

**Working paper NOT for citation without authors' permission.  
Feedback welcome.**

# Changing Fundamental Principles in Turkish Foreign Policy Making

©  
March 2006

by

**Ahmet Sözen**

ahmet.sozen@emu.edu.tr  
Department of International Relations  
Eastern Mediterranean University  
(North Cyprus)

Paper prepared for presentation at the 2006 Annual Conference of the International  
Studies Association in San Diego, USA, March 22 - 25.

## **1. Introduction**

There are certain characteristics or principles that can be attributed to the traditional Turkish foreign policy from the beginning of the Turkish Republic (or even earlier) to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. *Continuity, conservatism, caution* and *status quo* are some of the terminologies that have been used to describe the fundamental principles of the traditional Turkish foreign policy. From the establishment of the Republic of Turkey to the Second World War, Turkish foreign policy followed a policy of deliberate *neutrality* in order not to risk the consolidation of the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of the Republic of Turkey both internally and externally. During this time, Turkey was busy with implementing domestic policies of Westernization and normalizing its foreign relations with the major powers based on active neutrality to keep Turkey out of war. By and large, Turkey managed to stay out of World War II and only declared war symbolically against Germany in February 1945. In the post-Second World War era, where Cold War discipline became the new world order Turkey could no longer follow a neutral foreign policy. In other words, Turkey was not in the position to play one European power against another in temporary and vague alliances as the Ottoman Empire did. This time Turkey's options were far more limited than the ones during the earlier periods of the Republic. If Turkey had continued to rely on its policy of neutrality – sort of a balance of power strategy *à la Ottomana* - between the US and the Soviet Union, it would have faced with the risk of either Soviet aggression or Soviet political domination. Hence, Turkey was forced to choose full alignment and integration with the West. Turkey's integration with the West is marked by Turkey's being a founding member of the OECD (1948), a member of the Council of

Europe (1949), of NATO (1952) and an associate member of EEC (1963). Turkey's integration with the EU continued in the post-Cold War era and was consolidated by the establishment of the Customs Union (1996) and the start of the accession negotiations for full membership (3 October 2005).

The end of the Cold War which can be termed as a *paradigmatic shift* on the systemic level provided Turkey with new opportunities together with lots of uncertainties with potential threats. The end of the Cold War has expanded the Turkish foreign policy horizons. In other words, the playing field of maneuver for Turkish foreign policy, in terms of geography, number of issues and tools, has dramatically expanded.

In this article, after a brief historical background of Turkish foreign policy in four phases, it is argued that Turkish foreign policy in the new millennium, though a bit late due to domestic constraints, has started to respond to the paradigmatic shift in the systemic level due to the end of the Cold War by filling in the new expanded playing field with new or modified strategic visions and tools on multiple number of issues which were non-existent in the earlier periods of the Republic. Hence, since the beginning of the new millennium objective observers have been witnessing *new contours* in the making of the traditional Turkish foreign policy. Such contours should have emerged from a set of new principles of policy making.

According to the chief foreign policy advisor of Prime Minister Erdoğan, Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, international politics is a very dynamic process that necessitates “vision based” strategies in foreign policy making rather than “line based” or “crisis based” strategies which produce only reactive (or defensive) policies. Davutoğlu argues that, unlike earlier static and mono-dimensional strategy, Turkey is currently following a

“vision based” strategy in the making of the Turkish foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> According to Davutođlu, the current Turkish foreign policy making is based on five fundamental foreign policy principles:

1. Balance between *freedom* and *security*.
2. *Zero problems* with the neighbors.
3. *Multi-dimensional* and *multi-track* policies.
4. A new *diplomatic discourse based on firm-flexibility*.
5. *Rhythmic* diplomacy.

These are quite novel principles compared to such principles as caution, status quo and so forth of the traditional Turkish foreign policy making. In this article, above mentioned five fundamental foreign policy principles are analyzed in the light of the recent developments in Turkish foreign policy to see whether they are nominally used or in fact reasonably integrated in the policy making and are implemented. The latter case would be a good explanation to the changing contours in Turkish foreign policy.

## **2. Turkish Foreign Policy in Four Phases**

### **2.1 Early Republican Era**

When Republic of Turkey was established it faced three threats. The Republic was faced with two internal threats. Religious fundamentalism and ethnic separatism posed real threats to the young Republic. In addition, the danger of a Soviet invasion of

---

<sup>1</sup> See NTV *Karşı Görüş*, 21 December 2005, where Prof. Davutođlu used Atatürk’s motto “There is no defense of a line, but there is the defense of the superfcies” [Hattı müdafaa yoktur, sathı müdafaa vardır]” in describing the vision-based strategy in policy making.

Turkey or at least political domination of Turkey by the Soviet Union was an important external threat to the Republic.

During the 1920s and 1930s, internally Turkey was busy with implementing de-islamization, de-arabization and westernization reforms.

The various reforms of the 1920s and 1930s, and their ideological justification, have come to be known as Kemalism. Kemalism, which promised a peaceful social revolution, was a program aimed at reforming Turkey's political institutions and at developing a national economy free of foreign domination through statist economic policies. The elimination of the Sultanate, abolition of the Caliphate, and declaration of the Republic were followed by alphabet reform, changes in the legal codes, dress laws, and women's suffrage. Altogether, these reforms were aimed at moving Turkish society closer to West.<sup>2</sup>

The Sheikh Said rebellions (1924-1925) which carried both ethnic (Kurdish) separatist and religious fundamentalist motives against the Republican regime were harshly suppressed. Furthermore, a special court, known as the Independence Tribunal, was established in 1926 in order to curb the opposition to the Republican regime. In 1931, the People's Party, in its Third Congress, adopted a program based on six values (tenets) which later became the fundamental tenets of the Republic: republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism and reformism. During the same year, People's Houses (*halk evleri*) were established in order to spread the spirit (i.e., the six tenets) of the Republic to villages and small towns.

Meanwhile, externally, Turkey was trying to consolidate its independence and territorial integrity through a series of treaties of friendship – based on neutrality and balance of power *a la Ottomana*.

In March 1921, the so-called "national government" signed a treaty with the Soviet Union that was extended in 1925. In June 1926, Ankara accepted the integration of Mosul area into Iraqi territory. In the treaty of friendship with Greece (1930) and the Balkan Pact (1934) with Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, Turkey normalized its relations with the now independent states of the former European provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In 1934, Reza Shah of Iran visited Ankara and a number of agreements on tariffs, trade, borders and security were concluded between Iran and Turkey in the 1930s. Finally, the two countries signed together with

---

<sup>2</sup> See John M. VanderLippe (2005): p. 16

Afghanistan and Iraq a non-aggression pact, the so-called Saadabad Treaty of 1937. ...The normalization of Turkey's foreign relations was guarded by the intention to keep the country neutral.... İsmet İnönü basically followed this line. He tried hard to maintain Turkey's neutrality during the Second World War, before the country eventually was compelled to declare war against Germany in February 1945.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2 Cold War Era

The Cold War that had started after World War II and lasted until the early 1990s between the two super-powers and their allies had been the fundamental determining factor in international relations during most of the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the Cold War era, *Realpolitik* had been the dominant *paradigm* in international relations in general; and more specifically in the making of foreign policies of states, as well as in the discipline of International Relations. *Realpolitik*, sometimes defined as *power-politics*, regarded war, security/defense, military issues and so forth as primary issues or as issues of *high politics*. In that regard, economics, democracy, human rights, environmental and social issues and so forth naturally became secondary issues or issues of *low politics*.

The two super-powers had imposed a series of rules on the states that were involved or forced to be involved in the Cold War. I call this series of rules the *Cold War discipline*. "The super-power competition was the number one priority issue for the two Cold War super powers - the US and the USSR. This competition should not be interrupted by "petty" regional or ethnic conflicts... This was the *Cold War discipline*."<sup>4</sup>

The position/alignment of Turkey became quite clear in the context of the Cold War. In 1945 Stalin not only abrogated the Turkish-Soviet friendship pact but also demanded the Turkish provinces of Kars and Ardahan and the establishment of Soviet

---

<sup>3</sup> Jung (2003) at

[http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives\\_roll/2003\\_07-09/jung\\_sevres/jung\\_sevres.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2003_07-09/jung_sevres/jung_sevres.html)

<sup>4</sup> Sözen (2005): p.2

military bases on the Turkish straits, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. The Soviet move was

instrumental in Turkey's decision to seek full affiliation with the West. In the context of the rising Cold War, the security and integrity of the Turkish state could no longer be guaranteed by neutrality and the deep-rooted suspicions against the West had to be overcome. From its previous neutrality Turkey switched almost to the other extreme, sometimes 'acting as if she was a cold war warrior.'<sup>5</sup>

Turkey began receiving economic aid from the US through Marshall Plan and military aid through Truman Doctrine (1947). These were followed by Turkey's becoming a member of the Council of Europe in 1949 and sending Turkish soldiers to the Korean War in 1950. Turkey's becoming a member of NATO in 1952 and an associate member of the EEC in 1963 was the culmination points in Turkey's "external westintegration"<sup>6</sup> during the Cold War. Turkey's primary role as a military post in the south-eastern flank of NATO during the Cold War was to be a reliable and strong watchdog (or gendarme) of the containment strategy of the US. Aligning with the West was the only rational strategic option for Turkey in the context of the *Cold War discipline* that the two super-powers imposed on their allies. In addition to this strategic choice, however, Turkey's aligning with the West was also in line with Atatürk's vision (and his legacy) to the Turkish nation, that Turkey should be part of the contemporary civilized nations, which he equated with the Western world.

However, naturally though, since established on Turkey's role as a gendarme of NATO, Turkish foreign policy had been for a long time, especially until the 1970s, uni-dimensional (anti-communist) with a very narrow vision and room for maneuver. For example, Turkey failed to show sensitivity to the shift in Soviet policy in the aftermath of

---

<sup>5</sup> Jung (2003) at [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives\\_roll/2003\\_07-09/jung\\_sevres/jung\\_sevres.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2003_07-09/jung_sevres/jung_sevres.html)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Stalin's death. Its failure to play a more independent role prolonged the confrontation with the USSR even during the period of détente. Similarly, Turkey could not use its proximity and its historical and cultural ties with the Middle East in order to establish healthy relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors. Instead, until the 1970s Turkey acted as if it was representing the interests of the West in its relations with the Middle Eastern countries that alienated itself in the Middle East.

The Americans trading off of Jupiter missiles in Turkey (without consulting with Turkey) for the Soviet anti-ballistic missiles in Cuba during the famous Cuban missile crisis, created some suspicions in Turkish foreign policy makers. When Lyndon Johnson sent his famous undiplomatically written harsh letter to Prime Minister İnönü, hinting that NATO support for Turkey in case of a Soviet invasion is not guaranteed if Turkey carried out a military operation in Cyprus (to save the Turkish Cypriots), Turkey started to question its relations with the US in particular and with the West in general. The oil crisis in 1973 and the US military embargo on Turkey after the 1974 Turkish military operation in Cyprus, led the Turkish foreign policy making elites to question the monocentric foreign policy of Turkey and to contemplate on the need for a more *independent* Turkish foreign policy. However, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, sometimes regarded as the beginning of the second Cold War, and the Iranian Revolution in 1979 brought back Turkey to the forefront as a geostrategically very important actor for the West. So, there was no room left for Turkey to act independently of the Western camp.

Domestic factors were also not conducive to Turkey's changing its traditional strictly Western oriented foreign policy into a more independent multi-dimensional

policy. Turkish diplomacy was affected by such changes in domestic politics as the military regime (1960-61), the semi-military regime, nominally under civilian 'supraparty' government (1971-1973) and unstable governments after 1973. Between 1977 and 1980 Turkey was heading towards a total political and economic collapse due to unstable governments and rising political terrorism/violence, as well as an astronomical inflation and gigantic deficits in the balance of payments. These were the perfect pretext for the military coup d'état on 12 September 1980. As a result, Turkish foreign policy became a prisoner of chronic domestic instability and frequent economic crises, which made effective planning or implementing a program almost impossible.

After the three-year long military regime, Turgut Özal's ANAP (Motherland Party) won the 1983 parliamentary election in a grand slide. Özal was committed to economic liberalization. He tried to bring a new activism in Turkish foreign policy in three geographical domains that were open to Turkish foreign policy: the US, the EC and the Middle East.

During Özal's governments<sup>7</sup> (Prime Minister during 1983-1989) and Presidency (1989-1993), Turkey-US relations, which were strained in the 1960s and 1970s mostly due to the Cyprus issue, were generally mended. US was a strong supporter of Özal's liberal reforms in economics.

Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East, taking lessons from the 1950s, tried to divorce its regional policy from its alliance with the West as far as possible, and to establish bilateral rather than multi-lateral relations with the major Middle Eastern states. However, Turkey tried to avoid taking sides in regional disputes in the Middle East, and instead concentrate on the economic aspects. In that sense, Özal followed an

---

<sup>7</sup> Özal also served as the undersecretary responsible for economy during the military rule (1980-1983).

active export strategy towards the Middle East. “Between 1980 and 1985 Turkish exports to the Middle East increased fivefold, in 1985 sixty-four percent of total exports went to neighboring Iran and Iraq. Turkish exports to Iran rose from twelve million US dollars in 1979 to a peak of 1.1 billion in 1985.”<sup>8</sup>

Turkey’s relations with the EC suffered greatly due to the military coup d’etat in 1980. The relations were reactivated and gradually normalized after the end of the military rule. However, in 1987 Turkey shocked the EC by putting forward an official application for full membership to the EC. This was a premature application. However, the Community did not want to alienate Turkey. Hence, the Commission prepared its official Opinion and issued it in December 1989. “In essence, the Commission’s Opinion was a polite rebuff of the Turkish application.”<sup>9</sup>

### ***2.3 Post-Cold War in the 20th Century***

Gorbachov’s rapprochement with the West and the departure of the Eastern and Central European socialist states from the sphere of the Soviet influence in the second part of the 1980s were being watched in amazement by the whole world. However, there were only a very few experts and scholars of international relations in the 1980s who predicted that the Cold War would end, Eastern and Central European socialist states would be independent from the Soviet Union, let alone the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the disintegration of the Soviet Union (1991).

---

<sup>8</sup> Jung (2003) at [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives\\_roll/2003\\_07-09/jung\\_sevres/jung\\_sevres.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2003_07-09/jung_sevres/jung_sevres.html)

<sup>9</sup> Hale (2000): p. 178.

After the end of the Cold War, the dominant paradigm – *Realpolitik* – was challenged and questioned by liberal perspectives – liberalist *paradigm*. Throughout the globe, a spirit of optimism was becoming dominant. The idea that the issues of *high politics* of the Cold War (i.e., war, security/defense, military issues, and so forth) were losing their priority and importance and that the issues of *low politics* (economy, democracy, human rights, environmental and social issues) were filling in the vacuum created by the departure of the issues of *high politics*.

The end of the Cold War has manifested two opposing global trends: *fragmentation (disintegration)* and *integration*. On the one hand, the EU (and to a lesser extent, such organizations as NAFTA and APEC) had been widening and deepening their integration, while on the other hand such multi-ethnic countries as former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia had been disintegrating into dozens of nation-states. The two opposing global trends of the post-Cold War era created an ambivalent atmosphere of optimism and pessimism. With the end of the Cold War, danger of a nuclear war had been mostly diminished and new opportunities to solve the previously ignored (due to the Cold War discipline) domestic political and social problems had arisen. However, on the other hand, numerous ethnic conflicts had poisoned different regions of the world in the 1990s.

Yet, the axis of the world politics was moving from *geo-politics* to *geo-economics* and several norms and values, such as democracy, human rights, market economy and so forth were clearly becoming globally popular and even almost universally endorsed in the 1990s. It was at this point that Turkey could not adapt to the global trends successfully. Turkey by and large followed its Cold War conservative and narrow-visioned foreign

policy during the 1990s and could not transform its geopolitically important geography and multi-cultural values into international cash.

The collapse of the former Soviet Union opened up new horizons and new areas which were previously closed for Turkey. In the first few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union Turkey set out to become the unofficial leader, sort of the *big brother*, of the Turkic states in Central Asia and the Caucasus. However, the original excitement about these regions falling under Turkish sphere of influence was proved unrealistic.<sup>10</sup> Later Turkey's relations with this region came to sit on a more sober and realistic platform.

Another region that was closed to Turkey during the Cold War was the Balkans which was part of the Ottoman Empire. "The Balkans as a region has played a significant role in European and world history. This strategically sensitive region is Turkey's gateway to continental Europe. Important historical and cultural ties exist between the peoples of Turkey and the Balkan countries, which in effect mirror Turkey's close ties with the region."<sup>11</sup> Here, Turkey was modestly involved in the peace-keeping and nation-building activities.

Turkey's commitment to peacekeeping across the globe continues through her active participation in and support for various UN, NATO and EU led missions. These include, among others, such NATO operations as KFOR in Kosovo, Active Endeavor in the Mediterranean, the Military Training Mission for Iraq, as well as the EU led police missions in Macedonia (Proxima), Kinshasa (EUPOL) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUPM), including the EUFOR-ALTHEA

---

<sup>10</sup> There were several reasons for Turkey's limited success in expanding its influence in Central Asia in the 1990s. Turkey did not have the necessary financial means and resources to take an important economic and political role in the region. The "Turkish model" based on democracy, secularism, and market economy, had little attraction from the autocratic leaders of the region. Turkey's domestic problems limited the amount of attention and resources Turkey could devote to the region. In addition, Russian influence in the region was stronger than it was anticipated in Turkey. For further details, see Hale (2000): pp. 191-212.

<sup>11</sup> See "Synopsis of the Turkish Foreign Policy" at the Turkish Foreign Ministry web site at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Synopsis/SYNOPSIS.htm>

operation that replaced SFOR in the latter. With over 300 civilian police currently deployed in UN peacekeeping missions throughout the world, Turkey is among the Organization's leading contributors of civilian police.<sup>12</sup>

However, the capacity, attention and the room for maneuver for Turkish foreign policy were heavily curtailed by three chronic domestic problems: Economic crises, political instability and terrorism. Turkey had to struggle with high inflation and severe economic crises during the 1990s.<sup>13</sup> It was almost impossible to design and apply a rational structural economic program in an environment where there was political instability due to several different coalition governments.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Turkey was fighting against the PKK during the 1990s. The war against PKK not only drained Turkey's attention and energy, but also cost Turkey billions of dollars.<sup>15</sup>

It was against a tough domestic background and an international background which was full of uncertainties due to the constantly transforming international paradigm that Turkey was designing and implementing its foreign policy. Hence, curtailed by domestic problems and challenged by the post-Cold War uncertainties, Turkish foreign policy was unable to fully usurp the new opportunities of the post-Cold War era. Instead, Turkey followed its traditional principles in foreign policy making in order to erase the threats of the post-Cold War era. Besides the newly opened geographies such as the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia where Turkey had very modest moves, Turkey used *caution*, *conservatively* followed its traditional clichés (*continuity*) and tried not to tilt the boat (*status quo*) in its traditional relations with its neighbors and in relations with

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> For further details, see Öniş (2000): pp. 95-115.

<sup>14</sup> For further details, see Hale (2000): pp. 195-199.

<sup>15</sup> For further details, see Cornell (2003): pp. 123-142, and Radu (2003): 143-164.

the US, the EU and the Middle East in most part of the 1990s. In short, Turkey spent the 1990s mostly in a mode of *muddling through*.

#### ***2.4 New Millennium Era***

Turkish political elite (and the public) have mostly been ambivalent about the relations with the West (EU and the US) and the Middle East. This is due to the *Sevres syndrome*<sup>16</sup> that the Turkish Kemalist elite inherited from the latest stage of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkey's foreign relations are still under the impact of the traditionalist Kemalist worldview. On the one hand, there is the latent mistrust towards both the West and the Middle Eastern neighbors. On the other hand, this worldview is mirrored by the narrow notion of security – limited to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state – that characterizes Turkish politics.<sup>17</sup>

Though the Kemalist ruling elite continued to have a good dose of *Sevres syndrome*, they still continued to foster the Turkey-EU relations in the 1990s. Turkey entered the new millennium with optimism and increased political credit, mostly due to the announcement of Turkey, by the EU, as a “candidate country” for full membership in December 1999 Helsinki Summit. However, the pace of the reforms in Turkey to fulfill the criteria to start the accession negotiations with the EU, the Copenhagen political criteria, was quite slow. Decision making, especially on major issues, or implementing reforms in coalition governments is always very difficult and more time consuming, compared to a one-party government, due to the need for a process of negotiation and consensus building. This was the case with the ruling coalition government in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, which was composed of three political parties with ideologies

---

<sup>16</sup> See Jung (2003) for further details.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

far apart from one another - Prime Minister Ecevit's center-left DSP, Bahçeli's extreme-right MHP and Yılmaz's liberal-conservative ANAP.

The financial crisis of November 2000 and the more severe one in February 2001 came as a big blow on the ruling coalition government. Due to the February 2001 economic crisis, the value of the Turkish lira dropped almost 50 percent overnight and nearly 65 percent by the end of 2001.

Unemployment mounted rapidly in the financial sector, affecting many younger, urban Turks. The collapse of the commercial credit system had a pronounced effect on the small and medium-sized enterprises across the country. Turkish and foreign observers began to openly speculate about the prospects for social unrest and more violent protest. ...

Since the end of the Cold War, observers have often described Turkey as being at a crossroads. In previous crises, Turkey has simply "muddled through" without pronounced changes in course. By contrast, the events of 2000-2001 have clearly led Turkey to a crossroads, by any definition, and muddling through is unlikely to suffice.<sup>18</sup>

The coalition government introduced a painful economic reform program in order to overcome the present financial crisis and to prevent future crises through structural reforms in the Turkish financial system. Any Turkish government had two options here.

On the one hand, successful implementation of the IMF-inspired economic reforms will require a degree of political change that could facilitate more rapid reforms, greater democratization, and the steps required for closer integration in Europe. ... On the other hand, Turkey's conservatism and statism may impede economic and political reform. ... The result would be a more inward-looking Turkey, more sovereignty conscious on the international scene. In the worst case, a more chaotic and uncontrolled Turkey would have little energy and resources for foreign policy initiatives.<sup>19</sup>

The Ecevit government chose the first option and gave the full control of the Turkish economy to Kemal Derviş, one of the leading chiefs of the World Bank invited by Ecevit to serve as the Minister of Economics. The Ecevit government was aware that the economic reform program should be supplemented with more political reforms in order to receive the necessary international financial support. Hence, in a way, the Ecevit

---

<sup>18</sup> Larrabee and Lesser (2003): p.16.

<sup>19</sup> Larrabee and Lesser (2003): pp. 16-17.

government combined the economic reform program (for the structural problems of the Turkish economy) with the National Program that it prepared for the political reforms needed for the fulfillment of the Copenhagen political criteria for the EU. However, the economic crisis of February 2001 had already affected almost all sectors of the Turkish society negatively and the positive results of the reform program had not been reflected on the common people by November 2003 parliamentary election. The 2003 election resulted in all the three coalition government parties to score below the 10 percent national threshold and failing to secure seats in the Turkish Parliament.

AKP won the 2003 election with the two-thirds of the seats in the Turkish parliament. It was after twelve years of coalition governments (1991-2003) that Turkey was once again ruled by one party government of AKP. The AKP government came to power calling for more democratization and carrying Turkey to the EU. The AKP government adopted and implemented the economic reform program of the previous government without much change. By and large, the AKP government has so far showed its commitment to democratization and Turkey's EU membership process by measurable deeds.<sup>20</sup> On 6 October 2004, the EU Commission in its annual Regular Report on Turkey indicated that Turkey had fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria and recommended that the Council open accession negotiations with Turkey. After tough negotiations at the EU Council Summit on 17 December 2004, the Council decided to start the accession negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005 and the actual negotiations indeed started where Turkey is now an "acceding country" for the EU membership. This is a historic decision of the EU to take the first step towards the *consensus of civilizations*.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Sözen (2005): pp. 300-304.

<sup>21</sup> Sözen (2005): p. 303.

Starting with the 1999 Helsinki Summit where Turkey was declared a “candidate country,” more and more changes in the traditional Turkish foreign policy behavior have been observed. The changes in the Turkish foreign policy have been more visible and pronounced especially since the 2003 election that brought AKP to the government. Clearly, AKP is following a new set of principles in foreign policy making.

### **3. New Fundamental Foreign Policy Principles**

According to the chief foreign policy advisor of Prime Minister Erdoğan, Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, international politics is a very dynamic process that necessitates “vision based” strategies in foreign policy making rather than “line based” or “crisis based” strategies which produce only reactive (or defensive) policies. Davutoğlu argues that, unlike earlier static and mono-dimensional strategy, Turkey is currently following a “vision based” strategy in the making of the Turkish foreign policy.<sup>22</sup> According to Davutoğlu, the current Turkish foreign policy making is based on five fundamental foreign policy principles:

1. Balance between *freedom* and *security*.
2. *Zero problems* with the neighbors.
3. *Multi-dimensional* and *multi-track* policies.
4. A new *diplomatic discourse*.
5. *Rhythmic* diplomacy.

---

<sup>22</sup> See NTV *Karşı Görüş*, 21 December 2005 and fn.1.

These are quite novel principles compared to such principles as *caution*, *status quo* and so forth of the traditional Turkish foreign policy making. Does the current Turkish foreign policy making really operate on these five principles?

### ***3.1 Balance between “Freedom” and “Security”***

When the Berlin Wall fell down and the Cold War ended *freedom* landed on the focal point of the dominant international discourse. However, since the tragic events of 11 September 2001 (9/11), *security* issues have gained more importance and priority over many other issues. *Security* has occupied the focus of the international discourse. Accordingly, in order to prevent terrorist activities similar to the 9/11, many countries have been boosting their security arrangements which automatically curtailed the domain of individual freedoms. In some countries, with the adoption of special anti-terrorism precautions (laws etc.), some individual freedoms have clearly been traded in for more security.

Turkey is truly an exceptional case in the post-9/11 era. Contrary to many countries, Turkey continued to increase the domain of individual freedoms after 9/11 in accordance with its political reforms in order to satisfy the Copenhagen political criteria for the EU. On the one hand, Turkey has been continuing its armed struggle against the violent Kurdish separatist PKK attacks, while on the other hand, expanding the scope of individual freedoms by granting the Kurdish people of Turkey broadcasting and education rights in their mother tongue. Moreover, the AKP government seems to have established a balance between security and freedom. Prime Minister Erdoğan made it

very clear that there would be “no stepping back from the Copenhagen criteria in the fight against terror.”<sup>23</sup>

It is also striking that Turkey has gone so far as, besides the domestic reforms on expanding the domain of freedoms, to openly advise Muslim countries to adopt democratic reforms.<sup>24</sup>

### ***3.2 “Zero Problems” with the Neighbors***

Turkey’s relations with its neighbors, such as Bulgaria and Russia (former-Soviet Union) until the early 1990s, and Greece, Iran, Iraq, and Syria until the late 1990s, had been quite problematic. However, one has witnessed dramatic enhancement in the relations with Bulgaria and Russia in the early 1990s after the end of the Cold War. Currently, the Russian-Turkish relations are moving on a very positive platform where the trade volume between the two countries has reached to over 11 billion USD per year. Bulgarian-Turkish relations, especially since the Turkish minority in Bulgaria has been represented in the coalition governments, are taking place in an excellent atmosphere.

Relations with Syria and Greece started to improve towards the end of the 1990s, especially after PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was forced to leave Syria and later caught in Kenya after being hosted in the Greek embassy. Today, the Greek-Turkish and Syrian-Turkish relations are by and large moving on a very positive platform. Relations with

---

<sup>23</sup> For further details see the daily Zaman newspaper at <http://www.zaman.com/?bl=international&alt=&trh=20050914&hn=24050>

<sup>24</sup> Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer called for democracy and reform in Muslim countries during the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) in June 2004 where the Foreign Ministers came together in Istanbul in June 2004.

Iran has always been mostly balanced and on a rational level. Relations with the former-Soviet state of Georgia, since its independence, have always been extremely positive.

Turkey's relations with Iraq in the 1980s and 1990s have been a bit ambivalent. Saddam Hussein played the Kurdish card pretty good against Turkey. It is clearly known that PKK has been stationing in and using northern Iraq as a base since the 1980s for its insurgency in Turkey. However, the AKP government has already established constructive relations with the different religious and ethnic groups in Iraq, such as the Kurds, Turcomans and the Sunnis. It is no secret that Turkey played an active role in motivating the Sunni groups to participate in the latest election in Iraq, whereas they previously boycotted the constitution referendum. This also shows another fundamental Turkish foreign policy principle at work where Turkey used multi-dimensional and multi-track policies.

There are two exceptions to Turkey's positive relations with its neighbors: Cyprus and Armenia. Turkey's relations with the (Greek Cypriot) Republic of Cyprus since 1963 have not been normalized. Although Turkey actively supported the UN-sponsored Cyprus peace plan (known as the Annan Plan) that called for the unification of the island in the 2004 referenda, the Greek Cypriot side refused the plan with a 76% and prevented the normalization of the relations between Turkey and united Cyprus. Turkey's relations with Armenia deteriorated when Armenia occupied Nagorno-Karabakh (in Azerbaijan) in the early 1990s. Although Turkey was among the first countries which recognized Armenian independence in 1991, Turkey closed its border to Armenia and suspended its diplomatic relations. Today, any Turkish policy move towards Armenia is a hostage to

Turkey's relations with Azerbaijan. Currently, Turkey follows an isolationist policy towards Armenia in order not to jeopardize its excellent relations with Azerbaijan.

### **3.3 “Multi-Dimensional” and “Multi-Track Policies”**

During the Cold War era where *static polarization* was the main characteristic of the international system, Turkey by and large followed a *mono-dimensional* and *mono-track* foreign policy. The main focus of Turkish foreign policy was security (mono-dimensional) which was conducted by the state (mono-track). However, the end of the Cold War has expanded the Turkish foreign policy horizons. The playing field of maneuver for Turkish foreign policy, in terms of geography, number of issues and tools, has dramatically expanded.

During the post-Cold War era where international system became more dynamic and issue-wise more diversified, besides security, Turkey started to put more emphasis on economic and cultural relations. Turkey's trade volume has increased dramatically with the EU, the US and the Middle East. In addition, with the opening of new playing fields for Turkey in the post-Cold War era, Turkey, besides political and military relations, has entered into intensive economic and cultural relations with the newly independent states of Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans. Hence, Turkish foreign policy had to diversify and become multi-dimensional.

The traditional mono (or first)-track Turkish foreign policy became quite obsolete in fully exploiting the potential of the new opportunities and furthering the Turkish national interests in the post-Cold War era. In that sense, the Turkish foreign policy started to benefit from the involvement of powerful Turkish individuals and NGOs

in the Turkish foreign relations. For example, such powerful NGOs like TUSIAD, IKV and TOBB played a very constructive role in lobbying to start the accession negotiations of Turkey with the EU. Many big businesses, such as Koç Grubu and Anadolu Grubu opened huge factories in former-Soviet states. ENKA and Alarko Şirketler Topluluğu are involved in enormous construction projects in former-Soviet states. Turkish universities have expanded their cooperation agreements and joint projects with the universities in the EU and former-Soviet states. Turkish academicians, prominent writers, artists and NGO leaders are now participating in thousands of international projects, conferences and seminars. In other words, they are a kind of academic, cultural and so forth “ambassadors” of Turkey. Their work in different tracks can be termed as complimentary to first-track foreign policy.

### ***3.4 A New “Diplomatic Discourse” based on “Firm-Flexibility”***

During the Cold War security focused era, the discourse of the Turkish foreign policy was also security focused and hence more “masculine” and harsh. During the 1980s and a good part of the 1990s, especially when Turkey was fighting intensely against PKK, the discourse of Turkish foreign policy was shaped by “win-lose” type of security focused mentality. However, as the war against PKK eased, international economic relations expanded, democratization reforms implemented and, more importantly, Turkey-EU relations deepened, Turkish foreign policy discourse started to mellow down.

During the AKP government, Turkey silently stopped using “*casus belli*” and projected the idea of bi-lateral dialogue and even international arbitration in solving the problems in the Aegean with Greece. This was a big shift from the traditional Turkish foreign policy towards Greece.

Turkey’s change of foreign policy discourse can be best observed in the Cyprus case. AKP’s Cyprus policy has showed a big change from the traditional Turkish foreign policy. AKP came to power with an election program in which “no solution is the solution in Cyprus” or “status quo in Cyprus is the solution” policies were rejected. Instead, AKP promised to solve the Cyprus problem. In that regard, AKP suggested that the “Belgian model” should be seriously considered for the solution of the Cyprus problem. Moreover, Prime Minister Erdoğan repeatedly stated that Turkey’s Cyprus policy was based on the “win-win” philosophy. During the New York negotiations in early 2004 before the Cyprus referenda, Erdoğan even went so far to say that “Turkish side will always be one step ahead” in the Cyprus negotiations signaling the new Turkish foreign policy on Cyprus. This was a clear sign of a new principle of Turkish foreign policy at work: *firm-flexibility*. Davutoğlu explains firm-flexibility principle as “knowing what you want and being *firm* on this issue, yet being as *flexible* as possible in demanding and negotiating on this with the other side.”<sup>25</sup>

Turkey’s response to the most recent cartoon crisis resulted from the publication by a Danish newspaper a series of cartoons portraying Prophet Mohammad in offensive situations, can also be considered as an example to the changing discourse of the Turkish foreign policy. There were lots of demonstrations against this in many Muslim countries which ended with violence and casualties. However, the Turkish government officials

---

<sup>25</sup> 17 February 2004, CNN Turk, Special Editorial.

have approached the issue with calm and called for moderation. As the co-chairs of the UN initiated Alliance of Civilizations, Prime Minister Erdoğan and Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero made a joint declaration to the world on the cartoon crisis inviting the international community to be calm and act rationally and responsibly.<sup>26</sup>

In a globalized world, in which the relationships and exchanges among different civilizations continue to multiply, and in which a local incident may have worldwide repercussions, it is vital that we cultivate the values of respect, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Freedom of expression is one of the cornerstones of our democratic systems and we shall never relinquish it. But there are no rights without responsibility and respect for different sensibilities. The publication of these caricatures may be perfectly legal, but it is not indifferent and thus ought to be rejected from a moral and political standpoint.

In the end, all of this lends itself to misunderstandings and misrepresentations of cultural differences that are perfectly in harmony with our commonly shared values. Ignoring this fact usually paves the way for mistrust, alienation and anger, all of which may result in undesirable consequences that we all have to work hard to avoid.

The only way for us to build a more just international system is through maximum respect for the beliefs of both sides. We are fully committed to observing the norms of international law and to the defense of the international organizations that embody it. But neither laws nor institutions are enough to ensure peace in the world.

We need to cultivate peaceful coexistence, which is only possible when there is interest in understanding the other side's point of view, and respect for that which it holds most sacred. These are the basic premises and main goals of the Alliance of Civilizations promoted by Spain and Turkey.

### ***3.5 “Rhythmic” Diplomacy***

During the Cold War international politics was taking place in a context based on static bi-polarity, whereas after the end of the Cold War, international context became pretty dynamic. However, Turkey continued its Cold War adapted static policies during the 1990s without successful adaptation to the post-Cold War dynamic and fluid environment. Chief advisor to Prime Minister Erdoğan, Prof. Davutoğlu argues that “if the conditions are dynamic and one stands static, then one can not adapt to the conditions.

---

<sup>26</sup> 5 February 2006, International Herald Tribune.

One needs to have a constantly moving diplomacy. That's why I call it rhythmic. In other words, even if nothing happens, one has to be active when standing."<sup>27</sup>

During the AKP government since November 2002, Turkey witnessed a record high number of high level visits to Turkey as well as a record number of visits by Turkish high level officials to abroad. Davutoğlu observes "Look at last year, despite all the crises management [Iraq war and Cyprus negotiations. AS] and the domestic economic crisis and so forth, Foreign Minister and other Ministers visited more than 60 countries. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister visited more than 40 countries. ... [During 2003] 9 Presidents, 14 Prime Ministers and 25 Foreign Ministers came to Turkey for official visits."<sup>28</sup>

According to Davutoğlu, Turkey spent 2003 on *crises management* where the newly established AKP government found two hot potatoes on its lap. On the one hand the government was busy negotiating with the US the terms of Turkey's involvement in the war against Iraq, while on the other hand it was actively participating into the Cyprus negotiations where the government was activating its new Cyprus policy which meant a shift from the traditional Turkish foreign policy.

AKP focused on three domains in 2004. Firstly, Cyprus issue was on the top of the agenda during the first four months until the Cyprus referenda in April 2004. Secondly, Turkey put its main focus on the EU process until 17 december when the EU decided to open the accession negotiations with Turkey. And, thirdly, during 2004 the Foreign Ministry was furthering its consciously designed "zero-problems with the neighbors" principle where the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister paid official

---

<sup>27</sup> 17 February 2004, CNN Turk, Special Editorial.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

visits to the immediate neighboring countries, such as Greece, Bulgaria, Iran, Syria and so forth.

In 2005, next periphery countries, such as Russia, Israel, Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Serbia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and so forth were visited by the Turkish Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Towards the end of 2005, as a new opening in Turkish foreign policy, Prime Minister visited a series of countries from East Asia to Africa (New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Ethiopia, and so forth). Most of these were the first official Turkish high level visits. In 2006, the Foreign Ministry is planning to have a new opening towards Africa and Latin America, especially for the purpose of seeking support for Turkey's membership to UN Security Council for 2009.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The democratization steps and the reforms in the domestic domain in the late 1990s and in the 2000s reflect also on Turkish foreign policy domain. Since the 1999 Helsinki Summit, Turkey has behaved as an ideal EU member - committed to solving its foreign policy conflicts through dialogue and peaceful diplomacy. The rapprochement with Greece since the 1999 Helsinki summit was the beginning of the new orientations in the Turkish foreign policy. Turkey carefully refrained from its traditional verbal threats and nationalistic discourse towards Greece and in a way brought Greece to the resolution of its bilateral conflicts with Turkey through political dialogue and diplomacy. Turkey also showed its goodwill and co-operation in the Cyprus negotiations in New York,

Nicosia and Bürgenstock (Switzerland) during February and March 2004. The result of the April 2004 referenda in Cyprus, where the Cyprus peace plan (known as the Annan Plan) which called for the unification of Cyprus in a loose federal structure and the membership of the unified island in the EU, was supported by 65% of Turkish Cypriot votes while it was rejected by 76% of Greek Cypriot votes showed Turkey's changed Cyprus policy. Furthermore, on 1 March 2003, the rejection of the Turkish Parliament of a resolution that would authorize the US military forces to enter Turkey en route to Iraq was a clear message from the Turkish MPs that Turkey would not be a part of the controversial war in Iraq. This was a significant departure from the traditional Turkey-US relations. Last but not least, the invitation of Hamas by the AKP to Turkey in February 2006 also shows a dramatic shift in the traditional Turkish foreign policy of "isolation" towards and "status quo" in the Middle Eastern affairs.

From the analysis of Turkish foreign policy in four phases, one can clearly see that there are certain characteristics or principles that can be attributed to the traditional Turkish foreign policy from the beginning of the Turkish Republic to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. During the first three phases, as described above, Turkish foreign policy, by and large, operated on such principles as *continuity*, *conservatism*, *caution* and *status quo*. The end of the Cold War which can be termed as a *paradigmatic shift* on the systemic level provided Turkey with new opportunities together with lots of uncertainties with potential threats. The end of the Cold War has expanded the Turkish foreign policy horizons. In other words, the playing field of maneuver for Turkish foreign policy, in terms of geography, number of issues and tools, has dramatically expanded. However, during most of the 1990s Turkish foreign policy failed

to adapt to the new dynamic international system. Instead, Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s “meddled through” due mostly to the chronic domestic problems that curtailed the energy and capacity of foreign policy decision making.

Turkish foreign policy in the new millennium, however, has started to respond to the paradigmatic shift in the systemic level due to the end of the Cold War by filling in the new expanded playing field with new or modified strategic visions and tools on multiple numbers of issues which were non-existent in the earlier periods of the Republic. Hence, since the beginning of the new millennium objective observers have been witnessing *new contours* in the making of the traditional Turkish foreign policy.

In line with the design of the chief advisor of the Turkish Prime Minister, Prof. Davutoğlu, Turkish foreign policy developed “vision based” strategies in foreign policy making rather than “line based” or “crisis based” strategies which produce only reactive (or defensive) policies. Unlike earlier static and mono-dimensional strategy, Turkey is currently following a “vision based” strategy where above mentioned five fundamental principles are actually being used in the making of the Turkish foreign policy.

## REFERENCES

- Cornell, Svante E. (2003). "The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics," in *Dangerous Neighborhood: Contemporary Issues in Turkey's Foreign Relations*. Edited by Michael S. Radu. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.
- Hale, William. (2000). *Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774-2000*. Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers.
- Jung, Dietrich. (2003). "The Sevres Syndrome: Turkish Foreign Policy and its Historical Legacies." Accessed at [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives\\_roll/2003\\_07-09/jung\\_sevres/jung\\_sevres.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2003_07-09/jung_sevres/jung_sevres.html)
- Larabee, F. Stephen and Lesser, Ian O. (2003). *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty*. RAND National Security research Division.
- Öniş, Ziya. (2000). "The Turkish Economy at the Turn of a New Century: Critical and Comparative Perspectives," in *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*. Edited by Morton Abromowitz. New York: The Century Foundation Press, pp. 95-115.
- Radu, Michael S. (2003). "The Rise and Fall of the PKK," in *Dangerous Neighborhood: Contemporary Issues in Turkey's Foreign Relations*. Edited by Michael S. Radu. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.
- Sözen, Ahmet. (2005). "Turkish Democratization in Light of its EU Candidate Status" in *The Constitution for Europe and an Enlarging Union: Union in Diversity?* Edited by Kirstyn Inglis and Andrea Ott. Amsterdam: Europa Law Publishing, pp. 279-305.
- Turkish Foreign Ministry. (2006). "Synopsis of the Turkish Foreign Policy" at the Turkish Foreign Ministry web site at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Synopsis/SYNOPSIS.htm>
- VanderLippe, John M. (2005). *The Politics of Turkish Democracy: İsmet İnönü and the Formation of the Multi-Party System, 1938-1950*. Albany: State University of New York Press.