, 2012, p. 436.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 437

<sup>104</sup> Eligür, 2012, p. 439; Fuller, 2008, p. 76; Chris Morris, 2005, p.216.

moved “from role of a mediator to the role of a key defier of Israel in the region”.<sup>105</sup> Before leaving, Erdoğan argued, “When it comes to killing you know very well how to kill. I know very well how you killed children on the beaches”. This incident instigated a “Davos syndrome” in Israel, which took the form of distrust towards Turkey, coupled with the return of a feeling of isolation in the region.<sup>106</sup> The crisis gained Erdoğan a huge amount of regional popularity, to a degree that no other Turkish leader in the republican period had enjoyed before. The crisis can be seen as one of the most symbolic moments in understanding Turkey’s popularity among oppositional groups during the Arab Spring and Erdoğan’s popularity in polls—a popularity that dwindled after the halt of the Awakening in Syria and the Sisi-led coup in Egypt.<sup>107</sup>

*e- Developments that Further Deteriorated the Relationship in the post-Operation Cast Lead Era*

The Israeli-Greek Cypriot Relationship

Several developments caused further worsening of the Turkish–Israeli relationship in the era that followed Operation Cast Lead. Israeli rapprochement with the Greek Cypriots was a major concern for Turkey. The relationship was considered to pose a significant threat to Turkey’s own relative power position in the Middle East and in the Eastern Mediterranean region, while closer ties between Israel and the Greek Cypriots carried the potential to provide Greece and Greek Cypriots with a relative advantage against Turkey.

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<sup>105</sup> Daniela Huber, senior fellow at the IAI in the Mediterranean and Middle East programme and Gerda Henkel Guest Researcher at LUISS Universit, personal communication, 12/2/2016.

<sup>106</sup> Ufuk Ulutaş, “Turkey and Israel: A Fluctuating Alliance”, *SETA Policy Brief* 42 (2010), p. 7.

<sup>107</sup> Emel Parlar Dal, “The Transformation of Turkey's Relations with the Middle East: Illusion or Awakening?”, *Turkish Studies*, 13: 2 (2010), pp. 245–267, p. 255. See also Mensur Akgün and Sabiha Senyücel Gündoğar, *The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2013*, TESEV Foreign Policy Programme.

The newly strengthened ties between Israel and the Greek Cypriots—especially related to arms sales and cooperation for the extraction of natural resources—caused discontent in Turkey. The Israeli exploration of the Leviathan natural gas field in the Eastern Mediterranean in 2010 resulted in a comprehensive energy exploration agreement between the Greek Cypriots and Israel, according to which they would delimit exclusive economic zones, plan joint exploration efforts and allow the participation of Israeli energy firms along the maritime border between the two countries. This rapprochement strengthened the position of the Greek Cypriots and indirectly Greece in the region at the expense of Turkish Cypriots and Turkey. In response, Turkey threatened to increase its military presence in and around Cyprus, and began its own resource exploration programme to the north, east and west of the island. It also insisted on the necessity to include both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities in any discussion regarding the conclusion of any future agreements.<sup>108</sup>

Overall, these reciprocal moves worsened relations further. The Israeli National Security Council warned Jewish citizens about growing anti-Semitism in Turkey and that visits to Turkey carried the risk of terrorist attacks against them.<sup>109</sup> In 2009, the number of Israeli tourists to Turkey almost halved compared to 2008 levels, decreasing from around 560,000 to 300,000. In 2010, numbers fell even lower to around 100,000.<sup>110</sup> In 2009, Israel also refused Ahmet Davutoğlu's request to enter the Gaza Strip from Israel, where he planned to meet Hamas leaders before meeting Israeli officials. This Israeli move against Davutoğlu

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<sup>108</sup> Huber and Tocci, 2013, p. 6–7 and “Arab Awakening Boosts Turkey’s Confidence”, *Strategic Comments*, 17:8. On the Israeli-Greek Cypriot relationship, also see Brent E. Sasley, “Regional Shifts Bring Israel and Cyprus Closer Together, for Now”, 8/7/2015, *World Politics Review*, <<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/16170/regional-shifts-bring-israel-and-cyprus-closer-together-for-now>>, accessed 3/1/2016.

<sup>109</sup> Aytürk, 2009, p. 63.

<sup>110</sup> See “Turkey posts huge fall in Israeli tourist numbers”, 8/5/2010, *Hürriyet Daily News*, <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-posts-huge-fall-in-israeli-tourist-numbers.aspx?pageID=438&n=turkey-posts-huge-fall-in-israeli-tourist-numbers-2010-08-05>>, accessed 7/11/2014 and “Turks come to Israel in record numbers”, 1/7/2014, *Al-Monitor*, <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/turkey-tourism-marmara-export.html>>, accessed 4/12/2015.

took place just a month before the planned Anatolian Eagle exercise of 2009 from which Turkey excluded Israel—a decision that does not in the circumstances seem coincidental.

From the Turkish point of view, in terms of its own power position and of the Turkish Cypriots, the main concern was about its influence over Cyprus—a strategic asset for Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean. Still, , the peak point of the deterioration in this era came with the Mavi Marmara flotilla raid.

### The Mavi Marmara Flotilla Raid

The climax of the deterioration in the relationship between Turkey and Israel came with the Israeli commando raid on a Turkish aid flotilla on 31 May 2010. The flotilla had been organised by a Turkish charity organisation, the IHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation/İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı).

The flotilla was staffed by activists from around the world with the goal of putting an end to the blockade of the Gaza Strip. The raid claimed the lives of nine Turkish citizens. What made this incident unique was that since the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, no state had ever killed Turkish civilians. Erdoğan described the Mavi Marmara incident as “inhumane state terrorism”, a comment much harsher than the UK Prime Minister David Cameron’s statement calling the raid “completely unacceptable”.<sup>111</sup> Beyond the rhetoric, certain other measures were taken. Turkey demanded a public apology, recalled its ambassador Oğuz Çelikkol, and refused to appoint a new ambassador to Israel. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were downgraded to second-secretary level, and Turkey

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<sup>111</sup> Eligür, 2012, p. 447–448, Sabrina Tavernise, “Raid Jeopardizes Turkey Relations”, New York Times, 31/5/2010, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/world/middleeast/01turkey.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/world/middleeast/01turkey.html?_r=0)>, accessed 12/07/2012 ; Roger Cohen, “Israel Isolates Itself”, New York Times, 5/9/2011, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/opinion/06iht-edcohen06.html?\\_r=2&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/06/opinion/06iht-edcohen06.html?_r=2&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss)>, accessed 07/06/2013.

called for an international investigation. Turkey also suspended all military relations with Israel, cancelled all joint military exercises, and closed Turkish airspace to Israeli forces. An official communication sent from Turkey in 2010, inviting Hezbollah leader Nasrallah to visit Ankara, appeared to be a blunt way of showing Turkish anger at Israeli policy-makers over the flotilla incident.<sup>112</sup> Turkey also succeeded in obtaining official UN condemnation for the raid—even though its wording was much weaker than Turkey had wanted.<sup>113</sup> In the UN Palmer Report, it was accepted that Israel's use of force was excessive, but the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip was accepted as legal, and the intentions of IHH activists were questioned.

Public opinion in Turkey was also extremely negative with respect to Israel after the raid: a 2011 survey conducted by the BBC noted that 77 percent of respondents viewed Israel negatively while only 9 percent saw the country in a positive light.<sup>114</sup>

Turkey's demand for a public apology as a prerequisite for normalisation was rejected by Israel.<sup>115</sup> However, in 2013, with US President Obama's mediation, Netanyahu apologized to Erdoğan for the flotilla raid over the phone and they talked about normalisation.<sup>116</sup> This apology played a significant role in more recent normalisation efforts, which will be investigated in more detail in the next section and in the concluding remarks of this chapter.

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<sup>112</sup> Inbar, 2011, p. 137.

<sup>113</sup> Hale, 2013, p. 231. On some exemplary criticisms of the report, see Richard Falk, "Disappointment at the United Nations: The Failure of the Palmer Report", *Insight Turkey* 13:4(2011), pp. 1-9; Norman G. Finkelstein, "Torpedoeing the Law: How the Palmer Report Justified Israel's Naval Blockade of Gaza", *Insight Turkey* 13: 4 (2011), pp. 11-29.

<sup>114</sup> Eligür, 2012, p. 448.

<sup>115</sup> Barak Ravid, "Lieberman to Turkey: Israel won't apologize for Gaza flotilla raid," *Haaretz*, 5/7/2010, <[www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/lieberman-to-turkeyisrael-won-t-apologize-for-gaza-flotilla-raid-1.300128](http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/lieberman-to-turkeyisrael-won-t-apologize-for-gaza-flotilla-raid-1.300128)>, accessed 4/7/2015; Oded Eran, "Israel: Quo Vadis, Turkey?", *Insight Turkey* 13: 4 (2011), pp. 31-38, p. 34.

<sup>116</sup> See "Israel PM Apologies for Gaza Flotilla Deaths", *BBC*, 23/3/2013, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-21902273>>, accessed 3/7/2014; "Israel to Turkey: We Apologize for Deadly Raid on Gaza-bound Flotilla", *CNN*, 24/3/2013, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/03/22/world/meast/israel-turkey-apology/>>, accessed 5/7/2014; "Netanyahu Apologizes to Turkey over Gaza Flotilla", *The Jerusalem Post*, 22/3/2013, <<http://www.jpost.com/International/Obama-Netanyahu-Erdogan-speak-by-phone-307423>>, accessed 5/7/2014; Matthew S. Cohen & Charles D. Freilich, "Breakdown and Possible Restart: Turkish-Israeli Relations under the AKP", *Israel Journal of Foreign affairs* 8: 1 (2014), pp. 39-55, p. 39-40.

*f- Towards a Pragmatic Re-evaluation of the Relationship: The Arab Spring and Beyond*

As previously mentioned, there were occasional efforts to repair the Turkish-Israeli relationship (or at least to keep it alive) even before the Arab Spring. Officials from both countries exchanged visits to negotiate whether and how the relationship could be fixed. The Arab Spring and beyond, however, offered a quite fertile ground for a substantial revision.

While Turkey's securitised relations with Syria and Iran dramatically improved in the period between 2002 and the Arab Spring, Israeli concerns remained constant due to the Syrian influence over politics in Lebanon, as well as the question of Iran's nuclear programme.<sup>117</sup> However, as far as Turkish perceptions were concerned, a dramatic change came about with the Arab Spring. First, Turkish-Iranian tensions over their clashing priorities heightened, then the impact of the Arab Spring on Syria caused deterioration in both the Turkish-Iranian and Turkish-Syrian relationships. Within this context, the Turkish government's rejection of the IHH's request to send a second flotilla in 2011<sup>118</sup> does not appear by any means coincidental.<sup>119</sup> Following this, Netanyahu's call to congratulate Erdoğan on his election victory the same year and his assertion of the desire to "solve all outstanding issues" between Turkey and Israel<sup>120</sup> further indicated the two countries' shared intention to keep the relationship under control for possible future normalisation. In 2012, Israel's acceptance of Turkey's role in Israel's prisoner swap deal with Hamas and Israeli aid to Turkey after the earthquake in Van in late 2011<sup>121</sup> were further signs of both sides' desire to revise the currently negative atmosphere of the relationship.

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<sup>117</sup> Kibaroglu, 2009, p. 132.

<sup>118</sup> Cagaptay, 2014, p. 28.

<sup>119</sup> Goren, 2012, p. 123.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 124

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 133.

As a further positive signal with noteworthy timing, Turkey had been a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in 2008. However, in 2012 the Holocaust was first commemorated in Istanbul's Neve Shalom Synagogue with high-level official attendance including the then Governor of Istanbul, the then Foreign Minister Davutoğlu and the former speaker of the parliament, Cemil Çiçek. In 2013, the commemoration took place in Etz Ahayim Synagogue in Istanbul's Ortaköy district. The then Head of Parliament Cemil Çiçek, the then Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç, then Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and former Minister for European Affairs Egemen Bağış all sent messages to the ceremony. In 2014, it took place at Kadir Has University and speeches were sent by Bülent Arınç, Ahmet Davutoğlu and the former Minister of the European Union and Chief Negotiator Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. In 2015 and 2016, the memorials took place in Ankara, first at Bilkent and then Ankara University, and included messages from current PM Ahmet Davutoğlu.<sup>122</sup> As a country which has observed the IHRA since 2008, the siting of these ceremonies in Turkey over consecutive years starting from 2012 is surely noteworthy, and its timing seems far from coincidental.

For Turkey, the instability of Arab politics, as recently evidenced by the Arab Spring, was perceived as an opportunity to project more influence over the region in the face of an emerging power vacuum. "The futures of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia are uncertain; the dangers on Israel's and Turkey's borders with Syria are growing, and events with Iran are

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<sup>122</sup> See Umut Uzer, "Turkish-Israeli Relations: Their Rise and Fall", *Middle East Policy* 22: 1 (2013), pp.97–110. See also "Holocaust Memorial Day Ceremony took place at Kadir Has University on January 27th, 2014", Turkish Jewish Community website, <<http://www.turkyahudileri.com/content/view/2883/287/lang,en/>>, accessed 24/7/2015; "International Holocaust Remembrance Day", International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance website, <<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/media-room/stories/international-holocaust-remembrance-day-2015#Turkey>><https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/media-room/stories/international-holocaust-remembrance-day-2015#Turkey>>, accessed 6/7/2016; "Turkey remembers Holocaust with vow to fight anti-Semitism", *Daily Sabah*, 27/1/2016, <<http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2016/01/27/turkey-remembers-holocaust-with-vow-to-fight-anti-semitism>>, accessed 22/3/2016

rapidly unfolding.”<sup>123</sup> This atmosphere required a revision in Turkey’s attitude towards the region due to potential risks of instability. Kutlay rightly argues that this controversial and unstable atmosphere required Turkey to improve its relations with other regional powers that were not at risk of collapsing, highlighting the need for normalising relations with Israel.<sup>124</sup> Amidst instability and unpredictable turn of events, Israel could again turn into a valuable partner in the medium term. This would especially be the case if regional turmoil were to spill over into Turkey or if it were to cause a U-turn in Turkey’s rapprochement with leading Middle Eastern powers which had been achieved in the last decade. Regarding the latter, it seems to be the case already due to the civil war in Syria. Under these circumstances, improvement (or “normalisation”) in the Turkish-Israeli relationship stands out as a valuable option in an atmosphere reminiscent of the regional dynamics 1990s. Once again, Turkey’s relationship with Iran and Syria suffered from major interest and security-driven clashes and its relationship with Iraq, especially after the Abadi’s election victory, gradually deteriorated too. Seeing the demise of the “zero problem” doctrine with regard to Turkey’s neighbouring states and moving towards a more ambiguous concept of “precious loneliness,”<sup>125</sup> the Turkish–Israeli relationship was unsurprisingly revisited.<sup>126</sup> More recently, Turkey has lifted its veto on Israel’s demand to have an office at NATO headquarters, which is another symbolic step towards cooperation.<sup>127</sup>

At this point, it is also important to mention Turkey’s gradually improving relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) especially since Abdullah Gül’s

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<sup>123</sup> Cohen & Freilich, 2014, p. 49

<sup>124</sup> Mustafa Kutlay, 8/4/2016.

<sup>125</sup> This concept was first mentioned by Ibrahim Kalin, a presidential spokesperson who had previously served as the Chief Policy Advisor to the then PM Erdoğan.

<sup>126</sup> On the motivations of normalisation, also see Kılıç Buğra Kanat, “Turkish-Israeli Reset: Business as Usual?”, *Middle East Policy* 20: 2 (2013), pp. 113–121.

<sup>127</sup> See “NATO Okays Israel Office in Its Brussels Headquarters After Turkey Lifts Veto”, *Haaretz*, 4/5/2016, <<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.717794>>, accessed 10/5/2016; “Israel to open permanent mission at NATO HQ after Turkey lifts veto”, *RT*, 4/5/2016, <<https://www.rt.com/news/341827-israel-nato-mission-turkey/>>, accessed 9/5/2016.



unprecedented direct call to the KRG President Massoud Barzani in 2009.<sup>128</sup> The relationship further deepened following the Peace Process in Turkey, primarily through the leading political party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and its leader, the KRG's President Massoud Barzani. This relationship even helped Turkey's ongoing fight against the PKK.<sup>129</sup> In 2011, as the first prime minister to do so, Erdoğan visited the KRG, and the following year Barzani attended the JDP's general congress.<sup>130</sup> Meanwhile other Kurdish parties, namely the PUK and the Gorran Movement were also searching for better relations with Turkey, probably in part due to their desire to strengthen their position against President Barzani.<sup>131</sup> Turkey's increasingly deteriorating relationship with the Iran-backed Iraqi government, along with the KRG's need for regional partners to support its autonomous status and trade its energy resources—in which Turkey is far from rich—has resulted in a new atmosphere of overlapping interest for the two parties. The KRG started to export crude oil to Turkey by truck in 2012, and began to use the pre-existing Iraqi-Turkish oil pipeline to pump its oil to Turkey in May 2014.<sup>132</sup> In 2011, the KRG accounted for 70 per cent of the export volume between Iraq and Turkey.<sup>133</sup> For the KRG, Turkey is an important gateway both for further trade and as a transit point, especially considering the KRG's troubled political, military, and

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<sup>128</sup> Joerg Baudner, "The Evolution of Turkey's Foreign Policy under the AK Party Government", *Insight Turkey* 16:3 (2014), pp. 79-100 and Mesut Özcan, "From Distance to Engagement: Turkish Policy towards the Middle East, Iraq and Iraqi Kurds", *Insight Turkey* 13:2 (2011), pp. 71-92.

<sup>129</sup> Even though the freezing of the Peace Process due to the re-eruption of armed conflict in the Southeastern Turkey, Turkish ties with the KDP seems strong enough to keep this relationship alive. The KDP's feeling of being surrounded by increasing power and presence of PKK in Syria and Iraq also pushes Barzani to Turkey's side. The question is whether the critical stance about Turkey's attitude with respect to the Peace Process and its close ties with the KDP by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Gorran/*Change* movement both of which enjoys closer ties with Iran might damage this relationship in a scenario where Massoud Barzani loses its position as the key policy-maker in the KRG.

<sup>130</sup> Massimo Morelli & Constantino Pischedda, "The Turkey-KRG Energy Partnership: Assessing Its Implications", *Middle East Policy* 21:1(2014), pp. 107-121, p. 110.

<sup>131</sup> Based on the field research in Erbil, Suleimaniyah and Kirkuk in December and March, 2016. Some leading figures such as the PUK's Politburo members Rizgar Ali and Aso Mamand and the Gorran's spokesperson Shores Hajj all stated similar statements on their desire to have better relations with Turkey and criticised Turkey's tendency to conduct policy and business with the KDP alone.

<sup>132</sup> Stein, p. 26-28; Bill Park, "Turkey, the US and the KRG: Moving Parts and the Geopolitical Realities", *Insight Turkey* 14: 3 (2012), pp. 109-12.; Winrow, 2013, p. 159; David Romano, "Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey: Temporary Marriage?", *Middle East Policy* 22: 1 (2015), pp. 89-101; Yakış, 2014, p. 100-101.

<sup>133</sup> Morelli & Pischedda, 2014, p. 110.

economic landscape due to its fight with ISIS, economic difficulties and political controversies over Barzani's presidency. Here, it is important to note that Turkey's changing attitude regarding the question of Northern Iraq acted as a further catalyst to pave the way for normalisation with Israel since the question was a major point of divergence between the two in the past.

Energy also played an important role in the normalisation of Turkish-Israeli relations. Israel's Tamar and Leviathan fields are considered to offer an alternative source of diversification in Turkey's search for energy security. Gareth Winrow states that "the prospects for a gas pipeline connecting Turkey with the Israeli Leviathan gas field in the eastern Mediterranean have improved with a possible rapprochement between Turkey and Israel and moves to resolve the Cypriot dispute."<sup>134</sup> In the past, Turkey and Israel had agreed upon the construction of the Med Stream, a connecting system which would carry not only oil and natural gas but also electricity and water between the two countries. However, the project was shelved in 2009, and the energy envoy of the Foreign Ministry of Israel, Adam Ron, argues that Israel has succeeded in finding alternative sources for water and electricity. However he concedes that a new project can and should to be considered as a component of recent normalisation. Israel seems optimistic about this, and Ron also mentioned the prospects of an Israeli contribution to Turkey's nuclear and renewable energy projects so that Turkey can revise its energy mix and thereby limit its over-dependent energy profile.<sup>135</sup> According to Cenk Pala, gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean might contain as much natural gas resources as the entire Caspian natural gas field, which in turn could make a significant contribution to Turkey's energy profile, reducing its primary dependence on

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<sup>134</sup> Gareth Winrow, personal communication, 22/2/2016.

<sup>135</sup> Ron Adam, personal communication at an ORSAM meeting on the prospects for the Turkish-Israeli energy relationship, 5/3/2016.

Russia.<sup>136</sup> Even though Turkey's desire for a close energy relationship with Israel is strong, Israel's option of selling its gas to Europe and Asia via the Greek Cypriot Government and Greece routes might challenge the bilateral energy relationship in the foreseeable future.

Regarding this recent pragmatic re-evaluation and normalisation of the relationship, a significant turning point came in mid-2016. On June 26, 2016, the two sides announced the deal on which their normalisation will be based. This was based on the two countries' negotiations after 2013 at various levels, which had grown to form a final reconciliation document in which both sides expressed their desire for an improved relationship and identified the main points that needed to be addressed in order to bring that about. According to the deal, Israel would pay 20 million US dollars compensation to the families of the people who lost their lives in the Mavi Marmara flotilla tragedy; Turkey would be able to send aid to the Palestinians via the Port of Ashdod and carry out humanitarian projects in Palestine; Hamas would only be able to have political representation in Turkey, and no legal action would be taken by the Turkish judiciary against the Israeli security forces that took part in the Mavi Marmara raid. Turkey, within the context of its humanitarian aid to and investments in Palestine, stated that it would start transferring necessary equipment in order to build a water treatment facility, energy plant, and a 200-bed Turkey-Palestine Friendship Hospital. Turkey and Israel would upgrade their diplomatic representation to ambassadorial level again and lift the sanctions they had imposed upon each other. Turkey's Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, in addition to the points mentioned by his Israeli counterpart, stated that the first instalment of Turkey's aid to Palestine would be sent to Ashdod on 7 July 2016, and would reach its destination within a week.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Pala, personal communication, 10/3/2016.

<sup>137</sup> "Israel and Turkey Officially Announce Rapprochement Deal, Ending Diplomatic Crisis", 27/6/2016, *Haaretz*, <<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.727369>>, erişim 27/6/2016; "Türkiye-İsrail mutabakatının detayları", 27/6/2016, *Al Jazeera Türk*, <<http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/al-jazeera-ozel/turkiye-israil-mutabakatinin-detaylari>> erişim 28/6/2016; "6 Must Reads on the Israel-Turkey Reconciliation Agreement",

With respect to the timing of the normalisation efforts, which started in 2013 and reached its zenith in 2016, a few points seem worth mentioning. The internationalisation of the Syrian civil war and the intensification of ISIS/DAESH's terrorist activity in the region pushed regional powers to revise their regional and global policies. Within this context, Turkey was not an exception. Its relationship with the Syrian regime deteriorated, and bilateral relations with Iraq and Iran worsened to a great extent compared to the pre-Arab Spring years. Also, as an indirect consequence of the Syrian Civil War, the Turkish-Russian relationship took a serious blow when Turkey downed a Russian jet in late 2015. This tense period lasted until August 2016, when the two countries agreed to restore their relationship. The latter also caused a great deal of concern regarding Turkey's energy security.<sup>138</sup> Under these circumstances, Turkey's ideal partner should be both regionally influential, rich in terms of hydrocarbon resources, and geographically beneficial to Turkey's geopolitical position as a major transit route. Turkey's realpolitik analysis, based on these two major needs, seems to have laid the groundwork for the Turkish-Israeli reconciliation.

All in all, Turkish and Israeli efforts to fix the relationship show that both sides are aware of its strategic importance in an environment where threat perceptions and concepts of national interest can change rapidly. As the Arab Spring illustrated, and as stated by chargé

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28/6/2016, *Haaretz*, <<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.727500>>, erişim 29/6/2016; "Israel and Turkey announce deal to repair relations after six-year split", 27/6/2016, *Washington Post*, <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/israel-turkey-announce-deal-to-repair-relations-after-six-year-split/2016/06/27/aa2399ae-3bd5-11e6-9e16-4cf01a41decb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/israel-turkey-announce-deal-to-repair-relations-after-six-year-split/2016/06/27/aa2399ae-3bd5-11e6-9e16-4cf01a41decb_story.html)>, erişim 28/6/2016; "Israel, Turkey strike deal to normalize ties", 27/6/2016, *CNN*, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/26/middleeast/israel-turkey-relations/>>, erişim 28/6/2016.

<sup>138</sup> See Göktuğ Sönmez, Energy Dependency and a Route Map Within the Context of the Recent Turkey-Russia Crisis, *ORSAM Review of Regional Affairs*, No. 36, December 2015. With several months of diplomatic effort and a meeting between Erdoğan and Putin in August, 2016 in Moscow, the atmosphere between the two seems softened to a great extent. See and "Putin mends broken relations with Turkey's Erdogan", 9/8/2016, *BBC*, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37018562>>, accessed 11/8/2016; "Russia's Putin and Turkey's Erdogan meet after damaging rift", 9/8/2016, *CNN*, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/08/09/world/russia-putin-turkey-erdogan-meeting/>>, accessed 10/8/2016; "Erdoğan and Putin discuss closer ties in first meeting since jet downing", 9/8/2016, *The Guardian*, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/09/erdogan-meets-putin-leaders-seek-mend-ties-jet-downing-russia-turkey>>, accessed 10/8/2016; "Russia and Turkey Vow to Repair Ties as West Watches Nervously", 9/8/2016, *New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/10/world/europe/putin-erdogan-russia-turkey.html>>, accessed 11/8/2016.

d'affaires Amira Oron,<sup>139</sup> when regional dynamics change, the two powers' revised calculations act as a catalyst for closer contact. Still, even though both sides manifest a need for cooperation at pragmatic and practical levels, and even penned a normalisation deal, the renewal of more nebulous concepts such as mutual trust and confidence is something that could take some time.<sup>140</sup>

The next section will investigate how domestic factors have impacted on the Turkish stance vis-à-vis Israel as multipliers, either obstructing or reinforcing Turkey's ability to make adjustments to the two countries' relationship.

#### Domestic Level: Coalitions between Businessmen and Political Figures and Shifting Civil-Military Power Calculus

In terms of domestic factors that play important roles as multipliers in Turkey's shifting attitude towards Israel, this thesis will analyse the two most significant ones. The first is Turkey's economic pragmatism, even in the face of political tension, within the context of its journey towards becoming a trading state. This is reflected in the gradual shift of conservative businessmen associations towards a more pragmatic, neoliberal stance. The second is the decreasing influence of the military over civilian authorities' policy-making processes, which has allowed elected civilian policy-makers to adjust and readjust Turkey's attitude towards Israel more flexibly in line with changing interest-based calculations rather than being pressured by the military to continue following the securitised and ideology-based alignments of the previous years.

#### *Business: Pragmatic Economic Relationship amidst Political Tension*

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<sup>139</sup> Amira Oron, personal communication at an ORSAM meeting on the prospects for the Turkish-Israeli energy relationship, 5/3/2016.

<sup>140</sup> Oron, personal communication, 25/5/2016.

As Oron stated, Israel is an “island” in economic terms, isolated and lacking economic connection on the ground. As such, Turkey has been an important facilitator through which Israel can reach out to the world.<sup>141</sup> From the very beginning of the JDP rule—and the post-2008 era was no exception as far as the desire to maintain economic ties was concerned—the JDP has always presented a welcoming attitude towards Israeli investments and the flow of money. The JDP government has even faced harsh criticism from opposition parties in this regard, but challenged them by arguing that values and political developments were of secondary importance to conducting economic relations.<sup>142</sup> However, it still came as a surprise to some when leading figures from the JDP—a so-called Islamist political party with an anti-Israeli ideological background—visited Israel in 2005, led by Erdoğan and accompanied by a crowded business delegation whose aim was to encourage further economic activity between the two countries.<sup>143</sup>

It should be noted that even during times of political deterioration, bilateral trade volume has never experienced a particularly dramatic fall. Trade with Israel rose from less than \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion between 2000 and 2009. In spite of the famous Davos and flotilla crises, it rose to \$3.5–4 billion in 2010 and \$4–4.5 billion in 2011, defying the political deterioration.<sup>144</sup> Even though \$4–4.5 billion seems quite a modest figure considering

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<sup>141</sup> Oron, personal communication, 25/5/2016

<sup>142</sup> Oğuzlu, 2010, p. 277 and Bacık, 2009, p. 36.

<sup>143</sup> Sabrina Tavernise, 2010.

<sup>144</sup> Dennis-Peter Merklingshaus, “The Benefits of the Israeli-Turkish Partnership”, *MILTEC Military Technology*, 5 (2013). For further information on the economic activity while political tension is raised, see “Turkish-Israeli trade at record high, tourist numbers plunge”, *Today’s Zaman*, 3/4/2011, <<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-240029-turkish-israeli-trade-at-record-high-tourist-numbers-plunge.html>>, accessed 15/06/2012; “Ties remain strained, but Turkey, Israel keep trading”, *Jerusalem Post*, 17/4/2011, <<http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Ties-remain-strained-but-Turkey-Israel-keep-on-trading>>, accessed 18/03/2013; “Turkey-Israel Trade Unaffected by Diplomatic Spats”, *VOA News*, 27/10/2011, <<http://www.voanews.com/content/turkey-israel-trade-immune-from-diplomatic-spats-132804308/169365.html>>, accessed 05/01/2013;

For official Turkish statistics for a comparison regarding bilateral trade in terms of exports and imports in USD in 2010, visit

<[http://rapor.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwservlet?disticaretdb2=&report=IHT0151.RDF&p\\_kod=2&p\\_ulke1=624&p](http://rapor.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwservlet?disticaretdb2=&report=IHT0151.RDF&p_kod=2&p_ulke1=624&p)

Turkey's overall trade volume, this increasing trend is worth noting in order to demonstrate the level of pragmatism that still existed between the two countries even as political differences reached their height. Pipes refers to this era as "hostile on the political level but booming on the commercial level",<sup>145</sup> although Aytürk argued that \$4-4.5 billion in terms of Turkey's overall trade volume is almost nothing and quite expendable.<sup>146</sup> However, I suggest that the increasing trend in bilateral trade and its underlying meaning is an extension of the pragmatism that separates economics from occasional political tension, and in analytical terms is therefore far from negligible. The idea that politics and economics could run separately even during those thorny times is one that needs further investigation. Zorlu Holding, which is widely regarded as a pro-government Turkish company, signed an \$800 million deal with Israeli Dorad Energies to construct natural gas stations in Israel in 2004.<sup>147</sup> This, and the projected Med Stream pipeline project, are examples of the pragmatic attitude of the JDP and the Turkish businessmen associations. These projects are far more ambitious than the \$100 million deal with Ceylan Holding to construct a new terminal at Israel's Ben-Gurion airport, which was signed during one of the high points of the relationship in 1997.<sup>148</sup>

In the pre-JDP era, MÜSİAD demanded that the government cut off economic ties with Israel due to Israel's treatment of Yasser Arafat, and it also demanded the cancellation of the high-profile M-60 tank deal. However, MÜSİAD made no similar demands during the JDP era.<sup>149</sup> In addition to pro-JEDP Zorlu Holding's ambitious natural gas deals, between

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[\\_yil1=2011&p\\_kod1=1&p\\_kod2=4&p\\_dil=2&desformat=html&ENVID=disticaretEnv](http://rapor.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwservlet?disticaretdb2=&report=IHT0151.RDF&p_kod=2&p_ulke1=624&p_yil1=2010&p_kod1=1&p_kod2=4&p_dil=2&desformat=html&ENVID=disticaretEnv); for 2011 statistics, visit [http://rapor.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwservlet?disticaretdb2=&report=IHT0151.RDF&p\\_kod=2&p\\_ulke1=624&p\\_yil1=2010&p\\_kod1=1&p\\_kod2=4&p\\_dil=2&desformat=html&ENVID=disticaretEnv](http://rapor.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwservlet?disticaretdb2=&report=IHT0151.RDF&p_kod=2&p_ulke1=624&p_yil1=2010&p_kod1=1&p_kod2=4&p_dil=2&desformat=html&ENVID=disticaretEnv).

<sup>145</sup> Daniel Pipes, personal communication, 14/2/2016.

<sup>146</sup> Aytürk, 12/3/2016.

<sup>147</sup> Gruen, 2004, p. 446 and Fuller, 2008, p. 76

<sup>148</sup> Olson, 2001, p. 148.

<sup>149</sup> See "TUSKON İsrail Saldırısını Lanetledi" ["TUSKON Cursed Israeli Attacks"], 1/6/2010, <http://www.haberaktuel.com/tuskon-israil-saldirsini-lanetledi-haberi-280348.html>, accessed 28/04/2012; "TUSKON İsrail'i Kınadı" ["TUSKON Condemned Israel"], 31/5/2010, <http://www.istanbulburda.com/TUSKON-ISRAIL'I-KINADI-33948>, accessed, 18/05/2012; "MÜSİAD'dan Hükümete İsrail Desteği" ["Support to the Government's Israeli Policy from MÜSİAD"], 14/9/2011,

2005 and 2009, Turkey's Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB) under the leadership of a leading businessmen rightly known as quite pro-JDP, Rıfat Hisarcıklıoğlu, successfully initiated the Erez Industrial Zone Project in Gaza, also known as the Project on the Revitalization of the Palestinian Industrial Free Zone or the "Industry for Peace Initiative in Palestine."<sup>150</sup> The project facilitated closer contact between Israeli, Turkish and Palestinian business circles, allowing for a tripartite channel of communication and bringing associated economic benefits.

A more recent statement from MÜSİAD about the organisation's positive views on the normalisation efforts with Israel and Russia is also quite striking within this context, especially given the ideological stance of the organisation.<sup>151</sup> It is known that TUSKON—even during the era of political tension—was quite active in Turkish-Israeli economic relations, with several leading TUSKON member firms standing out as doing business with Israel, including Naksan Holding, Almera, Derma, Fixa Construction etc.<sup>152</sup>

While in the 1990s economic contact stemmed from military purchases and modernisation programmes, Turkey's path towards becoming a "trading state" resulted in a more diversified and desecuritized understanding of economic interaction. In spite of their conservative ideological orientation and occasional criticisms directed at Israel, conservative Turkish business associations with close ties to the JDP did not press for a severance of

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<http://ekonomi.haberturk.com/makro-ekonomi/haber/669410-musiaddan-hukumete-israil-destegi>, accessed 08/06/2013; "MÜSİAD: İsraille Ticari İlişkileri Durdurun" ["MÜSİAD: Halt Trade with Israel"], 4/4/2012, <<http://www.bianet.org/bianet/ekonomi/8976-musiad-israille-ticari-iliskileri-durdurun>>, accessed 01/06/2013; "MÜSİAD İsrail'i Kınadı" ["MÜSİAD Condemned Israel"], 31/5/2010, <<http://haber.mynet.com/guncel/musiad-israili-kinadi-513946-1>>, accessed 26/05/2013; "MÜSİAD'dan İsrail Saldırısına Kınama" ["MÜSİAD Condemned Israeli Attack"], 28/12/2008/ <<https://www.ih.com.tr/ekonomi/musiaddan-israil-saldirisina-kinama/48651>>, accessed 12/07/2013.

<sup>150</sup> Aytürk, 2009, p. 70 and Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, "Turkey and the Middle East: frontiers of the new geographic imagination", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 61: 4 (2007), pp. 471–488, p. 479.

<sup>151</sup> "Hükümetin İsrail ve Rusya politikasına iş dünyasından tam destek", 28/6/2016, *Dünya Bülteni*, <<http://ekonomi.dunyabulteni.net/son-dakika/556715/hukümetin-israil-ve-rusya-politikasına-musiad-ve-askondan-tam-destek>>, accessed 4/7/2016.

<sup>152</sup> See "Türkiye İsrail'in Pazarı", 1/6/2011, *Özgür Gündem*, <<http://ozgurgundem.biz/haber/12715/turkiye-israil-in-pazarı>>, accessed 13/6/2016 and "Bir tek onlardan ses çıkmıyor", 22/7/2014, *Sabah*, <<http://www.sabah.com.tr/ekonomi/2014/07/22/bir-tek-onlardan-ses-cikmiyor>>, accessed 4/8/2016.



economic ties with Israel, and Turkey's pre-established economic links with Israel ensured that economic interaction was maintained between the two countries. The more considered and pragmatic attitude of the businessmen—who had been expected to take a much more oppositional stance regarding bilateral economic interactivity with Israel—helped keep this channel open in the hope of the longer-term possibilities of mending ties. This attitude was very important in terms of keeping economic channels open and even showing an increase in trading volume, however modest it might be.

### *The Military's Loss of Influence*

The securitisation of Turkey's politics in the 1990s was due in part to the military's authority and its desire to stay in charge in order to act as a control mechanism against "Islamist" political groups inside Turkey by using the relationship with Israel as a counterweight. "For the military, ties with Israel were not just a useful tool for joint training, weapons procurement, and counter-terrorism, but also a means of demonstrating the secular nature of the Republic to domestic Islamists".<sup>153</sup> The military's primary concerns were changing regional dynamics and the rising number of PKK attacks. Within the context of the re-orientation of Turkey's military, economic, and political focus in the 1990s, the military's attitude also significantly contributed to the Turkish-Israeli alliance. The relationship between the two countries' military officials, according to Oron, pushed the relationship to a higher level, that of a strategic partnership. The two sets of military officials who spoke the same language of security and military power could help "miracles happen".<sup>154</sup> Objections from politicians regarding the extent of this relationship or about over-priced military equipment deals were overlooked by the military as they bypassed elected civilian politicians. Pointing

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<sup>153</sup> Cohen & Freilich, 2014, p. 45.

<sup>154</sup> Amira Oron, personal communication, 25/5/2016.

to the self-appointed superiority of the military over civilian policy-makers, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Turkish armed forces Çevik Bir (who was also the architect of the Turkish-Israeli military agreements and was awarded the International Leadership Award by the Jewish Institute in Washington) referred to politicians as hats that come and go. Meanwhile, the state—the old establishment with the military as the most influential group within it—was a permanent reality. Bir also noted that the military had made it clear that it would not allow the Islamist Welfare Party to damage the Turkish-Israeli relationship.<sup>155</sup>

One of the major problems that caused public discontent with Israel concerned the M-60 tank modernisation deal in 2002. It was signed on the same day that Israeli forces surrounded Arafat's headquarters. When asked about a possible delay of the agreement, Head of General Staff Hüseyin Kivrıkoğlu commented that those proposing such ideas are born enemies of Jews, and that such an option would be completely out of the question.<sup>156</sup> Chief of Staff İsmail Hakkı Karadayı stated that he would visit Israel whether Erbakan (the elected coalition partner and deputy Prime Minister) liked it or not, and that he saw no need to meet Erbakan prior to going there. Such attitudes exemplify the way the Turkish military not only acted independently of elected politicians, but also did not hesitate to actively position themselves against them.<sup>157</sup>

The military's increasing influence in Turkish politics in the 1990s stemmed from the increasing number of the PKK attacks and the political elite's alarmist attitude towards the rise of the Welfare Party—two domestic concerns to which the military gave priority. The military succeeded in adding these to the agenda of the National Security Concept documents<sup>158</sup> via their influence over politicians, which in turn meant that military concerns

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<sup>155</sup> Altunışık, 2000, p. 183; Ulutaş, 2010, p. 5; Olson, 2001, p. 160.

<sup>156</sup> Gruen, 2002, p. 318.

<sup>157</sup> Olson, 2001, p. 130.

<sup>158</sup> Ümit Cizre, "Demythologizing the National Security Concept: The Case of Turkey", *Middle East Journal*, 57:2 (2003), pp. 213–229; Pınar Bilgin, "Turkey's Changing Security Discourses: The Challenge of Globalisation",

became the primary concerns of the state. Such an atmosphere left elected politicians with almost no room to pursue policy choices independent from the military's preferences. These dynamics show how the relationship between Israel and Turkey was based on Turkey's security needs and new threat perceptions in the post-Cold War era, which were also reinforced by the military's upper hand over politicians. Tschirgi rightly notes that "contrary to the view in the Arab world, and in Damascus in particular, the impetus of the alliance between the two countries did not come from Israel, but from the Turkish generals".<sup>159</sup>

As the military's power gradually decreased in the JDP era, its ability to interfere in politics declined along with it—also thanks to the legal amendments in accordance with the EU acquis. The exclusion of Israel from the Anatolian Eagle and Reliant Mermaid operations without prior consultation with the military was an obvious example of this change. The increasing power of the elected civilian executive brought about by the new power calculus in the civil-military relationship. The pro-Israeli front inside Turkey suffered from the diminishing influence of one of its most ardent supporters, namely the military.

This new environment allowed elected policy-makers to desecuritize Turkey's relationship with its neighbours—with Iran and Syria up until 2013 and with the Kurdistan Regional Government in Northern Iraq since 2009, as well as challenging former policy directions, as was the case with Israel.

In contrast to the 1990s, recent normalisation efforts came in the wake of changing regional dynamics in an era during which the military is much less influential over policy-making. This shows that international changes and consequent power-driven concerns had the upper hand over domestic factors. The military recovered its public image to some extent

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*European Journal of Political Research* 44 (2005), pp. 175–201; Ayşe Aslıhan Çelenk, "Democratization of the National Security Discourse and the Political Parties in Turkey", *Erciyes Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 33 (2009), pp. 119–134.

<sup>159</sup> Tschirgi, 2003, p. 111.

after the Erdoğan-Gülen rift and the recent U-turn in the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer trials, even though it is still a long way from the position it enjoyed before. A noteworthy development within this context is that some of the military personnel who were previously accused of being part of the Sledgehammer coup plans succeeded in regaining their positions after the coup attempt in July 15, 2016—which was widely believed to have been led by Gülenist officers. However, it is important to note that in addition to the joint position taken by political parties and the people, the anti-coup stance adopted by the vast majority of the military—including the Chief of Staff and the Commanders of Land and Air Forces as well as Special Forces and Gendarmerie—was what made the coup attempt fail. This shows how the reconfiguration of the civil-military relationship has succeeded in transforming the greater part of the military itself and ensuring its adherence to elected politicians—even though the military cannot in its entirety be assumed comfortable with Erdoğan’s policy line. To what extent this change fixed the image of the military and how this would affect normalisation between Turkey and Israel for the coming years is a question that would make an interesting subject for future research. In the face of this change, however, and the attempted coup, the military still refrained from making any public statements about the normalisation efforts or any other foreign policy-related matter, showing the consequences of years of efforts that have been put into reconfiguring civil-military relations.

#### Concluding Remarks: Assessing the Strength of NCR vis-à-vis Primordialist/Naïve Culturalist Accounts

Primordialist accounts widely use the Turkish-Israeli relationship as a case study to show how ideology has played the ultimate role in each country’s perceptions of the other and how fluctuations in their ideologies caused deterioration. Pipes suggests that the primary motivation behind the changing dynamics of the Turkish-Israeli relationship was without

doubt the “Islamist outlook of the JDP leadership”, saying that “it was all about ideology”.<sup>160</sup> According to Cornell, “The AKP leadership are ideologically convinced anti-Semites, who also find it to their political advantage at home to use Israel and Jews as a punching bag.”<sup>161</sup>

I suggest that shared economic and practical interests, rather than ideological values and ideational factors, have been the main motivations behind the last decade’s deterioration and more recent normalisation efforts. The JDP did not pursue an “Erbakanist” anti-Israeli policy line—even though in an interview conducted by this author, Michael Bishku stated that the improvement in Turkey’s relations with the “Arab and Islamic worlds” was due to the “zero problems” doctrine working in conjunction with “Neo-Ottomanism and pan-Islamism”.<sup>162</sup> Instead, this chapter has shown that Turkey followed a much more pragmatic line towards Israel, even in an era of serious clashes of interest. Even during the Welfare era, when the current JDP elite were active within the Welfare Party, some prominent figures within the Welfare Party had chosen to follow a more moderate path, such as the then Mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who visited the Chief Rabbi when he was elected as the mayor of İstanbul to avoid any concerns over his future policies vis-à-vis different ethnic and religious groups in the city. The Mayor of Ankara had extended an invitation to Israeli diplomats to a dinner he hosted for foreign diplomats, while Welfare Party MPs had also attended the event organised to honour Bernard Lewis’ 80<sup>th</sup> birthday—a man who is both a Turcologist and a leading Jewish figure.<sup>163</sup>

Some scholars who approach this bilateral relationship from a primordialist and ideational viewpoint extensively refer to specific developments—such as Erdoğan’s naming of Israeli actions in Gaza as “state terror” in 2004, the JDP’s invitation to Hamas leader

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<sup>160</sup> Daniel Pipes, personal communication, 14/2/2016.

<sup>161</sup> Cornell, personal communication, 17/2/2016.

<sup>162</sup> Bishku, personal communication, 26/2/2016.

<sup>163</sup> Gruen, 1997, p.10.

Mashaal in 2006 and the Davos Crisis—as important turning points that defined the last decade’s deterioration.<sup>164</sup> However, as mentioned in the relevant chapter of this research, the first signs of deterioration in the relationship came after the Iraq War in 2003 due to Turkey and Israel’s clashing visions of Northern Iraq. Similarly, rather than blaming the Davos Crisis, the reason for such a dramatic deterioration in the first place is important, and that was Operation Cast Lead.<sup>165</sup> For Turkey, the operation marked the failure of its mediation efforts in the region. In turn, the relationship experienced a severe blow as Turkey felt its regional standing had been undermined. As such, it appears that the critical junctures and developments focused on in this chapter—such as the question of Northern Iraq or Israel’s Operation Cast Lead—have proved much more useful in explaining the shift, rather than relying on ideological and/or cultural shifts.

Some incidents such as the Turkish invitation to Shimon Peres in 2007 to address the Turkish Grand National Assembly, and the Turkish support for Israeli membership of the OECD in 2010<sup>166</sup> at a time of high political tension, prove difficult to explain if it is assumed that Islamism or Neo-Ottomanist ideology is all that matters. Israel and Turkey seemed to be aware of the possibility that they might need each other at some point in the future due to the dynamic environment of the region, as the post-Arab Spring setting have clearly shown. Moreover, Turkey’s closer ties with the regional authority in Northern Iraq—once the main point of disagreement between Turkey and Israel—has also helped ease tensions in Turkish-Israeli relations. A closer relationship with the KRG offered Turkey a way of maintaining its regional position whilst controlling the links between the PKK and Northern Iraq. The pragmatism of post-Arab Spring normalisation efforts were noted even by Çağaptay, who is in fact an ardent supporter of primordialist approach to Turkey, and argued that Turkey was

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<sup>164</sup> Haas, 2012, p. 197

<sup>165</sup> Tarık Oğuzlu, “The Changing Dynamics of Turkish-Israeli Relations: A Structural Realist Account”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 15, vol. 2 (2010), pp. 273–288, at p. 279.

<sup>166</sup> Haas, 2012, p. 200–201.

“Islamising” its grand strategy. Cağaptay argues that due to Turkey’s increasing concerns about the Assad regime and Iran’s bid for regional leadership, the Turkish-Israeli relationship had again found fertile ground for serious improvement.<sup>167</sup> Turkey’s comparatively mild stance over the Israeli operation in Gaza in 2014<sup>168</sup> compared to its stance during Operation Cast Lead does not seem coincidental in that respect. Ünver rightly adds an important dimension to this picture, stating that as long as internal conflicts and asymmetrical warfare continues in both countries, they will have to maintain good relations.<sup>169</sup>

From the timing of the Turkish and Israeli efforts to mend their fences to the continuing and even improving bilateral economic relationship, the ideology-driven argument faces several serious challenges. Turkey’s new, extensively pragmatic and interest-driven grand strategic behaviour has sometimes caused politicians to clash with the public opinion. But even when public anger was at its zenith, for example after Operation Cast Lead or the Israeli flotilla raid, a working channel of communication was maintained. The two countries even continued to conduct joint military exercises until it became impossible to reconcile Turkey’s new grand strategy of power-maximisation with Israeli actions. This shows that public opinion, party politics, and the personal trajectories of policy-makers were of secondary importance to power and interest-driven calculations. This pragmatic approach has been significant in keeping economic channels open, rather than contributing to a further deterioration in the relationship using anti-Israeli rhetoric.

One thing is obvious: in spite of all the tension between 2002 and 2011, neither Israel nor the JDP want a complete breakdown of the relationship between the two countries. This has been true even in the post-2008 period, when the JDP became much more powerful than

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<sup>167</sup> Soner Cağaptay, “Turkey mends fences with Israel”, *Jane’s Islamic Affairs Analyst*, 16/04/2013.

<sup>168</sup> “Gazze Yaralarını Saramıyor” [“Gaza Cannot Bind Up Its Wounds”], *Al Jazeera*, 8/7/2015, <<http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/gazze-yaralarini-saramiyor>>, accessed 14/7/2015.

<sup>169</sup> Ünver, personal communication, 23/4/2016.

ever following its second general electoral victory. An account focusing primarily on identity and ideology such as the one proposed by Aytürk regarding the post-2007 period would expect the opposite result—that the JDP, with greater public support and a freer hand, should have been able to pursue a more ideological grand strategy. Instead, the level of pragmatism actually increased during that period. This can therefore be seen as a victory for pragmatism, which is contrary to the primordialist analyses that view the JDP era as a clear victory for the so-called “Islamist” grand strategy. The recent normalisation efforts are an important sign of this victory. It is far from coincidental that the process led to normalisation came at a time when it became obvious that Turkey’s “zero problems” foreign policy have failed to achieve its desired goals.

In the next chapter I will analyse the relationship between Turkey and the EU. I will engage with the debate about whether the value-driven rhetoric of a “Christian union” attached to the EU or the power and interest-driven concerns of Turkey resulted in the post-2005 stagnation of that relationship, in spite of the last decade’s overall impressive record with respect to the harmonisation efforts and reforms in line with the EU acquis.



## **Chapter 5: The Turkish-EU Relationship: Stagnation, Realpolitik Stalemate, Bargaining and Mistrust**

The previous chapter analysed the changing dynamics of the Turkish-Israeli relationship. I presented critical junctures such as the Iraq War, Israel's Operation Cast Lead, Turkey's position regarding the Iranian nuclear programme, and the Arab Spring and gradual revision of the bilateral relationship. In the domestic dimension, I investigated the rise of pragmatism within conservative businessmen groupings/associations as well as examining the impact of the military's loss of influence over foreign policy choices. I concluded that rather than an identity-driven clash between Muslim and Jewish identities or Erbakan-like ideological sense of enmity, the shift in the relationship was primarily due to interest-driven adjustments.

This chapter will investigate the ups and downs of the relationship between Turkey and the EU. Different international, regional and domestic developments will be analysed in order to explore the reasons behind the post-2005 stagnation and the gradual loss of momentum in the relationship despite the official start of accession negotiations in 2005.

A closer look at the relationship between Turkey and the EU since 2002 shows that the peak point came with the official start of the accession negotiations in 2005. However, these negotiations provided few if any positive outcomes over the years that followed. A gradual stagnation and a loss of momentum, enthusiasm and hope about EU accession in Turkey began to define the relationship.

So far, in terms of the Turkish-EU membership talks, only 15 out of 35 chapters in Turkey's accession document have been opened for discussion. Of these, only one (the Science and Research chapter, closed in 2006) has been successfully closed, while eight remain blocked due to Turkey's refusal to open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriots.

France blocked five more chapters in 2007, and in 2009 the Greek Cypriot Government blocked a further six.<sup>1</sup> Since the consent of all member states is required for the opening and closing of each chapter, Turkey's path to accession seems to be tightly linked to the question of Cyprus. Turkey's stance is that opening its ports and airports to the Greek Cypriot Government would mean de facto recognition of the Greek Cypriot government as the only legitimate representative of Cyprus. Turkey has strong reservations about this as it would affect the status of Turkish Cypriots and its own regional standing in the Eastern Mediterranean. The current situation in terms of chapters opened, suspended and blocked can be seen in the table below (talks on the chapter on Financial and Budgetary Provisions also opened recently, in June 2016,<sup>2</sup> in addition to this list):

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<sup>1</sup> Özge Zihnioğlu, "Bringing the European Union Back on the Agenda of Turkish Foreign Policy", *Insight Turkey* 16: 3 (2014), pp. 149–164, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> "Accession conference with Turkey: Talks opened on Chapter 33 - Financial and budgetary provisions", 30/6/2016, <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/06/30-turkey-accession-conference/>>.

*Current Situation in Turkey's Accession Negotiations*

Chapters suspended*	Chapters opened	Turkey has submitted its Negotiation Position Paper	Chapters blocked by Greek Cypriots unilaterally	Draft Screening Reports to be approved at the Council of the EU
1. Free Movement of Goods 2. Right of Establishment Freedom to Provide Services 3. Financial Services 4. Agriculture and Rural Development 5. Fisheries 6. Transport Policy 7. Customs Union 8. External Relations	1. Science and Research (provisionally closed) 2. Free Movement of Capital 3. Company Law 4. Intellectual Property Law 5. Information Society and Media 6. Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy 7. Taxation 8. Statistics 9. Enterprise and Industrial Policy 10. Trans-European Networks 11. Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments 12. Environment 13. Consumer and Health Protection 14. Financial Control 15. Economic and Monetary Policy	1. Education and Culture	1. Free Movement of Workers 2. Energy 3. Judiciary and Fundamental Rights 4. Justice, Freedom and Security 5. Education and Culture 6. Foreign, Security and Defense Policy	1. Free Movement of Workers 2. Fisheries 3. Transport Policy 4. Energy 5. Judiciary and Fundamental Rights 6. Justice, Freedom and Security 7. External Relations 8. Foreign, Security and Defense Policy 9. Financial and Budgetary Provisions

\* The European Council decided on 14-15 December 2006 to suspend negotiations on eight chapters relevant to Turkey's restrictions with regard to Cyprus.  
 Source: Ministry for EU Affairs.

Given this stalemate on the economic front, the EU's share in Turkey's imports fell from 45 percent to 38 percent between 2005 and 2015. In the same period, exports from Turkey to EU countries fell from 56 percent to 46 percent, in an era when Turkey's volume of foreign trade almost doubled from \$190 billion in 2005 to \$351 billion in 2015.<sup>3</sup>

While commitment to reforms continues, the EU has expressed disappointment with Turkey's progress. From Turkey's viewpoint, enthusiasm for EU membership has started to gradually fade in the aftermath of tension over the EU's Common Security and Defence

<sup>3</sup> See the Turkish Statistical Institute webpage on these figures and more on Turkey's trade by country groups and by year, <<http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>>, accessed 17/3/2013.

Policy (CSDP), formerly known as the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). This dampening of enthusiasm was a consequence of realpolitik-driven discussions examined in this chapter. Later controversy about the accession of the Greek Cypriot Government as the sole representative of the island as a hotly debated issue in the Turkish public sphere further damaged the relationship. A poll conducted by the Turkish-German Foundation for Education and Scientific Research showed that support for EU membership was around 70 percent in 2004,<sup>4</sup> but had dropped to 34 percent by 2011. In the same poll, 74 percent of respondents felt that they had lost hope for EU membership. Since 2013, however, there has been a gradual increase; in 2014 support was around 45 percent and in 2015, it grew to approximately 60 percent.<sup>5</sup> But in 2015 the most recent poll also indicated that around 70 percent still think that there is no favourable prospect for Turkey's membership.<sup>6</sup>

The main question that I will address is whether this stagnation stemmed from Turkey's shifting ideological stance accompanied by "Christian club" rhetoric about the EU or from global and regional changes which required power and interest-driven adjustments in Turkey's policies vis-à-vis the EU.

Before addressing the question by analysing the impact of the research's selected international and domestic factors, I will briefly present the historical background of the Turkish-EU relationship in the following section to provide a better picture of the changes and continuities over time.

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<sup>4</sup> "Cyprus, Turkey, and the European Union: A Mediterranean maelstrom", *The Economist*, 10/12/2009, <<http://www.economist.com/node/15065921>>, accessed 23/11/2013.

<sup>5</sup> Ionnais Grigoriadis, personal communication, 19/3/2016; İktisadi Kalkınma Vakfı, Türkiye Kamuoyunda Avrupa Birliği Algısı-2015, <[http://50yil.ikv.org.tr/belgeler/ikv\\_turkiyenin\\_AB\\_ye\\_bakisi\\_tr/html/index.html#24/z](http://50yil.ikv.org.tr/belgeler/ikv_turkiyenin_AB_ye_bakisi_tr/html/index.html#24/z)>, accessed 1/3/2016; Kadri Gürsel, "Turks turn to EU with renewed enthusiasm", *Al-Monitor*, 10/9/2014.

<sup>6</sup> "Membership support to EU dropped: Poll", *Turkish Daily News*, 20/8/2012. <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/membership-support-to-eu-dropped-poll.aspx?pageID=238&nID=28158&NewsCatID=341>>, accessed 24/09/2013. According to the same poll, it is even less with 17 percent in 2012. Also see "Turkey: poll; 74% of people 'lost hopes to join EU'", <<http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/politics/2013/10/08/Turkey-poll-74-people-lost-hopes-join-EU-9427375.html>>, accessed, 24/09/2013. For a similar poll, see Barysch, 2011, p. 5.

## Historical Background

Turkish policy-makers' quest for "Westernisation" or "Europeanisation" can be traced back to the late Ottoman era. "Westernisation" was regarded as a means of keeping the country together, to keep up with growing Western military power, and to restructure state mechanism.

Nineteenth and twentieth century reforms in the Ottoman Empire stemmed mainly from European pressure in the aftermath of the Crimean War, when the Ottoman Empire *de jure* became a part of Europe within the context of the Concert of Europe structure.<sup>7</sup> With this, the Empire also became a diplomatic part of Europe. The process brought with it the decision of the great powers at the Paris Conference in 1856 that the Ottoman Empire's territorial integrity was highly important to Europe, and would be protected by the same powers, providing them with significant leverage over the Empire.<sup>8</sup>

The Tanzimat era of the Ottoman Empire, between 1839 and 1876, included the Tanzimat and Islahat edicts and introduced a new constitution with a more Westernised legal approach. The era can be seen as a turning point for institutionalisation efforts to Westernise Turkish bureaucracy and its legal structure and as well as some particular topics such as political representation and citizenship.<sup>9</sup> This was the era when the Ottomans found themselves seriously struggling to keep up with the West, and the Ottoman Empire grew more and more dependent on Western powers to protect its very existence, either via balancing strategies under which it benefitted from great power rivalries or through requests

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<sup>7</sup> Virginia Aksan, 2005–2006, p. 21 and Kaloudis, 2007, p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Virginia Aksan, "Ottoman to Turk: Continuity and Change", *International Journal*, 61: 1 (Winter 2005–2006), pp. 19–38, p. 21–22. For more information on the edicts and the era, also see Musa Gümüş, "Anayasal Meşrutî Yönetime Medhal: 1856 Islahat Fermanı'nın Tam Metin İncelemesi" ["Transition to Constitutional Monarchy: A Full Text Analysis of the Islahat Edict of 1856"], *bilig* 47 (2008), pp. 215–240; Stone 2010, p. 88–108.; Altunışık & Tür, 2005, p. 2–3; İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* [The Longest Century of the Empire] (İstanbul: Alkım, 2006).

for protection against aggressors. The first wave of Westernisation thus came about because of pragmatic concerns on the part of the Ottoman elite between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the first two centuries of what Norman Stone referred to as “the long defensive” of the Empire.<sup>10</sup> The elite assumed that in order to keep the Empire together, Western technology and bureaucracy should be largely imitated and serious clashes with the great powers should be avoided.<sup>11</sup>

As far as the Republic of Turkey is concerned, Westernisation has been a clear preference since its proclamation, and gradually became a security-driven necessity, too. Efforts to Westernise the country were primarily regarded as a civilizational project, a process intended to transform the society. The process focused not merely on bureaucratic and military areas, but also included the adoption of European norms and values, including dress code and legal systems.

In terms of power and security-related realpolitik concerns, Turkey campaigned quite eagerly for NATO membership during the 1950s, mainly due to the perceived threat of Soviet aggression. Turkey is also an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) member and an associate member of the Western European Union (WEU). Turkey is “unwashed by Atlantic waters”,<sup>12</sup> so its membership of these organisations has left the geographical objections it occasionally faces regarding its participation in European integration open to question. Drawing from this, Turkey applied for associate membership in the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1959, the beginning of an exhausting quest to be a part of the European political and economic integration process. Turkey’s application in

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<sup>10</sup> Stone, 2010, p. 104

<sup>11</sup> See Ahmet Gündüz, “19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Reformlarında Etkili Olan Sosyal, Ekonomik, Politik ve Askeri Faktörler”[“Social, Economic, Political, and Military Factors on the 19th Century Ottoman Reforms”], *Karadeniz Araştırmaları* 9 (2006), p. 1–16; İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*[The Longest Century of the Empire]; Walter F. Weiker, “The Ottoman Bureaucracy: Modernization and Reform”, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 13: 3 (1968), pp. 451–470.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Hemmer&Peter Katzenstein, “Why is there no NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism”, *International Organization*, 56: 3 (Summer 2002), pp. 575–607, at p. 590.

1959 spawned to the Ankara Agreement in 1963 between the EEC and Turkey, foreseeing a Customs Union and kicking off a process which envisaged membership according to the Union's Article 28.<sup>13</sup> The Agreement was the first institutionalised link in terms of Turkey's political efforts to be included in the European integration project. However, that newly established link between Turkey and the EEC was referred to as a "connection without commitment" at the time.<sup>14</sup> It seems no coincidence that Greece signed its association agreement with the EEC in 1961, and the timing of this might well be the result of a desire on Europe's part to avoid further disappointment for Turkey.<sup>15</sup>

The Ankara Agreement was followed by the Additional Protocol in 1970, which mainly centred on the necessary steps needed for Turkey's accession to the Customs Union.<sup>16</sup> The military's interventions in Turkish politics in 1971 and 1980<sup>17</sup> and Turkey's Cyprus operation in 1974<sup>18</sup> prevented substantial progress regarding Turkey's accession. With the slow recovery of Turkey's democracy in the 1990s, Özal's election victory over the military's "guided democracy"<sup>19</sup>, and the ensuing Özal-led reforms towards liberalisation, relations began to improve. This recovery process resulted in Turkey's application for full EEC membership in 1987 and the signing of the Customs Union Agreement between the two

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<sup>13</sup> The article reads as follows: "As soon as the operation of this Agreement has advanced far enough to justify envisaging full acceptance by Turkey of the obligations arising out of the Treaty establishing the Community, the Contracting Parties shall examine the possibility of the accession of Turkey to the Community."

<sup>14</sup> Ümit Cizre, "Rethinking the connections between Turkey's "Western" identity versus Islam", *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 7:12 (1998), 3–18, at p. 4 and Turkey and the European Union, Strategic Comments, 3: 1 (1997); Hale, 2013, p. 175–176.

<sup>15</sup> Ireneusz Fidos, personal communication, 17/5/2016.

<sup>16</sup> Kaloudis, 2007, p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> For a brief background and information on both, see Nasser Momayezi, "Civil-Military Relations in Turkey", *International Journal on World Peace*, 15:3 (September 1998), pp. 3–28, p. 7–10.

<sup>18</sup> On the question of Cyprus, for more detailed information, see Costas Melakopides, 2006, pp.73-101; Michális S. Michael, "The Cyprus Peace Talks: A Critical Appraisal", *Journal of Peace Research*, 44: 5 (September 2007), pp. 587–604; Demetrios A. Theophylactou, "Geopolitics, Turkey's EU Accession Course and Cyprus: Power Balances and 'Soft Power' Calculations", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 12: 1 (2012), 97–114; Nugent, 2000; Oliver P. Richmond, "Shared Sovereignty and the Politics of peace: Evaluating the EU's 'Catalytic' Framework in the Eastern Mediterranean", *International Affairs*, 82: 1 (2005), pp. 149–176.

<sup>19</sup> Svante E. Cornell, "Turkey: Return to Stability?", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 35:4 (October, 1999), pp. 209–234, at p. 210).

parties in 1995—an agreement which came into force in 1996 and made Turkey the first country to participate in the Customs Union without accession.<sup>20</sup> Starting from the late 1990s, harmonisation has been a major goal in Turkey’s agenda. Coupled with the JDP’s commitment to reforms since the very foundation of the party in 2001, Turkey’s intensive reform record—especially up until 2005, which is regarded as the “golden age of reforms”<sup>21</sup>—resulted in the start of official accession negotiations in 2005.

In the next section, several major international developments will be analysed. These critical developments played important roles not only in the process up to the official start of the accession negotiations in 2005, but also in engendering a stagnant relationship in the post-2005 era.

### **Making Sense of Changes in Turkey-EU Relations**

#### **Critical Junctures: Major International and Regional Developments**

Certain major developments at the international level had knock-on effects on Turkey’s power- and interest-driven calculations, and resulted in a revision of Turkey’s policies vis-à-vis the EU. For the EU, these incidents provoked different responses too, affecting its policy line regarding Turkey. These incidents and historical events include the end of the Cold War, 9/11 and its aftermath, the EU’s ESDP project, the tension over the Greek Cypriot accession, and the Syrian civil war and the question of the Syrian refugees came with it. How and why

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<sup>20</sup> Deniz Gökalp and Seda Ünsar, “From the Myth of European Union Accession to Disillusion: Implications for Religious and Ethnic Politicization in Turkey”, *Middle East Journal*, 62: 1 (Winter 2008), pp. 93–116, at p. 98.

<sup>21</sup> Ziya Öniş, “Sharing Power: Turkey’s Democratization Challenge in the Age of the AKP Hegemony”, *Insight Turkey* 15: 2 (2013), pp. 103–122, p. 109. The term was used in my conversations with Nathalie Tocci, Paul Kubicek and Ireneusz Fidos, who all referred to the era with more or less the same words.



these developments affected the Turkish-EU relationship will be investigated in detail in this section.

*a- Late 1990s and Early 2000s: Souring Relations and the Goal of “Re-Unification of Europe”*

The end of the Cold War provided Turkey with opportunities in its immediate neighbourhood, while the EU prioritised the goal of “re-unifying Europe” by switching its attention to the former Soviet satellite countries in Eastern Europe. Even though the Özal era sent positive signals in terms of democratization and liberalization, not only Turkey’s, but also “the EU’s attention shifted”, too.<sup>22</sup>

After the dissolution of the USSR, Turkey revisited its grand strategy, especially regarding the former Soviet area and the Middle East. The demolition of bloc-based barriers enabled Turkey to evaluate the benefits of new bilateral links that had been impossible to establish before, and marked the start of a new era that offered Turkey windows of opportunity that could be utilised across multiple regions, thus altering the weight of the European integration in its foreign policy agenda.<sup>23</sup> In this way, the geopolitical orientation of Turkey’s grand strategy appears to be on its way towards a transformation from its previous “West-only” orientation.

Turkey’s ambition to play a more active role in multiple theatres coincided with the EU’s prioritisation of the goal of European reunification. At the 1997 Luxembourg Council, the EU’s prioritisation of Central and Eastern European countries resulted in the exclusion of Turkey from the list of candidate countries. The EU instead gave candidate status to Hungary,

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<sup>22</sup> David Phinnemore, personal communication, 17/4/2016.

<sup>23</sup> See Gareth M. Winrow, “Turkey and Central Asia”, in Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (eds.) *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), pp. 199–219; Aydın, Mustafa, “Between Euphoria and Realpolitik: Turkish Policy toward Central Asia and the Caucasus” in Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydın (eds.) (2003), *Turkey’s Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Company), pp. 139–160; Kibaroglu, *Global Security Watch-Turkey: A Reference Handbook*, p. 61–68; Graham Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press), p. 129–145.

Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria, and accepted the Greek Cypriot Government as the representative of the whole island and a future member.<sup>24</sup> The EU was swift to utilise its own window of opportunity, and moved hastily to “re-unite Europe” as soon as possible due to the possible recovery of Russian influence in the Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>25</sup> This decision to side-line Turkey was taken despite strong US support for Turkey to be included in the accession list and Turkey’s threats to block NATO expansion if candidate status was not granted. Turkey’s disappointment was evidenced by its suspension of political dialogue with the EU following the 1997 Luxembourg Council. The decision was even referred to as the erection of a new “Berlin Wall” by the then Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz, and it was argued by the government that the decision was based on “partial, prejudicial, exaggerated assessments.”<sup>26</sup> According to Fidos, along with the EU’s prioritisation of the central and Eastern European countries (CEECs), the change in the very nature of the integration project might also be a possible reason for such an outcome.

Before the 1990s, political and human rights-related factors were much less important, and economic and security concerns dominated discussions. However, starting from the 1990s, some other areas such as human rights issues, democracy, market liberalisation and minority issues gained greater significance in the EU enlargement criteria. Given the post-Cold War atmosphere, the EU based its policy line on a system of “layers” during this era. These layers were related to geographical proximity and significance, and given these new

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<sup>24</sup> Luxembourg Council Presidency Conclusions, 12–13 December 1997, <[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/032a0008.htm](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/032a0008.htm)>, accessed 23/02/2013.

<sup>25</sup> On this era, also see Ronald D. Asmus, “Europe’s Eastern Promise: Rethinking NATO and EU Enlargement”, *Foreign Affairs*, 87: 1 (2008), pp. 95–106, at p. 95–99.

<sup>26</sup> Christos Kassimeris and Lina Tsoumpanou, “The Impact of the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms on Turkey’s EU Candidacy”, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 12:3 (2008), pp. 329–345, at p. 334. On the impact of the end of the Cold War over Turkish-EU relationship, also see Barry Buzan & Thomas Diez, “The European Union and Turkey”, *Survival*, 41:1 (Spring 1999), pp. 41–57, at p. 42 and p. 47 and Hale, 2013, p. 179.

priorities, possibility of Turkey's accession to the EU in the short to medium-term was significantly diminished, and the unspoken opinion was that Turkey "could wait".<sup>27</sup>

The shockwaves from the 1997 exclusion of Turkey at the Luxembourg Council caused the lowest point in the relationship between Turkey and the EU. One of the results was Turkey's vetoing of European powers' European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI)—the predecessor of the ESDP scheme proposed in an agenda-setting meeting of NATO at a Washington D.C. conference in 1999.<sup>28</sup>

It was probably to improve the deteriorated relationship and to improve Turkey's stance regarding the ESDI—and also to preserve the EU's "sticks and carrots" hold over Turkey—that the Helsinki Council of 1999 provided Turkey with candidate status. However, Turkey's ability to comply with the famous Copenhagen Criteria (functioning democracy, rule of law, protection and respect for human rights and minority rights, a functioning market economy and the ability to accept and apply all the *acquis* rules) remained in doubt. Turkey's efforts on these grounds and its achievement of candidate status are regarded as clear progress in Turkey's quest and an ongoing desire to become a part of the European integration project—a quest that was now more than four decades old.<sup>29</sup> Fidos also argues that the timing speaks for itself indeed. In 1998, the CEECs started negotiations and were already moving forward towards full membership by 1999. Perhaps now it could be Turkey's turn.<sup>30</sup>

In short, the immediate post-Cold war era up until 1999 was marked by European focus on its "historic opportunity" to re-unify a continent which had been "divided for over 40

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<sup>27</sup> Ireneusz Fidos, personal communication, 17/5/2016.

<sup>28</sup> Birol Yeşilada, "Turkey's Candidacy for EU Membership", *Middle East Journal*, 56:1 (Winter 2002), pp. 94–111, at p. 96–97.

<sup>29</sup> Heather Grabbe, "European Union Conditionality and the "Acquis Communautaire", *International Political Science Review* (July 2002), pp. 249–268, p. 251 and European Council Meeting in Copenhagen (June 1993), <[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/72921.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/72921.pdf)>, accessed 23/07/2013, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ireneusz Fidos, personal communication, 17/5/2016.

years” and establish a new order with “peace, stability and prosperity under the aegis of the EU.”<sup>31</sup> This coincided with an era in which Turkey strove to interact with many other regions in line with perceived improvements in its relative power position. However, this new atmosphere in the Turkish-EU relationship was to plague the relationship for the next decade with a lack of trust, pushing Turkey to revisit its relationship with the EU and put a higher emphasis on the post-Cold War windows of opportunity it was finding in its more immediate environs.

*b- 9/11 and European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)*

The question of identity-related incompatibility between the EU and Turkey is a decades-old problem for both sides, and one that has become more apparent since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. With Islamophobia on the rise, the question of Muslim identity featured almost daily in news reports in many western European countries.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, relatively pro-Turkey leaders like Schröder and Chirac were replaced by leaders such as Merkel and Sarkozy as right-wing rhetoric began to enjoy a higher profile throughout Europe.<sup>33</sup> The rise of Turco-scepticism significantly contributed to the emergence of a mindset that was plagued by distrust and disappointment.<sup>34</sup> Discourses on identity had the potential to provide Turco-sceptic groups with electoral support, especially from right and extreme-right constituencies. The rise of Islamophobia in the post-9/11 era contributed to the strengthening of value-driven discourses. Within this context, the post-9/11 era helped some European leaders gather more

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<sup>31</sup> Erhan İçener, David Phinnemore & Dimitris Papadimitriou, “Continuity and Change in the European Union’s Approach to Enlargement: Turkey and Central and Eastern Europe Compared”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 10: 2 (2010), pp. 207–223, p. 217.

<sup>32</sup> Banu Gökarıksel and Anna Secor, “New Transnational Geographies of Islamism, Capitalism and Subjectivity: the Veiling-Fashion Industry in Turkey, *Area*, 41: 1 (2009), pp. 6–18, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> On this point also see, Hale, 2013, p. 174.

<sup>34</sup> Ireneusz Fidos, personal communication, 17/5/2016. He afterwards, added that whereas Sarkozy’s policy line caused a great damage, Merkel succeeded in correcting her rhetoric and fixing the damage it caused to a great extent.

support for their culture-based interpretation of Turkey's accession via the use of different imagery based on "terrorists from the East". References were made to the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683, and the image of the Ottomans was put forward as the "terror of Europe" or in Richard Knolles' words, the "terror of the world". Even Burke's address to the UK's House of Commons in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century where he argued that Turks were worse than savages and that any Christian power should be preferred over them were echoed to strengthen this mood.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, revisiting Turkey's potential role within the context of the future of the West's security structure was a hot topic in the post-9/11 era. It seemed more important than ever to readdress the question of whether Turkey as an EU member would be an asset linking Europe with the Muslim world (thereby helping to defuse its threat) or a liability and a transit route for instability and even terrorists. Either way, in the years after 9/11, Turkey's significance as a flank country required further re-evaluation within the context of the broader question of its role for Western security in the immediate post-Cold War era.

The EU, with a renewed interest in the military dimension of its organisation, pushed for the realisation of the ESDP more eagerly in the wake of 9/11 in response to international terrorism. Turkey's strategic value could prove useful in broadening the EU's geopolitical scope and providing it with better access to several regional theatres. This process necessitated Turkey's cooperation as an important NATO member, despite the country's exclusion from the ESDP scheme. The EU was required to use NATO assets in order to keep its military wing operational and effective, and this resulted in a controversial atmosphere in the Turkish-EU relationship. The timing of the start of official accession negotiations in 2005 between the EU and Turkey seems far from coincidental within this context. It was important

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<sup>35</sup> Fatoş Tarifa & Benjamin Adams, 2007, pp. 52–74, p. 62 and Nuri Yurdusev, "Perceptions and Images in Turkish (Ottoman)-European Relations" in Ismael and Aydın, 2003, pp. 77–102, p. 85.

not letting the “sticks” outweigh the “carrots” for Turkey in the short term, and not to alienate the country. Any sense of alienation could result in Turkey’s insistence on its stance against the ESDP scheme as the EU’s ambition to act as a global player reached its zenith.

*The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)/Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and Its Impact on the Turkish-EU Relationship*

The dissolution of Yugoslavia and the atrocities and tragedies that followed caused the EU to consider a military tool that would effectively operate under a broad geopolitical scope to deal with the new world and its flashpoints. This desire increased over time due to the conflicts in the former Soviet space, the Gulf War, and finally the 9/11 attacks.

The idea of an EU with a broader scope, stronger deterrence and an effective military tool did not emerge solely from the 9/11 attacks, but their impact as a significant push to operationalising this scheme was important. For the EU, the attacks were a wake-up call to accelerate its plans for an effective military tool. As terrorism became ever more transnational and no country seemed as safe as it had been before, the EU felt the need to deploy military power abroad in order to stop the threat of terror or its spill-over effects before they found a way into Europe. The EU realised that in order to protect itself more effectively and act as a real global player, it should increase its presence in the MENA region, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Albert Hourani noted that “whoever rules the Near East would rule the world,”<sup>36</sup> although the flipside of that argument appears to indicate that any entity that becomes over-involved in the region would find itself caught in the middle of countless new problems. Either way, the EU sought to widen its scope to these regions, and

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<sup>36</sup> Richard N. Haass, “The New Middle East”, *Foreign Affairs*, 85: 6 (November-December 2006), pp. 2–11, p. 3

the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)<sup>37</sup> were clear examples of this desire. The ESDP scheme, as the military leg of this desire, was designed with the purpose of broadening the EU's military scope.

The motivation for having a presence in new areas of conflict found its most concrete form in the ESDP scheme, which was renamed as the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) after the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The CSDP was proposed in order to help achieve one of the EU's most important goals as stated in its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP): "To strengthen international security and preserve peace". The EU's "headline goals" were laid out at the Helsinki Council in 1999 and declared operational in Laeken in 2001. Within this context, it was agreed that the EU should possess the potential to deploy a 60,000 strong Rapid Reaction Force within a 60 day period, and that the force should be capable of sustaining itself for one year.

The link between the EU and NATO was probably the most controversial issue on the agenda. Since most EU members are also NATO allies, and the EU may need to avail itself of NATO assets at some point in the future, a strong link should be forged and maintained between the two organisations—especially as France and the UK questioned whether and how to link the new structure to NATO and sought clarification of the pros and cons of the ability to conduct operations without the need to cooperate with NATO. This debate became a more serious issue which surfaced at the St. Malo Summit of 1998 and remained on the agenda for many years to come. While France opted for a more independent body, the UK insisted on closer contact with NATO. There were divergent views on how to define the extent of ESDP operations, the concept of peace-making and how to combine military and civilian elements within the core institutions of the EU. Gradually, the ESDP/CSDP was

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<sup>37</sup> Sevilay Kahraman, "Turkey and the European Union in the Middle East: Reconciling or Competing with Each Other?", *Turkish Studies*, 12: 4 (2011), pp. 699–716, p. 701–702.

given a duty to act within the limits of the “Petersberg Tasks”, referring to humanitarian and rescue efforts as well as peacekeeping and combat-force prerequisites, which included peace-making.<sup>38</sup>

In terms of Turkey’s security concerns during that era, there were important parallels between the EU’s security-related priorities and Turkey’s own threat perceptions. This was especially true in terms of international terrorism, the illegal arms trade, drug smuggling and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). These threats were considered major security concerns in both the EU’s European Security Strategy (ESS) document and Turkey’s Defence White Paper in 2000. However, the ESDP’s Civil-Military Cell and Operation Centre (OpsCen) was only capable of battalion-sized military and civilian operations, compared to NATO’s ability to conduct decisive operations in hot conflict zones (along with many other capabilities). As such, the ESDP had to rely on NATO’s assets when its limited manpower or equipment constrained its ability to act effectively.<sup>39</sup> This is where Turkey—as NATO’s second largest military force—came into play with its critical approach to the ESDP scheme.<sup>40</sup>

There were several key reasons underlying Turkey’s critical approach to the project. Given Turkey’s exclusion from the decision-making process of operations for which its NATO assets might be needed, there was also a concern about possible EU operations in the

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<sup>38</sup> Seiju Desai, , “Turkey in the European Union: A Security Perspective – Risk or Opportunity?”, *Defence Studies*, 5:3 (2005), pp. 366–393, p. 370; Stephanie Hofmann, “Overlapping Institutions in the Realm of International Security: The Case of NATO and ESDP”, *Perspectives on Politics*, 7: 1 (March 2009), pp. 45–52, at p. 46; Anand Menon, “From Crisis to Catharsis: ESDP after Iraq”, *International Affairs*, 80:4 (July 2004), pp. 631–648, at p. 632–637 and Serdar, 2003, p. 65–68; Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 65–68.

<sup>39</sup> Hofmann, 2009, p. 46.

<sup>40</sup> On Turkey’s criticism with respect to ESDP and its position within this context, see Miguel Medina-Abellan, “Turkey, the European Security and Defence Policy, and Accession Negotiations”, *SInAN Working Paper* No. 1 (24/04/2009); Antonia Missiroli, “EU-NATO Cooperation in Crisis Management: No Turkish Delight for ESDP”, *Security Dialogue* 33: 1 (2002), pp. 9–26; Özlem Terzi, “New Capabilities, Old Relationships: Emergent ESDP and EU-Turkish Relations”, *Southeastern European Politics* 3: 1 (2002), pp. 43–61; Steven Blockmans, “Participation of Turkey in the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy: Kingmaker or Trojan Horse”, *Center for the Law of EU External Relations Working Paper* 41 (March 2010).



Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean (including Cyprus), which would directly threaten Turkey's power position.<sup>41</sup> If this were to happen, Turkey's relative advantage would be threatened, and its power position and security might be compromised. During the late 1990s, following the 1999 "earthquake diplomacy" and during the JDP era,<sup>42</sup> the Turkish-Greek relationship had gradually improved, but considering the ongoing disputes over the Aegean and Cyprus, it still held the potential for crisis. If tensions with Greece or the Greek Cypriot government were to boil over, Turkey might have found itself up against a united European army that had the right to call upon Turkey's own troops under Article 5 of the NATO Charter.

As well as this possibility, Turkey had been a major contributor to NATO, and the use of Turkey's assets despite refusing it a role in the decision-making process was regarded unacceptable. Of the sixteen flashpoints identified in NATO's contingency plans—from Kosovo to Nagorno-Karabakh, from Chechnya to Abkhazia and South Ossetia—thirteen were in close proximity to Turkey. As such, Turkey considered its participation in any decision-making process that could result in NATO using its own assets in these theatres vital. Turkish forces could be compelled to act in operations that could have an indirect negative impact on Turkey's own interests and security. If operations went ahead in such regions without considerable prior diplomatic deliberation, the ensuing problems would carry the potential to spill over into Turkish affairs, leading to a situation in which Turkey was left with no option but to fight against its own interests due to its commitments under the NATO Charter.<sup>43</sup> The ultimate question was whether Turkey should allow the use of its military resources in an operation where it had no say in the decision-making process, even if Turkey's own interests were not at stake, or worse, the operation itself threatened them.

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<sup>41</sup> Kibaroglu, 2009, p. 98–100.

<sup>42</sup> Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 85.

<sup>43</sup> Kibaroglu, 2009, p. 98–100 and Serdar, 2003, p. 68–71.

The famous 2003 “Berlin Agreement”, which allowed the EU to use NATO assets and organised the way in which the two would interact and cooperate, was a turning point within this context. The “Berlin Plus” agreement provided NATO with its right of “first refusal” in conflicts. This right was supported by the UK and the Netherlands.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, Turkey’s concerns were also addressed, with the reiteration of principles agreed in the UK-US-Turkey document of 2001 (known as the Ankara Document)<sup>45</sup> which assured Turkey that ESDP forces would not be deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean and would not be used against any NATO ally.<sup>46</sup> Since then, Turkey has participated in several ESDP/CSDP missions, including those in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Palestine. Turkey has also expressed willingness to contribute to missions in Libya, Mali and the Central African Republic.<sup>47</sup>

In its original form, the EU’s ambitious ESDP project had the potential to threaten Turkey’s relative power position in the region if operationalised in Turkey’s neighbourhood without prior consultation. Once these concerns had been addressed by the EU, the two sides succeeded in finding a middle ground. The ESDP crisis had come about through a clash of power- and interest-driven concerns, and was settled by the EU’s provision of required assurances to Turkey. Still, looking the process from the perspective of the current atmosphere, it can be stated that if both sides could have known that the ESDP “barely got off the ground”,<sup>48</sup> controversies about it would not have damaged the relationship to the extent they did. However, evaluating past events based on present circumstances and data would be a fatal error according to both IR and History 101.

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<sup>44</sup> Hofmann, 2009, p. 47.

<sup>45</sup> Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 66

<sup>46</sup> Medina-Abellan, 2009, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> See European Commission, Turkey Progress Report 2014, <[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2014/20141008-turkey-progress-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-turkey-progress-report_en.pdf)>, accessed 5/12/2014, p. 75 and Steven Blockmans, “Participation of Turkey in the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy: Kingmaker or Trojan Horse”, Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies Working Paper 41 (2010), p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> Hale, 2013, p. 257.

*c- Start of the Official Accession Negotiations between the EU and Turkey in 2005*

In the post-9/11 era, the newly optimised relationship between Turkey and the EU reached its height once the ESDP crisis had been settled. October 3, 2005 marked the official start of Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU. However, and much to Turkey's irritation, it was decided that the process would remain open-ended.

According to political Islamist discourse, Turkey's values were coming under serious threat from reforms and its cultural codes demanded by the EU, and a Pan-Islamic Ummah-based narrative should be pursued as an alternative to the EU membership. This line of thought—an Erbakanist Islamist anti-EU rhetoric which identified the EU as a “Christian club”, saw it as a danger to Turkey's values and even referred to it as a Zionist tool<sup>49</sup>—was clearly rejected by the JDP. As early as 2002, Erdoğan and leading JDP staff organised a series of visits to Europe to gain support for Turkey's candidate status among European leaders. The JDP promised future reform packages, seven of which were to be put in place in just one year between 2002 and 2003 in line with the *acquis*. It also assured European heads of state that it would follow a more accommodating path regarding the question of Cyprus.<sup>50</sup>

The EU had set a major set of criteria centred around democratisation, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These criteria were set not only at the Copenhagen Council in 1993 but also as membership preconditions in Article F of the 1992 Treaty of European Union and in Article O of the amended 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam. The JDP strove towards these values, and received quite positive feedback within the EU, resulting in positive signals

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<sup>49</sup> Robins, 2003, p. 146.

<sup>50</sup> Marcie J. Patton, “The Economic Policies of Turkey's AKP Government: Rabbits from a Hat?”, *MiddleEastJournal*, 60: 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 513–536, at p. 527–528 and Laman Tasch “The EU Enlargement Policy and National Majority-Minority Dynamics in Potential European Union Members: The Example of Turkey”, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 21:2 (Spring 2010), pp. 18–46, p. 40–41

for the future by 2004 and 2005. There were six specific points that Turkey needed to accomplish in order to achieve membership:

- democracy and the protection of human and minority rights
- a functioning market economy which would be able to compete within the EU market
- the institutional and administrative capacity to implement the *acquis*
- good neighbourly relations
- commitment to solving the Cyprus problem
- the fulfilment of its obligations under the 1963 Ankara Treaty, i.e. the extension of the Customs Union to the Greek Cypriot regime.

The last point has been the hardest for Turkey to address.<sup>51</sup> The first three points basically summarised the Copenhagen Criteria, and there was broad agreement in regard to surmounting these hurdles within Turkey. However, the JDP's unprecedented efforts to fulfil the last three points resulted in fierce fighting with the old elite on the question of Cyprus as well as closer relations with Greece and Armenia.

With the ESDP crisis settled and Turkey's reforms appreciated by the EU, the Turkish-EU relationship seemed quite promising. In this atmosphere, the start of official accession negotiations was a clear indication of this change. However, even during this period, Turkey's *realpolitik* concerns about Cyprus acted as a major obstacle. Turkey was quite concerned about the Greek Cypriot government's accession as Cyprus's sole representative which critically damaged its relationship with the EU. The newly achieved membership status of the Greek Cypriot government allowed it to obstruct Turkey's path to membership

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<sup>51</sup> Fadi Hakura, "Partnership is No Privilege", *Chatham House European Programme Briefing Paper* No. 05/02 (September 2005), p. 3.

by vetoing the opening of certain chapters because of Turkey's opposition to opening its ports and airports to it. Turkey, on the other hand, insistently defended its official position that opening ports and airports would mean *de facto* recognition of the Greek Cypriot government, which would in turn pose the danger of tilting the power balance against Turkish Cypriots on the island. Turkey considered its presence vital on Cyprus within the context of its profile in the Eastern Mediterranean and relative advantage against both Greece and the Greek Cypriots.

Overall, the question of Greek Cypriot membership to the EU without reaching a final settlement on the island significantly affected Turkey's attitude toward the EU. On the other hand, post-2004-2005 era, up until the Syrian refugee crisis, due to enlargement fatigues and global financial crisis as well as the economic crisis in Greece, was marked a more inward-looking profile for the EU, as an additional factor slowing down the progress in the EU-Turkey membership process.

#### *d- The EU's Fifth Enlargement Wave: The Cyprus Question and Stalemate*

The EU's 2004 enlargement, also known as the Fifth Enlargement Wave, had two important implications. The first was the successful finalisation of the process of accession of Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs). The second was the full membership status given to the Greek Cypriot government as the sole representative of Cyprus. Cyprus was accepted for EU membership as a unitary body with no discussion on how to include Turkish Cypriots in the process and no serious attempt to settle the decades-old dispute regarding the island. This, while comparatively much less important on the global or European stage, caused a vast amount of lasting damage to the Turkish-EU relationship.

The Cyprus dispute has always been an important facet of the Turkish-EU relationship. The crisis began in 1967 with an increasing number of attacks by Greek Cypriots on the island's Turkish Cypriots, but escalated after Turkey's 1974 military intervention. Settlement of the crisis has been a key issue not only for Turkish and Greek foreign policies but also in the agendas of the UN and the EU.

Turkey's intervention in 1974 was in response to a coup d'état on the island by the Greek Cypriots with the support and encouragement of the military junta in Greece. After the coup, Greece sought to annex the island, a process which put the lives of the Turkish Cypriots in danger. Turkey intervened militarily to preserve the constitutional order and peace on the basis of its status as one of the three guarantor powers along with Greece and the United Kingdom.<sup>52</sup> The result was the proclamation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus—a republic recognized only by Turkey. The EU demanded a peaceful settlement, and constantly referred to this as a prerequisite for Turkey's accession. The Cyprus question was raised at several EU conferences, such as the Helsinki Council in 1999 and the Accession Partnerships of 2001, 2003, and 2006.<sup>53</sup> The EU stressed the importance of settling disputes with neighbours through the ICJ at the 1997 Luxembourg Council meeting, which sent an implicit but clear message to Turkey regarding its dispute with the Greek Cypriot government and

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<sup>52</sup> For studies on the crisis see Fiona Adamson, "Democratization and the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy: Turkey in the 1974 Cyprus Crisis", *Political Science Quarterly* 116:2 (2001), pp. 277–303; CihanGöktepe, "The Cyprus Crisis of 1967 and its Effects on Turkey's Foreign Relations", *Middle Eastern Studies* 41: 3 (2005), pp. 431–444; Thomas Ehrlich, "Cyprus, the 'Warlike Isle': Origins and Elements of the Current Crisis", *Stanford Law Review* 18:6 (1966), pp. 1021–1098; Michális S. Michael, "The Cyprus Peace Talks: A Critical Appraisal", *Journal of Peace Research* 44:5 (2007), pp. 587–604; George Kaloudis, "Cyprus: The Enduring Conflict", *International Journal on World Peace* 16: 1 (1999), pp. 3–18; Meltem Müftüler-Baç and Aylin Güney, "The European Union and the Cyprus Problem 1961–2003", *Middle Eastern Studies* 41: 2 (2005), pp. 281–293.

<sup>53</sup> Ali Resul Usul, "The Justice and Development Party and the European Union: From Euro-scepticism to Euro-enthusiasm and Euro-fatigue" in Ümit Cizre ed., *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 174–198, at p. 184.

Greece. This was no less irritating for Turkey than the decision to exclude it from the list of candidate countries at the very same Council.<sup>54</sup>

There were other flashpoints between Turkey and Greece besides the Cyprus question, which further complicated the puzzle. The countries have clashed on the limiting of the continental shelf, the demarcation of territorial waters, air space and the militarisation of the Aegean islands. These separate disputes all worked to reinforce tensions between the two countries. Basically, the major disputes were due to the problematic geographical location of the Aegean islands. The islands themselves were a critical factor in terms of the continental shelf as well as setting up controversy over territorial waters due to their close proximity to Turkey's shores. This not only presented a major security concern, but also complicates the question of the extraction of energy resources in the region. As such, the dispute had a strong economic dimension, too. Turkey favoured a 6-mile airspace exclusion zone over Greek territorial waters, as opposed to the general 12-mile rule, while Greece insisted on its unilateral decision to increase its airspace to 10 miles. The result was occasional aerial dogfights over the Aegean. Even though the Lausanne and Paris Treaties of 1923 and 1947 forbade the militarisation of the Aegean islands, Greece continued to militarise and fortify its positions there, citing Turkey's 1974 military intervention in Cyprus as a reason for its move.<sup>55</sup>

In 2004 the Annan Plan for Cyprus<sup>56</sup> brought hopes for settlement in the form of a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation.<sup>57</sup> Turkey, with the goal of obtaining a bi-communal and

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<sup>54</sup> Heinz-Jürgen Axt, "Relations with Turkey and Their Impact on the European Union", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 5: 3 (2005), pp. 365–378, p. 367–368.

<sup>55</sup> On the Aegean dispute, see Yücel Acer, *The Aegean Disputes and International Law* (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003); Leo Gross, "The Dispute between Greece and Turkey Concerning the Continental Shelf in the Aegean", *American Journal of International Law* 71 (1977), pp. 31–59; Haralambos Athanasopoulos, *Greece, Turkey and the Aegean Sea: A Case Study in International Law* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2001); Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 74–77.

<sup>56</sup> Hale, 2013, p. 198–200. Regarding the details of the plan, Hale notes that "The Treaty of Guarantee provided by the 1960 agreements would remain in force. There would be a bi-cameral federal legislature... the

bi-zonal federative structure on the island, eagerly supported the plan, and 65 percent of Turkish Cypriots voted for it. The Turkish Cypriots' support for the plan was welcomed by the UN Secretary General, who in his 28 May 2004 report, stated:

I would hope that the members of the Council can give a strong lead to all states to cooperate both bilaterally and in international bodies, to eliminate unnecessary restrictions and barriers that have the effect of isolating the Turkish Cypriots...<sup>58</sup>

Another statement this time from the EU, echoed this appreciation.

The Turkish Cypriot community have expressed their clear desire for a future within the European Union. The Council is determined to put an end to the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community...<sup>59</sup>

However, 75 percent of Greek Cypriots rejected it in a referendum.<sup>60</sup> This came no surprise, since by “assuring the Greek Cypriots they could be admitted to the Union anyway, they [the EU] provided them with no incentive to reach a settlement with the Turks.”<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the

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Presidential Council would have six voting and three non-voting members, with members drawn from proportionately from each community. This would elect a President and Vice-President, one from each community, who would rotate in office every 20 months...the Turkish Cypriot territory would be reduced to 28 percent of the island and there would be a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops, to leave 950 Greek and 750 Turkish soldiers.”

<sup>57</sup> Chrysostomos Pericleous, “Cyprus: A Last Window of Opportunity?”, *Insight Turkey* 14: 1 (2012), pp. 93-108.

<sup>58</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good Office in Cyprus, 28 May 2004, <[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2004/437](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2004/437)>, accessed 15/02/2014, at p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> 2576<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting-General Affairs-Luxembourg, 26 April 2004, <[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_PRES-04-115\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-04-115_en.htm)>, accessed 08/07/2013.

<sup>60</sup> Theophylactou, 2012, p. 104.

<sup>61</sup> Hale, 2013, p. 180.



statements quoted above engendered no substantial action to end the Turkish Cypriots' isolation. Turkish disappointment was exacerbated by the Greek Cypriots' acquisition of veto power as an EU member state, which would directly affect Turkey's accession process and have a negative impact on the relationship between Turkey and the EU. The question asked by Hale thus remains, "How a country could be admitted if about 20 percent of its population were left outside the EU?"<sup>62</sup> The EU delegation's head of political affairs to Turkey, Ireneusz Fidos, shared this criticism about the EU's handling of the Greek Cypriot membership process, but criticised Turkey's stance because changing Turkey's general policy line would hurt only Turkey for the sake of a very small self-declared republic, rather than the EU or the Greek Cypriots.<sup>63</sup>

As Amanda Paul noted, "The lack of strategy and vision of EU leaders has been compounded by the hurdle of the decades-old Cyprus problem, almost totally deadlocking the process [of Turkey's membership]".<sup>64</sup> Similarly, the University of Duisburg's Professor Heinz-Jürgen Axt argues that the point Turkey lost hope in the settlement of the Cyprus dispute and the Greek Cypriots' membership marked the critical juncture at which the "positive Turkey-EU relationship lost its momentum."<sup>65</sup> In order not to lose its leverage over Turkey completely due to this deadlock and to keep communication channels open, the EU endorsed a new "Positive Agenda" for Turkey, instigating eight working groups to assist Turkey's harmonization efforts. These efforts include eight specific chapters: visas, mobility and migration, energy, trade and the customs union, political reforms, fight against terrorism, foreign policy dialogue and participation in EU programs.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Hale, 2013, p. 180.

<sup>63</sup> Ireneusz Fidos, personal communication, 17/5/2016.

<sup>64</sup> Amanda Paul, "Turkey's EU Journey: What Next?", *Insight Turkey* 14:3(2012), pp. 25-33, p. 26.

<sup>65</sup> Heinz-Jürgen Axt, personal communication, 14/3/2016.

<sup>66</sup> Erhan İçener & David Phinnemore, "Turkey and the EU: Looking Beyond the Pessimism", *Insight Turkey* 16: 3 (2014), pp. 37-46, p. 42.

In spite of signing the Ankara protocol in July 2005—which referred to Turkey’s extension of its Customs Union agreement to new EU members—Turkey stated that it would not recognise the Greek Cypriot government, nor would it open its ports or airports to it.<sup>67</sup> As a result, the EU suspended the talks on all eight chapters and decided that no chapter would be officially ratified before Turkey fulfilled all of its obligations.<sup>68</sup> In the following years the number of suspended chapters increased due to new Greek Cypriot and French vetoes, raising the number of suspended chapters to seventeen.<sup>69</sup>

The question of Cyprus has therefore been a key point to understanding how the Turkish attitude towards the EU has changed in line with its interests and relative advantage-related concerns. Even though the two sides had succeeded in repairing their relationship to some extent after the EU’s prioritisation of CEECs in the immediate post-Cold War era,<sup>70</sup> the tension both sides experienced over the ESDP/CSDP scheme and the Cyprus question changed the dynamics of the relationship once again. Turkey’s concerns over its relative advantage vis-à-vis Greece and Cyprus resulted in a deadlock in the Turkish-EU relationship. The island has been regarded as a forward military asset providing Turkey with a further military deterrent against Greece and the Greek Cypriots, an important trade route offering Turkey a presence in the Mediterranean, and a stepping-off point to the MENA region in

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<sup>67</sup> Marcie J. Patton, “AKP Reform Fatigue in Turkey: What has happened to the EU process?”, *Mediterranean Politics*, 12:3(2007), pp. 339–358, p. 345–346.

<sup>68</sup> Ahmet Sözen, “The Cyprus challenge in Turkey-EU relations: heading towards the defining moment?” in Firat Cengiz and Lars Hoffman (eds.) *Turkey and the European Union: Facing New Challenges and Opportunities* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 46–64, p. 46

<sup>69</sup> Katinka Barysch, “Turkey and the EU: Can stalemate be avoided?”, Centre for European Reform, Policy Brief, (2011), [http://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/pb\\_turkey\\_eu\\_barysch\\_dec\\_10-182.pdf](http://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/pb_turkey_eu_barysch_dec_10-182.pdf), accessed 23/10/2013, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Geoffrey Edwards, “The New Member States and the Making of EU’s New Foreign Policy”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 11 (2006), pp. 143–162; Lykke Friis “The End of the Beginning’ of Eastern Enlargement – Luxembourg Summit and Agenda-setting”, *European Integration Online Papers* 2:7 (1998), <http://eiop.or.at/eiop/texte/1998-007a.htm>, accessed 28/04/2011; Geoffrey Pridham, “EU Enlargement and Consolidating Democracy in Post-Communist States—Formality and Reality”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40: 3 (2002), pp. 453–473.

general. While reform efforts continued and there were significant levels of economic interactivity, disappointment and distancing marked the political front of the relationship.

Recent efforts to reach a settlement over the island should be mentioned here, since they might change not only the dynamics of the Cyprus question, but also the Turkish-EU relationship. In a joint statement by Turkish and Greek leaders in 2008, both affirmed their desire to establish a “bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality” with a “Federal government with a single international personality as well as a Turkish Cypriot Constituent State and a Greek Cypriot Constituent State, which will be of equal status.” Since then, the two leaders have engaged in an intense period of negotiations and meetings covering six main points discussed by six working groups. When Ban Ki-Moon visited the island in 2010, he read a joint statement on behalf of both leaders, underlining their desire to reach a settlement. The process was expected to produce a comprehensive plan to be put to referenda to engender a permanent solution in 2012. Even though it was neither side’s first choice, support for a federation seems quite high on the island—around 75-80 percent on both sides—coupled with a desire to achieve a comprehensive solution in the short-term, with around 60-65 percent overall support. However, the issue still remains unsolved and the short-term chances of settling it are in doubt despite the progress that has been made so far. Questions remain, especially regarding future power-sharing arrangements, relations with the EU, and economic affairs.<sup>71</sup> Both Nicos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akıncı, the current leaders of the Greek and Turkish communities, seem optimistic and enthusiastic about reaching a settlement on the island. European Commission Chief Jean-Claude Juncker, based on the recent optimism about a settlement in January 2016, even stated that a settlement could be achieved within the next six months—a deadline already missed at the time of writing. Juncker stated “I am very confident that in the first six months of this year we will come to a

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<sup>71</sup> See Ahmet Sözen, “Heading Towards the Defining Moment in Cyprus: Public Opinion vs Realities on the Ground”, *Insight Turkey* 14:1(2012), pp. 112–116.

final agreement on the reunification of that island”, and added “I hope 2016 will be the year that we can finally resolve the Cyprus issue.” It was stated that the UN was aiming to put a referendum in place in the spring or by the summer at the latest.<sup>72</sup> However, there has been no substantial progress towards that end yet. But it would be quite valid to expect a significant improvement in the Turkish-EU relationship if a comprehensive settlement is reached which would also mean lifting the Greek Cypriot vetoes over opening and closing of various chapters.

It is also important to note that following its new wave of enlargement, the EU has had to become more and more inward-looking in order to control the enlargement process without inflicting serious damage to the Union itself in legal, political, and economic terms. Additionally, the global recession and Greece’s debt crisis, as well as the Union’s efforts to agree on a comprehensive constitution when divisions within became more visible, has further reinforced this inward-looking approach. Along with the crisis over Cyprus, these developments forced the EU to at least postpone its goal of “acting as a global player” and to focus on its internal issues. In this atmosphere, unsurprisingly, neither the post-ESDP crisis era nor the start of official accession talks has engendered significant results in terms of the Turkish-EU relationship.

#### *e- Deterioration and Bargaining: Post-2013 Era*

The post-2013 era needs to be examined more closely in terms of the relationship between Turkey and the EU. Nathalie Tocci, Deputy Director of the Istituto Affari Internazionali, who studies the Turkish-EU relationship and Turkey’s foreign policy, states that while the

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<sup>72</sup> See “Cyprus settlement deal 'within reach'”, 18/1/2016, *Politico*, <<http://www.politico.eu/article/cyprus-settlement-deal-within-reach-reunification-ali-talat-anastasiades/>>, accessed 2/2/2016; “EU 'very confident' of a Cyprus settlement this year”, 15/1/2016, *Ekathimerini*, <<http://www.ekathimerini.com/205102/article/ekathimerini/news/eu-very-confident-of-a-cyprus-settlement-this-year>>, accessed 3/1/2016; UN Cyprus Talks webpage, <<http://www.uncyprustalks.org/>>

2002-2005 period represented the “golden age” of reform, there was a slowdown between 2005 and 2011 and a tendency towards reversal since 2011.<sup>73</sup> Professor Ioannis Grigoriadis from Bilkent University makes a similar differentiation: “successful compliance” between 2002 and 2005, “growing inertia” between 2005 and 2011, and “rapid decline” since 2011.<sup>74</sup> Fidos makes a similar distinction referring to the era between 2007 and 2010 as a time of disillusionment preceding an era of rising negative trends.<sup>75</sup> Most accounts ascribe the turning point to the constitutional referendum in Turkey, which changed Turkey’s judicial atmosphere. However, the referendum, among other things, brought quite important achievements in terms of the EU’s *acquis*-related reforms. Therefore, I put primary emphasis on 2013, when Turkey started to face serious difficulties in its Syria policy which had future implications on its relationship with the EU that were related to the refugee crisis and the Gezi Park protests. These developments questioned Turkey’s commitment to freedom, democratisation and its role as a regional “impartial socialiser” in European eyes. Freezing the “Peace Process” did not help this image either.

In this regard, a few key points need to be considered, starting with the criticisms in the aftermath of the Gezi protests and freedom of the press issues. The Gezi protests began in May 2013 as a “green” protest for the preservation of the Gezi Park, where the municipality was planning to re-construct the Taksim Military Barracks (Topçu Kışlası, first constructed in late 19<sup>th</sup> century). The municipality’s desire was to build a cultural centre and a shopping mall, a small hotel and a few meeting rooms with its exterior form architecturally designed to imitate the old barracks.<sup>76</sup> According to a poll conducted by KONDA, only around 5 per cent

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<sup>73</sup> Nathalie Tocci, personal communication, 27/2/2016.

<sup>74</sup> Ioannis Grigoriadis, personal communication, 19/3/2016.

<sup>75</sup> Ireneusz Fidos, personal communication, 17/5/2016.

<sup>76</sup> Edibe Sözen & M. Hakan Yavuz, “The Gezi Protests: An Outburst at Turkey’s Shutter-Zone”, *Insight Turkey* 16: 1 (2014), pp. 147–162.

of the protesters considered that environmental goals were their primary motivation,<sup>77</sup> showing the movement's true nature as an movement in opposition of what they regarded a "civil dictatorship," relying on mass social reaction and support. The power of the Internet was visible throughout the protests, where 69 percent of the protesters were kept informed via social media.<sup>78</sup> After the police intervened, individual protests quickly turned into a mass movement marked by sporadic violence and vandalism on the part of the protesters. The protests over the summer of 2013 represented a short-lived outburst rather than a long-lasting political movement engendering a new actor with a possible "new Left" identity.<sup>79</sup> However, coupled with allegations of corruption,<sup>80</sup> Turkey's international profile has been going through a tough time as a democratic, liberal model and its reputation has worsened according to Bill Park.<sup>81</sup> In the meantime, in the Reporters without Borders Press Freedom Index, Turkey dropped from 98<sup>th</sup> of 175 countries in 2005<sup>82</sup> to 149<sup>th</sup> in 2015.<sup>83</sup>

The freezing of the "Peace Process" resulted in further questioning of Turkey's reform efforts and commitment to democracy and freedoms. As such, it came as no surprise that the EU's annual progress reports on Turkey contained important references to post-Gezi developments and the Peace Process, highlighting the EU's concerns about democratization

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<sup>77</sup> Coşkun Taştan, "The Gezi Park Protests in Turkey: A Qualitative Field Research", *Insight Turkey* 15: 3 (2013), pp. 27–38, p. 34.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 32; Ali Murat Yel & Alparslan Nas, "After Gezi: Moving Towards Post-Hegemonic Imagination in Turkey", *Insight Turkey* 15: 4 (2013), pp. 177–190, p. 181.

<sup>79</sup> See Nilüfer Göle, "Gezi-Anatomy of a Public Square Movement", *Insight Turkey* 15: 3 (2013), pp. 7–14; Hatem Ete, "The Political Reverberations of the Gezi Protests", *Insight Turkey* 15: 3 (2013), pp. 15–25; Edibe Sözen and Hakan Yavuz, "The Gezi Protests: An Outburst at Turkey's Shatter-Zone", *Insight Turkey* 16:1 (2014), pp. 147–162; Yeşim Arat, "Violence, Resistance, and Gezi Park", *International Journal of Middle East* 45:4 (2013), pp. 807–809; Coşkun Taştan, "The Gezi Park Protests in Turkey: A Qualitative Field Research", *Insight Turkey* 15: 3 (2013), pp. 27–38; Edibe Sözen & M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Gezi Protests: An Outburst at Turkey's Shatter-Zone", *Insight Turkey* 16: 1 (2014), pp. 147–162; Atilla Yayla, "Gezi Park Revolts: For or Against Democracy?", *Insight Turkey* 15: 4 (2013), pp. 7–18; Doğan Eşkinat, "Gezi Park: Negotiating a New Left Identity", *Insight Turkey* 15: 3 (2013), pp. 45–49; Hatem Ete, "The Political Reverberations of the Gezi Protests", *Insight Turkey* 15: 3 (2013), pp. 15–25.

<sup>80</sup> Erhan İçener & David Phinnemore, "Turkey and the EU: Looking Beyond the Pessimism", *Insight Turkey* 16: 3 (2014), pp. 37–46.

<sup>81</sup> Park, personal communication, 15/2/2016.

<sup>82</sup> Paul Kubicek, "Democratization and Relations with the EU in the AK Party Period: Is Turkey Really Making Progress?", *Insight Turkey* 15: 4 (2013), pp. 41–49.

<sup>83</sup> 2015 World Press Freedom Index, <<https://index.rs.f.org/#!/>>, accessed 3/4/2016.

and reforms in Turkey.<sup>84</sup> According to Ünver, the post-2013 environment in Turkey also results from the elite's sense of being surrounded, which has engendered occasionally aggressive responses.<sup>85</sup> Cornell, summarising these criticisms in one sentence, argued that:

The 2013 controversies led directly to Erdogan's regime transitioning from a hybrid, semi-democratic system to an outright repressive, authoritarian system that manipulates the democratic system with absolutely no intention to abide by the results of a free expression of popular will.<sup>86</sup>

Kubicek's assumption about the overall facts of the relationship after 2010 seems worth mentioning here:

My sense is that from 2010-2014 in particular, Turkey-EU ties hit a new low, with blame on both sides as the EU refused to open accession chapters and not grant visa-free travel, and on the Turkish side, in part due to Turkish interest in the Middle East (and less interest in Europe) and because of Turkey's deteriorating democratic record, which makes the prospect of Turkish membership much more difficult to envision.<sup>87</sup>

Here, the phrase "hit a new low" refers to the previous low point had come with the ESDP discussions and the controversy about the Cyprus question as discussed above.

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<sup>84</sup> Kubicek, 2013, p. 45.

<sup>85</sup> Akin Ünver, personal communication, 26/3/2016.

<sup>86</sup> Svante Cornell, personal communication, 17/2/2016.

<sup>87</sup> Paul Kubicek, personal communication, 20/2/2016.

As Fidos has argued, the EU has turned into an entity which is currently going through a rather difficult time and has had to adopt an inward-looking approach. However, the refugee crisis has reminded the EU that even when pursuing a successful inward-looking policy line, there are still regional and international challenges that need to be addressed. In this atmosphere, discussions between the EU and Turkey over the handling of the refugee crisis, with the prospects of lifting visa regimes and opening new chapters, has helped resurrect the political dimension of their relationship. Still, it is important not to overlook the fact that public faith in EU membership is still quite low in Turkey—even though support for membership has been on the rise recently—thereby diminishing the cost of remaining outside the EU for political parties in Turkey and decreasing the leverage of EU encouragement. It is also widely perceived that by struggling to resurrect the relationship just because of the refugee crisis, the EU has weakened its democracy, human rights leverage and rhetorical power in the bilateral relationship. This image plays into the hands of Turkish EU-sceptics, showing the EU's turn to an over-pragmatic approach as soon as its interests are at stake. Sharing this assumption, Tür mentioned her disappointment with the EU's attitude during a period marked by bargaining between the EU and Turkey, questioning the EU's own commitment to the values and norms it has purported to defend for decades.<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile, the coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016 brought harsh criticism from Turkey about the response from EU countries, which was considered too late and too weak. On the other hand, Turkey viewed EU criticism of about the arrests, suspensions and imprisonments following the attempted coup as harsh. The three-month state of emergency declared across Turkey was perceived as something that would further complicate the relationship, in which each side's commitment to democratic values and norms were being questioned by the other. Unless

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<sup>88</sup> Tür, personal communication, 28/4/2016.



there is a sudden and proactive change of heart on the part of the EU and Turkey, stagnation and deadlock seem to be the prevailing trend for the foreseeable future.

The next section will investigate the way selected domestic factors have impacted the Turkish-EU relationship.

#### Domestic Level: Coalitions between Conservative Businessmen and the JDP and Shifting Civil-Military Power Calculus

In economic terms, even though the comparative shares of other regions over the last decade have reached much greater levels, the EU is still Turkey's number one trading partner. Future energy transportation projects, in which Turkey might play a key transit link role, have the potential to reinforce this picture of economic interdependence. Even though the EU's share in Turkey's trade decreased in the last decade, this cannot only be attributed to a grand strategic shift. Professor Erdal Tanas Karagöl, a leading academic and researcher on economics at SETA, rightly argues that the global economic crisis of 2008–2009, which affected the EU's economic capabilities, encouraged Turkey to keep a closer eye on other regions to compensate for potential loss in trade with the EU.<sup>89</sup> TOBB University's Mustafa Kutlay also added that higher levels of competition in the European market due to the increasing competitiveness of rising economies have also negatively affected Turkey's ability to consolidate its levels of trade with the EU.<sup>90</sup>

The Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and the former Soviet area (including Russia) have become more important in terms of Turkey's economic scope abroad, with both a higher

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<sup>89</sup> Erdal Tanas Karagöl, personal communication, 11/3/2016.

<sup>90</sup> Mustafa Kutlay, personal communication, 8/4/2016.

share and a stronger demand for closer economic ties.<sup>91</sup> However, it is neither feasible nor desirable for Turkey to attempt to reverse the orientation of its economic interactivity abroad in such a dramatic way that economic interaction with those regions replaces Turkey's strong ties with the EU. As such, conservative business associations with close links to the JDP have never ignored the significance of the European market. They have refrained from challenging the EU dimension of Turkey's economic activity with value-driven rhetoric. Instead, they work to maintain a presence in Europe via their branches and associated companies, and strive to achieve the CE-mark for their goods.

As far as the military's decreasing influence over civilian policy-making is concerned, it is important to note the military's paradox regarding Turkey's "Westernisation project", of which they claimed to be the forerunners. Since the 1990s, the hawkish wing of the military has become more and more irritated with the reforms demanded by the EU, knowing that liberal components of the integration project would allow different religious and ethnic groups to become more active in politics. The military's reactionist stance came to be seen as an obstacle to reforms demanded by the EU. However, as a result of the military's gradual loss of power, the JDP has found it much easier to implement reforms and amend necessary laws in order to bring Turkey's legal structure and institutions more into line with the EU.

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<sup>91</sup> On the figures, see Foreign Ministry's briefs, "Turkey's relations with the Latin American and the Caribbean Countries", <[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i\\_turkey\\_s-relations-with-the-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-countries.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i_turkey_s-relations-with-the-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-countries.en.mfa)>, accessed 25/05/2014; "Turkey-Africa Relations", <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>>, accessed 30/06/2014; "Turkey's Commercial and Economic Relations With Russian Federation", <[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey\\_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-russian-federation.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-with-russian-federation.en.mfa)>, accessed 6/12/2014; "OrtaAsyaÜlkeleriileİlişkiler" [Relations with the Central Asian Republics], <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-orta-asya-ulkeleri-iliskileri.tr.mfa>>, accessed 7/12/2014; Azerbaijan'ınEkonomisi[The Economy of Azerbaijan], <<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/azerbaycan-ekonomisi.tr.mfa>>, 7/12/2014; Ministry of Economy's brief, "Countries & Regions-Middle East", <<http://www.economy.gov.tr/index.cfm?sayfa=countriesandregions&region=4>>, updated July 2013, accessed 07/11/2014 and The Prime Ministry's Investment Support and Promotion Agency's brief "Turkey-Russia Eye Increased Trade, Joint Auto Production", <<http://www.invest.gov.tr/en-US/infocenter/news/Pages/261113-turkey-russia-joint-auto-production.aspx>>, 26/11/2013, accessed 8/12/2014; Gül Turan, İlterTuran and İdris Bal, "Turkey's Relations with the Turkic Republics" in İdris Bal, ed. *Turkish Foreign Policy in Post-Cold War Era* (Florida: Brown Walker Press, 2004), pp. 291–326, p. 320–321.

*Domestic Coalitions between the JDP and Conservative Businessmen and the Turkish-EU Economic Relationship*

TÜSİAD (Turkish Industry and Business Association)—and more recently MÜSİAD and TUSKON with their more conservative outlook and links with the JDP—have helped Turkey move towards becoming a trading state. The JDP has a reputation as a “pro-private sector party”,<sup>92</sup> and half of the party’s Executive Board describe themselves as “businessmen” or “merchants”.<sup>93</sup> The party has a lot of businessmen MPs, including several former heads of MÜSİAD, and it has challenged the pre-existing sense of Kemalist étatism in the economic sphere,<sup>94</sup> helping Turkey reduce the EU’s concerns.

The two conservative business associations, MÜSİAD and TUSKON (up to 2013 for the latter), succeeded in utilising the pre-established links with conservative and Islamist political figures and parties. These links included strong connections with the leading cadre of the JDP, which may hold a certain degree of influence over the ruling party’s choices. With this influence, commitments to conducting business with the EU—and even increasing it to further integrate with the EU’s trading mechanism and comply with the standards for goods and services—has meant a lot over recent years in terms of keeping the economic dimension of the Turkish-EU relationship alive.

MÜSİAD has an ideological tendency to stress the importance of improving economic relations with predominantly Muslim countries, and has enjoyed intimate ties with the Welfare Party, whose approach to the European Union has been sceptical at best.

However, it accepted the need to become a part of the market both in Europe and the US.

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<sup>92</sup> Henri Barkey and Yasemin Çongar, “Deciphering Turkey’s Elections: The Making of a Revolution”, *World Policy Journal*, 24: 3 (Fall, 2007), pp. 63–73, p. 66.

<sup>93</sup> Seda Demiralp, “The Rise of Islamic Capital and the Decline of Islamic Radicalism in Turkey”, *Comparative Politics*, 41: 3 (April 2009), pp. 315–335, p. 328.

<sup>94</sup> On Kemalist étatism, see Ömer Celâl Sarc, “Economic Policy of the New Turkey”, *Middle East Journal*, 2:4 (October 1948), pp. 430–446.

Despite attempting to redirect some of Turkey's economic interactivity with EU countries to its neighbouring regions, neither MÜSİAD nor TUSKON pushed for a dramatic change in the economic interactivity with the EU. That particular attitude actually shows how Turkey's conservatives, including businessmen groupings, have evolved to reflect a pragmatic approach.

Based on the experiences of the 1997 post-modern coup—in which conservative Anatolian businesses suffered along with the Welfare Party—business groups seemed to understand the potential benefits of adopting European norms and values. Their two-decade journey toward pragmatism since that year deserves a good deal of attention in their shifting attitude towards the EU.<sup>95</sup> The conservative businessmen's experiences stemming from the process of the February 28 coup may have taught them two things to account for their pragmatic approach to the EU. Firstly, the military does not only intervene in politics when it deems necessary, but also targets the economy by putting pressure on the businessmen with religious or conservative affiliations and/or close ties to the ruling party.<sup>96</sup> Secondly, in order to revise the civil-military power calculus, EU membership could prove highly useful, with its attendant demands for reforms in the civil-military relationship and market liberalisation. This may explain why Turkey's conservative business associations gradually came to terms with the EU and abandoned their previous oppositional stance.

Just before the JDP era began, MÜSİAD began to lean more and more towards further democratisation, human rights and liberalisation, the key focus areas of its report on Democratic and Constitutional Reform in 2000.<sup>97</sup> In several other publications, MÜSİAD also underlined the need for political, bureaucratic and economic reforms in order to further

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<sup>95</sup> Mustafa Kutlay, personal communication, 8/4/2016.

<sup>96</sup> Adaş, 2009, p. 632–633 and Svante Cornell, "Turkey: Return to Stability?", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 35:4, (October 1999), pp. 209–234, p. 221–222.

<sup>97</sup> Şebnem Gümüşçü & Deniz Sert, "The Power of the Devout Bourgeoisie: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies* 45:6 (2009), pp. 953–968, p. 964

democratise Turkey.<sup>98</sup> This tendency might also be a result of the more pragmatic assumption that a higher profile and stronger representation of groups like MÜSİAD—which had been at the periphery of the old domestic power calculus—would depend on such a transformation. In order to open up space for peripheral groups including conservative SMEs and conservative political parties, and to normalise civil-military relations, democratisation was put on the agendas of these associations, bringing them closer to the pro-EU line. This came about not only because of the perceived benefits of the accession process (such as limiting the military's influence) but also because of their own ambitions to grow from smaller firms to much bigger companies which could export and import competitively within the European market. According to Fidos, the process could be referred to as the “Europeanisation of the conservative businessmen”—something that needs further encouragement and which will be an increasingly important dimension of future integration efforts.<sup>99</sup>

There are concrete examples of conservative businessmen associations' changing attitudes from a religious rhetoric that labelled the EU as a “Christian club” to seeing it instead as a valuable economic partner. MÜSİAD has been a member of the European Confederation of Associations of SMEs since 2003, and it strongly encourages its member companies to achieve the CE marking—a designation of conformity for products showing that their specifications are in line with the EU's requirements and can be sold within the EU.<sup>100</sup> MÜSİAD has branches in several European cities such as London, Berlin and The Hague, as well as partner organisations all over Europe.<sup>101</sup> It opens stands for member companies at business fairs in numerous European cities each year, including Cologne,

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<sup>98</sup> See *The Turkish Economy 2001* (38) (İstanbul: Mavi Ofset, 2002) and *The Turkish Economy 2002* (39) (İstanbul: Mavi Ofset, 2002), published by MÜSİAD.

<sup>99</sup> Ireneusz Fidos, personal communication, 17/5/2016.

<sup>100</sup> Selcen Öner, “Europeanisation of Civil Society in Turkey during the Accession Process to the European Union” in Çiğdem Nas and Yonca Özer, eds., *Turkey and the European Union: Processes of Europeanisation* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2012) Ch.5.

<sup>101</sup> “Branches”, MÜSİAD webpage, <<http://www.musiad.org.tr/en/branches>>, accessed 10/11/2012.

Hanover and Milan. In the Turkish city of Konya alone, 16 MÜSİAD member businesses obtained EU funding in 2006, and since 2005 the organisation itself has obtained funding from the EU as an NGO.<sup>102</sup> In one of many similar visits, MÜSİAD visited Brussels in 2012 with a group of 35 businessmen, who did not only contact their counterparts there, but also meet Stefan Füle, the former EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. During this visit, the group also attended a conference at the European Parliament about the Middle East and Turkey's role in it, in which Egemen Bağış was also a participant.<sup>103</sup>

TUSKON also has an office in Brussels,<sup>104</sup> from which it organised a summit with the European Policy Centre (EPC) in 2011 to discuss the common interests of the EU and Turkey. European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Füle and European Commissioner for Trade Karel de Gucht, as well as deputies of the European Parliament Graham Watson, Anneli Tuulikki Jäätteenmäki and Sandra Kalniete, attended and made statements. At this summit, the then Minister of European Union Affairs Egemen Bağış and the then Economy Minister Zafer Çağlayan also addressed the audience, highlighting the close ties forged between the conservative businessmen association and the JDP.<sup>105</sup> The head of TUSKON, Rızanur Meral, also stated at this summit that “the EU reforms would be the reference point for Turkey's transformation”, and that Turkish businessmen would do their best to support and contribute to the EU-Turkey relationship.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> See Dilek Yankaya, “The Europeanization of MÜSİAD: Political Opportunism, Economic Europeanization, Islamic Euroscepticism”, *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (2009).

<sup>103</sup> “MÜSİAD heyeti 35 işadami ile Brüksel'e gidiyor”, 4/3/2012, *Dünya*, <<http://www.dunya.com/dis-iliskiler/musiad-heyeti-35-isadami-ile-bruksele-gidiyor-147601h.htm>>, accessed 5/1/2016.

<sup>104</sup> “Tuskon Offices”, TUSKON webpage, <<http://www.tuskoneu.org/tuskon-offices/>>, accessed 12/11/2014.

<sup>105</sup> “TUSKON Partners with EPC to Organize Turkey-EU Conference”, *Today's Zaman*, 13/11/2011, <[http://www.todayszaman.com/business\\_tuskon-partners-with-epc-to-organize-turkey-eu-conference\\_262533.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/business_tuskon-partners-with-epc-to-organize-turkey-eu-conference_262533.html)>, accessed 22/12/2013.

<sup>106</sup> “TUSKON Başkanı Rızanur Meral: AB normları Türkiye’de değişimin referansı olacak”, 12/7/2011, *Doğan Haber Ajansı*, <[http://www.dha.com.tr/tuskon-baskani-rizanur-meral-ab-normlari-turkiyede-degisimin-referansi-olacak\\_184544.html](http://www.dha.com.tr/tuskon-baskani-rizanur-meral-ab-normlari-turkiyede-degisimin-referansi-olacak_184544.html)>, accessed 12/7/2016.

All in all, for reasons both political and economic, Turkey's conservative businessmen, once staunch allies of the anti-EU Welfare Party, have calculated that it would be potentially devastating in the long run to dramatically change the dynamics and volume of the bilateral economic interaction between Turkey and Europe. Instead, they consider it wiser to diversify the routes of Turkish money flow without damaging the strong economic link with the EU, an economic stance which is quite similar to the mentality employed by the foreign policy-makers of the new Turkish grand strategy. This approach emphasises pragmatism over ideological discourse, coupled with a political pragmatism that sees the links between the potential benefits of Turkey's further advance towards greater democracy—with higher levels of participation from the periphery including different religious and ethnic groups—and a much better working market economy.

*Military-Civil Power Calculus: Reforms and Discontent on the Rise amongst the Old Elite Including the Military*

In its quest to reconfigure the civil-military relationship, the EU accession process provided the JDP not only with motivation and encouragement, but also with an effective instrument. Echoing this assumption, Heinz-Jürgen Axt argues that reforms are used by the JDP primarily in instrumental terms in order “to secure support by businessmen, to overcome military's strong influence, and to modernize the country”.<sup>107</sup> Svante Cornell shares this assumption, arguing that “The AKP's interest in the EU is inversely related to its consolidation of power. When it has been weak, it has appealed to the EU; as it strengthened its controls, so it dumped any ambitions of EU integration.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Axt, personal communication, 14/3/2016.

<sup>108</sup> Svante Cornell, personal communication, 17/2/2016.

The acquis-oriented reforms that Turkey carried out did not receive approval from every circle within Turkey. Not surprisingly, the Copenhagen Criteria enraged the old elite and the military due to the emphasis on minority rights, gradually triggering reforms resulting in the abolition of the death penalty (an amendment to be applied to PKK leader Öcalan) and discussions over Article 312, which bans incitement to religious and ethnic hatred. The Criteria also angered the military due to the demand for reforms designed to address Turkey's problematic civil-military power calculus. For the EU, "the military tutelage" has been "one of the central obstacles towards democratic consolidation".<sup>109</sup> This demand can be seen as aiming to limit the military's ability to intervene in civilian politics,<sup>110</sup> which is in line with Phinnemore's suggestion that "a large role for the military is incompatible with the democratic norms supposedly underpinning the EU".<sup>111</sup>

Certain legal amendments, changes and the introduction of new laws and regulations laid the ground for a great deal of discontent among the old elite, of which the military has long been the backbone. The old Turkish elite based its ideologies and mentality on French-type Jacobinism<sup>112</sup> and laicism, with a top-down understanding of reform and an alarmist attitude towards any other ideological affiliation. This included religious or non-Turkish ethnic ideology, and resulted in a re-evaluation of the EU membership process in a more critical light. Thus, the military, once staunch Westernisers, had been transformed into Euro-sceptics. Soli Özel notes that:

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<sup>109</sup> Öniş, 2013, p. 105.

<sup>110</sup> Gamze Avcı, "Turkey's Slow EU Candidacy: Insurmountable Hurdles to Membership or Simple Euro-scepticism?", *Turkish Studies* 4:1 (2003), pp. 149–170, p. 159–162 and Hale, 2013, p. 181–187.

<sup>111</sup> David Phinnemore, personal communication, 17/3/2016.

<sup>112</sup> Nilüfer Göle, "Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites", *Middle East Journal*, 51:1 (Winter 1997), pp. 46–58, p. 48 and Ahmet Kemal, "Military Rule and the Future of Democracy in Turkey", *MERIP Reports*, 122 (March-April 1984), pp. 12–15, at p. 13.



Democratisation of the Turkish political order does indeed mean a profound shift in the balance of power and this process entails the loss of power and privilege for those on the losing side. Therefore the most virulent anti-Western positions as well as proposals for a non-Western strategic option come from some Westernised elites, including retired military officials.<sup>113</sup>

Showing this discontent and the military's changing stance, the then Chief of the General Staff Hilmi Özkök tried to justify the asymmetry in the Turkish civil-military relationship by saying that every country has its own characteristics.<sup>114</sup> He also objected to the EU's "carrot and stick" policy.<sup>115</sup> In this environment, a religious rhetorical attack even came from the military ranks when General Halil Şimşek, speaking at a Military Academy-organised seminar, called the EU a "Christian club" that was shaped by "Christian values and under the Vatican's influence."<sup>116</sup> This statement would not have surprised anybody if it had come from Erbakan in the past. However, it came from the military, which has long been the self-appointed guardian of the "secular and unitary state structure" of Turkey. This was a clear sign that the military's irritation had reached a point where it no longer hesitated to use its old enemy's rhetoric to garner the support it needed.

Turkey's signing of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Protocols 6 and 13, and the resulting abolition of the death penalty introduced the necessary means to promote judiciary independence, closer investigation and strict measures against torture in

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<sup>113</sup> Erik Jones, "Turkey, Islam and Europe", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 51:5(2009), pp.163–172, p. 170.

<sup>114</sup> Ersel Aydınli, Nihat Ali Özcan and Doğan Akyaz, "The Turkish Military's March toward Europe", *Foreign Affairs*, 85: 1 (January-February 2006), pp. 77–90, p. 78.

<sup>115</sup> On the definition and use of "sticks and carrots", see Joseph Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (March 2008), pp. 94–109.

<sup>116</sup> Hasan Kösebalaban, "Turkey's EU Membership: A Clash of Security Cultures", *Middle East Policy*, 9: 2 (2002), pp. 130–146, p. 141.

interrogations and reforms related to prison system.<sup>117</sup> This caused a great deal of anger for groups which considered such changes to pose a danger to the state's fight with "ethnic and religious domestic threats". Among the EU's demands concerning the democratization aspect of the Copenhagen Criteria was a call to increase the number of civilian members of the National Security Council and an increase in the influence of these civilian members in defining national security concepts. The Copenhagen Criteria also demanded higher levels of civilian control over military promotions, budgets and dismissals, the removal of military members from non-military councils such as YÖK (Council of Higher Education)<sup>118</sup> and RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council), as well as civilian supervision of military courts.<sup>119</sup>

The 2003 reform package included legal changes to ensure civilian control over the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and National Security Council (NSC) budgets. This was an important step forward limiting the military's free hand over what proportion of the state budget is transferred to itself.<sup>120</sup> The NSC, a structure that was established as an advisory body, had become a powerful military tool which was used to control civilian politics. The NSC even had the right to veto candidates that political parties chose for upcoming elections.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, a parallel military legal system for military officials added a legal side to its political and economic position, which had long been a concern for the EU regarding Turkey's judicial system.<sup>122</sup> In 2006, increasing civilian control over military courts and

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<sup>117</sup> David Phillips, "Turkey's Dreams of Accession", *Foreign Affairs*, 83:5 (September–October 2004), pp. 86–97, at p. 94 and Javier Solana, "EU Values in Action Around the World", *Foreign Policy*, 151 (November–December 2005), pp. 6–7.

<sup>118</sup> In academia, this asymmetry found its meaning in the establishment of the Council of Higher Education which directly ends the autonomy of universities and brings them under direct state control—with of course a "supervisory" military member within this council. See Ersel Aydınli, Nihat Ali Özcan and Doğan Akyaz, "The Turkish Military's March toward Europe", *Foreign Affairs*, 85:1 (January–February 2006), pp. 77–90, p. 82.

<sup>119</sup> Aydınli, Özcan and Akyaz, "The Turkish Military's March toward Europe", at p. 84.

<sup>120</sup> Tuba Ünlü Bilgiç, "The Military and Europeanization Reforms in Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45: 5 (2009), pp. 803–824, p. 805.

<sup>121</sup> Karabelias, 1999, p. 136.

<sup>122</sup> Aydınli, Özcan and Akyaz, "The Turkish Military's March toward Europe", p. 81.

restrictions over their jurisdictional capabilities reached the point at which trials of civilians, regardless of the nature of the accusations, were prohibited from being conducted in military courts, significantly limiting the judicial autonomy of the military.<sup>123</sup>

As far as the military's ability to intervene in politics is concerned, one of the most important demands from the EU was to amend Article 35 of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) Internal Service Law, Article 85 of the Internal Service Regulations, and Article 2a of the Law on the NSC. These three articles gave the Turkish Armed Forces the duty to defend not only the country but also the regime against "both internal and external threats." The EU considered that the articles implicitly justify military intervention. In fact, they had been used to justify interventions in the past, effectively allowing the military to act as a "shadow government" that could give orders to political leaders, amend the decisions of ministers and monitor whether their "advice" was put into practice by civilian authorities.<sup>124</sup> In terms of the Kurdish question, Kurdish broadcasting was permitted with the 2001 National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA) in spite of the military's strong opposition to it. Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorism Law was repealed, making a clear distinction between armed acts of terror and intellectual criticisms of state structure and policy, thus clarifying a previously blurred dividing line. The number of civilian members in the NSC increased and a civilian head was elected. All these things angered both nationalists and hawkish military officials.<sup>125</sup> A statement made by the then Chief of General Staff, İlker Başbuğ, shows the parallels in the objections of nationalists and the military to the EU reform packages: "If the cultural rights are transformed into group political rights then fragmentation may occur. This is directly

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<sup>123</sup> Bilgiç, 2009, p. 806.

<sup>124</sup> Bilgiç, 2009, p. 807 and Eric Rouleau, "Turkey's Dream of Democracy", *Foreign Affairs*, 79:6 (November-December 2000), pp. 100–114, p. 105.

<sup>125</sup> Bilgiç, 2009, p. 810; Gümüşçü and Sert, 2009, p. 960 and Bahar Rumelili, "Turkey: Identity, Foreign Policy, and Socialization in a Post-Enlargement Europe", *Journal of European Integration* 33:2, pp. 235–249, p. 244.

related to Turkey's security because it destroys the unitary structure."<sup>126</sup> In a similar vein, as a response to the NPAA, the Commander of the Armed Forces Academy, Brigadier General Halil Şimşek stated that it was breaking up the country in the name of "cultural rights", "broadcasting in the mother tongue" and "educational rights." Despite criticism from the military, the acquis-driven reforms were carried out one after another in rapid succession, further distancing the military from its previous pro-EU sentiments.<sup>127</sup> The EU's emphasis on the accountability of the Army to the Minister of Defence, not to the Prime Minister (in accordance with the general practice in member states of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe as well as NATO and the EU)<sup>128</sup> was no less alarming for the military officials, who had hitherto enjoyed an autonomous and influential role in Turkish domestic politics. Ideally, "the military quantifies the risk, the civilians judge it,"<sup>129</sup> whereas in Turkey the military not only quantified risks, but also pressured civilians to take the steps they considered necessary and judged the civilians on their policy decisions. In the face of the changing civil-military relationship and increasing civilian control over the military, the possibility of a junta striving for an intervention into the civilian political realm proved to be present anyway, considering the coup attempt of 15 July 2016. However, most of the military took an anti-coup stance for the first time in modern Turkish history, which was one of the key factors that helped the government thwart the attempted coup. This showed how years of effort to transform the military and reconfigure the civil-military relationship—even when some elements did not approve of the JDP's political line—was largely successful.

All in all, as a result of the above-mentioned amendments, the military lost a great deal of its power in terms of political influence and policy-making. This changed the military's

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<sup>126</sup> Bilgiç, 2009, p. 816

<sup>127</sup> Cizre, 2003, p.224. On these and further reforms related to democratisation, human rights, minority rights and the civil-military relations, also see Hale and Özbudun, 2010, p. 55–68.

<sup>128</sup> Bilgiç, 2009, p. 808.

<sup>129</sup> Ümit Cizre, "Demythologizing the National Security Concept: The Case of Turkey", *Middle East Journal*, 57:2 (2003), pp. 213–229, p.229.

attitude towards the EU membership process, which they blamed for changes and amendments in its stature and capabilities. After decades of pro-Westernisation polemicizing, the military was trapped by its own rhetoric, preventing it from making a full-frontal attack on the EU accession process. Instead, it chose to oppose some of the amendments and reforms one by one whenever it deemed necessary. The EU had changed in the post-Cold War era, and political conditionality and pressure for domestic reforms became as important as the economic dimension of the European integration process. However, in Turkey the military and the Kemalist elite had not changed to the same extent, or had chosen to be more rigid in terms of changing their stance.<sup>130</sup> This state of affairs was a little ironic when one considers that most of the JDP's leading cadre came from Erbakan's Islamist political parties, which were once the forerunners of anti-EU campaigns.

The controversial situation in which the military found itself trapped was referred to as the "Kemalist dilemma"; while Europe was a civilizational target within the context of the elites' "civilizing mission", the same elite gradually came to regard it as a threat to Turkey's independence and unitary structure.<sup>131</sup> This dilemma came about partially a result of Turkey's memories of the First World War and the aftermath of the Independence War. These events culminated in the so-called "Sèvres Syndrome" within the Turkish public and the elite, which was even visible in the statements made by the rather dove-ish former Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit. He criticised the EU's request for reforms regarding Cyprus, the Kurdish question and the Armenian dispute, describing the process as trying to revive the Sèvres Treaty and humiliate Turkey.<sup>132</sup> The roots of the syndrome were described by Bernard Lewis as follows: "...the Treaty of Sèvres was very harsh, and would have left Turkey helpless and mutilated, a

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<sup>130</sup> Tarık Oğuzlu, "The Clash of Security Identities: The Question of Turkey's Membership in the European Union", *International Journal*, 57:4 (Autumn 2002), pp. 579–603 at p.588.

<sup>131</sup> Hasan Kösebalaban, "The Permanent "Other"? Turkey and the Question of European Identity", *Mediterranean Quarterly* 18: 4, pp. 87–111 (2007), p. 90.

<sup>132</sup> Morris, 2005, p.200.

shadow state living on the sufferance of the powers and peoples who were annexing her richest provinces.”<sup>133</sup> Even though the comparison between WWI memories and the problems relating to Turkey’s quest for accession seems a little far-fetched, it was clear that the ruling elite and the public suffered significantly from this syndrome, even affecting their approach to the latter.

Although it is questionable to ascribe all the credit for the normalisation of an abnormal civil-military relationship in Turkey to the EU accession process, the EU can be credited with helping bring about the change much sooner and more easily. This came about as a result of the EU’s criticism of the civil-military relationship in the Turkish context and the reforms it demanded. Either way, Turkey was freed from the rigid stance of the military and its self-appointed mission to “civilise” the country via a largely outdated reading of European civilisation. As Nathalie Tocci, Deputy Director of Istituto Affari Internazionali, confirms, the demise of military influence was one of the key factors that contributed to a reform process<sup>134</sup> which, along with the economic dimension, kept the relationship alive during a period of realpolitik stalemate.

#### Concluding Remarks: Assessing the Strength of NCR and the post-2013 Environment in the Bilateral Relationship

In contrast to the National Salvation Party (NSP) and the Welfare Party, which pursued an anti-Western agenda, the JDP has maintained Turkey’s commitment

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<sup>133</sup> Ben Lombardi, “Turkey: Myths and Realities”, *International Journal: Canada’s Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 61 (2006), pp. 1–18, p. 15.

<sup>134</sup> Nathalie Tocci, personal communication, 27/2/2016.

to the Western security structure and the EU, and emphasised EU membership as an important pillar of its foreign policy.

Angel Rabasa & Stephen F. Larrabee <sup>135</sup>

The timing of the stagnation in the Turkish/EU relationship is thought-provoking. It took place in an era when debates over Turkey's "potential" in surrounding regions were livelier due to changes in power- and interest-driven perceptions, and when Turkey's interest-driven concerns about the ESDP scheme and the Cyprus dispute were heightened.

Even during the era when the JDP's commitment to reforms and further democratisation in line with the *acquis* was praised by the EU, some *realpolitik* questions plagued the relationship with tension. This contradicts the picture drawn by primordialist accounts, which primarily focus on ideological tension between the two.

Turkey's irritation over its side-lining in an era of new windows of opportunity in the immediate post-Cold War era and its concerns about the EU's stance on the question of Cyprus pushed the two sides into opposing positions. Turkey has also found itself disagreeing with the EU due to the emerging ESDP scheme. The ESDP crisis has shown Turkey's significance for the EU as a leading NATO ally which would help the Union project its own power on a global scale. The crisis has also shown the limits of decades-old Westernisation rhetoric in Turkey, and how this rhetoric can be defeated at times when its interests are at stake. During the ESDP/CSDP discussions, Turkey insisted on pursuing its own interest-driven policy line rather than offering concessions without receiving necessary assurances, even at the expense of a stalemate and stagnation in its relations with the EU. Neither long-standing Westernisation discourse nor the potential loss of momentum in the reform process

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<sup>135</sup> Angel Rabasa and F. Stephen Larrabee, "The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey", *RAND Report* (2008), p. 75

due to the stagnating relationship with the EU could outweigh power and interest-related concerns, as shown in the case of the Greek Cypriot accession. This was happening despite the fact that it could also cost the JDP in terms of both international support and its wide domestic electoral base, which included pro-EU groups. Paul states that Turkey moved to an approach on the *acquis* reforms that could be summarised as “we will do what we want when we want to,”<sup>136</sup> echoing Heinz Kramer’s suggestion, quoted by Hale: “the very moment the Turkish political leadership lost trust in the readiness of the EU to stand by its commitments, it started to change its policy”.<sup>137</sup>

The pragmatic attitude adopted by conservative businessmen, in spite of their role in channelling some of Turkey’s economic interactivity with the EU to neighbouring regions, gradually allowed the adoption of a more pro-EU line. Their stance was reinforced via their branches in Europe as well as at meetings and fairs with their EU counterparts, and efforts to harmonise their businesses with EU standards. This attitude economically reinforced Turkey’s “balancing efforts” in the geopolitical orientation of its grand strategy. Turkey’s biggest trading partner is still the EU, and the EU’s share in Turkish trade still stands at more than 40 percent, even in the post-2005 stagnation period.<sup>138</sup>

From the late 1990s, while previously ardent supporters of EU accession process such as the military began to approach the EU membership with more suspicion, other groups, including the conservatives, came to regard it as a goal worth pursuing and also as a way of changing the centre-periphery power calculus in Turkey. With the EU’s demand for reforms and further democratisation, the military and the old Kemalist elite realised that the EU process reflected a more contemporary reading of European civilisation. This reading placed more emphasis on minority rights, democracy, market

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<sup>136</sup> Paul, 2012, p. 30.

<sup>137</sup> Hale, 2013, p. 190.

<sup>138</sup> Kirişçi and Kaptanoğlu, 2011, p. 705–707.



economy and religious freedoms, as opposed to the old elite's adherence to the European norms and values in the nineteenth and early twentieth century which took the form of an étatist, Jacobinist, and aggressive laicist approach.<sup>139</sup> The military's demise as a key policy-maker removed a significant obstacle that stood in the way of Turkey carrying out reforms in line with the EU *acquis* and maintaining the country's legal and bureaucratic commitment to EU the norms. Even in 2010—one of the high points of Turkey's fading enthusiasm and loss of reform-based momentum—a “democratization package” was passed via a referendum in September which was applauded by the EU. This amendment package was third of its kind after the amendments in 2004 and 2007, but had a broader scope. The package included important changes to the judicial system, including the authorization for civilian courts to try military personnel for “crimes against the security of the State, constitutional order and functioning”, thus implicitly referring to coup plots.<sup>140</sup> Despite all reform efforts, a coup attempt was carried out by a group within the military in July 2016. The attempt not only led to questioning the effectiveness of the EU-demanded reforms, but due to the ensuing arrests, suspensions and the 3-months state of emergency, also resulted in severe criticisms about Turkey's democracy from the EU capitals. A key positive side of the tragic incident was that most of the military followed an anti-coup stance and supported the democratically-elected government.

Within this context, Turkish leaders' disappointment about the EU's late and weak responses to the 2016 coup attempt is important in order that the EU does not to lose its norm-based leverage, not only in terms of pushing for further reforms but also for urging the JDP to maintain its commitment to the rule of law in the aftermath of the attempt. The EU's

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<sup>139</sup> Haas, 2012, p. 208–209.

<sup>140</sup> Hale, 2013, p. 192–193. For a more detailed analysis of all three amendment packages, see Vahap Coşkun, “Constitutional Amendments Under the Justice and Development Party Rule”, *Insight Turkey* 15: 4 (2013), pp. 95–113; Ergun Özbudun, “Turkey's Search for a New Constitution”, *Insight Turkey* 14: 1(2012), pp. 39–50.

norm-oriented approach has been discussed already in the bilateral “bargaining” process over Syrian immigrants. Added to that, in the civil-military relationship dimension—coupled with the insufficiency of the *acquis*-related reforms to avoid a coup attempt however small-scale it was carried out—this image of the EU’s silence would not help the bilateral relationship in the future.

All in all, expectations that Turkey, under a so-called Islamist government, would turn its back on the EU and the West in general on ideological and value-based grounds have proved groundless. It is true that Turkey has acted much more proactively in its neighbouring regions, extending financial activity to regions in which it was previously non-existent. However, its stance regarding the EU and the *acquis*, even during the “Merkozy” era,<sup>141</sup> did not undergo any substantial change. Still, the Merkozy era,<sup>142</sup> coupled with the Greek Cypriot government’s veto right and distractions on the EU’s part caused by the global financial crisis of 2008-2009 and the Greek debt crisis of 2010-2011, effectively worked together to halt membership process, although not on paper.<sup>143</sup> Turkey put a great deal of effort into harmonisation, adopting a softer power-oriented policy regarding the Iraq War and the Iranian nuclear programme whilst encouraging democratisation and market liberalisation in the MENA region. In this context, it is possible that Turkey realised that a higher profile in its environs and in regions in which it had not enjoyed a presence before would pay off. From that standpoint, involvement in the Caribbean and Africa and in regions where it had previously enjoyed only a limited economic presence (such as the Middle East and former Soviet countries) would help Turkey not only in terms of its position on the global stage but

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<sup>141</sup> A term used to refer to the era when Merkel- and Sarkozy-led governments in Germany and France caused a great deal of stagnation in terms of the Turkish-EU relationship due to their at best distanced position with respect to the question of Turkey’s membership, coupled with rising Islamophobia and Turco-scepticism in Europe and their repeated use of the term “privileged partnership” instead of membership for Turkey.

<sup>142</sup> Paul Kubicek, in personal communication with the author, also highlighted the impact of this era by referring to the new leaders of France and Germany as one of the reasons of Turkey’s turn to its surroundings.

<sup>143</sup> Hale, 2013, p. 187–190.

also in terms of its bargaining power with the EU. Turkey's disappointments on several fronts—particularly regarding its immediate neighbourhood after the Arab Spring, however, might leave this possible increase in its bargaining power open to question for some time in the future. The post-2013 rise in support for EU membership—even though belief in eventual membership is still quite low—shows people's increasing sensitivities about “human rights and democracy promotion” as Grigoriadis suggested,<sup>144</sup> and a belief in the importance of the EU dimension of Turkey's grand strategy in the face of Turkey's losses on other fronts. Whether Turkey's efforts to devise and pursue “strategic flexibility”, aiming at improving some of the deteriorated relations (as in the cases of Israel and Russia), would help Turkey compensate for these losses, and how this possibility might have an impact on the average Turkish citizen's support for EU membership, would be important questions that future research would need to address. Addressing the latter would help test whether this rise in support for EU membership stemmed from the demand for more democracy or cost-benefit analysis of the people.

Expectations about a Welfare Party-like foreign political stance that would strictly contest being part of Europe on religious grounds have proven far from realistic.<sup>145</sup> To the contrary, the JDP era has been an important period in terms of legal and institutional harmonisation with the *acquis*.<sup>146</sup> According to Paul Kubicek, the mixed relationship with the EU during successive JDP governments results from:

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<sup>144</sup> Ioannis Grigoriadis, personal communication, 19/3/2016. As it was mentioned earlier in the chapter With a gradual increase after 2013, in 2014 support was around 45 percent and in 2015, it is around 60 percent.

<sup>145</sup> On the attitude of the Welfare Party towards the EU, see Şaban Taniyıcı, “Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey: Islamist Welfare Party's Pro-EU Turn”, *Party Politics* 9: 4 (2003), pp. 463–483.

<sup>146</sup> See Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretariat General for EU Affairs, *Political Reforms in Turkey*, (M&B Tanıtım Hizmetleri ve Tic. Ltd. Ankara: 2007).

...disappointment with the EU, the lack of a real membership perspective, the EU's own economic troubles that make it look less desirable (and the strength of the Turkish economy)... anti-Turkey rhetoric, the problem with Cyprus, closing of chapters in talks, gave the notion that Turkey does not need Europe or that Europe offers little, that Turkey is a 'rising power' on its own.<sup>147</sup>

In the following chapter I will discuss the overall explanatory power of neoclassical realism to analyse and explain the changes in Turkey's behaviour. I will present a conclusive summarising analysis on each case study. This will be followed by a discussion on the sustainability of Turkey's new grand strategic behaviour in the light of the current state of affairs both at the regional and international levels and within Turkey. Lastly, the contribution of this research to the literature and broader research agendas now and in the future will be discussed.

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<sup>147</sup> Paul Kubicek, personal communication, 20/2/2016.

## **Conclusion: From “Zero Problems” to “Precious Loneliness” and “Strategic Flexibility”**

### “New Turkey” and Shifting Grand Strategic Formulations

It [Turkey] has matured as a country and now has the self-confidence to play a global role; the end of the Cold War has freed it from a policy straitjacket and given it the chance to pursue broader interests; it sees a wide range of political and economic opportunities and wants to seize them.

Stephen Kinzer<sup>689</sup>

At some point in history there comes a time where you stand by the truth all alone when the world keeps silent against coups and slaughters. If this places you in a different position than the rest this is a ‘value-centred loneliness’ and this actually is a precious loneliness.

İbrahim Kalın<sup>690</sup>

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<sup>689</sup> Kinzer, 2010, p. 201.

<sup>690</sup> “Turkey not ‘lonely’ but dares to do so for its values and principles, says PM adviser”, 26/8/2013, *Hürriyet Daily News*, <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-not-lonely-but-dares-to-do-so-for-its-values-and-principles-says-pm-adviser-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=53244&NewsCatID=338>>, accessed 1/2/2015.

“Turkey has a lot of problems. We have regional problems... So what will we do?  
Very simple: We’ll increase the number of our friends and we’ll decrease the  
number of our enemies.”

Binali Yıldırım<sup>691</sup>

Over the last two decades—especially during the last one—Turkey has pursued an increasingly activist grand strategy when compared to its limited manoeuvrability during the Cold War. In the post-Cold War era, Turkey found itself in a very different position—one that has become even more complex over the last decade, in which its relative power position has been subject to important occasional changes. These changes in attitude did not emerge all at once during the JDP era, but had their roots in the immediate post-Cold War period. However, the JDP era has witnessed the climax of this shift.

In the post-Cold War era, especially up until the Arab Spring’s extension to Syria, Turkey came to be seen as an example of the “rich man analogy”, referring to “a man who woke up one morning and found himself in possession of a big treasure.”<sup>692</sup> The country enjoyed a much broader geopolitical scope in terms of diplomatic representation, political involvement and an unprecedented rise in trade and investment levels.<sup>693</sup>

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<sup>691</sup> "New PM signals shift in foreign policy: More friends than enemies", 24/5/2016, *Hürriyet Daily News*, <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/new-pm-signals-shift-in-foreign-policy-more-friends-than-enemies.aspx?pageID=238&nID=99616&NewsCatID=338>>

<sup>692</sup> Bengio and Özcan, 2001, p. 62.

<sup>693</sup> On the increasing levels of economic activity between Turkey and the Middle East see Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Süleyman Elik, “Turkey’s Growing Relations with Iran and Arab Middle East”, *Turkish Studies* 12: 4 (2011), pp. 643–662, p. 654; the Ministry of Finance’s statistics at: <<http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr/index.cfm?sayfa=7155BE01-D8D3-8566-45208351967592CF>>, accessed 08/06/2013; Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, “From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey’s Relations with Syria and Iran”, *Security Dialogue* 39 (2008), pp. 495–515. On the Turkish-Russian trade volume, see “Turkey-Russia Eye Increased Trade, Joint Auto Production”, <<http://www.invest.gov.tr/en-US/infocenter/news/Pages/261113-turkey-russia-joint-auto-production.aspx>>, 26/11/2013, accessed 8/12/2014 and Foreign Ministry’s statistics on “Turkey’s Commercial and Economic Relations With Russian Federation”, <[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey\\_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-commercial-and-economic-relations-)

Along with power- and interest-related revisions in Turkey's behaviour vis-à-vis other actors, an enabling domestic environment has also been an important component of the new picture. Two principal domestic factors—the coalitions between conservative business circles and political leaders and the increasing autonomy of the elected civilian executive thanks to the demise of the military—have played the role of multipliers.

Nevertheless, Turkey's activism towards having “zero problems with neighbours” brought not only opportunities in its surroundings, but also a gradual increase in risks and occasional losses, especially since the Arab Spring. The regional and international landscape that emerged after the Arab Spring gradually pushed Turkey to embrace its “precious loneliness” before more recently changing its grand strategic formulation to “strategic flexibility”<sup>694</sup>, referring to an effort to increase its manoeuvrability once more by fixing damaged ties with particular actors. Putting some serious effort into normalising its deteriorating relations with Russia and Israel in the summer of 2016, Turkey seemed to be coming to terms with the reality that the regional dynamics would no longer allow it to pursue a “zero problems” policy line, whereas loneliness, however precious it is, would significantly damage its goal of acting as a key player. Achievements and/or losses stemming from these more recent shifts in Turkey's grand strategic positioning, as well as how the recent turn to “strategic flexibility” would be pursued, will pave the way for future research.

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with-russian-federation.en.mfa>, accessed 6/12/2014. According to these, trade with Russia increased from around \$4 billion in 2002 to \$35 billion in 2012. Also see, Foreign Ministry's briefs, “Turkey's relations with the Latin American and the Caribbean Countries” at <[http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i\\_turkey\\_s-relations-with-the-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-countries.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/i_turkey_s-relations-with-the-latin-american-and-the-caribbean-countries.en.mfa)> and “Turkey-Africa Relations” at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-africa-relations.en.mfa>, accessed 30/06/2014. In line with these, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stats, trade with Africa increased from almost \$3 billion in 2002 to almost \$20 billion in 2012, and in the same era, trade with the Caribbean increased 9-fold to reach around \$8 billion. In the same period, in both regions, the number of Turkey's diplomatic representations—including embassies and consulates—almost doubled and now Turkey has representations in almost all countries in both regions. See *Sorumluluk ve Vizyon: 2014 Yılına Girerken Türk Dış Politikası* [Responsibility and Vision: Turkish Foreign Policy towards 2014], Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <<http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/sorumlulukvevizyon-2014.pdf>> accessed 20/1/2015.

<sup>694</sup> Şaban Kardaş, “Normalleşme Dalgası ve Stratejik Esneklik”, 2/7/2016, *Star*.

In terms of a theoretical framework, NCR proves useful in explaining both the ups and downs in Turkey's particular bilateral relationships as well as its overall grand strategic positioning in an era when both international and domestic factors have been subject to change.

### Summarising the Analysis and the Explanatory Power of Neoclassical Realism

In order to explore whether ethno-religious ambitions or interest-driven behaviour was the main catalyst for Turkey's new grand strategic behaviour, three cases were analysed: the Turkish-Iranian, Turkish-Israeli and Turkish-EU relationships. These three cases represent three major cultural paradigms—Muslim solidarity, Muslim-Jewish hostility and Muslim/Turkish vs. Western/Christian tension. In terms of primordialist analyses, all of these relationships have been frequently considered based on the tensions or affinities between these labels. However, after analysing the relationships in detail over the previous chapters, my conclusion is that self-interested state behaviour is the primary motivational factor behind adjustments in Turkey's attitude. The next section will briefly summarise the analyses on each of the three cases, highlighting the explanatory power of NCR.

#### *1) The Turkish-Iranian Relationship*

From a culturalist point of view, Iran has been the ideal candidate for a culture- and ideology-based analysis of Turkey's shifting attitudes towards particular actors. Such accounts have interpreted the recent rapprochement on common religious grounds. It was expected that governments with similar ideological viewpoints would strive for a closer relationship. Due to the religious backgrounds of the leading figures of the JDP, a close contact in the name of



religious solidarity similar to that which marked the Erbakan era was expected, even though Iran represents a Shi'a Muslim identity.

Rather than an ideology-driven rapprochement, the relevant chapter showed that it was the shared concerns of Turkey and Iran regarding the post-Iraq War atmosphere which laid the foundations for their rapprochement over the last decade. The rapprochement came after several decades of distrust, rivalry, and occasional hostility since 1979, followed by Turkey's shift in focus towards the Middle East after the Cold War. This new focus not only pushed Turkey to increase its deterrence against its neighbours, but also forced the country to reconsider its relations with them. With the Iraq War of 2003, Turkey realised that as far as the questions of post-war Iraq and Northern Iraq were concerned, it had more in common with Iran than it did with other powers, including Israel and the United States. Moreover, in order to limit the impact of external intervention on the whole region and to prevent spill-over effects—which would threaten its own regional power position and domestic stability—closer contact with Iran seemed to be the most pragmatic choice. Turkey's support for the Iranian nuclear programme for peaceful ends was again an interest-based decision which further reinforced the two countries' rapprochement. However, again due to interest-driven divergences and both sides' desire to achieve relative advantage over the other, the two countries experienced several points of tension, such as Turkey's decision to be a part of NATO's BMDS scheme and their disagreements during the Arab Spring and beyond. Once Turkey realised that its own interests clashed with those of Iran, it adjusted and re-adjusted its attitude toward Iran. In spite of an overall improvement in the relationship, the post-Arab Spring environment also brought to the surface their divergences and continuing rivalry for regional superiority against each other.

On the domestic front, Turkey's conservative business associations not only received practical encouragement from policy-makers to pursue their goals and support state policy

choices abroad as a “practical hand”, but also used their cultural affinities to establish closer economic ties with other predominantly Muslim-populated countries in the MENA region, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Within this context, Iran has long been a key destination for these conservative businessmen since the early 1990s. In the JDP era, in line with the increase in their overall activity abroad, their role within the context of the Turkish-Iranian economic relationship increased too.

As another important domestic component, changing civil-military power calculus in Turkey affected Turkey’s ability to adjust and alter its policy line regarding Iran. The possibility of closer contact between Turkey and the post-revolutionary Iran had long been regarded as a serious threat by the military. The military was quite successful in backing its stance with security-related concerns such as alleged efforts of Iran to export its regime to Turkey and to threaten its unitary structure by supporting the PKK. In the 1990s, the military was quite influential within the context of Turkey’s foreign policy-making. The result was that Turkey’s foreign policy was shaped in accordance with mostly security-driven evaluations made by the military as well as an aggressive secular attitude targeting neighbouring Muslim countries. Unsurprisingly, the military’s influence as the leading actor in the anti-Iran camp in Turkey contributed to the negative atmosphere in the Turkish-Iranian relationship which had already been plagued by distrust, especially since 1979. The military’s gradual loss of power as a key policy-making actor led to the demise of the impact of its preferences regarding foreign policy choices. This acted as a positive multiplier, contributing to Turkey’s desire to revisit its relationship with Iran towards an overall rapprochement in the era under the JDP rule, even though *realpolitik* concerns, after the Arab Spring, showed the limits of this rapprochement.

The Turkish-Iranian relationship therefore illustrates that neither rapprochement nor growing tensions after the Arab Spring could be attributed simply to the ideological or

cultural motives which are assumed to have pushed Turkey into reshaping its relationship with Iran in line with its Islamist or Neo-Ottomanist ambitions. Instead, all the changes discussed in the chapter on Iran basically stemmed from the way Turkey perceived the power structure in both regional and global terms, and how it decided to revise its policies accordingly in response to changing dynamics. As a consequence of the changes at international level, Turkey revised, adjusted, and re-shaped its policy line regarding Iran. Meanwhile, the selected domestic factors outlined in this research played the role of multipliers, helping policy-makers carry out these steps.

## 2) *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*

According to ideology and culture-centred accounts, Turkey's new grand strategic approach—its “Neo-Ottomanist” and/or “Islamist” policy line, is assumed to have pursued a rigid attitude towards Israel, following the footsteps of Erbakan. A strategic partnership that enjoyed a golden era in the post-Cold War years due to the positive achievements in Arab-Israeli relations and Turkey's return to the “arc of crisis”, underwent a tectonic shift stemming from ideological and cultural tension due to leading JDP figures' Islamist backgrounds and their early political careers in Erbakan-led Islamist political parties. However, it is striking to note that the relationship was no less positive for each side compared to immediate pre-JDP years until Turkey and Israel clashed over the question of Northern Iraq—a clash that resulted from their own interest-driven calculations. But even after this first major setback, cooperative efforts and desire to fix the relationship have been far from absent.

Israel and Turkey's clashing views over Northern Iraq were the first critical juncture towards understanding the deterioration in the relationship between the two countries over the

last decade. While Turkey regarded the possibility of an independent Kurdish entity in the region as a direct threat to the power configuration of the region and its own interests, it also felt threatened by the risk of spill-over, considering its own sizeable Kurdish population. The Israeli position, however, is believed to be quite supportive of an independent Kurdish state in the region. Operation Cast Lead (2008–2009), as an Israeli step towards consolidating its own security and power position, put Turkey's efforts to raise its profile in the region in danger by abruptly ending the indirect Syrian-Israeli peace talks which were being mediated by Turkey. The Syrian-Israeli peace talks provided Turkey with a great opportunity to present itself as a key regional player and impartial broker. Operation Cast Lead struck a blow to Turkey's profile and marked the start of a further deterioration, followed by more symbolic crises. These crises include the Davos incident and Israel's deadly flotilla raid. Israel's close ties with the Greek Cypriots and Turkey's support for the Iranian nuclear programme while at the same time criticising Israel for possessing nuclear weapons, did not help their deteriorating relationship either.

The two domestic factors discussed in the chapter on Israel also played their roles within the context of the Turkish-Israeli relationship during the JDP years. In terms of economic interactivity between Turkey and Israel, investments from businessmen close to the JDP were present throughout this era. Israel's attitude towards economic initiatives from Turkey has always been welcoming, and vice versa, illustrating the pragmatic approach of Turkey's conservative businessmen associations, and the ability of both countries to put distance between ideology and economic relations. The idea that economic relations can continue even in the face of political tension, and should have little to do with religion, past conflicts and/or divergent foreign policies, has driven the economic aspects of Turkey's new grand strategy all along, and the Israeli case is one of the best ways of showcasing this. This

pragmatism is one of the important factors that avoided a complete collapse of the Turkish-Israeli relationship.

The impact of the decline of military control over policy-making is equally visible in the new dynamics of the Turkish-Israeli relationship. The old elite, including the military, believed that developing a close relationship with Israel would not only distance Turkey from its predominantly Muslim neighbours, but also eliminate the risk of a possible religious takeover of the regime. The increasing number of PKK attacks in southern Turkey back in the 1990s reinforced their arguments in favour of a closer relationship with Israel due to the need for advanced military technology and equipment transfer. The old elite's securitised rhetoric directed against Iran, Iraq and Syria due to their alleged support for the PKK and possible efforts to destabilise Turkey also contributed to the strategic partnership forged between Turkey and Israel. The JDP era marked the peak of the military's demise in terms of its influence over civilian authorities. This helped Turkey to adopt a much more flexible approach to its relationship with Israel in response to rapidly changing calculations of power, as opposed to the partly ideology-driven, military-supported golden age of the 1990s.

Overall, the game has been primarily interest-driven over the last decade. When its power position was challenged, Turkey revisited its relationship with Israel and made major adjustments. However, the relevant chapter also discussed the numerous efforts that were made to fix the relationship during that era, despite the deteriorated atmosphere. Neither country saw the other as expendable in a region where alliances and enmities as well as overall stability and security could so easily alter. Pragmatism, therefore, amidst changing dynamics almost on a daily basis, governed the dynamics of this particular relationship too. Recent normalisation efforts, which reached their zenith with the reconciliation deal on 26 June 2016, came at a time of Turkey's loss of manoeuvrability in the region, further

reinforcing assumptions about the pragmatic sources of change in the Turkish-Israeli relationship.

### 3) *The Turkish-EU Relationship*

From a primordialist viewpoint, the “Middle-Easternisation” of Turkey’s grand strategy with “Neo-Ottoman” or “Islamist” tendencies would have given rise to the “Christian club” narrative regarding the EU. However, it is striking that the highpoint of the Turkish-EU relationship was actually witnessed during the JDP era. In this era legal, bureaucratic and institutional harmonisation reached its highest level and the official accession negotiations began. For a political party about which culturalist accounts tend to highlight Islamist and anti-Western roots,<sup>695</sup> it is striking that the JDP was the political party that achieved the most in the Turkish-EU relationship in Turkey’s decades-old quest for membership.

The EU’s prioritisation of the CEECs in the immediate post-Cold War era coincided with a time when Turkey was evaluating its newly emerging opportunities in its own neighbourhood. Regarding the prioritisation of the CEECs, Turkey felt side-lined and got extremely disappointed. Turkey began to question the EU dimension of its grand strategy in an era when the former Soviet space and the Middle East came to be regarded as promising regions for the country to raise its profile. This, coupled with the EU’s later efforts to speed up the process of operationalising the ESDP scheme damaged the Turkish-EU relationship. Controversies over the project—which was once expected to have great potential, but proved disappointing over time—marked an important critical juncture. Turkey had serious concerns

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<sup>695</sup> See Martina Warning and Tuncay Kardaş, “The Impact of Changing Islamic Identity on Turkey’s New Foreign Policy”, *Alternatives*, 10: 2–3 (Summer-Fall, 2011), pp. 123–140. On the ‘logic of identity related to that point, also see Tarık Oğuzlu & Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Is the Westernisation Process Losing Pace in Turkey: Who’s to Blame?”, *Turkish Studies*, 10: 4 (2009), pp. 577–593, p. 580.

about the ESDP, stemming from its own power- and interest-based calculations.<sup>696</sup> Another major blow to the relationship was the EU's handling of the Greek Cypriot accession process. Ever since Turkey began EU membership negotiations in 2005, it insisted on rejecting the extension of its Customs Union agreement to the Greek Cypriot government. This insistence stemmed from Turkey's decades-old policy of not recognising the government as the island's sole legitimate authority. Cyprus has been regarded an important part of Turkey's regional power position within the broader MENA region and a significant military asset to maintaining its relative advantage over Greece and the Greek Cypriot government. Turkey's EU accession process has thus come to a standstill until a comprehensive settlement regarding the Cyprus question can be reached. Recent efforts to re-energise the relationship in the wake of the refugee crisis do not seem very promising at present.

Regarding the two selected domestic factors, the changing attitude of the conservative businessmen's associations with strong links to the JDP played an important role. Even though conservative SMEs were among the most ardent supporters of Erdogan and his strict anti-EU rhetoric in the past, their journey towards pragmatism and sympathy towards European norms and values has been an important one in terms of maintaining the European dimension of Turkey's international economic activity. It is true that some of the EU's share in that process has been channelled to neighbouring regions thanks to the activity of conservative businessmen's associations abroad, but the geographical scope of Turkey's economic activity has been broadened, and this has naturally affected the EU's share in Turkey's international economic portfolio. Despite this, The EU still remains Turkey's leading economic partner. It seems unrealistic to expect any change there, even in the long

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<sup>696</sup> These concerns include the risks of spill-over of the use of ESDP in its immediate neighbourhood, of the project's use against itself in the Aegean and the subsequent loss of its relative advantage in the Aegean and with respect to Cyprus. Thus, Turkey used its power in NATO to make sure its concerns were addressed rather than desperately pursuing its Westernisation project at all costs, damaging the relationship to a great extent.

run, due to the more pragmatic approach that has gradually been adopted by conservative businessmen in their desire to integrate themselves further into the EU and its norms and values.

The second domestic factor analysed in this research was the changing dynamics of the civil-military relationship in Turkey. As far as the military's position is concerned, it was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of "Westernisation" as a "civilizational project" since the early years of the republic. However, particular reforms demanded by the EU—especially those which targeted the civil-military relationship in Turkey—aroused concerns among the hawkish military officials, especially after the end of the Cold War due to the increasing importance of political criteria in the accession negotiations. They realised that by helping liberalise Turkey's politics they would in fact be limiting their own influence, which they had enjoyed for decades. Pursuing their own "project" would therefore eventually mean shooting themselves in the foot. The Turkish military found themselves caught in a dilemma—they must either destroy their decades-old image as "Westernisers" or face destruction themselves. The JDP's strong commitment to harmonisation and to undertaking the necessary reforms in line with the *acquis* contributed to a further decline in the military's influence over civilian policy-makers. The military's much reduced and limited impact resulted in a rise in self-confidence for the new ruling elite—"the new Westernisers"—in line with significant improvements in their autonomy. Despite this change, the coup attempt of July 15, 2016 showed that attempts could still be made by particular groups within the military to intervene directly in the political realm. However, the anti-coup stance shown by most of the military proved the extent to which the civil-military relationship and the military's attitude had transformed over time. This change was the key to understanding the government's freer hand to carry out necessary reforms over the years. Still, the incident and its ramifications—including the arrest and suspension of thousands of people—were followed by discussions



about Turkey's adherence to democracy and liberties, which will remain a key focal point in the bilateral relationship for the foreseeable future.<sup>697</sup>

All in all, the post-2005 stalemate did not stem from an Erbakan-like anti-Western or anti-EU rhetoric,<sup>698</sup> but from purely interest-based calculations. Harmonisation efforts have remained in place, further challenging a primordialist reading of the stagnation. The new era is marked by a Turkish-EU relationship shaped by interest and power, replacing the old Turkish mentality of prioritising the identity-driven dimension of Turkey's ambitions towards Westernisation.

In all three case study chapters I conclude that interest- and power-driven revisions are the primary motivations behind the shifts in Turkey's attitude towards each of the actors discussed, while ideas and values entered the picture only indirectly, through influential actors such as conservative businessmen.

### Sustainability of Turkey's Activism

Turkey's grand strategic activism, its components, the motivation behind it and its theoretical analysis have all been addressed in this study. However, the degree to which it is sustainable is a subject which I will briefly touch upon in this section. Some concluding points on sustainability will be made to open space for future research.

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<sup>697</sup> "Juncker: İdam geri gelirse AB üyelik süreci sonlanır", 25/7/2016, BBC Türkçe, <<http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-36882475>>, accessed 27/7/2016.

<sup>698</sup> Begüm Burak, "Turkey's European Union Candidacy from an Identity Perspective: The End of Clashing Identities and Security Cultures?", *Turkish Journal of Politics* 1: 2 (2010), pp. 23–35. Also see Sedat Oflaz, 'Constructing Identities: Bridging the Gap with the EU?', Master Thesis, at <<http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=1330396&fileId=1330397>>, accessed, 20/12/2013; Meltem Müftüler-Baç and Meltem Taşkın, "Turkey's Accession to the European Union: Does Culture and Identity Play a Role?", *Ankara Review of European Studies*, 6: 2 (Spring, 2007), pp. 31–50; Kösebalaban, 2007, pp. 87–111.

One primary and two secondary factors were discussed as the key variables affecting Turkey's policies vis-à-vis certain actors and its grand strategy in general. These were the external changes "seducing" Turkey's *animus dominandi*, coalitions between "internationalist" business groups and political elites, and civilian relief from military pressure in policy-making and implementing revised policy choices.

Since I have explained Turkey's grand strategic shift in the light of the variations in these three factors, it follows that the sustainability of this shift will be dependent on their future changes and continuities.

*Changing Regional and International Dynamics: From "Zero Problems" to "Precious Loneliness" and to Having "More Friends and Fewer Enemies"*

Turkey's steps in response to changing external dynamics are based on interest-driven calculations and the country's ability to maintain economic and political flexibility, rather than setting fixed policies vis-à-vis certain actors. These aspects are the key to measuring the sustainability of the country's pursuit of power-maximisation. The utilisation of new windows of opportunity is important in this context, rather than the adoption of irrational, ideological or over-securitised positions that would deprive the state of its ability to act in line with changing interest-based calculations. The Western dimension is still Turkey's greatest asset in political and economic terms, not only because of institutional, economic and political ties, but as one of the major sources of receptiveness for Turkey's activism in its own environs. Without dramatically damaging this asset, Turkey might need to continue its insistence on a multi-regional approach. This approach would doubtless prove a wise option in order to compensate for losses in particular regions due to occasional crises, conflicts, and political tensions which seem to be the norm in Turkey's surroundings, rather than exceptions.

Within this context, some important challenges that need to be monitored at regional and international levels include the damaged relationship between Syria and Turkey and the civil war in Syria, where the high level of international involvement calls for the re-securitisation of the bilateral relationship. Turkey's expectation was that Assad would fall quickly, after which the new ruling elite would have provided Turkey with a higher influence in Syria once a new government had been formed. But Russian and Iranian support has proved highly helpful for Assad, helping him hold on to power and regain some of the territory the regime had previously lost. Instability continues in the region due to the current reversal of the Arab Spring, which was once perceived as providing Turkey with a great opportunity to act as a "model" in the broader MENA region.<sup>699</sup>

The civil war in Syria has proved damaging to both the Turkish-Iranian relationship and—after Turkey's downing of a Russian jet in November 2015—the Turkish-Russian relationship. Within this context, considering Turkey's dependence on Russian energy resources—especially natural gas—the future relationship between Turkey and Russia deserves a good deal of attention. It is important to note the interdependent nature of the Turkey-Russia energy relationship, as Turkey, after Germany, is the second biggest consumer of Russian natural gas.<sup>700</sup> The Russian role in the construction of Turkey's Akkuyu nuclear terminal deepens the critical nature of this dimension.<sup>701</sup> As a sword that cuts both ways, Turkey's energy picture (which is a balancing act between its reliance on Russian natural resources and Russia's need for revenues in return for them) leaves a big question mark hanging over the future of the relationship.<sup>702</sup> Turkey, in the foreseeable future, does not have the opportunity to compensate for the possible loss of Russian supplies, which account for more than 25bcm/a, by obtaining alternative sources—although in this respect, options

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<sup>699</sup> Alper Y. Dede, "The Arab Uprisings: Debating the 'Turkish Model'", *Insight Turkey* 13:2 (2011), pp. 23-32.

<sup>700</sup> Erdal Tanas Karagöl, personal communication, 11/3/2016.

<sup>701</sup> Cenk Pala, personal communication, 10/3/2016.

<sup>702</sup> Gareth Winrow, personal communication, 22/2/2016.

including Qatar, the KRG and Iran are widely discussed, as well as the recent TANAP project.<sup>703</sup> Thus, in spite of the recent tension between Turkey and Russia, the dynamics of their relationship would require a revision in the medium term.<sup>704</sup> Recent normalisation efforts in the summer of 2016, followed by renewed talks about the Turkish Stream pipeline project, do not seem coincidental within this context, and once more serve to prove the dominance of economic interests over political or ideological ones.<sup>705</sup>

As a second development to be monitored within the context of how international and regional developments can affect the sustainability of Turkey's new grand strategy is the increasing instability and insecurity in its immediate neighbourhood. Ongoing civil conflicts and collapsed, failed or failing state structures also produce spill-over effects,<sup>706</sup> such as contributing to the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)<sup>707</sup>, which so far has conducted several mass bombing attacks in Turkey. Bombings include Suruç on 20 July 2015, which claimed more than thirty lives, Ankara on 10 October 2015, claiming more than one hundred lives, Sultanahmet on 12 January 2016 and one close to Taksim Square on 19

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<sup>703</sup> Pala, 10/3/2016.

<sup>704</sup> Ünver, in an interview conducted by the author on 23/4/2016, also stated that he shares this perception and in the medium-term, normalisation of the bilateral relations are likely to occur.

<sup>705</sup> See "Putin mends broken relations with Turkey's Erdogan", 9/8/2016, *BBC*, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37018562>>, accessed 11/8/2016; "Russia's Putin and Turkey's Erdogan meet after damaging rift", 9/8/2016, *CNN*, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/08/09/world/russia-putin-turkey-erdogan-meeting/>>, accessed 10/8/2016; "Erdogan and Putin discuss closer ties in first meeting since jet downing", 9/8/2016, *The Guardian*, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/09/erdogan-meets-putin-leaders-seek-mend-ties-jet-downing-russia-turkey>>, accessed 10/8/2016; "Russia and Turkey Vow to Repair Ties as West Watches Nervously", 9/8/2016, *New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/10/world/europe/putin-erdogan-russia-turkey.html>>, accessed 11/8/2016.

<sup>706</sup> For a more detailed review of these spill-over effects, see William Young, David Stebbins, Bryan A. Frederick and Omar Al-Shahery, *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2014). For the chapter on Turkey, especially see p.15–23.

<sup>707</sup> With respect to Turkey's position on this, Turkey's recent declaration of its willingness to participate in the US-led campaign by not only opening its Incirlik airbase to the US-led coalition to conduct air strikes against ISIS but also closely monitoring its own air strikes. See "US Deal with Turkey over ISIS may Go beyond Simple Use of an Airbase", *The Guardian*, 24/7/2015, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/24/us-deal-turkey-isis-incirlik-airbase-erdogan-obama>>, accessed 30/7/2015; "Turkish Warplanes Bomb ISIS Positions in Syria for the First Time", *CNN*, 25/7/2015, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/24/middleeast/turkey-syria-isis-violence/>>, accessed 30/7/2015; "Turkey Bombs Islamic State Targets in Syria", *BBC*, 24/7/2015, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33646314>>, accessed 31/7/2015.

March 2015 which claimed around ten lives. ISIS/Daesh also kidnapped all personnel from Turkey's consulate in Mosul (including the Consul General) on 11 June 2014, and kept them captive for more than three months.<sup>708</sup> Within the context of Turkey's fight with ISIS, it listed the organisation as a terrorist group in 2013 and has been a member of the anti-ISIS coalition since 2014. Moreover, Turkey now has a no-entry list of 37,000 people, has prevented 7500 people coming to Turkey from Europe, has extradited 3000 people and arrested 700 more, prevented 40,000 people from joining ISIS and stopped 223,000 people entering Syria illegally. Turkey has established Risk Analysis Units at its border with Syria, and thanks to them 1300 people have been added the no-entry list out of 6000 people the units have investigated. Turkey has also built 300kms of wall and 161kms of barbed-wire fencing, as well as 74km of barriers along its Syrian border. The lighting along 422kms of the Turkish-Syrian border has been upgraded so that the border can be patrolled more effectively.<sup>709</sup> However, while instability prevails in the region, neither Turkey nor any other power's individual fight against ISIS will remove the threat completely. As Turkey experiences a mass flow of refugees, as well as bombings in different parts of Turkey from Ankara to Istanbul and Gaziantep, and even rocket attacks carried out by ISIS against Turkish city of Kilis on the Syrian border, regional and domestic implications of the existence of the ISIS will continue to be challenging in the foreseeable future.

Another important front would be Turkey's policy line regarding Iraq and the KRG.

With respect to Iraq, Turkey's support to the Muslim Brotherhood's branch of the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) damaged not only its relationship with the Shi'a elite ruling Iraq but also

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<sup>708</sup> See Kanat & Üstün, 2015..

<sup>709</sup> See "Türkiye'nin IŞİD'le Mücadele Karnesi: Tam Not!", 27/11/2015, *Yeni Şafak*, <<http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/turkiyenin-isidle-mucadele-karnesi-tam-not-2348697>>, accessed 3/1/2016; "Increasing number of illegal immigrants and security considerations led Turkey to review its visa policy" – Turkish Ambassador Kaymakçı", *KarabakhToday*, 12/2/2016, <<http://en.karabakh.today/news/middle-east/2002-increasing-number-of-illegal-immigrants-and-security-considerations-led-turkey-to-review-its-visa-policy>>, accessed 18/3/2016; Muharrem Sarıkaya, "8 bini bizden iade 34 bin DAES'li var", *Habertürk*, 23/3/2016, <<http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/muharrem-sarikaya/1213796-8-bini-bizden-iade-34-bin-daesli-var>>, accessed 24/3/2016

with Iran, whose support has been critical for that elite from day one. Turkey's Syria policy has also faced strong criticism from the former Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki, who accused Turkey of trying to draw NATO forces into the Syrian conflict just to defend Turkish interests, even though there is no direct threat to the country.<sup>710</sup> More recently, within the context of upcoming Mosul operation to re-take the city from the ISIS, the exchange of harsh criticisms between Turkey and Iraq due to Turkey's military presence and training program in Bashiqa military base as well as the possibility of direct Turkish involvement dealt a serious blow to the bilateral relations.<sup>711</sup> Turkey's close ties with the KRG further endanger its relationship with the Baghdad government due to disagreements between the two over energy revenues. Turkey might also need to keep a closer eye on its relationship with other groups within the KRG, especially considering the PUK's control of energy rich regions including Kirkuk and Gorran's role as a kingmaker (as was the case in 2014) between the two leading political parties, the KDP and the PUK.<sup>712</sup> If we conclude that the PUK-Gorran agreement of mid-2016 takes a common stance against Barzani's KDP,<sup>713</sup> Turkey's closest ally in the region, it would be valid to argue that Turkey's future policy-making regarding the KRG would present a challenge.

As another point, the toppling of the Moursi-led government in Egypt (once considered a leading partner for Turkey) and the consequent deterioration in the Turkish-Egyptian relationship, has affected Turkey's standing in the region negatively. Turkey's expectation was that Moursi's election victory would result in a closer relationship between Turkey and

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<sup>710</sup> Özpek & Demirağ, 2014, p. 329.

<sup>711</sup> "Turkey has right to combat threats in Syria and Iraq: Erdogan", Reuters, 11/10/2016, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-turkey-iraq-idUSKCN12B160>>, accessed 12/10/2016.

<sup>712</sup> During field research in Erbil, Suleimanie and Kirkuk in December and March, 2016, some leading oppositional Kurdish figures such as the PUK's Politburo members Rizgar Ali and Aso Mamand and the Gorran's spokesperson Shoreshe Haji all criticised Turkey's tendency to conduct policy and business with the KDP alone as well as stating their desire to have better relations with Turkey.

<sup>713</sup> Mohammed A. Salih, "Will Unity Deal Deepen Rivalries in Iraqi Kurdistan?", *Al-Monitor*, 18/5/2016, <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/iraq-kurdistan-gorran-puk-kdp-agreement.html#>>, accessed 23/5/2016.

Egypt as well as offering Turkey greater influence via close links between the JDP and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. However, the al-Sisi-led coup in 2013 not only undermined this expectation, but also resulted in a fractured Turkish-Egyptian relationship which put an end to the goal of establishing an "Ankara-Cairo axis"<sup>714</sup> which would have increased Turkey's influence further in the Middle East for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, Turkey's close relationship with the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP)—which is the Iraqi branch of the Muslim Brotherhood—and its supportive stance regarding Hamas has led to questions being asked about its supposed neutrality. Criticisms about Turkey's policy line transforming from pro-democracy and pro-reform to "pro-Brotherhood"<sup>715</sup> might further weaken Turkey's position. Overall, Cornell rightly argues that Turkey has overestimated its influence in the Middle East,<sup>716</sup> an overestimation that was proved unfounded after later trends towards the reversal of the Arab Spring.

The comprehensive deal between Iran and the P5+1 countries in July 2015<sup>717</sup> is another issue that will be at the top of Turkey's agenda for the foreseeable future. With sanctions lifted, Iran's economic growth might result in a further rise in its regional power, meaning that it can open further channels to its proxies in the region from Iraq to Syria as well as to Lebanon, which could possibly put Turkey's regional standing in greater danger. While Iran can offer a much more vibrant economic environment for Turkey to utilise, the new picture would possibly further contribute to the intensification of the recent regional rivalry between the two countries.

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<sup>714</sup> Stein, 2014, p. 39.

<sup>715</sup> Stein, 2014, p. 48.

<sup>716</sup> Cornell, 2012, p. 22-23.

<sup>717</sup> See William J. Broad and Sergio Paçanha, "The Iran Nuclear Deal-a Simple Guide", The New York Times, 14/7/2015, <<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/03/31/world/middleeast/simple-guide-nuclear-talks-iran-us.html>>, accessed 18/7/2015; Greg Botelho, "Iran Nuclear Deal Full of Complex Issues and Moving Parts", CNN, 14/7/2015, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/07/14/politics/iran-nuclear-deal-highlights/>>, accessed 17/7/2015.

To summarise, these developments signal a need for the re-evaluation of Turkey's windows of opportunity in the region. Turkey's ability to devise and adjust policies in line with emerging issues will directly affect the damage its grand strategy takes from the changing dynamics in its surroundings. Whether Turkey will eventually find itself on the losing side in the region in its "age of striving for hegemony" or whether it would be successful in overcoming its "precious loneliness"<sup>718</sup> with the more recent "strategic flexibility"<sup>719</sup> approach will primarily depend on its performance on this front. Bill Park argues that Turkey has been gradually falling out with its neighbours since the Arab Spring, primarily due to intemperance and its own inability to assess its role in events.<sup>720</sup>

In any case, it is clear that the country is now experiencing more problems with its neighbours than its "zero problems" foreign policy was designed to experience. Turkey now has far fewer countries in its immediate neighbourhood with which it enjoys favourable relationships. Whereas it was ranked as the country with the most positive perception in the Middle East in 2011 and 2012, with an average of 75 per cent, in 2013 its ranking was 4<sup>th</sup> with 59 per cent.<sup>721</sup> For Turkey, in an age of toppling authoritarian regimes that surround it, maintaining its "zero problems" policy with its neighbours is an extremely unrealistic ambition. While Turkey sided with the people and their demands for democratization and reform in the MENA region, turning its back to that policy line—particularly in Syria—would have meant backing an authoritarian regime which ruthlessly kills its people and has caused "the biggest migration flow in late history,"<sup>722</sup> with around five million refugees

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<sup>718</sup> The concept was coined by Ibrahim Kalin who is the presidential spokesperson. Before that, he was the former chief policy advisor to the then PM Erdoğan. For a detailed investigation of the concept and the regional dynamics that engendered it, see Aaron Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy: Davutoglu, the AKP, and the Pursuit of Regional Order*, RUSI Whitehall Papers series (Routledge Journals: Oxon, 2014), pp. 88-95.

<sup>719</sup> Kardaş, 2/7/2016, *Star*.

<sup>720</sup> Bill Park, personal communication, 15/2/2016.

<sup>721</sup> Mensur Akgün and Sabiha Senyücel Gündoğar, "The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2013," *TESEV Publications*, January 2014, Istanbul.

<sup>722</sup> M. Murat Erdoğan, "Perceptions of Syrians in Turkey", *Insight Turkey* 16: 4 (2014), pp. 65–75, p. 65.



fleeing the country. Of these, around three million have taken refuge in Turkey.<sup>723</sup> Still, as Hale mentions, even though Turkey has not been able to achieve “zero problems”, it “could hardly have done otherwise” in an era when its “neighbours are in conflict with each other”. The “zero problems” approach was “worth attempting” and was “better than alternatives,”—a reference to Turkey’s once paranoid and xenophobic approach to its surroundings.<sup>724</sup> As Hugh Pope states, it marked “Turkey’s move away from a reflexive defensive foreign policy...toward outreach and faith in win-win outcomes”.<sup>725</sup>

From this failed attempt to achieve “zero problems” with neighbours down to the concept of “precious loneliness” in which Turkey admitted that its foreign policy approach has resulted in fewer friendly partners, a major turning point seems to be on its way. Realising its loss of manoeuvrability in the region, Turkey has from mid-2016 put a great deal of effort into fixing its deteriorated relationships with Israel and Russia, as mentioned previously. Coupled with this, once Binali Yıldırım became the new PM after Davutoğlu’s resignation in May 2016, Turkey reformulated its grand strategic doctrine, which in Yıldırım’s words, now aims at having “more friends and fewer enemies”. Considering that achieving the goal of “zero problems with neighbours” is almost impossible in a region where almost every regional player is in direct or indirect conflict with others, this reappraisal seems quite understandable. The change also indicates an important realisation that “precious loneliness”, however precious it is, is not a policy line that Turkey can maintain or benefit from in the long-run. Its troubled relationships with Israel, Russia and Syria, and distanced or conflicting relationships with Iran, Iraq and Egypt at the same time proved quite a costly

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<sup>723</sup> See “Başbakan Yardımcısı Akdoğan Suriyeli mülteci sayısını açıkladı”, 10/3/2016, *Hürriyet*, <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/basbakan-yardimcisi-akdogan-suriyeli-multeci-sayisini-acikladi-40066605>>, accessed 4/4/2016.

<sup>724</sup> Hale, 2003, p. 255–256 and William Hale, “Turkey and the Middle East in the ‘New Era’”, *Insight Turkey* 11: 3 (2009), pp. 143–159, p. 156.

<sup>725</sup> Hugh Pope, “Pax Ottomana: The Mixed Success of Turkey’s New Foreign Policy?”, *Foreign Affairs* 86: 6 (2010), p. 161–171, p. 165.

positioning. How this change towards “strategic flexibility” or its policy of “increasing the number of friends and decreasing the number of enemies” will proceed, what achievements it can accomplish and which partners Turkey will choose in the future are key questions which need closer attention and stand out as thought-provoking and perhaps controversial topics for future research agenda.

### *The Domestic Dimension: Shattering and Emerging Coalitions, and Louder Critical Voices*

Several developments need to be monitored at the domestic level, too, in order to assess the future of Turkey’s grand strategy.

There are many important economic factors to be considered in terms of the domestic dimension. The first point is the recent fight which has broken out between the JDP and TUSKON due to the association’s links to Fethullah Gülen.<sup>726</sup> New coalitions may be required to compensate for this breakdown in the relationship, and in terms of domestic coalitions, a search for new allies seems necessary. On the other hand, DEİK (Turkey’s Foreign Economic Relations Board) and TİKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency)—through which most of TUSKON’s penetration was achieved in the past—is still quite active in the regions such as Africa and the Caribbean. As such, newer business associations, in cooperation with these two government organisations, would possibly be encouraged to replace TUSKON and avoid a potential loss in these regions.<sup>727</sup>

The government’s closer ties with some recently rising conservative business associations such as ASKON (Anadolu Aslanları İş Adamları Derneği/Anatolian Tigers

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<sup>726</sup> See Joshua D. Hendrick, “Neo-liberalism and 'Third Way' Islamic Activism: Fethullah Gülen and Turkey's New Elite” in Tuğrul Keskin ed., *The Sociology of Islam* (Reading, Ithaca Press: 2011), pp. 61–91, p. 75–76; Yüksel Taşkın, “AKP’s Move to “Conquer” the Centre-Right: Its Prospects and Possible Impacts on the Democratization Process”, *Turkish Studies* 9: 1 (2008), pp. 53–72, p. 62; Pinar Tremblay, “Clash of the Anatolian Tigers”, *Al Monitor*, 28/4/2014, <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/04/turkey-business-clash-gulen-akp.html>>, accessed 5/6/2014.

<sup>727</sup> Erdal Tanas Karagöl, personal communication, 11/3/2016.

Businessmen Association) can be considered as showcasing such an attitude, but in the meantime, Turkey's annual growth rate has fallen to around 3-4 percent since 2011.<sup>728</sup> Before then, it had been steady at around 8–9 percent since 2002 (with the exception of 2009 due to the global financial crisis). The Turkish Lira's exchange rate has fallen by around 50 percent against both the Dollar and the Euro between 2011 and 2015.<sup>729</sup> According to Mustafa Kutlay, assistant professor at TOBB University, because of Turkey's lack of R&D, education and hi-tech investments as well as major changes in regional politics starting with the Arab Spring, Turkey has experienced an era of significant challenges and a general economic slowdown. While Turkey's economic interactivity in the MENA region suffered during the Arab Spring and beyond, the European market became much more competitive than it had been during the financial crisis.<sup>730</sup> Moreover, Turkey's troubled relationship with Russia threatened its economic profile abroad for around 9 months between November 2015 and August 2016 as well as the sustainability of the economic dimension of its grand strategy. The recent reconciliation with Russia and Israel in the summer of 2016 might cause some improvement in this pessimistic picture. This and other fluctuations should be closely monitored in order to assess the future of the Turkish economy's power, as the future of domestic coalitions and possible financial problems would significantly affect Turkey's ability to pursue its policy choices abroad.

Another domestic factor requiring closer investigation is Turkey's commitment to democratisation and reforms. Any setbacks to democracy would carry the risk of empowering the old alarmist elite, further damaging Turkey's already slowing reform efforts in line with

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<sup>728</sup> The World Bank Data on Turkey's Economy, <<http://data.worldbank.org/country/turkey>>, accessed 2/5/2015.

<sup>729</sup> See "Turkish lira falls to record-low amid weak fundamentals and domestic uncertainty", Focus Economics, 5/2/2015, <<http://www.focus-economics.com/news/turkey/exchange-rate/turkish-lira-falls-record-low-amid-weak-fundamentals-and-domestic>>, accessed 2/3/2015 and European Central Bank Webpage on Turkish Lira's performance, 30/4/2015 <<https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/exchange/eurofxref/html/eurofxref-graph-try.en.html>>, accessed 1/5/2015.

<sup>730</sup> Mustafa Kutlay, personal communication, 8/4/2016.

the acquis and sparking a new wave of securitisation regarding not only foreign policy issues but also domestic rivalries and economic activity abroad. It would also threaten the rhetorical and economic encouragement Turkey has received from the West and the receptiveness it has enjoyed in its surrounding regions. Even though the JDP era has witnessed the most active period of reforms, democratisation, and harmonisation with the demands of the EU acquis, maintaining this momentum would have a direct impact on the sustainability of Turkey's profile. This seems more important than ever now, considering the increasing amount of controversy and criticisms since the Gezi protests, which were discussed in the chapter on the Turkish-EU relationship. Within this context, Turkey's commitment to the rule of law would also be subject to close scrutiny due to the wave of arrests, suspensions and the state of emergency after the coup attempt in July, 2016.

Over the last decade, efforts to reduce military influence and improve relations with neighbouring countries that had been regarded as threats for decades have helped Turkey desecuritise its policy-making. Since the beginning of the JDP's second term, it seems that the civil-military relationship has fallen more and more in line with democratic norms. One thing that should be monitored with respect to the question of sustainability could be the judicial decision to acquit more than 200 military officers jailed for their involvement in the alleged Sledgehammer coup plot and their role in the post-modern coup of 28 February 1997.<sup>731</sup> Whether a recovery of the military's image might affect the new dynamics of the civil-military relationship and once again empower the military against the elected civilian policy-makers is an important question. Here, however, it should also be noted that "the problem was that the military was not put back in the barracks by democratic or legal means, but by the badly flawed undemocratic methods of the Ergenekon and Balyoz investigations,

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<sup>731</sup> "Turkish Armed Forces says it holds respect for law while following cases", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 13/4/2015, <<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-armed-forces-says-it-holds-respect-for-law-while-following-cases.aspx?pageID=238&nID=80995&NewsCatID=338>>, accessed 22/4/2015.

themselves a work of the Gülenist movement”.<sup>732</sup> Thus, it was revealed that the majority of the trials were not based on authentic evidence, and most of the convicted military officials were in fact innocent. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who previously supported the trials, also admitted that the government itself was deceived by judges affiliated with the Gülen movement, who produced false, fabricated and forged evidence.<sup>733</sup>

Along with several key developments in the last decade, the legal amendments related to the position, responsibilities, and rights of the military within the broader establishment based on the EU *acquis* had already changed the very nature of civil-military relations in Turkey. However, the July 2016 coup attempt showed that particular groups within the military can still strive to intervene directly. The majority of the military took an anti-coup stance during the coup attempt, and harsh criticisms from high-ranking military officers were directed at plotters. The military’s pro-democracy stance in the aftermath was a clear indication of its transformation over the last two decades. This transformation, rather than legal amendments, seems to be a more effective force, at least until civil-military dynamics and legal restraints in line with EU practice have become more deep-seated. Within this context, so far, several important measures have been taken which will help re-configure the civil-military relationship. Military high schools have been shut down, war academies will be merged under a new National Defence University, while land, air and naval forces will be brought under the Ministry of Defence. The Coastguard and the Gendarmerie General Command will be brought under the Interior Ministry and military hospitals will be brought under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health.

It is clear that in general terms Turkey possesses a higher ability and broader room for manoeuvre to devise and adjust policies compared to the situation that prevailed during the

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<sup>732</sup> Cornell, personal communication, 17/2/2016.

<sup>733</sup> “Erdoğan subaylara seslendi: Komutanların tutuklanmasında aldatıldık”, 19/3/2015, *Radikal*.

Cold War era and in the 1990s. However, Turkey still faces complex challenges, and will quite possibly continue to do so at both international and domestic levels. Altunışık and Tür argue that in the immediate post-Cold War era, Turkey had to deal with multiple difficulties in order to become an influential player. These included economic fragility, the Kurdish issue, and political polarization.<sup>734</sup> Even though progress is undeniable regarding all these matters over the last decade, it seems that especially since 2013, such problems, along with regional instability and insecurity, could continue challenging Turkey's enthusiasm for playing a more influential role both regionally and globally.<sup>735</sup>

#### Contributions of the Research to Academic and Policy Debates and to the Future Research Agenda

With its detailed analysis of Turkey's changing grand strategic attitude and the motivations behind these shifts—especially in the period under the JDP rule—this research has the potential to attract a broad audience consisting not only of scholars and policy-makers dealing with Turkey's foreign policy attitude and its grand strategy, but also of scholars whose primary focus is IR theory. The research could also address an audience focusing on the analyses of how lesser powers acted in the post-Cold War era in general, even if they are not studying the particular case of Turkey. This thesis first and foremost tries to offer a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of Turkey's grand strategy. Even though there are other recent large-scale studies on Turkey and its foreign policy written by renowned experts, such as Hale's *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774* and Stein's *Davutoglu, the AKP and the*

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<sup>734</sup> Altunışık & Tür, 2005, p. 133.

<sup>735</sup> Özlem Tür, personal communication, 28/4/2016.

*Pursuit of Regional Order*, there are two key remaining issues that make this thesis a necessary further study.

The first is that due to the vibrant atmosphere and changes in both domestic and international dynamics almost on a daily basis, keeping up with the pace of events requires new studies on a periodic basis. Focusing on events up to mid to late-2016, this thesis will contribute to the literature in this regard. The research, with numerous interviews and the use of primary and secondary sources both in English and Turkish, provides extensive empirical material for the particular case of Turkey.

The second and more important motivation behind this research is the continuing absence of a comprehensive theoretical analysis of Turkey to date. As Hale mentions, “the process of foreign policy-making is one of the least well-studied aspects of Turkish foreign policy and suggestions can often only be speculative or illustrated by occasional examples.”<sup>736</sup> In order not only to study this process but also to provide a generalisable and repeatable causal mechanism, it is important to keep an eye on rival theoretical frameworks. This study, set within its own specific theoretical framework, namely neoclassical realism, offers a comprehensive, holistic and working analysis of internal and external factors and their impact not only on the making but also the implementation of particular grand strategic choices. Even though several studies have done their best to grasp the full complexity of the picture and covered some or all of the factors I have considered, they did not do so by referring to a comprehensive theoretical framework. As detailed historical or chronological accounts, they represent large scale studies from which I have benefitted vastly. However, Hartley argues that without a theoretical framework, the researcher is in severe danger of

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<sup>736</sup> Hale, 2013, 148.

providing description without meaning.<sup>737</sup> My perspective is that theory is what differentiates IR from strict historical/chronological accounts. I embrace the view that theoretical frameworks offer us what we need to make sense of a particular case in a way that not only systematises causal mechanisms, but also identifies causal mechanisms that can be generalised to other cases. Thus, it would not be too bold to argue that theory is what makes IR a discipline, and without it, this thesis would have gone no further than simply expanding the time span covered by other recent studies.

Numerous studies have attempted to make sense of the case of Turkey theoretically through primordialist lenses.<sup>738</sup> Hale argues that “Critics of the ruling AKP’s policies frequently argued that Turkey’s new activism in the Middle East was part and parcel of its supposedly Islamist commitments.” Hale reiterates this opinion in several chapters of his *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, but does not provide detailed insights into the arguments or the empirical data provided by these critics. Systematic theoretical framework and empirical data, as well as effective use of primary and secondary sources, are important in showing the weaknesses of existing accounts while providing the reader with a clear alternative causal mechanism. Thus, one of the main contributions of this research will be in terms of its criticism of these culture- and value-based accounts.

Neoclassical realism (NCR), a recent strand within the realist school, has not been widely utilised in general terms, and this under-utilisation is even more pronounced in terms of analyses focusing on rising powers. This results from the fact that rather than standing as a monolithic school of thought, NCR is an amalgam of several different approaches to a more or less similar causal mechanism with a relatively narrow empirical reach due to its current

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<sup>737</sup> Jean Hartley, “Case Studies in Organizational Research” in Catherine Cassell and Gillian Symon, eds., *Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research: A Practical Guide* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), pp. 209–229.

<sup>738</sup> See Hüsna Taş Yetim, “The Role of Identity in Turkey’s New Middle East Policy: The Case of JDP’s Palestine Policy”, at <<http://www.uli.sakarya.edu.tr/sites/uli/file/1371681227-husnayetim.pdf>>, accessed 18/11/2013, pp. 83–99, at p. 89–90; Warning and Kardaş, 2011 Onar, 2009.



under-utilisation. Therefore, as far as this research's contribution to neoclassical realist literature itself is concerned, two expectations can be identified. Firstly, in terms of empirical ammunition for its theoretical framework, this study could play an important role. In order to present NCR as a strand that is academically sustainable, credible and valid, its repertoire in terms of cases and their comprehensive analyses should be far-reaching. This research has focused on the task of addressing Turkey's situation by analysing three individual relationships, and could contribute to future neoclassical research in that regard by expanding the concept's empirical reach. Secondly, in terms of its contribution to the neoclassical realist strand itself, this research acknowledges the primary impact of power in an anarchic structure connecting two domestic factors, namely coalitions between statesmen and businessmen and the autonomy of state apparatus that act as multipliers for a state's ability to respond to international and regional shifts. As stated above, NCR appears to be a diverse rather than a unified school of thought, and can thus be applied to analysing different domestic elements such as "extraction capability" and "autonomy of the executive branch" (Zakaria), "mobilization capability" and "national political power" (Christensen), "elite perceptions" (Wohlforth), and "coalition politics" (Snyder). There are diverse views about which particular domestic factors have an impact over grand strategy, and in what ways. This thesis not only investigates these diverse academic approaches to this new school of thought from scholars who are considered to be key representatives of NCR, but also questions which domestic factors affect the pursuit of grand strategic shifts and particular foreign policy steps, and the extent to which they do so.

The research's theoretical stance also positions it within the broader realist debate that followed the Waltzian paradigm. By choosing and incorporating domestic factors, this research challenges strict "third image" theories such as Waltzian Neorealism and underlines the role of domestic factors. By revisiting roles played by relevant domestic factors in

classical realist analyses and investigating their impact on more recent neoclassical realist literature, Waltzian determinism and the “billiard balls” analogy are challenged.

NCR’s ability to subsume culturalist arguments and ideologies by incorporating domestic politics and groupings into its analysis could also challenge the explanatory power of naïve culturalist or primordialist accounts by offering a middle-ground. In terms of the incorporation of related ideological and value-based factors into realist analysis, the research is quite promising; it shows NCR’s ability to integrate those factors into its analysis because of its strong roots in classical realism. However, this research does not seek to argue that ideology and/or culture-based assumptions should be completely ignored. Instead, the research acknowledges the potential of such analyses and the importance of the factors investigated by them, but in contrast to such analyses this thesis—within the context of “hierarchy” of motivations that pushes a particular state to make certain foreign policy decisions—prioritises interest-driven power-maximisation behaviour over ideology-driven concerns.

By contributing to literature on the links between external dynamics, domestic politics and shifting grand strategies, this thesis not only provides an important empirical dataset for studies on grand strategy, but also shows parallels between literature on grand strategy-making and the variables highlighted by neoclassical realist scholarship. Due to important similarities in conceptualisations, factors, and variables, the thesis demonstrates the explanatory power of NCR regarding grand strategic behaviour. As such, it will contribute not only to NCR’s ability to analyse grand strategy-making, but also to the literature on grand strategy by theoretically enriching established accounts on the subject.

By analysing Turkey’s striving for more power and influence abroad in response to opportunities it has found in its environs, this research broadens the scope of the literature on

the concept of grand strategy. The literature has so far primarily focused on the imperial eras of European great powers such as Britain and France or the post-WWII policies of the USA and the USSR. Until now, studies on grand strategy (such as Zakaria's *From Wealth to Power* and Wohlforth's *World out of Balance*) have focused either on great powers in multipolar and bipolar structures or on the sole superpower, the United States, in a unipolar structure. The analysis of the structural circumstances under which Turkey now operates, and of its position as a lesser rising power rather than an established great power, will contribute to the literature on the configuration and pursuit of grand strategy by challenging the widespread "great power obsession" that dominates existing literature.<sup>739</sup> For future research, BRIC and MINT countries might provide interesting and fruitful areas of study, using the structural and regional changes that demarcate the contours of their new roles as the primary factor along with, for instance, the important role played by internationalist business communities and/or the changing power calculus between particular domestic interest groups. Hopefully, this research will encourage similar studies on other rising powers and broaden the research agenda of grand strategy-making and the impact of external and internal factors in its configuration and application for the future.

In terms of policy implications, too, the research has the potential to make important contributions. Ideologically devised narratives, once received by policy-makers and the public, might also cause them remain mired in nostalgia, which could result in irrational and destabilising policy choices. With respect to the particular case of Turkey, the Turkish domestic audience and the ruling elite could also be given a false sense of emotional

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<sup>739</sup> Recently, several other studies also aimed at addressing this problem and there is certainly an increase in the number of studies focusing on rising powers. For instance, see Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Wang Jsi, "China's Search for a Grand Strategy: A Rising Power Finds its Way", *Foreign Affairs* 90: 2 (2011), pp. 68–79; David Scott, "India's 'Grand Strategy' for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions", *Asia-Pacific Review* 13: 2 (2006), pp. 97–129; Daulet Singh, "Thinking about an Indian Grand Strategy", *Strategic Analysis* 35: 1 (2010), pp. 52–70; Stephen P. Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington D. C.: The Brookings Institution, 2001); Hal Brands, *Dilemmas of Brazilian Grand Strategy*, Strategic Studies Institute, August 2010.

euphoria, running the risk of causing self-fulfilling prophecies which could result in self-containment, marginalisation and/or over-stretching capabilities which would have negative consequences for regional and international peace and stability. There has been a high risk of the political misuse of primordialist arguments to reach a broader constituency, especially considering the supporters of extreme right parties. Thus, such approaches can easily feed into the ideological baggage of Turco-sceptic audiences abroad. Moreover, they can contribute to the emergence of an insecure regional atmosphere plagued with distrust and “mutual threat perception”<sup>740</sup> in the Middle East, the Balkans and the post-Soviet space due to the “imperial tone” of approaches highlighting Islamism and Neo-Ottomanism as the main determinants of Turkey’s grand strategy.

All in all, ten major theoretical and empirical contributions are expected to be made after this dissertation has been thoroughly analysed;

1. To provide the literature on the case of Turkey especially in the JDP era with a comprehensive theoretical framework
2. To contribute to the literature on Turkey with rich and up-to-date empirical data,
3. To enrich the empirical ammunition of NCR
4. To modify NCR in a way that a clear theoretical framework and a repeatable causal mechanism can be presented
5. To revisit the classical realist school and challenge neorealism’s strict “third image” approach
6. To question and challenge the explanatory power of primordialist accounts

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<sup>740</sup> Stein, 2011, p. 23. Also see Fox, 2001 and Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, “Islamic Culture and Democracy: Testing the ‘Clash of Civilizations’ Thesis”, *Comparative Sociology* 1:3–4 (2002), pp. 235–263. For the weaknesses and possible self-fulfilling prophecies of primordialist approaches, also see Katerina Delacoura, “Beyond a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Religion and Conflict in the Middle East”, *Opendemocracy*, 13/1/2014, <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/katerina-dalacoura/beyond-self-fulfilling-prophecy-religion-and-conflict-in-middle-ea>>, accessed 1/5/2014.

7. To offer a theoretical middle ground incorporating material and domestic factors in a realist analysis
8. To theoretically enrich the literature on the concept of grand strategy by showing the parallels between the variables widely used by neoclassical realist scholars and the literature on grand strategy
9. To empirically broaden the scope of the literature on the concept of grand strategy to the case of Turkey in particular, which could contribute to opening up a future research area on rising powers in general
10. To question the validity of primordialist arguments coming from either academic or political circles. This would hopefully help avoid the risks stemming from potentially dangerous domestic euphoria and from possible self-fulfilling prophecies, which might not only threaten regional security and stability, but also raise Turco-scepticism abroad.

Acknowledging the fact that analysing Turkey—with its frequently changing and vibrant external and internal settings—would require more and more studies and pose an important challenge for anyone studying the country, it is expected that this study can also make a humble but highly useful contribution. Given all the listed expected contributions, this thesis will hopefully make its contribution to multiple literatures and research agendas, encourage more studies on grand strategy, neoclassical realist scholarship, rising powers and Turkey, and open up new and broader paths for future research.

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