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Diploma Thesis Project
Analytical Eclecticism in an Analysis of Turkey's Regional Foreign Policy

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

This thesis looks at Turkish regional foreign policy in a turbulent Middle East. In particular, even though it touches upon the early years of AKP governance in order to provide a contextual framework, this thesis focuses on the period of the Arab uprisings, when a major reorganisation of the region's political landscape changed how both regional and external actors interacted with one another. Turkey was one of the countries that was most affected by these geopolitical changes, perhaps only second to the Arab countries in upheaval. This was partly due to the structure of regional politics and partly due to the growing engagement of Ankara with the region, as we will see in the following chapters. Moreover, the country's geographic strategy vulnerability makes it susceptible to Kurdish militias and a consistent refugee inflow from Syria. These factors, together with many others, all together prompted a response by part of Turkish leadership which has been object of intense debate in academic circles. The discussion in centred around the inability to fully understand Turkish regional foreign policy shifts in connection to the Arab uprisings.

There have been many different accounts of said foreign policy changes, which all point in different directions. This is a major problem as it prevents effective advancement in better understanding Turkey as a regional and global actor in international politics. Moreover, this has also consequences that transcend the ivory tower of academic debate, as analysts and experts worldwide were often puzzled when confronted with certain foreign policy choices by part of Turkish leadership. If Turkish regional policy is at times incomprehensible and unpredictable, how can allies and other partners hope to cooperate with Turkey, and how can strategic choices on political, military and security matters be taken without a reliable partner?

With this thesis I aim at providing a more comprehensive account of Turkish regional foreign policy vis-a-vis the Arab uprisings. I will do so by providing explanations on different levels of analysis; this will also demonstrate that different methodologies need not necessarily wield different results. I will not attempt to compare the findings of different accounts of Turkish policy, nor to assess which theory has a higher explanatory power. I rather aim at integrating the findings of different approaches, which all together can hopefully better account for Turkish foreign policy variation. I look into the Arab uprisings time period as this is when Turkey behaved most unpredictably on the regional stage, and as this is the period that had the direst consequences on Turkey, its citizens and on the region at large.

I proceed in my analysis by first drawing a brief literature review, then defining the theoretical framework and delving into a methodological discussion which touches upon the idea of a mixed methodology; I discuss different methodologies, the main concepts and variables that are analysed, defining also the geographical scope and time period. In the third chapter I delve into an analysis of the ideational factors that inform Turkish regional foreign policy; this is mainly focused on the political thinking of Davutoğlu, who, as we will see, has had a huge influence on theory and conduct of Turkish foreign policy. The fourth chapter will be devoted to analysing Turkish policy in practice in many of its manifestations across the Middle East, then focusing particularly on the Syria policy, which as we will see constitutes the most puzzling manifestation of Turkish miscalculation that had dire consequences on the region's stability, on the war in Syria and on Turkey's image abroad. In the last chapter I answer to my research question; this answer will hopefully be able to draw its information from different levels of analysis, providing a more complete view of Turkish regional foreign policy during the Arab uprisings. Said policy will then be assessed in the hope that it will help me ascertain whether the methodology adopted was of any use in reaching a deeper understanding of the matter at hand.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

1. Introduction

Historically, Turkish foreign policy (TFP) has hardly been unpredictable; hence, the field of study has always been somewhat classical, rigid and orthodox. After the end of the Cold War, a changed international system has allowed Turkey to slowly change its foreign policy (FP), but it is not until the early 2000s that an underlying change in Turkish society, identity and politics had the opportunity of giving a new momentum to TFP transformation. In the last decade the Turkish political system has seen a major reorganisation, and one of the many consequences in such change, perhaps the most apparent transformation to the external observer, has been a shift in Ankara's otherwise restrained and status quo oriented FP. On the one hand, these changes found unprepared observers, who often enough gave wrong interpretations of the events unfolding under their watch. On the other hand, said changes have sparked a renewed interest in TFP, and new alternative approaches in TFP analysis (TFPA) have proliferated (see for example Kirişçi et Kaptanoğlu 2011, Keyman 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b, Bilgin 2005, 2009, 2011).

TFP is worthy of being studied due to its political and scholarly relevance. TFP is very present in political science reviews due to the uniqueness and importance of Turkey in the region and due to the country's position in between macro-regions. Notwithstanding Turkey's large presence in literature, I will argue in section three of this chapter that there is still room for further exploration. TFPA is particularly relevant due to the importance of Turkey on the regional stage: TFP casts a long shadow over the Kurds living in the country and on its borders. Turkey is also one of the major actors involved in the War in Syria, and Ankara is also entangled in a race for regional leadership that pushes the country into trying to expand its sphere of influence across the Middle East. Moreover, Turkey plays a role in the management of migratory flows for the EU while its FP shifts redefine the country's role within NATO and the relationship to its allies.

2. Literature Review

In this section I present a review of the literature on TFP. The purpose is to cover as much as possible of what has been written on TFP so as to identify a gap in the literature that can be filled by this dissertation. I therefore proceed in summarising the main interpretations of TFP under the lenses of different theoretical frameworks, while also looking at its modern history from a historical perspective. Most of the selected literature was written by Turkish authors: this is due to a

preponderance of Turkish accounts in TFP literature. Understandably, TFP in one or more of its many dimensions is the main object of analysis of many Turkish International Relations (IR) scholars, who normally have a deeper understanding of their own country's history and changing identity. This is not to say that there are no good Western accounts of TFP, because there are as we will see in the sections below, but as you will be able to see Turkish authors wrote most of the literature on TFP.

2(a) Positivist Approaches

When analysing a research paper, it is easy to mistake its scientific method of observation as proof of its positivist nature, whereas it is not the epistemological outlook that defines what kind of paper it is, but the ontological assumptions about social reality that are important (Yalvaç 2014). Positivists assume rational behaviour and predictable outcomes, ignoring underlying structures and mutually constitutive processes. Positivism in TFPA is manifest in a number of ways: the determinants of FP are divided in domestic and international, and the state is abstracted from society. Hence, FP is conceptualised as an autonomous political activity carried out by an ontologically given state: this is obviously a state centric approach. Liberals and realists are of common agreement on a number of points: they both centre their analysis on the state, viewed as a rational actor pursuing its goals. Said actor possesses preferences and identities that are assumed to be fixed over time (Yalvaç 2014).

Realism: Turkish IR research is generally realist, state centric and security oriented. Within Turkey, IR is mainly understood as foreign policy analysis (FPA) with a focus on the policymaking processes and the state, with little to no reference to internal social structures, nor to domestic determinants of FP. Realist accounts are therefore written not only by academia, but by diplomats and journalists as well, and tend to be problem oriented and can sometimes be ideologically biased (Yalvaç 2014). TFP is often seen as taking place in historical periods, and its analysis adopts an empiricist method focused on determinate events (see Gönlübol et Sar 1996). Other works employ neoclassical realism in their TFPA so as to explain how leaders' perceptions have a significant impact on FP choices (see İşeri et Dilek 2011, 2012). A neorealist structural framework of analysis has been instead employed in analysing Turkish-Israeli relations in order to predict the future developments of said relationship (see Oğuzlu 2010). Finally, historical materialist accounts focusing on structural variables analysed the concept of *strategic depth* as primarily focused on hard power, even though former Prime Minister (PM) Davutoğlu claims *strategic depth* is mainly a soft power tool focusing on Turkey's societal links to the Middle East (see Yalvaç 2012).

Liberalism: the early years of government of the Justice and Development Party (AKP, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) saw an emphasis on liberal/neoliberal policies, both at home and abroad. This prompted an increase in the number of TFP interpretations adopting a liberal institutionalist framework of analysis. Liberal approaches adopt concepts such as soft power, seen as separated from hard power, in order to explain FP outcomes. These are, however, just different FP tools, and are not theoretically different in nature, as they remain within a state centric framework of analysis. Liberals believe in international institutional cooperation to overcome the otherwise anarchic nature of the international system, and they also argue that liberal democracies do not wage war on each other (Yalvaç 2014). In the Turkish case, liberal FPA focuses on geopolitics, domestic consolidation of democratic rule and modernisation, which, it is argued, ultimately increase Turkey's influence in the region, also providing more flexibility in its dealings with the EU and other international partners (see Keyman 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b). Other liberal analyses argue that a process of de-securitisation is in the happening in Turkish relations towards its neighbours, in a move to create complex interdependence at the economic and civil society levels (see Kirişçi 2009, 2012, Kirişçi et Kaptanoğlu 2011).

2(b) Post-Positivist Approaches

Constructivism and Poststructuralism: constructivists propose an intersubjective understanding of the world, whereby everything is a social construct, FP included. Material capabilities are only understood and valued when they are part of a social context. Identities are also constructed and define state interest and FP, which is mutually constituted by identities and interests (unlike for realists, for whom identities are given and state interest is determined by systemic constraints). The world is understood as an intersubjective reality where discourse and language can shape reality itself. There are different constructivist accounts of TFP: these differ mainly on the basis of how identity affects the FP-making process. A strand of constructivist literature focuses on identity differences and on how each actor has a different perception of their respective identities (Yalvaç 2014); these studies mainly look at Turkey-Greece and Turkey-EU relations (see Gündoğdu 2001, Rumelili 2004, 2007, Kösebalaban 2007). A second strand of constructivist TFPA belongs to critical security studies, of particular relevance the work done by Bilgin (2005, 2009, 2011) and, for what regards Turkey-Israel relations, Balcı and Kardaş (2012), who focus on the threat perception of the main actors doing FP in Turkey (the military, the Kemalist elite and the AKP). Of particular interest to my dissertation, a paper adopting an eclectic methodology that combines realism and constructivism (see Uzer 2010); similarly, there is an example of research paper featuring the combined methodologies of constructivism and liberalism. The latter stresses the importance of the

identities shaping threat perception in the Kemalist, Islamist and Nationalist blocks, which are viewed as competing in imposing their own identity on society as the overarching national identity (see Bozdağlıoğlu 2004). Many constructivist accounts are centred around Neo-Ottoman discourse and identity (Aydın 2003; Balcı and Miş 2008; Bilgin and Bilgiç 2011), while liberal constructivist accounts focus on the links between domestic politics and TFP (Kirisçi 2009; Oniş 2011; Atlı 2011). In TFPA we can also find research that looks at how political discourse influences FP practice. Historical and geographical features may for example be used in a discourse with the aim of constructing an exceptional identity that will rationalise, or justify, FP choices (see Yanık 2011). As is often the case for poststructuralist interpretations, we can also find a critique to the domestic/external divide, which views FP as a constructed myth that is part of a bigger strategy of internal power relations (see Balcı 2010). These are of particular interest as they focus on the discursive construction of reality, and will be referenced when looking at Davutoğlu's *Weltanschaung* in the following chapter.

2(c) Turkey in International Relations Theory: a Regional Power?

Many scholars agree on the fact that the global system is witnessing a major restructuring, but full spectrum contenders to US hegemony have yet to surface. We are rather witnessing to an increase in actors that develop one or two dimensions of power, in a process referred to as regionalisation of world politics. Regions become increasingly important in our understanding of the international system, and fields of inquiry such as regional economic integration and regional security are flourishing. The reshuffling of world politics makes room for regional powerhouses to become influential in regional governance, economic integration and cooperative security management (Kardaş 2013).

The most cited categorisation of Turkey in the international system is that of a regional power, as it is a regional pivotal actor that cannot be ignored in a third country's dealings with the region. Moreover, the country holds a defined hierarchical position in global power distribution. Given Turkey's growing activism and involvement in its larger neighbourhood, the country has been normally defined as a regional power; however, Turkey barely figures in the growing body of literature on regional powers, where it hardly features as a case study (Kardaş 2013).

The most commonly used indicators of the status of a regional power are three: first, material power resources, such as population, GDP, size and military power; second, the degree to which a state is able fo influence regional politics; lastly, whether a state is perceived by others or thinks of itself as

a regional power (Kardaş 2013). Turkish composite material resources place the country in a good position relatively to its Middle Eastern neighbours. Also for what regards soft power, Turkey's standing in the region is very good (until 2011 at least). Ankara has a growing level of influence on regional interactions, for what regards political, economic and security exchanges. Just taking into consideration the main contemporary regional security challenges, the equation would be incomplete without Turkey: the Iranian nuclear issue, Arab-Israeli conflict, and Syrian conflict, all count Turkey as a major intervening variable. Nevertheless, the country is far from being the hegemonic power in the region, as it cannot hope to be the agenda setter on its own (Kardaş 2013).

2(d) Foreign Policy History and Discussion

When Turkey's Independence War against Western colonial powers came to a victorious end in 1923, the new Turkish state's army and economy were outdated and in a very bad shape. This forced the country into adopting a non-interventionist stance that only allowed for the maintenance of a fragile status quo (Hale 2012; Karaosmanoğlu 2000). Turkey remained neutral for roughly the same reasons also during WWII (Deringil 2004). After the end of WWII, a rising Soviet Union pushed Turkey into the West arms; this new alignment bolstered Ankara's defences via economic and military alliances and ultimately NATO membership in 1952 (Kubicek 2008). This alignment curtailed TFP autonomy; maintenance of the status quo, territorial integrity and border security became the milestones of TFP, while relations to the Middle East were neglected (Altunışık 2009).

With the 1990s, Turkey started focusing more on cooperative regional security and expressed an interest in multilateralism more broadly (Karaosmanoğlu 2000). The end of the Cold War has been traditionally associated to a paradigm shift in TFP, from caution, protection of territorial integrity and neutrality to multilateral activism (Sayarı 2000). The most cited example testifying to said paradigm shift is Turkey's involvement in the Gulf War; Ankara had normally avoided getting caught into regional politics (Larrabee et Lesser 2003).

The greatest variation in TFP has however occurred with the single party rule of the AKP, starting in the early 2000s, along three main dimensions. The first is surely an increased amount of international political activism, that resulted in a greater integration in the international system and in the *zero problems with the neighbours policy,* which stresses cooperative policies (Davutoğlu 2008). The second dimension of change is in Turkey's relations to its Arab neighbourhood (Öniş et Yılmaz 2009), often interpreted as Ankara turning its back to the West (its traditional alignment) in favour of the Muslim world (Öniş 2011). This is also referred to with *Islamisation of TFP* (Bilgin et

Bilgiç 2011). The third element of change is the multidimensionality of TFP, which came at the expenses of security driven mono-dimensional FP; the former focuses on diplomatic, economic and cultural exchanges (Öniş 2011), and on soft power more broadly, promoting interdependence and economic integration (Sözen 2010). Finally, scholars discuss a re-securitisation of TFP in connection to the Arab uprisings and the war in Syria (Özpek et Demirağ 2014): this is further discussed below.

There are many critical accounts of AKP's FP; Ülgen (2012), for example, holds that *zero problems* doctrine is obsolete and cannot hope to manage the Arab uprisings; Turkey will therefore have to change its FP. Taşpınar (2012) agrees, viewing *zero problems* as a no longer viable policy vis-a-vis the Arab uprisings as, the author argues, Ankara is dealing with *zero neighbours without problems.* Özel (2012) also stresses the fact that US withdrawal from Iraq and the Arab uprisings significantly limited Turkey's room for manoeuvre, as its activism rested upon a status quo which is no longer there; he also argues that the structure of regional politics will come to shape TFP. Robins (2013) comes as far as saying that *zero problems* was immediately put aside to make room for the *popular legitimacy policy* as soon as protests spread across the MENA region. Dağı (2012) stresses how *zero problems policy* was completely ignored in relations with Syria and Iraq, also highlighting an aspirations capabilities gap that is damaging Turkey's credibility. Öniş (2014) focuses instead on the incoherence of *zero problems* implementation across the regional spectrum, which ultimately resulted in strategic adaptations. Tol (2012) and Fuat Keyman (2012) both argue that Turkey's democratic credentials and domestic justice are necessary conditions for it to project soft power. They also argue that the inability to find a democratic solution to the Kurdish problem, together with a rather negative democratic record at home, undermine Ankara's FP commitments. Çağaptay (2013) agrees and questions TFP sustainability, as the country's own democracy and human rights record undermines its soft power. Moreover, the author insists, Turkey has to maintain its political and economic stability so as to remain a regional attraction pole. Kardaş (2012) instead argues that the central notion in TFPA should be *the role of a central country*, while *zero problems* was just a discursive tool to break away from the old FP idea of encirclement. Oğuzlu (2012) agrees, dividing *zero problems* into two versions, before and after the Arab uprisings.

3. Gaps in the Literature and Critique

TFPA has traditionally been realist, state centric and security oriented. This has left no room for studying the roots of TFP, which may be structural as well as domestic, rooted in identity or discourse. Moreover, orthodox TFPA can be ideologically biased, especially if carried out by

Turkish scholars in think tanks. Some attempts were put in place to account for internal variables, most notably İşeri et Dilek (2011, 2012) neoclassical realist analyses, but these tend to overlook systemic variables. AKP's initial liberal facade created a surge in liberal TFP accounts (see Keymans 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b): these, however, blinded by a liberal progressive and linear understanding of democratisation, completely missed out on what was really happening in Turkey. Liberal democratisation policies were instrumental in the disbanding of the Kemalist block and in the weakening of the military as a guardian of secularism: with the excuse of making the country more democratic, in line with Western liberal standards, the Islamists got read of any constraint to their project of reconstructing Turkish identity as a fundamentally Islamic one, in a Neo-Ottoman reading of Turkish history. Consolidation of democratic rule, modernisation and liberalisation of the economy, supposed to increase Ankara's flexibility in its dealings with the EU, actually brought the country on the verge of authoritarianism. Other liberal accounts (Kirişçi 2009, 2012, Kirişçi et Kaptanoğlu 2011) insist on a process of de-securitisation in Turkey's relations towards its neighbours so as to create regional complex interdependence. These TFP analyses were blatantly incorrect, as it is now clear with the benefit of hindsight: the most obvious example is Syria, where Ankara opted for military intervention rather than for complex interdependence.

TFP shifts prompted also an increase in constructivist accounts, in the search of a better understanding of TFP: positivist approaches had clearly missed the biggest TFP shift in a century, and needed to be revisited, or integrated. Bilgin (2005, 2009, 2011) focuses her critical research on the threat perception of the actors doing FP in Turkey: these kind of insights are surely useful, but I argue they cannot account for all variation in TFP. Of particular interest to my dissertation, are papers combining different methodologies: Uzer (2010) combines realism and constructivism in a rather weak analysis of TFP, in what is a shy attempt to putting in place what Hinnebusch et Ehteshami (2014) do more consistently: using variants of realism that account for internal factors in FP-making. Bozdağlıoğlu (2004) combines instead constructivism and liberalism, but this analysis does not take into account systemic variables and misses out on the big picture more broadly. Poststructuralist interpretations view FP as an instrument of internal power relations (Balcı 2010): there might be a grain of truth to that, especially for what regards Turkish internecine political battles, but I argue that FP cannot be solely treated as an instrument of internal power relations as it would not account for the external variables influencing it. This said, Yanık (2011), for example, argues that particular features of the state can be used in political discourse to construct an exceptional identity that will support FP choices. This is a particularly interesting point of view I will get back to in Chapter 3.

While there have been already attempts at using a plurality of methods in interpreting TFP, these were limited and often missed important parts of the explanation. I aim at moving beyond these limitations by looking at TFP on different levels of analysis and merging their findings in a more comprehensive view of TFP change. I have not found other examples of such attempts in the literature. As Kardaş (2013) concludes: "Regional-level theorising will benefit from an eclectic approach that draws insights from different theoretical traditions, as the phenomenon of regions and regional powers involve elements of material power, as well as non-material variables" (Kardaş 2013, p. 643).

4. Introduction to The Middle East as a Regional System

In this section I put Turkey into context, defining the geographical limits of the region my TFPA will focus on while stressing the characteristics Turkey does and does not share with it. This will help in contextualising TFP vis-a-vis its neighbours.

Defining the geographical limits of the Middle East is no simple task. It is easy to be caught up in the constructivist debates over the definition of Middle East, over the West centric origin of the term and over its post-colonial heritage; moreover, these issues are also directly linked to all new possible forms of neo-colonialism affecting the countries of the global south (see Bilgin 2004, Said 1995). I will therefore adopt a working definition of the region's boundaries. It is normally argued that there are some common traits that characterise Middle Eastern nation states. These are, in the political realm, the low level of democratisation and high level of authoritarianism; for what regards the economic dimension, the high number of rentier economies and the low level of economic liberalisation; finally, at the cultural level, a predominantly Arab and Islamic identity (Fawcett 2013). The growing literature on regional systems suggests that geographic definitions do not necessarily reflect regional systems, which are instead defined by cultural and demographic similarities, trade integration, regional international organisations, and interdependence, which all together define a region on the bases of degree of interaction (Kardaş 2013).

It should be kept in mind that these are generalised characteristics which can see a great deal of variance over the large geographical span taken into consideration; for the purpose of the dissertation, all nation states located between Mauritania to the far West corner and Iran to the far East corner, always remaining to the North of the Sahara desert, will constitute the Middle East and North Africa, or MENA region, to which I also refer to with Middle Eastern regional system or

Middle East for ease of reference. Said regional system sees at its geographic core Arab nations, with non-Arab states located at its periphery. The latter, however, remain intertwined with the region due to their geographical position, their involvement in the regional balance of power and in connection to transnational identities and politics (Hinnebusch 2014b). Even though Turkey lies at the north-eastern periphery of the Middle East, it remains an important actor in the region, to which it naturally belongs due to shared economic, societal, cultural and security links. This puts the country in a difficult position, as it operates in an environment characterised by multilayered identities: national identities often clash with religious or tribal identities, which are transnational and do not reflect national borders (Hinnebusch 2014a). This is especially the case for Turkey, which hosts a large Kurdish minority (shared with Syria, Iraq and Iran) and faces a Kurdish insurgency.

The Middle Eastern regional system is certainly one of the most anarchic ones due to its complexity and due to the irredentism embedded at its formation. Power imbalances are inherent to arbitrary boundary drawing, and balancing the Middle East has required countless wars, leading to continuous turmoil and very few periods of peace and prosperity. Historical records show that the strategies of Middle Eastern states have chiefly fallen into two categories: status quo actors balance with global patrons in order to contain regional threats, while revisionist regimes reverse the balancing act in order to mobilise regional alliances to balance against global powers and their regional allies (Hinnebusch 2014a). Ankara is normally viewed as a status quo actor and as the second US ally in the region.

So how can the researcher properly address the methodological challenges posed by this very complicated region?

5. Methodological Discussion

I hereto posit my research question and delve into the methodological discussion. With this dissertation I approach TFPA employing methodological pluralism. Hence, the research question will be of a dual nature itself, explanatory and interpretative.

• Why have we witnessed to a shift in Turkey's regional foreign policy in correspondence of the Arab uprisings and what ideational factors allowed for such shift?

In order to answer to this question, I aim at putting into practice what Bourbeau (2015) lays out in his book *Security: Dialogue Across Disciplines*. Methods that are normally associated to a discipline may be used by other disciplines: ethnography, for example, need not belong solely to anthropology. Same for experimental research design, discourse analysis, content analysis and statistical analysis. Scholars increasingly use a combination of these methods when studying international security. The process of combining methods can take three forms: an intra-qualitative or intra-quantitative combination, whereby several qualitative or quantitative methods are combined. Secondly, a sequential method allowing for evidence obtained with one method to be enriched by or compared to findings originating from other methods. Finally, a concurrent method, which allows for data to be collected simultaneously, providing a comprehensive explanation. The most largely used of said eclectic methods are the subsequent and the concurrent method. "Overall, the incorporation of a multiplicity of research methods into our quest to better understand security is both immensely valuable and desirable" (Bourbeau 2015, p. 16).

With this dissertation I also aim at proving wrong the thesis whereby "critical approaches to security are incompatible with methods generally associated with positivist epistemology, whereas orthodox or traditional approaches to security cannot work with anything other than a positivist epistemology" (Bourbeau, Balzacq and Dunn Cavelty 2015, p. 128). Such incompatibility must not come as a surprise: Neo-utilitarian theories such as realism, liberalism and all their descends are generally considered positivist approaches, while critical and constructivist approaches are defined as post-positivist ones. Postmodernist constructivists oppose empiricism and behaviourism, aiming at understanding, not explaining, the social reality. Modernist constructivists, such as realists and positivists, aim instead at explaining social reality. These epistemological disagreements are then translated into method: constructivist and critical scholars often overlook positivist methodology, favouring discourse analysis and ethnography. Neo-utilitarians limit themselves to covering-law techniques and do not indulge in ethnographic studies. This methodological divide effectively prevents any cross-fertilisation, keeping the inductive separated from the deductive, the qualitative aside from the quantitative (Bourbeau et al. 2015).

5(a) Methodological Triangulation

Balzacq (2014) suggests a triangulation of methods in order to finally overcome the epistemological divide mentioned above, bringing about advancement of theory. In the visual representation of triangulation below we can see how every method provides distinctive evidence of the phenomenon taken into consideration (A, B). Combined, these two methods can give rise to an original

Triangulation

A   C   B

Process tracing   Discourse analysis
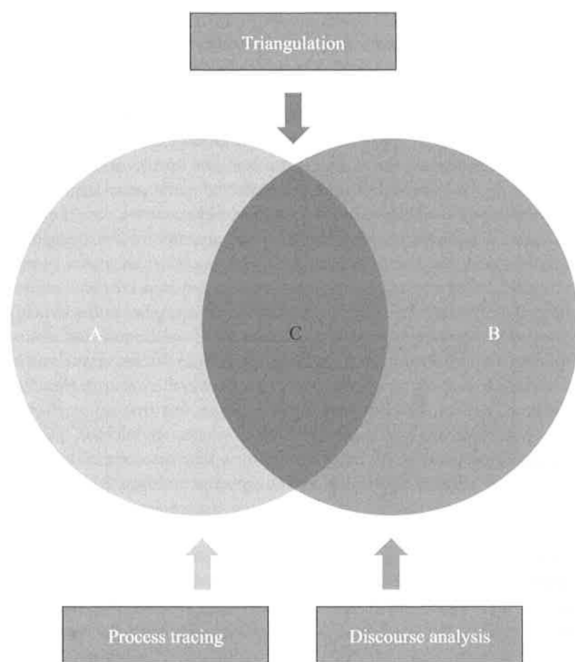
perspective (C). By avoiding cross-fertilisation, discourse analysis misses perspectives A and C, while positivist approaches miss perspectives B and C. Triangulation by method, or multi-method triangulation, allows the researcher to determine whether convergence occurs, increasing the validity of the findings. More importantly, it allows for new, otherwise missed results to arise, a new more comprehensive view C. Indeed, triangulation bears the best fruits when methods are not viewed as substitutes, but as complementary. We should be "recognising the need to cut across traditional divides and to shift the discussion toward the factors that unite security scholars rather than those that divide them" (Bourbeau et al. 2015, p. 136).

I argue that this precise version of triangulation is extremely difficult to put into practice. However, Balzacq's (2014) does suggest a fruitful direction for the advancement of security studies. I aim at providing explanations of TFP change that originate from different levels of analysis. Referring back to the visual representation above, I will not delve into the monumental quest of generating perspective C, but will rather provide a holistic explanation/interpretation that will account for perspectives A and B. If we are to view them as complementary, and not substitutes, as Balzacq's (2014) suggests himself, then A and B will still be a more comprehensive explanation than either one of the two. As analyses A and B occur on different levels of analysis, for example the structural and the ideological, perspective C will not exist. If the creation of original perspective C were possible, and I have not found any example of this in the literature, I will miss out on part of the explanation. If, though, perspective C could not possibly exist, an account that includes both perspectives A and C would still be more comprehensive than either one of the two. This is therefore how triangulation will be understood and treated in this thesis. Triangulation is considered as an explanation/interpretation originating concurrently from different levels of analysis.

I adopt a concurrent method of triangulation, looking at data from two different points of view , but without comparing the two findings; this is not a comparative analysis of TFP, which would try to assess which factors hold higher explanatory power. Rather, this is a comprehensive account of TFP changes, which will consider all explanations as equally valuable as long as they are reliable and

methodologically sound. As further argued below, *complex realism* provides a deep understanding of the MENA region and its actors. One level of analysis will therefore adopt this approach to the study of the MENA region, with the aim of integrating its findings with the insights provided by an analysis of the ideological tendencies influencing TFP. I will look at Turkey's external environment, its systemic constraints and its state features, integrating these findings with an analysis of secondary sources that look into ideas, as reported in public speeches and publications.

5(b) Complex Realism

The methodology laid out below will allow me to answer to the explanatory part of my research question, identifying the motives behind the shift in TFP in its immediate neighbourhood. In one of the most complete studies of Middle Eastern politics, Hinnebusch and Ehteshami (2014) employ what they refer to with *complex realism* in order to carry out their analysis. This term refers "to varieties of realism that accept that several levels of analysis, notably the internal (domestic) as well as the international systemic level, have major impacts on state behaviour and international politics" (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2014, p. 351). The authors argue that complex realism is the best instrument in understanding the region's geopolitics, as this methodology acknowledges the importance of the internal factors ultimately influencing the policymaking process: these include, for example, the political elite's threat perception, often shaped by identity, and its capacity to employ state power (Hinnebusch 2014a).

The authors therefore employ insights from other epistemological traditions, including structural theories, constructivist theories and historical sociology. The result is a comprehensive understanding of the region's dynamics, which encompasses several levels of analysis and therefore many different aspects of what it means to do FP in the Middle East. Especially in the MENA region, it is important to look inside the realist Waltzian blackbox representing actors on the regional stage so as to understand their domestic structures and the features of the state (Hinnebusch 2014b). I adopt the very same methodology, and not a more "pure" variant of realist theories, as there is one very problematic realist assumption concerning the MENA region: the idea of nation state, understood as the congruence of national identity and territorial borders that result in a cohesive unity of intent. Middle Eastern borders were arbitrarily drawn, and mass loyalty to the state is impeded by either transnational identities or substate groups. The ultimate result of said incongruence is a pervasive irredentism, a dissatisfaction of the un-matching of territorial borders and imagined communities (Hinnebusch 2014b).

Substate communities, be them religious or ethnic, are transnational and span across borders (Hinnebusch 2014b). This is especially the case for the large Kurdish minority living in Turkey; said ethnic group, and especially its armed wing, the Kurdistan's Workers Party (PKK, Partîya Karkerén Kurdîstan), create a security and sovereignty issue for Ankara. This concern is shared with Iran, Iraq and Syria, and while cases of cooperation between the latter are present, in other instances they have silently supported the Kurdish minority in the neighbour's backyard when it served their interests. Ankara's policy in Syria, for example, could not be understood without this key constructivist insight. Far from employing purely constructivist theories, complex realism allows the researcher to make sense of TFP without abandoning materialist considerations. Ankara's position in the regional balance of power and its geographical strategic vulnerability are factors that cannot be ignored either. Turkey shares one of its longest borders with Syria, a nation in continuous turmoil since 2011. This exposes it to consistent refugee flows and to attrition episodes with Syrian forces. Turkey's geography makes it susceptible to this kind of issues as well as to Kurdish militias (Ayata 2015, Robins 2014), and these are material factors that cannot be ignored in TFPA.

Hinnebusch (2014b) maintains that Middle Eastern policymakers are essentially realist because they have to deal with the multiple pervasive threats characterising the region. According to the author, what matters the most is the pervasive balancing nature of the region. Overall, falling in realist macro-categories, Middle Eastern states either bandwagon with the global hegemonic power or challenge the global hegemony. The balancing strategies adopted by regional actors vary considerably, as a state's position in the regional balance of power and its geographical strategic vulnerability are the most likely determinants of the threats it faces. A state's power resources (wealth, population, size, social coherence) also concur in determining the FP stance adopted by countries such as Turkey. While most countries adopt a defensive realist posture, the states with more power resources may adopt an offensive realist stance in the pursuit of regional hegemony. Nowadays, many of the material power resources just mentioned belong to the non-Arab countries, Iran and Turkey, which are indeed in pursuit of regional hegemony (Hinnebusch 2014b).

Turkey used to be a status quo power in a defensive realist posture, and has traditionally been a bandwagoning actor as well as the most important US ally in the region after Israel. This was partly due to NATO membership, partly because Turkey was/is a secular liberal democratic state, the herald of the future of the region in the eyes of the West. This was a typically pragmatic behaviour by part of Turkish historical leaders (Hinnebusch 2014b); however, what puzzled observers, are the recent changes in Ankara's behaviour on the regional and international stage. An increasingly harsh

rhetoric against the USA and Israel, a soft and relatively permissive stance on Daesh, and other unforeseen regional FP actions call for a look inside the Turkey blackbox in search of explanations.

I argue that Hinnebusch et Ehteshami (2014) indeed produced one of the most encompassing guides to IR in the Middle East, but that they were not bold enough. Integrating some constructivist, historical sociological and structural insights to a realist analysis turned out to be very fruitful, and complex realism accounts for regional FP variations very well. Nevertheless, one more element can be added, a key element in understanding the MENA region and Turkey in particular; I aim at integrating their analysis and method with this further element, as laid out below.

5(c) Mapping the Ideational Dimension of Policymaking

The methodology considered in this section will allow me to answer to the interpretative part of my research question, reaching a better understanding of what identity and ideas informed major TFP shifts. In a constructivist understanding of IR, FP is constructed by a mutual interaction of identity, interest, ideas and discourse. Looking at political messaging and discourse can help understanding how the identity and ideas of the political elite influence FP choices and FP discourse, showing how identity informs political discourse and how political discourse relates to FP. Moreover, it can also shed light on the mechanism whereby internal political messaging frames a security issue for domestic consumption. This can lead to a better understanding of the ideational and identity factors informing the FP-making process. Civilisational, historical, geographical and cultural characteristics can for example be used to construct an exceptional identity that justifies FP choices. The best way to understand how these features influence the FP-making process is to look at the ideas that informed it, be them in political discourse, publications or rooted in identity.

In order to understand how ideas interact with the FP-making process I look at sources mentioning ideological underpinnings of TFP; this allows the researcher to assess how much influence ideas exert on a state's FP, while also understanding what ideas in particular inform FP-making. Ideas in nation states influence, or are embedded in, individuals, institutions and culture. When looking at the state apparatus, its units are individuals, who decide and lead; the power of an idea resides in its coherence and congruence, and in the leader's intellectual status and his capacity to persuade the public. When an idea generates popular support, public opinion will push it at the centre of policymaking, yet, an idea can also find itself there because it is promoted by an individual in a position of power and influence (Kitchen 2010). This is the case in Turkey, where individuals like

Erdoğan and Davutoğlu have played a significant role in advocating that certain ideas inform foreign and domestic policy.

Ideas can also find followers in groups and/or organisations which play formal or informal roles in the FP-making process. These can be, for example, epistemic communities of experts and the positions the latter occupy in the bureaucracy. Ideas can also be embedded in the institutions at their formation. These are all products of the cultural context, which is made up of discursive patterns, collective identities and others (Kitchen 2010). In the Turkish case, a specific think tank, the Centre for Strategic Affairs, was the epistemological community that slowly made its way into the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (TMFA), and along with it came certain ideas that changed TFP.

Balzacq (2009) proposes a sociological model based on symbolic interactionism, which views language as an essential component of social interactions. The aim of an interaction, by means of language, it to persuade the audience to see the world in a certain way and act accordingly. Heuristic artefacts, such as metaphors, analogies and stereotypes, are then mobilised by a political agent in order to persuade a target audience to build a coherent set of implications; by investing the reference object with an aura of unprecedented threat level, a customised political act must be undertaken immediately to address it. The conditions enabling such an unfolding are three: an agent in a relative power position, who leverages the social identities of the target audience. A security speech act, which must include appropriate language, a strategic element (heuristic artefacts) and policy tools. A context, that can be proximate, like a public speech, or distal, enabling a societal cascade persuasion (Balzacq 2009). Public political speeches still have a prominent position in Turkish politics, and they are often used to mobilise the masses, buttress support for policies or justify FP choices.

Calculli (2016) argues that identities shape cleavages and societal differences, which can then be instrumentally employed by the political elite in its discourse (Calculli 2016). For what regards Turkey, AKP leaders can: leverage national identity as Turks in its fight against the PKK and the YPG; leverage a liberal democratic identity when facing more oppressive regimes; leverage a pan-Islamist identity when at odds with Israel or when trying to project soft power on its Arab neighbours; leverage a Neo-Ottoman identity when it needs national cohesion on regional policies. In fact, the AKP elite has a pool of identities it can employ instrumentally to serve its own FP goals; looking at how ideas and identity interact and mutually constitute each other will allow the researcher to reach a deeper understanding of Turkish politics.

5(d) The Power of Ideas

Neoclassical realists argue that FP-making processes "are influenced not only by exogenous systemic factors and considerations of power and security, but also by cultural and ideological bias, domestic political considerations and prevailing ideas" (Kitchen 2010, p. 133). Hence, neoclassical realist methodology can be summarised as follows: the researcher must identify national security threats by assessing the balance of power, capability and intent. Then the means adopted to address the threat must be analysed, in particular their soundness, effectiveness and availability; means can range from soft power to military power. At this point, different ideas are competing on the choice of most effective and acceptable means; this must be accounted for, for example by looking at internecine power struggles. The researcher should be able to assess whether a change in FP is a strategic adjustment or a circumstantial change due to changed realities on the ground. If a change in goals can be identified, or a new goal arises, and the chosen means change as well, then it will be a strategic adjustment. If instead only the means change, it will be a circumstantial change. Neoclassical realist theory has predictive capacity and can provide historical explanations; it does so by accounting for the role of ideas, viewed as positioned between systemic pressures and grand strategy formation (Kitchen 2010). I argue instead that ideas can be as influential as systemic pressures in influencing the FP-making process, and that these two can jointly act as incentives for FP change. This is also the reason why I cannot adopt neoclassical realist methodology: it accounts for the role of ideas, but it does not account for the power of ideas.

Moreover, very powerful states are more likely to follow political ideas in the conduct of their FP, as they have already secured territorial integrity and security: "in such situations, a foreign policy based on intentional ideas is the likely course, in which ideological goals become ends in themselves" (Kitchen 2010, p. 141). Moreover, in states where FP-making is concentrated in one or few individuals, their ideas can easily become preponderant (Kitchen 2010); this is especially the case for Turkey. The country found itself relatively well off with respect to other regional actors, and therefore started pursuing ideological policies in the Middle East. This was partly because both domestic and regional factors allowed for it, and partly because of AKP's leadership ideas and conceptions. Soon after engaging with the Arab uprisings, though, Turkey had to come to terms with renewed security concerns, like a revival of the Kurdish rebellion which put in doubt its territorial integrity and security. Hence, Ankara had to reverse its ideologically based policy to address it *realpolitik* concerns, but as it had slowly managed to create the image of a morally driven country, this caused a discrepancy between the image it tried to sell both domestically and abroad and its actual FP choices.

6. Key Concepts

The key concept I will work with is the *foreign policymaking process*; I will look at its determinants in the case of TFP. This dissertation is particularly interested in those TFP parts broadly concerned with the Middle East and Turkey's immediate neighbourhood. As already argued, taking into consideration the multilayered structure of the MENA region, it is difficult to infer state behaviour solely from systemic constraints. Hinnebusch (2014a) argues that the main variables influencing FP-making are the following:

- *The elites' threat perception and the capacity to mobilise state power:* threat perception is shaped by the political elite's identity; civil society can therefore be considered either an internal threat, in less consolidated regimes, or a resource that can be mobilised in more consolidated regimes.

- *The level of state formation:* the internal features of the state matter, in particular how safe the regime is vis-a-vis society and public opinion. This determines whether the main perceived threat is domestic or external; state response varies accordingly.

- *The social composition of the ruling coalition:* a major determinant of FP. The very same states can shift from being supporters of the status quo to being challengers of the regional and global order when their ruling coalition changes, for example in connection to a revolution. This was the case for Baathist Iraq and 1979 Iran.

- *The foreign policy role (ideology):* this variable is normally connected to identity and defines the relationships with the neighbours. Said role is defined by the ruling elites and reflects their interests, incorporating their experience and learning curve. Once this role in constructed it can serve as a constraint on future leaders' generations, granting overall consistency, as it sets standards of legitimacy and performance.

- *The concentration of power and decision making process:* there is of course a great variance in these variables across the region, but for what regards Turkey the president must assemble cabinet and military chiefs in the National Security Council. However, Erdoğan seems to exercise a certain degree of autonomy, but we will look into this later.

- *The idiosyncratic variable:* this changes a lot according to the regime, but in the Turkish case it is playing an increasingly important role. With the creation of a presidential republic under Erdoğan, power became more concentrated and personalised. The leader's personal preferences, values, perceptions and misperceptions can play an important role, especially in times of crisis. Historical record shows that leadership miscalculation can have enormous impacts, as was the case for Saddam in the Gulf Wars and for Nasser in 1967.

- *The intra-elite bureaucratic politics:* members of the political elite have different ideas on how to conduct FP in connection to their specific role and their material interests. In the Middle East, the military and the intelligence services often dominate in the FP realm at the expenses of the diplomatic branch, with an obvious bias towards coercive measures.
- *The public opinion:* this variable regards pluralistic states only, as it can play a role via electoral accountability processes (this is partly the case for Turkey).

In the MENA region, regime security is generally the primary goal, and threats to it will drive FP. The pervasiveness of security threats in the Middle East forces the region's political leaders to implement pragmatic FP, as these threats cast a long shadow over regime survival, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The chosen strategy, however, may vary a lot due to the extremely multilayered nature of the regional system and due to all of the domestic factors mentioned above. FP-making is therefore not only a response to environmental pressures, but also a product of internal leadership and of the policymaking process (Hinnebusch 2014a).

I will take into account all the variables mentioned above when conducting my TFPA. As we will see in the following chapters, the threat perception of the ruling party, a very powerful executive, little to no oversight mechanisms, the need to answer to public opinion, particular FP ideas and a new FP role put forward by a newly risen elite, internecine power struggles, Erdoğan's personal perceptions and preferences, all play a role in TFP-making, especially vis-a-vis the Arab uprisings. These will not be taken into consideration systematically, but will definitely pop up when looking at the features of the Turkish state, its FP-making process and other domestic factors.

7. Time Period and Sample

For what regards the time period taken into consideration, all selected sources will be from 2011 onwards, as I will focus on the AKP leadership period, particularly on the time span that saw the most unexpected moves by part of what was considered to be a status quo power. I will look at the developments in Turkey's regional FP as related to the Arab uprisings, a period during which the political forces of fragmented Arab states looked for regional and international support for their internal power struggles. This unfolding shaped to a great extent our contemporary understanding of security in the MENA region, as Arab states in turmoil became the battleground for competition between non-Arab states (Turkey and Iran), Gulf monarchies and global powers (Hinnebusch 2014a).

8. Conclusion

The existing literature identifies different dimensions of change in TFP under the rule of the AKP, but most studies concentrate on only one dimension. This does not allow for a systematic analysis of the different components of change, their main drivers and relative significance (Akdağ et Çakır 2017). Other authors agree on this point: studies belonging to canonical theories generally focus on a single issue when trying to conduct TFPA. This kind of focus makes it harder to explain the multifaceted TFP change (Hatipoğlu et Palmer 2016). With this dissertation, I aim at providing a comprehensive and holistic analysis of change in TFP, moving beyond an analysis that focuses solely on one dimension of TFP change.

To do so, I will first look at the thinking behind TFP under the AKP government; this part of the analysis will come first so as to better account for the role played by ideas in the TFP-making process. The analytical body of the dissertation will follow, dealing first with Turkey's generalised stance towards the Arab uprisings, then focusing on Ankara's Syria policy. The results of this concurrent triangulation will be laid out and assessed in the concluding chapter, where I will also assess whether by encompassing several levels of analysis we have enriched our understanding of TFP. More importantly, the aim will be that of understanding whether the concurrent approach I have opted for answers to my research question more exhaustively than either pure approach. I will also try to assess whether the proposed approach has brought TFPA any step forward in understanding TFP change.

CHAPTER 3: TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY AND DAVUTOĞLU'S VISION

1. Introduction

It is impossible to conduct TFPA without considering the huge influence Mehmet Davutoğlu had on TFP. Davutoğlu served as chief foreign affairs advisor to the first AKP government; he then served as Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Prime Minister (PM), having the chance of designing new theory for the conduct of TFP whilst influencing TFP conduct itself. I will therefore proceed in my analysis by looking at his vision for Turkey on the regional stage.

2. Brief Overview and History of TFP and its Competing Narratives

TFP during the Cold War was predominantly West-oriented, reflecting the strong constraints of the bipolar international system. With little space for independent FP-making, Turkey joined many Western institutions, such as OECD, the Council of Europe and NATO. With the end of the Cold War Turkey continued to pursue a broadly internationalist liberal agenda, democratising at home while aiming for EU membership, also recommitting to a changing NATO. With AKP's second term in office, starting with 2007, Turkey steered away from its traditional orientation, towards a reengagement with its geographic neighbourhood, where it hoped to assert a hegemonic role. This phase is broadly characterised by civilisational expansionism, an overly confident pan-Islamist understanding of Turkey's role in the region and an ultranationalist anti-Western stance (Balta 2018). TFP in the last two decades reflects a deeper underlying change of Turkish identity, which in turn mirrors a new understanding of the country's history that places Turkey in a pivotal position with respect to the flow of history and to the international relations in the region and beyond.

Turkey features two competing FP narratives, a Kemalist one and an Islamist one (Robins 2014). While the former dominated throughout the twentieth century, the latter is leading the way into the twenty-first century. Starting with the 2002 elections, the AKP government started recruiting its foreign affairs officials from outside the elitist insular tradition of the Mulkiye state school where the Kemalists were formed. This new generation of officials is mainly loyal to Erdoğan, in a trend towards the individualisation of FP-making (Robins 2014). The Turkish state, that increasingly sees personalised and concentrated power, is a good example of how, in times of fluidity and crisis, the leader's personal style, values and perceptions (misperceptions too) can be very influential. In the past, only few other Turkish elected politicians (Adnan Menderes, Turgut Özal) occasionally abandoned the cautious Kemalist policies of career bureaucracy (Hinnebusch 2014).

Substantial obstacles to the implementation of AKP's vision for Turkey were present when it came to power in 2002: the biggest one being the Kemalist military, guardian of Turkish secularism. Domestically, Erdoğan instrumentally used EU accession prospects to push forward his agenda of democratic reforms that would curb power from the military. Abroad, the AKP reversed the military's discourse of besiegement by putting forward the *zero problems policy*, curtailing the leverage of the military on the FP-making process while boosting both trade relations with the neighbours and consequently the Turkish economy (Ayata 2015). After the AKP consolidated its hold on power in the 2007 elections, the Islamist think tank Centre for Strategic Affairs was brought under the wing of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (TMFA). The army's officer corps and the Ministry's traditionally Kemalist officials were gradually substituted by a new generation of public servants. Former Foreign and Prime Minister Davutoğlu is the main example of this new generation, which was raised under his personal supervision pursuing PhDs and research in the Centre for Strategic Affairs (Robins 2014).

Ibrahim Kalin (2011) was chief policy advisor to the Turkish PM and director of the office of public diplomacy when he wrote what is summarised below and represents TFP at the time (at least up until the Arab uprisings). The official line was the following: Turkey is a major soft power actor; said "soft power derives its strength from a young population, long historical ties, deep cultural relations, and a growing economy" and, Kalin (2011) continues, it also rests upon "democratic credentials, a system of transparency and accountability, and political stability" (Kalin 2011, p. 19). The roots of said soft power run deep in "cultural affinity, historical companionship, geographical proximity, social imagery, and how they create a sense of belonging" (Kalin 2011, p. 19). This, according to the government, turned the country into a huge attraction hub for business and diplomacy alike. TFP is described as guided by three principles: "economic and political justice, a balance between security and freedom, and economic development" (Kalin 2011, p. 20), with the aim of creating a political order in the Middle East that can make it easier to address controversies, turning Turkey into the region's most influential powerhouse. The instruments adopted to achieve these ambitious aims are many and multidimensional. The newly found TFP activism is due to a transformation in the country's identity done via a revision of its history: Turkey's place in history is now perceived as a pivotal place, which entails a role of protagonist in global politics (Kalin 2011).

Ultimately, "a revisionist tone in foreign policy has become more pronounced, especially after the AKP received 50% of the total votes in the national elections of 2011, the military's tutelage over politics vanished following the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer cases, and the Arab Spring opened a window of opportunity for Turkey" (Özpek et Yaşar 2018, p. 199).

3. Davutoğlu's Vision

3(a) Davutoğlu's Foreign Policy

The five dimensions of Davutoğlu's FP are: a balance between democracy and security at home (to be exemplary and project stability Turkey has to be democratically stable itself), a *zero problems with the neighbours* policy (a non-confrontational stance and a stress on win-win policies, mitigating neighbouring threats and fostering cooperation), a multidimensional FP (avoiding exclusive alignments, pursuing good relations with all relevant actors), and the use of *rhythmic diplomacy* (vaguely defined as an increase in both bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts). The concept of *strategic depth* is the main justification behind Turkey's twenty-first century proactive and diversified FP, which has its roots in the country's Ottoman past. Davutoğlu views the country's geographic, historic and cultural reach as Turkey's natural strategic depth and sphere of influence, which supposedly grant it a central role in international politics. Strategic depth implies that TFP should be multidimensional and multidirectional, so that it can provide security and stability for itself and the region at large. Turkey is to be more active and constructive, in a move away from the idea of Turkey as a bridge between East and West and from its traditionally Western orientation towards the central and rightful role of heir to the Ottoman Empire (Kramer 2010).

"Davutoğlu further elaborated and modified these core principles over the years to include the role of a wise country, a value-based foreign policy, an autonomous foreign policy, a vision-oriented foreign policy and a principled foreign policy" (Arkan et Kınacıoğlu 2016, p. 390). In Davutoğlu's view, a *wise country* (such as Turkey) defends national interest, yet its FP will be value based and vision oriented. Turkey is to act self confidently and autonomously on the international stage, finally going back to its role as a playmaker. Strategic depth is a concept designed to guide Turkey in its immediate neighbourhood so that it can become a leading force in the Middle East. As such, Turkey's new approach to FP-making is portrayed as a strong proactive stance (Arda 2015).

If we look at Davutoğlu's publications we can shed some light on his thinking and on the discursive construction of social reality he carries out. In particular, I look at how the Turkish people came to identify with a specific identity narrative, and at how the government drew on said identity to justify FP choices. The Turkish identity and FP narrative belongs to a restricted number of authoritative speakers, who have a louder voice because of their institutional position, such as former PM Davutoğlu and president Erdoğan. In their eyes, Turkey has to cease on the opportunity of becoming an active independent agent in a changed international system that is providing room for

manoeuvre: Turkey is to become a central actor in the new global order that is in the making by combining elements of soft and hard power. Its success rests upon a healthy balance of security, democracy and economic growth to become an exemplary nation in the eyes of the Arab public. In order to create a more just, equitable and sustainable international economic order, Turkey will give voice to the least developed and under-represented, it will be a moral actor fighting inequality and promoting justice on a global scale, a legitimate alternative powerhouse representing a distinct civilisation, the Islamic one (Arkan et Kınacıoğlu 2016).

Taking into consideration Turkey's unique identity vis-a-vis the MENA region, and the geopolitical, historical, cultural and religious foundations of said identity, TFP should be more active in the search of a more influential role in the region. This reflects a unique reading of Turkey's history and geography. Turkey is viewed as having a unique historical legacy, owing mostly to its Ottoman past and to its cultural/civilisational basin, the Islamic community, of which Turkey is the natural leader. States sharing said cultural heritage look up to Turkey, taken as a reference point, and the country should therefore stand by them and act morally, wisely and responsibly in its large area of influence by providing security, stability and development (Arkan et Kınacıoğlu 2016).

Despite obvious shortcomings for what regards Turkish domestic democratic record, its security provision and broad FP disappointments, Davutoğlu continues to assert that the country is seen as a responsible state providing order and security regionally, while behaving competently domestically. Moral, religious and humanitarian features characterise TFP: a responsible power, a wise country, a facilitator of dialogue, an international mediator and a central state. It should be noted that Davutoğlu's and Erdoğan's project was not solely an attempt to TFP reform, but also an identity transformation project: the new Turkish Neo-Ottoman identity is a source of pride in the domestic public, or at least for those supporting the AKP and its FP (Arkan et Kınacıoğlu 2016).

Arda (2015) also observes a strong parallelism between Turkey's activism on the regional stage and AKP's political discourse. The author finds that the Neo-Ottoman identity informs Turkey's regional FP-making, as this is rooted in religious and historic affinity as well as in ethnic and linguistic ties. This results in an identity driven FP that reflects voters' preferences and that is clearly linked to domestic political considerations. The public discourse of government officials forms the role conceptions that inform FP-making; said role conceptions ascribe a certain role to the country on the regional stage, and stand at the core of grand strategy design. The task of changing Turkey's role conception was taken over by Davutoğlu, Erdoğan and the epistemic community of

the Centre for Strategic Affairs, and the otherwise mitigating effect of the state apparatus and of the TMFA were sidestepped, with destabilising and harmful effects (Arda 2015).

3(b) Davutoğlu's Geopolitical Imagination

Davutoğlu uses geopolitics, particularly civilisational geopolitics, to justify AKP's FP choices. This is because said understanding holds that culture and civilisational belonging are set behavioural determinants on the international stage. In his 2001 book *Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position*, civilisational geopolitics play a central role. The book became a bestseller when in 2002 he became chief FP advisor to the PM and to the MFA; when in 2009 Davutoğlu was chosen as MFA himself, his book had the chance of being put into practice. In his book Davutoğlu asserts Turkey has a natural sphere of influence in the Middle East, along with the civilisational affiliation to Islam (Bilgin et Bilgiç 2011).

Davutoğlu's publications and articles won him praises as an affirmed academician and one of the top a hundred global thinkers for Foreign Policy magazine (Ozkan 2014). His publications also expose him to criticism and lent themselves for analytical purposes, as they represent Davutoğlu's thinking at its purest. Davutoğlu's political thought stresses the artificial nature of the borders of the Sykes-Picot agreement, focusing on a new role for Turkey on the regional stage which rests upon concepts such as pivotal country, sphere of influence and *Lebensraum*, and an emphasis on expansionist policy more broadly. The idea that emerges is that of Turkey as the heir to the Ottoman civilisation (Ozkan 2014). For Davutoğlu, Turkey's modernisation estranged the political filo-Western elite from the Turkish Muslim people. Islamists and their political parties therefore became the true representatives of the people. Davutoğlu thinks that the Western and Islamic civilisations are distinct and that the Middle East is home to the Islamic civilisation; he also assumes the people living in the region possess a strong religious identity they do not necessarily share with their ruling elites (Başkan 2018).

In his writings, Davutoğlu also stresses how the end of the Cold War gives Turkey the unique opportunity of finding its place in the world through diplomatic engagement and economic development, using Islamism as a legitimacy tool. Geographic determinism is another element of Davutoğlu's political thought, tying him down to *realpolitik* concerns and power politics more broadly: Turkey's pivotal geographic position has to be transformed from one of vulnerability to one of opportunity, expanding the country's *Lebensraum* instead of adopting a status quo oriented defensive posture. Turkey is destined to fill the leadership vacuum left by the Ottoman Empire,

which, according to Davutoğlu, left behind two features that characterise the whole region: Islam and a historical legacy. He therefore concludes that Turkey's Westernisation and Western alignment is unnatural, that the country decided to be a peripheral state of another civilisation rather than the weak centre of its own civilisation (Ozkan 2014). Davutoğlu's "political analysis remains on the level of prophecy rather than prognosis; his ideas are pseudo-scientific and are based on inspiration about historical destiny rather than rational thought" (Ozkan 2014, p. 8).

A question that has not been answered yet is to what extent does religion influence TFP-making. Jung (2012) looks into this variable, concluding that religion certainly matters in how AKP leadership presents FP choices to the internal audience. However, FP-making is not guided by religious ideas but by instrumental rationality. This does not mean that the decision making process is not indirectly influenced by the leaders' religious worldview. The author argues that the main driver behind activist TFP are internal power relations, with the balance tilting towards the AKP and nationalists, at the expenses of the Kemalist block (Jung 2012).

3(c) Davutoğlu on the Middle East, the Arab Uprisings and Turkey's Role

When Arab protests started spreading across the MENA region, the AKP swiftly claimed that just as they had gotten rid of military tutelage, so the rest of the region could do too. They created a vision for a new regional order with one clear herald supporting the MB and other Islamist parties all across the region, setting the stage for the dawn of a glorious new regional order, Ankara's regional order (Ayata 2015).

The press releases of TMFA lend themselves for analytical purposes as well; in particular, Başkan (2018) looks at them in order to understand the country's posturing towards the Arab uprisings. On Tunisia, the TMFA was initially cautious, and only after Bin Ali stepped down Ankara declared its full support for the Tunisian people. In Egypt, instead, there was an immediate embracing of the protesters, calling on Mubarak to resign. Then, Turkey proceeded in publicly taking the side of the protesters all across the region. Turkey swiftly jumped on the protesters' wagon, without taking into consideration that other regional and global powers had their own stakes, and foreign assistance would pour in for both regimes and opposition groups. Ankara also ignored the fact that some of the dictators would have clung onto power and resorted to repression. In order to understand why Turkey favoured political reform across the region and supported the protesters, one can look at Davutoğlu's view of the Arab uprisings. As Turkey's MFA during that period, Davutoğlu delivered a number of speeches on the issue that can be analysed (Başkan 2018).

Opposition leaders call the Middle East a "swamp" where Turkey should not get stuck in, while to Davutoğlu the region is unlike any other place on Earth, an exceptional and divine place where God has made himself known to humanity, it is the birthplace of an ancient civilisation concentrated in multi-faith, tolerant cities nurturing pluralism. This is a civilisational view which identifies religions as the main identity traits, and not ethnicity or nationality. The conclusion is that the ancient civilisation that kept the region peaceful and developing in harmony was lost and has to come back in order to restore the old Middle East. Davutoğlu blames modernity for the fall of said civilisation, with national, religious and ethnic identity trumping that of the peoples. The Ottoman Empire was the last embodiment of said ancient civilisation, before it was shattered in many nation states in an alienation process that created a historical aberration. To Davutoğlu, this alienation process is an abnormal chain of events which should have ended with the end of the Cold War, but some Western countries and their leaders were afraid a democratisation process in the Middle East would have paved the way for instability and the rise of radical Islam, so they opted for keeping Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes in place in order to maintain the status quo. The lack of democratic progress in the region is therefore a major problem in Davutoğlu's eyes. It is up to Turkey to correct this abnormal course of events by setting the example of a democratic Islamic society while actively seeking influence with its FP via cooperation and regional renovation (Başkan 2018).

In Davutoğlu's eyes the Arab uprisings are the natural normalisation of history, closing a hundred years of unnatural aberration, making borders meaningless and breaking away from the Sykes-Picot order. This is not to say he meant to abolish borders, rather that he wished to make them fluid and penetrable (supposedly similar to intra-European borders). Here he insists again on the democratic process, saying that a political system rooted in the will of the people would make the region more politically integrated as they are already culturally close. Davutoğlu holds that the normalisation of history had already occurred in Turkey in 2002, when the people chose the AKP: its coming to power is seen as the dawn of a new era, a new blossoming for the region with Turkey naturally leading as it experienced the normalisation of history first (Başkan 2018).

For what regards the Arab uprisings, Davutoğlu believes authoritarian regimes are weakened, and the regional trend of Islamism is Turkey's best shot to influence; another major regional trend, ethnic nationalism, is instead viewed as a danger, not an opportunity. The support for Islamist movements is portrayed as an objective rational strategy in the bid for influence, not the result of ideological alignment. In the years leading up to 2011, Turkey significantly reengaged with the region, boosting trade figures and diplomatic engagement, while adopting a pragmatic stance towards authoritarian regimes as Ankara did not have the power to challenge them. Pan-Islamist FP

was also downplayed, while Davutoğlu insisted on the fact that said regimes could not survive in the long term and Turkey had to be ready to realign. It should be noted that Turkey did not support opposition groups out of love for democracy, human rights and civil liberties, also considering Turkey's poor record in the latter: the priority in 2011 was the establishment of Islamist political regimes over which to exert influence, because for Davutoğlu unity in the Middle East is only possible if all political regimes are legitimised by Islam (Ozkan 2014). To conclude, the Arab uprisings were a welcome development, overthrowing the corrupt elites in favour of the true representatives of the masses, the Islamists. Turkey therefore supported the protesters all across the region, advocating for political reform and resignations (Başkan 2018).

4. Populism

Davutoğlu has a Manichean view of society, which sees two antagonistic groups, the majority, the pure pious people, and the minority, the corrupt elites, in a simple populist logic. Therefore, this system entails an inherent unfair distribution, whereby a morally inferior minority rules over the morally superior people (Başkan 2018). To be noted, superiority is described in terms of moral ground; and who is the best representative of such morally pure people? The populists and their true voices. As Mudde et Kaltwasser (2017) stress, populism is a fragile and flexible ideology often parasitising on stronger ideologies; in Davutoğlu's case, the pillar against which AKP's populism leans is that of Islamism (Başkan 2018).

In its internal messaging, the AKP stresses the issue of unfairness, wanting to break away from an era centred around secularism and modernity that came at the expenses of traditional and religious values. The AKP portraits itself as the party of the masses that suffered from the prejudice of the Kemalist elite. This is reflected onto the international stage, where Turkey defends those treated unfairly, aiding the ones in need and supposedly maintaining moral standards. These are the characteristics of a populist government: a plebiscite prone democracy, fabricating or pointing to an enemy, claiming moral justice and portraying itself as the defender of traditional values while putting in place a rallying domestic campaign. Since Turkey's reengagement with its predominantly Islamic neighbourhood, the AKP has been emphasising Islamic virtues; AKP leadership identifies with the Ummah, and makes continuous reference to it (Arda 2015).

The AKP draws a line between the privileged secular Kemalist elite, which in its narrative controls economic resources and dominates the socio-cultural arena (media, art, academia), and the masses, which are ignored by the former. AKP narrative also highlights corruption scandals inside the army

and defines media, academia and civil society as the fortresses of Kemalist elitism. For the AKP, said elitist system survived thanks to military patronage since the foundation of the Republic in 1923, and in order to restore a more democratic system the military's influence over politics and bureaucracy had to be curbed. This purge was viewed and presented, both in the domestic and international arena, as a struggle for democracy, therefore receiving support from bureaucrats and politicians of the EU and Turkish liberals alike. The withdrawal of the military from politics, though, paved the way to populism instead of democratisation. Populist discourse and policies became the main instrument of AKP, and populism can be said to be the common thread linking AKP's initial, liberal years in power to its Islamist and Neo-Ottoman period (Özpek et Yaşar 2018).

How has populism affected TFP-making? As populist strategies respond to a need for domestic approval of their policies, TFP has experienced a number of crises because AKP's populism required it to answer to domestic political calculations as well (Özpek et Yaşar 2018). In populist FP-making, FP is considered a governance tool that can mobilise the masses, diverting attention from AKP's failures at home while adopting whatever policy will allow Erdoğan to remain in power (Balta 2018). Hence, in populist FP-making we can find another important explanatory factor that works both directly and indirectly: first of all, FP is very susceptible to public opinion and is a mean to many ends in domestic political games. Indirectly, populism also shapes the way political leaders view global and regional developments; this was certainly the case when AKP leadership viewed the Arab uprisings through the lenses of populist and Islamist FP-making, which came together in a toxic mix that left little to no room to *zero problems* and rational policymaking. The idea that the popular protests of the morally pure people of the former territories of the Ottoman Empire were finally rising against the corrupt elites of the Sykes-Picot regional order took foot; the Arab people chose to support popular Islamist political forces across the region, replicating, in AKP's eyes, what had already happened in Turkey in 2002. Turkey found itself in a natural position of leadership for the Arab protesters, both as a heir to the Ottoman Islamic civilisation and as the first country that had experienced the expression of the will of the people, bringing AKP to power.

5. Conclusion

Davutoğlu has guided AKP's proactive FP, characterised by a *zero problems with the neighbours* stance, which allowed Turkey to act as an emerging regional power, a regional mediator and cooperative actor on the regional stage. Peace-building, foreign aid and mediation were the main instruments of its soft power, deriving from Turkey's economic development and aid programs. However, it seems apt to reevaluate this policy in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, considering

that many of the ties Ankara was cultivating with regional actors were severed and deteriorated significantly (Aras 2014). TFP activism has been subject to criticism in connection to its policy towards the Arab uprisings and the Syrian crisis.

What emerges is that Davutoğlu's personal beliefs and conceptions greatly influenced TFP-making in the decade and a half he worked with the TMFA and the executive. This is something that should be kept in mind when moving forward in our analysis of TFP, as some of its many shortcomings may be due to personalised FP conduct. Overall, the *Davutoğlu effect* (Demirağ et Özpek 2012) has been most visible in the following dimensions: TFP has become more active and engaging, this is partly due to newly designed FP theory, such as the *zero problems with the neighbours* policy, and partly due to the structure of regional politics, as we will see in the following chapter. This TFP change was rooted in changes in Turkish society and identity, particularly in a new reading of Turkish history, promoted by Davutoğlu and Erdoğan among others, which granted Turkey a central role in regional and world politics.

Even though AKP governance certainly provided TFP with new inputs, making it overall more active and contemporary, AKP's own reading of regional developments contained the seeds of its new policy's demise. Turkey sized on what it believed to be its one shot to regional leadership, but meddling into Arab states' internal affairs turned out to be a dangerous strategy. Davutoğlu saw in the Arab uprisings the same societal forces that brought AKP to power; he thought Turkey could become the leader of a new era of peace and prosperity for the region under Islamist democratic governance. Turkey therefore abandoned its previous FP commitments and embarked on a rollercoaster ride that has come to an end, at least for Davutoğlu, in 2016, when he was forced into retirement due to obvious FP failures. This policy not only forced a wrong reading of the structural changes affecting the region, but it was also susceptible to domestic policy making, as it was often used as a tool for internal populist governance. Overall, this resulted in many wrong turns.

To conclude, even though TFP won many praises between 2002 and 2011, in the following decade it became subject of criticism from all sides (as we will see in the concluding chapter). Mapping the ideational factors behind TFP has provided us with some insights on the FP-making process in Turkey; it has also shed some light on the domestic determinants of FP, be them identity, ideas or discourse. What emerges is that there was surely a certain degree of agency in TFP change, which was fuelled by a newly risen political leadership that brought along new ideas and a new identity for Turkish society. These in turn informed FP-making, which had as its main components an Islamist Neo-Ottoman reading of Turkey's role and history in the region, but also elements of populist

governance and new principles for the conduct of Turkish contemporary FP. These are all important factors that have to be kept in mind when I proceed in my TFPA, as I want to be able to see how these interact with variables that originate from another level of analysis. When correctly assessed and put together, this data can give rise to a more comprehensive perspective that will hopefully answer to my research question.

CHAPTER 4: TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, BEFORE AND AMID THE ARAB UPRISINGS

1. Introduction

The Arab uprisings represented an important geopolitical development on Turkey's doorstep; a new regional order was in the making, with ramifications in the political, economic and security dimensions. Said changes in the region's political landscape represented the first challenge to a newly developed approach; AKP's FP was challenged in many of its dimensions, including its soundness, coherence and matching of means to ends. This was even more so as Davutoğlu centred his new FP paradigm precisely on the Middle East and Ankara's Arab neighbours. This was the first time TFP had to face dilemmas and real world problems, as it had to deal with *realpolitik* concerns and security threats after a decade of diplomatic engagement in a relatively stable regional order.

In a world that, as Fuat Keyman (2016) puts it, is characterised by global turmoil, foreign policies must mainly address said turmoil in its regional and local expressions; this ought to be the main goal of contemporary FP-making. MENA countries have been between the most affected by global turmoil, especially after the high hopes of the Arab uprisings vanished and left space to civil war and military dictatorships. The two main crises emanating from said turmoil are the refugee crisis and the Daesh crisis; Turkey happens to be caught in between these two fires that work in symbiosis. It should be stressed that while the countries most involved in the Daesh-refugee crisis are the USA, Russia, Iran, Syria and Turkey, the only one sharing both the security cost and the humanitarian burden of said struggle is Turkey (Fuat Keyman 2016).

After having looked at the ideational factors that informed TFP change, in this chapter I will try to ascertain whether regional dynamics influenced TFP in any way, and if they did I will also look at what dynamics influenced it and how. I will do so by first sketching a brief assessment of the regional balance of power, then I turn to Turkey's generalised stance towards the Arab uprisings, finally focusing on Syria to carry out a more in depth analysis on a case study. I focus on Syria as in the literature it is the most cited example of TFP variance with respect to official policy prescription. I will also touch upon other examples of TFP in action across the region; this will be to provide context and justify my claims.

2. The Regional Balance of Power Between 2003 and 2011

Before analysing TFP towards the Arab uprisings it is necessary to examine the regional distribution of power. The fall of the Baathist regime in 2003 created an enormous power vacuum in the MENA region. Arab states were to weak to seize on this opportunity, and two non-Arab countries saw an opportunity to expand their sphere of influence. While Iran reinforced its axis of resistance, acquiring new proxies (Iraqi Shias) and consolidating relations with old ones (Hezbollah, Hamas), but also with allies such as Syria, Ankara chose another path; it placed its bets mainly on soft power tools, developing friendly and mutually advantageous relations with most regional actors. Ankara and Tehran found even more room for manoeuvre when the Obama administration started to pull out of the Middle East with its *pivot to Asia*. The regional balance of power was overturned once again in 2011 with the Arab uprisings, when stable Arab regimes started collapsing one after the other one. The concomitance of global hegemonic decline and disintegrating status quo in the region created a possibly even bigger power vacuum than in 2003 (Yeşilyurt 2017). "This situation gave Turkey a considerable structural incentive to engage more actively in regional affairs and fill the gap that was created with the unfolding revolutions" (Yeşilyurt 2017, p. 68).

The structural incentives created by the power vacuum are not the only external factor that contributed in pushing Ankara towards a more ambitious and interventionist approach to FP-making towards the region. Turkish policymakers also realised that many other regional and global actors were ready to fill this power vacuum, and the cautious approach of the previous decade would have left Turkey with little say in regional matters, while other countries seized on the opportunities offered by a region in turmoil (Yeşilyurt 2017). These regional developments, coupled with AKP's ideological tendencies and domestic political calculations, in the end resulted in the FP stance we will look at in the following sections.

In addition to the above mentioned regional balance of power, Turkey also faced a number of security threats: the war in Syria and relative spillover effects, and transnational Kurdish militias. Moreover, Turkish national interests included considerations over regional competition with Iran and ensuring a constant energy supply. Taking Syria as main analytical focus can help in understanding many of these points, as the Syrian war touched upon most of the above mentioned security threats: as we will see, Assad's regime posed a direct threat to Turkey and its borders, while the civil war had many spillover effects onto Turkish national territory, such as the Daesh-refugee crisis. Moreover, the Syrian regime silently supported the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey. Syria represents a blend of many regional dynamics as well as a mix of threats to Turkish security.

3. Turkey's Stance Towards the Arab Uprisings in Discourse

Before 2011, Turkey's diplomatic and economic engagement with the Middle East won many praises; the country was perceived as an honest broker and a regional economic powerhouse that could set the example for its neighbourhood. Moreover, Ankara's growing involvement in regional politics put the country and its leadership under the spotlight as an emerging moral power with a FP rooted in values rather than interest. However, with the Arab uprisings, Turkey's inability of standing by its professed policy line and values quickly surfaced, as Ankara's commitments to democracy and liberal values were soon put in doubt; when its economic and strategic interests were at risk, Turkey acted pragmatically (Grigoriadis 2014).

On the wake of the Arab uprisings, many global actors expressed their support but opted for non-interference policies. This was not the case for Turkey, whose leadership saw an unprecedented opportunity to expand its sphere of influence by guiding Arab countries in their transitions to democracy. Turkey therefore embarked on a daring path of FP activism, implementing a proactive, value based and identity driven FP which should have granted it with an unprecedented level of influence in the region. At home, the AKP had won three consecutive elections without demolishing the secular order, becoming a valid alternative example to Sharia countries: Turkey was a democratic role model for Arab countries and yielded considerable soft power (Ayata 2015).

In his paper *The Three Major Earthquakes in the International System and Turkey*, Davutoğlu (2013) compares AKP's 2002 rise to power to the Arab uprisings; he believes the popular demands to be the same, and thinks voters chose AKP because they wanted more democracy, freedom, transparency, and less corruption. Therefore Turkey had the moral duty to adopt a principled position and side with the protesters to be on the right side of the flow of history. Davutoğlu also vowed to make power transitions in the Arab states as swift and peaceful as possible, avoiding bloodsheds. In the same paper Davutoğlu (2013) describes his last meeting with Assad, to whom he reportedly told that Turkey will always stand by the people. He also describes the relationship with Morsi's Egypt as the most important regional bilateral axis, while stating that the sectarian factor has never played a role in AKP's FP (Davutoğlu 2013).

Erdoğan and Davutoğlu disguised Turkish support for protesters across the region in liberal democratic language, insisting on the legitimacy of the protester's concerns, and stressing political representation and human rights motives. Turkey sought influence from within the international system, trying to run for regional leadership following the international community's rulebook.

Ankara championed democratisation and human dignity, bringing forward liberal democratic values while serving as an example of a successfully modernised country that remained a predominantly Islamic democracy with a solid economy (Dalay et Friedman 2013). The AKP made use of a variety of discursive tools: it employed a democratic discourse aimed at the secularists and Western partners; it also made use of an Islamist discourse meant for the Arab streets and its domestic constituents; thirdly, the AKP used a Neo-Ottoman discourse with domestic audiences to bolster the latter's confidence. Finally, Erdoğan recurred to what Fisher Onar (2011) describes as the *Turkey Inc. Story*, the idea of Turkey as an economic and financial hub, an example of prosperity for the rest of the region. This view of Turkey is centred around soft power instruments like trade and cultural exchange, visa free admissions and other liberal policies (Fisher Onar 2011).

Turkey's liberal internationalist approach to FP, which emphasised cooperative policies and sponsored regional and international institutions, promoting the creation of a peaceful regional order, was the one employed to justify support for the protesters across the region, demanding democratic legitimacy and respect for human rights. Yet, security concerns quickly took over, embroiling the country in a series of disputes and confrontations, leaving little to no room to liberal internationalist policies soon after the protests outburst (Kardaş 2012). Hinnebusch (2015) agrees: the Arab uprisings were, in AKP leadership's eyes, a window of opportunity for Turkey to secure regional leadership. The AKP distanced itself from the *zero problems with neighbours* policy and other liberal internationalist policies, approaching the MB and backing its political parties; these initially came to power in Tunisia and Egypt after the fall of the dictators (Hinnebusch 2015). Robins also (2014) describes Turkish policies towards the Arab uprisings as shifting from an initial cautious approach to a reckless activism (Robins 2014).

In my analysis of Turkey's FP towards the Middle East, I focus on a limited number of cases which I find to be symptomatic. These are Libya, Egypt and Syria in connection to the Arab uprisings, while I also look at relations with Israel, Iran and Iraq during AKP's tenure in order to have a broader look and include other significant regional actors. I focus on relations with only six countries for the sake of the argument, its length and clarity. Moreover, the selected countries most exemplify the inconsistencies and double standards in TFP; a great deal of variance can be found in Turkey's dealings with the selected countries, suggesting that the determinants of TFP might be different than we thought. The selected sample allows me to cover as much ground as possible in terms of differences between states Turkey interacted with and it provides precisely what I look for: it allows me to understand what factors contributed to TFP change amidst the Arab uprisings, while also accounting for the differentiated treatment across the range of countries selected.

4. Turkey's Stance Towards the Arab Uprisings in Practice

In this section I will briefly cover TFP vis-a-vis the Arab uprisings from a general point of view; this will allow me to highlight the inconsistencies of Turkey's approach to Syria and the huge variance in FP practice observers have been able to witness in Turkey's dealings with its Arab neighbours. I will proceed in my analysis in geographical order, from West to East, in order to develop an outlook that is as clear as possible. The assessment will be drawn as follows: I will look at whether Turkish policy vis-a-vis a particular state followed the professed FP principles, and in case this was not the case I will look at what other factors contributed in changing course of action.

In Libya, Turkey fiercely opposed sanctions and external military intervention, and when the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed UNSC resolution number 1973 on the use of military force in Libya, the Turkish government voiced concerns over the possible disintegration of the country, while trying to mediate between the Gaddafi family and the opposition. Erdoğan then personally contacted Gaddafi and his son, urging them to leave the country. When the NATO operation started, Turkey criticised it, challenged its legitimacy and refused to supply armed forces. Turkey still maintains that the armed intervention in Libya did more harm than good, especially since the country fragmented. In this case it is clear how, far from unconditionally supporting the protesters and the democratisation process, against its own professed democratic liberal internationalist agenda, Turkey saw its strategic interests at stake, such as its substantial investments in the Libyan energy sector, the second largest market for Turkish contractors and fourth largest oil producer in the world (Ayata 2015). These *realpolitik* concerns guided Turkish behaviour in Libya.

As Tunisia was patient zero of the Arab uprisings, it is sound to conclude that Ankara had not quite made up its mind on the course of action towards the protests. The official policy line which was adopted reflected these conditions, as Turkey adopted a very cautious approach. This however changed in Egypt: Erdoğan was the first world leader calling for Mubarak's resignation, increasing Turkish standing in the region. The MB was clearly becoming the most prominent political force in Egypt; hence, Turkey supported Morsi's presidency and significantly invested in the country. Erdoğan and Davutoğlu visited Egypt, along with an AKP delegation, and were welcomed by cheering crowds. The first presidential visit of the newly elected president Morsi was to Turkey, when he was offered a two billion dollars worth loan, that together with other loans from regional partners, allowed him to reject the International Monetary Fund (IMF) offer, which entailed less favourable terms. In Egypt Turkey got the chance to show it was an economic powerhouse willing to commit to its regional allies (Ayata 2015).

With Morsi's removal, though, Ankara became an acid critic of the military regime; the coup was seen and presented as an assault on democracy, to the point that Egypt expelled the Turkish ambassador and suspended diplomatic relations. An angered Turkey saw its vision of a new Middle East crumble. Saudi Arabia and Russia supported the military rule, leaving Qatar as the only Turkish ally in the region. Besides the obvious loss of investments and fall of an important regional ally, there is another reason for Turkey's vocal complaints about the Egyptian military coup. The 2013 Gezi park protests, and subsequent repression of dissent, substantially changed the image of Turkey abroad, from that of a democratisation champion to that of an increasingly authoritarian state. Instead of accommodating the protesters, as Ankara had suggested Arab states do just two years before, the AKP went on the defensive. In the tailwind of the protests the Kemalist front became increasingly active; AKP responded by fiercely criticising the military removal of Morsi out of fear of suffering the same faith at the hand of the Turkish military (Ayata 2015).

To summarise, in Libya Ankara first stood by its role of regional mediator, attempting to promote reform while maintaining good relations with the Gaddafi family. However, these concerns soon left room to economic considerations, which were deemed more important than the democratic demands of the Libyan people. In Tunisia, Ankara stood by the protesters only after they had overthrown Ben Ali and a successful transition had occurred. In Egypt, instead, Turkey immediately embraced the protests and their demands, pushing for democratic elections. After the coup at the expenses of the democratically elected president, Ankara was very vocal in criticising the Egyptian military mostly because of its political and economic interests, and because the AKP lost a key ally in its vision for a new Middle East: though, what fuelled a disproportionate reaction was the fear that the AKP could incur in the same faith as the Egyptian MB at the hands of the Turkish military (Ayata 2015). As can be clearly seen, there is a huge variance in Turkish FP behaviour vis-a-vis the Arab countries taken into consideration; this suggests that Ankara was not following any sort of grand strategic design or principles such as the *zero problems* policy. This can be seen even more clearly in Turkey's dealings with Syria, Iraq, and with its non-Arab neighbours.

5. Turkey's Relations with its Neighbours During the AKP Tenure

Kramer (2010) argues that after the USA overturned the regional balance of power in 2003, taking Iraq out of the equation, Turkey was forced to engage with the Middle East so as to reestablish order and balance. This was not part of a bid for regional leadership, but more because these events were taking place on Turkey's doorstep; any other strategy would have meant a severe disregard of the country's national interests. After the 2011 US troops withdrawal, Turkey aimed at preserving

Iraq's territorial integrity and sovereignty. To do so it established ties with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), boosting trans-border trade and opening a consulate in Erbil (Kramer 2010). The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) significantly increased aid to Iraq because instability in the latter was a direct security threat to Turkey: disintegration would have emboldened Iraqi Kurdistan, with a cascade effect on Turkey's own Kurdish minority (Altunışık 2014). Turkey's Iraq policy was mainly pragmatic and driven by events on the ground; it was not designed in terms of *strategic depth* and *zero problems with the neighbours* (Kramer 2010); actually, relations with Baghdad soured over Turkish support of the KRG.

Turkey shares with Iran important security priorities, such as Kurdish militias and Iraq's territorial integrity, but they also share an interest in regional stability more broadly. Concerning these issues, Ankara and Tehran signed a memorandum on security cooperation in 2008, which included intelligence sharing in their common fight against Kurdish militias. Moreover, Erdoğan is known for insisting on Iran's right to a peaceful nuclear program and for campaigning for a nuclear weapons free Middle East. The AKP has a different understanding of the Iranian nuclear problem, viewed as an example of the unbalanced and unjust international nuclear order of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, which privileges established nuclear powers without being able to counter nuclear weapons' proliferation. AKP's favourite example is the common silence on Israel's secret nuclear weapons, proliferated by France, one of the signatories of the NPT (Kramer 2010). Turkey is an important goods supplier for Iran and acts as a gateway to international trade for Tehran. In exchange, as Turkey is a notoriously energy hungry country, it receives Iranian oil and gas to diversify its energy supply (McLean 2015). Even though Turkey roughly followed the *zero problems* policy with Iran, promoting interdependence and trade, after 2011 relations with Tehran soured over the Syrian war, which again points in the direction of *zero problems* guiding TFP only in so far as there is no crisis on the horizon and Turkey's national security is not at stake.

Relations with Israel were good during the first AKP tenure. Trade between Turkey and Israel was significant and there also seemed to be an understanding on regional security matters. In 2009, at a panel in Davos, Erdoğan harshly responded to Shimon Peres' remarks telling him he was a kids murderer, then continued with inflammatory rhetorics that portrayed Israel as a terrorist state. Even though these episodes served the purpose of improving Ankara's image in the eyes of the Arab governments and public, they certainly did not benefit Turkey's relations with Israel. In a leaked diplomatic cable "Turkish civil servants [...] advised Israel to weather the [then] prime minister's harsh rhetoric until ties improved [and stressed that] repeated outbursts against Israel were for domestic consumption only" (McLean 2015, p. 459). In 2010, the Mavi Marmara incident (when

the IDF killed nine Turkish citizens) precipitated the situation. The activists were sent to force a blockade on Gaza in a clear act of provocation that was at least tacitly approved by the AKP (Kramer 2010). It looks like the *zero problems* doctrine was once again ignored in the case of Israel, in favour of fostering ties with the Arab streets and governments. AKP's Islamist identity, and Erdoğan's personal distaste for Israel and its leaders, also certainly influenced Ankara's policy towards Jerusalem.

As clearly emerges from these cases as well, the newly developed TFP hardly followed its professed principles. Turkey's regional behaviour was in turn guided by political and strategic considerations, in turn led by economic interests and ideology. This became more obvious in times of crisis, but even when relations to its neighbours were good *zero problems* was not always the policy of choice. In Iraq we witnessed to an almost purely pragmatic approach, while for what regards relations with Israel AKP's Islamist identity seemed to prevail. Economic and security cooperation with Iran tamed the latent competition with Ankara, and the policy adopted largely reflected the principles set out by Davutoğlu until 2011 (Kramer 2010). Turkish erratic behaviour in FP became even more clear in Syria, perhaps the most important example of sudden shifts in TFP, both for the magnitude of the strategic turnabouts and for the dire consequences Turkish FP choices had for the country, its allies and the region at large.

6. TFP in Syria: Before and Amid the War

Unlike all other nations involved in the Syrian civil war, Turkey is both an actor and a victim; it hosts close to three million Syrian refugees and is actively involved in the war. As Ankara finds itself deeply entangled with the refugee crisis and the war itself, its FP choices had to be tuned to these important issues. Turkish handling of the Syria crisis effectively dismantled Turkey's image in the region as a proactive leading powerhouse, which its new multidimensional FP had made room for. After just a decade of pro-activism, the coup in Egypt and the Syrian crisis had Turkey involuntarily change course of action. This occurred while Turkey's political elite did not dare tuning down its rhetoric, creating a big mismatch between AKP's rhetorics at home and Turkey's decreasing influence abroad, both at a regional and global level (Fuat Keyman 2016).

Regional conflicts always raise difficult questions for Turkish policy makers, and Syria is a perfectly good example of this (Robins 2014). Between 2002 and 2011, the AKP, through a successful diplomatic effort, turned one of its main national security problems (the Assad regime) into a partnership, contributing greatly to regional stability. It looked like Turkey enjoyed a good

record in expanding its sphere of influence in its immediate neighbourhood (Kramer 2010). Syria quickly became the most cited example of how successful the *zero problems* policy was. The leaders of the two countries developed a personal relationship, visa requirements were removed and significant economic ties sealed the partnership after decades of enmity (Ayata 2015).

When protests spread to Syria, Ankara tried to pressure Damascus into political reform while giving space to the opposition and partially supporting it: as the conflict dragged on and became a fully fledged civil war, Turkey welcomed not only refugees, but also the opposition (Ayata 2015). AKP's Sunni-Islamic identity was becoming the characterising feature of Turkey's bid for regional leadership, and the AKP sponsored a MB-backed opposition to replace Assad (Hinnebusch 2015). Needless to say, this did not please Assad, who had been keeping in check the Kurds during AKP's tenure as a condition of rapprochement: the regime started sparing the Kurds from military repression and tacitly allowed them to become increasingly autonomous. Turkey then decided to cut off all official links to Syria, enacted a unilateral sanctions package and put in place a no flight zone. After suspending diplomatic relations, Turkey started advocating for regime change in a strategic turnabout (Ayata 2015).

Syria then slowly became cause of the biggest headaches in Ankara. The basic assumption, shared by many analysts worldwide, was that Assad's regime would collapse due to internal pressure. This was why Erdoğan used his special bilateral relationship to Assad to convince him to step down. But Assad, as it is now clear, had no intention whatsoever of doing so, and their relationship soured: Erdoğan even sent Davutoğlu to Damascus to ask for ending the massacre, but the latter's six hours meeting with Assad brought nowhere (Robins 2014). The rift between Ankara and Damascus found its peak in June 2012, when Syrian forces downed a Turkish fighter jet. Later that year, Syrian mortar fire killed five Turkish citizens in a border town, bringing the two countries on the brink of interstate conflict. Turkey requested that patriot missiles be deployed by NATO to protect its borders, and this was granted; Ankara also deployed soldiers along the border and overall reinforced border security. More cross border shelling episodes followed in 2013, killing respectively seventeen and fifty-two Turkish citizens (Ayata 2015, Robins 2014).

The ensuing refugee crisis is also not to be ignored: Ankara periodically opened humanitarian corridors, as increasing numbers of Syrian refugees pressured its southern border (Robins 2014). "According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), due to the soaring number of Syrian refugees Turkey has jumped from the 59th to the 10th biggest refugee-hosting country in a single year" (Altunışık 2014, p. 344).

Syrian opposition groups were training, supplying and recruiting in Turkey while operating in Syria. Ankara was basically contributing in creating the threat it was blaming Damascus for by hosting these armed groups. Turkey supported the Syrian MB and other Sunni groups, and when Daesh stormed the Turkish consulate in Mosul, holding the staff hostage, Ankara did not respond as is expected of a large nation state, let alone a regional power, and speculation grew that Turkey was supporting Daesh as well (Ayata 2015). Ankara certainly adopted a soft stance on Daesh, as the group served Ankara's interests: it fought against the YPG, undermining Kurdish independence in Rojava, and fought against Assad's regime as well (McLean 2015).

Turkey decided to counter the rise of PYD and YPG by supporting Sunni opposition groups, which may or may not have included Daesh and its offshoots. The impressive territorial gains of the group and its atrocities not only shed light on Turkey's silent commitment to it, but also won international support over to the Kurds, which was counterproductive for Ankara. Moreover, Daesh onslaught onto Kobane prompted significant domestic protests by part of the Turkish Kurds, who demanded the opening of a humanitarian corridor and asked for allowing Iraqi peshmerga to cross into Turkish territory to be able to reunite with their Syrian counterparts. These protests spread all over the country, leaving forty-two dead. Syria was quickly becoming a FP issue that spilled over into becoming a domestic problem as well (Balta 2018). On Syria, Erdoğan faced strong external pressure and a public opinion contrary to war; this situation led the way into 2014, when it became clear that Turkey had to change its Syria policy (Robins 2014). Popular protests were spreading across Turkey, and restoring stability and security became the priority: Ankara feared that further deterioration of the security situation in Syria would fuel domestic Kurdish unrest (Ayata 2015).

Turkey and Syria managed to avoid waging war on each other; nevertheless, they are engaged in a proxy war that will have dire consequences for the region, its borders and balance of power. Turkey's generalised stance towards Syria and the ensuing turmoil sparked a renewed activity in the Kurdish independence movement. Ankara's support for the Syrian rebellion was paralleled with Damascus' support for the Turkish rebellion, as Assad started providing aid to PKK fighters on the border. Iran too reversed its anti-Kurd policy over the Syrian war, providing the PKK with logistical support, free passage and shelter; the peshmergas found themselves in the best spot they have been in a long time, only comparable to the peak of the campaigns in the 1990s. In the end Erdoğan was forced into negotiations with the PKK; information regarding these meetings leaked many times over during the negotiation process, suggesting an internal power struggle seeking to undermine the presidency (Egin 2013).

"If the Arab Spring was a stone dropped in the waters of Middle East politics, the waves it created, passing through Syria, now lap upon the shores of Turkey's domestic politics, creating uncertainty even more than conflict" (Egin 2013, p. 72).

After the 2015 Russian intervention, at the Astana peace talks Turkey finally gave up on the opposition groups it supported, in exchange for Russia's green light for military operations into Syrian territory. An emboldened YPG, controlling most of Turkey's southern border, pushed Ankara into intervening militarily in Syria with operation Euphrates Shield first, followed by operation Olive Branch, and to this day Turkey controls swats of Syrian territory (McLean 2015).

When looking at AKP's official discourse on Syria between 2011 and 2012 as reported by *Milliyet*, an influential Turkish daily newspaper, a number of observations can me made. The AKP portrayed the Syrian regime as cruel and oppressive, as opposed to Turkey in the role of a responsible stakeholder of the regional order, defending human rights and dignity. AKP officials demonised Assad for his human rights violations, portraying Ankara as a powerful regional actor. Turkey was presented as a responsible actor of the international community that listened to democratic demands and acted in compliance with international law and with moral/religious principles. Turkey also opposed authoritarianism and crimes against humanity, asserting its moral superiority. AKP leadership therefore chose to present Turkey as the most moral and indispensable actor in the region in the effort of discursively constructing this identity for Turkey (Demirtas-Bagdonas 2014).

This moral discourse was accompanied by a national security discourse, especially after the cross border shelling episodes, the downing of the Turkish fighter jet, and reports allegedly reporting a certain degree of support and cooperation between Assad and the PYD/YPG. Erdoğan publicly declared the Syrian regime as a national security threat, while Davutoğlu stressed Turkey's military power and determination, which should have not been put to test. They also stressed that a cooperation between PKK and PYD/YPG was to be avoided at all costs and Ankara had a right to intervene. The message to be passed was that Turkey was unquestionably a powerful actor and that it was exercising self-restraint vis-a-vis a lower power that was provoking it. This also stressed Turkey's moral high ground and responsibility towards Syrians, a cautious stance that was not in any way a sign of weakness. This narrative stressed how antithetical the two countries were, and why Turkish military operations were justified: it was a conflict between an international law abider and a law breaker, between a rational actor and an irrational one, between a mature great power and a weak childish state (Demirtas-Bagdonas 2014).

"If Turkey was not responding in the harshest way possible, that was because of its rational and moral considerations, compliance with international law, ethical responsibility and the thousand year-long tradition of not overreacting to any incitements (Demirtas-Bagdonas 2014, p. 150).

There are many different interpretations of Turkish policy shifts towards Syria: some are rationalist arguments that mention *realpolitik* and national security concerns. Realists argue that the security threats originating on the border with Syria and a huge flow of refugees pushed Ankara into abandoning a value-based moral FP. The uncompromising stance against Assad is explained by the fact that Damascus used the Kurdish conflict, Ankara's Achille's heel, against Turkey, making TFP reactive and nervous as PKK attacks started intensifying and a large Kurdish belt along the borders with Syria and Iraq consolidated (Ayata 2015). Other accounts focus more on ideational interpretations, predominantly centred around the Neo-Ottoman Islamist identity of AKP's Turkey and its sectarian policies. What should be noted is that these different accounts are not mutually exclusive: protection of national interest, territorial integrity, security and stability are all considerations that can interact with Neo-Ottoman Islamist views (Demirtas-Bagdonas 2014).

7. Charting Turkey's Regional FP: Why did it Change and What are the Determinants of Change

As can be clearly seen, there is quite a variance in TFP behaviour across the region; this suggests that Ankara does not follow a defined set of FP principles, or that these are somewhat flexible, leaving behind a controversial and at times incoherent FP response. All observers have noticed changes in TFP with AKP coming to power, and then again during the Arab uprisings; the question that remains to be addressed is whether Turkey acted on the regional stage by reacting to a changing regional and global environment, or whether its regional FP was mainly driven by a new, actively developed approach (Kramer 2010, Altunışık et Martin 2011). Kramer (2010) argues that "The most likely explanation is that it was both, to different degrees for different foreign policy issues at different times" (Kramer 2010, p. 12). I tend to agree with his view; these factors coexist and interact, and it might as well be that in some cases one prevailed on the other, while in other cases this was reversed. In the sections below I look at the incentives behind TFP change; these should not be viewed as substitutes, but as two faces of the same coin. The interaction between these factors is what ultimately determines TFP, and will ultimately tell us why we have witnessed to TFP shifts, and what ideational factors allowed for such changes.

7(a) The Incentives Provided by a New, Actively Developed Approach to FP-making

At the domestic level, three important developments interacted contemporarily. First, the AKP came to power, and as the representative of change it had to propose a new FP orientation to send a strong message of distance from the policies of the Kemalist elite. In the AKP leaders' eyes the Middle East had been neglected for too long by TFP. Secondly, there was an important political transformation, which radically changed civil-military relations and the judiciary, leaving the military with less influence in matters of FP, both for what regarded decisions on means and on ends. Economic liberalisation was the third important domestic change, leading to an export led economic growth that needed new markets open to its goods, in the neighbourhood and beyond. Turkey therefore needed a multidimensional FP that would find new markets for its exports while ensuring a constant energy supply (Altunışık et Martin 2011).

Turkey, in a clear break with the past, moved away from its traditionally restrained Kemalist FP. The AKP sought instead to maximise national interest by looking at regional developments under the lens of pure Turkish state (or regime) interest. The new *strategic depth* policy is not, however, a complete turnabout of Turkey's behaviour and alliances, but more of a realignment along the principles set out by Davutoğlu for the conduct of a contemporary TFP. The AKP government initially changed Turkey's position to that of an almost fully accepted member of the Middle Eastern regional system, a new and seemingly lasting role for the country (Kramer 2010).

Kennedy et Dickenson (2013) analyse Turkish public opinion polls on TFP; in particular, they analyse the Pew Global Attitudes Program's (GAP) annual survey. What they find is that Turkey is not turning its back to the West, but simply pursuing a more autonomous and proactive FP that can give rise to disagreements with its traditional partners. This is then reflected in Turkish public opinion: the majority of GAP respondents do not see international politics as a binary choice between opposing blocks, but are all equally critical of international actors, no matter if the respondents vote for the AKP or the opposition (Kennedy et Dickenson 2013).

7(b) From Actor to Country at the Mercy of Events: the Arab Uprisings

While the region's structural factors created the conditions and setting for a proactive TFP, domestic factors provided the right incentives to bring about change in TFP. Turkey's policies on the regional stage were a reaction to changed regional circumstances, but these policies were also driven by an active reconfiguration of its priorities (Kramer 2010). This trend, however, changed soon after the

2011 protests spread to the MENA region. The important domestic changes and paradigm shifts had more influence than structural variables in the decade leading up to 2011, but as new realities evolved in the region, TFP had to go through a process of adaptive changes at the very least. What is important to understand is the degree to which these changes took place, so whether they were only adaptive changes or paradigm shifts (Altunışık et Martin 2011).

The Arab uprisings shifted the balance of power in the MENA region, and Turkey was unprepared for these changes. TFP choices in the wake of the Arab uprisings jeopardised past diplomatic achievements: siding with the protesters may have preserved Ankara's credibility and consistency, but the Turkish handling of many regional crises fell short of the country's status. In these cases a new concept arose, that of reaching a balance between security and democracy in the hope of stabilising the region via smooth transitions of power. Said new principle was a provisional measure, to be replaced by *zero problems* as soon as stable political systems arose. There is a general agreement on the fact that Davutoğlu's new FP fared fairly well until the Arab uprisings, but reconciling Turkish FP liberal democratic principles with its *realpolitik* concerns proved to be a hard task (Aras 2014).

TFP faced hard reality checks soon after the outbreak of the protests in 2011; Turkey quickly went from being an honest broker to being a party to the Syrian conflict. The emphasis on the normative basis of TFP easily backfired, exposing the country's misdeeds abroad and at home. Turkey raised moral standards issues, but was not ready to live by them, and ended up being accused of the very same inconsistency it accused others of. Furthermore, Turkey was likely to experience, and in the end experienced, a formidable capability-expectation gap (Grigoriadis 2014). A mismatch of strategies and instruments led to severe miscalculation. In the brief period between 2010 and 2014, Turkey went from being the region's democratic champion and promoter to being a partisan actor fuelling sectarian conflict in its neighbours backyard. When Ankara was faced with hard security concerns, it turned to the same partners it criticised for intervening in Libya, calling onto them to intervene in Syria. The new TFP soon became a turbulent roller coaster ride that put an end to Turkey's dreams of regional leadership in little less than a decade. Turkey's claim to be a neutral mediator in the region dissolved when the country was openly partisan on behalf of the MB in Egypt, while its *zero problems policy* vanished into thin air when it supported military intervention in Syria. TFP has since been criticised for being sectarian, failing and overstretched (Ayata 2015).

7(c) TFP as a Reactive Approach to Changed Geopolitical Realities

Multipolar and unipolar world orders leave more room for action and influence to regional powers. So Turkey, starting with the Gulf War, had the opportunity to act more autonomously. Another big change was brought to the region by external actors when the USA invaded Iraq in 2003. The changed structure of regional politics gave Turkey the chance of becoming an important if not the most influential actor in the region. Not only the Kurdish issue tied Ankara to Tehran and Damascus, but with Iran's main balancer gone Gulf states started worrying over Tehran, making Turkey a reference point. As the room for manoeuvre and importance of the country increased, so did its aspirations and engagement with the region (Altunışık et Martin 2011).

If we understand bilateral and international agreements ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) as indicators of activist FP, it emerges that the structure of regional politics strongly influenced Ankara. With Saddam's removal, for example, we witness to an increase in ratified agreements: Turkey found increased room for manoeuvre, where it was able to define its space and role in the region. TFP activism significantly increased, confirming the perceived Turkish desire of playing an active role in shaping the new Middle East. Turkey's reach to other regions and to new partners is mainly explained by the desire to expand its economy, but for what regards the MENA region, it also entailed the spread of political influence and the desire of being seen as a leader of the Muslim world. When looking at the international system more broadly, Turkey is no exception. Emerging middle powers are popping up in every region, following similar courses of action: activist, multidimensional policies with an emphasis on soft power (Akdağ et Çakır 2017).

The disruption of the regional order, and global hegemonic decline, created room for manoeuvre for regional powers such as Turkey, but together with new opportunities come new threats. Turkey was granted an unprecedented degree of freedom and autonomy to shape a new regional order. It tried to do so with *zero problems*: political and strategic dialogue, growing economic interdependence, fostering economic development and political stability, while proposing a comprehensive security framework that is nonhierarchical, for all stakeholders (Aras et Akarçeşme 2012). However, starting with 2011, the increasing regional tensions and spreading crises curtailed Ankara's freedom of manoeuvre (Akdağ et Çakır 2017) and the volatility of Turkey's neighbourhood came to shape TFP (Aras et Akarçeşme 2012). AKP leadership then let impulses, ideology, populist policy making and opportunistic stances govern its FP choices, and this erratic FP behaviour resulted in a reactive approach to changed regional circumstances.

8. Conclusion

As can be clearly evinced, Ankara shaped its own FP choices up until 2011, leading to a significant improvement in its standing in the region thanks to an actively developed multidimensional approach and to a changed regional political structure. However, as soon as Turkey was faced with geopolitical changes on its doorstep, threatening the security of its citizens, all its diplomatic achievements quickly turned to dust. The newly developed approach was unable to address the problems on its border and with its neighbours, and Ankara ended up embracing an overtly sectarian and reactive FP, which falls short of a regional power's status. Turkey is now acting accordingly to changed regional realities, domestic political calculations and ideational factors.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING REMARKS

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will first of all answer to the research question by summarising the findings of the previous two chapters, looking at the data that emerged from my analysis. Then I will turn to sketching a brief assessment of TFP vis-a-vis the Arab uprisings, linking it to the ideational and structural dimensions of the TFP-making process in order to see what does this tell us about the different levels of analysis adopted and about the different components of the FP-making process. Lastly, I will assess whether methodological triangulation bared its fruits and enriched our insights into TFP, and whether this occurred in a contradictory, complementary or supplementary manner, also looking at what I have contributed to the theoretical discussion on Turkey in IR and what it means for regional and international politics. In the conclusion, I will also suggest a possible direction for further inquiry and research.

2. Determinants of TFP

The first thing that emerges from my analysis is that TFP has witnessed two major changes in the 2000s. First, when the AKP came to power in 2002, then again in correspondence of the Arab uprisings in 2011. Even though I touch upon the 2002 policy change, I use it mainly as a benchmark, a meter of comparison for the 2011 policy shift; as the research question rightly stresses, the main focus of my analysis is the second change in FP under the AKP government. From 2003 onwards, Middle Eastern politics provided more room for manoeuvre to Turkey; however, this was not enough to create an engaging multidimensional FP. What was necessary was Davutoğlu's input into TFP-making: he injected new vitality and new principles for the conduct of TFP, and put forward a new understanding of Turkey's role in the region and beyond. The multidimensional nature of AKP's early FP, its reengagement with the region and the world, and its regional interdependence policies all contributed in raising Turkey's profile, both regionally and internationally, while also winning over many praises for Davutoğlu and his newly developed approach. These changes set the stage and strongly influenced the way in which Ankara viewed the political developments of 2011, ultimately influencing TFP vis-a-vis the important geopolitical changes in Turkey's neighbourhood represented by the Arab uprisings. I hereto restate the research question and provide the answer that emerged from my analysis.

• Why have we witnessed to a shift in Turkey's regional foreign policy in correspondence of the Arab uprisings and what ideational factors allowed for such shift?

Many of the authors taken into consideration agree on the fact that the AKP leadership saw in the Arab uprisings a unique opportunity to expand Turkey's sphere of influence in a turbulent Middle East: in their eyes, if seized properly, this opportunity would have found its pinnacle in a democratic pan-Islamist regional order led by Turkey. This view of the Arab uprisings within the FP-making elite surely influenced the stance adopted by Turkey in 2011. This vision, however, quickly crumbled in front of the eyes of Turkish FP-makers when Turkey started to face hard security threats in an increasingly unstable neighbourhood and a mounting pressure on its borders: the conflict in Syria, a revived Kurdish domestic insurgency and other Kurdish organisations across the border came to shape TFP choices. Moreover, it quickly became clear that Ankara had double standards in its dealings with the Arab states and other neighbours.

If in the decade leading up to 2011 it was a new actively developed approach that guided FP-making in Turkey, as soon as the country was faced with a period of crisis new determinants came into play, sidelining Davutoğlu's FP principles such as *zero problems*. The new factors contributing to FP-making in Turkey are many and multidimensional, they often mutually interact and are here presented in no particular order. First of all, a war by other means with Assad, which sees proxies on both side of the border fighting the respective incumbents. Said proxies are mainly Kurdish, as these have their own stakes in the war, but are also Sunni militias and other opposition groups, which made Turkey complicit in fuelling sectarian conflict in the Middle East. This war started partly because of ideological reasons and partly because of miscalculation, as Turkey chose to uncompromisingly stand by the protesters during the Arab uprisings and thought Assad would fall. This led to badly conceived policies that alienated a former ally, Assad, caused a cascade effect on Ankara's own Kurdish problem and ultimately pushed Turkey into intervening militarily in Syria.

The ideological stance that informed Turkey's posturing vis-a-vis the Arab protests and that contributed in causing Turkey to become a party to the war in Syria finds its roots in AKP's reading of history and in its identity, which also have a major influence on TFP-making. AKP's pan-Islamist Neo-Ottoman view of the world is to be credited for Turkey's reengagement with the region, but is also to be blamed for the current state of affairs. If the country had never embarked on a quest for regional leadership during the Arab uprisings, supporting opposition forces across the region, the course of events for the country, the war in Syria and the region at large could have been significantly different. Most importantly, what would have been significantly different was the

reading of the course of events, had a different prevailing identity informed FP-making. For example, a pragmatic stance of verbal support of the protests, instead of an uncompromising support for the people, would have favoured Turkish national interest. In Libya, for example, Turkey did not stand by the protesters, so why do it in Syria, which also had good relations with Turkey at the time and happens to share Turkey's longest border as well as security concerns over the Kurds. At the very least, not hosting the insurgency chiefs would seem a reasonable stance.

Lastly, another important element that influences TFP, the need for it to answer to domestic political calculations as well. A coherent grand strategic design does not serve domestic political feelings and does not follow voters' mood swings, but AKP's populist nature is reflected in its FP and does have to respond to the above mentioned considerations. Populism surely accounts for some of the policy change, especially for the inconsistent parts of it and for some of the directions of change that analysts have most struggled with. AKP's FP reflects the party's nature: it is flexible, driven by opportunistic adaptation and ideology at times, and it is subject to domestic constraints. Unsurprisingly, AKP's populist nature can be found in its FP as well, which has a significant popular appeal: the masses believe AKP has restored Turkey's status and honour on the world stage. FP is used as a governance technique, blaming AKP's own failures on external actors. TFP also reflects domestic political structures, which entail virtually no constraints such as the judiciary, the parliament and the military: TFP is dictated by the executive, without any oversight mechanism (Balta 2018).

To conclude, a variety of factors contributed in changing FP course in connection to the Arab uprisings; the domestic factors include the sidelining of the restrained Kemalist FP-makers in favour of a newly risen restricted executive with no oversight mechanisms or any other sort of constraint. This newly risen elite brought along its own identity, reading of history and role conception for Turkey, which informed its reading of events in the region and ultimately pushed Ankara into abandoning the much praised *zero problems* policy in favour of a miscalculated unconditional support of the protesters across the region. This, however, was not a purely ideological stance; Turkey saw an opportunity for seizing regional leadership, and political and strategic considerations certainly played a role in forming an ideologically driven opportunistic stance. Not all opposition movements succeeded in their aims, and where they did not Ankara found enemies instead of allies. This was the case in Egypt, but the breakdown of diplomatic relations there is not as impacting on Turkey's national interest as much as the fact that Assad remained in power and is now a battle-hardened, unfriendly at the very least bordering neighbour. When Turkey came to realise it severely miscalculated and had placed its bets on the wrong players, its FP

became increasingly nervous, reactive and erratic, leading to more incoherence and ultimately to military intervention. In the end, in absence of a set of principles guiding its FP, set of principles Ankara had abandoned in 2011 in favour of an uncompromising stance in favour of what turned out to be the loosing side in some cases, Turkey had nothing left to take as a reference point than its hard security concerns and other *realpolitik* factors which have ultimately come to shape its FP choices. Moreover, these concerns have to answer to domestic political calculations as well, which does not improve the already low coherence of TFP behaviour.

3. Assessment and Consequences for Theory

Two other issues remain to be addressed. One is whether the TFP change that has been identified was necessarily a bad thing for Turkey, its citizens and foreign affairs; second, if this was the case what are the signs of this negative unfolding. The academic debate on the viability of AKP's FP is centred around four points. The first is the stagnation of Turkey's relations with its neighbours after the Arab uprisings. The second is the incoherent and unbalanced stance Turkey adopted in its international relations. The third point is Turkey's overconfidence on the regional stage, which highlighted a formidable ambitions-capabilities gap. The fourth is the negative effect of Turkey's weak democratic record at home on its FP (Aras 2014). As one can easily infer, all the main points of the debate already point in the direction of an overall negative assessment of TFP under the AKP government, which does not lend credit to its post-2011 FP stance.

As of 2015, worsened relations with the USA, Russia, Iran, Syria, Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia speak for themselves. With its erratic FP Ankara managed in the incredible task of making enemies on both sides of the Syrian conflict, when these sides are at odds with each other: finding common ground with either one would have been relatively easy. A consulate raided by Daesh in Iraq, an embassy closed in Damascus and an expelled ambassador from Egypt also fail in giving credit to Ankara's post-2011 posture. This brings us to believe in a complete failure of the *zero problems* doctrine; as soon as AKP's FP was confronted with a major geopolitical event, said policy was put aside to leave room to an ideologically justified strategic (mis)calculation at first, and to security concerns later. It is now clear that Turkey does not have a viable alternative strategy when *zero problems* fails. The idea of a value based FP is also undermined, as it is now clearer than ever that there is no credible commitment to democracy in Ankara, and that Turkey rather opts for sectarian politics abroad and repression at home. The only positive unfolding is related to the fact that, far from being a regional leader, Turkey has re-engaged with its own region: however, this was a particularly easy task considering that the level of interaction with MENA previous to the AKP

tenure was close to zero (Ayata 2015). However, the regional environment was not receptive of Turkey's Neo-Ottoman narrative, and AKP's FP was therefore doomed to fail (Arkan et Kınacıoğlu 2016).

Most importantly, Turkey has become a reactive state due to its own policy failures: it has now reengaged with a political environment that was created by other actors, beyond its influence, and cannot disentangle itself from it. Not only Turkey failed in achieving its ambitious FP goals, but it also undermined its credibility as a regional and global actor. Turkey's FP successes remain very much questionable: the country experienced the worsening and/or breakdown of diplomatic relations with many states in the region (Israel, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia); its relations to major powers, like Russia and the USA, also deteriorated (Arkan et Kınacıoğlu 2016). The data shows that Turkish standing and relations in the region peaked in 2010, just to find themselves at the lowest point in 2015 (Akdağ et Çakır 2017). Furthermore, Turkey contributed, together with other regional actors, in supporting moderate and fundamentalist Sunni Islamic armed groups across the region, in what became perhaps Ankara's only active contribution in shaping the region: fuelling sectarian conflict. The ultimate result of said sectarian approach to regional politics can be clearly seen: Turkey was left isolated, with difficult to problematic relations with many of its neighbours. Moreover, an obvious gap between Ankara's ambitions and capacity was exposed and is now clearly visible to everybody (Ozkan 2014).

In the short span of ten years, Erdoğan's Turkey managed to travel from many one extremes to many others: from the main example of Islamic democracy to a model of authoritarian state, from Westernised liberal state to a anti-Western repressive state, from a *zero problems* to a crisis prone FP. This is what happens when FP is treated as a tool for internal governance and not as an end in itself, when it is used aggressively by a populist ruling government and is subject to abrupt shifts. Overall, this translates into a more unstable and unpredictable regional actor that is also conflict prone; this has grave consequences for the region's stability (Balta 2018).

As clearly emerges, AKP's FP has not only made the country and its citizens less safe than they were twenty years ago, but with its erratic FP behaviour it has also significantly contributed in eroding Turkey's image abroad. This starkly contrasts with AKP's rhetorics, which portray Turkey as a wise country with a FP rooted in values that has won many praises in the region and beyond, creating a new image of the country as a responsible stakeholder of the international system and a regional powerhouse. Public opinion seems to buying in this narrative, giving credit to TFP under the AKP government, as opposed to the restrained FP of the Kemalists. To crown the absurdity of

certain TFP choices, in the end it was Turkey that, instead of positively influencing the region and setting standards for it, was sucked into the region's characterising dynamics and adopted them.

So what does this assessment tell us about TFPA? It tells us first of all that structural variables maintain a high degree of explanatory power, and should never be ignored when looking at Turkey. The power vacuum left behind by the Arab uprisings set the course for TFP in the region. It actually set the course of action for many other regional and global players, what distinguishes their different policy choices are their respective capabilities and domestic variables. These cannot be ignored either, especially in the Turkish case: the ideological tendencies of the AKP, the threat perception of its leaders and the FP role they promote for Turkey, the concentration of power and intra-elite bureaucratic politics, the personal style of Erdoğan and Turkish public opinion, are all variables that need to be taken into consideration as they all contribute in shaping TFP.

The results also give credit to the conceptualisation of the power of ideas on a distinct level of analysis; this analytical step has to be carried out in order to fully account for the TFP-making process. If ideas are considered only as secondary intervening variables, such as in structural theories of IR that account for domestic variables, they remain relegated in a position that does not fully account for the power and influence they can have. This also means that the intuition of integrating methodologies, or of somehow working eclectically, has proven fruitful and useful, as it has accounted for structural, domestic and ideational variables. TFPA can be done in many ways, but most importantly, it cannot be done with a single theory or methodology without incurring in the risk of missing out on part of the picture. What is left to discuss is how the best mix of theory and/or methodology to conduct TFPA looks like, but it might as well be the case that this depends on the issue being analysed and there is no definitive answer.

4. The Fruits of Concurrent Triangulation

Complex realism accounts fairly well for most TFP variations; it takes into account the structure of regional politics, the conflict with one of Turkey's largest neighbours, the proxy war with the Assad regime and the Kurdish insurgency, and all the spillover effects and security risks entailed in the above mentioned factors. Moreover, complex realism takes into consideration AKP's Islamist and populist identity, and how it interacts with the FP-making process. This methodology also accounts for internal power structures and for the domestic political environment, overall providing an already encompassing guide to TFPA. However, I have argued, mapping the ideational dimension of FP-making can still provide some unique insights, especially when looking at Davutoğlu's

political thought. This has indeed allowed for an in depth analysis of Davutoğlu's principles for the conduct of contemporary TFP, such as *zero problems* and *strategic depth*, and for a broader look at the ideational underpinnings of AKP governance.

When looking at Davutoğlu's publications and the press releases of the TMFA, a number of key further explanatory factors arise which account for a great deal of TFP change in 2011. We took a look into the thought process of AKP leadership and into the ideas that inform their political views; it also led us to a deeper understanding of the AKP overarching identity. What emerges from my analysis is that an alternative reading of Turkish history, which views the country as heir to the Ottoman Empire and as natural leader of the Islamic civilisation, has informed a new role conception for Turkey. This reading of history also created a new identity for Turkey, a fundamentally Islamic one that links the country to the rest of the Middle East via shared cultural, religious, civilisational and historical links. This puts Turkey in a position of natural leadership, not only because of its Ottoman heritage, but also because Turkey was the first country in the region to experience the "normalisation of history" in Davutoğlu's eyes. What he means with it is that it was the first country to experience populist Islamist governance, as opposed to corrupt nationalist secular filo-Western elitarian governance; this entails that the rest of the MENA region was also going to experience the normalisation of history, that in the eyes of the AKP leadership corresponded to the Arab uprisings. Turkey's principled position was therefore that of standing by the side of protesters and by the Islamist political parties on the rise across the region, setting the premises for the dawn of a new regional order, a new era of prosperity and morality for the region. This newly developed identity for Turkey was a very significant determinant of TFP choices vis-a-vis the Arab uprisings: together with strategic considerations, it was what informed the FP decision that then set the country on a daring path of FP activism, which ultimately resulted in a crisis prone reactive state on the regional stage.

Concurrent triangulation of different levels of analysis has therefore bared its fruits, as it provided us with insights that complex realism did not touch upon, or if it did, this was done in a superficial manner. I argue the analysis of the power of ideas has acted complementarily as it has integrated the findings of variants of realism that account for internal variables, such as identity, with the narrative that shaped that definite identity. Not only so, but triangulation has also worked supplementarily, as it provided new insights that would have otherwise been missed, enriching our understanding of TFP and providing a more comprehensive account of TFP change.

I believe I have managed to provide further insights into the Turkish FP-making process, which can be used as suggestion or building brick of future research. There is still room for further exploration, perhaps in doctoral and postdoctoral research. What remains to be done is surely assessing the relative weight of different factors influencing the TFP-making process. To do so, a comprehensive theory of TFPA has to be carefully developed.

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