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Power, Economic Interests and Ideational Attraction: A Theoretically Heterogeneous Approach in Understanding Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Early AKP-era

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Abstract

This study analyzes and observes the determinants of the changing foreign policy orientations of Turkey in the immediate post-Cold War era. Systemic Changes (the end of the Cold War), domestic political and economic crisis together with troubling developments in nearby regions (Balkans and the Middle East) have been influential in Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s. It is argued that Turkey followed a realpolitik oriented foreign policy in the 1990s and starting with the AKP period (late-2002), beside material factors (economic, strategic), some ideational factors (cultural, identity and value based) have increasingly entered into the decision-making process. The Turkish decision-makers has started to pursue a combination of power (emphasis on Turkey Regional leadership role and national interest), economic interests (active involvement in regional IGO's and initiation of economic and political cooperation with neighbors) and ideational attraction (emphasis on Turkey's identity, cultural shared values with the regional countries and construction of the ideational bridge between civilizations). A theoretically heterogeneous perspective is proposed to observe these determinants.

Keywords: AKP, Foreign Policy, Activism, Regional Power, Turkey, EU

Özet

Bu çalışma Soğuk savaşın hemen ertesinde, Türkiye dış politika yönelimlerindeki değişimlerin ardındaki belirleyici etkenlerini gözlemlemeyi ve incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ülkenin yakın çevresinde meydana gelen tedirgin edici gelişmeler, küresel sistemdeki değişim ile birlikte Türkiye'nin 90lı yıllarda izlediği dış politikada oldukça etkili olmuştur. Bu yıllarda Türkiye'nin realpolitik odaklı bir dış politika izlediği ancak Ak Parti dönemi dış politikasında bu ekonomik ve askeri etkenler gibi maddi unsurların yansıra kültür, kimlik ve değer-odaklı fikri unsurların da dış politika karar alım sürecine daha fazla dahil olmaya başladığı ifade edilmektedir. Bu dönemde karar-alıcılar güç (Türkiye'nin bölgede etkin bir ülke olması ve gerekliliğine ve milli çıkarlara yapılan vurgu), ekonomik çıkar (Bölgesel Işbirliği girişimleri ve bölgesel uluslararası örgütlerde daha aktif katılıma yapılan vurgu) ve fikri çekicilik (Türkiye'nin kimliğine, bölge ülkeleri ile paylaştığı ortak değerlere, ve medeniyetler arası köprü kurulmasına yapılan vurgu) unsurlarının bir bileşimini kullanmış ve ülkenin dış politikasını bu çerçevede inşa etmişlerdir. Bu çerçeve üzerine inşa edilen çalışma, Dış politika yönelimlerini belirleyen bu etkenlerin gözlemlenebilmesinin, birden fazla kuramsal yaklaşımın birleştirilmesi ile oluşacak çok-unsurlu bir yaklaşım ile mümkün olabileceğini öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ak Parti, Aktif Dış Politika, Bölgesel Güç, Türkiye, Kimlik

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Introduction:

Most of the post-Cold War studies on Turkish foreign policy claim that Turkey has followed an active foreign policy in 1990s and 2000s (Çelik 1999; Hale 2000; Makovsky and Sayari 2000; Kut 2001; Rubin 2001; Robins 2003; Larrabee and Lesser 2003; Martin and Keridis, 2003). Especially after the 2002 elections, when AKP (Adalet ve kalkınma Partisi-Justice and Development Party) formed the majority government, the previous wave of foreign policy activism gained momentum. According to Öniş (2009), the AKP government pursued a new wave of activism first by speeding up the Europeanization process (between 2002-2005 the golden age of Europeanization) and then, when the Europeanization process fell into a stalemate after the negotiations for full membership were formally opened in October 2005, by increasing Turkey's regional role as a "benign Euro-Asian soft Power" through the establishment of economic, cultural and political ties in the region (Öniş 2009; Öniş and Yılmaz 2009). The prospect of full membership to the European Union (EU), which boosted after the 1999 Helsinki summit (When EU granted candidate status to Turkey) was especially influential in the period between 1999- 2005. Although the Islamist background of the party generated some fear among the supporters of Europeanization in Turkey, the early years of AKP government had become the Golden Age of Europeanization when the government speeded up the democratization (Özbudun 2007) and economic reform process (Dervis et al. 2004; Öniş and Bakır 2007) within the country. However after 2005 we see a decline in AKP's enthusiasm for Europeanization and increase in Turkey's activism in the region (Öniş 2009; Çakmak 2008).

The increasing significance of Turkey's foreign policy activism of has brought many questions with itself. The article at hand aims at answer three of them: (1) To what extent does AKP's foreign policy orientation represent a divergence from that of the previous period? (2) Which dynamics (domestic/structural, or material/ideational) affected the foreign policy re-orientation in Turkish foreign policy in the AKP period? And finally, 3) can mainstream IR theories help us explain Turkey's foreign policy in the early-AKP period? As a response these questions, the paper observes that Turkey followed a *realpolitik* oriented foreign policy in the 1990s and starting with the AKP period (late-2002), together with material factors (economic, strategic), some ideational factors (cultural, identity and value based) have increasingly entered into the decision-making process.

The paper argues that, theoretical perspectives, when adopted, stress a set of distinct phenomena as important and exclude or ignore the others. Thus, adopting a single perspective will inevitably lead us to omit some very important factors in the conduct of AKP foreign policy. Rather than a theoretically homogeneous understanding, regarding theories as different perspectives that provide explanations for different aspects of the reality would provide a more comprehensive way of analyzing foreign policy.

The article consists of two main parts: First part explains the similarities and differences between post-Cold War Foreign policy activism and the activism in the AKP period (2002 onwards). The second part explains AKP's foreign policy activism with specific emphasis on Turkey's EU-membership prospect. Theoretical arguments are embedded in these two parts. In the conclusion, the article makes a short assessment of the literature on AKP's foreign policy activism and proposes the theoretically heterogeneous perspective adopted by the article in understanding Turkish foreign policy in the AKP period.

Turkey's immediate post-Cold War foreign policy

Systemic Changes (the end of the Cold War), domestic political and economic crisis together with troubling developments in nearby regions (Balkans and the Middle East) have been influential in Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s. Turkey was increasingly getting involved in the region and moving from a primarily western oriented foreign policy towards a

multi-dimensional one. This of course had impacts on the country's international relations. Turkey as a significant regional actor, with the opportunities emerged after the Cold-War, has started to redefine its national interests in this period (Larabee and Lesser 2003).

One of the major reasons behind this redefinition was the end of the Cold war and change in the international bipolar structure. The strict East- West division of the previous period had changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union. This change had at least one negative and two positive impacts for Turkish Foreign policy. One of the positive impacts on the Turkish side was that, the country did no longer share a land border with Soviet Union (then Russia). This has, to a great extent, decreased the perception of a possible Russian threat in the eastern regions of Turkey. Second, the collapse of the Soviet Union created a power vacuum around Turkey, both in the Caucasus and the Balkans. This vacuum, in turn, provided Turkey with opportunities to improve its relations in those regions. Turkish foreign policy makers started to stress Turkey's leading role in the region and emphasize its historical and cultural ties with the Turkic and Muslim countries in Caucasus and the Balkans. On the other hand, the negative impact was that Turkey's geostrategic importance for its western allies has, to a great extent, decreased with the collapse of the Communist Soviet Union. Turkey tried to overcome this negative impact by actively involving in the region and trying to obtain a regional leadership role. These conditions, in general terms, have led to an assertive, multi-dimensional and power-oriented foreign policy vision in Turkey (see Oran, 2001: 204-239; See also larabee and lesser, 2003).

The country's foreign policy was assertive in the sense that it followed "confrontational tools" not only in Iraq against Kurdish separatists but also against Syria (by deploying troops on the border in 1998) and Greece (especially on the Cyprus issue) until the end of 1990s (Öniş 2003; See also Kirişçi 2006). It was multi-dimensional since there has been a change in Turkish Foreign policy "vision" from the "sacredness of the borders and the National Pact (Misak-ı Milli)" understanding towards an aim of "getting beyond the borders and creating a regional sphere of influence in the Balkans, Mediterranean and Caucasus" (Gözen 2006:79). Two major developments have been crucial in Turkey's foreign policy vision in the period: the Gulf War (1990- 1991) and the opportunities that emerge in Eurasia (especially Caucasus) with the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the Gulf War, by participating in the "Operation Provide Comfort", Turkish Armed Forces seized the opportunity to attack the bases of the Kurdish separatist movement (PKK) in Northern Iraq and establish a secure zone in Turkish- Iraqi border. Particularly in its South-Eastern border but generally in the whole surrounding regions, Turkey tried to establish a strategic (Which was especially based on Military power and Geographical location) sphere of influence. As Gözen (2006:79-84) argues, Turkey has followed a Realist approach to Foreign policy by trying to fill-in the power vacuum and to increase its influence in the region. The main aim was to obtain a regional leadership role through this active involvement. However, this realist approach has led to a more confrontational and military weighted foreign policy in Turkey.

The geostrategic discourse and use of confrontational tools was, partly, due to the increased role of military in Foreign policy making (see Bilgin 2005). The decisions given by the National Security Council (NSC), although they were constitutionally limited to be advisory, were taken seriously by the governments; so much that military became the dominant actors even in the daily domestic politics of Turkey (see Özcan 2001). The involvement of military was due to the fact that Turkey was facing instability in its domestic politics because of the frequent government changes, the Kurdish separatist movement and intensified PKK terrorist attacks, and the securitization of political Islam. As a result of these developments, Turkish Armed Forces obtained an important role in both domestic and foreign policy of Turkey which led to the re-emergence of the "Sevres Syndrome" which was, in Aydın's (2004) terms, a "structural determinant" of Turkish Foreign policy. The dominance of military; combined

with the uncertainties of the post-Cold War era; Turkey's perception that it is losing its geostrategic importance for its Western allies; and the Realist approach to foreign policy, made Turkey feel entrapped by the Greeks in the West, Syria in the South East and Kurdish separatists from inside (see Oran 2001: 236). When Turkey's wish to utilize the opportunities of the end of the Cold War is combined with the fear of abandonment and fear of losing territories, the reasons behind an active but *confrontational* foreign policy becomes clearer.

These developments, in turn, have put Turkey into serious dilemmas. For instance, Turkey's confrontational and active involvement in the Middle East was not appreciated by the EU. In Larabee and Lesser's (2003) words, "the deeper its involvement in the Middle East, the more problems this poses for Turkey's Western orientation and identity." EU leaders were emphasizing problems about Turkey's western identity and the possibility that the EU would be dragged into the complex problems in the Middle East if Turkey becomes a Member. Another dilemma was caused by Turkey's aim to improve its relations with the countries in the Caucasus. Turkey, whereas trying to increase its trade relations and economic cooperation with the region, was facing the possibility of confrontation with Russia. In this sense, Turkey's decisions were crucially important for the Russian- Turkish interactions in the 1990s. Additionally, Turkey's stance against the conflicts in the Balkans (dissolution of Yugoslavia) did also create a dilemma for Turkey. While helping the Muslims in the Balkans, Turkey was taking the risk of falling into a conflict with Serbians.

Beside the above mentioned negative impacts there are also some positive improvements in Turkey's international relations. Turkey's participation in the Gulf war and its contributions to the solution of the disputes in the Balkans, improved Turkey-US relationship. US started to regard Turkey as its "Strategic Partner" and an influential actor in the region (Fuller et al. 1993; see also Larabee and Lesser 2003). That is not to say that Turkey-US relations were totally positive in the period. For instance, Turkey's Northern Iraq operations had some side-effects because it was not appreciated by the US administration. However, in general, Turkey- US relations improved in the 1990s (Gözen 2006: 83).

Robins (2006) observes that major studies on Turkish foreign policy started after the 1990s. That is so, not as a coincidence but because of the variety of foreign policy issues -like the collapse of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the rising instability In the Balkans, The first Gulf War (1990-1991), NATO and EU enlargement (etc.) - in which Turkey was actively involved and which were crucially important developments for the emergent new post-Cold War world order. As Kut and Özcan (2000) pointed out, it was "The Longest Decade" in Turkish foreign policy since the foundation of the republic. The long decade of 1990s provided fruitful results for the 2000s. Although both foreign policy approaches were aiming at active involvement in the surrounding regions, Turkish foreign policy in the 2000s – especially during in the AKP period- has slight differences from the 1990s.

Turkish Foreign policy in the early-AKP period (2002-2005):

The decision-makers of the country have established new roles for Turkey in the AKP period. The literature is abundant of references to specific roles such as a 'bridge across continents', a 'bridge across civilizations,' a 'trading state' or a 'model/example country' (see Aras 2002; Aras and Görener 2010; Tank 2006; Yanık 2009, 2011; Kirişçi 2009 among others). For instance, Aras (2002) argues that Turkey has attempted to utilize the emergent power vacuum in Central Asia and Caucasus after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The country assumed the 'bridge role' in order to establish political/economic ties in these regions and to solve ethnic conflicts. Yanık (2009) argues that the 'bridge metaphor' has become a "discursive strategy" for Turkish foreign policy makers in the aftermath of the Cold War. It was a justification for Turkey's foreign policy goals as well as a way to "re-construct" Turkey's identity and international role in that period. The country's Western linkages, its secular

political system and economic structure were presented as a model for the East. The country was portrayed as a connection between the West and the East. The use of bridge metaphor, however, has changed in the AKP era. Following the impact of 9/11 on world politics, the AKP leaders have shifted the geographical emphasis of the Bridge metaphor into an ideational one. From an emphasis on a 'Bridge across continents', the AKP leaders have shifted the emphasis into a 'bridge across civilizations' (Yanık 2009:533). In another study, Yanık (2011) mentions that the AKP leaders have established an 'exceptionalist' position for Turkey. The country as being part of both East and the West is argued to have a special position to play a mediator/peacemaker role in world politics. The Ottoman background of the country has been utilized in establishing this position. However, Yanık argues that this emphasis on Ottoman background in the AKP era might clash with the traditional Kemalist foreign policy vision of the country.

Tank (2006) argues that it was Mustafa Kemal himself who first established the aim to become a western state for Turkey. Turkish leaders have followed such aim for a long time in their foreign policies. The Muslim heritage, as argued by Tank, has been denied since it was seen as an obstacle for this aim. However after 9/11 attacks the Muslim identity of Turkey had become a "marketable attribute." This shift has led to a reconstruction of Turkey's identity from a "western" identity into a "progressive, democratic, Muslim" one (Tank 2006: 464). The country was presented as a "model" for the Muslim countries.

Kirişçi (2009) observes an alternative role for Turkey in his analysis of the economic considerations in the formulation of AKP's foreign policy. The regional activism of Turkey has been affected by powerful domestic business circles. As argued by Kirişçi, opening up new trading markets and finding new economic opportunities have been major determinants of Turkey's activism in its surrounding regions. He refers to Turkey as a "Trading State."

Aras and Görener (2010) argue that a country might have a number of identities. The Leaders' perception of their country's 'national role' is based on these different identities. Building on Holsti (1970) the authors observe seven different role conceptions in their analysis of Erdoğan and Gül's speeches: "regional leader, regional protector, regional subsystem collaborator, global subsystem collaborator, example and bridge" (Aras and Görener 2010: 81). Additionally they observe the "bridge" role has lost its significance in the recent era. The activism in the Middle East, as argued by the authors, has been a result of this shift in AKP leaders' self-identification.

While there is no-consensus over a single main foreign policy role for the country, the scholars in the literature seem to agree on one aspect: the foreign policy activism of the previous decade gained momentum in the 2000s. It is argued that the approach or "vision" behind this activism was different from that of the previous decade. Especially with the 2002 elections, when AKP won the elections and established its single-party government, Turkey, contrary to the hard/confrontational foreign policy of the 1990s, followed a soft/diplomatic foreign policy (See Murinson 2006; Çakmak 2009; Öniş and Yılmaz 2005; 2009; Çakmak 2009; see also Davutoğlu 2010).

One can establish at least three main factors behind this change: First factor is the role of US and international system; Second factor is the AKP government and domestic politics; and the third and arguably the most important factor is the role of the EU membership prospect. There was a boost in Turkish foreign policy activism due to the 1999 Helsinki decision of the EU when the union decided to grant candidate status to Turkey. This in turn, boosted EU-Turkey relations and encouraged the Turkish government to enter into an active Europeanization process (Öniş 2009; See also Öniş and Yılmaz 2009; Gözen 2006) and a process of an active engagement in the region.

In the international arena, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US started to follow a "unilateral" foreign policy, by waging a global war against terror without responding

to the international criticisms against it. As a first step it attacked into Afghanistan and then Iraq for their support to terrorist activities. In response to this hard unilateralism both European states and the states in the Middle East and the Muslim world develop a negative anti-American stance. It can be argued that, especially the war on Iraq, and the anti-American stance that emerged in the period was one of the reasons that have led Turkey closer to the EU and start the rapid Europeanization process. "In retrospect, the war has helped to tilt the balance of power within Turkey's domestic politics further in the direction of the 'pro-EU coalition' which had already been gathering strength particularly since the Helsinki decision of 1999 granting Turkey candidate status (Öniş and Ylmaz 2005).

Under that international system Turkey had gone to elections in October 2002 and AKP won a landslide victory. Ak Party, in Erdoğan' s terms, was a " conservative democrat" party but most of the people believed that it was also a religious party since most of its members, including Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül (leaders of the party), had previously been members of the Welfare Party. Although some religious connotations existed in its discourse, AKP did not establish a religion based foreign policy orientation. Instead by using Turkey's historical/cultural background and religious identity as a strategy AKP has tried establish Turkey, in Öniş's words, as a regional "Euro-Asian Soft Power" that connects the Muslim world with the Western Christian world (see Öniş and Yılmaz 2009). Accordingly Turkey followed a "Zero-Problem with Neighbors" policy, by actively involving in regional activities, establishing economic and strategic agreements, and attempting to solve its major disputes with its neighbors. Although the "Bridging the East with the West" discourse was not a new agenda for Turkey, compared to the previous governments, the AKP government has made the greatest effort among the Turkish governments in order to achieve this aim.

Some of the major policies can be summarized as follows: Just after the elections, AKP government entered into a rapid Europeanization and achieved a great progress so that the EU formally opened the accession negotiations in October 2005; Turkey did not respond all the US demands during its military operation in Iraq (2003) which in turn led to a problematic situation for Turkey's military involvement in Northern Iraq against PKK; Additionally the AKP government has made an important revision in Turkey's Cyprus policy, by supporting the Annan Plan which caused a great improvement in Turkey- EU relations; the government actively involved in regional organization for example the ICO (Islamic Conference Organization) and supported the UN led "Alliance of Civilizations" which emerged as a response to the "Clash of Civilizations" thesis; The AKP government also supported the spread of transparency, democracy and liberal values in other Muslim countries (see Gözen 2006).

As observed in the above-mentioned foreign policy activities Turkey did not follow the same confrontational vision of the previous decade. Although a national-interest based pragmatic approach continued, AKP's foreign policy vision was not so much confrontational as the previous era. One might argue that the Turkish decision-makers has started to pursue a combination of power (emphasis on Turkey Regional leadership role and national interest), economic interests (active involvement in regional IGO's and initiation of economic and political cooperation with neighbors) and ideational attraction (emphasis on Turkey's identity, cultural shared values with the regional countries and construction of the ideational bridge between civilizations).

There has been a revision in Turkish foreign policy understanding. First of all, Turkey has left the heavy emphasis on protecting lands (the Sevres Syndrome). This arguably, has been so because of the decreased impact of the Armed Forces on foreign policy issues. One reason for this decrease is that AKP government was a single-party government and turkey did not suffer so much domestic political instability as it did in 1990s. Second, through the EU led democratization reforms the AKP government managed to decrease the intervention of military in political affairs (See Özbudun 2007). These developments, in turn, have led Turkey to leave

its heavy emphasis on strategy and military issues and follow a Soft and diplomatic foreign policy. So the period was a period of: less emphasis on land and more emphasis on people; less emphasis on military, more emphasis on diplomacy; less emphasis on state-centricism, more emphasis on non-state actors (TUSIAD, Civil society organizations) ; and less emphasis on nationalism more emphasis on global dynamics (see Gözen 2006: 87-95).

Öniş and Yılmaz (2009) explain Turkish post- Cold War foreign policy in three periods. "an initial wave of foreign policy activism in the immediate post-Cold War context [1990s]; a new or second wave of foreign policy activism during the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) government era with a strong emphasis on Europeanization [2002-2005]; and the more recent tension between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism [post-2005 period]. The first two periods are explained above. Now, let us explain the third period.

The prospect of full membership that boosted after the 1999 Helsinki summit, when EU granted candidate status to Turkey, was especially influential in the period between 1999 and 2005. Although the Islamist background of the party generated some fear among the supporters of Europeanization in Turkey, the early years of the AKP government became the Golden Age of Europeanization, when the government speeded up the democratization (Özbudun, 2007) and economic reform process (Dervis et al. 2004; Öniş and Bakır, 2007) within the country (Robbins, 2003; Çakmak, 2008; Öniş, 2009). However, after 2004, although the EU formally opened the negotiations for full membership, it is observed that there has been a decline in Turkey's enthusiasm for European membership and an increase in its activism in the region (For instance see Alpay 2009; Öniş and Yılmaz 2009).

In the post-2005 period, it is argued that the Europeanization process fell into a stalemate. Some authors claimed that, although the EU formally opened the negotiation process, Turkey has lost its European direction because of the increasing criticisms against Turkey's European(ness) and existing obstacles on the path to the EU (see Alpay 2009; Öniş and Yılmaz 2009; Elver 2005). Thus, it is argued that Turkey started to turn towards its region and leave the EU path. According to Elver, this loss of enthusiasm was largely due to the obstacles on Turkey's way to the EU membership. One of these obstacles is the resurgent anti-Muslim feelings in Europe. In addition, the Kurdish problem and the Cyprus issue also stand as other problems that Turkey should deal with before it gets access to the EU. The European Commission, in one of its reports, stated that the negotiation period is an open ended process that could continue for a long time without even giving a final date for Turkey's accession (Elver 2005).

Contrary to those arguments, however, one might argue that the post 2005 regional activism period is not a change of direction or loss of enthusiasm but instead a strategy to increase Turkey's EU membership prospect. Turning the causal mechanism the other way around, it can be argued that when Turkey's relations with Europe fall into a stalemate, AKP leaders follow an active regional policy in order to show Turkey's role as an important regional actor and increase the prospect of membership. A careful reading of Davutoğlu's arguments and a parallel analysis of Erdoğan's speeches may clearly reveal this strategy. For instance, in his book, "*Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Standing"*, Davutoğlu uses a "bow and arrow analogy" to explain Turkey's new foreign policy direction (Davutoğlu 2010: 551-63). In the analogy, Turkey represents the arrow which is directed at Europe, and its foreign policy environment represents the bow. The more Turkey strains the bow towards the Caucasus and the Middle East the faster it enters to the European Union. Following this analogy, one can argue that Turkey's regional foreign policy activism is used as a strategy to increase the prospect of EU membership. Turkey's leading role, together with Spain, in the "Alliance of Civilizations" project and Tayyip Erdoğan's speeches regarding Turkey's mediating role between the East and the West are all in parallel with Davutoğlu's bow and arrow analogy. For instance, in one of his speeches Erdoğan says that "The idea of 'Christian Europe' belongs to

the Middle Ages. It should be left there. There should be no doubt that Turkey's full membership will re-enforce the desire and will for co-habitation between Christians and Muslims." This expression can be used to exemplify the connection between Turkey's vision of its role in the region and its EU membership. So within a Social- Constructivist approach to Foreign policy; it can be argued that by continuously emphasizing Turkey's bridging role, its role in the alliance of civilizations, and Turkey's moderating role between Islamic World and the Christian World the AKP government has tried to construct a positive identity which will increase its EU membership prospect.

Conclusion

To summarize the argument so far, Turkey has followed an assertive-confrontational foreign policy, with a military power oriented approach in 1990s. It was assertive because Turkey tried to utilize the opportunities that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was confrontational because of the uncertainties in the region and realist because it was aimed strictly at state centric National Interest perspective. In the 2000s, contrary to the confrontational tools that were used in the previous decade, Turkey started to emphasize diplomacy and politics instead of military and strategy. So the country followed a national interest oriented pragmatic policy with reference to Turkey's soft power, economic relations and increasing interdependence in the region; ideational attraction oriented policy with reference to the construction of "the bridge between civilizations" by using ideational and cultural factors; and a power maximizing approach as a framework with an overall emphasis on increasing Turkey's role both in the region and internationally.

The first period of foreign policy activism in 1990s gained momentum with the 2002 elections and establishment of the single party government of AKP. The increased emphasis on diplomacy, regional activism, and soft power (power of attraction) capabilities is due to three main reasons. First, US unilateralism caused an anti-American tendency which opened the way for Turkey to prove its reliability in the Middle East. The Anti-American tendency also pushed Turkey to the European Union which, in turn, has led to increased political and economic reform process. Second reason, is the policies of single party- government and domestic politics. Especially the Strategic Depth doctrine of Davutoğlu and AKP leaders' emphasis on Turkey's historical cultural and religious ties with the region have led Turkey to be actively involved in almost all activities in its surrounding region including the conflict resolution processes, regional IGO's and economic and strategic initiatives. The existence of a single party government also decreased the political instability in the domestic politics of the country which left the influence of the Armed forces out of the political sphere. When the impact of Armed forces decreased in the foreign policy making of Turkey, the emphasis on strategy, national power and confrontational tools have also decreased automatically. Finally the third, and arguably the most influential reason was the prospect of EU membership which was boosted after the 1999 Helsinki decision of the union.

As Davutoğlu once said, "Turkey, without having a solid stance in its surrounding regions, cannot become member of the Union." This expression is in contrast with the literature which claimed that Turkey has lost its EU membership direction in the post- 2005 era. Most of the literature on EU-Turkey relations states that EU member states like France and Germany increased their criticisms against Turkey's membership, Turkey will not overcome the obstacles on its path to EU, and therefore Turkey lost its enthusiasm to become a member of the union and started to turn its direction towards Asia and Middle East. However, as this article argues, with a careful reading of Davutoğlu's arguments and a parallel analysis of Erdoğan's speeches the causal mechanism can be established the other way around. It can be argued that when Turkey's relations with Europe fall into a stalemate, AKP leaders follow an active regional policy in order to show Turkey's role as an important regional actor and increase the prospect of membership.

Davutoğlu is regarded as the architect of AKP's foreign policy orientation (Murinson 2006, Walker 2011). He has been the chief foreign policy advisor to the government and a lot of parallelism exists between his foreign policy vision and the AKP leaders' speeches. In his book (Davutoğlu 2010) "Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Standing" he explains his vision of TFP in detail. Thus referring to his vision might be a useful way to identify how the AKP leaders' perceived the decision environment by the time they were deciding on the foreign policy direction of the country. He (Davutoğlu 2010: 221-225) mentions that, throughout the 1990s, Turkish decision-makers desired to utilize the opportunities created by the end of the Cold War through actively involving in the political and economic activities of its surrounding regions. However, "the existing power vacuum in the Caucasus, the crisis in Iraq, the first Gulf War, the undulant Turkey-EU relations, the 'Sevres Syndrome' and the perceived threat against the country's territorial integrity have put Turkey into a confrontational stance in its foreign policy"(Sula 2011: 45). When these conditions were combined with domestic political instabilities (changing Coalition governments, separatist terrorist activities of PKK) of the era, the security emphasis in foreign policy became more apparent. These conditions led Turkey into a confrontational stance with a heavy emphasis on territorial integrity and security (Sula 2011: 46). Davutoğlu (2010: 552-553) sees Turkey at the center of its "near land" (Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East), "near sea" (Black Sea, the Straits, Aegean and the Mediterranean seas, the gulf and Caspian seas) and "near continent" (Europe, North Africa, the Western and Central Asia) basins." This location provides Turkey with an important potential that could not have been utilized until 2000s. He claims that Turkey rather than having a security oriented isolationist stance in foreign policy should follow a multi-dimensional and active one in order to improve its relations with these neighboring regions. Turkey, according to Davutoğlu, should improve its prestige and credibility in its surrounding regions through solving its disputes with neighbors and achieve a central power status by actively engaging in the politics of its near land, near sea and near continental basins through utilizing its strategic depth within the region (Davutoğlu 2010: 262; see also Davutoğlu 2008).A similar vision is also apparent in Gül and Erdoğan's speeches.

Throughout his speeches on TFP, Erdoğan frequently refers to Turkey's "central role" in its region (Erdoğan 2003b), that Turkey requires a multi-dimensional approach to foreign policy in order to utilize its assets (2003e), that it is necessary for Turkey to explain itself properly to the countries in the region while preserving its close relations with the EU (2003d) and the like. In a speech directed at the AKP members (2003c), "Erdoğan clearly states that Turkey has followed an active and dynamic foreign policy aiming to increase Turkey's prestige and prepare a future suitable to Turkey's past"(Sula 2011). Similarly, Gül (2007: 16) defines the foreign policy followed before AKP as "problem-driven", "defense oriented", and "reactive". He also presents AKP's foreign policy as "pro-active", "soft-power oriented", "problem-solving" and "spreading stability to its surrounding regions". He proposes Turkey a "multi-dimensional" foreign policy, close relationship with the EU and the neighboring regions, and a role to promote peace, stability and good Future in the Middle East (Gül 2007: 32). Gül mentions that Turkey should actively participate in regional cooperation" initiatives (2007: 33), that it has a role to promote peace, security and cooperation in its neighboring regions including the Balkans and the African continent (2007: 51-52), that it has "historical and cultural" ties with the countries in the region (2007: 33-35, 47), that it is civilizational bridge between the east and the west (2007: 43-46), that it has a role to "remove the prejudices" against Islam in the West (2007: 42), that it should aim to promote its prestige and credibility in the region (2007: 54) and should follow an "active", "multilateral", and "zero-problem with neighbors" oriented foreign policy (2007: 53-60).

Nearly all speeches given by Erdoğan and Gül in 2002 and 2003 that include references to Turkish foreign policy direction are in line with Davutoğlu's arguments in his strategic depth.

Both Davutoğlu and Gül define TFP before AKP as "security oriented and confrontational" whereas they propose a "soft-power oriented and peaceful" foreign policy direction. Although Turkey followed an active foreign policy throughout the post-Cold war era, it faced a problem of credibility. Turkish foreign policy makers tended to regard regional cooperation initiatives like ECO, BSEC, OIC, and D8 as "reactive derivatives" of its relations with the West (Davutoğlu 2010: 262). "More emphasis was given to these institutions when Turkey's relations with EU or US did not continue in the desired way (Sula 2011: 46). This policy both "decreased Turkey's credibility in the Muslim world" and harmed Turkey's relations with the West. Turkey followed a "multidimensional foreign policy in 'rhetoric' but a uni-dimensional policy in 'conduct" (Sula 2011: 46). The argument is that Turkey should regard its relations with its neighboring regions independent of its relations with the West.

To sum up, in line with the information provided in the article, although different theories, when used as perspectives, show the importance of different phenomena, one might still argue that Realism has been a framework since the overall emphasis has been on increasing Turkey's power. However, analyzing the period with only a realist perspective would eventually lead us to omit AKP's emphasis on ideational, cultural and historical connections to construct a positive image both for the countries in the region and internationally. Or, a Realist approach will lead us to omit the role of domestic factors such as one party politics, and the decreasing role of the military in daily politics. Here a liberal approach that puts emphasis on the role of domestic polity and politics over the foreign policy formation of a country. So the answer of the questions mentioned in the introduction we can say that mainstream Theories might help us to explain Turkish foreign policy but an eclectic approach is needed. Although some scholars argue that those theories would not be meta-theoretically compatible, when the debate over philosophical roots of these theories are put aside and theories regarded as idealized instruments of analysis, then combining different theories will increase the overall understanding of reality. Thus, as this article shows, it will be difficult to have an overall understanding of a foreign policy of a country by using a single theoretical perspective.

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