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Diploma thesis

Changes in Turkish foreign policy towards Iran in the Davutoğlu era (2002 - 2012)

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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 3. 2. 2019   Slávka Marcinová

References

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Abstract

The principal aims of the research are to identify the nature and scope of Turkish foreign policy change towards Iran in the period 2002-2012 – the first ten years of the successive governments of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Then, individual sources of foreign policy change and their respective roles in shaping Turkish foreign policy toward Iran will be investigated. As the research is theoretically grounded in the subfield of foreign policy analysis known as foreign policy change, the reader is familiarized with a variety of different models used in the study of foreign policy change.

In order to assess the relevance of the individual sources, an alternative explanatory model is designed. The application of the designed foreign policy model highlights the necessity of applying a wider approach in the quest to assess Turkish foreign policy change, taking into account the different domestic and international sources in order to achieve a comprehensive explanation that can evaluate the relative power of international and domestic political, economic, and ideational sources serving as its driving mechanisms. The role of economic factors – long seen as fundamental in shaping Turkey's foreign policy toward its neighbors – and the role of security concerns are subsequently identified as perhaps the most relevant driving mechanisms behind Turkey's foreign policy change towards Iran.

Keywords

Title

Changes in Turkey's foreign policy towards Iran in the Davutoğlu era (2002-2012)

Abstrakt

Prvotným cieľom výskumu je identifikovať rozsah a povahu zmien v tureckej zahraničnej politike voči Iránu v období od roku 2002 do roku 2012 – prvých desiatich rokov vlád na čele so Stranou spravodlivosti a rozvoja (AKP). Následne sa výskum zaoberá individuálnymi zdrojmi zmien v zahraničnej politike a ich relevanciou v procese transformácie tureckej zahraničnej politiky voči Iránu. Výskum je teoreticky ukotvený v odvetví analýzy zahraničnej politiky (*foreign policy analysis*, FPA), v rámci ktorej sa venuje predovšetkým konceptu zmien v zahraničnej politike (*foreign policy change*). V úvode práce bude preto predstavených niekoľko typov existujúcich modelov používaných pri analýze zmien v zahraničnej politike.

Čitateľovi bude predstavený alternatívny model, ktorý zahŕňa ako domáce, tak i zahraničné pragmatické a ideologické faktory podieľajúce sa na zmene zahraničnej politiky. Model slúži ako podklad následnej analýzy relevancie jednotlivých faktorov, ktoré slúžili ako hnacie mechanizmy transformácie tureckej zahraničnej politiky voči Iránu po roku 2002, zohľadňujúc okrem iného rolu ekonomických faktorov a faktorov týkajúcich sa bezpečnosti.

Klíčová slova

Turecko, Írán, zahraniční politika, analýza zahraniční politiky, změna zahraniční politiky, AKP

Název práce

Zmeny v zahraničnej politike Turecka voči Iránu v ére Ahmeta Davutoğlu (2002-2012)

List of abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*)
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*)
BTC	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan
CFP	Comparative Foreign Policy
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
MHP	National Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*)
MÜSİAD	Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
PJAK	*Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê* (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan)
PKK	*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (Kurdish Workers Party)
TPAO	Turkish Petroleum Corporation
TÜSIAD	Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association

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**Changes in Turkish foreign policy towards Iran
in the Davutoğlu era (2002 - 2012)**

Projekt diplomové práce

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Davutogluově éře (2002-2012)

Introduction

This thesis will investigate the sources of change in Turkish foreign policy since 2002 towards Iran, with a focus on the role of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) as a ruling party.

The research identifies and assesses multiple variables that might have acted as drivers of foreign policy change (as opposed to a single factor), therefore making it necessary to employ a multiple factor-based approach in order to systematically evaluate the relevant variables – and their interactions.

Within the field of foreign policy analysis, the Kleistra-Mayer's model was initially employed as a primary reference. On the basis of this model, a new model will be constructed by the researcher, such that it can encompass the specific factors most relevant to the environment of Turkish foreign policy between 2002 and 2012.

Preliminary research suggests that the factors at play are domestic as well as international, economic and ideational/ideological. Additionally, the role of individual leaders and policy makers cannot be underrepresented in the research, particularly with regard to the extensive influence of Davutoğlu doctrines in the field of foreign policy strategy and the political dominance of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Research questions

What were the principal factors driving Turkey's foreign policy changes towards Iran in the time period from the year 2002 to 2012?[1]

This principal research question can be subdivided into further, subsidiary questions:

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[1] The year 2002 denotes the currently ruling Justice and Development Party's entry into power, whereas the year 2012 represents a crucible of Turkish-Iranian relations due to the parties' opposing allegiances in the Syrian civil war.

(1) Has there been any change in Turkey's foreign policy towards Iran since 2002, and if yes, to what direction?

(2) Are the driving forces behind the transformation of foreign policy mostly of domestic or external origin?

(3) Is the foreign policy shift a reflection of the change of Turkey's approach toward the whole region of the Middle East, or is the change Iran-specific?

Research design, methodology, data collection and analysis

The thesis at hand uses qualitative methodological approaches and the research is conducted in the form of a case study. Theoretically, the thesis is anchored in the field of foreign policy analysis. The literature review will thus be dedicated to an introduction to the field of foreign policy analysis and, subsequently, its subdimension – the study of foreign policy change.

Firstly, foreign policy analysis and the different approaches that are part of it will be conceptualized. Secondly, the study of foreign policy change, its nature and causes will be addressed, approaching such change as a multi-causal phenomenon. This conceptual and theoretical framework can be employed to examine which actors and forces were the essential determinants behind the transformation of Turkey's foreign policy toward Iran.

To conceptualize the nature of foreign policy alteration, several models will be introduced, contrasted and compared, such as the aforementioned Kleistra-Mayer's model, which addresses three different types of foreign policy change:

  - change in programmes/instruments (methods and means),
  - change in strategies/problems/goals,
  - change in political/normative foundations (eg. a hard-line outlook replacing
a previous soft power orientation).

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Alternatively, the more widely used model of Charles Hermann (1990)[2] distinguishes four levels of foreign policy change: adjustment changes (changes in the level and scope of recipients); program changes (qualitative changes in the methods and means); problem/goal changes (where the initial problem or goal is replaced or forfeited, purposes replaced); and international orientation changes (the redirection of a country's entire orientation toward world affairs).

An extended literature review will be provided on the topic of potential factors that are seen as (possible) drivers of foreign policy change, such as:

- international system (international institutionalization, interdependence)
- national political system (parliament, interest groups, democratization, regime change, media)
- individual policy makers and leaders.[3]

Other models, such as Hermann's, recognize four agents of major foreign policy change – leader driven, bureaucratic advocacy, domestic restructuring and external shock. A variety of models will be addressed in the literary review, together with an in-depth explanation of why they do not wholly overlap with the specific needs of current Turkish foreign policy research and why they necessitate the creation of another model.

Structure of the model

Based on preliminary research, the model would be designed to include the following:

- Domestic factors (Turkish identity politics, neo-Ottomanism),
- Security-based explanations,

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[2] Hermann, C. 1990. Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy. *International Studies Quarterly 34*, pp. 3-21.
[3] Kleistra, Y. and Mayer, I. 2001. 'Stability and Flux in Foreign Affairs: Modelling Policy and Organizational Change', *Cooperation and Conflict, 36* (4), 381-414.

- Economic interests (which, considering the nature of Turkish-Iranian relations in the recent decades, make up an especially relevant variable),
- Europeanization and the role of the European Union.

Throughout the research, the relative plausibility and influence of the individual factors as the driving force(s) behind a foreign policy shift will be analysed. There remains one factor – the role of political Islam and Islamism – that may or may not be included in the model, depending on the nature of the findings throughout the research.

The determinants will then be addressed in separate chapters. A concluding chapter where the overall findings are analyzed will follow.

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Introduction

This thesis will investigate the sources of change in Turkish foreign policy towards Iran since 2002 to 2012, with a focus on the role of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) as a ruling party.

The research identifies and assesses multiple variables that might have acted as drivers of foreign policy change (as opposed to a single factor), therefore making it necessary to employ a multiple factor-based approach in order to systematically evaluate the relevant variables – and their interactions.

Within the field of foreign policy analysis, the Kleistra-Mayer's model was initially employed as a primary reference. On the basis of this model, a new model will be constructed by the researcher, such that it can encompass the specific factors most relevant to the environment of the Turkish foreign policy between 2002[4] and 2012.

The reasoning for selecting this time period is as follows: on one hand, 2012 marks the end of perhaps the most transformational, dynamic period of the AKP's rule, whilst the same year also brought a certain deterioration of Turkey-Iran relationships due to the parties' opposite allegiances in the Syrian civil war. Due to this, 2012's events, the Arab Spring and Syrian civil war would become the "crucible" for Turkish-Iranian relations.

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[4] The year 2002 denotes the currently ruling Justice and Development Party's entry into power.

Preliminary research suggests that the factors at play behind the analyzed foreign policy change are domestic as well as international, economic and ideational/ideological. Additionally, the role of individual leaders and policy makers cannot be left underrepresented in the research, particularly with regard to the extensive influence of Davutoğlu doctrines in the field of foreign policy strategy and the political dominance of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Methodology and research design

1.1 Research questions

The principal research question is posed as follows:

What were the principal factors driving Turkey's foreign policy change towards Iran in the time period from 2002 to 2012?

This principal research question can be subdivided into further, subsidiary questions:

(1) Has there been any change in Turkey's foreign policy towards Iran since 2002, and if yes, in what direction?

(2) Are the driving forces behind the transformation of foreign policy mostly of domestic or external origin? Are any of the forces more relevant than others?

(3) Is the foreign policy shift a reflection of the change of Turkey's approach toward the whole region of the Middle East, or is the change to a degree Iran-specific?

1.2 Methodology and thesis structure

The thesis at hand uses qualitative methodological approaches and the research is conducted in the form of a case study. Theoretically, the thesis is anchored in the field of foreign policy analysis. The literature review will thus be dedicated to an introduction to the field of foreign policy analysis and, subsequently, its subdimension – the study of foreign policy change.

Firstly, foreign policy analysis and the different approaches that are part of it will be conceptualized. Secondly, the study of foreign policy, its history, approaches and its limitations will be addressed.

Subsequently, recent and past research on foreign policy analysis' sub-field of foreign policy change will be introduced. To better conceptualize the nature of foreign policy transformation, several foreign policy models will be introduced, contrasted, compared, and classified, among them the Kleistra-Mayer's model, which addresses three different types of foreign policy change:

- change in programmes/instruments (methods and means),
- change in strategies/problems/goals,

- change in political/normative foundations (e.g. a hard-line outlook replacing a previous soft power orientation).

To assess the degree and severity of foreign policy change, we will employ the widely used model of Charles Hermann (1990)[5], distinguishing four levels of foreign policy change: adjustment changes (changes in the level and scope of recipients); program changes (qualitative changes in the methods and means); problem/goal changes (where the initial problem or goal is replaced or forfeited, purposes replaced); and international orientation changes (the redirection of a country's entire orientation toward world affairs).

An extended literature review will then be provided on the topic of potential factors that are seen as (possible) drivers of foreign policy change, such as:

- international system (international institutionalization, interdependence)
- national political system (parliament, interest groups, democratization, regime change, media)
- organizational system (domestic institutionalization)
- individual policy makers and leaders[6]

In order to assess the empirical value of different models and frameworks, the applications of foreign policy change models will be introduced. Numerous examples of widely or less widely empirically applied models will be addressed, together with an in-depth explanation of why they do not wholly overlap with the specific needs of current Turkish foreign policy research and why they necessitate the creation of another model.

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[5] Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect *Foreign Policy. International Studies Quarterly, 34*(1), 3-21.
[6] Kleistra, Y., Mayer, I. (2001), 'Stability and Flux in Foreign Affairs: Modelling Policy and Organizational Change', *Cooperation and Conflict, 36*(4), 381-414.

Pursuant to this, we will design an explanatory model suited to an analysis of Turkish foreign policy change toward Iran.

The chapters which ensue shall be dedicated to an outline of the history of Turkish-Iranian political, diplomatic, economic and security relationships. A brief historical background of Turkey-Iran relationships will be followed by a historical analysis of Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East and toward Iran specifically, followed by an analysis of Turkish-Iranian relations in the timeframe of 2002-2012.

The reader will then be familiarized with the first two Turkish AKP government's policies, dedicating most attention to the well-developed foreign policy, its principles, priorities, instruments and practice.

Then, crucial issues dominating Turkish-Iranian relations will be analyzed, including the Kurdish and Azeri question, economic factors, the Iranian nuclear programme as well as the Syrian civil war.

In the following chapter, we will assess whether – and to what degree – significant change had taken place in the Turkish foreign policy toward Iran after 2002.

We then apply the designed foreign policy change model and utilize it in order to evaluate its individual explanatory factors and their roles in re-shaping Turkish foreign policy toward Iran.

The final chapter concludes, assessing whether the goal of the research was fulfilled and whether the model has managed to trace the causal relationships between the (independent and intervening) variables vis-à-vis the dependent variable of foreign policy change.

The main conclusion of the thesis argues that relying on a single factor-based explanation in a complex case such as the Turkish foreign policy reorientation under the AKP might actually overlook the complexities of the mutual relationship and that the way to go forward is by adopting a more inclusive and multiple factors approach.

1.3 Choice of sources

The methods of data collection will comprise a mixture of both primary and secondary sources. This will include the use of books, written by both Turkish and international scholars, as well as journal articles, which represent the larger of the sets of analyzed sources. Among those, journals such as the Turkish Policy Quarterly, European Journal of Turkish Studies, Turkish Journal of International Relations, Turkish Studies and the Middle East Policy Quarterly, as well as the *Avrasya Dosyası*, *Ortadoğu Etütleri* and the *Türk Dış Politikası Yıllığı* yearbook were exceptionally helpful.

The researcher benefits from being able to access and interpret English, German, Persian, but most importantly Turkish academic literature, which might represent some limited benefit for the Czech political science research. Particularly some Turkish sources concerning Turkish-Iranian relations and economic matters, along with some news and academic sources (e.g the *Yeni Şafak*) and some speeches and statements – such as the Turkish President's address to the Parliament at the commencement of the new legislative year, the Foreign Minister's annual speech at the Ambassadors' conference, the Prime Minister's address to the nation, as well as other speeches of Mr. Erdoğan and Mr. Davutoğlu – are not accessible in translation.

1.4 Structure of the explanatory model

Based on preliminary research, the model would be designed to include the following:

- Domestic factors (Turkish identity politics, neo-Ottomanism, restructuring of Turkish foreign policy toward the „no problems with neighbors" model),
- Security-based explanations,
- Economic interests (which, considering the nature of Turkish-Iranian relations in the recent decades, make up an especially relevant variable),
- Leader-based change,
- International and institutional factors, such as Europeanization and the role of the European Union.

Throughout the research, the relative plausibility and relevance of the individual factors as the driving force(s) behind a foreign policy shift will be analysed and evaluated. There remains one factor – the role of political Islam and Islamism – that although was initially not to be included in the model, became a part of it due to the nature of the findings throughout the research.

The individual sources of foreign policy change which make up the model will then be addressed in the last chapter, in their separate sub-chapters. A concluding chapter where the overall findings are analyzed will follow.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Foreign policy analysis: History and development

Whilst the study, evaluation and analysis of foreign policy is as old as the study of politics itself, a coherent and focused effort to study foreign policy comparatively is relatively new, developed by a small number of scholars working in the 1960's.

Commonly identified as "the comparative study of foreign policy," "comparative foreign policy" or "foreign policy analysis (FPA)," the approach emerged as a challenge to the then-prevailing methodological practices and theoretical assumptions.

Methodologically, these foreign policy scholars were challenging a "traditionalist" approach to the study of international relations and foreign policy, which was distrustful of efforts to predict or apply probability analysis to human affairs. Comparative foreign policy sought from the outset to develop theories of foreign policy at multiple levels of analysis and explanation.

Instead, traditionalists applied "judgment, intuition and insight in arriving at their conclusions" after subjectively examining and interpreting the evidence. Traditionalists saw no need to quantify their findings and instead focused on single events or problems that they used to understand "the subtlety of detail" (Dougherty, Pfaltzgraff, 1990, 29).

Surveys of comparative foreign policy generally identify the work of Richard Snyder and his associates as being the first widely known effort to theorize about foreign

policy in a scientific manner (see Hermann and Peacock, 1987; Gerner, 1995; Hudson and Vore, 1995). Contrary to the assumptions of realism, Snyder, Bruck and Sapin held that sources of foreign policy could be found in individual decisionmakers and the context in which they operated – bringing into light FPA's perhaps most defining characteristic: its actor-specific approach. Along with Snyder, James Rosenau's work, namely *Theories and Pre-theories of Foreign Policy* (1966) further contributed to theorizing about comparative foreign policy and the individual actors engaged in policy-making, complementing and critiquing the then-dominant structuralist approaches in international relations.

2.1 Comparative foreign policy and foreign policy change

Despite compelling reasons for the study of foreign policy change, it remained for many years in the words of K. J. Holsti, "a neglected phenomenon" in the study of foreign policy:

> *An aspect of foreign policy that has received little attention*
>
> *in the theoretical literature…[is] foreign policy change. A*
>
> *review of current writings reveals that the sources of*
>
> *foreign policy…have received more attention than actually*
>
> *policies…and even where policy is reviewed, rather static*
>
> *pictures emerge; continuity of the major powers' foreign*
>
> *policy orientation seems to be the norm* (Holsti, 1982: ix).

In similar spirit, Rosenau has noted, "changed behavior provides an especially useful occassion for observing the interplay of the factors that shape foreign policy (1976, 371-372)."

Within the subfield of comparative foreign policy, foreign policy change emerged as a topic of inquiry in the 1980's. Scholars addressing foreign policy change are specifically interested in cases where states change their foreign policies from a previous position — analyzing how such change occurs, when it occurs and which factors serve to influence it.

2.2 Foreign policy change: Literature review

As aptly pointed out by Jakob Gustavsson, due to an inclination on the part of foreign policy analysts to focus on stability and inertia rather than on the transition from one state of affairs to another, dynamic aspects of international politics and foreign policy have received comparably less attention in scholarly literature (Gustavsson, 1995, 3).

As much as remains unexplored, there have been authors dealing with accounting for foreign policy change, picking up especially after 1990. Among them, Alden and Aran, 2012; Carlsnaes, 1993; Gustavsson, 1999; Hermann, 1990; Rosati et al. 1994, Skidmore, 1994; Walsh, 2006; Welch, 2005, have addressed foreign policy change.

Also, various models of foreign policy change, which will be addressed later on, have been designed: among others by Goldmann in 1982 and 1988, Hallenberg in 1984, Jerneck in 1993 in addition to Hermann's and Carlsnaes's more widely known models.

While it is true that foreign policies tend to be rigid (once a particular policy has been enacted, both inertia and various vested interests have a stabilizing effect on it, making it resistant to alteration), the consensus remains that it is possible to identify the circumstances under which such obstacles break down, thus creating an opening for change, and to analyze the nature of foreign policy change (Smith, Hadfield, Dunne).

There is a general acquiescence in foreign policy analysis nowadays that different levels of analysis should be studied in parallel, combining individual factors, inputs in the decision-making process and institutional features of the decision-making process itself, as well as cultural and societal, domestic and international factors (Garrison, 2003, 155; Mintz and DeRouen, 2010, 3–4).

Whilst this serves to make the models and frameworks of foreign policy change quite complex, amongst the different models, there is a basic commonality to the mechanism. First, it is possible to identify a number of 'sources' that are mediated by 'individual decision-makers' who act within the 'decision-making process' in order to bring about a change in policy. Most foreign policy change comes after a perception by the foreign policy leadership of some change or initiative in the external environment, which are large events in terms of visibility and its impact on the recipient.

Types of foreign policy change vary widely – there can be significant differences in scope and domain. In Hermann's most widely used typology (1990, 5-7), he identifies four graduated levels of foreign policy change: adjustment changes (changes in the level and scope of recipients); program changes (qualitative changes in the methods and means); problem/goal changes (where the initial problem or goal is replaced or forfeited,

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purposes replaced); and international orientation changes (the redirection of a country's entire orientation toward world affairs, a simultaneous shift in all international roles and activities).

According to Carlsnaes, changes at foreign policy *outputs* may occur in three circumstances: firstly, new alternative inputs from various domestic and/or international sources may enter in and alter the foreign policymaking process and its outputs. Secondly, pre-existing alternative inputs may find their way to the policymaking nexus as a result of changes in the domestic political, institutional and bureaucratic structures. Thirdly, discourse changes may alter foreign policy outputs without necessarily requiring new inputs or new structures, capitalizing on cognitive and ideational shifts within the existing members of the policymaking group.

The form and properties of each unit, as well as its capacity to induce foreign policy change vary according to the existing political and institutional structures (number of formal and/or informal veto points, political opposition, scope of societal involvement, electoral system, policymaking style of the leader, etc.) (Koivula, Sipilä, 2011: 521–522; Mintz and DeRouen, 2010: 19–21).

The effort to include structure as well as agency, is exemplified represented by Snyder (2005), who focuses not on the state but rather on the human decision maker, prioritizing the study of the decision-making process rather than the foreign policy output per se (Hudson, 2002). This is rooted in the decision making approach, outlined by Snyder, Bruck and Sapin (1954).

This research focuses on problem/goal and international orientation changes that refer to fundamental changes in the conceptualization of a foreign policy problem/goal or

to the strategic repositioning of a country in the international system. Hermann's typology will be utilized to determine whether Turkey's change of foreign policy toward Iran marks such a major reversal or redirection in policy.

We offer an analytical typology of domestic and international structural parameters (or sources) that lead to such changes. These parameters of foreign policy change are in literature often classified according to their *domestic* or *international origins* (Kaarbo et al., 2012, 7–19). We will then assess the relevance and explanatory value of each parameter or factor.

2.3 Foreign policy change: Frameworks and models

The publication of several frameworks or models throughout the decades helped shape the way scholars began to conceptualize foreign policy change, its sources, and processes. While these frameworks did not initially result in the appearance of a great many applications in the literature, they did represent the most crucial insights into how scholars think about change.

In *Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World*, K. J. Holsti pursues a specific type of foreign policy change – restructuring – "the dramatic, wholesale alteration of a nation's pattern of external relations" (Holsti, 1982). This differs from "normal foreign policy change, which is usually slow, incremental and typified by low linkages between the geographic and functional".

In *Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy,*

Charles Hermann proposes a scheme for "interpreting decisions in which a government decides to change policy direction" (Hermann, 1990, 3). Specifically, his interest is in those cases that mark a major reversal or redirection in policy. He identifies four graduated levels of foreign policy change: adjustment changes (changes in the level and scope of recipients); program changes (qualitative changes in the methods and means); problem/goal changes (where the initial problem or goal is replaced or forfeited, purposes replaced); and international orientation changes (the redirection of a country's entire orientation toward world affairs, a simultaneous shift in all international roles and activities). The escalation of American involvement in Vietnam is provided as an example illustrating all four levels of graduate change. Hermann also outlines four agents of major foreign policy change – leader driven, bureaucratic advocacy, domestic restructuring and external shock.

Of the major frameworks outlined here, Hermann's has received perhaps the most application in academic literature. Bengt Sundelius (1994) applies Hermann's model to the case of Sweden when it broke its longstanding no-alliance, neutrality doctrine and joined the European Community in 1990. He finds that this policy move constituted what Hermann called a problem/goal change, which constitutes a policy restructuring. Sundelius identifies domestic restructuring and external shock as the two change agents that acted upon the decision-making process leading to the change.

Other recent new works have sought to build upon these frameworks to develop new models of foreign policy change. Gustavsson (1998; 1999) incorporates elements of Hermann's model in his three-stage process of foreign policy change. Domestic and international sources of change are mediated by decision makers who in turn act upon the

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decision-making process to bring about one of the four types of policy change identified by Hermann. Individual decision makers must perceive sources of change that trigger alterations in their beliefs for them to impact foreign policy change. Like Sundelius, he applies his model to the Swedish decision to join the European Community. He posits that the end of the Cold War and a deep recession (external shocks) caused Sweden's prime minister, an advocate of EC membership, to seize the opportunity.

Due both to changes in international politics and several paradigm shifts, there has been a rise in recent contributions with regard to the issue of foreign policy change. Among else, Carlsnaes's contribution to the theory of foreign policy change (1993), Walsh's analysis of foreign policy change in United Kingdom (2006), Rynhold's study of foreign policy change in Israel (1994), and Rosati's (1994) theoretical work.

Among those, three different types can be distinguished, referred to by Gustavsson as 'checklist models', 'structural constraints models' and 'cyclical models' (Gustavsson 2014).

First, checklist models, which include the ones developed by Kalevi Holsti (1982) and Charles Hermann (1990), do not contain any theoretical elements in the sense of hypothesizing that some factors might be more important than others. While they include a wide variety of relevant factors, they do not allow to draw conclusions about the respective value of individual factors.

Secondly, in the "structural constraints models", one identifies and focuses on factors that might serve to stabilize existing policies and prevent pressures for change from leading to an actual change in policies. Both Goldmann's (1988) and Skidmore's

(1994) models concentrate on those stabilizing factors, yet dedicate no weight to the different relevance the factors might have in varying political regimes and environments.

The third category, the "cyclical models", are represented by models of Walter Carlsnaes (1993) and Jerel Rosati (1994). In his complex model, Carlsnaes focuses on the roles of agency and structure, which engage in a cyclical interplay. Rosati, on the other hand, contrasts "periods of stability" with "periods of transition". Expanding on this, Kleistra and Mayer (2001) have incorporated elements of both Goldmann's and Hermann's models into a model of foreign policy (and organizational) change.

2.4 Foreign policy change models: Empirical applications

Several authors have dedicated effort to developing models in order to enable an emprical study of foreign policy change, that is, formulating analytical models that would expressly facilitate empirical investigations and applications.

As an example, Blavoukos and Bourantonis (2014) examine parameters of foreign policy change, clustering them according to their *nature* (structural or conjunctural) and *origin* (domestic or international). Domestic structural parameters comprise the politico-institutional setting and advocacy groups in support of alternative foreign policy options. International structural parameters refer on the one hand to systemic changes that may bring about a foreign policy realignment and on the other hand the country's role in the international system (e.g. participation in international organizations) that may activate foreign policy changes through socialization processes. Then, Blavoukos and Bourantonis empirically apply the classification to two case studies: the Greek-Turkish

rapprochement following the Greek foreign policy shift in the late 1990's and the Israeli re-orientation that enabled the signing of the Oslo Peace Agreement in the early 1990's.

Few empirical applications testing foreign policy change models have been presented with regards to Asian countries: Park and Kim (2016), for example, empirically examine foreign policy change in Korea, whilst there have been some applications of the framework to China's foreign policy. Foreign policy change and restructuring in Europe, however, has received much academic attention: Thomas Volgy and John Schwartz (1990) examine foreign policy restructuring in two mainland European countries. Checkel (1997) has attempted to apply Hermann's framework to examine Soviet foreign policy change at the end of the Cold War.

Bengt Sundelius (2013) and Magnus Jerneck (2014) have analysed foreign policy change in Sweden with regard to the Swedish reorientation on the membership in the EC. This case study is followed by Jakob Gustavsson's extensive study on Swedish foreign policy reorientation, published in 2014.

Finally, Cop and Zihnioğlu (2015) have briefly analyzed change in Turkish foreign policy according to Hermann's model of varying degrees of change; concluding that either three or all four levels of foreign policy change have been present during the successive AKP governments.

This has, to date, been the only application of a foreign policy change framework to the case of modern Turkey. However, in the recent decade, a number of works focused on the changing Turkish foreign policy have surfaced. In an empirical study, Aydın-Çakır (2017) and Arıkan-Akdağ relied on bilateral and international agreements ratified by Turkey in an attempt to assess long-term changes in Turkish foreign policy orientation.

Öniş and Yılmaz (2015) examined gradual differences in foreign policy style, identifying various indicators such as a more active utilization of soft power instruments, a more proactive role in conflict settlement, as efforts to promote multilateralist foreign policy in several regions.

Aydın-Düzgit (2016) argues that a certain support for a shift-of-axis argument can be found through a discursive analysis of the foreign policy discourse of the AKP elites. Başer (2014), on the other hand, has compared foreign policy approaches by the AKP leadership and political elites of the previous period, arguing for a gradual change towards a more active foreign policy, instead of shift-of-axis arguments.

Finally, Ipek Pınar's study (2016) explores "how ideas at the domestic level matter in foreign policy change", proposing a constructivist account for policy change that emphasizes not only ideas but also material interests as exogenous factors constituted within domestic structures. In a constructivist approach, she attempts to specify ideational influence on the foreign policy of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, and identify causal mechanisms and conditions for how and whether ideas were the driving force behind the change of Turkish foreign policy in 2004-2009.

2.5 Introducing the explanatory model

This thesis is dedicated to designing and empirically applying an alternative explanatory model of foreign policy change with regard to Turkey's foreign policy toward Iran after 2002. After 2002, the year marking the beginning of a successive string of Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) governments, significant transformations could be identified in Turkish foreign policy, its principles, priorities, as well as its instruments.

The thesis at hand is dealing with 'reasons' rather than 'indicators' of Turkish foreign policy change; as the Turkish political sciencist Kusku-Sonmez has formulated it: the 'why' rather than 'how' foreign policy change has been taking place (Kusku-Sonmez, 2018). In this research, six major sources of change are identified, domestic and international – a change of paradigm and a resurgence of identity politics (neo-Ottomanism); leader-initiated change; Islamism and political Islam as a source of foreign policy change; economic factors; security factors, and international factors.

First, the model takes into account domestic factors, since policymakers' intersubjective understandings of a state's identity, as well as discourses, norms, and institutions, are embedded in domestic structures (Risse-Kappen, 1994; Katzenstein, 1996).

Economic factors were chosen partially due to the sheer volume of literature supporting the hypothesis of material interests influencing the Turkish foreign policy change. Apart from that, the emergence of a new Turkish business class (the "Anatolian Tigers") in Anatolia's major cities in the late 2000's, Ahmet Davutoğlu's (1994) explicit acknowledgement of the business community as a central driver in Turkish foreign

policy, and an unprecedented economic engagement with Iran has argued that economic factors have indeed been a driving force behind the foreign policy change. Ozlem Tür is one of the analysts who stress the importance of economic dimension of the relations with the Middle East, giving prime importance to the relationship between the AKP and the Turkish business circles and their role in the increasing volume of trade between Turkey and countries in the Middle East (Tür, 2011). Kutlay (2011) also argues that Turkey extensively uses economic opportunities and interdependence for institutionalizing its relations with neighboring countries and downgrading military power in favor of economic interactions.

Further, the role of leaders as motivation behind foreign policy change is assessed. Due to a dramatic change in the diplomatic approach toward Iran (and the wider Middle East) which followed the AKP's entry into power in 2002, it is necessary to analyze whether the party's leaders and representatives had a crucial role in this foreign policy shift. We will focus on the role of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, but also Hakan Fidan, deputy head of the National Intelligence Service in 2009 to 2010, and current head of the National Intelligence Service; and İbrahim Kalin, the chief advisor on foreign affairs to the Prime Minister since 2009.

Identity politics, tied to a greater use of cultural factors in political rhetoric (Dağı, 2015), to references to Turkey's multi-civilisational identity, along with the claims of Turkish foreign policy architects that the reconciliation with the Middle East is based on a "shared cultural heritage" have led to including identity and neo-Ottomanism as an explanatory factor in the model.

Connected to this is an invocation of Islamic heritage in the political rhetoric of Turkish leaders in the 2000's. Some scholars point out Turkey's re-orientation toward the

Middle East and North Africa as based on Islam and common religious heritage (Oğuzlu 2008), which can therefore refer also to the re-engagement with Iran. Ennis and Momani highlight Turkey's use of mobilization of Islam as foreign policy instruments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region before and after the Arab Spring. Sadik (2008) in his work *Magic Blend or Dangerous Mix? Exploring the Role of Religion in Transforming Turkish Foreign Policy from a Theoretical Perspective,* addresses religious reasoning as a powerful motivator and justification for AKP-led foreign policy change.

Assessing the international factors' influence as a determinant of Turkey's foreign policy transformation, we are leaning on the commonly supported statement that changes in foreign policy can be associated with sudden and less sudden reactions to international or domestic political crisis situations (Holsti, 2013). Several scholars (e.g. Sayari, Larrabee, Karaosmanoğlu) do argue that the major factor driving the Turkish policy change stems from a change in the international system and states adjusting to the new balance of power in international relations. Other analyses mostly attribute changes in Turkish foreign policy in the 2000's to "Europeanization" and the effects of European Union (EU) conditionality (Özcan 2008, Müftüler-Baç 2005).

In this way, the model was designed to include factors seen as relevant throughout research on the changing Turkish foreign policy: systemic and other changes in international relations, economic interests, the influence of leaders, identity-based factors and changing security discourses are most frequently mentioned as the driving force behind Turkey's foreign policy transformation. The model is specifically created to allow for the examination of the interplay of domestic actors with the regional and international systems including their economic, identity and security components.

The evaluation of individual factors in this model is also conducted while being aware that structural conditions do not have independent impact on foreign policy decision-making, but are perceived and reacted to by the foreign policy makers.

Finally, we have to address the model's additional limitation. Although the AKP might have been crucial in instituting change in Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East and Iran, as Walter Carlsnaes has stated, "the policies of states are a consequence of, and can hence only be fully explained with reference to, a dynamic process in which both agency and structure causally condition each other over time" (Carlsnaes, 1992, 7).

CHAPTER THREE

3. Turkish foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party (2002-2012)

The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) has put its stamp on Turkish foreign policy in the first decade of the 21st century. This party, which was established in 2001 by people who split from the Felicity Party (*Refah Partisi*) that represented the political Islamist line in Turkish politics, came to power in November 2002. From the outset, the AKP enjoyed an absolute majority in the parliament in what was the first instance of single-party rule since 1987 (Başer, 2015). The AKP has

maintained power since then, as it came out once more as the winning party in the 2007 elections, forming a majority government.

Foreign policy has been one of the areas that the subsequent AKP governments have been quite assertive and ambitious about. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who first served as the chief foreign policy advisor of formerly Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2002-2009) and then became Minister of Foreign Affairs in May 2009, has been the main architect of AKP's foreign policy.

Davutoğlu developed a vision of foreign policy which framed Turkey as a central country (*merkez devlet*) in global politics, based on its geography, history and identity. According to Davutoğlu, particularly in the new constellation of global politics, Turkey could no longer be content with being a "flank country" as it was in the Cold War or even a "bridge country" as it was generally characterized in the 1990's, but rather become a central country that enjoys an area of influence in its immediate environs and also beyond.

This novel foreign policy is based on several principles, first (and most discussed) of which is the principle of "zero problems with neighbors", which conceptualized a certain positive future direction, inviting Turkey to maintain good relations, stability and status quo in the region. The second principle is multi-dimensional foreign policy, which sets out to emphasize the complementarity between Turkey's new engagements and old alliances. Thus, it is argued that Turkey's developing ties with the Middle East or Russia are not in competition with its strategic relations with the West, or its relations with the EU respectively. Third principle emphasized the importance of Turkey's mediation in regional and global conflicts. It is argued that Turkey has the will and an obligation to

play this role to promote peace and stability in its neighborhood. Finally, the new foreign policy principle emphasized de-securitization of Turkish foreign policy (Davutoğlu 2000).

Instead, concepts like soft power, engagement and economic interdependence are claimed to be the new tools of Turkey's engagement (Benli Altunişik, 2017). As such, Turkey would mainly pursue its goals through diplomatic negotiation rather than military force, focused on its soft power assets, emphasized engagement and economic interdependence, and promoted mediation as a conflict resolution tool. This represented an important contrast with Turkish foreign policy in the region for most of the 1990's which was highly securitized and used mostly military means (balancing alliances, military relations, military threats and interventions).

To conclude, the AKP – whose emergence marked the birth of a reformist Islamist movement in Turkey and who can be said to have led Turkish Islamism into a wholly new phase – had pursued a foreign policy which differs in several important respects from those pursued by its predecessor – secular or religious – governments.

In the first place, the AKP government stepped up its efforts to position itself as a broker and mediator between Western countries, in particular the US and the EU, and the "Islamic world," particularly the countries of the Middle East. On the other hand, it based its foreign policy on its belief in the peace-promoting effects of economic interdependence and active membership in international organisations (Kirişci, 2006). The guidelines used to settle regional conflicts were to include proactive approaches, engagement, and dialogue in the place of isolation, confrontation, and containment – with major changes ensuing after the Arab Spring and the Syrian engagement in 2012.

3.1 Foreign policy principles of the AKP era

Several principles were stipulated by Ahmet Davutoğlu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, as guiding lines of the new foreign policy: among them a proactive and pre-emptive foreign policy, rhythmic diplomacy, policy of "zero problems with neighbors" and an effort for maximum cooperation and economic integration with neighbors, whilst having balanced relations with global and regional players (i.e. the EU, US, Russia, China, the Muslim and Arab world) are virtually common principles of all governmental programs and the party program. Furthermore, both statesmen – Erdoğan and Davutoğlu – emphasize capitalizing on soft power as a significant principle of the leadership's foreign policy.[7]

Turkey's soft power peaked particularly until the beginning of the Arab spring (Benli Altunışık 2008: 50). Along with its historical and cultural depth, Turkey's social and cultural achievements, its modernization and economic development and its political and economic stability have remarkably supported Turkey's rising soft power.

From a constructivist point of view, the change in Turkey's domestic politics, namely advancing democratization process as well as economic dynamism and development have changed Turkey's perception at the ideational level in the eyes of the world.

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[7] Though defined in a variety of ways, soft power is customarily defined by Joseph S. Nye as "the ability to attract others by the legitimacy of a country's policies and the values which underlie them".

3.1.1 Davutoğlu and the „strategic depth" concept

In his works, including books, journal articles and treatises, Davutoğlu reevaluates the post-Cold War international system, underscores the geographical and historical depth of Turkey and sets a new vision for it.

The concept of "strategic depth" was firstly introduced in 2001 by Davutoğlu, a University professor, in his seminal book under the same title. Davutoğlu's core argument proceeds as follows: geopolitical, geo-cultural and geo-economic components form the basis of strategic depth and it is these two invariable assets, namely geo-strategic location and historical depth, which determine the value of a nation in world politics. In this respect, Turkey with its unique geographical position and a vibrant historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire harbors a vast, yet unfulfilled potential.[8]

With respect to the geographical position of Turkey, Davutoğlu argues that in the northern direction, two land transition zones (Balkans and the Caucasus) connecting the Eurasian central land mass to warm seas and Africa, and a sea transition zone (Bosphorus and the Dardanelles) intersect above Turkey's territory and connect these zones to the geo-economic center of resources in the Middle East and Caspian region. In the east-west direction, on the other hand, the Anatolian peninsula is the most important part of strategic peninsula belts surrounding the Eurasian continent. As a result of these geopolitical qualities, the Anatolian peninsula has always historically been a candidate for being a political power center.

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[8] For a complete discussion see Davutoğlu, Stratejik Derinlik, 551-552. See also, Walker, J. (2007), "Learning strategic depth: implications of Turkey's new foreign policy," Insight Turkey, 9(3),

Davutoğlu contends that history and geography are two invariables that cannot be changed in the short or middle term. Turkey, being a uniquely located, non-island nation in terms of geography, and a bearer of rich Ottoman heritage, is a "centre" and as such cannot remain on the political periphery.[9]

"As a large country in the midst of Afro-Eurasia's vast landmass, it may be defined as a central country with multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one unified character. Like Russia, Germany, Iran, and Egypt, Turkey cannot be explained geographically or culturally by associating it with one single region. Turkey's diverse regional composition lends it the capability of maneuvering in several regions simultaneously; in this sense, it controls an area of influence in its immediate environs."

In this framework, Turkey is – arguably correctly – perceived as a simultaneously Middle Eastern and Eurasian state; a country tied to the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean at the same time. It has not only an option, but an obligation to be active in all these regions, ultimately moving forward on the way of becoming a global player.

According to the framework put forward by Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkey has to act as its "depth" requires, otherwise it would lose. Suggesting that rather than acting as a mere "bridge" between the West and the Muslim world, a previously repeated mantra of Turkish foreign policy leaders,[10] Turkey should act as a "central country", breaking away

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[9] Speech of Ahmet Davutoğlu, "New Horizons and New Opportunities in Turkish Foreign Policy, Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD), İstanbul.
http://www.musiad.org.tr/detay.asp?id=156.
[10] Indeed, the "bridge" policy was pursued by former Prime Minister Turgut Ozal.

from a static, isolationist, passive and single-parameter policy, and becoming a "problem solver" by contributing to global and regional peace.

3.1.2 „Zero problems with neighbors" and maximum cooperation policy

One of the Erdoğan leadership policy's stated goals is not only to eliminate the existing barriers preventing good relations with neighbors, but to maintain those relationships as a high priority.

Likewise, the government has admittedly sought to establish closer relations with the neighboring nations in order to also establish a kind of "peace and prosperity circle" around Turkey to the benefit of each of the involved parties. The next step of this policy has been explained by Foreign Minister Davutoğlu as commencing the integration process with the regional countries, i.e. constructing a collective identity definition with them – a process which has to date yet to encounter its goal.

3.1.3 Multidimensional foreign policy

What is commonly termed a "multidimensional approach" to foreign policy by the current Turkish government leaders, is a sophisiticated, multifaceted policy built on a system of balances.

Though the recent Turkish foreign policy attracts criticism pointing out that Turkey "shifts its axis from the West towards the East", Davutoğlu presents Turkey's

developing relations with the Muslim world and with other regional organizations as complementary to the new Turkish strategy, but not an alternative to Turkey's relations with the EU or the US. Equally, an effort to improve relations with Russia should be viewed similarly.

As such, Turkey has been seen developing relations with the Islamic world and assuming an active role in regional organizations such as the BSEC or ECO, cultivating alliances which matter both strategically and politico-economically (Aras, Akpinar, 2009), but also maintaining its perception as a pro-European, West-oriented actor.

In terms of Davutoğlu's foreign policy, he stresses the idea of two "balances". First balance refers to the idea that Turkey should develop a balanced relationship with all global actors which is relevant to axis shift debates on Turkey's new foreign policy orientation. The second one refers to a balance between democracy and security within internal politics (Walker 2007).

3.1.4 Pro-active and preemptive peace diplomacy

Ever since the AKP's entrance into power, the novel foreign policy has featured a preemptive stance towards political and diplomatic crises, stressing the importance of taking measures before crises emerge and escalate to a critical level.

In conformity with this principle, Turkey undertook the mediator role between Syria and Israel and endeavored to achieve Sunni-Shiite reconciliation in Iraq. Reconciliation efforts in Lebanon and Palestine, the Serbia-Bosnia reconciliation in the Balkans, dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the reconstruction of Darfur and Somalia might be listed as further examples of pre-emptive diplomacy. Turkey's engagement in the diplomatic negotiations with Iran regarding the nuclear issue are a yet another demonstration of the principle.

Such pro-active approach signifies a certain break with the Özal era. The previous Turkish government did not put forward a "zero problems" vision, as much as it believed that its issues with neighboring countries would themselves be solved in parallel with developing economic relations (Daği, Sezal 2003: 13). In this context, Özal attached great importance especially to improving economic relations and establishing interdependencies with neighbors.

In this respect, one might contend that the Davutoğlu approach to the country's neighbors would represent a certain "advanced" form of Özal's aforementioned approach: one that emphasizes actively engaging for peace.

3.1.5 Rhythmic diplomacy

This principle stipulates a more active, assertive involvement of Turkey in all relevant international relations issues, negating any preceding isolationism.

Under the AKP, after almost fifty years, Turkey became once again a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council for the 2009-2010 period and chaired three commissions on the council. Turkey is also 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.

After 2003, Turkey has also launched new diplomatic initiatives, opening 15 new embassies in Africa and two in Latin America, and became a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol. There was also a marked increase in foreign aid and bilateral and international agreements ratified by Turkey in the mid-2000's (Kuşku-Sönmez, 2018).

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Turkish foreign policy toward Iran: Background and history

The entire period of the Ottoman Empire witnessed a mutual rivalry between the Ottoman and the Persian Empire, growing particularly intense during the Persian Safavid dynasty. However, the relationship between the two regional powers improved substantially from the 18th to the 20th centuries.

At the beginning of the 20th century, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey – as opposed to Iran – decided to embrace a pro-Western foreign policy. This can be argued to have resulted in one of the main obstacles for the modern Turkish – Iranian relationship. During the late 20th century, identity and security issues involving sizable Kurdish populations living on both sides of the border and clashing Islamic identities began to dominate the two countries' relations.

For a more detailed insight into the history of Turkish-Iranian relations, the reader is recommended to see Adel Allouche's *Origins and Development of the Safavid-Ottoman Conflict* (1985), the works of Robert Olson, who has examined the bilateral relations in depth until the mid 2000's (Olson 2004, 2002, 2000), and Calabrese's work (1998), which examined the turbulent Turco-Iranian relations in the 1990's. For further discussion on the Turkish-Iranian relations in the more recent timeframe, refer to Efeğil and Stone (2003) and Aras (2001), whose works focused on the bilateral relations in the early years of AK Party government.

4.1 Turkish-Iranian relations: Modern history

Three coherent phases can be identified in modern mutual Turkey-Iran relations. The first phase, between 1920 and 1970, was notable by both parties pursuing reasonably good relations among the secularist Turkish state and Iranian monarchy headed by the Pahlavi *shahs* (Çetinsaya, 2003).

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The following phase, dating between the 1979 Iranian Islamic revolution and the Turkish change of government in 2002, has been marked by various political, diplomatic and security issues that would make bilateral Turkish-Iranian relations somewhat more problematic as the actors would succumb to competition and conflict.

The third phase covers the period since 2002 until 2012, in which the relations, influenced by several complex factors, would improve significantly. This period extends up to the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War, which would prove to pose a crucial deteriorating aspect to the relations.

In the turbulent 1920's, Turkey, then headed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, would pursue similar foreign policy goals with Iran. Thus, the parties signed the Treaties of Friendship and Security in 1926 and 1932, and formed the Saadabad Pact in 1937. After the Second World War both countries followed a policy of alliance with the West. Several years on, when Turkey and Iraq signed the Baghdad Pact in 1955 to prevent the Soviet intervention, Iran also joined the Pact. After Iraq pulled out, the name of the Pact was changed to the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1959, the pact itself remaining operational until 1979. In short, Iran and Turkey continued their cooperation until the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

In the 1990's, the new geopolitics of Turkey and Iran after the fall of the Soviet Union, and the internal developments such as the flaring up of the Kurdish conflict and the Arab-Israeli confrontation where both actors allied themselves with the opposing sides, had established a sense of competition and an atmosphere of distrust between the two countries. In addition, tensions and ideological and religious frictions between the two further exacerbated the already conflictual proces.

Problematic relations continued throughout the 1990's during the government of Turgut Ozal. Himself pursuing a pragmatic policy favourable to Iran, his influence proved insufficient vis-à-vis the power of the army and the complex of military-bureaucratic elites (Kalkan 2001, 157-160)**.** In the Turkish state, secularist elites had the primary say and, to a degree, prevented good relationships with Iran (Dağı, Sezal 2015; Gürbey 2012).

When Erbakan's Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) came to power in 1996, it sought to reduce ideological confrontation between Turkey and Iran and improve Turkey's political and economic ties with Iran and the Islamic world as a whole. Pursuing and prioritizing ties to the Muslim world, Prime Minister Erbakan paid his first official visit to Iran, and later on to Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia.

His effort to expand political and economic relations with Iran and the Islamic world resulted in increasing economic and security cooperation between Iran and Turkey, followed by the 1998 establishment of the Developing-8 (D-8) group. Instead of strong opposition from the military-bureaucratic elites, the Erbakan government signed a gas purchasing agreement with Iran in 1996 (Aykan, 1999, 22). The Erbakan government's attempts resulted in increasing cooperation with Iran in Turkey's fight against the PKK in 1996 (Bayat, 2008), in addition to a deepening economic and political cooperation. Those developments would prove seminal in the newly bettering Turkey-Iran relations.

The hegemony held by the military-bureaucratic elites over Turkish domestic and foreign policy decision-making, however, bode unwell for further prospective development of political and economic relations between the two powers (Olsen, 1998;

Aras, 2007). The military-bureaucratic elite cited "supporting Islamism and religious ideology" as their reason for dissatisfaction with Erbakan's attempts to develop Turkey's political and economic relations with Iran and the wider Islamic world. Similar accusations culminated in the Sincan Affair (Kalkan, 1999, 161), when the Erbakan government was directly accused of supporting "political Islamism and terrorism" in Turkey by the prominent General Çevik Bir.

Facing such fervent and powerful opposition, the Erbakan government resigned in 1992 (Kurubaş, 2013).

During the 90's, other affairs – such as the most prominent "headscarf affair" – arose, prompting the media and traditional elites of both countries again to engage in ideological combat and decry each other's political regimes. The "Hezbollah affairs" in particular were mired in serious accusations by the traditional elites that Iran supported illegal organisations committing assassinations in Turkey (Yılmaz, 1997, 96) and as such any complicity with Iran should be viewed with suspicion.

As the already sizable military-bureaucratic elite's power increased in Turkish politics, the discussions about the country's ties with Iran were dominated by matters related to the Kurdish issue (and thus security-dominated) and Islamism – as such, they prompted waning levels of pro-Iranian sentiment.

4.1.1 Turkish foreign policy toward Iran under the AKP (2002-2012)

The AKP leadership, having risen into power in late 2002, had brought about a complex change in Turkish approach to Iran and the whole Middle East. Stressing the need to maintain an active and influential political role in the Middle East, as well as the strategy of zero problems with neighbors, it has led to Turkey maintaining and strengthening its relations with numerous Middle Eastern powers.

As Karacasulu and Askar Karakir have aptly pointed out, apart from an undeniable „pragmatic rapprochement" between Iran and Turkey there has been an ongoing effort by both actors to strengthen their own geostrategic positions and consolidate their own regional roles (Karacasulu, Aşkar Karakır, 2011).

Why, then, had the diplomatic relations improved, instead of the two actors engaging in competition over regional influence and power, just as in the 1990's?

It was the new Turkish foreign policy that brought about an alternative Turkish approach towards Iran. No longer considering itself "surrounded by enemies", and instead extending the policy of "zero problems with neighbors" to Iran, Turkey extended a friendly approach – keeping in mind, among else, its vast economic interests in Iran, whose extent will be discussed later.

High-level official visits between Turkey and Iran took off, such as the visit of Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Ertuğrul Apakan to Iran in June 2008, Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki to Ankara in July 2008, Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan to Iran in the same month, Iranian President Ahmadinejad to Istanbul in August 2008, Iranian

Parliament speaker Ali Larijani to Turkey in January 2009 and Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan to Iran in October 2009. These visits can be considered as signs of two sides' willingness to improve bilateral relations.

Bilateral relations reached a high point during President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's first term, when he visited Turkey in August 2008 and became the first Iranian leader to be hosted by a NATO member since the Revolution. Symbolic of the growing rapport between the two states was Erdoğan's insistence on addressing Ahmadinejad as 'my dear brother', a term of endearment which Ahmadinejad reciprocated in his correspondences and meetings with Erdoğan, such as after the Mavi Marmara Gaza incident between Turkey and Israel.

The extent to which Turkey was willing to diplomatically accommodate Iran was evident in its representatives' tact in commenting on the controversial 2009 presidential elections, which returned Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to power. Unlike most of the Western nations, accusing Iran of electoral fraud, Erdoğan and President Abdullah Gül sent their congratulations almost immediately after the result was announced. In return, the attitude of the Iranian government towards Turkey had bettered significantly in this period, and Turkey's membership in NATO, which had traditionally been a major issue of concern, was not addressed in official declarations. Iran looked upon the AKP government as potential regional partner at a time when its government was experiencing a great amount of external and internal pressure.

Ankara's interest in the Iranian nuclear dispute also arose out of the hindrance that sanctions posed on Turkey's economic development. Ankara did not stand to gain from

the sanctions against Iran, and in some ways interpreted the sanctions as setting a precedent which one day might be applied to Turkey. Turkey's trade with Iran grew steadily despite the sanctions regime. Therefore, Ankara's interest in the Iranian nuclear negotiations was aimed at ending sanctions to the benefit of their economy as much as it was about mutual cooperation and regional leadership.

Just as Turkey has relied on Iran for its oil and gas needs, Iran looked to Turkey for assistance in breaking away from its international isolation. Turkey's policy toward Iran was thus, to a degree, dominated by strategic calculations, by matters of security, but perhaps equally so by issues of energy and economy.

In 2010, Turkey announced a new initiative to resolve Iran's nuclear deadlock. Offering to mediate between Iran and the international community, Turkey and Brazil managed to secure an agreement with Iran, which involved the shipment of low-enriched uranium for storage to Turkey. This was praised by the Turkish government as a strategic step forward towards removing the threat of nuclear weapons from the region (Benli Altunışık, 2010).

At the same time, another important process surfaced, highlighting some change between the first and second (and third) AKP governments. There was a marked shift in some policy areas in the second half of the 2000's: namely in favor of a more ambitious, assertive approach.

This change did not amount to a change of objectives, but rather what Hermann terms an 'adjustment change' – and yet it still represented a perceptible transformation.

4.1.2 Turkish policy toward the Middle East under the AKP

As marked by scores of analysts and academics both Turkish and foreign, the AKP's governments, particularly in its second and third term are "marked by an ambitious foreign policy that drifted away from Turkey's traditional partnerships with the West and toward the betterment of relations with regions previously neglected by Turkey. Since the foundation of the Republic, Turkey's foreign policy has mainly been a Western-oriented policy driven by the aspiration of seeing Turkey perceived as a European state. This paradigm went hand in hand with a marked focus on national security and sovereignty. Put differently, Turkey has avoided any engagement in the Middle Eastern region since the foundation of the Republic in 1923 (Bazoğlu, Sezer, 1995).

Concurrently, during the Cold War, loyalty to its NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) partners was a firm guiding principle of Turkey's foreign and security policy (Karaosmanoğlu, 1988; Kirişçi, 1994) – a foreign policy course which would serve to practically isolate Turkey from the rest of the Middle East.

With the AKP at the helm, Turkey began prioritising relations with regions such as the Middle East, North Africa, and Eurasia (Zarakol, 2011), the relationships with the Middle East becoming "deeper, comprehensive and multifaceted (Altunışık, Martin 2011: 570)". The Middle East is arguably the most crucial theater in which Turkish foreign policy is engaged, but also one of the most volatile – a zone of conflict at both the inter-state and, in some cases, intra-state levels. Economic relations with the Middle East had also entered their all-time high: in a comparison of exports by region between two eras, 1990–2001 and 2002–2010, a rapid increase in exports to the Middle East and Africa

during the latter period can be clearly seen since the AKP government has been in power (Pınar 2014). Moreover, while the EU's share in Turkey's total exports had declined from 63.1% in 2002 to 49.5% in 2010, the Middle East's share had increased from 10.5% in 2002 to 21.8% in 2010. Turkey's overall trade with its neighbors and nearby regions had increased substantially in the time period from 2002 – 2012. Ankara's level of economic relations with Iran (as well as Russia and Georgia) can be said to have reached nearly a level of economic interdependence.

In comparison to the previous governments, Turkey has successfully entered into a working dialogue with actors with whom it previously had turbulent relations in the 1990's, including Iran; while strengthening contacts with its southeastern neighbours Syria and Iraq, as well as Saudi Arabia, Qatar or Sudan. In this context, Turkish diplomacy has witnessed a considerably dynamic process.

Moreover, Turkey established high-level strategic council meetings with Iraq and Syria (and targeted to establish similar mechanisms with other neighboring countries). It took considerable steps in respect of abolishing visa requirements with neighbors and abolished visa requirements mutually with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and – initially – Libya.

The reasons behind this development are various. Raptopoulos (2004) in his work *Rediscovering its Arab neighbours? The AKP imprint on Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East* has argued that Turkey's distinct reorientation of foreign policy is grounded in its perception of national interest in the region – in other words, that Turkey's opening doors to the Middle East can be seen as beneficial both politically and economically.

Svante Cornell (2012), in his work titled *Changes in Turkey: What drives Turkish Foreign Policy?* has argued that the role of Turkey in the Middle East has been much

greater particularly in the second term of the AKP government and was due to AKP's ambition towards the Islamic World. Turkey's recent shift or re-engagement with the Middle East was a result of AKP's Islamist outlook and pro-Islamic orientation.

Ömer Taşpınar, an analyst working with the Brookings Institution and the Carnegie Endowment, has identified what he terms two conflicting drivers of Turkey's new activism in the Middle East: "Neo-Ottomanism," which encourages engagement and projection of influence recalling Turkey's multicultural, Muslim, and imperial past, and "Kemalism," which aims to eliminate the perceived threat of Kurdish nationalism and protect Turkey's secular, nationalist identity.

Some scholars also argue that neo-Ottomanism motivates the foreign policy of Turkey's ruling party, the AKP – while critics of the AKP, including the military and national security establishment, view neo-Ottomanism and its use of soft power in the Middle East as a threat to Turkey's Kemalist secular identity.

Turkey's secular, nationalist establishment resents the West for supporting the Kurds and "moderate Islam" in Turkey, while the AKP's neo-Ottomanism favors good relations with Washington and Brussels — an important realignment of Turkish foreign policy.

Both groups favor improved relations between Ankara and Tehran. Neo-Ottomans view engagement with Iran (and Syria) as part of Turkey's growing regional influence, while Kemalists see a shared interest in containing Kurdish nationalism and preventing the emergence of an independent Kurdish nation on their borders.

Other authors and analysts view this re-engagement as a demonstration of continuity with Turkey's previous government, that of Turgut Özal.

Does Turkey's shift toward the Middle East mean leaning away from the West (and Europe) – or not at all? Again, there is a lack of clear answers in the literature. Soner Cagaptay (2006) in his work *Preventing Turkey's Popular Slide Away from the West* argued that Turkey was actually moving away from the West and its traditional Western allies and moving closer to the Middle East and the Islamic World (Çağaptay 2006).

Others, such as Bayram Sinkaya, see it as a reflection of the principle of "multidimensional diplomacy" – a committed effort to maintain ties with the East just as well as with the West (Sinkaya, 2010).

4.2 Turkish-Iranian relations: Main issues

4.2.1 The Kurdish question

The issue of Kurdish political, social, cultural and linguistic autonomy was an issue of contention between the Turkish state and the Kurdish population spanning several centuries. Both Turkey and its Middle Eastern neighbors have a sizable Kurdish population on both sides of their borders, necessitating the development of a consistent foreign policy in this regard. The largest Kurdish populations are found in Turkey's Eastern Anatolia, in Syria, Iraq and Iran.

The Kurdish question has traditionally occupied a central place in Turkey's security and foreign policy, with the elites invoking the principles of security of the state, territorial integrity and non-interference in other states' internal politics (Efeğil 2008, 61).

4.2.1.1 The Kurdish question and Turkish – Iranian relations: A history

Ever since the last decades of the Ottoman empire, but especially since the First World War, the Turkish goverment has faced scores of rebellions protesting the Kemalist secularism, severe repressive measures against the non-Turkish population and demanding linguistic and political rights for Kurdish citizens. In 1925, the most widespread Kurdish insurgency lead by Sheikh Said arose in the provinces of Mardin and Amed and lasted until late 1929. Other insurgencies, organized overwhelmingly on a tribal basis, were also unsuccessful and eventually forcibly overthrown.

Several rebellions, including a large uprising in Diyarbakir, occurred in the 1930's. The members of one of such rebellions were initially under the leadership of Ihsan Nuri Pasha, an Iranian (Bayat, 2008).

This was subsequently interpreted by the Turkish state as a case of Turkey's Kurds looking toward Iran, even potentially seeing it as an ally against the Turks and Arabs. Due to both the linguistic ties between the two nations, and Iranian political ambitions to support the Kurds in a pan-Iranian effort, there indeed materialized a Kurdish-Iranian alliance of sorts, regarded with suspicion by the Turkish state. Several Kurdish leaders, such as Seyyed Taha, had for example agitated among the Iranian Kurds for the union of Iranian and Turkish Kurdistan in an independent state.

 Years later, the Ağri Dağı (Ararat Mountain) rebellion was suppressed and in the immediate aftermath, Iran agreed not to aid the Kurds.

Following the Ağrı rebellion, Iran and Turkey signed three important agreements. The Turko-Iran Frontier Treaty in 1932, with an addition in 1937, made adjustments in the Turkish-Iranian border to provide better control within the borders. The other two agreements were the Treaty of Conciliation, Judicial Settlement and Arbitration, and the Treaty of Friendship, both signed in 1932. These treaties would prove to have a defining impact on Turko-Iranian relations in decades to come (Olson, 1998, 24).

Yet another large-scale uprising known as the Dersim rebellion broke out in 1937-1938 in what is modern-day Tunceli province, the region previously being the site of as much as eleven armed uprisings and being regarded as one of the most important issues of domestic Turkish politics. After quelling the rebellion, east Anatolia was put under martial law and subjected to repressive measures.

In the mid-1980's, the Kurdish PKK stepped up its attacks against the Turkish army, which led to large-scale conflict between the guerillas and the Turkish armed forces. During the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam Hussein committed scores of attacks on Kurds in Iraq, including chemical attacks, all of which brought waves of refugees into Turkey. In the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), Turkey had remained neutral.

In 1993, Turkey, Iran, and Syria signed a tripartite security agreement to prevent PKK activities in their borders. There has, however, been significant mistrust on the part of Turkey, whose politicians, military-bureaucratic elites and security apparatus had long made accusations that Iran supported radical Islamism in Turkey and the PKK in Iran and Iraq.

In the 1990's pragmatic reasons for Turkey-Iran cooperation vis-a-vis the Kurdish question in the Middle East came to the forefront. Firstly, the parties were motivated by fear – if an independent Kurdish state existed in northern Iraq, it could possibly provide an impetus toward unification for the Kurds of both countries. Secondly, Iran has been apprehensive of the fact that in case it used the Kurdish question against Turkey, Turkey would then be free to use the Azeri issue against Iran. As such, the geo-politic and geostrategic interests of both countries, as well as an interest in a stable Iraq gradually prevailed.

4.2.1.2 Kurdish question and Turkish-Iranian relations since 2002

In 2003, the United States-led coalition invaded Iraq, beginning a several-year war. The US designated a no-fly zone over Northern Iraq and so the Iraqi Kurds could create a *de facto* autonomous region. This was actively rebelled against by both Iran and Turkey. The reasoning was that an independent Kurdish state could serve as an inspiration for the Kurdish population inside their own borders, and their eventual seccessionist efforts in order to create a newly-formed Kurdish state.

This attitude is illustrated by the then Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül: when he visited Iran in 2004 to offer his condolences for an earthquake in Iran, the Iranian president Khatami stated "The security of the Turkish state is also the security of our own. Like Turkey, we also do not want a Kurdish state in northern Iraq" (Hürriyet Daily, 2004).

Meanwhile in Iraq, Kurdish was declared as an official language and the Iraqi Shia government acknowledged the autonomy of the Kurdish region by means of the interim constitution, to which both Turkey and Iran reacted with a considerable degree of apprehension.

Tehran and Ankara had previously not cooperated in Iraqi Kurdistan, but rather competed for influence by favouring different players in Kurdish politics. Since the 1990s, Iran has strongly supported the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), linked closely to the Talabani family, while Turkey has favoured the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), linked to the Barzani family (Taşpınar, 2008).

In the light of the post-2003 events, however, realpolitik concerns such as territorial integrity and the security of the state[11] had indeed brought the two states closer. A somewhat cooperative stance was favored by both sides, demonstrated among else by less accusations of each other of providing support for the PKK and Mujahedeen-e Khalq respectively.

4.2.2 The Azeri question

When discussing the history, relevance and development of the Azeri issue, one can not forego deriving significantly from the works of Robert Olson, who had dedicated several of his works to the issue. Specifically, *The 'Azeri' question and Turkey-Iran relations, 2000–2002* (Olson, 2002) has been crucial to understanding the issue at hand.

Emergence and re-emergence of nationalism in the Republic of Azerbaijan as well as in Iranian Azerbaijan had a crucial impact on Iranian-Turkish relationships for decades and has historically ranked amid the most crucial of issues – together with the Kurdish question, economy issues, security issues and matters of political Islam.

The Iranian Turkic-speaking Azerbaijanis, also known as Azeris, populate the provinces of West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan, Ardabil, Zanjan, Qazvin, Tehran, Hamadan and Kurdistan; West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan and Ardabil have been a center of Iranian Azeri nationalism. The Turkic-speaking Iranian Azerbaijanis are

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[11] In subsequent years, mostly around Kurdish cultural and political centres of Diyarbakir (in Turkey) and Mahabad (in Iran), riots erupted during Kurdish nationalist rallies. In Iran, the security forces clashed with the PJAK – The Party of Free Life of Kurdistan), the Iranian arm of the PKK.

primarily Shi'a Muslims, and form the second largest ethnic group in Iran after the Persians (24%).

Various autonomist social and political movements in Iranian Azerbaijan had already arisen by the mid-20th century – such as the Constitutional Movement, the Movements of the anti-colonialist Shaikh Mohammad Khiabani (1920), or the Peoples Government of Azerbaijan of Seyyed Ja'far Pishevari (1946) – some of them being influenced by pan-Turkic sentiment. In 2002 to 2012, SANAM led by Ali Johragani remained the predominant and most renowned group representing the Iranian Azerbaijanis.

The group enjoys very limited support, even considering that the Turkic identity of the Iranian Azerbaijanis has been reportedly gaining strength since the mid-1990's. Kraus and Souleimanov (2017), for example, indicate that an ever increasing number of Azerbaijanis do claim an ethnolinguistic Turkic (*Türk* or *torki*) identity rather than a local or a more neutral regional *(Azerbaijani)* or national *(Iranian)* identity as was the case in past years (Kraus, Souleimanov, 2017).

Although the first years of the 21st century saw some developments of Turkish policy toward the Azeri question, it can be argued that the Azeri issue did not strongly figure in Turkish-Iranian relations in the period from 2002 to 2012.

The issues in the beginning of the 2000's were: a prominent Turkish official Aksener expressing support for Turkey union with Republic of Azerbaijan in 2001; Turkish feared that Iranian parliament (the *Majlis*) would pass a legislation acknowledging the Armenian genocide, and apprehension about continued Iranian support to Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Later in 2001, a further conflict of interests developed on the Caspian, contributing to mutual Iran-Turkey-Azerbaijan tensions. While Tehran regarded the projected Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline with fear, as it would presumably not benefit from it, the plan was warmly supported by both Turkey and Azerbaijan (Olson, 2002). Iran, who did not want to be excluded from the East-West pipeline, would gradually lose its position to Turkey in the Caspian Sea issue.

Additionally, Iran was confronted with looming economic trouble, whereas its uncooperative stance in the United States-led War on Terror further contributed to its isolation after 2001. Instead, Iran observed an increased military cooperation arising between Georgia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and the United States. It undoubtedly seemed to Tehran that a South Caucasus military alliance among Turkey, Georgia, Israel and the U.S. was in the making. This development and strengthening of military and intelligence relations contributed to Iran's fears that it was being encircled and denied outlets for its oil and gas.

Furthermore, Tehran worried about Israel, its strengthening ties with Azerbaijan and Georgia, and a working Israeli alliance with Turkey. Mutual Israel-Azerbaijani ties were gradually developed, improving sharply after 2001, with a significant economic aspect to the relations – at the time, Israel was the second largest purchaser of Azerbaijani oil. This set of circumstances rendered Iran very politically vulnerable.

Even so, this did not reflect in an upheaval in the internal Iranian or Iranian Azerbaijani politics. Even anti-government protests launched by Iranian Azerbaijanis in

recent years, most notably in 2003, 2006 (connected to the "Cockroach Affair"[12]), 2007 and 2011, did not result in political crisis.

For the entire time period, Turkey did neither engage in support of Iranian Azerbaijani nationalism, nor utilize the Iranian Azerbaijani card in its relationship with Tehran; Turkish authorities and media did not call attention to the issue of Iranian Azerbaijanis, including during the 2006 and 2011 protests. Turkey's effort to maintain mutually beneficial relations with Iran, an important economic partner, might have also lead to non-interference in the political situation of its ethnic kin in Iran. In comparison, the issue of Iranian Azerbaijani ethno-nationalists „looking toward Turkey" and harboring pro-Turkish sympathies was more relevant, with Turkey maintaining its traditional passive cultural influence over Iranian Azerbaijanis via the Turkish media.

4.2.3 The Iranian nuclear programme

Particularly since the mid-2000's, Iran has faced tremendous diplomatic and political pressure from the international community regarding its nuclear programme. In the international arena the Turkish government has continuously supported to reach a settlement through diplomatic engagement and negotiations between conflicting parties rather than imposing new sanctions on Iran (which would ultimately also be to Turkey's

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[12] The Cockroach affair refers to the publication in the May 12, 2006 issue of the national daily newspaper *Iran* of an offensive caricature of an Azerbaijani depicted as a cockroach along with an article demeaning the Azerbaijani minority.

economic detriment), while vehemently opposing using any military means against the regime (Gürzel, 2012).

As to Turkey's position on the Iranian nuclear issue, there was a relevant change in the second AKP term. Until 2009, Turkey did not take an active position on the issue and the "Iranian nuclear program was rarely addressed in Turkish-Iranian relations." Such a position was possible mainly due to the fact that there were still divergences on the issue not only among the Permanent Members of the Security Council, but also between the USA and the EU. This and the fact that negotiations with Iran and the EU-3 continued took the pressure off Turkey.

Later, however, negotiations with Iran began to stall and the issue was transferred to the UN Security Council. As the positions of the USA and the EU as well as among the P5+1 came closer, the AKP government started to feel the pressure to make its position clearer. The government, however, refused to do so and began this time to work more actively to mediate (Karacasulu, Karakir, 2008).

Later into the crisis, during Turkey's improving relations with Iran, the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan would openly question the accusations about the Iranian nuclear program. The crisis culminated during the UN Security Council vote on Iranian sanctions, where Turkey, together with Brazil, the two countries that had brokered a nuclear swap deal with Iran, voted against the resolution.

Ultimately, the fuel-swap deal brokered by Turkey and Brazil did not prove to be a step toward a comprehensive solution to the issue of Iran's nuclear program. Yet, at that time, Iran had perceived Turkey as a worthy diplomatic partner, as evidenced by the help it extended regarding the nuclear issue. During President Gül's 2011 visit to Iran,

President Ahmadinejad is quoted as saying, "We would like to offer our thanks to you for Turkey's mediative role and efforts regarding Iran's nuclear program. We are especially grateful for the Istanbul meeting, which is a great achievement on its own" (Gurzel, 2012).

4.2.4 The Syrian civil war

The Syrian conflict, having continued since 2011, is not merely a sectarian conflict between the Sunni majority and Alawite/Shiite minority, but has evolved into a multi-layered conflict driven by key political actors in the Middle East.

The Syrian civil war would eventually pose the greatest obstacle to Turkish-Iranian relations since 2002 (Flanagan, 2013, 172). On one hand, the Iranian regime has taken on the role of an effective guarantor of Assad's forces, allied with Hezbollah and Hamas in a „resistance axis". Bashar Assad is one of the Islamic republic's few staunch allies, having supported Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. Iran sees a Turkey openly supporting the rebels attempting to depose the Syrian regime as working in tandem with the United States and Saudi Arabia to effect regime change in Damascus.

Turkey's opposition to the Syrian government came after previous Turkish support for Assad (Barkey, 2012). After 2012, however, Turkey has underscored the staunchness of its diplomatic stance with active measures on several occassions: it intercepted Iranian weapons bound for Syria (Flanagan, 2013), and provided training and

support to the Free Syrian Army rebels, allowing the Turkish territory to be used for the transfer of funds, weapons and militants to aid the anti-Assad rebellion.

The Turkish and Iranian positions on Syria are diametrically opposed, with their partisan support reminiscent of Cold War competition. Together with Iran, Russia and China have come out in support of the Syrian regime, whereas Turkey is clearly ideologically aligned with the US-led international coalition.

4.2.5 Economic issues

Contrary to the secular Turkish elite who dominated Turkish politics during 1990s, the Erdoğan leadership has viewed Iran as a significant economic partner and has considered the Islamic regime as a potential cooperative partner for Turkey since the outset. This change of perception Iran, rooted perhaps to a part in the identity and interest definition of the Erdoğan's AKP leadership, has brought about a fruitful development of Ankara-Tehran ties particularly in the economic sphere.

There are several reasons driving Turkey to pursue closer economic relations with Iran in the 2000's in comparison to the 1990's. Kirişçi (2013) argues it can be said that economic considerations affected the foreign policy of Turkey towards Iran even more after the mid-2000's because Turkey is increasingly becoming a "trading state", gradually leaving the label of a "military-political state" behind. In line with this thought, Turkey has also subscribed more value to economic considerations – increasing its exports, finding new export markets, attracting foreign investments – when designing a successful foreign policy (Karacasulu, Karakir, 2011). This has also coincided with how the role of

Turkish businessmen and their interests are gaining importance in the foreign policy making (Pınar, 2016; Kutlay, 2008).

In the energy sector, Turkey has also strived to create and maintain stable ties with Iran. The main motive behind Turkey's determination to pursue energy sector relationships with Iran was its dependence on Russia for natural gas and its aim to reduce this reliance. The Turkish Petroleum Corporation's (TPAO) project, which would reduce this reliance, was also in line with Erdoğan leadership's active foreign policy in the region and building interdependencies with neighboring countries. In this respect, the Erdoğan leadership has propagated Turkey's strategic goal to act as a "major conduit for non-Russian gas to central and eastern Europe", that is, via the planned Nabucco pipeline project. In this way, Turkey's approaches to Iran were tied in to its hopes of becoming an important energy corridor between the Caspian Region, the Middle East, and Europe.

Thus, in the 2000's Turkish-Iranian economic relationships improved, particularly with regard to energy cooperation. Admittedly, at times, both parties have run into issues: there have been lapses in reliability on the part of Iranian suppliers (McCrudy, 2008, 89) difficulties with gas cut-offs due to shortages in Iran, one cancellation of a contract with a Turkish firm and an inability to fulfil a contract for Turkey to develop a part of Iran's South Pars gas field.

With that said, it can be argued that the expansion of economic interdependency between Turkey and Iran, and the liberalisation of trade have become one of the main priorities of new foreign policy towards Iran. Turkey has deepened its cooperation with Iran in supplying its own and Europe's expeditiously mounting energy needs.

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In August 2007, the two countries concluded the draft of a deal creating a joint company to construct a pipeline designed as 3,500 kilometres long to transport up to 40 billion cubic meters (1.4 trillion cubic feet) of Iranian natural gas annually to Europe. They also decided on the building of three thermal power plants by Turkish companies in Iran, and in November 2008 signed a memorandum of understanding related to gas and oil transit and joint energy investments to deliver Iranian gas and oil to Western Europe through Turkey and Italy.

The countries signed agreements providing for the joint construction of three thermal power plants - two in Iran and one in Turkey, and some hydroelectric plants. Under terms of the agreement, Ankara would import 3 to 6 billion kilowatt hours of electrical energy a year (Gregor, 2008).

The growth in the energy trade would continue. From March 2009 to May 2010, Turkey's gas imports from Iran increased by 98 per cent (Kinnander, 2010). In February 2010, the two countries announced that they would build a pipeline between Turkey's northeast port city of Trabzon and the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas; a Turkish company signed an agreement with Iran in July 2010 to construct a pipeline from Iran to Turkey that would deliver gas to Western Europe (Parkinson, 2010).

Consequently, in the late 2000's Iran had become the second-largest gas supplier to Turkey after Russia (Blair, Kalantari, 2009) and in 2009, following the European Union, China, Japan and South Korea, Turkey had become the 5th largest trading partner of Iran (McCrudy, 2008). According to media reports, the cross-border trade between the countries also jumped tenfold in this process, reaching $2.7 billion in 2009.

Bilateral trade, largely through growing energy needs between Turkey and Iran, jumped from 1 billion in 2000 to $4.33 billion in 2005, $10.43 billion in 2008 (DEIK 2008), and $14.5 billion in 2013, increasing more than fourfold since 2000 while it would further rise in the coming years.

In March 2010, Iran decided to open new trading border points. The two countries also agreed on the creation of a joint industrial town on the border of the two countries. In 2018, at the time of writing, Turkey is one of just twelve nations with whom Iran has signed preferential and free trade agreements.

Even though the Iran issue will continue to put Turkish foreign policy to a test in terms of balancing its regional and global policies, Iran has clearly demonstrated its high value as an economic partner.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Assessing the change in Turkish foreign policy towards Iran post-2002: Employing Hermann's model

5.1 Introduction

In the following section, we will assess whether any change has taken place in Turkish foreign policy toward Iran in the time period from 2002 to 2012, evaluating its degree and scope. Then, we will identify the sources of change in the international and regional systems levels that created the general context for change in Turkish foreign

policy in the Middle East as well as focus on the domestic-level variables, evaluating the most relevant sources driving foreign policy change.

5.2 Program changes

According to Hermann's policy change framework, a "program change" refers to a change in *methods or means* for attaining the goal addressed.

How, then, did the Turkish foreign policy under the AKP undergo a program change? As we have discussed, in the 2000's, Turkey mainly pursued its goals through diplomatic negotiation rather than military force, focused on its soft power assets, emphasized engagement and economic interdependence, and promoted mediation. Thus, clearly Turkey began to use different means in achieving its foreign policy objectives in the region of the Middle East and elsewhere.

This represents an important contrast with Turkish foreign policy in the region for most of the 1990's which was highly securitized and used mostly military means (balancing alliances, military relations, military threats and interventions).

After the outbreak of the Arab uprisings, the instruments of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle Eastern regional affairs were still mainly those of soft power as hard measures were refrained from in pursuing foreign policy objectives. Thus, the AKP government sought to mobilize soft power instruments including economic integration, mediation and conflict resolution, development assistance, and cultural dialogue.

It was until the Arab Spring, that Turkey first decided to take an active hard power stance in the case of Libya back in 2011 – and eventually took part in the international military intervention therein.

A more final change in Turkey's "non-military engagement" policy was then observed in the example of Syria in terms of introduction of coercive measures. First type of coercive measures included economic sanctions, freezing of assets, and travel ban, isolating the Assad regime with coercive measures. This gradually led to a long-standing active engagement in the Syrian civil war.

5.3 Adjustment changes

Using Hermann's framework, the term „adjustment changes" refers in the case of the AKP during the analyzed period to changes in the level of effort, while keeping the goal and the method through which to attain that goal intact. This refers to a more proactive foreign policy pursued by Turkey, especially in the second AKP term.

Adjustment changes have severely increased in scope after 2011, with the successive Middle East and North Africa uprisings arguably providing the Turkish government with a so-called "policy window"[13], an opportunity to introduce changes and reforms in order to pursue a more autonomous foreign policy in the wider region.

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[13] Unforeseen events and conditions (e.g. leadership change due to death, political upheaval) may frequently open an „opportunity window" for policy reform (Rosati, Hagan and Sampson 1994, Keeler 1993).

5.4 Problem/goal changes

Goal changes refer to more strategic and fundamental changes in the conceptualization of a foreign policy problem or goal. In other words, this describes a replacement or abandonment of initial goals and foreign policy objectives, without necessarily entailing an overall international re-orientation of the state.

The most apparent goal change in the period from 2002 to 2012 is a reconceptualization of Turkey's role in the region and in the international system, represented by the AKP government's goal of Turkey becoming a regional leader. According to Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkey is destined to become a „central country" (*merkez devlet*) that enjoys an area of influence in its immediate environs and also beyond.

Some scholars also identify other, simultaneous changes in the Turkish national role conception – some of them new, some a mere continuation of a trend since the Ozal's government (Başer, 2015). Assuming the role of a regional leader, the role of a mediator or integrator, or posing as "an example[14]" (e.g. as a democratic, secular society vis-a-vis Iran) are identified as some of the goals of the AKP's foreign policy.

5.5 International orientation changes

The last type of change in Hermann's model is international orientation change. Whether Turkey went through such a change has become subject of a public debate both

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[14] Alternatively, this „model role" is, albeit seldom, used to frame the AKP as striving to support 'moderate Islamist' currents in the Middle East in order to serve as an example and form a solidarity network led by Turkey.

domestically and internationally in the recent years. The issue came up especially frequently during the second AKP government (2007–11), with regard to policy issues such as the rapid deterioration of Turkish–Israeli relations after the Gaza War (2008–09) and the Mavi Marmara incident.

However, the majority of analysts support the view that with regard to the Middle East, there has been a sufficient transformation in the orientation of foreign policy. An „axis shift", as it is at times termed in the literature, has taken place with regard to strengthening existing ties and relationships with Middle Eastern states (such as Iran and, up until 2012, Syria) and also improving the existing relations with the Balkan countries.

The former foreign policy which was based on close ties with West, had undergone a transformation, underpinned by its new foreign policy principles. It is evidenced by a warmer, pro-active approach to Middle East states and by a certain reluctance to comply with what can be said consitutes Western and NATO foreign policy (one of such events is the Turkish refusal to allow US troops' deployment in the İncirlik airbase in 2003). Öniş (2015) claims that this represents a fundamental shift from the basic foreign policy orientation of the 1990's, in the context of which relations with the United States and Israel constituted the primary axis of Turkish foreign policy. The majority of other scholars, however, argue that it is not as much a departure from the West as it is a re-engagement with the East (Demiryol, 2013; Babacan, 2010).

Taking precautions to develop relations equally, Turkey established high-level strategic council meetings with Iraq and Syria, but also with Greece and Russia and set out to establish similar processes with Bulgaria, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and others. Simultaneously, Turkey abolished visa requirements mutually with Syria, Tajikistan, Albania, Lebanon, Jordan, Libya, Russia and Ukraine (Cop, Zihnioğlu 2015).

Even though an overall international orientation change might be perceived, political and diplomatic relations to Syria and Iran were specific and represented exceptional cases within the Middle East. As such, with Turkey starting to openly support the anti-government rebels in late 2011, the previously friendly relations with Syria deteriorated.

Turkey's opposition to Assad's government also lead to a decline in Turkish-Iranian ties. Together with the decision in the fall of 2011 to accept the stationing of US missile defense systems on Turkish soil, these developments had sparked new tensions in the bilateral relations with Tehran.

We have thus differentiated between individual changes and classified those according to Hermann's framework into minor adjustment changes, program changes, goal changes, and orientation changes. With such a methodological approach, we see that minor adjustment or program changes by themselves do not automatically translate into what we can term a foreign policy change – but that greater objectives and orientation changes have indeed occurred during the analyzed time period.

CHAPTER SIX

6. Post-2002 Turkish foreign policy change towards Iran: An explanatory model

6.1 Sources of Turkish foreign policy change toward Iran

6.1.1 Change due to foreign policy paradigm: Neo-Ottomanism and identity politics

As the research has discussed previously, in the framework of the new Turkish foreign policy Ahmet Davutoğlu has re-defined Turkish identity by taking into account Turkey's Ottoman history and its geography, terming it a "central country". Subsequently, he defined Turkey's foreign policy principles in compatibility with his new identity definition and in accordance to his perception of the new conditions of the post-2000 international system.

That this has occurred alongside a certain reorientation in terms of identity is suggested by Kanat (2012), stating: "a country that has been characterised by its secular system and Western values, is now ruled by a party that is seen as an Islamic oriented one that does not fear to identify itself as an Islamic and Middle Eastern one" (Kanat, 2012). Since the refusal to allow US troops to use Turkish territories in its war against Iraq in 2003, the adoption of pro-active foreign policy towards the Middle East, with an increasing mediation role, leadership role and an active participation in international organisations, such as the Organisation of Islamic Conference; boasting newly improved relations with its Middle Eastern neighbours, more increasing attention was given to the possible transformation and reorientation of Turkish politics and foreign policy.

Scholars asked whether this signified that Turkey is turning away from the West (Kanat, 2010). It has also sparked a theoretical debate on ideational vs. pragmatic

theoretical interpretations of Turkish foreign policy change (for differing interpretations, see Aras, Görener 2010 and Danforth, 2004).

Two of the main ideational explanations presented in the literature on the new Turkish foreign policy are the concept of neo-Ottomanism, and the notion of national identity. Focusing on Ahmet Davutoğlu's work known as "Strategic Depth", which has been called the source of neo-Ottomanist foreign policy, and paying attention to the statements and speeches delivered by Davutoğlu, as a foreign minister and prime minister, and Erdoğan in his presidency, we will address the neo-Ottomanism concept as a possible engine causing greater foreign policy cooperation with Iran.

First, it is necessary to state that this identity is not linked nor limited to former Ottoman territories or regions with populations of Turkic ethnicity. It includes countries and regions far away from the former Ottoman territories, rejecting the former policy of looking primarily westward towards Europe. Putting forward the Ottoman legacy involves paying great attention to ties with the Middle East, including Iran.

Secondly, a new approach which emphasizes the historical and geographical "depth" of Turkey might be also assessed as the reflection of a domestic political development to the foreign policy landscape through a new identity description.
As Kemal Kirisci argues, AK Party leadership's foreign policy could be better accounted for by means of an identity-based approach (Kirişçi, 2011).

Kalin (2011) similarly maintains that Turkey's new identity reconciles its cultural and historical inheritance in its soft power and comprehensively communicates it in its public diplomacy activities.

Was this identity change relevant with regard to the foreign policy toward Iran? Turkey, as a country possessing several identities, assuming a new, much more active foreign policy, chose to target its favourable foreign policy particularly to those countries where it maintains historical links – Iran being one of them. The change in foreign policy was formulated as Turkey "re-discovering its geographic and historical identity, re-gaining its self-confidence, recognizing its historical and cultural roots in the neighboring regions" while seeking a balanced relationship with all global and regional actors.

While it is true that the "active peace diplomacy" was not launched after 2002, Erdogan, as opposed to Ozal, did not believe that the questions with neighboring countries would (themselves) be solved in parallel with developing economic relations. In this context, Ozal attached great importance especially to improving economic relations and establishing interdependencies with neighbors. The Davutoğlu and Erdoğan approach with neighbors prefers developing economic ties but also, at the same time, being active in negotiating deals and developing other cooperation mechanisms.

However, identity-related thinking was neither a self-contained explanation of the foreign policy change, nor the sole source of a transformation in foreign policy. On one hand, Ziya Öniş, professor of International Political Economy at Koç University in Istanbul and Director of the Center for Research on Globalization and Democratic Governance, maintains that Turkish foreign policy has moved beyond ''the sphere of economics; [to] considerations relating to culture and identity, [which] are seen as a fundamental part of historical depth.'' (Öniş, 2015).

On the other hand, however, during the Erdoğan leaderships, it has been stressed by statesmen that Turkey possesses several identities, and it must be accepted that Turkey

is an Eastern as well as a Western country which carries both Muslim and western values at the same time.

6.1.2 Leader-initiated change: The influence of Erdoğan and Davutoğlu

As of 2018, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has occupied the post of the Turkish head of government for 16 years, carrying the primary responsibility as well as the authority on foreign political issues. Though some markers of continuity with Turgut Özal's former government are apparent, the newly introduced foreign policy enacted by the AKP goverments has overwhelmingly been characterized as an abrupt change.

In terms of foreign policy, owing to its Islamist identity, Erdoğan leadership first left aside the traditional ultra secularist point of view to foreign policy issues and took into account Turkey's historical and cultural ties. Furthermore, Erdoğan leadership's Islamist roots helped it develop closer cultural, diplomatic and economic links with the Arab Middle East and the Muslim world in general.

As Öniş points out, "arguably, a more secular government led by the Republic People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP), for instance, would not have experienced the same degree of popularity in the Arab or Muslim worlds." (Öniş 2015: 57). As such, the reflection of Erdoğan leadership's 'conservative' and 'democratic' identity on its foreign policy should be seen as a natural consequence.

However, the government has tried to facilitate a multidimensional foreign policy in the course of the AK Party governments between 2002 and 2012. That is, rather than being a strict admirer of the West and focusing on a strictly westward looking foreign policy, Erdoğan's leadership sought to develop balanced alternatives by employing Turkey's respective cultural and historical assets.

Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu has been a most important driving force in the development, theorization and formulation of the ideas of Turkey's foreign policy. It was Recep T. Erdoğan who employed Davutoğlu first as chief advisor on foreign political issues (2002-2009) and later as the Minister of Foreign Affairs since May 2009.

Hailed as the intellectual architect of the new Turkish foreign policy, Davutoğlu's most published book was the *Strategic Depth, Turkey's international position* (2000).

According to the ideas of this book, Turkey has a multidimensional value in world politics due to its depth and geolocation. Davutoğlu's vision of the Turkish foreign policy refers to future Turkey's regional and global relevance in the post-Cold War international system.

Davutoğlu was also able to redirect the Turkish foreign policy through the introduction of the so-called "zero problems with neighbors" policy since he had been appointed as Foreign Minister. As such, his foreign policy approaches and his influence as a leader on the foreign policy paradigm of the AK Party must be addressed in this research.

Davutoğlu himself has often urged for a reorientation of Turkey's regional foreign policy, having advocated for it in the domestic environment since the mid-2000's, stressing the country's unique importance of ties with the Middle East.

Moreover, it was not only the persons on the highest level of political leadership that have played an important role in such a reorientation during the 2000's.

The number and density of high-level visits of all sorts of state officials to Iran jumped substantially after 2002. The visits of State Ministers responsible for Foreign Trade (Kürşad Tüzmen and Zafer Çağlayan), Ministers of Foreign Affairs (İsmail Cem, Abdullah Gül) and Presidents (Ahmet Necdet Sezer and Abdullah Gül) have been economically decisive and commercially lucrative in terms of enabling rapprochement with Iran.[15] Political leaders' and officials' visits, accompanied by delegations of Turkish businessmen, would have positive impact on bilateral commercial relations with Iran.[16]

Additionally, Hakan Fidan, Deputy Undersecretary of the Prime Minister's Office between 2006 and 2009, deputy head of the National Intelligence Service in 2009 and 2010, and current head of the National Intelligence Service; and Ibrahim Kalin, chief advisor on foreign affairs to the prime minister since 2009, have all advocated for foreign policy ideas which chiefly overlapped with the aforementioned AKP ones (Fidan, Nurdun 2008; Kalin, 2011), furthering the idea of a group of similarly politically inclined leaders promoting a certain form of foreign policy.

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[15] During one such visit, e.g. the Turkish-Iran Business Council was established.
[16] A lot of articles covering the visits has appeared in the Turkish press, e.g.: "İran'la ekonomik yumuşama", *Milliyet*, 25. 05. 2000.

6.1.3 Islamism and political Islam as source of foreign policy change

When explaining the AKP's ambition towards the global environment, it is almost always noted that the government has pursued, and pursues, ties to the Islamic World on an unprecedented level. This has given rise to the notion that Turkey's recent shift or re-engagement with the Middle East was a result of AKP's Islamist outlook and pro-Islamic lenience.

For instance, Soner Çağaptay, the director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, stressed in 2012 that ''religion remained the salient national identity during the Ottoman period,'' and currently it „seems that religion is again becoming an important part of the national identity for the Turkish population and the AKP government in particular" (Çağaptay, 2012).

However, despite the significant credentials of Erdoğan and AK Party in general, there is a debate whether one should perceive their Islamic roots as the main driving force behind their foreign policy transformation.

From a values-based point of view, the AKP leadership has stressed a pious Muslim identity and an obligation toward the global Muslim *ummah,* with its representatives maintaining a devout Muslim image (Ehteshami, Elik 2011; Sadık, 2008): but at the same time, it has emphasized the importance of international norms such as democracy, liberalism and respect for human rights acquired as a result of various socialization processes. Support for human rights, liberalism and the rule of law became

an integral part of the AK Party identity (Dağı, 2005, 12-13) and had equally been part of it in 2012.

Öniş and Çaha are even more forward in their analysis, asserting that whereas Erdoğan and his associates kept their ties with Islam in the social realm, they abandoned it as a political program (Çaha, 2003, 103-107).

Dağı explains the evolution process of Islamic identity of AK Party leadership and the societal and transnational socialization process as follows:

"… Islamic political identity was traditionally built in opposition to the West, western values and, equally important, to the history of westernization in Turkey. Yet pro-Islamic politicians of the late 1990's, most of whom have joined the JDP, realized that they needed the West and modern/western values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in order to build a broader front against the Kemalist center, and to acquire legitimacy through this new discourse in their confrontation with the secularist establishment. In the face of pressures originating from the military's adamant opposition to the Islamists, which influences attitudes of the judges, high state bureaucracy as well as mainstream secular media, they realized the legitimizing power and the virtue of democracy which turned out to be a means to highlight "people power" vis-à-vis the state power. They knew that they could survive only in a country that was democratically oriented, respecting civil and political rights, and moreover integrated further into the western world, particularly the EU. This discursive turn, speaking the universal language of political modernity instead of Islam's particularities, also served to justify the presence of an Islamic political identity. (Dağı, 2005, 12-13).

6.1.4 Economic interests as causes behind Turkish foreign policy change

Not merely political, but also economic relationships between Turkey and Iran had throughout history been characterised by highs and lows. Economic concerns have traditionally been one of the main drivers of Turkish foreign policy – in fact, economy had already occupied a place at the top of the foreign policy agenda during the Özal leadership (1980-1999). In the early 1980's Turkey under Özal, for example, the economic model of import substitution was replaced with an export-oriented model in what was a sophisticated, successful transformation.

Under the rule of AK Party, economy continued to be one of the significant components of foreign policy – and similarly to Turgut Özal, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attaches a great importance to matters of economy.

According to the Turkish President, Turkey "first needs a strong economy in order to build a robust republic and safeguard democracy". By implication, and as confirmed by the AKP leader's words, this approach also regards a strong economy as "a precondition of an assertive foreign policy".

Ahmet Davutoğlu himself, too, implies that economic interests are among the main foreign policy priorities of those countries which adopt export-oriented economic development model – and thus, for Turkey. Furthermore, in an interview in 2004, he concludes that the business world has become a primary driver of foreign policy.[17]

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[17] Interview with Ahmet Davutoğlu "İş Dünyası artık Dış Politikanın Öncülerinden". Zaman, (April-May, 2004).

But was economy the main reason for the post-2002 Turkish-Iranian rapprochement, or merely one of the less relevant contributing factors?

Economic motivators cannot be denied a crucial role in Turkey's re-engagement with the Middle East. Energy reserves like oil and gas became important determinants of Turkey's foreign orientation, since it was forced to import substantial amounts of gas and oil from Russia, Iran, and the Gulf states. Economic actors, like the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TÜSIAD – *Türk Sanayicileri ve Işadamları Derneği*), a traditionally Western-oriented body that has focused its lobbying activities on European countries and the issue of Turkey's accession to the EU, or the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB – *Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği*) or the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MÜSIAD – *Müstakil Sanayici ve Işadamları Derneği*), all three of which had maintained interests in projects in northern Iraq and the Levant, had played a growing role in efforts to pluralise debates in Turkey on foreign and security policy.

In the economic sphere, the Middle East and North Africa's share in Turkey's total merchandise trade had grown impressively in the analyzed period, from 11.4 percent in 2002 to 16.2 percent in 2008: unusually, it shows a positive trade balance for Turkey, with exports ahead of imports (Tür, 2011).

Even more noteworthy was the fact that after the major global economic crisis in 2010, Turkey's economy continued to grow at a rate of around 8.9%, the highest growth rate in Europe and third in the world.

In this thesis, we have, in part, tried to empirically demonstrate the level of importance and role of economic interests for Turkey under the AKP's administration.

We can, however, also reason that in order to sustain such economic growth as it demonstrated in the 2000's, Turkey had found itself in need of new markets. Therefore, it was only logical for Turkey to pragmatically capitalize on its historical and geographical assets and strive for revitalizing its potential in the Middle East, Balkans and Central Asia – an effort which can barely skip Iran, who possesses among else the world's second largest proven gas reserves (991.6 trillion cubic feet in 2010)[18].

A certain number of analysts[19] indeed regard economy as the main driving force of the AK Party policies. Kemal Kirişçi, as one, regards "the new, post-2000 Turkey" as a trading state[20], viewing Davutoğlu's interdependence, zero-problems and cooperation-oriented approaches as manifestations of such a state (Kirişçi, 2009, 42-45).

The revival of commercial and economic ties with Iran has also proved very popular domestically in Turkey. It was, after all, also due to an eagerness of Turkish businessmen to develop economic relations with Iran and an intensive support of the Turkish political elites, that Turkey-Iran economic relations were able to substantially improve in the 2000's (Atlı, 2011). The increasing influence of industrialists and exporters in determining the course of foreign policy only helped to cement the advancement of bilateral relations. The public sector, business people, business associations and NGOs had now emerged as the new actors of the foreign policy during the tenure of the AKP (Özcan, Turunç, 2011).

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[18] Indeed, at the end of 2001 Iran began to export natural gas to Turkey, opening up the most successful post-1979 Iranian gas export trade.
[19] Atli, Kirisci, Hale, Kutlay, Karacasulu, Kaptanoglu, Onis among others.
[20] This invokes Richard Rosecrance's definition of the "trading state", which pursues a foreign policy based on interdependence, foreign trade, cooperation and economic development instead of military capabilities, territorial control and power struggle in international relations.

A similar process had indeed taken place with regard to Turkey's formerly booming economic relations with Syria, in which Turkish industrialists and exporters played a crucial role (Benli Altunışık, Tür 2006).

Furthermore, Turkey has traditionally concentrated on building up bilateral relations on a country-by-country basis, focusing on those states of most importance to Turkey, either politically or economically. This approach has helped Turkey not to be hindered by the sanctions of the international community imposed on Iran. Iran has come forward in part because of its own need to counteract detrimental diplomatic and economic isolation and have an option reach both Turkish and European markets to sell its hydro-carbon resources.

Put differently, the classic paradigm of Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East, geared as it was in the previous decades to security matters, became broader than ever in the 2000's, to include an important economic and energy dimension. On the backdrop, the rising demand for energy caused by the Turkey's growing industrialisation and in a rising volume of transnational trade (Larrabee, Lesser, 2003) constituted two of the most pressing factors speaking for a re-evaluation of its foreign policy priorities.

It was these two factors that were instrumental in inducing the Turkish leadership to reassess the country's relations not only with the Middle East, but also e.g. with the Caucasus region. Pragmatic factors such as economic ties, requirements for energy supplies like oil and gas and foreign trade concerns became important determinants of Turkey's foreign orientation. As Eruysal has put it, "it is a growing assertion of business ties and strategic interests that is nowadays redefining Turkey's external relations with Iran" (Eruysal, 2011).

To conclude, even though traditional ideological and sociopolitical differences remained, significant cooperation between Turkey and Iran grew between 2002 and 2012, regarding the pragmatic issues of economy, trade and energy relations. As such, the mutual trade between the two countries has exploded (particularly after 2004) and had even withstood the global economic recession.

Table 1.1 Turkey's trade with Iran, 2000-2012

	Imports ($bn)	Exports ($bn)	Total ($bn)
2000	0.84	0.24	1.06
2004	1.96	0.81	2.77
2008	8.2	2.03	10.23
2012	11.96	9.92	21.88

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (2013)

6.1.5 Security related concerns as causes behind Turkish foreign policy change

Back in the 1990's, Turkey's regional foreign policy toward Iran and the other countries with Kurdish populations continued to be formulated mainly through the prism of the Kurdish question – followed by the country's fear of Islamic fundamentalism (Hoffmann, 2003; Yavuz, 2003; Oran, 2004). The background of this threat perception must be seen in the concern of the dominant elites over (a) a break-up of the unified Turkish nation-state along ethnic lines and (b) the emergence of an Islamic fundamentalism that could undermine the secularist order of the Turkish state (Seufert,

2002). This threat perception severely affected Turkey's relations with Iran, whilst also affecting the country's ties with Russia and Syria.

In Iran's case, two main issues were in the forefront: Iran's real and alleged support for he PKK[21], and the supposed Iranian effort to export its own theocratic model of polity and support hardline Islamism outside of its territory[22]. Continued PKK attacks in areas adjacent to the Turkish-Iranian border have frequently brought tensions between the two countries, meanwhile Turkey constantly accused Iran of giving the PKK training and logistic support, while sheltering the PKK militants. Certain competition over influence in Central Asia and Caucasus had added to the mutual disavowal.

After 2002, and particularly with the invasion of Iraq, commonalities of interests and threat perceptions concerning both Iraq and the Kurdish issue paved the way for the emergence of a common ground for cooperation between Iran and Turkey. Security-focused cooperation with Iran became more and more necessary due to a "common enemy" – the Kurdish ambitions in Iraq. According to Bayram Sinkaya, the chief Iran analyst of the Turkish Center for Strategic Analysis of the Middle East (*Ortadoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi* – ORSAM), this chain of events was the beginning of the new talk about how Turkey and Iran share a common security perception of what constitutes risks and threats (*„Türkiye ve İran'ın ortak risk ve tehdit algısı hissettiğini söyleyebiliriz"*) (Sinkaya, 2010). Indeed, in February 2006, Turkey and Iran would enter into active bilateral cooperation in the fight against terrorism. In 2008, the two countries went on to sign a memorandum of understanding in order to further increase security

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[21] Up until the 2010's, allegations of Iran's intensive aid to the PKK can be found throughout Turkish media. For example, the government-affiliated Yeni Safak has claimed that the Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan had his book published in Iran by a regime-supported publisher.

[22] In the 2000's, the assassinations of several prominent Turkish intellectuals with supposed Iranian involvement significantly contributed to these suspicions.

cooperation and exchange intelligence to combat the Kurdish PKK and PJAK, as well as to fight organized crime, drug trafficking, enable extradition of criminals and maintain border security[23].

Security concerns have traditionally played a front role in shaping Turkey's relations with countries like Syria, Iraq, and Iran who all share borders with Turkey and are directly involved with the Kurdish issue. However, with the invasion of Iraq, both countries found themselves, as Bayram Sinkaya terms it in his 2010 speech, „forced quickly to take common steps" due to their proximity with Iraq. Moreover, Sinkaya sees Turkey as the one who began the initiative, and Iran as the joining party. In the same manner, Turkey's undeniable rapprochement with Iran in security and strategic matters is described by the Turkish press as a „reactive step" taken in a time of crisis, with both actors aware of their differing interests[24].

At this time, also Turkey's deteriorating relations with Israel and limitations on its relations with the US, side to side with AKP's pro-Islamic discourse has been welcomed by Iran and it generated a positive atmosphere in which Turkey and Iran began to heighten cooperation in the field of security. Concurrently, the Turkey-Iran High-level Cooperation Council (*Türkiye-İran Yüksek Düzeyli İşbirliği Konseyi* – YDİK) was launched.

Speaking of the Iraq invasion aftermath, the Turkish analyst Süleyman Elik of the BİLGESAM Insitute (*Bilge Adamlar Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi*) had also assessed regional security cooperation with Iran as "very necessary" (Elik, 2011).

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[23] 12. Türkiye-İran Yüksek Güvenlik Komisyonu Toplantısı," [The 12th Turkish-Iranian High Security Commission meeting] Radikal, 14 April 2008.
[24] "Post-PKK Operations: Will Turkey Change Its Attitude toward Iran and Syria?" Turkish Daily News, 4 February 2008.

Still, the Turkish military elite was traditionally heavily skeptical of any rejoindring with Iran. As one justification, Turkey's now-Chief of General Staff Hulusi Akar has blamed the differences due to the fact that the threat of "Kurdish nationalism" is much more dangerous for Turkey than for Iran, and as such, Iran does not feel the same urgency in pursuing any action (McCrudy, 2008).

6.1.6 International and institutional reasons as sources of foreign policy change

Similarly, Turkey has been affected by the transformation and changes that took place in the international system since 2002. As such, some scholars, as well as the chief foreign policy strategist Ahmet Davutoğlu himself, subscribe to the view that the transformation in Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East and Iran specifically has been a response to the changes in the international system and environment (Yalvaç, 2015).

In his works, Davutoğlu has stated that there were three main international "earthquakes" that affected Turkish domestic and foreign policies: first, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991; second, the changing geo-political structure immediately after 2001 due to the 9/11 terrorist attacks; with the third earthquake being more complex - emerging in 2011 as a result of both the European economic crisis, and the regional social and political upheaval known as the Arab Spring (Davutoğlu, 2001).

For Davutoğlu, these three events were central to the transformation of Turkish foreign policy.

Other regional and global actors (e.g. the US and the EU) and events (such as the US War on Iraq in 2003 and subsequent instability, but also the Iranian engagement in Syria) made it imperative for Turkey to cooperate with its neighbours. Starting in 2003, the new course of coordination between Ankara, Tehran, and Damascus was based on new security perceptions and overlapping interests. As states neighbouring on Iraq, all three countries were interested in seeing a stable Iraq and rejected the formation of an independent Kurdish state. Both Ankara and Tehran realized the importance of joint cooperation and joint counteraction to any regional threats.

The European Union has been a major force behind the changes in both domestic and foreign policies of Turkey. The AKP adopted the Copenhagen criteria and (in the 2002-2012 time period) pushed for democracy, transparency, human rights measures and limiting the military's influence over civilian politics, which was also reflected in its foreign policy norms of changing its hard power image to more of a soft power similar to the EU's promoting democracy and stability in the region[25].

As opposed to former President Özal (who, in the post-Cold War period remained under the influence of hard power policy represented by the USA), Erdoğan was affected by the compromise and cooperation-oriented soft power policy represented by Europe. Those norms can be said to have strongly affected the foreign policy orientations of Özal

[25] For analyses of the EU's impact on domestic politics see Keyman, F. and Aydın, S. "European Integration and the Transformation of Turkish Democracy," CEPS, EU-Turkey Working Papers, no. 2 (2004); or Meltem Müftüler-Baç, "Turkey's Political Reforms and the Impact of the European Union," *South European Society and Politics 10*, no. 1 (2005).

and Erdoğan leaderships respectively during the Gulf War in 1991 and in the operation on Iraq in 2003.

On the other hand, although Turkey's bid to gain eventual membership of the European Union was stated for years as the governing Justice and Development Party's (AKP) main foreign policy priority, it has had very little effect on its actual policies towards the Middle East (Aydın-Düzgit 2016). This can be explained by the fact that the EU itself *had* no concerted policy towards the region – being, for instance, equally split over the US-led invasion of Iraq.

However, what the process of EU accession called for was a course of institutional and legal change geared to putting an end to any control of civil affairs by the military-bureaucratic authorities and reducing the permanent state of tension between the military-bureaucratic elite and the civil elites, promoting a pluralisation of public life in Turkey. Bringing Turkey into alignment with the EU's norms and standards thus meant making efforts to curtail the privileges of the state military-bureaucratic elite (Çarkoğlu, Toprak 2006; Kramer, 2004; Aydın, 2005; Özdemir, 2006).

The AKP declared accession to the EU to be an absolute priority of Turkey's foreign policy (Grigoriadis, 2004). There were two important reasons for this. On the one hand, the AKP hoped in this way to win an election that it could not possibly have won without the support of the country's pro-European economic actors and media. On the other hand, the party hoped to be able to expand its manoeuvring space vis-à-vis the military-bureaucratic establishment by following the processes of convergence with the EU and the associated reforms. Islamist politicians, according to Sinkaya, saw the EU and the reforms it was requiring from Turkey to implement in order to meet the

Copenhagen criteria as a mechanism that would serve to protect the position they held within Turkish society.

This had brought about another, more or less unforeseen aspect: security-related thinking, connected to the Kurdish question and ideological opposition to the Iranian regime would thus be awarded less place in the new foreign policy. Traditionally, Turkish foreign policy was in the hands of diplomats, bureaucrats, and generals, with civilian-political elites under the supervision of the military Chief of Staff – a situation that led to a permanent state of tension between civilian and military authorities.

There was no institutionalised parliamentary oversight of the military-bureaucratic elite (the General Staff was not subordinate to the defence ministry); the military was in possession of great means to interfere in the work of the administrative bureaucracy; the military had its own intelligence services and tribunals that were not subject to civilian control; and the military budget was autonomous by law. In addition, the military secured its financial autonomy in part by operating businesses of its own, which were tax-exempt. Meanwhile, the army-dominated National Security Council (NSC) had grown into the country's most relevant national decision-making body, an institution with the power to block virtually any policy.

De-militarising foreign policy by way of structural reforms and restrictions on the influence of the military in the beginning of the 2000's, together with structural changes was thus another impulse for renewed relationships with Iran. Limiting the military's reach in foreign policy meant limiting an actor that, for ideological reasons, rejected both cooperation with some countries of the Middle East (such as Iran) and rejected a proactive neighbourhood policy.

Another feature of the changing actor constellations in Turkey was the rising influence of civil society (e. g. business and industry associations and various lobby groups), a development that was reflected in a pluralisation of debates on foreign relations. Civil society started to act as a counterweight to the centralist state. In earlier years the escalation of the civil conflict in southeast Anatolia had set narrow limits to any engagement of civil society, with the whole of public space in Turkey dominated by the repressive measures taken to "protect the unitary and secularist Republic," i. e. in the context of the military struggle to defeat the PKK. Change in this regard also facilitated lessening the opposition toward Iran.

Conclusion

As the thesis argued, the period of 2002 to 2012 has witnessed the revival of pragmatism and the relative retreat of ideology in Turkish foreign policy towards Iran and this new mentality has profoundly and positively affected Turkish-Iranian relations. Since 2002 – and at least up until 2012 – Turkish political elites have been more inclined to overlook the set of traditional political-ideological tensions with Iran in order to make a 'pragmatic rapprochement' with Iran possible.

What has motivated this and what were the sources of such foreign policy reorientation on the part of Turkey, governed by the Islamist AKP party? This thesis has argued that the course of Turkey's relationship towards Iran, formerly shaped by military-

political and security considerations, had taken on a significant shift as the AKP entered into power in 2002.

In the 2000's, Turkey's relations with Iran can be assessed to be largely shaped by economic and commercial considerations. The impact of economic considerations in determining and shaping Turkish foreign policy towards Iran has been understated in studies and literature, with very few researchers looking at the economic dimension of the relationship from the Turkish perspective and examining through what channels the economic considerations affected Turkish foreign policy towards Iran.

Admittedly, since 2002, cooperation between Turkey and Iran gained momentum in a number of various areas such as security, energy and the nuclear issue. As a result the number and intensity of bilateral dialogue and cooperation mechanisms such as reciprocal visits, meetings, conferences and fairs increased substantially. In this context, Turkey-Iran High Security Commission and Joint Economic Commission meetings and fairs constituted main mechanisms that brought Turkey and Iran together. This high level of interaction in different areas from politics to economics positively affected Turkish-Iranian relations and facilitated the rise of bilateral trade relations and vice versa.

The impetus for this was, in part, economic. Turkey's role as a trading state with rising economic needs and an economy that has withstood the global economic recession, looking for partners in its surroundings. Particularly during the second AKP government it became apparent that the authorities are no longer interested determining the 'national interests' in terms of a narrowly defined national security, and that national interests are instead tightly linked to economic considerations such as the need to trade, diversify export markets and attract foreign investment.

Pursuant to this, Turkey's exports to Iran increased 13 times and imports from Iran soared 9 times during the 2000's. As a result, volume of bilateral trade increased by 10 times and had promptly exceeded $10 billion, whilst Turkey was still subjected to a sort of asymmetric dependence on Iran. Moreover, a large part of this growth has been caused by the booming crude oil and natural gas imports from Iran. Thus, Turkey's dependence on Iran has increased as a result of growing energy imports.

To summarise, the overall research results and application of the designed foreign policy model highlights the necessity of applying a wider approach in the quest to assess Turkish foreign policy change, while taking into account the different domestic and international sources in order to achieve a comprehensive explanation. Doing so, the research has identified the nature and scope of Turkish foreign policy change towards Iran and has evaluated the relative roles of international and domestic political, economic, and ideational sources serving as its driving mechanisms.

Summary

There has been a significant increase in cooperation between Turkey and Iran in the decade from 2002 to 2012, the first ten years of successive Justice and Development Party governments. Both countries' goverments contributed to a certain rationalization of mutual interactions in order to replace the antagonism and suspicions of the recent past.

This thesis investigates the different sources of Turkish-Iranian rapprochement, namely the individual drivers behind the change in Turkish foreign policy toward Iran. There has been a number of conflicting hypotheses, as the existing literature ascribes the foreign policy change to neo-Ottomanist politics, to a re-orientation of Turkish foreign policy toward the Muslim World and toward the East (a *shift-of-axis* explanation), to the influence of Islam in Turkish politics, and to more pragmatic concerns such as economic and security interests.

As each of those aspects could have contributed to the foreign policy change, a more nuanced view is required. An explanatory model was designed in order to analyze the relevance of individual sources of foreign policy change, taking into account both domestic and international factors that have altered the Turkish-Iranian dynamics.

The thesis posits that whilst the rapprochement with Iran did overlap with the proclaimed aims of the Turkish foreign policy as delineated by Ahmet Davutoglu, it was mainly brought on by economic and security concerns. Concerns regarding trade and especially energy relations (such as the crossborder flow of oil, gas and capital) have had a crucial impact on the changing Turkish foreign policy, together with security concerns. Further Turkish (and Iranian) attempts at reconciliation would be gradually overshadowed by major political divisions brought on by the Arab Spring.

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