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Book Review: A Look Back and Forward at Turkey's "Strategic Depth" Foreign Policy Doctrine

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FOREIGN MILITARY STUDIES OFFICE

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Book Review:

A Look Back and Forward at Turkey's "Strategic Depth" Foreign Policy Doctrine

Synopsis: "Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)" is a Turkish book published in 2001. This was a time when international relations theorists were describing new frameworks of world order and security modalities following the end of the Cold War and bi-polar world. Works such as Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" and Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" were icons of this intellectual period. It was in this context of a changing international system that Turkish International Relations Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu (who later served as Foreign Minister between 2009-2014 and Prime Minister between 2014-2016) attempted to define Turkey's position in his book "Strategic Depth." From around 2002 to 2012, the foreign policy that Davutoğlu outlined in his book was considered the doctrine and roadmap for Turkish foreign policy. Although current Turkish foreign policy is much changed, an examination of "Strategic Depth" will help explain the roots of Turkey's current threat perceptions as well as provide insight into the motivations and driving factors of Turkish foreign policy. Finally, the ideas in the book are worth studying in light of the author's newly formed political party, which may impact Turkish foreign policy in the medium or long term.



This book review will first provide a summary of the book along with translations of key passages. It will then provide examples of how the "Strategic Depth" doctrine was applied in Turkish foreign policy from around 2002-2012. Next, it will look at regional and global developments since then, and conclude with an update on current Turkish foreign policy. Given that the book is not available in English, this review will provide a unique foreign perspective on Turkey by a primary source and shed light on what some have called "the biggest geo-political shift in the post-Cold War era."

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I. Introduction and Context

"Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)" is a Turkish book published in 2001, at a time when international relations theorists were searching for frameworks to define the new world order following the end of the Cold War and a bi-polar world. Books such as Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" and Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" are familiar to many analysts. It was in this context of a changing international system that Turkish international relations expert, Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu (who later served in key positions in the government) attempted to define Turkey's position in the post-Cold War era in his book, Strategic Depth. The foreign policy he prescribed for Turkey was considered the doctrine and roadmap for the country from around 2002-2012.

This book review will first provide a summary of the book along with translations of key passages. It will then provide examples of how the "Strategic Depth" doctrine was applied in Turkish foreign policy from around 2002-2012. Next, it will look at regional and global developments since then, and conclude with an update on current Turkish foreign policy. Given that the book is not available in English, this book review will provide a unique foreign perspective on Turkey by a primary source. Although "Strategic Depth" was published in 2001, it is still valuable today as the history and background provided in the book help explain the roots of some of Turkey's current threat perceptions as well as the motivations and driving factors of Turkish foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. They also help explain the roots of how Turkey views itself in the world and its region today. Finally, the ideas in the book are worth studying in light of the author's newly formed political party, which may impact Turkish foreign policy in the future.

Domestically, "Strategic Depth" emerged shortly before the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won a landslide victory in Turkey on 3 November 2002. A brand new player on the political scene, the AKP had strong Islamic roots and the majority of the members had no experience in national government or foreign policy. Davutoğlu was a close figure to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, one of the founders of the AKP. Erdoğan became Prime Minister of Turkey in 2003, and President in 2014. Davutoğlu served as his Foreign Minister from 2009-2014 and his Prime Minister from 2014-2016. Davutoğlu resigned from the Prime Minister position in 2016 after falling out with Erdoğan, and was expelled from the party in late summer 2019. In December 2019, he formed a new party called the "Future Party," as a challenger to Erdoğan's AKP.



Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu

Source: DoD photo by Glenn Fawcett via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ahmet_Davuto%C4%9Flu_\(cropped_version\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ahmet_Davuto%C4%9Flu_(cropped_version).JPG)
PG, Public domain

Prior to the adoption of "Strategic Depth" around 2002, Turkey had traditionally followed a security-oriented, inward-looking foreign policy. It was mostly pro-Western and pro-NATO, but its particular geographical location required it to strike a difficult balance between its obligations as a NATO member and its need to co-exist with its neighbors, which include Iran, Iraq and Syria. Turkey's geographical location between Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa shaped its identity as a unique country at the center of many geopolitical fault lines, which threatened Turkey's security. A

historian of the Ottoman Empire noted that "The rulers of Anatolia have always had to be Janus-faced and look both East and West."¹ As the heir to the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has traditionally perceived the world similarly. Former Turkish diplomat Bülent Nuri Eren said: "Turkey is a lone wolf without instinctive friends or allies."²

Davutoğlu, an influential figure in foreign policy since 2002, reframed this worldview in his 'Strategic Depth' doctrine. In contrast to Samuel Huntington, who saw Turkey as a 'torn' country in "The Clash of Civilizations," Davutoğlu said that Turkey's 'torn'ness was a huge asset. Davutoğlu argued that Turkey should embrace its diverse Muslim, Ottoman, European, and Central Asian background and take advantage of its "multifaceted" identity, instead of just facing West. Davutoğlu argued that Turkey was the only country that could talk to Damascus and Jerusalem, Tehran and Washington, and be an effective arbiter and peacemaker in the region and the world. In contrast to Turkey's historical perception of itself as a "lone wolf in a difficult neighborhood" which came with a reactive, defensive, crisis-response oriented foreign policy; Turkey emerged during this time as an actor with something to offer. This represented a new, vision-oriented foreign policy for Turkey. Davutoğlu was considered Turkey's "Henry Kissinger" for being its architect.

In line with this doctrine, later labeled "Zero Problems with Neighbors," and sometimes also called "neo-Ottomanism,"³ in the first decade of the 20th century, Turkey diversified its foreign policy and tried to use its multifaceted identity to solve some of the world's toughest problems. Turkey's attempt to be an arbiter between Washington and Tehran in 2008; between Damascus and Jerusalem in 2009; and the trilateral mechanism with Pakistan and Afghanistan since 2007 come to mind. It opened new embassies in Africa and started various initiatives to advance regional interdependence and trade relations as part of this new, pro-active peace diplomacy.

In a 2008 United Nations (UN) Security Council meeting, Turkey received 151 votes with supporters from all regions, and won election to a non-permanent seat. "Strategic Depth" appeared to be yielding results. In subsequent years, Turkey's star continued to rise. Following the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, Turkey was hailed as a model, with its relatively successful synthesis of Islam, democracy and secularism; along with its market economy. Its newly-achieved civilian control over its military was an inspiration for some Arab countries. When then-Prime Minister Erdoğan took his Arab Spring tour, which included visits to Egypt and Tunisia, he was received like a rock star by thousands of adoring supporters at Cairo's airport.⁴ Turkey was a rising, independent, self-confident power in its region.

¹ Soli Özel, "Of Not Being a Lone Wolf: Geography, Domestic Plays, and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East," in Geoffrey Kemp and Janice Gross Stein, eds., *Powder Keg in the Middle East: The Struggle for Gulf Security* (Washington D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1995) p.161

² Ibid.

³ While Davutoğlu himself rejects claims of being 'neo-Ottoman,' his doctrine does involve rebuilding ties around the former Ottoman Empire. "The Davutoğlu Effect," *The Economist*, 23 October 2009.

<https://www.economist.com/special-report/2010/10/23/the-davutoglu-effect>

⁴ Abouzeid, Rania. "Why Erdoğan is Greeted like a Rock Star in Egypt," *Time*, 13 September 2011.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2093090,00.html>

In 2020, things could not look more different. Turkey appears isolated in its region and in the world. It does not have diplomatic relations with Syria, Egypt or Israel; and has problematic ones with Greece, Armenia, Iraq, and almost the entire the Arab world except Qatar. Its relations with the United States are facing unprecedented challenges; and its European Union (EU) membership process is frozen. Its "Westernness" and trustworthiness as a NATO ally are being questioned following its purchase of S-400 missiles from Russia. Its recent unilateral actions in Syria have brought it condemnation from the Arab League, the EU, and the UN. Its authoritarian slide and sectarian foreign policy are alarming to many-- a far cry from the glory days of the "Turkish model." Instead, the question of the day is "Who lost Turkey?". Turkey is facing the real possibility of being subject to the "Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)," a US law imposed on Iran, North Korea and Russia.

Former National Security Advisor Gen. H.R. McMaster has called this "the biggest geo-political shift in the post-Cold War era," noting that it is "against us."⁵ This book review attempts to shed light on this shift through an examination of "Strategic Depth" and subsequent developments that led to its demise.

⁵ Gen. H.R. McMaster comments at "Instruments of American Power: Implementing Foreign Policies and Protecting Against Global Threats," at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Washington D.C., 10 October 2019. <https://www.fdd.org/events/2019/10/10/instruments-of-american-power-implementing-foreign-policies-and-protecting-against-global-threats/>

II. Book Outline

The book is organized in three sections, with each section building on the previous one, culminating in the Strategic Depth doctrine in the final section (see Appendix A for a full English translation of the book's Table of Contents). A summary of each section is provided, and English translations of certain passages are presented in *italics*. For each section, the passages that were most reflective of the highlights were translated, in an effort to convey the style, tone and feel of the book.

The first section, titled "Conceptual and Historical Framework" puts forward basic concepts and questions in three parts. Part one describes national power parameters and provides examples; part two discusses Turkey's lack of strategic theory; and part three looks at the impact of Turkey's historical legacy on its domestic and foreign political parameters, which shape its international relations.

The second section, called "Phased Strategy and Basin Policies" tries to establish a theoretical framework for strategic analysis, in four parts. Part one presents basic concepts and theoretical tools to enable the understanding of Turkey's geographic depth for the strategic analysis to come. In this framework, the concepts "near land," "near sea," and "near continental" as coined by Davutoğlu, are introduced and defined. The subsequent three parts discuss the characteristics of Turkey's near land, near sea and near continental areas, along with the new strategic importance attributed to these areas in the post-Cold War era; and their effect on Turkish foreign policy. Having laid out this theoretical framework and analytical background, Davutoğlu presents the outlines of a strategy that is systematic and consistent along these geographic areas.

The third section, titled "Application Areas: Strategic Tools and Regional Policies" applies this theoretical framework to Turkey's foreign policy, and consists of five parts. Part one looks at international institutions and organizations such as NATO, OSCE, ECO, OIC, BSEC, D-8 and G-20 as basic strategic tools that Turkey can use in its foreign policy-making. The subsequent sections deal with the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia, and European Union policies respectively. Based on historic and geographic analyses, they prescribe the foundations of a foreign policy, presented as Strategic Depth. This section forms the bulk of the book at over 350 pages, while the first two sections are approximately 100 pages each, for a total of 580 pages.

The book opens with an introduction where Davutoğlu puts forward his goal of establishing Turkey's strategic position in the post-Cold War era. He claims that Turkey is in a historical fork in the road; and that it needs to integrate its "historical and geographical depth" with a rational strategic plan. This, he claims, requires an understanding of the concepts of "depth of space and time." These concepts include the history, geography, demographics and culture of a country. For example, a description of Turkey's geo-cultural and historical space would be:

"Turkey is a modern nation-state established upon the legacy of the Ottoman State, which was one of the eight multi-national empires that had sovereignty over Eurasia at the beginning of the century (the others being England, Russia, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, China and Japan)." (p.6)

A description of Turkey based on its geopolitical space would be:

"Turkey is a modern nation-state which is situated in the interaction spheres of the main geopolitical waves within the globe." (p. 7)

Adding more dimensions to this depth of time and space, he offers further, more nuanced descriptions for Turkey:

"Turkey is the first nation-state founded as a result of the anti-colonialist struggle." (p. 8)

"Turkey is a nation-state situated at the crossroads of continents and regions." (p. 8)



Map of Eurasia, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East showing Turkey.

Source: CIA via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Political_Map_of_the_World_\(august_2013\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Political_Map_of_the_World_(august_2013).png) Public Domain.

II - 1 Summary of Section 1.

CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

This section introduces some basic concepts that will appear throughout the book and, using those concepts, offers the following formula for calculating a country's international standing/weight (which Davutoğlu calls "national power parameters"):

$$\text{Power} = (\text{Constant Data} + \text{Potential Data}) \times (\text{Strategic Mindset} \times \text{Strategic Planning} \times \text{Political Will})$$

where Constant Data is history, geography, demographics and culture; and Potential Data is economic, technological and military capacity.

Essentially,

$$\text{Power} = [(\text{history} + \text{geography} + \text{demographics} + \text{culture}) + (\text{economic, military and technological capacity})] \times (\text{Strategic Mindset} \times \text{Strategic Planning} \times \text{Political Will})$$

(p.17)

Davutoğlu then discusses Turkey's historical background as the heir to the Ottoman Empire. According to Davutoğlu, the Ottoman Empire's lack of an imperialist/colonialist strategy is a key factor shaping Turkey's foreign policy today. He writes:

The 19th century was the century of colonialism when big countries developed classic national strategies and in this century, the Ottoman State had only one concern: to preserve its internal unity⁶ and prevent further loss of territory. In time, this led to a static approach of defending borders, which became a foreign policy tradition.... Thus, after the loss of each piece of territory, the main concern became preserving what was left, and ties with areas beyond the borders were severed. (p. 52)

According to Davutoğlu, this historical tradition resulted in modern Turkey having an absolute-abandonment approach to regions that were once within the Ottoman Empire. He claims that Turkey turned its back on its surrounding regions such as Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East. For example, in the Middle East, this has manifested itself as follows:

Turkey's Middle East policy also bears marks of this absolute control-absolute abandonment predicament and related insufficient strategic planning. At the end of World War I, Turkey severed all political, cultural and strategic bridges with the Middle East and

⁶ This focus on 'internal unity' is a common and important theme in the book, and comes from the trauma of the collapse of the multi-national Ottoman Empire. This focus on internal unity became one of the main founding principles of the Turkish Republic, and even made its way into its constitution, which stipulates "the indivisible unity of the country with its state and nation." Today, there is still a fear of the West infiltrating the nation to exploit internal divisions. This deeply held fear and anxiety over the possible betrayal and annihilation of the Turkish state by internal treason still exerts a strong influence in Turkey's mainstream political culture today. This is also reflected in Turkey's threat perceptions emanating from Kurdish autonomous initiatives in its neighbors.

turned its back on the region; resulting in Turkey's lack of sufficiently receiving its share of natural resources of a region which it ruled for 500 years, and whose natural resources had the power to define the region's entire global relations. ...

When Turkey realized the geopolitical losses of its policy of turning its back on the Middle East, it... was unable to have sufficient influence over the people of the region from whom it had become culturally alienated, and over the political elite. This, even though, when Turkey left the region, there was an established Ottoman intellectual-political elite and a geopolitical integrity among the people of the region, which contained advantages that could form a Middle East strategy. Until recently, many Arab capitals including Damascus and Baghdad had a Turkish-speaking social segment. Instead of creating an image of a prestigious country with good relations with these segments, Turkey focused on being the Middle East representative of global power centers, entering a period of increasing alienation from the region.

This period of alienation removed Turkey from a position of having influence over the region.... Turkey, which couldn't use its advantages in areas beyond its current borders, became subject to European-centric pressures regarding its own internal unity and its borders. What's worse, despite its strong 500-year historical legacy of controlling the region, today, Turkey gives the appearance of having based its regional policies on the strategies of Israel- a country with only a 50-year history in the region; thus entering a new period of alienation. (p. 56-57)

Davutoğlu argues that Turkey is unique with its history of being the heir to the Ottoman Empire. He describes the historical transformation (rise and fall) of the Ottoman Empire as a critical feature in understanding Turkey's international position today.⁷ In addition, he claims that the Ottoman Empire had some unique characteristics, such as being home to the Islamic Caliphate and being the only non-colonial power in the 19th century. In fact, he claims that the Ottoman Empire challenged colonial powers and stood up as the protector of colonized Muslims against them. (p.68) He later argues that the Ottoman Empire's demise shaped Turkey's identity and approach to Islam during its founding.

Davutoğlu discusses that the context at the time of the demise of the Ottoman Empire was such that the two foundations of what should be Turkey's *hinterland* (or backyard)-- Turkism and Islamism-- were in crisis, leading to the new Turkish state not grasping the importance of the two factors. He claims that the Islamic world was going through its worst period and was in a time of shrinking; and the Turkic world was completely "taken hostage" following the Bolshevik Revolutions (p.69). Thus, he claims, when Turkey was founded, its new foreign policy ignored these two factors, and was based on a realist, idealist approach focused on peace and avoiding

⁷ Understanding Turkey's imperial past is key to understanding Turkey's foreign policy today. Turkish expert Soner Çağaptay says that a romantic view of the collapsed Ottoman Empire continues to shape how Turks view their place in the world today, so understanding this past is essential to understanding modern Turkey. He claims that nations that were once great powers have an inflated sense of their heyday, which is applicable to Turkey today, similar to Iran and Russia. See: Soner Çağaptay, *Erdoğan's Empire: Turkey and the Politics of the Middle East*, I.B. Tauris, 2019.

conflict with colonial powers. He claims that the leaders of the new Turkish Republic rejected their Ottoman heritage and tried to create a new political culture. In addition, because of the prevalent view that the Ottoman Empire's Islamic identity was a factor in its unraveling, the new founders of Turkey completely abandoned Islamic-identity and policies. He writes:

*The political elite [during the founding of Turkey] thought that internal unity and protection of borders would be achieved by abandoning the political identity and institutions that bothered the rising Western axis, thus attempting wide-ranging reforms. As such, Turkey made a serious and radical decision regarding its international position and, rather than being a weak center of a unique civilizational basin, it chose to be a regional power under the security umbrella of the dominant Western civilizational basin. This situation deeply impacted society's political ideals, attitudes, culture and institutions.*⁸ (p.70)

Davutoğlu then describes Turkey's foreign policy after World War II and the Cold War period as an extension of these tendencies coupled with the international context of the time:

After World War II... Turkey cooperated with the rising axis and pursued a policy of balancing the threat, leading Turkey to join NATO, the security organization of the Atlantic axis and to counter the Soviet threat. Again, instead of acquiring a unique position within the international system, Turkey followed a policy based on its instinct of protecting its borders, which became the foundational principle of Turkish foreign policy in the Cold War period as well. Turkey paid the price of being under this security umbrella, which it entered due to the geopolitical necessities given the Soviet threat, by avoiding its own natural spheres of influence and other power centers. (p.71)

Davutoğlu calls this a single-axis policy, based on the Western axis, which he claims led to Turkey losing its ability to create its own sphere of influence. He also claims that this choice led Turkey to avoid establishing relations with countries outside of this Western axis. This, he notes, manifests to this day, and can be seen in the difficulties that Turkey has encountered in its efforts to open up to Asia, Africa and Latin America after the Cold War. This was the outcome of the necessities of a bi-polar world, and shrunk Turkey's foreign policy to a low profile and to two basic parameters: Staying under the Western security umbrella against the Soviet threat; and its problems with Greece, which was also within this security umbrella.⁹ He claims that Turkey's

⁸ Although Davutoğlu never openly mentions this, he is deeply critical of Kemalism, and the "top-down" reforms imposed on Turkey during its founding by the Kemalists. Kemalism is the ideology promoted by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and its basic tenets are staunch secularism, the abolishment of the Caliphate, a 'nation-state' composed of Turkish people and a strong advocacy of membership in Western institutions. When he refers to the "political elite" or the "founders of Turkey," he is criticizing their way of modernization and secularization of Turkey; and for their failure to appreciate the advantages that the country's rich Ottoman history offered.

⁹ This is reflected in US organization charts regarding Turkey as well: Turkey is considered a 'European country' and assigned to various subdivisions responsible for Europe, due to Cold War logic. For example, at the State Department, it is under the European Bureau (EUR), and at the Pentagon, it is under the European Command (EUCOM). However, since the end of the Cold War, the most difficult issues in U.S.-Turkish relations have arisen outside of these areas. The majority have come from areas which are the responsibility of offices dealing with the Middle East, such as Central Command (CENTCOM). This

application to join the European Community (EC) was the outcome of an effort to stay competitive with Greece within the block. (p.72)

During the Cold War period, Turkey followed a foreign policy centered on security along its borders and developed military strategies accordingly; instead of creating an international position for itself. However, he claims, the end of the Cold War opened up a dynamic structure in the region and created an opportunity for an expansion in Turkey foreign policy-- however, Turkey was caught unprepared for this dynamism given its recent history of a narrow security approach to its international standing. (p.73)

During the post-Cold War period, Turkey paid the price of having made its foreign policy dependent on the Cold War conflict between two superpowers. As a regional power, he claims that Turkey was forced to follow policies consistent with those of the superpower that it aligned itself with (the US) and faced "penalties" if it followed a policy that was not consistent with the US. As an example, he cites the US embargo on Turkey following its Cyprus operation (1974-75); the Falklands War (1982) and the Gulf War (1991). Davutoğlu argues that some of the conflicts witnessed after the end of the Cold War (e.g. Bosnia) were the result of the transition from a bi-polar world to a balance of power.

Davutoğlu claims that the structure of the United Nations (UN) and its decisions are a direct reflection of the hierarchical organization of the Cold War period. (This is a sore spot for Turkey to this day, and still manifests itself in one of Turkish President Erdoğan's most common criticisms of the UN Security Council: "The world is greater than five.") Regarding the UN Security Council, he claims it does not reflect the current global power distribution. For example, he notes that the absence of Germany on the Council has led to some of the most important global problems (such as Kosovo) to be handled through the G-8, which was a more accurate reflection of the political economy of the time.

He claims that the international system of the Cold War period led Turkish foreign policy-makers to prefer short or mid-term tactical plans aligned with its superpower rather than long-term independent strategies of its own. However, the balance of power period that emerged after the Cold War allows Turkey an opportunity to create its own sphere of influence and strengthen its international position, but it can only do this through a meaningful merger of its rich historical legacy, its geopolitical and geo-economic opportunities and an internal political renewal. (p.79)

Davutoğlu then turns to Turkey's political culture and historical legacy, discussing one of the main themes of the book-- Turkey's "unique" political culture. He asks, "What is the main factor that differentiates Turkey's political culture from other societies and how does this influence Turkey's international standing?" He claims that Turkey's political culture is significantly different than societies in Western Europe and the Americas, as it is more diverse, more dynamic and less consistent. He also claims that Turkey differs from societies in the Middle East, whose political culture emanates from a tribal history, kingdom regimes and totalitarian dictatorships. This is why elections in Turkey carry a much different meaning than those in Egypt or Iraq.

mismatch between responsibility and expertise creates a gap of understanding on issues relating to Turkey.

(p.80) After discussing how Turkey differs from Asian, African and Latin American histories as well, Davutoğlu then turns to what makes Turkey unique-- its history and geography:

The most important historical factor that differentiates Turkey's political culture from other societies is the fact that it was the center of a civilization that contained the world's main crossroads, establishing an authentic and long-standing political order. (p.81)

Davutoğlu claims that the Ottoman civilization, over time, lost its power to the competing civilization. This led to a critical break with history and resulted in Turkey abandoning its own historical political culture, to its own detriment:

Turkey is the only society that experienced a complete historical break and redefinition of its identity, culture and institutions upon which its [previous] political system was based; and demonstrated a will to join the Western civilization, to whom it had lost its frontiers. Despite the sacrifices that this historical break required, [Turkey]... was constantly ostracized by the very civilization that it was made to join-- the most recent examples of this being the European Union's 1997 Luxemburg Summit... (p.82) ¹⁰

This historical break also led Turkey to become alienated from its own geo-cultural surroundings-- the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus. While this situation was not a problem during the bi-polar world, the current system necessitates a reversal of this alienation:

The [former] single-axis approach can no longer answer society's expectations nor is in alignment with today's international structure or realities. No rational person in Turkey today is tied to this forced identity or axis. Turkey's position as a bridge between East and West is being mentioned more than ever. Turkey truly is a European, Asian, Balkan, Caucasian, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean country, all at once. (p.92)

¹⁰ Here again, Davutoğlu is being critical of Kemalism when he writes of a "complete historical break and redefinition of [Turkey's] identity, culture and institutions upon which its [previous] political system was based."

Here we also see a conspiratorial view of the West, which is a recurring theme throughout the book, when he writes of Turkey being "made to join" the Western civilization. His mention of "constantly being ostracized" by that civilization is a common theme that continues in Turkish rhetoric today as well. As recently as July 2019, President Erdoğan talked of this regarding Turkey's purchase of S-400's: "Despite the political and military pacts that we made with the western alliance, it is a reality that we have seen the greatest threats from them." See "Turkish Commentators See Link between Failed Coup and S-400 Purchase," *OE Watch*, August 2019 and "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan S-400 Açıklaması: Tarihimizin En Önemli Anlaşması (Statement about the S-400 from President Erdoğan: The Most Important Agreement in our History)," *Haberturk.com.tr*, 14 July 2019. <https://www.haberturk.com/son-dakika-erdogandan-s-400-aciklamasi-tarihimizin-en-onemli-anlasmasi-2504288>

II - 2 Summary of Section 2.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PHASED STRATEGY AND BASIN POLICIES

Geopolitical Theories: The Post-Cold War Era, Security Vacuums and Turkey

Davutoğlu discusses that the end of the Cold War produced three geopolitical vacuum areas, specifically the Balkans; Caucasus to the Middle East; and Central Asia, which he notes, are all situated along strategic passageways. He claims that these geopolitical vacuum areas have witnessed many of the conflicts that last to this day (e.g. the frozen conflicts in Central Asia, Kashmir, Eastern Turkistan). The first vacuum area was the strategic route from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Adriatic in the south (which was seen as the borders of the Cold War), which ultimately became the geopolitical fault-line in the post-Cold War period (p. 110-111). A similar vacuum emerged in the area from North Caucasus to Eastern Anatolia, Northern Iran and Iraq, to the Persian Gulf. The third vacuum area emerged in Central Asia and in the regions where Central Asia connects to seas in its south. Davutoğlu claims that this vacuum area was home to the colonial competition of the 19th century, with Afghanistan playing a buffer role. In fact, he claims that Afghanistan witnessed the final conflicts that led to the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, he claims, is what started the inevitable end of the Cold War (p. 113), because Afghanistan contained the Wakhan Corridor-- a strategic corridor that enabled passage to the warm seas from Central Asia and the Indian basin. Turkey was critically impacted by all three of these vacuum areas, given its position on the Anatolian peninsula, located along the crossroads (both north-south and east-west) of all of them:

Turkey is located at the center of passageways and power struggles along east-west and north-south of land and sea power centers. Along the north-south route, two important land passageways (Balkans and the Caucasus) and one important sea passageway (the Straits) that connect Eurasia to warm seas and to Africa, intersect in Turkey, and connect these regions to the Middle East and the Caspian region, which are geo-economic resource centers. Along the east-west route, the Anatolian peninsula is the most important ring [intersection point] among the strategic peninsulas surrounding the Eurasian continent. (p.116)

Given this strategic location and changes in the international balance of power after the Cold War, Davutoğlu claims that Turkey's geopolitical configuration is in need of a reinterpretation:

A country's geography is a constant factor. But the geopolitical diplomatic aspect of this geography is a dynamic factor that should be reinterpreted and adjusted based on changes in the international balances of power. Approaches that fail to adapt to these changes can cause advantages to turn into disadvantages... (p. 116)

Davutoğlu claims that during the Cold War period, Turkish foreign policy failed to use this critical geography as a strategy to connect with the world; preferring instead to use it as a diplomatic advantage for the benefit of the security umbrella of the block under which it had placed itself. However, now that the Cold War parameters have collapsed, Davutoğlu argues that Turkey needs to reinterpret its geopolitical role and its foreign policy accordingly. This entails creating a *hinterland* -- an area where long-term cultural, economic and political ties are

strengthened. Davutoğlu describes three "basins" that should form Turkey's *hinterland*-- its regional spheres of influence, expanding outward in phased concentric circles:

1. *Near land basin: Balkans-Middle East-Caucasus*
2. *Near sea basin: Black Sea-Adriatic-Eastern Mediterranean-Red Sea-Gulf-Caspian Sea*
3. *Near continental basin: Europe-North Africa-South Asia-Central & East Asia (p.118)*

Near Land Basin: The Balkans-Middle East-Caucasus

Regarding the Balkans, Davutoğlu claims that the basis of Turkey's political influence in the Balkans are what he calls "Ottoman-remnant" Muslim societies. In addition, both Turkish and Muslim minorities in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo and Romania should form important elements of Turkey's Balkan policy (p.123). He claims that Turkey must take an active role in issues involving these communities:

In order to ensure that another Balkan tragedy like the one at the turn of the century is avoided, Turkey must follow an active policy on issues involving the future of Ottoman-remnant Muslim societies...

...

In other words, the security of the Balkans increasingly correspond to the security of Turkey's western borders... Therefore, it is inevitable that Turkey develop a plan that ensures the security and territorial integrity of particularly Albania, Bosnia and Macedonia, by creating inter- and extra-regional security umbrellas to balance the Russia factor on the region. (p.124)

Regarding the Caucasus, Davutoğlu writes that, during the Cold War, Turkey joined NATO and sided with the "Western front," thus turning the Turkish-Soviet border into the NATO-Warsaw Pact border. This, he claims, created an artificial curtain between the Caucasus and Eastern Anatolia. With the end of the Cold War, this artificial curtain has been lifted. He calls the Caucasus "the door to Asia" for Turkey, which opened with the end of the Cold War. In addition, the end of the Cold War changed the international standing of the Caucasus and unleashed ethnic and religious conflicts (e.g. the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan). Davutoğlu argues that Azerbaijan (in the Caucasus) and Albania (in the Balkans) are two critical allies for Turkey:

Azerbaijan is the most important strategic ally for Turkey in the Caucasus in general, and in the South Caucasus in particular... Until Azerbaijan (in the Caucasus) and Albania (in the Balkans) gain a stable and strong position in the region... it will be impossible for Turkey to increase its weight in the region. (p.127-128)

Regarding the Middle East, which Davutoğlu calls "an inevitable *hinterland*," he discusses the area's historical significance; including being the world's main oil reserve and the birthplace of Islamic civilization. In addition, he discusses the subjectivity of the term "Middle East" as a western concept. Given all the changes the area has witnessed, particularly with the power vacuums that emerged after the Cold War, he argues that Turkey needs to revise its policy towards this region as well:

Given the new international context, Turkey's Middle East policy needs a revision. Turkey, which lost the most strategic parts of the Middle East in the first quarter of the century, which became alienated from the region in the second and third quarters of the century, and which had volatile relationships in the fourth quarter, must radically re-evaluate its Middle East policy. In particular, the tense relations with the European Union, which make it increasingly impossible for the membership process to proceed, necessitate a comprehensive regional Middle East strategy. At the same time, a Turkey that has severed its ties with Europe and the Middle East cannot be successful in its regional and continental policies. (p.142)

The policies that Davutoğlu suggests for the above three areas which make up Turkey's "near land basin" also have to be consistent with each other. Therefore, Davutoğlu argues that Turkey needs a comprehensive peace plan coupled with a plan to develop economic and cultural relations with these areas. (p.145) He claims that striking this balance and combining it with a rational foreign policy will make Turkey a rising power in the coming century. (p. 149)

Near Sea Basin: The Black Sea, Eastern Mediterranean, the Gulf, and Caspian

Davutoğlu claims that one of the most critical elements of a new Turkish foreign policy should be a naval strategy that will make it influential in its near sea basin. During the Cold War, Turkey's location made it impossible to have a coordinated naval strategy due to separate approaches to its responsibilities within NATO and its national interests. This led Turkey to see its surrounding water basins and waterways as disparate problem areas based on inter-bloc competitions. For example, the Straits and the Black Sea were seen as an extension of inter-bloc issues between NATO and the Warsaw Pact; while issues related to the Aegean and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean were evaluated as part of inner-bloc competition with Greece. (p.157)

The end of the Cold War replaced this static inter-bloc competition with a dynamic context where reflexive and momentary reactions could lead to strategic outcomes. In this dynamic context, even a minor mistake in these reflexive reactions could end up causing shifts to long-term strategies. Therefore, defensive Cold War strategies needed to be replaced with an active and offensive attitude. For Turkey, this required a coordinated naval strategy in its surrounding seas and waterways. (p.159)

For example, Turkey's approach to the Black Sea during the Cold War was shaped by the fact that all the other littoral states (Soviet Union, Romania, Bulgaria) were in the competing bloc, even though Turkey held the entire southern border of the Black Sea and had the longest border of any littoral state. Regardless, Turkey viewed itself as being encircled by the Soviet bloc in the Black Sea. With the end of the Cold War and disbanding of the Warsaw Pact, Turkey was able to develop bilateral relations with each of the other littoral states based on mutual interests. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, two new states- Georgia and Ukraine- became littoral states to the Black Sea and their conflicts with Russia created a diplomatic advantage for Turkey, facilitating Turkey's bilateral relations with them. (p.160) Davutoğlu argues that the Black Sea also holds potential for economic opportunities, particularly regarding naval transportation. This requires developing good relations with states north of the Black Sea and leveraging mechanisms like the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Turning to the Straits (the Bosphorus/Istanbul Strait and Dardanelle Strait), which Davutoğlu calls "Eurasia's Strategic Knot," he discusses their strategic significance, as the bridge connecting Asia to Europe and the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. With the end of the Cold War, Davutoğlu claims that the Straits give Turkey new strategic advantages beyond just security, such as geo-economic (strategic location in the transfer of Caspian Oil) and geo-cultural (intersection of East and West cultures), which Turkey should leverage to its full benefit by developing a flexible, long-term strategic plan. (p.168)

Regarding Greece and the Aegean, he notes that the biggest obstacle to Turkey's near water basin policy is Greece's ownership of most of the Aegean islands. These islands are so close to Turkey that they can become the base for a military operation against Anatolia; they also surround Turkey's waterways that allow passage from the Sea of Marmara to the Mediterranean, creating a serious security predicament for Turkey. (p.171) Meanwhile, Cyprus holds a key strategic position due to its location between the Straits (connecting Asia and Europe) and the Suez Canal (connecting Asia and Africa). The end of the Cold War took Cyprus out of being simply a Turkey-Greece issue, and carried it to a greater Eurasia-Middle East-Balkans platform, requiring Turkey to develop a new strategy based on this new platform. (p.178) Turkey also needs to reverse the mistake it made during the Cold War, of not prioritizing the Gulf or Caspian. (p.181)

Near Continental Basin- Europe, North Africa, South Asia, Mid and East Asia

During the Cold War, Turkey's response to continental or global crises was bound by Turkey's adherence to the parameters of a bi-polar world order. Turkey did not prioritize regions beyond its own bloc, instead focusing on issues within its bloc, and the competition with Greece (within this bloc). The end of the Cold War replaced the bi-polar blocs with continental blocs, requiring continental strategies. For Turkey, this entails complicated continental policies, given its unique position within several different continental basins:

Turkey is Balkan country via Thrace, a Black Sea country via its northern shores, a Caucasus country via the Erzurum plateau, a Mesopotamian and Middle Eastern country via Harran, and an Eastern Mediterranean country via its southern seashores and the Gulf of Alexandretta...

The Balkan connection makes Turkey an Eastern European country, while its Middle Eastern connection highlights West Asian nature. Turkey, who is involved in the waterways of Eastern Europe and the Eurasia Steppes via the Black Sea, is also within the balances of the Caspian and Central Asia via the Caucasus, and the balances of South- east Asia and North Africa via the Eastern Mediterranean.¹¹ (p.194)

...
[Therefore] Turkey needs a strategic definition and plan for five main areas regarding its near continental basin: (i) Europe, (ii) the Asian depth, (iii) the Atlantic factor, (iv) the Africa opening, and (v) Intercontinental interaction areas: Steppes, North Africa, West Asia. (p.198)

Regarding Europe, Davutoğlu claims that Turkey's relations with Europe are much broader than just Turkey-EU relations, requiring Turkey to have a much broader strategy to deal with Europe, than just the EU (to include mechanisms such as NATO, OSCE and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization). Regarding Asia, the end of the Cold War led to the emergence of new power balances among those powers in the top of the global hierarchy (Russia, China, Japan) along with continental powers such as India, Pakistan, Iran and Indonesia. In addition, regional powers such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also entered the picture, complicating the Asian dynamic. Turkey also seriously ignored Africa during the Cold War, even though the Ottoman Empire had included Libya, Tunisia and Algeria and held deep religious, cultural and trade relations with sub-Saharan countries. The bi-polar world led Turkey to view its relations with Africa within the context of the Soviet threat, resulting Turkey keeping a distance from Africa. Turkey needs to reverse this, and make a cultural and economic opening to Africa a central part of its new foreign policy. (p. 208)



Map of the Ottoman Empire in its heyday, 1481-1683.

André Koehne via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ottoman_empire.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0

II- 3 Summary of Section 3.

APPLICATION AREAS: STRATEGIC TOOLS AND REGIONAL POLICIES

Turkey's Strategic Links and Foreign Policy Tools

Davutoğlu discusses that during the Cold War era, Turkey had three main strategic tools based on three main links: Turkey's Atlantic connection (which prioritized relations with the US) was based on NATO; Turkey's European connection, based on its relations with the European Union (EU); and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), based on its relations with Asia and Africa. (p.222) In the post-Cold War era, Turkey tried to diversify and expand these relations to adapt to new dynamics, but was unable to advance a comprehensive and consistent strategy.

The Atlantic Axis and Turkey within NATO's New Strategic Mission

The Warsaw Pact's collapse gave rise to the need for a renewed identity and mission for NATO- an organization founded on the premise of preventing a European expansion of this Pact. While some argued that NATO would have a shrinking role until it was eventually replaced with an independent EU defense structure; other, more realist views held that NATO would need to expand its mission to answer to non-military threats with global missions. The Bosnia crisis revealed the weakness of Europe's defense mechanisms and confirmed that only NATO could control such crises and prevent them from turning into a large-scale war. (p.230) This led to an expanded strategic mission for NATO at the 1999 NATO summit in Washington. However, Davutoğlu warns that the role that Turkey may need to play within NATO's new mission in the post-Cold War era may contradict Turkey's need to develop its strategic links with its near abroad, and carries a risk for Turkey:

One of [Turkey's] most important foreign policy problems of the coming era is the compatibility of Turkey's regional policies and preferences with NATO's global mission... If the sides [Turkey and NATO] carry out their respective policies without considering the sensitivities of the other, there is a risk of Turkey becoming alienated from its own basin on the one hand, and tense relations with NATO on the other. (p.233)

If Turkey takes an active role in regional operations on behalf of NATO... this may lead to an alienation from its own basin; while a Turkey that prioritizes regional calculations may lead to a debate about Turkey's strategic trustworthiness within NATO and to new pressures. The issue of the use of the Incirlik base during and after the Gulf War kept this diplomatic predicament on the agenda constantly. (p.233)

OIC: The Geopolitical and Geo-cultural Interaction Line for Afro-Eurasia

Founded in 1969 in the aftermath of an attack on the al-Aqsa Mosque, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) had particular importance for the Arab world. However, despite gathering all Islamic nation-states under one roof, the OIC was unable to develop joint policies. As with many other international issues at the time, OIC became secondary to the international system of the bi-polar world. Nation-states in the OIC had to balance the policies of their bloc and their OIC links, and they were generally unsuccessful in doing so. Davutoğlu claims that the

Islamic world is undergoing a geo-cultural awakening in the aftermath of the Cold War, creating a strategic advantage for Turkey. He writes:

The Islamic world is no longer an Afro-Asian (Africa-Asia) phenomenon, there is a realization that it is also a Eurasian (Europe-Asia) one. A geo-cultural awakening in a geography ranging from Albania to Kazan, from Bosnia to Chechnya, Crimea to Tajikistan is taking place, transforming Islamic identity to a Eurasian one... Many international problems are happening against the backdrop of the pains of this transformation. (p. 250)

The increasing importance of the Eurasian aspect of Islamic identity... is extremely important for the geo-cultural depth of Turkey's international position. The strengthening of Islamic identity in the depths of Eurasia creates a strategic opportunity for Turkey. The most important element that can counter/challenge Slavic and Russian influence in these areas is the cultural resistance of Islamic identity... If the Turkic Muslim elements in these areas become active in the Islamic world, this would mean an increase in institutional and political influence for Turkey. (p. 250-251)

However, he notes that the end of the Cold War also brought a new, negative perception of Islam, with the word being mentioned alongside words like "terrorism," "fundamentalism," "bombs," and "radicalism," paving the way for a geopolitical exclusion of Islamic civilization. Davutoğlu argues that this is an unfair characterization:

Even though there were plenty of Muslim countries in the anti-Saddam coalition during the Gulf War, the anti-Saddam campaign was turned into an anti-Muslim campaign; while the IRA's terrorist acts aren't described as "Catholic terrorism," individual terror acts in the Islamic world were described as "Islamic terror;" while India's atomic bomb wasn't described as a "Hindu bomb," Pakistan's bomb was described as an "Islamic bomb" and any important developments on earth that had to do with Islam came to be defined with fundamentalism. (p.253)

Davutoğlu claims that characterization of Islam was apparent in the two big theories of the time-- Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" and Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations." He claims that Fukuyama described Islamic values as the opposite of Western values, while Huntington claimed that the borders of Islamic civilization were drawn by blood and that Islam was at war with all civilizations, specifically the West. He claims that this characterization was a deliberate strategy in order to "legitimize international operations in this geography":

The threat perception regarding the Islamic world that emerged after the Cold War, and the related geopolitical exclusion [of Islam], is actually the product of a strategic pragmatism based on geopolitical, geo-cultural and geo-economic facts... For such a perception to be spread, and to point to post-Cold War conflicts in the Islamic world as proof, are efforts to legitimize international operations on this geography. (p.254)

Having abolished the Caliphate and established as a secular country, Davutoğlu argues that Turkey was not in a position to represent the Islamic world at the time of its founding in 1923. Nevertheless, Turkey's initial leaders did try to establish relations with other Muslim countries;

Iran and Afghanistan are two examples. After this period, the Cold War bi-polar order made it hard for Turkey to deepen its relations with the Islamic world. Turkey's position as the only Muslim country within the western bloc lead to a decrease in its prestige in the Islamic world. The post-Cold War world offered an opportunity for Turkey to improve its profile in the Islamic world; but this quickly dissipated as Turkey developed relations with Israel. Today, Turkey needs a new approach to the Islamic world. (p.261)

The Middle East: The Key to Political-Economic and Strategic Balances

Davutoğlu writes that the basic geographic and historical balance mechanism in the Middle East lies in the trilateral relations of Egypt-Turkey-Iran; and that cooperation among these three countries is imperative for long-term peace in the region. There are also smaller-scale trilateral balances in the region, such as Iraq-Syria-Saudi Arabia; and Jordan-Palestine-Lebanon (and northern Iraq, after the Gulf War). These three trilateral mechanisms are like an 'intertwined and dynamic chessboard' according to Davutoğlu. (p.355) The Arab-Israel conflict adds even more complexity to this chessboard. (p.361) The Middle East also has a unique naval importance:

From a naval geopolitical point of view, the Middle East is at the center of the Afro-Eurasia strategies of sea-based powers. In their naval strategies, both the UK and the US view the Middle East as a strategic offensive base towards the inner parts of Eurasia and its shores—one that should absolutely not be abandoned to the control of the opponent's strategic powers. The fact that five of the nine most important strategic sea transit lines pass through here directly (Istanbul and Dardanelle Straits, Suez Canal, Aden and the Strait of Hormuz) and one of them indirectly (the Gibraltar), proves the area's importance in naval geopolitics. (p.325-326)

Regarding Syria, Davutoğlu notes that the Turkey-Syria border is the longest border for each side, holding huge potential for agriculture, trade and transportation; despite the water conflict between Turkey and Syria, regarding the sharing of the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Davutoğlu argues that Turkey needs to develop its economic relations with Syria to pave the way for an easing of political tensions.

Regarding the Arab world, Turkey's rapidly developing relations with Israel led to a perception in the Arab world that Turkey was in a strategic alliance with Israel. This, combined with Turkey's position in the western bloc during the Cold War, led to problematic relations with the Arab world, which needs to be reversed via bilateral relations. The Arab world's threat perception towards Western colonialism in the 50s, towards Israel in the 60s and 70s and towards Iran in the 80s, is now at risk of shifting towards Turkey in the mid-90s. (p.414)

The Arab public seeing Turkey as an extension of other countries' calculations... weakens Turkey's regional image and influence. While Turkey is not a country that became integrated with the region later, it also doesn't have the luxury to act based on changing dynamics... Turkey's historical depth and its abundance of experience in the region, contradicts its image as the regional extension of a global bloc. Such an image... is detrimental to Turkey-Arab relations and Turkey's regional influence. (p.417)

...

The best defense against Turkey's potential isolation from the region, is to diversify and deepen bilateral relations with Arab countries based on mutual interest. (p.416)

Regarding Israel, Davutoğlu writes that Turkey-Israel relations are based on the fact that Turkey was on the side of the Western bloc after World War II, which is the same block that supported the birth of Israel. (p.417) This made Turkey an inevitable partner for Israel; but also forced Turkey to pay attention to Israel's global links, particularly its influence within and over the US. Turkey-US relations typically moved in parallel with Turkey-Israel relations, with the Jewish lobby in the US playing an important balancing role against anti-Turkish Greek and Armenian lobbies. This created pressure on Turkey in its relations with Israel, and prevented Turkey from following balanced regional policies. The appearance of a Turkey-US-Israel triangle also negatively impacted Turkey's relations with China, Russia and countries of the OIC. (p.420) In the post-Cold War period, Turkey's relationship with Israel needs to be placed within the greater context of its relations in the Middle East. (p.426)

Regarding Iran, Davutoğlu writes that the fates of Turkey and Iran will always be connected, given their history and geography. In this sense, he compares them to France and Germany-- whether they are at war or in an alliance, they share similar cultures and geographies. The only difference is that Turkey and Iran are of different sects of Islam (Iran being mostly Shi'a, and Turkey being mostly Sunni). He points out that the Ottoman-Iran border is one of the most stable and enduring borders in the region, having been drawn at the end of a war between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid Dynasty, in the 1639 Qasr-i Shirin Treaty. These borders last to this day and form the Turkey-Iran border. In the 20th century, the Iranian Revolution's anti-American nature and subsequent hostage crisis with the US made it difficult for Turkey to pursue good relations with Iran; nevertheless, both sides tried hard to avoid tension given their position as neighbors. With the end of the Cold War, Turkey needs to place its relations with Iran in the greater context of its Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia policies. (p. 436)

Regarding the Kurdish issue, Davutoğlu writes that "Kurdish geopolitics" is divided and vulnerable to abuse by greater powers for their regional interests, creating a risk of conflict. The only way that Turkey can counter this is by creating a common identity with Kurds. He claims that this can be done by highlighting Turkey's common history, culture and geography with Kurds. Kurds must be guaranteed equal citizenship, and feel a sense of belonging in Turkey:

Turkey needs to develop cultural, political and economic policies that will embrace the region's innocent people with a new feeling of belonging and create a wedge between the terrorist group and the Kurdish public; instead of adopting a rhetoric that risks disrupting social belonging, at this time of dealing a big blow to [PKK] terror. (p.449)

Combining all of the recommendations he makes regarding the Middle East, Davutoğlu closes this part of the chapter with one of the most important policy prescriptions of the book-- that Turkey should aim to be a "peace-maker" in the Middle East:

Turkey should avoid becoming a short-term or tactical side to ethnic-based conflicts likely to be instigated in the Middle East; and instead emerge as the center of a long-term solution for such tensions via a comprehensive geo-cultural redefinition. This means that Turkey should stay away from polarizing political-cultural attitudes and adopt

unifying ones; and take on the role of regional peacemaker in the Middle East. A country that is experiencing a divided identity and a Turkey whose state-society relationship has been weakened will inevitably face new risks in the new power dynamics. (p.452)

Turkey's Central Asia Policy within the Eurasia Power Equation

Davutoğlu argues that the static polarization of the bi-polar world relegated Central Asia to a passive element within the static global balance of the time, suppressing the region's unique geographical and historical characteristics. The end of the Cold War created an opportunity for Central Asian states to emerge in the region with their unique internal dynamics. They also went through complex and difficult transformations as they gained their independence. Davutoğlu claims that this region is relatively much less densely populated than India and China, suggesting that the coming century may see a demographic shift into Central Asia from these regions. Geoeconomically, Uzbekistan's gold, natural gas and oil reserves, in addition to its silver and cotton production make it an important center. Azerbaijan's oil, natural gas, cobalt and iron pyrite reserves further add to the region's geo-economic importance. (p.455-465)

One of the most important transformations that took place in Central Asia with the collapse of the Soviet Union has to do with local identities. The Soviet Union's 70-year policy of creating a Soviet identity had destroyed the unifying Turkic identity of the region (and related common linguistic base), which encompassed sub-cultural identities such as Uzbek, Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Uighur. An atheist education policy had also erased their Islamic identity. The collapse of the Soviet Union allowed both their Turkic and Islamic identities to flourish. (p.466) Davutoğlu argues that if Turkey can support the revival of these historical and geo-cultural identities; and combine that with a rational strategy, it can open up an area of influence for itself.

In the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey was ill-prepared to deal with the rapid and complex transformations in Central Asia. It did not have a coordinated strategy for the region; instead conducting policies based on instantaneous, nostalgic and historical reflexes, leading to inconsistencies and problems. Because of its geographic location at the intersection point of multiple spheres (or "basins" as Davutoğlu calls them), Turkey faces the unique challenge of developing policies that take into account all of these different basins. In contrast, for example, China (a much bigger country both geographically and demographically)--only has to develop consistency between two spheres: Eastern Asia and the Pacific given its position as (only) an Eastern Asian and Pacific country. (p.490)

Given this necessity for Turkey, Davutoğlu writes that Turkey's policy toward Central Asia should leverage its relations with both the US and the EU in Asia, while paying attention to balances within Asia to make sure it never finds itself alone against a certain bloc:

Central Asia is key to Turkey establishing a deep Asia strategy. Turkey needs to simultaneously use its relations with the US and EU within Asia; and pursue an active diplomacy that closely follows inter-Asia dynamics to ensure that it never ends up alone against any bloc. This requires developing its relations with Central Asia based on its strategic priorities within the Asia-Europe equation. A consistent and long-term link

between a grand Eurasia strategy and a foreign policy toward Central Asia will lay an important part of the groundwork for Turkey's global influence. (p.499)

The European Union: An Analysis of a Multi-dimensional and Multi-level Relationship

Turkey applied to become a member of the European Union (EU) in 1959, and the diplomatic process started with the Ankara Agreement of 1 December 1964. The 60s and 70s witnessed uncertain and volatile relations due to the EU's reservations about free travel within the EU, and Turkey's protectionist policies towards its own industries. The process came to a halt with the 12 September 1980 military coup in Turkey. Relations were revived in the mid-80s, but by the early 90s, Turkey's lingering uncertain status within an indefinite "waiting room" had led to disappointment in the country. While the 1995 Customs Union agreement raised hopes, this was reversed with the 1997 Luxemburg Summit, where Turkey's candidacy was officially rejected. At this summit, Turkey's candidacy was put on hold under a special status, leading to anti-European sentiment in Turkey. The perception that Europe was sheltering Abdullah Öcalan-- the leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) added fuel to the fire. At the 1999 Helsinki Summit, Turkey was officially declared a candidate country, leading to euphoria in the country.¹² Davutoğlu argues that this psychological roller-coaster relationship with the EU makes it difficult for Turkey to develop a rational foreign policy towards Europe. (p.504-506)

There are other aspects that make this a difficult relationship. Davutoğlu argues that the EU requires each member state to relinquish some of its sovereignty to a higher structure. While this is a necessary part of European integration, it directly conflicts with Turkey's political psychology, based on its history and its understanding of sovereignty based on a nation-state:

In contrast to other member and candidate states, the fact that the Republic of Turkey was established as the result of a War of Independence against European powers' plans to divide Anatolia, prompts a reflex based on a historical subconscious, which psychologically impacts the political decision-making process in Turkey. When you merge the shrinking of the nation-state's sovereignty with the concept of minority rights based on ethnicity¹³, this reflex turns into a Sevr psychology¹⁴, often verbalized by the top levels of government. (p.515)

¹² Since the publication of the book, the Turkey-EU relationship has taken a turn for the worse and currently appears to be in the "deep-freeze." The EU formally started accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005, but Turkish Europhilia had begun to decrease because of Cyprus's admission into the EU despite the Greek Cypriot rejection of the Annan plan to end the Cyprus conflict in 2004. As the EU enlargement went forward in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the Western Balkans, Turks and Turkish leaders felt further alienated. They believed that the EU was employing double standards. The dominant rhetoric in Turkey on the EU became that "the EU would not accept Turkey whatever Turkey does." During this time, Turkey's authoritarian drift, the steady deterioration of its democratic practices, the erosion of the rule of law and the dissolution of the independence of the judiciary, provided the anti-Turkey camp within the EU with ample ammunition as well, which continues today. For Turkey's part, there is great resentment against the EU for its reluctance to take any Syrian refugees and to a perception that the EU has left Turkey alone on this.

¹³ What Davutoğlu is referring to as "minority rights based on ethnicity" has to do with the Kurds. Turkey defines minorities based on religion, while the EU does so on the basis of ethnicity. As such,

Furthermore Davutoğlu claims that there are significant suspicions about the EU's sincerity about basic EU principles, given its increasingly "anti-Islamic" attitude:

Increasing racist biases and an anti-Islamic psychology has led [the EU] towards an attitude that completely ignores its pluralist ideology. Even though the Bosnia crisis once again brought the European identity of the Islamic civilization to the fore, the [EU's] attitude during this crisis raised serious suspicions about its sincerity regarding its basic principles. (p.542)

...
Within this framework, one of the main questions is, what differentiates Turkey from other EU members or candidates? For example, why don't the membership processes of Slovakia, Estonia, Romania and Bulgaria give rise to a civilization debate among European elites and policy-makers; but the membership of Turkey-- who shared the same strategic fate with the EU's central states during the Cold War--brings up a civilizational problem? In fact, why can relations between the EU and Japan or China be conducted completely rationally, while relations with Turkey-- an EU candidate member-- raise the issue of a civilizational and cultural difference as a point of isolation rather than a positive interaction? (p.542)

Having raised these questions, Davutoğlu closes out the chapter and the book with a critical and conspiratorial view of Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" theory. This theory had described Turkey as one of three "torn" countries along two civilizations (the other two "torn" countries being Mexico and Russia). Davutoğlu argues that this is a deliberate and dangerous strategy to present the cultural re-awakening of the non-Western world as a threat:

Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' theory and its related presentation of Turkey as being 'torn' between two civilizations, is a striking and dangerous example of how the long-term process of civilizational interaction can be used for a strategic purpose. Huntington's approach, which presents the cultural re-awakening of non-Western civilizational basins as a threat, and suggests to Western strategists [that they should] manipulate the conflicts between these civilizational basins, has not only attracted serious reactions from the Islamic and Chinese civilizations, but has also raised serious suspicions among policy-makers and Western elites who foresaw the risks that would

Turkey's integration with the EU would require a redefinition of its minorities to include the Kurds. This conflicts with the "Sevr psychology" described in the footnote below.

¹⁴ What Davutoğlu is referring to here as the "Sevr psychology" goes back to the founding of Turkey. The Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I and dissolved as an entity. The 1920 Treaty of Sevres abolished the empire and divided up the Anatolian possessions of the Ottoman Empire among national entities, one of which were the Kurds. The Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923) was fought to nullify this agreement and maintain the territorial integrity of Asia Minor. This focus on territorial integrity became one of the main founding principles of the Turkish Republic, and even made its way into its constitution, which stipulates "the indivisible unity of the country with its state and nation". (Source: "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası (The Constitution of the Turkish Republic)," The Website of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Undated, <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa82.htm>) This Sevres-phobic approach, including red-lines voiced by Turkish military officials, persists to this day and is focused on the primacy of territorial integrity.

arise from a categorical divide like the "West-Rest." ... This approach, which views China-- containing a quarter of the world's population; and the Islamic world-- which encompasses the most sensitive wave of the globe's geopolitics and its passageways-- as the other civilizational pole, will clearly lead to risky results in the process of forming a world order. (p.543)

This theory is important for countries that can easily be placed in the "other" category due to their important role in history or their position along the passageways of civilizations, like Turkey. From this perspective, the aspects that lead to Huntington's definition of a 'torn' country-- having different and varied civilizational experiences-- are an important wealth, instead of a risk in the long-run. (p.543)

III. Application of Strategic Depth in Turkish Foreign Policy

Strategic Depth envisioned a Turkey as an independent global power that asserts its influence in its neighborhood, especially in the Middle East. During this period, Turkey increased its involvement in regional initiatives, tried to pursue good relations with its neighbors and significantly expanded its trade linkages with the Middle East and Africa. In line with the Strategic Depth view that Turkey's multifaceted identity made it the best candidate to be a mediator between East and West, Turkey also inserted itself as a party in many unresolved problems in its surrounding region and tried to play mediator in tough conflicts. This pro-active peace diplomacy could be seen in Turkey's foreign policy in the Balkans, the Middle East, Caucasus and the Gulf. Some examples are as follows:

- **Turkish efforts to solve the Lebanese crisis:** During the July-August 2006 war between Lebanon and Israel, Turkey played a proactive role in trying to bring about a ceasefire. Turkey also contributed to efforts to find a solution to the political crises which erupted in 2006 in Lebanon that ended with the signing of the Doha Agreement in 2008.¹⁵
- **Turkish efforts to initiate talks between Syria and Israel:** Turkey tried to bring Syria and Israel together through proxy negotiations, to hold direct talks in 2008.¹⁶ (The Israeli offensive against Hamas, 'Operation Cast Lead' which came in December of 2008, ended this process.)
- **Afghanistan/Pakistan/Turkey Trilateral Summits:** In 2006-2007, Turkey leveraged its close ties with both the Afghan and Pakistani governments to initiate a trilateral mechanism called the Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Summit. The purpose of this initiative was to improve relations between the two countries, whose ties were strained. The first summit, which brought the leaders of Pakistan and Afghanistan together in Turkey was held in 2007. Since then, summits have taken place each year at the presidential level, with progress towards cooperation against the Taliban, and at times, just to keep the lines of communication open between the sides.¹⁷
- **Turkey's offer to mediate between the US and Iran on nuclear matters:** In November 2008, Turkey's then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced that Turkey wanted to use its growing role in the Middle East to mediate between the new Obama administration and Iran.¹⁸ Erdoğan repeated this offer in a speech three days later at the Brookings Institution in Washington D.C., asserting that Turkey was uniquely

¹⁵ "Relations between Turkey and Lebanon," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-lebanon.en.mfa>

¹⁶ "Erdoğan, İsrail-Suriye Barışı İçin Aracı Olmuş (Erdoğan is a Mediator for Peace between Israel and Syria)," *Milliyet*, 31 March 2008. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/dunya/erdogan-israil-suriye-barisi-icin-araci-olmus-511434>

¹⁷ "Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Summit was Held in Ankara," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_afghanistan_pakistan-trilateral-summit-was-held-in-ankara.en.mfa

¹⁸ "Turkish Leader Volunteers to be U.S.-Iran Mediator," *New York Times*, 12 November 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/12/world/europe/12turkey.html?_r=1&sq=TURKEY.

positioned for the job given its good rapport and increasing trade with Iran, along with its cultural and religious ties.¹⁹ Following Erdoğan's offer, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hassan Qashqavi indicated that Iran would not oppose Turkish mediation of nuclear talks with the West.²⁰

- **Strategic agreements with the Gulf Cooperation Council:** Turkey institutionalized its relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) by initiating the "Framework Agreement for Economic Cooperation between Turkey and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC)," signed on 30 May 2005 in Manama, Bahrain. This framework agreement aimed to facilitate economic cooperation and increase cooperation in many other areas. In September 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding establishing a Strategic Dialogue Mechanism between Turkey and the GCC was signed in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. This aimed to deepen Turkey's relations with the GCC in political and cultural areas. With this mechanism, Turkey became the first country to establish such a bilateral mechanism with the GCC.²¹
- **Turkey's "Africa Opening":** Starting in 2002, Turkey unleashed a charm offensive in Africa, deepening bilateral ties with African states in the realms of economics, politics, and more notably, defense and security affairs. Various milestones have marked Turkey's opening to Africa. In 2003, the Turkish Department of Foreign Trade crafted the "Strategy to Develop Economic Relations with African Countries." Turkey also started participating in African Union Summits as a guest country after 2002. These developments culminated in the government declaring 2005 as "The Year of Africa," when it took its involvement in the diplomatic, political, economic and military arenas to higher level. Prime Minister Erdoğan's visits to Ethiopia and South Africa in March 2005 marked the first time a Turkish prime minister visited Sub-Saharan Africa since the Turkish Republic was established. Also in 2005, Turkey obtained "observer status" in the African Union, with the Turkish Embassy in Addis Ababa becoming accredited by the organization as Turkey's representative office. In 2008, Turkey became a 'strategic partner' of the Union and gained membership in the African Development Bank. In August of that year, then-Turkish President Abdullah Gül organized a "Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit" in Istanbul, which hosted high-level officials from 49 African countries. During this meeting Turkey requested support for its bid to obtain a non-permanent UN Security Council status, which it eventually won, in part thanks to African support. Numerous other meetings and cooperation agreements have taken place since then. Turkey's new, aggressively friendly stance towards Africa between 2009-2012

¹⁹ "Başbakan ve Brookings (The Prime Minister and Brookings)," *Sabah* (Istanbul), 17 November 2008. <http://www.sabah.com.tr/haber,222D03C2EA724C8B87E3C52486F79896.html>.

²⁰ "Iran Says Won't Hinder Turkish Mediation with U.S.," *Reuters*, 17 November 2008. <http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSTRE4AG1V220081117>.

²¹ "Relations between Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/korfez-arap-ulkeleri-isbirligi-konseyi_en.en.mfa

could be seen in Turkey's diplomatic representation in Africa which nearly tripled, increasing from 12 embassies in 2009 to 34 by the end of 2012.²²

- **Turkey's attempt to open a new era in Turkish-Iranian relations:** In 2008, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Turkish military started coordinating efforts to battle Kurdish militants in northern Iraq.²³ Turkey also sought to find ways to develop trade relations with Iran, signing many natural gas deals in 2007 when the two countries agreed to transport natural gas to Europe from Iran and Turkmenistan. The AKP initially saw the Islamic Republic as a friend. In 2009, Erdoğan was among the first to congratulate President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on his fraudulent reelection. Turkey also refused to take a stance on Iran's repression of the Green Revolution, repeatedly stating that it did not want to intervene in Iran's domestic affairs. In 2010, Turkey (along with Brazil), sought to (but failed) to broker a deal with Iran on its nuclear program. Turkey also voted against further sanctions on Iran in the June 2010 UN Security Council meeting. By 2012, Turkey was still trying to re-start negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 over Iran's nuclear enrichment program by hosting talks in Istanbul in April 2012. In early January 2012 Iran's chief negotiator on nuclear issues, Saeed Jalili said that Iran was willing to resume negotiations with the P5+1 and that Turkey would be the ideal venue for these negotiations.²⁴ The Arab Spring and the Syrian crisis made it difficult for this to continue, though the two sides still manage to have a working neighboring relationship.
- **Turkey's effort to mediate between Russia and Georgia:** In the aftermath of the August 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia, Ankara advanced a regional security framework (the "Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Pact") that included the two combatants as well as Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkey to bring the sides together, but the pact was never established.
- **Turkey's vocal criticism of Israel and increased sensitivity to the Palestinian issue:** Strategic Depth's call to leverage Islam as a platform for advancing Turkey's position as a regional leader necessitated a more vocal criticism of Israel and a more sensitive tone to the Palestinian issue. Due to Turkey's historical and religious ties with the Palestinians, strains between Israel and the Palestinians challenged Turkish-Israeli relations. Israel's

²² Karen Kaya and Jason Warner, "Turkey and Africa: A Rising Military Partnership?" Foreign Military Studies Office, September 2013. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/200295>

²³ "Turkey Forms Alliance with Iran against Kurds." *Assyrian International News Agency*, 16 October 2007. <http://www.aina.org/news/2007101522389.htm>; "Iran'la Teröre Karşı İşbirliği Mutabakatı (Agreement to Cooperate Against Terror with Iran)," *Referansgazetesi.com*, 17 April 2008. http://www.referansgazetesi.com/haber.aspx?HBR_KOD=95037&KTG_KOD=284

²⁴ "Iran's Conditions for Throwing Its Weight behind Turkey in 5+1 Talks" *Iran Diplomacy*, 9 January 2012. <http://irdiplomacy.ir/en/news/93/bodyView/1896944/Iran%E2%80%99s.Conditions.for.Throwing.It.s.Weight.behind.Turkey.in.5+1.Talks.html>

Gaza offensive against Hamas in late 2008 through early 2009 damaged relations with Turkey significantly. The Turkish side reacted very harshly, calling Israel's actions a 'crime against humanity' and demanding that Israel be excluded from the UN for disregarding their call to stop the fighting in Gaza. During the World Economic Forum in January 2009, then-Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan walked out of a debate with Israeli President Shimon Peres in Davos. His actions and Turkey's increasingly vocal criticism of Israel made him a hero in the eyes of the Gazans, Iranians and Syrians. Relations hit a critical low during the "flotilla crisis" of May 2010, when a flotilla led by an Islamic charity organization, which challenged Israel's blockage of Gaza was met by an Israeli raid on international waters, killing nine Turkish civilians.²⁵ Turkey's relations with Israel remained frozen for a long time and never fully recovered since then.

- **Turkey's new soft-power:** Turkey also created a new image for itself in international affairs and international organizations. By 2008, the UNDP director was a Turk, the OIC Secretary General was a Turk, and the civilian administrator for NATO in Afghanistan was a Turk. Turkey was in the G-20, a member of the UN Security Council, and an EU candidate country. All of these initiatives painted a new picture of Turkey as an independent, rising regional leader with soft-power.
- Turkey also tried to improve attempt a reconciliation with Armenia, played a leading role in stabilizing Iraq via its commercial ties, and became active in the Balkans, especially in Bosnia and Kosovo.

²⁵ Karen Kaya, "Changing Trends in Israel-Turkey Security and Military Relations: Their Perspectives," Foreign Military Studies Office, January 2011. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/216503>

IV. The Collapse of Strategic Depth

The onset of the Arab Spring in 2011 brought discussions of a 'Turkish model.' Countries in the Middle East looked to Turkey whose conservative social and cultural outlook, but liberal political and economic program, stood out as a model of Islamic liberalism. Turkey's harsh rhetoric against Israel, its increased self-confidence and independence from the West, its democracy and successful economy in a Muslim-majority country, and Prime Minister Erdoğan's success in reigning in the military had made Turkey a hero on the Arab street. When then-Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visited Libya in July 2011, crowds in Tahrir Square chanted, "Thank you, Turkey," and "Erdoğan, Turkey, Muslim!"²⁶

The Arab Spring revealed a lot about Turkey's potential as a model.²⁷ Until then, many in the Arab world admired Turkey's ability to stand up to the West by establishing good relations with countries such as Syria, Iran and Libya, while criticizing Israel, despite resistance from the West. All this changed with the Arab Spring. Turkey was caught off-guard by the Arab Spring, just like other countries. In the case of Tunisia and Egypt, where the protestors were calling for an end to authoritarian secularist policies, the AKP was able to stand with the pro-democracy movements because these were protesting conditions similar to what the AKP had to overcome when it came to power.

This was not the case for Libya and Syria. The events in Libya and Syria tested Turkey's "Strategic Depth" doctrine. It was harder for the AKP to criticize Muammar Qaddafi because Libya was one of Turkey's major trading partners, with billions of dollars invested there and 25,000 citizens living there when the crisis began. Thus, Turkey initially hesitated over the NATO operation against Qaddafi, but eventually carried out its obligations within NATO to help defend the Libyan people. It called on Qaddafi to step down and supported the Libyan opposition.

The biggest challenge and fatal blow to "Strategic Depth" came in Syria. At first, Turkey saw an opportunity for its engagement with Syria to pay dividends. It sought to convince Assad to undertake political reforms; in an effort to demonstrate its regional leadership. But Turkey's friendliness had not translated into actual clout in Syria. Despite Turkey's calls on Assad to conduct reforms, Assad refused to compromise. At this point, Turkey changed its position and instead supported and armed the opposition, calling for regime change in Syria. As the expectation that the Syrian regime would eventually collapse did not come to pass, Turkey's position of supporting and arming the opposition caused it to be seen as part of the problem in Syria.

Meanwhile, Turkey's position in Syria damaged relations with Iran, bringing "Strategic Depth" into question. Iran warned that if Turkish officials insisted on their 'contradictory behavior' (of

²⁶ Abouzeid, Rania. "Why Erdoğan is Greeted like a Rock Star in Egypt," *Time*, 13 September 2011. <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2093090,00.html>.

²⁷ Karen Kaya, "Turkey and the Arab Spring," *Military Review*, July-August 2012, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20120831_art007.pdf

supporting the opposition) and continued on their present path, Iran would side with Syria over Turkey. In short, the Arab Spring exposed the contradiction between pursuing good relations with all its neighbors, which included undemocratic rogue states as Syria and Iran, while advocating democracy and values that the people were advancing.²⁸ When faced with this dilemma, Turkey realized that its values were incompatible with its policy of befriending Syria and Iran. The two countries had been part of two opposing camps. Syria was close to Iran, while Turkey has historically been in the Western camp as a member of NATO.²⁹ Turkey could not longer assume the role of "impartial mediator" who could talk to all sides anymore.

As the Arab Spring and the Syrian crisis exposed the problems with Strategic Depth, it became clear that close ties with neighboring regimes were no longer feasible. At this point, the AKP pivoted towards supporting new political movements emerging from the political upheavals that surrounded it. The allies it chose were ideological brethren: The Sunni Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters. This was a significant break from Turkey's traditional multi-faceted (and "non-sectarian") foreign policy and represented a shift towards a political Islamic foreign policy, which Turkey had never followed before. And it turned out to be a big strategic mistake.

Turkey's affinity for the Muslim Brotherhood had started becoming evident before the Syrian crisis, with Erdoğan's strong support for them in Egypt in 2011-2012. The calculation was that, when the forces that brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt came to power in the rest of the Middle East, Turkey would emerge as their natural leader. But when the Muslim Brotherhood-aligned leader of Egypt was ousted, the Turkish government called the intervention a coup. Shortly after that, Turkey's ambassador was expelled from Cairo. When Turkey refused to recognize the subsequent government of President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, it also alienated powerful members of the GCC-- particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, who supported Sisi and were deeply concerned about the role of the Brotherhood and other political Islamist movements in the region.³⁰ By the end of 2014, Turkey's ambitions for regional leadership had been thwarted. Turkey's bet on the Muslim Brotherhood to succeed in the Arab world turned out to be wrong. Turkey's current relations with Egypt are further complicated by competing interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

At the same time, Turkish leaders repeatedly criticized the West for not intervening more decisively against the Syrian regime and not helping Turkey with its Syrian refugee burden. Relations with the US took a turn for the worse when the US started supporting and later arming the Syrian Kurds in Syria in late 2014; and viewed them as allies in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Having been shunned by the European Union, Erdoğan appealed

²⁸ Idiz, Semih. "İran Konusunda Gözler Açılıyor (Eyes are Starting to Open on the Issue of Iran)," *Milliyet* (Nationality), 8 August 2011. <http://dunya.milliyet.com.tr/iran-konusunda-gozler-aciliyor/dunya/dunyayazardetay/08.08.2011/1423870/default.htm>

²⁹ Mert, Nuray. "Another Empire? No, Thanks!" *Hürriyet Daily News*, 24 July 2011. <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/n.php?n=another-empire-no-thanks-2011-07-24>

³⁰ Soner Cagaptay and Ben Fishman, "Turkey Pivots to Tripoli: Implications for Libya's Civil War and U.S. Policy," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 19 December 2019. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/turkey-pivots-to-tripoli-implications-for-libyas-civil-war-and-u.s.-policy>

to Russian President Vladimir Putin to admit Turkey into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Customs Union, two organizations composed mostly of authoritarian governments. These developments led many to argue that Turkey's foreign policy started to look more like "zero neighbors without problems" than "zero problems with neighbors."³¹ They also highlighted how Turkey's "soft power" and "model" image had become deeply undermined.

Turkey's relations with the West continued to deteriorate and received an almost fatal blow following the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016. Turkish leaders found US and European postures to be insincere and curious, in contrast to Russian President Putin's quick reaction and offer of support. The anxiety that Davutoğlu had alluded to in his book-- of a fear of the West infiltrating the nation to exploit internal divisions, was on full display in the aftermath of the coup. A sense of abandonment by its Western allies caused the Turks to question the reliability of their NATO partners. Turkey's reaction to it only made things worse. The emergency rule, which suspended most democratic and legal rights, the jailing or firing of tens of thousands of people and the crackdown on the press led to increased concerns about Turkey's values and whether they aligned with the West. These actions also reinforced the view that the coup was being used as a pretext to further Turkey's descent into authoritarianism. Ankara complained that its Western partners were not sensitive to the existential security concerns that Turkey faced. It is under such circumstances that Turkey signed an agreement with Russia to buy two batteries of Russian S-400 air-defense missiles in the wake of the coup attempt.³² The delivery of S-400s started on the symbolic date of 15 July 2019, on the third anniversary of the failed coup.

Over time, the AKP abandoned Turkey's traditionally non-sectarian and secular foreign policies in favor of more pro-Sunni Muslim policies, becoming party to sectarian conflicts in the region. This made it impossible for it to become a trusted actor by all sides, making it impossible to assume the role of mediator in any regional conflicts, as it previously hoped.

It is important to note that these shifts happened in parallel to significant changes in Turkish domestic politics. Erdoğan's political Islamic foreign policy emerged around the same time as when he defanged the Turkish military and started a process of locking up dissidents and opponents. Turkish democracy came under attack and the separation of powers started eroding, as did the free press. The 2013 Gezi Park protests³³ and the government crackdown could be considered the turning point although things had started deteriorating around 2011, after Erdoğan's third election victory and his consolidation of power in Turkey (see chart on the next page).

³¹ Kemal Kirişçi, "An Imperfect Model," Brookings Institute, 26 December 2013. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/an-imperfect-model/>

³² Soli Özel and Evren Balta, "The End of an Enduring Alliance? Turkey and the West," Institut du Bosphore, September 2019. http://www.institut-bosphore.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/IB_PolicyPaper3.pdf

³³ Karen Kaya, "Turkey's Protests: Local Perspectives on their Causes and Implications," Foreign Military Studies Office, *OE Watch* Special Essay, August 2013. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-past-issues/195483/download>.

Human Freedom

Score over Time



Ranking over Time



Source: Turkey Country Report in "Human Freedom Index, 2019" CATO Institute, <https://www.cato.org/human-freedom-index-new>

V. Turkish Foreign Policy Today

After firing Davutoğlu in May 2016 and replacing him with a lower-profile figure, Erdoğan continued a more aggressive and more muscled foreign policy. He became the executive president of Turkey on 9 July 2018, after having changed Turkey's constitution to give the president expanded executive powers. He is now the head of state, head of the military and head of police, in addition to having expanded powers over the judiciary, intelligence and other institutions. During his swearing in ceremony, among the 22 world leaders that came to attend, there was not a single EU or NATO member state (except Bulgaria) at the head-of-state level. There was also not a single Middle Eastern monarch present (except Qatar).

Having hollowed out the institutions and especially the foreign service, the deliberation mechanism for foreign policy-making disappeared, allowing Erdoğan to make quick, sometimes rash decisions, based on his own calculations. Turkey's foreign policy became Erdoğan's foreign policy, and more based on assuring regime continuity rather than on Turkey's best strategic interests. This also had the effect of turning foreign policy into Erdoğan's personal relationships with world leaders-- what some have called "the personalization of foreign policy." A former Turkish diplomat, Aydın Selcen claims that Turkey's foreign policy as has gone from "bold" to "hot-headed" in the absence of the institutions and the checks and balances they provide.³⁴ This is a sharp departure from most of Turkey's modern history, when foreign policy was made based on the perspective and dogmas of the armed forces and career professionals in the Foreign Ministry.

This new personalized and muscled foreign policy entails using threats rather than soft-power, in contrast to what Davutoğlu had envisioned. Some recent examples of these threats can be seen in Turkey's repeated threat to Europe to release thousands of Syrian refugees that it is hosting into Europe³⁵; and its threat to the US to "close down the Incirlik airbase" if sanctions are imposed.³⁶ The threat to close down Incirlik was accompanied by a threat to also close down a base that hosts a NATO early warning radar, sending a message to both the US and NATO.

The failed coup attempt of July 2016 further reinforced Erdoğan's search for alternative alliances. Turkey developed warm relations with Russia and Iran through the Astana process and moved its relationship with Russia closer to a strategic level. Despite warnings from the US and NATO, it moved forward with the purchase and delivery of Russian S-400 air defense systems. In turn, this raised questions about Turkey's commitment to the Western alliance.

³⁴ Aydın Selcen "Turkish foreign policy: Boldness or Hot-headedness?" *Medyascope.tv*, 11 December 2019. <https://medyascope.tv/2019/12/11/aydin-selcen-ile-gundem-disi-46-turk-dis-politikasi-iddialilik-mi-gozukaralik-mi/>

³⁵ "Erdoğan'dan Avrupa'ya: Zamanı gelince mültecileri salarız (Erdoğan to Europe: When it's time, we'll release the refugees)," *Dunyabulteni.net*, 24 October 2019. <https://www.dunyabulteni.net/t-genel/erdogan-dan-avrupa-ya-zamani-gelince-multecileri-salariz-h451735.html>

³⁶ "Erdoğan: Gerekiyorsa İncirlik'i de, Kürecik'i de kapatırız (Erdoğan: If necessary, we'll close down both İncirlik and Kürecik)," *BBC.com*, 16 December 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-50804208>

Turkey's unilateral actions in northern Syria and its "Operation Peace Spring" against the Kurds starting in October 2019 further added fuel to the fire, raising questions in the West about Turkey's commitment to the fight against ISIS in Syria. Turkey complained about the West being insensitive to its security concerns and threats emanating from Kurdish terrorists, such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and what Turkey considers to be its Syrian offshoot, the PYD (the Democratic Union Party).

Thus it appears that Turkey has come full circle back to its old "reactive" foreign policy rather than Davutoğlu's "pro-active peace diplomacy." However, its current reactive foreign policy is not based on a calculated long-term strategic interest. It is highly pragmatic and flexible, and based on short-term benefit. In fact, reflecting broader global trends towards transactionalism, Turkey engages with multilateral institutions when it sees immediate material benefits, and becomes pro-Western when and if good relations with Europe favors short-term interests.³⁷

Nevertheless Turkish experts Soli Özel and Evren Balta identify two major threat perceptions that shape Turkish foreign policy today: Kurdish transnationalism and regime security. The Syrian civil war has strengthened the transnational Kurdish movement, raising fears in Turkey about its own internal unity. Namely, Turkey fears that autonomous Kurdish movements in both Iraq and now Syria will embolden its own Kurdish population (~20 million) to seek autonomy from Turkey. This raises Turkey's deeply rooted fears of being dismantled by Western powers through the formation of a Kurdish state, this time in northern Syria. The close cooperation of Western powers, in particular the US, with the PYD has reinforced these fears. What Middle East expert Phillip Robins, wrote in 1993 remains true still today: "... the Sevres experience remains fresh in the minds of Turks. The... lesson drawn is that the creation of a Kurdish state will inevitably weaken the Turkish state."³⁸

The second fear and major threat perception is related to regime security. Erdoğan's desire to cling to power leads him to make calculations based on which outside power would be most likely to do what is necessary to keep the current regime in power.³⁹ This is a major factor that has brought Turkey closer to Russia, despite the fact that the strategic partnership with Russia is in favor of the latter in a very asymmetrical way.

In December 2019, Davutoğlu formed a new party called the "Future Party," which has quickly prompted a debate about whether it can challenge Erdoğan in future elections. The Future Party is already seen as a potential shaper of Turkey's future, whether in the opposition, or in a future government. Thus, Davutoğlu's views in Strategic Depth are still worth studying today as they may eventually come back to Turkey's foreign policy.

³⁷ Soli Özel and Evren Balta, "The End of an Enduring Alliance? Turkey and the West," Institut du Bosphore, September 2019. http://www.institut-bosphore.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/IB_-_PolicyPaper3.pdf

³⁸ Phillip Robins, "The Overlord State: Turkey and the Kurds," *International Affairs* 69, no 4 (1993): 659.

³⁹ Soli Özel and Evren Balta, "The End of an Enduring Alliance? Turkey and the West," Institut du Bosphore, September 2019. http://www.institut-bosphore.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/IB_-_PolicyPaper3.pdf

Appendix A.

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