

# Recalibration of Turkish Foreign Policy During AKP Era

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Since the Justice and Development Party came to power, Turkey has taken another direction in the international scene, based primarily on the ideas of Ahmet Davutoglu, architect of Turkish foreign policy. Different from Turkey's conduct during the Cold War, Davutoglu developed a new foreign policy with specific principles, with their implementation still open to debates. After Davutoglu's exit, it should be noted that Turkey found itself in another political context, and began recalibrating its foreign policy, as president Erdogan has undertaken a more active role under the essentials of a de facto presidential foreign policy. It is worth mentioning some shifts from Davutoglu's framework, such as: from soft power to hard power, from multilateralism to strategic security alliances, from zero problems with neighbours to a policy of regaining friends, from strategy of active globalisation through multilateralism to strategic security alliances, and from civilisationalist realism of Strategic Depth to proactive moral realism. The article aims to shed light on how effective the principles of Turkish foreign policy devised by Davutoglu were, whether Turkey continues implementing his policies or has abandoned them and what the dynamics of the new Turkish Foreign Policy are (after Davutoglu's exit). This article argues that there has been a reorientation of the foreign policy of Turkey as a result of structural and contextual changes in the regional and international political landscape.

Blendi Lami. Recalibration of Turkish Foreign Policy During AKP Era. *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 12, no. 3: 35-56.

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*Keywords: Turkish foreign policy, strategic depth, static paradigm, zero problem policy, multidimensional foreign policy, recalibration*

CEJISS  
3/2018

Ahmet Davutoglu has played an influential role in shaping Turkish Foreign Policy (TFP). He formulated this policy, referring mainly to the strategic location of Turkey, as he considers Turkey a 'central' country or power. It is near Europe, Asia and Africa, and as such, has the capability of having an important position within its region and internationally. As it simultaneously lies in many regions and is the heir to the Ottoman Empire, Turkey is 'the epicentre of the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus, the centre of Eurasia in general and is in the middle of the Rimland belt cutting across the Mediterranean to the Pacific.'<sup>1</sup> Hale reinforces this idea, stating that 'Turkey is the only state, apart from Russia, with territory in both Europe and Asia, and is affected by, and affects international politics in South-eastern Europe, eastern Mediterranean, Transcaucasia, southern regions of former Soviet Union and Middle East'.<sup>2</sup>

Based on the assumption that Strategic Depth argues that a nation's value in world politics is predicated on its geostrategic location and historical depth, Davutoglu promoted significant principles of foreign policy, becoming thus the architect of TFP, having thus a great impact on politics for more than a decade. This was a foreign policy that saw Turkey getting engaged in various realms, from solving disputes in its neighbouring countries to becoming more involved in international affairs. He believed that for Turkey to become a regional leader, it must have a friendly relationship with its neighbouring countries and a bigger influence abroad.<sup>3</sup> It could be put forth that the implementation of this doctrine raised the international stature of Turkey.

However, after Davutoglu's exit in 2016, Turkey began to recalibrate its foreign policies, due to internal changes in the country and external changes in the region. After having played an influential role in restructuring the Turkish foreign policy, his exit from the government in 2016 - along with changes in the environment of international relations - 'made Turkey vulnerable to changes in the country's foreign policies'.<sup>4</sup> This put Turkey in a different position, as the Turkish security paradigm was grounded on reconciliation and democratisation at home, and peaceful resolution of regional conflicts, while currently 'the foreign policy apparatus should be able to recalibrate and restructure itself vis-à-vis the problems of rising insecurity in the region-

al landscape and the difficulties of protecting engagements and new openings in the international arena<sup>5</sup>

The article aims to shed light on how effective the TFP principles devised by Davutoglu were, whether Turkey continues implementing his policies or has abandoned them and what the dynamics in new TFP after Davutoglu's exit are. As it tries to answer these questions, the article argues that there has been a reorientation of the foreign policy of Turkey as a result of structural and contextual changes in the regional and international political landscape.

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### **Traditional<sup>6</sup> Turkish Foreign Policy - “a Static Paradigm”**

During the Cold War system, the West was Turkey's close ally, as Turkey still is a strategic point for Europe's defence, and had a stabilized position in the international arena. With the end of the bipolar world, Turkey had other alternatives and its foreign policy became more independent.

Further back in history, during the Kemalism years, the fragile Turkish state defined foreign policy based on domestic and international conditions. Kemalism, mainly focused on domestic affairs, set forth ‘the policy of non-intervention, Western orientation and vigilance to protect national sovereignty’<sup>7</sup> Before the Second World War, Turkish foreign policy was based on maintaining neutrality in order to avoid conflicts, to become part of Europe and the West in general, as well as to protect territorial integrity. In this framework, Aidyn offers four main sources for Turkish traditional foreign policy. These sources are the historical periods of the formation of the modern Turkish state is based.

1. historical experience of the Ottoman state;
2. Kemalist nationalist revolution and creation of the Republic;
3. Western orientation; and
4. sceptical perception of great powers and foreign interests.<sup>8</sup>

According to Fuller, after the foundation of Turkish state, the backbone of foreign policy priorities was ‘the transformation of TFP - from the trend to expand the influence to containment’ and ‘the harmony between domestic and international politics and security issues took high priority on the foreign policy agenda’<sup>9</sup>

During the second half of the 20th century, two fundamental concepts explain the traditional Turkish foreign policy: maintaining the

status quo and westernisation. Traditionally, TFP is based on 'preserving the established order within existing borders and balances' and 'implementing a West-oriented foreign policy'.<sup>10</sup> During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union appeared in the political arena as two rival superpowers representing two different ideologies, and their rivalry and threats to world peace and security were the paradigm of international relations. Being part of this new international order, such a paradigm would deeply affect TFP. This new system forced the states to behave according to predetermined rules set by the two superpowers.

Aydin clarifies the events that affected Turkey's alignment in the Western Bloc, stating that 'after the threats of the Soviet Union in 1945 to control the straits, Turkey risked falling under Russian influence'.<sup>11</sup> In the power game between the superpowers, President Truman helped Turkey financially and militarily, and Turkey became an important ally to the West. Located between areas influenced by the two superpowers, Turkey was unable to benefit from their clash, being like a 'garrison' of the West, and sought to maintain its territorial integrity and security threatened by the Soviet Union.

Being a critic of this policy, Davutoglu emphasizes that 'Turkish policymakers accepted this position as a static paradigm, and this situation deprived Turkey of producing alternative paradigms, which resulted in the natural decline of its sphere of influence'.<sup>12</sup> In this way, Ataturk's agenda for the modernisation of Western-oriented Turkey and the Cold War system of international relations were the main factors defining traditional Turkey's foreign policy. TFP objectives depended on these two factors, and were - as stated by Davutoglu - part of a 'static paradigm'.

### **Theory of International Relation explaining TFP during Justice and Development Party (AKP) years**

According to realism, nation-states in the international system are motivated by their self-interests and pursue policies aimed at promoting what they think is best for them. According to Goodin, realism is a 'spectrum of ideas' and is focused on four main proposals: a) states as central actors in international politics; b) the international political system is anarchic, with no supranational authority that can impose rules on states; c) actors in the international political system are rational because their actions maximize their interests; and d) all states

want power so that they can secure their self-defence.<sup>13</sup> Referring to the four above proposals, we come to the conclusion that states, Turkey in our case, tend to act on the basis of their own interests by implementing the *realpolitik* to expand as much influence as possible. In this section, we will try to explain why realism is applied to the Turkish foreign policies during the AKP period.

To achieve influence in the international system, realism emphasizes the fact that a state must have power. During the Davutoglu era<sup>14</sup>, Turkey sought to create an international image of respect and influence. This is by relying on diplomacy and soft power. The main principles, formulated by Davutoglu, are categorized in five pillars: balance between freedom and security, no problem with neighbours, good relations with neighbours and beyond, rhythmic diplomacy and multi-dimensional foreign policy.<sup>15</sup> Davutoglu believed that, through the implementation of these pillars, Turkey will become more powerful, will earn the respect of other states and will assert its influence.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, in the post-Davutoglu period, we note that AKP foreign policy has acquired new characteristics. The new context is driven by several factors, such as the refugee crisis, the conflict with ISIS, increased terrorist attacks, the conflict with the Kurds in Iraq and Syria, the failed coup d'état etc.. Unlike Davutoglu's conduct of foreign policy, when foreign policy was based on soft power and civilizational multilateralism, Turkey, facing such threats, has undergone a shift from the use of soft power to exert influence over its neighbours and regional countries, taking a harder approach in trying to promote its self-interests.

It should be emphasized that 'Davutoglu's theories are not entirely based on a single paradigm [...] as he also employs realist, liberal and constructivist perspectives.'<sup>17</sup> Therefore, there is no wide consensus between international relations (IR) theorists as to what IR perspective Davutoglu doctrine belongs to. Scholars such as Alexander Murison (2006) in *Strategic Depth* and *Perspectives on Turkey's Multi-Regional Role in the 21st Century* (2015), Emre Ersen in *The Evolution of "Eurasia" as a Geopolitical Concept in Post-Cold War Turkey*, and Pinar Bilgin (2007) in *Only Strong States*, argue that realism is the main theory in Davutoglu's work.<sup>18</sup> This leads to the idea that 'choke points play an important part [...] in Davutoglu's explanation of international behaviour. Davutoglu contends that the real reason West is interested in Turkey, and in the Middle East as a whole, is that there are numerous choke points

in the region'.<sup>19</sup> Under this assumption, realism takes precedence over role of civilisations or religion. Ozkan states that Davutoglu 'bases his theories on realist expansionist policies'.<sup>20</sup> In this context, Davutoglu tries to create a new approach in international affairs 'by modifying existing Western power politics and applying them to Turkey, and an Islamic world view'.<sup>21</sup> Realism, the basis of Davutoglu theory over civilisations, is also explained by Aydinli and Mathews in *Periphery Theorizing* (2008); Ozkan in *Turkey, Davutoglu and the Idea of Pan-Islamism* (2014); Ozpek and Demirag in *The Davutoglu Effect in Turkish Foreign Policy: What if the Bowstring is Broken?* (2012).<sup>22</sup>

We can note three elements of realism, reflected in the why TFP is conducted. First, *power* is crucial in international relations, because Turkey is already a regional power and, as it has gained this stature, sees itself becoming a global power. Second, *anarchy* is the idea that the world lacks any supreme authority. Turkish foreign policy follows a realist perspective as it considers the world order anarchy and tries to exploit this element - through its power. For instance, as the United States of America showed for quite some time a containment regarding its involvement in the Middle Eastern issues (withdrawal from Iraq, reluctance to oust Assad from power, ISIS factor, expansion of Iran influence, and Russia's involvement in the region), and an inability to control the regional order, 'anarchy fostered competition and conflict among states and inhibits their willingness to cooperate even when they share common interests'.<sup>23</sup> With no central power controlling or configuring the system, the anarchy in international system favours powers such as Turkey to fulfil its interests. And third, the concept of *alliance* in the contemporary world explains the realist attitude in relation to Turkey's alliances. This concept underscores the way of creating alliances. Realists argue that there is no permanent ally, as alliances are based solely on interests, and the benefits from an ally are also not permanent. In a multi-polar system, friends and enemies are easily identified, and 'in this way they are focused on uncertainties and dependencies between individual states'.<sup>24</sup>

During the Davutoglu era, Turkey played in such a field of IR, but, as mentioned before, the context after 2015 changed the way TFP was implemented. In 1997, Brzezinski warned that a state like Turkey is 'volatile in its geopolitical orientation and internally potentially vulnerable, and is not only an important geostrategic player but also a geopolitical pivot, whose own internal condition is of critical importance to the

fate of the region'.<sup>25</sup> This is to show that a state like Turkey is prone to going through significant changes and transformations in world politics, and events such as Arab Uprisings, the war on terror, failed states in the area or the global economic crisis have naturally impacted TFP. Brzezinski's diagnosis about Turkey is relevant. Especially after the year 2000, Turkey has earned the status of a geopolitical pivot, as the AKP foreign policy implemented the Strategic Depth doctrine, through specific TFP principles devised by Davutoglu, but the foreign policy of this 'pivot' has been dynamic, transforming and modifying based on its environment.

According to Keyman, since 2002, when AKP came to power, it is possible to analyse and categorize Turkish foreign policy within three periods. The first period started in 2002 and continued until 2010, in which the environment was mainly framed by the September 11 attacks and the global war on terror. During this time, TFP was shaped by soft power, active globalisation, and a suitable environment for Turkey's proactivity. This is the period Davutoglu employed concepts of strategic depth, and civilizational, realist thinking of regional and global relations. The second period started with the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt in 2010, where a strong societal demand arose for regime change in the Middle East and North Africa region, with the intention of forming democratic regimes. But this movement ended in a boomerang, paving the way for internal and regional conflicts. The military coup in Egypt and the civil war in Syria ended the possibility of transformation in the region. It went even further, as the Middle East's instability represented an opportunity for expansionist regional powers.

Turkey was not immune from these radical changes. The regional tensions impacted the proactive foreign policy immensely. It was the time when Erdogan assumed the post of president and the tenure of Davutoglu as prime minister ended. The third period is characterized by serious security risks. Escalating conflict and instability in the region within the deepening global turmoil has made it necessary, if not imperative, to adjust Turkish foreign policy. In such a region, characterized by instability and insecurity, realism concepts such as chaos, alliances and power determine Turkish behaviour.<sup>26</sup>

It is also worth emphasizing two internal events that have significantly impacted TFP. First, since the Gezi protests in May and June 2013, much of the foreign policy language emanating from Ankara

haschanged considerably. This change has been profound even in the case of Davutoglu, who made a full volte-face from a language of win-win thinking and soft power to zero-sum games and strongmen aggression, justifying the government by saying that ‘first, it’s wrong to claim there is a deficit of democracy in Turkey [...] Second, our success extends beyond the ballot box [...] Third, though we view peaceful protests as part of a democratic system, we have to strike a balance between this principle and maintaining public order.’<sup>27</sup> In comparison to Davutoglu, Erdogan’s language comes across as uninfluenced by ‘soft power’ discourse, remaining nationalist on the one hand, and committed to *Realpolitik* in the extreme on the other hand.<sup>28</sup>

The second important internal event impacting TFP was the coup d’etat attempt of July 15, 2016, an attack on Turkish establishment. After this failed attempt to seize power, the head of state was strongly opposed to the reaction of the European Union and the US administration. He believed that they did not give appropriate support to his elected government. Receiving criticism for the way it handled these events, Turkey was even prepared to turn its back to the West. Being a NATO member-state since 1952, its international alliance is clearly defined with the Western world and it was very difficult to imagine Turkey moving away from that alliance.

The reaction toward internal and external risks have given rise to a new, proactive foreign policy, which, referring to Keyman, is moving toward a proactive moral realism, with the following specifics:

Since 2002, TFP was, and continues to remain, proactive [...] The perception of Turkey as a pivotal state/regional power has remained [...] TFP has undergone a shift from soft power to hard power [...] Turkey’s 2002-2010 strategy of active globalisation through multilateralism has significantly declined and been replaced by the establishment of, and involvement in strategic security alliances [...] “Zero problems” principle ended in 2015 and has been replaced by the policy of regaining friends [...] There was also a shift from “civilisationalist realism” in the 2002 - 2010 period, whose basic principles can be found in Davutoglu’s elaboration of strategic depth, to “moral realism” in the use of hard power.<sup>29</sup>

In conclusion, the proactivism of TFP, as set by Davutoglu, ended in 2014 - 15, and the new foreign policy is being shaped by proactive moral realism.



## Discussion on Davutoglu Alternative

Since 2002, Davutoglu has managed to influence the TFP and helped to establish the five pillars or principles.

One of the pillars is ensuring that there is a *balance between freedom and security*. From Davutoglu's point of view, if the Turkey was not democratic and secure, then it would not have the capability of asserting its influence in the neighbouring countries.<sup>30</sup> The decision by the Turkish government to promote democracy and security in its internal affairs was motivated by the need of claiming control and influence over its neighbouring countries.

The promotion of this principle was also galvanized by the idea that Turkey was to be admitted into the European Union. Advancement of democracy and security within its internal borders was also a foreign affairs strategy aimed at cementing its global image as a stable country, hence influencing the affairs of its neighbours and regional countries.

In principle, a state needs to guarantee its internal security and eliminate threats from outside. In the domestic sphere, state organisation is inclined to restrict some essential citizen's freedom for the sake of security. Following the logic of Davutoglu, this restriction requires careful balancing between two extreme cases. He says: "If security is neglected on behalf of freedom then a turbulent and chaotic situation is created."<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, "if freedom is not considered a priority such as security, then an authoritarian and autocratic society will be created."<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, Turkey came up with a policy aimed at ensuring that there it had *no problem with its neighbours*. This is a policy that the country managed to successfully implement, especially in the Balkans, Caucasus and Middle East. The main aim of this policy was to ensure that Turkey did not engage in costly wars and conflicts with its neighbouring countries.

However, this is such a disputed principle. It is populist, but it should be emphasized that a 'zero problems' policy firstly creates, at least perceptively, territorial security. Davutoglu managed to set aside perceptions of threats coming from Turkey or was able to mitigate conflicts with neighbours. This principle also seems idealistic in a chaotic region where *realpolitik* prevails. Edin states that 'a major challenge for Turkey stems from the fact that it is a player in three regions and viewed by other actors as an integral part of any region'.<sup>33</sup> In addition, Turkey is in contact with various international actors.

Its relations with them are often conflicting, because it is difficult to agree on a variety of interests in a problematic region such as the Middle East. As a conclusion, it can be said that the principle 'no problem' simultaneously creates a positive international reputation and is difficult to be accomplished.

However, as with balance between security and freedom, even the second principle has been open to polemics, and both these principles are intertwined. In fact, 'zero problem' is a principle that helps Turkey take a very active role in international relations. Friedman states that 'Turkey is emerging as a great power,' but it cannot achieve this status if 'it does not solve its internal problems'.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, the third principle of Turkish foreign policy under Davutoglu was to *develop relationships with countries from other regions of the world*. In fact, in a bid to be admitted to the European Union, Turkey, in the first years of AKP into power, sought to reform its laws and policies for more freedom and democratic principles. Regarding its relationship with NATO, Turkey is a member since 1951, and has the second biggest army of the alliance. From such a position, the country has acquired a solid stature. This is an indication that Turkey sought to build alliances with countries from other parts of the world. Nonetheless, alliance building with the European Union has been frustrated due to many differences of both parties.

Such policy targets a foreign policy vision, by which international relations have no restraints. This is illustrated by Davutoglu as follows:

Turkey's engagements from Chile to Indonesia, from Africa to Central Asia, and from European Union to Organisation for Islamic Cooperation will be part of a holistic approach to foreign policy. These initiatives will make Turkey a global actor as we approach 2023, the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Turkish republic.<sup>35</sup>

*Rhythmic diplomacy* is the fourth pillar of the Turkish foreign policy under Davutoglu. Under this principle, Turkey was to engage in intensive diplomatic initiatives aimed at cementing its image as an important regional and international actor.

As noted above, ending its status as buffer zone during the Cold War, Turkey gained the stature of a significant power in the international scene. Rhythmic or proactive diplomacy is also a reflection of this perspective. According to Davutoglu, proactive diplomacy 'refers to a stable pro-activism in the field of diplomacy as we strive to achieve

an active role in international organisations and to open on areas in which Turkey has been limited in the past'.<sup>36</sup>

The AKP position in this regard is clearly expressed in its program, emphasizing the implementation of 'a proactive, innovative and multi-lateral external policy',<sup>37</sup> which implies the undertaking of initiatives in neighbouring countries in times of crisis. In this new context, considering expansion to create new areas of influence, Turkey increasingly aspires to embrace a global perspective.

*Multidimensional foreign policy* is the fifth pillar of the Turkish foreign policy. The aim of this policy is for Turkey to engage with international actors to harmonize its interests and not to compete with other actors. This was the main target of the Turkish leadership when it sought to establish ties with the United States, NATO and the European Union.<sup>38</sup> This approach does not align with former politics based primarily on traditional concepts of security. TFP is no longer one-dimensional, but it includes a wider range of issues, such as economics, culture, diplomacy or energy. Thus, there is a shift from the static polarisation of the international system during the Cold War. Davutoglu claims that taking this new position 'is a natural phenomenon for Turkey',<sup>39</sup> meaning that its geostrategic position creates a golden opportunity to implement a multidimensional foreign policy.

Turkey's international political stance is a 'heavy burden' without a proper management of diplomacy, especially in the complicated theatre of international relations. Keyman underlines his doubts about the purpose of this new TFP vision. He sets out three possible reasons for the debate:

There is a "thick scepticism with a strong ideological take" on the new TFP behaviour, and it is perceived as a means by which the AKP government attempts to widen the legitimacy and power of its Islamic-authoritarian governance [...] There is another version of scepticism, which claims that Turkey is turning its back on the West, and moving towards the East. Yet, this version presents a "thin scepticism", which is less ideological in its orientation [...] The third form of scepticism raises the question of realism and sustainability: how realistic and sustainable is Turkey's proactive and multidimensional foreign policy?<sup>40</sup>

It is important to stress that geography forces Turkey to be part of a vast network of foreign relations. Turkey's role in the region as well as

in the world in the coming years will be determined by Turkey's political developments and its ability to adapt to both domestic and foreign policy levels. As Friedman lists the powers of the future in his prominent book *The Next 100 Years*, he notes that 'Turkey is a stable platform in the midst of chaos. The Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Arab world to the south are all unstable. As Turkey's power grows—and its economy and military are already the most powerful in the region—so will Turkish influence'.<sup>41</sup>

### **Current TFP Recalibration**

The aforementioned principles - set by Davutoglu - have created the tracks in which TFP after 2002 was re-established. AKP vision was thus reflected in Davutoglu's principles. This policy departed from the Cold War's 'static paradigm', where Turkey was focused on preserving the status quo and Westernisation, to a somewhat more independent policy during the last decade of the twentieth century. And, since the AKP's victory, Turkey has begun implementing the Strategic Depth doctrine, the source of five main principles of TFP.

Focusing on the AKP years (2002 - 2018), we note that, due to Turkey's internal and external dynamics during this period, there has been a foreign policy recalibration. While this article aims to shed light on how TFP principles have changed over the years of the ruling AKP, in this section we try to analyse the current recalibration of the principles that began to be implemented in 2002 and reveal their actual configuration. As we examine how the principles have changed or evolved during AKP years, we must point out that TFP has shifted from soft power to hard power, from multilateralism to strategic security alliances, from zero problems with neighbours to a policy of regaining friends, and from civilisationalist realism of Strategic Depth to proactive moral realism.

Regarding the first principle devised by Davutoglu, *balance between security and freedom*, we must point out that in the early years of its implementation, there was a tendency to achieve this balance. This principle was meant to strike a balance between freedom and security. But, as Turkey has been facing many challenges, such balance has not produced the desired results. For instance, one significant aim has driven Turkish domestic security policy since 2002, which is preventing the establishment of a Kurdish state either within Turkey or in Iraq (after 2003) and more recently Syria. Davutoglu warned again in 2012,

echoing his principle that ‘Turkey must establish a lasting security/freedom balance, by liberalizing its political system and abandoning its erroneous habits of the past, when viewing society as a potential enemy sucked its energy in vicious internal discussions.’<sup>42</sup> Given recent events, there is only a slim chance that the AKP government will allow a softening of its security policies towards the Kurdish regions. All of this has resulted in a Turkish state that, driven by post-coup paranoia, is likely to use force, repression of the media, and other more disreputable means<sup>43</sup> to achieve its internal security goals ‘to the detriment of freedoms’.

Another example of the failure of this balance, which directly reflects the development of foreign policy, is also the coup d’etat attempt on 15 July 2016, whose impact on internal security policy in Turkey has been crucial. Since coming to power in 2002, to meet EU accession criteria, the AKP government also implemented measures to bring the military within civilian control. The so-called Gulenists were blamed for the coup by the Turkish government. The consequences have been dramatic. *The Economist* states that “Mr Erdogan is fast destroying the very democracy [. . .] About 6,000 soldiers have been arrested; thousands more policemen, prosecutors and judges have been sacked or suspended. So have academics, teachers and civil servants, though there is little sign they had anything to do with the coup. Secularists, Kurds and other minorities feel intimidated by Mr Erdogan’s loyalists on the streets.”<sup>44</sup> Far from being the good ally of the past, Turkey blamed U.S. for the coup, with no evidence. Different to the early years of AKP government, when the country was considered the model of a prospering and stable democracy, Turkey is now threatening to turn its back to the West and the democratic practices. Therefore, Davutoglu’s principle of ‘security/freedom balance’ is imbalanced in favour of security.

In relation to the *zero problems principle*, Turkey envisions an enhanced regional engagement. Davutoglu insisted that ‘we believe that this is an achievable goal, if enough trust and confidence can be generated among the relevant parties.’<sup>45</sup> This principle was aligned with the way Turkey tried to implement public diplomacy, intending to convey a positive image of the country to the foreign public.

Referring to what is going on in the Middle East, we see that this policy has comprehensively failed. Turkey has many problems with its neighbours. Turkey narrowly avoided conflict with Russia, after

a Russian SU24 attack aircraft was shot down by a Turkish F-16 on 30 November 2015, although Turkish - Russian relations are currently normalized. Then on 24 August 2016, Turkey became involved in the Syrian conflict, after it became clear that without intervening, a Kurdish proto-state could become a reality on the Turkish southern border. Turkey's relationship with Israel was badly damaged after the Israeli operation to board the Palestinian relief fleet (the so called Mavi Marmara incident) on 31 May 2010, although relations have since gradually normalized. Relations with the U.S. administration were fraught for most of the Obama presidency. There are deep-rooted schisms with Iraq over territory and Kurdish issue. As the Americans have been collaborating in Syria with YPG Kurdish forces (People's Protection Units) in the Syrian conflict, 'Turkey is ready to proceed unilaterally in defence of its interests and security and [...] and is determined to meet threats to its security'.<sup>46</sup> And Turkey's relationship with Egypt is poor given Turkey's unstinting support for the Muslim Brotherhood.

Ironically, it is said that 'Turkey's Foreign Policy has gone from "Zero Problems" To "Nothing But Problems"'.<sup>47</sup> Although such policy worked relatively well for some time, today there is almost no 'country of immediate interest' for Ankara that Turkey has no problems with. From Washington to Berlin and Moscow, from Tehran to Baghdad and Damascus, you can hardly find a government in Turkey's immediate neighbourhood and beyond that has 'zero problems' with Ankara.

The other principle envisions an *effective diplomacy towards neighbouring regions*. 'Our goal' Davutoglu says, 'is to maximize cooperation and mutual benefits with all of our neighbours. In order to achieve that goal, we build our relations with them on the principles of "security for all", "high-level political dialogue", "economic interdependence" and "cultural harmony and mutual respect"'.<sup>48</sup>

Considering EU norms, values and reform process, Turkey - EU relations had a considerable impact on Turkey's foreign policy. For example: Sozen argues that, in the initial years of AKP in power, Turkey's shift to soft power can be seen in Cyprus' issue, because AKP administration changed its policy, 'as it promised to solve this problem by following a less confrontational strategy. Turkish foreign policy shifts to a more moderate policy based on solution oriented and AKP's new win-win strategy'.<sup>49</sup> This example, as Keyman notes, illustrates Turkey's 'general activism'.

Regarding regional engagements, there has been a shift from 'general activism' to 'priority setting'. Turkish foreign policy, especially after Davutoglu's exit, is concerned more about priorities and less about general activism. Moral realism and the use of hard power lead to priority setting so that Turkey can achieve the desired outcomes.<sup>50</sup> As Turkey was inclined for a greater cooperation and developing relationships with countries from different regions of the world, while negotiating simultaneously with European Union, the United States, Russia or Iran - a strategy of active globalisation through multilateralism - nowadays we notice that such strategy 'has been replaced by the establishment of, and involvement in strategic security alliances.'<sup>51</sup>

However, as TFP strategy has changed, Turkey continues to be influential in such an anarchy. It has acted based on its interests in the geopolitical theatre of the Middle East, by building effecting alliances with Russia, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. The shift from soft power to hard power has emphasized the strategic importance of alliances in foreign policy making.

The fourth principle, *rhythmic diplomacy*, aspires to provide Turkey with a more active role in international relations. It implies active involvement in all international organisations and on all issues of global and international importance. As it was being "rhythmic", Turkey became a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, and chaired three critical commissions concerning Afghanistan, North Korea, and the fight against terror. It also undertook the chairmanship-in-office of the South-East European Cooperation Process, a forum for dialogue among Balkan states and their immediate neighbours, for 2009 and 2010. In addition, it is a member of G-20, maintains observer status in the African Union, has a strategic dialogue mechanism with the Gulf Cooperation Council, and actively participates in the Arab League. Turkey has also launched new diplomatic initiatives by opening 15 new embassies in Africa and two in Latin America, and is a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol. In this regard, the nation's active and constituting role in the creation of the alliance of civilisations to challenge the clash of civilisation thesis was regionally and globally welcomed (The Alliance of Civilisations (AoC) was launched in 2005 by the then Prime Minister Erdogan, and former Prime Minister of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. The AoC became a U.N. initiative upon its endorsement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations). In the initial years of AKP, Turkey's involvement in the areas of economy,

culture, identity, diplomacy and humanitarianism raised the profile of the country as a secular and democratic government, with a Muslim population and a dynamic economy.

Since 2002, Turkey has been, and likely will continue to be, active, engaging, and assertive both regionally and globally. However, there are some limits to the effectiveness of this rhythmic diplomacy causing counterproductive impacts, especially if it is managed unilaterally without considering policy alignment with Europe and the United States. These fractures with the West have reduced the legitimacy and the effectiveness of this principle, giving way to the interpretation that Ankara is turning away from the EU.<sup>52</sup> On the other side, Turkey should focus on its priorities, not only to make its proactive foreign policy realistic and effective, but also to keep its role in global politics as an important and pivotal actor. Today, the nation's regional and global engagements focus on Syria and Iraq, as well as on Africa, and operate on the basis of the priority of security concerns.

However, since 2010, all of Turkey's soft power capacities have declined significantly. Instead, in ways similar to Cold War years, Turkey's hard power capacities have become more visible in bilateral and international talks. From the war against ISIS to the establishment of stability, from managing the refugee crisis to state building, the essential role of Turkey is perceived more in security terms rather than in terms of economy, culture, identity and democracy.<sup>53</sup> Turkey's military and geopolitical hard power capacities have begun to draw attention. Turkey's strategic buffer state capacity to contain ISIS, to manage the refugee crisis, and to contain Iran and its regional power aspirations have become more important than its soft power capacities.<sup>54</sup>

The fifth principle is adherence to a *multidimensional foreign policy*. Turkey's relations with other global actors aim to be complementary, not in competition. Such a policy gives priority to Turkey's strategic relationship with the United States, through the two countries' bilateral strategic ties and through NATO. It considers its EU membership process, its good neighbourhood policy with Russia, and its synchronisation policy in Eurasia as integral parts of a consistent policy that serve to complement each other. This means that good relations with Russia are not an alternative to relations with the EU. Nor is the model partnership with the United States a rival partnership against Russia.<sup>55</sup> Only Turkey can play this important role because of its geopolitical and geostrategic location connecting both continents.



Turkey's multidimensional foreign policy has been firmly established, and has been largely successful. One of the threats to this policy came when the relations with the United States were expected to collapse in 2007. A serious problem with the United States seemed imminent, due to the developments concerning the Armenian resolution and the Iraqi situation. On 17 October, 2007, the Turkish Parliament voted in favor of allowing the Turkish Armed Forces to take military action against the Kurdish forces based in northern Iraq, openly opposing the U.S. Later that year, Turkey recalled its ambassador to the United States after the House Committee on Foreign Affairs passed a United States resolution on the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, by the end of 2007, Turkish-American relations had evolved such that both sides emerged with a better understanding of each other; channels of communication continue to remain open on both sides. After the on-again, off-again relationship between the United States and Turkey, it is worth emphasising their latest agreement over the Kurds in Syria in June 2018. In regard to the EU, although the integration process has slowed down, a serious deadlock was avoided and the process was not suspended. The relations with EU have not progressed at the desired level, sometimes have deteriorated, but Turkey and EU interests are intertwined.

As a reaction to the shaky relationship with the West, an institutionalized pattern of relations with Russia emerged. Ankara's closeness with Moscow strengthens the former's political leverage against the U.S. and European countries with which Turkey currently does not enjoy good relations. Ankara's procurement of Russia's S400 missile system is not only a military move, but also a diplomatic one, sending a strong message to its Western allies. Russian - Turkish rapprochement also helps relations between Ankara and Tehran. Iran, Turkey and Russia have become the three guarantors of the Astana talks, aiming to solve the Syrian conflict politically.

This principle seems more immune towards the latest changes, as Turkey continues its quest for a great power. One good example is Turkey's multidimensional foreign policy with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): A. Selvarajah, Singapore's ambassador to Turkey, in an exclusive interview with Anadolu Agency said: 'In the past, Turkey has focused on its European accession and European membership. But today Turkey wants to also look beyond Europe to other parts of the world. Turkey's strategy of having a multidimension-

al foreign policy is kindly welcomed by the ASEAN countries'. Thailand's ambassador, SuvatChirapant, said that 'ASEAN was a huge market with over 600 million people, and we are looking for Turkey to be a hub connecting China, India, Japan and Korea with Europe, Africa and the Middle East'.<sup>56</sup>

However, despite this successful policy, Keyman emphasizes that 'considering the multidimensional policy, the present nature of involvement seems to be more focused, selective, and globally limited'.<sup>57</sup> He highlights that there is a transition from Proactivism/Regional-Global Engagements to Proactivism/Selective Engagements, dictated by the context in which Turkey finds itself and responding to 'anticipatory, change-oriented and self-initiated behaviour in specific situations'.<sup>58</sup>

After the change of nature in the international context, Turkey continues to pursue a balanced, multidimensional foreign policy instead of its traditional relatively western orientation. The current dimension is partly dictated by the rejection of EU and strained relation with the US. Turkey does not accept the 'privileged partnership' offered by Germany and France, and has been defiant to many U.S. policies. This new context has led 'Turkey to search for new alternatives'.<sup>59</sup> As this TFP principle continues to adapt to the new context, we can refer to Davutoğlu, as follows:

There is no longer a Euro-centric cultural life. China and India are rising with their own culture; Islamic world is becoming more culturally vibrant, Africa is rediscovering itself, and creating an African consciousness modernisation is increasingly multidirectional; the angle between modernisation and westernisation is getting steeper. New power centres are emerging; Turkey with its geography, history and culture, is a candidate to be one of these new centres.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

Finally, there is a significant shift in the foreign policies of Turkey, after Davutoğlu's exit from Turkish political scene, meaning that he had an undeniable effect on TFP. His departure coincided with a series of changes in internal and foreign policy. During the time when Davutoğlu was influential in Turkish foreign policy, Turkey managed to follow five specific principles that were used to determine its relationships with neighbouring countries and the world at large. We have noticed that these principles are undermined, as Turkey has recalibrated the

foreign policies, especially after the year 2015. For instance, Davutoglu believed that for Turkey to have influence all over the world, it must first secure its borders and promote democracy. The current government does not tolerate criticism and has demonstrated anti-democratic policies, with the coup d'état attempt and Kurdish issue being the main factors of the eroding security/freedom principle. Erdogan, embodying the Turkish establishment, has also departed from the 'no problem' policy, where Turkey sought to promote peaceful co-existence with its neighbours. The reason is because of the changing dynamics of international relations and the rise of regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. This change in policies is seen with the conflicting relationships that Turkey is having in the Middle East, as well as disagreements on many issues with the European Union and the United States. The relationship of Turkey with these countries has altered significantly, and so has their cooperation. Turkey's position in the international community depends more and more on hard power to exert influence over its neighbours.



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