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The Post-Cold War Regionalisms of Turkish Foreign Policy

ALPER KALIBER*

Istanbul Bilgi University, Turkey

Abstract: This study argues that the post-Cold War changes in Turkish foreign and security policy (FSP) can best be understood as the regionalization of strategic and security outlook in Turkey. Here regionalization refers to two interrelated processes: first, the process whereby security interest definitions and threat perceptions in Turkey have gained an increasingly regional character, and second the process whereby Turkey has increasingly defined itself as an activist regional power. Yet, the current study takes issue with the widespread assumption that regionalist activism of Turkish FSP can only be appropriated to the recent Justice and Development Party governments. Rather, it argues that the regionalist activism observed in the 2000s should be conceived as the second regionalist turn in Turkish FSP. The first wave of regionalization began soon after the end of the Cold War and developed in parallel to the rise of the 'region' as a new unit of security in global politics. This study compares and contrasts these two regionalist eras with a view to exploring the post-Cold War regionalization of FSP in Turkey.

Keywords: Turkey, Turkish foreign policy, regional security, regionalism, post-Cold War security.

Introduction

The end of Cold War politics characterized by global bipolar rivalry has had tremendous impacts on the international security order. Not only has it reshaped institutions and parameters of international security, but also has added new items, i.e. migration, energy and environmental security to the agenda of international politics. It has led to the drastic recalibrations of foreign and security policies on the part of states and to the rise of regions and sub-regions as the new referents of international security. In particular, the absence of a global ideological and military rivalry has triggered regionalizing dynamics in international politics which resulted in the ascent of regionality in security matters.¹

It is fair to suggest that the factors restructuring international security order in the post-Cold War era have deeply impacted Turkey's security concerns and interests as well. Since

¹ Davutoğlu 2010a.

* alper.kaliber@bilgi.edu.tr

the early 1990s, a new rhetoric and outlook of security has flourished in Turkey placing the country's threat perceptions and strategic calculations in a more regionalist context. Yet, it has been the 2000s, where assertive regionalism has set itself as the main component of Turkish foreign policy. This study mainly argues that the post-Cold War changes in Turkish foreign policy can best be understood as the regionalization of strategic and security outlook in Turkey. Here regionalization refers to two interrelated processes: first, the process whereby security interest definitions and threat perceptions in Turkey have gained an increasingly regional character, and second the process whereby Turkey has increasingly defined herself as an activist regional power. Yet, the current study takes issue with the wide spread assumption that regionalist activism of Turkish foreign and security policy (FSP) can only be appropriated to the recent Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP)*) governments. Rather, it argues that the regionalist activism observed in the 2000s should be conceived as the second regionalist turn in Turkish FSP.

The first turn may well be traced back to the onset of the 1990s when the Cold War security architecture has been subject to a radical transformation in global scale. In line with the regionalist approaches to international security, this article suggests that the end of global bipolar rivalry has recognized some leeway for Turkish policy makers to more actively engage in regional security institutions, issues and challenges. Freed from the restrictions imposed by being a loyal member of one of the poles, Turkey wanted to open up new spaces for her redefined and widened foreign policy agenda. In that context, the first wave of regionalization in Turkish FSP began soon after the end of the Cold War and developed in parallel to the rise of the 'region' as a new unit of security in global politics. Even if it was much more characterized by ill-defined policy targets, and over-stretched ambitions, it contributed substantially to Turkish FSP vision and activism in the post bipolar era. Some manifestations of this vague regionalism can be seen in the embracing rhetoric toward the Turkic states of the former Soviet Union, Turkey's initiative for the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the efforts of Turkish Armed Forces to take part in international peacekeeping initiatives. The first wave regionalism is also manifest in the changing security outlook of Turkish policy makers as regards the long-lasting Cyprus question.²

However, regionalism of Turkish FSP took its more mature and comprehensive turn in the regionalist assertiveness in the first decade of 2000s, where Turkey claimed herself as a 'pivotal state'³ in its region. The three successive AKP governments, and most notably the current foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, have initiated this second regionalist turn in Turkish FSP by endowing it with an identity dimension. The region-focused activism in this decade draws on the construction of a particular foreign policy identity which defines Turkey as a peace-promoting 'soft power' bearing the capacity of 'order setting'⁴ in its surrounding regions, namely the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus. Turkey is

2 Davutoğlu 2009.

3 Buzan and Wæver 2003, 4.

4 Murinson 2006, 946.

defined as a 'normative power' prioritizing peaceful instruments and economic incentives in its surrounding regions riddled with ethnic conflicts and turbulences. Unlike the status-quo oriented nature of the first turn, in the 2000s Turkey appears as a revisionist regional power aiming at reorganizing her geopolitics and security relations.

This study compares and contrasts these two regionalist eras with a view to exploring the post-Cold War regionalization of FSP in Turkey. It starts by reminding some basic assumptions of the regionalist approaches to international security. Then, it addresses some important aspects, policy initiatives and discourses of the first regionalist era of Turkish foreign policy. It examines the initiatives of Turkish policy makers in the 1990s to constitute regions drawing on cultural, economic and social exchange in the Black Sea area and Central Asia. It also focuses on Turkey's Cyprus policy displaying increasingly regionalist characteristics since the middle of the 1990s. However, the characteristics of the first regionalist era would be much clearer when they are compared and contrasted with the second regionalist turn of Turkish FSP in the subsequent pages. The article then proceeds to examine the main tenets of Turkish foreign policy rhetoric shaping the second regionalist turn and the foreign policy identity on which it draws. Finally, it sheds light on some commonalities and differences between the two regionalist periods of Turkish foreign policy.

The Regionalist Approaches to International Security

The collapse of the Cold War security architecture has given a considerable impetus to the rise of security studies which have turned out to be one of the most prolific sub-discipline of international relations. There occurred vibrant debates about the meaning, boundaries, and practice of security as well as its new referents other than states. On the one hand, security policies, norms, and institutions reminiscent of the bipolar international order have thoroughly been questioned by analysts and practitioners of international security. On the other, new concepts and perspectives have been introduced to understand and explain new sources of insecurities for states, societies and individuals, i.e. human security, societal security and multi-sectoral approach to international security.⁵ Positivist and non-positivist, broadly Social Constructivist approaches have challenged traditional—largely Realist and Neo-Realist—theories and their state centric conceptions of security. The regionalist theories foregrounding region as a rising unit of analysis of (in)security for states have become one of these new perspectives.

To many students of international relations, states freed from the exigencies of global bipolar rivalry, have found new incentives and instruments to focus on regional conflicts and cooperation.⁶ They began to define their security concerns and interests primarily in regional scale. Consequentially, (in)security relations among nation states have been

5 Davutoğlu 2001, 175–176.

6 Keyman 2009, 7.

increasingly patterned into ‘regionally-based clusters’⁷ and regionalization has been one of the main constituents of the post-Cold War international security order. In the regionalizing world, geographical proximity is still a major factor shaping patterns of amity and enmity among states. Most states threaten and are threatened only by neighbouring states, a fact ‘creating meaningful and distinct regional dynamics’.⁸

Furthermore, the rise of such soft security threats as migration, human and drug trafficking and environmental degradation necessitated the development of regional scale instruments, as the individual states capacity to tackle these issues has been limited. The increasing intermingling of economic and security calculations intensified regional security relations among neighbouring states. One must also add that some ways of ‘systemic overlay’ such as great power interventions, imperialism, colonialism have increasingly proven difficult and normatively ‘awkward’ in post-Cold War era.⁹ All these factors have substantially contributed to the autonomy of regions as new units of security and to the foregrounding of different regions in global politics.¹⁰ For instance, Buzan and Wæver propose that the post bipolar security order is characterised by the rise of ‘mutually exclusive’ regional security complexes (RSCs).¹¹ RSCs as the sub-structures of international order have their own unique characteristics i.e. internal balance of power, patterns of amity and enmity among the member states, and external boundaries distinguishing them from other RSCs. The notion that the whole world is divided into ‘mutually exclusive’ RSCs conceived as territorially fixed entities is debatable. Yet, it is fair to argue that regional security dynamics has gained a considerable salience and autonomy vis-à-vis the systemic and state level dynamics.

The 1990s and The First Regionalist Turn in Turkish FSP

As stated before, in parallel to the ascent of regionality in international security order, there emerged some characteristic and structural changes in Turkish FSP. Throughout the Cold War years, Turkey’s security concerns and interests were mainly structured by the global bipolar rivalry between the Soviet Union-led Communist and the US-led Western blocs. In tandem with Greece, Turkey constituted the southern flank of the Western security architecture and was assigned an internationally recognized geo-strategic importance. Turkey, which had common borders with the two crucial members of the rival bloc (the Soviet Union and Bulgaria), was also strategically located at the intersection of the Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and European regions. However, the exigencies of bipolarity have been the principle factor determining and restricting her relations with the neighbouring countries and regions. Hence, Turkey have often shied away from acting

7 Kalın 2009.

8 Çandar 2009, 8.

9 Ibid.

10 Nas 2010, 125.

11 Murinson 2006, 945.

as an autonomous actor in her relations particularly with the members of the rival bloc and with the Middle Eastern states considered to be closer to this bloc.

As Işıl Kazan suggested Turkey's bilateral relations with Greece and the Cyprus conflict constituted the only exception to this policy.¹² Throughout the long period of the 1950s and the late 1990s, Turco-Greek relations were monopolised by a number of bilateral crises which brought these two to the brink of war in several cases. The confrontational characteristic of these relations has reached its peak when Turkey militarily intervened in Cyprus in 1974, despite strong objections of her Western allies. Hence, unlike other foreign policy issues of Turkey, the Turkish-Greek relations exhibited a relatively autonomous character, but was never allowed to threaten stability and existence of the Western alliance.

The end of the Cold War has substantially challenged the established strategic thinking and security outlook in Turkey. It has induced a series of changes in the ways Turkish FSP establishment has formulated the country's foreign policy as well as her security concerns and interests. Freed from the exigencies of bipolar security order, Turkish policy makers found a considerable manoeuvring space to act as an autonomous regional power. They also believed that instabilities of the post bipolar world necessitated Turkey to actively engage in regional security issues. The implications of the post-Cold War era have particularly been tremendous on Turkey's immediate regional security environment.¹³ Dismantling of the former Yugoslav Federation and the Soviet Union, the two Balkan wars of the 1990s, the strengthening of Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq after the de facto partition of the country have all strengthened the conviction of the Turkish FSP elite that Turkey has become much more exposed to insecurities in its vicinity. Yet, these drastic changes in her vicinity also made new regions accessible for Turkey 'that were previously closed to Turkish policy.'¹⁴

The concern that disappearance of the Soviet threat scaled down Turkey's geostrategic importance for the Western alliance was prevalent among Turkish FSP elite in early 1990s.¹⁵ After a short period of political staggering, this concern has been an influential factor motivating Turkey to pursue more active and region focused policies. As late as the 1980s Turkey was highly dependent on Western alliances and maintained poor, even bellicose relations with its immediate neighbours. During his term in office from 1983 to 1993, late prime minister and president Turgut Özal became a key figure, who started to improve the strained relations with Turkey's neighbours. At the core of his new strategy was his conviction that Turkey could remain a valuable ally of the West only if it reinforced

12 Murinson 2006, 947, footnote 16.

13 The concept of 'normative power' was introduced by Ian Manners to refer to the norm exporting and value setting qualities of an entity through peaceful means, i.e. conditionality rather than military and coercive ways. See Manners 2002.

14 Ulutaş 2010, 4.

15 Özcan 1998, 17

its regional role and influence.¹⁶ To this end, the then Turkish governments encouraged diversifying regional economic relations and opening up to new markets particularly in the Balkans and the Middle East.

The first attempts of Turkish FSP establishment to build a loose regional integration came soon after the Soviet Union collapsed and was legitimized through the idea of a shared language and culture with newly emerging Turkic states. Throughout the 1990s it was a prevalent discourse particularly among right-wing politicians that ‘the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which brought independence to the Turkic republics of Central Asia and Azerbaijan, offered new unprecedented possibilities for Turkish foreign policy.’¹⁷ To the then Turkish FSP establishment, Turkey, taking the support of the Western bloc, was the only power that could fill the vacuum emerging after the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹⁸ That the Russian Federation as the successor of the Soviet Union grappled with economic and political crises during the first half of the 1990s also reinforced this conviction as well as self-confidence among Turkish political elite.

The slogan ‘the Turkic world from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China’ emerged in such an atmosphere. It was not only a mere slogan devised particularly by a few right-wing leaders to express and justify their political agenda, but it was also one of the first attempts of Turkish policy makers for region construction: a region where Turkey self-proclaimingly occupies the epicenter, and a region drawing on assumed cultural, lingual commonalities between Turkey and newly independent states of Central Asia. In the words of former Turkish president Demirel,

the Central Asian republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan are looking up to us. The gates will be opened. Turkey has, in effect, enlarged while its borders have remained intact. A Turkey has emerged stretching at one end from the Adriatic Sea to the Great Wall of China at the other end. More precisely, a Turkic world has come about. We have never forgotten a single Caucasian community. They are all our brethren. Turkey is the shining star in this [Turkic] world.¹⁹

However, the notion of a Turkic world where Turkey assumes the undeclared leadership proved unsuccessful and unrealistic within a short period of time. The members of the ‘Turkish world’ other than Turkey made clear in several occasions that they would not take any further step which could deteriorate their relations with the Russian Federation. For instance, in the first ‘Turkic republics’ summit, held in October 1992 in Ankara, Turkey’s proposals to establish a common market and a development bank were not met with enthusiasm by the other participant countries.²⁰ One may cite several factors behind the

16 Sayarı 1997, 45.

17 Murinson 2006, 946.

18 Özcan 1998, 19.

19 Özcan 1998, 20. Translated by the author.

20 Özcan 1998, 20.

failure of this ambitious project in Turkey's first regionalist era. Among these factors are the limited amount of financial means and resources Turkey could possibly invest in this region, the omni-presence of Russian influence and economic dependence on the Russian Federation on the part of newly-independent Turkic states, the rising conflict of interests among the regional countries, a Turkey focusing rather on its EU membership process and the fact that the 'Turkish model' did not appeal to the countries in the region.²¹

Another seminal initiative of the first regionalist wave of Turkish FSP was the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) established on 25 June 1992 in Istanbul. Its main objectives were to enhance economic and technological cooperation between member states and to support economic development of Black Sea and Balkan countries.²² The underlying idea was to consolidate stability and peace in the region through economic means. Turkish proposal for BSEC was greeted with enthusiasm by the Black Sea, Caucasian and Balkan states²³ and almost all regional countries including Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Greece, Russia and Ukraine participated in the organization. Rather than serving as a security bloc, this organization was expected to accelerate and deepen political, economic and cultural exchanges among member countries. BSEC foregrounded the cultural and economic dimensions of regionhood. Numerous protocols and agreements were signed on trade, collaboration in financial matters, education, language and art with the aim of strengthening regional cooperation in these areas.

Even though political and security concerns did not play a determinant role in the establishment of BSEC, it was a sort of soft power instrument for Turkey to deal with regional problems. This was particularly manifest in Turkey's invitation to Greece for membership, who was not a part of the Black Sea region. Furthermore, it was anticipated that improvement of political cooperation among the members would contribute to the easing of regional conflicts.²⁴ Yet, when Turkey was blamed by some members for politicizing the organization, it deliberately downsized the political aspect of the organization since most of the regional countries shared serious political problems with each other, i.e. in the case of Azerbaijan and Armenia and Turkey and Greece. Hence, this initiative remained limited in its resources and success and did not yield substantive and sustainable results.

Yet, it is the Cyprus question appearing as the most illuminating case to explore regionalist transformations in Turkish FSP in the post-Cold War era. It has not only become one of the few foreign policy issues for Turkey where several of post-Cold War security items were added to the already complicated conflict agenda. At the same time, it has arguably been the first major issue of Turkish foreign policy where regionalism has crystallized in

21 Hale 2000, 191–212; Turan and Turan 2001, 412–419.

22 Özgür 2001, 373.

23 Laçiner 2009.

24 Özgür 2001, 373.

the strategic and threat calculations since the mid 1990s. As I thoroughly discussed this issue elsewhere,²⁵ here it suffices to sum up the argument. Throughout its long-lasting history, The Cyprus dispute was more of a Turco–Greek ethnic conflict for the Turkish FSP establishment implying that the real threat has been but Greece itself. The island's geo-strategic salience for Turkey was always discussed with respect to military balances with Greece. Yet, from the second half of the 1990s onwards, a new rhetoric has gained prominence placing Turkey's threat perceptions and strategic calculations on Cyprus in a more regionalist context. The Turkish political elite has been convinced that the emerging geopolitical configurations in the post-Cold War era impel Turkey to develop a broader strategic outlook on Cyprus. "Cyprus turns into a dispute involving Eurasian, the Middle Eastern and the Balkan, that is West Asian and East European regions. Turkey's Cyprus policy should be re-molded to meet the requirements of this new strategic framework."²⁶

Turkish policy makers began to make more frequent references to the term 'Eastern Mediterranean' with a constellation of new strategic and security connotations. This new outlook rests on the re-location of the Eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus within the global and regional security dynamics and geostrategic build-up. In this re-conceptualization, the Eastern Mediterranean, which 'lies at the intersection of Europe, Asia and Africa,'²⁷ is a central concern for Turkey both in strategic and economic terms.²⁸ 'The Eastern Mediterranean looms over the maritime trade running across Gibraltar, Suez and the Black Sea and the energy hubs in the Middle East and the Caspian Basin.'²⁹ Cyprus has constituted the cornerstone of the Eastern Mediterranean Security Architecture in the making since the 1990s. It has a dominant position to have a say in the fate of the region 'in political, economic and security terms.'³⁰

Furthermore, the proximity of the island to the oil-rich Middle East and its critical location within the new routes of oil transportation stretching out from the Caucasus to Europe has incorporated the issue of energy security into Turkey's new regionalist agenda on Cyprus. For Davutoğlu, any regional or global power nurturing strategic calculations and interests in 'the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and in the Gulf' cannot fail to pay heed to the island of Cyprus, enjoying the capacity of directly influencing all those regions.³¹ Thereby, Turkey should consider it as the key element of a general naval strategy concerning the adjacent sea belt surrounding her.³² When the Republic of Cyprus signed agreements on the delimitation

25 Kaliber 2009.

26 Davutoğlu 2001, 175–176.

27 Kandemir 2004.

28 Taşhan 2003.

29 Kandemir 2004.

30 Ibid.

31 Davutoğlu 2001, 180.

32 Ibid.

of exclusive economic zones with Egypt and Lebanon in early 2007, Turkey reasserted its determination to protect its legitimate rights and interests in the Eastern Mediterranean region.³³ Turkish FSP establishment interpreted these delimitation agreements as posing a direct threat to regional security and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean.³⁴ Hence, it is fair to claim that the region-focused threat perceptions and strategic calculations are increasingly configuring Turkey's security outlook on Cyprus since the 1990s.

The Second Regionalist Turn: Turkey as a Multi-regional Normative Power

The second regionalist turn of Turkish FSP has been initiated by the successive AKP governments the first of which came to power in November 2002. As I will elaborate in more detail in the following section, there exist numerous commonalities between the first and second regionalist eras of Turkish FSP as in the case of the Cyprus policy. Yet, a seminal issue (foreign policy as an identity marker) differentiates the second turn from the former. While in the 1990s, regionalism does not make any reference to the problematization of Turkey's conventional foreign policy identity, in the 2000s, region-focused activism of Turkey is often referred to as a paradigm shift from the traditional Kemalist³⁵ approach to foreign policy. Analysts and practitioners of Turkish FSP often mention multi-regional activism and soft power strategy of the recent years to highlight the distinction between the 'old' and the 'new' paradigms. This difference is frequently articulated via binary oppositions. While, the 'old' paradigm is defined as 'highly state and security centric, reactive'³⁶ and Western oriented, the 'new' or the liberal paradigm, is depicted as civil society focused,³⁷ proactive and multi-dimensional, multi-regional. Yet, these binary dualities are neither entirely justifiable nor presenting sufficient analytical insights to comprehend transformations in Turkish FSP.

The definition of Turkey as a multi-regional actor with an expanded sphere of influence serves to the problematization of the conventional foreign policy paradigm. In the conventional discourse Turkey is depicted as an island of stability and as a bridge between West and East. For Davutoğlu and his followers, this symbolized nothing but passivity and stagnation, which is replaced by a new activism based on an assertive regionalism. Turkey should quit the role and status of being a peripheral country imposed by the Cold War security politics. Its special geography and unique historical/cultural ties with neighbouring and regional countries impels her to appropriate a new identity of being a 'central country'.³⁸

33 Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007.

34 National Security Council of Turkey 2007.

35 Kemalism can be defined as the state ideology of the Turkish Republic named after its founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

36 Keyman 2009, 7.

37 Doğan and Mazlum 2006.

38 Davutoğlu 2008, 77.

The recent rhetoric on Turkey as an emerging multi-regional actor draws on redefinition of regional geopolitics in which the country is embedded. This redefinition establishes a firm relationality between the fate of Turkey and that of various regions, i.e. the Middle East, the Balkans, the Mediterranean. This link is referred to depict both the multi-dimensional character of Turkish FSP, and Turkey's widening sphere of influence. 'The fault line extending from the Balkans to the Middle East and Central Asia' presents an integrated geopolitical scene, a fact requiring an integrated 'geo-strategic vision'³⁹. Therefore, the second regionalist turn in Turkish foreign policy comes up with a larger map of Turkish influence and activism which spans the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Caspian basin, the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Gulf and North Africa.⁴⁰ Turkey has emerged in various regions as a 'meaningful player in political and economic settings'.⁴¹

This new geopolitics of sphere of influence not only creates opportunities for Turkey, but also makes it vulnerable to multiple threats and insecurities. For instance, the current Turkish foreign policy makers tend to see the Middle East both as a source of new insecurities and as a gateway through which Turkey can prove its actorness within the regional/global security matters. Turkey, as an 'emerging regional power', may offer a peaceful alternative to the confrontational politics of 'the most turbulent zone of international politics' through its 'soft power'⁴² strategy. Turkey has responsibilities and duties vis-à-vis the Middle East which is 'a zone of conflict both at the inter-state, and in some cases, intra-state levels'.⁴³ In such an environment Turkey can guarantee its own security and stability only through a more active and constructive foreign policy which will transform her from a bridge to an 'order setting' power in its surrounding regions.

As regards the policy initiatives of the second regionalist turn, Turkey's engagement in the Middle East and Balkans has been greater than in any period in the Republican history. To many, 'after decades of passivity and neglect' Turkey's deep involvement in the Middle Eastern affairs constitutes 'one of the most distinguishing hallmarks of her 'new' foreign policy activism'.⁴⁴ Turkey initiated the set of regular meetings in 2007 which was named as 'meetings of the Extended Neighboring Countries of Iraq' to propose solutions to the question of Iraq's future during and after its invasion.⁴⁵ It established a firm dialogue with Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and participated in the UN Peacekeeping Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with 1,000 troops. Yet, this last decision was sharply criticized by Turkish opposition parties as running the risk of getting Turkey dragged into a military

39 Kalın 2009.

40 *The Turkish Daily News* 2001.

41 Ibid.

42 Çandar 2009, 8.

43 Hale 2009.

44 Larrabee 2007.

45 Ibid., 84.

conflict with Hezbollah. Turkey's attempts at normalizing relations with Armenia resulted in signing of protocols to open the shared border albeit being inconclusive in the end.

Turkey facilitated five rounds of indirect talks between Syria and Israel in 2008 aiming eventually a peace deal and the return of Golan Heights to Syria under Israeli occupation since 1967.⁴⁶ Turkey's facilitation initiatives in these proximity talks, however, remain stuck and have failed to produce positive outcomes for future initiatives to build on. In a similar vein, Turkey initiated the Caucasus Cooperation and Stability Platform in the aftermath of the Russian-Georgian conflict between 8–12 August 2008 and proposed crisis management strategies and regional security mechanisms.⁴⁷ This platform, however, failed to create the intended atmosphere of dialogue and cooperation and also to provide an alternative to OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) Minsk group already in place for resolution of conflicts in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

Turkey, as a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, undertook intense diplomatic efforts to help the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) in persuading Iran to swap a substantial portion of its low-enriched uranium for foreign-processed fuel rods to be used for medical purposes. Turkey's initiatives came at a time when the negotiations between Iran and the Vienna Group (U.S, Russia, France and the IAEA) came to a deadlock.⁴⁸ Turkey worked in close cooperation with Brazil in the negotiations and advocated a peaceful resolution to Iran's nuclear issue rather than imposing sanctions as proposed by the Western countries. In 2008, The Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TIKA) provided more than 45 percent of its overall developmental assistance, amounting to USD 800 million, to support the 'reconstruction of Afghanistan Program'.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Turks have taken command of the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) in Kabul for the second time and doubled their troop levels over the last year.

In tandem with the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean, the Balkans represent one of the core regions of Turkish foreign policy activism in the recent years. Turkey's engagement in the Western Balkans has so far focused primarily on intensely Muslim populated states, i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Yet, Turkey has also improved her ties with Serbia significantly which she has had traditionally problematic relations. Turkey's another instrument to increase her regional profile in the Balkans is to assume a mediatory role and undertake multilateral initiatives to contribute to stability in the region. For instance, in the Balkan Summit held in Istanbul on 24 April 2010 Presidents of Turkey, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Istanbul Declaration, which proposed that efforts would be made to secure a lasting peace and stability in the region, and that the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be respected. "After

46 International Crisis Group, 2010.

47 *Referans* 2008.

48 *Ibid*, 12.

49 Evin et. al. 2010.

three years of almost complete cessation of regular inter-state relations, the summit in Istanbul was important because it reopened a conduit for normal communication between Belgrade and Sarajevo.⁵⁰

Turkey's regional policy of socio-economic integration in the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus consists of freer trade and travel among neighbours, integration of economies and infrastructure and regular high-level meetings with regional states. Following changes in the visa regime vis-à-vis Iran, in late 2009, Turkey lifted the visa requirements for nationals of Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, and Syria. She also concluded agreements with Serbia, Russia and Ukraine to lift visa requirements for their nationals visiting each others' countries. There is an emerging consensus among the analysts and practitioners of Turkish FSP that Turkey's liberalizing visa policy vis-à-vis her neighbours is indicative of her 'increasing self-confidence' and "innovative approach to regional issues in the Middle East."⁵¹ This policy is also seen as an element in Turkey's 'soft power' strategy envisaging regional integration to deal with security threats and challenges. Some limitations and failures of Turkey's regionalist activism will be dealt with in the concluding section of this article.

Similarities and differences between the two regionalist turns

When one pole (the Soviet bloc) of the bi-polar international security order has quitted the scene, the process of regionalization of security dynamics has manifested itself as an almost inevitable global phenomenon. Certainly, Turkey was not immune from this process. Yet, at the very beginning, Turkish policy makers were not entirely sure about how to react to the newly emerging international order where the relative predictability, certainty and tranquillity of the Cold War politics faded away. Turkey's aspiration of being an assertive regional power was defined by Turkish policy makers in the 1990s, as complimentary to or even an asset in her relations with the Western bloc.⁵² This in turn holds true for the second regionalist turn of Turkish FSP, yet with a seminal difference. In the second turn, Turkey's regionalist policies are still not taken as an alternative to her place within the Western alliance. However, this time Turkish political establishment in justifying Turkey's regionalist activism, does not avoid problematizing its conventional Western-centric foreign policy orientation. They put a special emphasis on regionalist assertiveness as a corollary of multiplication of Turkey's security interests and expectations. This is often framed as a reminder to the West, a phenomenon absent in the first region

The 1990s' regionalism mainly developed as a reaction of Turkish policy makers to the regional insecurities. It was not a well-formulated, well-structured policy implemented by the whole spectrum of FSP establishment (civilian and military alike) in harmony. Apart

50 Ibid.

51 Nas 2010, 125.

52 Kut 2000, 54. For a summary of this article in English see, Kut 2002.

from some exceptions, i.e. the BSEC, this first wave regionalism was mostly problem-solving oriented. It did not encapsulate a clear vision for Turkey as a regional and subsequently a global power. However, the regionalist activism of the 2000s, has put much more emphasis on Turkey's aspirations to be a 'pivotal state' in its surrounding regions. In this era, Turkey aspires to become 'the new power balancer' and 'a dominant player' in its primary regions namely the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and the Caucasus.⁵³ To the AKP leaders, the status of being regional power is not a permanent one and should be understood as a gateway for Turkey to be a global actor.

It may be suggested that Neo-Ottomanism emphasizing the 'historical legacy of the Ottoman past and flourishing Islamic culture as a source' of Turkey's 'soft power' have tainted both regionalist turns of Turkish FSP.⁵⁴ Neo-Ottomanism was first embraced by the followers of Turgut Özal to define a political outlook foreseeing a reconciliation with Turkey's Ottoman past which was neglected and even despised by the uncompromised Kemalist tradition. Eventually, it 'infused the foreign policy thinking'⁵⁵ of the then Turkish policy makers and intellectuals aspiring a status of leadership for Turkey in the Muslim and Turkic worlds. Yet, it has been the 2000s where Neo-Ottomanism was explicitly articulated into Turkish FSP agenda. For Davutoğlu, Turkey due to its historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire, possesses a great geographical depth which situates her 'right at the center of many geopolitical areas of influence.'⁵⁶ Suat Kınıklıoğlu, a member of the current FSP elite, states that 'from Bosnia to the Crimea, and from Karabakh to Iraq, Turks are constantly reminded about a distinctly Ottoman geopolitical space.'⁵⁷ Neo-Ottomanism also stipulates that her Ottoman past provides Turkey 'a unique historical and socio-political capital to be a regional power in its neighborhood.'⁵⁸ For the proponents of this view, because of the common Ottoman past there exist special cultural, historical ties between Turkey and the Balkan, Middle Eastern and Caucasian societies, a fact bringing Turkey both regional leadership duties and responsibilities.

The second turn regionalist narrative constructs Turkey as a 'normative power'⁵⁹ working for the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts. It assigns Turkey the responsibility and duty of endorsing regional integration through security and economic cooperation. Therefore, Turkey's regionalist activism relies on peace-promoting economic incentives rather than military capabilities. One should note that these references to Turkey as a peace promoting, normative regional power were either scarce or virtually absent in the first

53 Theophylactou, 2011.

54 Murinson 2006, 950.

55 Murinson 2006, 945.

56 Murinson 2006, 947, footnote 16.

57 Kınıklıoğlu 2007.

58 Ibid.

59 The concept of 'normative power' was introduced by Ian Manners to refer to the norm exporting and value setting qualities of an entity through peaceful means, i.e. conditionality rather than military and coercive ways. See Manners 2002.

regionalist era of Turkish FSP. The Turkish policy elite in the former era was still inclined to understand the issues of and challenges to security within the confines of conventional approaches based on geostrategic calculations and military power balancing. Yet, to suggest that this conventional approach has entirely disappeared in the 2000s, as various analysts tend to do, would be nothing but naïvety. The current Turkish state elite still sees the country's military capabilities as an invaluable asset to tackle with the regional and bilateral security issues.⁶⁰ Hence, when comparing the two regionalisms of Turkish FSP, for the second turn we can only talk about diversification of security instruments for Turkey.

One seminal factor distinguishing the first from the second regionalist turn relates to the Turkish-Israeli relations. Turkey's relations with Israel reached their peak in the 1990s during the first regionalist era of Turkish foreign policy. These years were also marked by the friction between the civilian and military wings of the Turkish FSP establishment especially in Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP) and True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi, DYP) coalition governments. In several occasions the military wing signed bilateral security cooperation agreements with Israel without seeking the prior consent of the government. Turkey's strategy of becoming a regional power in the 1990s hinged on the belief that it needed to remain an ally of Israel. Furthermore, 'the fact that both states considered that they were surrounded by the same hostile "rogue" states motivated both Israel and Turkey into accepting one another as valuable strategic partners in a perceived hostile political environment.'⁶¹ Moreover, Turkish FSP establishment was relying on the notion that 'Jerusalem could provide military technology that the West was reluctant to sell to its NATO ally because of Ankara's war against the Kurdish insurgency. Subsequently, relations with Israel bloomed economically, diplomatically and militarily.'⁶²

In contrast, in the second regionalist turn, Turkey's regionalist aspirations have been disentangled from its strategic relations with Israel. The fact that Turkey disallowed Israel's participation in NATO military exercise 'Anatolian Eagle', which was to take place in Turkey from 12 to 23 October 2009 can be taken as one of many indications of this policy shift. The Israeli assault on Lebanon in July 2006 which lasted 34 days and caused 1,200 civil casualties and its attack on the Gaza Strip in 2008 as well as Israel's harsh criticism of Turkish government's contacts with Hamas caused Turkish-Israeli relations to gradually deteriorate. Yet, the watershed in the relations occurred when Israeli soldiers raided the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla – which aimed to break the blockade of Gaza – in international waters on 31 May 2010 and killed nine activists and stirred public outrage in Turkey.⁶³ As a result of this series of crises, Turkey cancelled joint military exercises with Israel,

60 The fact that Turkey still has 40,000 troops stationed in the north of Cyprus and that the Turkish army launched a sweeping military incursion into northern Iraq in February 2008 to destroy PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) camps exemplify this entrenched strategic outlook.

61 Ulutaş 2010, 4.

62 Inbar 2009 quoted in Çandar 2009.

63 Kesner 2010.

yet continued to receive Israeli surveillance/attack drones. To sum up, during the first regionalist era Israel was a crucially important regional partner for Turkey with whom Turkey signed military cooperation agreements. Turkey benefited substantially from these relations to influence the regional politics. Yet, in the second turn, the historically deteriorating relations between these two constitute an arduous challenge for Turkey in realizing its objective of being a pivotal state in its surrounding regions.

Another distinction can be made regarding the ways in which Turkey's economic interests and regional aspirations are linked to each other throughout the two regionalist turns. In the 1990s, the regionalist activism of Turkish FSP was much more related to Turkey's geopolitical and security concerns than economic imperatives. Economy was still considered as a factor of secondary importance which is not capable of determining or shaping Turkey's security perceptions and expectations. The Özalpian policy of strengthening bilateral relations with the neighbouring countries through deepening economic interdependence was resisted by the then FSP establishment due to national security concerns. It also fell victim to some major armed conflicts occurring in Turkish vicinity such as the first Gulf War, the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo and Turkey's Northern Iraq operations.⁶⁴

Yet, in the 2000s Turkey's regionalist foreign policy has increasingly been linked to its economic considerations such as finding new export markets, investment opportunities, tourism, and energy politics.⁶⁵ The AKP governments' regionalist activism is also related to the creation of new spaces for the newly strengthening business class often dubbed as 'Anatolian Tigers'. The members of this new business elite having a conservative *Weltanschauung* are closely associated with the AKP and supportive of its domestic and foreign policies. The first regionalist wave of Turkish FSP coincided with lower economic growth rates, chronic hyper-inflation and successive financial crisis in 1994, 2000 and 2001.⁶⁶ However, the 'proactive, multidimensional' foreign policy wisdom of the second turn is supported by microeconomic stability, disciplined inflation and strong growth momentum.⁶⁷

In Lieu of Conclusion

This study mainly argued that the changing nature of Turkish foreign policy in the post-Cold War period can best be understood as the regionalization of strategic and security outlook in Turkey. By the term regionalization I referred to two interrelated processes: first, the process whereby security interest definitions and threat perceptions in Turkey have gained an increasingly regional character, and second the process whereby Turkey

64 Ünay 2010, 26.

65 Kirişçi 2006.

66 Ünay 2010, 27.

67 Ibid., 27; and Keyman 2010.

has increasingly defined itself as an activist regional power. The regionalizing dynamics in Turkish foreign policy gained prominence in parallel to the post-Cold War regionalization of international security architecture. Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has taken some steps both to diversify its security interests and instruments and also to prioritize soft security strategies. In this context, the first wave of regionalization in Turkish FSP began soon after the end of the Cold War in early 1990s. However, regionalism of Turkish FSP took its more mature and comprehensive turn in the 2000s, where Turkey claimed itself as a 'pivotal state' in its region. Some commonalities and differences between these two turns have already been outlined with a view to grasp the post-Cold war transformations in Turkish FSP.

As this article demonstrated, Turkey has embarked on a process of outreach towards its imminent neighbours and adopted a promising attitude vis-à-vis several regional actors. When appointed as foreign minister, Davutoğlu declared 'the zero problem policy' with the neighbours presented as the backbone of Turkey's new 'soft power' approach to regional and bilateral security issues. At the inception, Turkey has taken bold steps to improve its bilateral relations with her various neighbours in economic and political senses, inducing a sense of optimism both in domestic politics and international arena. Fostering economic cooperation and constructive dialogue in bilateral and multilateral platforms, endorsing or initiating efforts of regional integration and facilitating peace negotiations in the protracted conflicts in its immediate neighbourhood was coined as clear manifestations of Turkey's 'new' FSP approach.

Yet, the limitations and contradictions of Turkey's regionalist activism became much more manifest soon after the Arab awakening started in the streets and squares of many Arab countries. Turkey had based its claim to be 'the new power balancer' in her immediate surroundings on her geostrategic, geo-historical properties, and mediatory initiatives, as well as her new policy of having zero problems with neighbours. Yet, Turkey's facilitating initiatives did not yield any result except for a limited number of issues in Iraq and Lebanon.⁶⁸ The self-declared 'the zero problem policy' seems to have collapsed due to serious deteriorations in the relations between Turkey and almost all important Middle Eastern countries, i.e., Iraq, Iran, Syria and Israel. As a former Turkish ambassador reminded, 'Turkey was not able to resolve any deep rooted problems in recent years. Let aside the complicated Middle East, the body of issues that divide Turkey and Greece remain to be solved. The Protocols signed with Armenia are in deep freeze. The good neighbourly relations with Iran have cooled off due to the Syrian policies. Our relations with the Central Government of Iraq are turning into open hostility.'⁶⁹ Of course, one should also include the deteriorating Turco-Russian relations and the crises bringing Turkey and Syria to the brink of war after a decade of piece and rapprochement.

68 Uzgel 2012.

69 Vural 2013.

The Syrian case, often mentioned as one of the prominent success stories for the ‘new’ Turkish foreign policy, deserves particular attention. The relationship between these two had significantly improved in the 2000s mostly due to ‘a shared concern’ regarding the rising Kurdish identity claims.⁷⁰ For a great number of observers, the Turkish-Syrian rapprochement was one of the most visible indicatives of Turkey’s new desecuritizing approach to foreign policy issues, representing a historical departure from the securitizing Kemalist tradition.⁷¹ Yet, the Turkish government effectively did side with the opposition in the Syrian uprising. Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan invested too much political capital in the fall of the Assad regime, and did not avoid getting embroiled in internal issues of a neighbouring country, saying that ‘the Syrian issues are our own domestic issues.’⁷² For the first time, in Turkey’s modern history, a Turkish government demanded Patriot missiles from NATO for the perceived threat from a neighbouring state. The fact that Turkey has been hosting Free Syrian Army groups, the alleged claims about the CIA ‘using Turkey as a staging ground for delivering weapons to the opposition’ and downing of a Turkish jet by the Syrian military have brought the two states to the brink of war once more since 1998. While the ‘old’ Kemalist policies were criticized as being highly securitized, tension-oriented, problem-driven, it is ironic that polarization, securitization and even hostility has returned to Turkey’s relations with her neighbours even more manifestly than in the past.

Considering the fact that Turkish foreign policy makers in the second regionalist turn have overstretched themselves and promised more than they could deliver in a vast geographical area, some analysts argue that Turkey seeks a larger regional role than it can afford to play.⁷³ This challenge could also undermine Turkey’s credibility in her future policy vision and the contours of what it can realistically achieve as a regional/global actor. Turkey’s any emphasis on Neo-Ottomanism or Pax-Ottomana would lead to discomfort and suspicions in her various neighbours. However, some statements by current Turkish foreign policy makers strengthen the impression that Turkey’s regionalist activism is not ‘motivated by good neighbourly relations, but by Turkey’s Neo-Ottoman and imperial ambitions.’⁷⁴ Turkey should be cautious while employing such discourses, since Turkey as an ‘order setting country’ would possibly be interpreted as colonial aspirations by her neighbours.

Turkey’s efforts towards strengthening the stability and good neighbourly relations in its regions were explicitly supported by the EU. Even if it is in decline in recent years, Turkey’s EU perspective is still one of the main assets of the country in her relations with the regional neighbours. The claims that Turkish foreign policy undergoes ‘a shift of access’ from trans-Atlantic alliance to the Middle-Easternist or Euro-Asianist ones have

70 Larrabee 2007.

71 Aras and Karakaya-Polat 2007; Altunışık 2008.

72 *Birgün* 2011.

73 Niblett 2010; Altunışık 2008; Öniş 2010.

74 Ulusoy 2013.

become popular in the Western media. Turkey's EU accession talks nearly coming to a halt and dramatic deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations have further fostered such a perception. As Baskın Oran indicated, throughout the history of modern Turkish state, 'these alarmist statements gain currency every time Turkish governments attempt to diversify their staunchly Euro-Atlanticist position.'⁷⁵ It is true that the current Turkish foreign policy establishment seems 'to prioritise the United States over the European Union and hence the logic of security over the logic of EU accession and political reform.'⁷⁶ Nevertheless, The EU membership is a well-established state policy in Turkey and no one should expect a particular government to reverse it within a short period of time.⁷⁷ Turkey without denying its western orientation, is seeking for a greater regional role and autonomy. Diversification of her foreign policy choices is a necessary strategy for Turkey in order to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances of regional/global politics.

75 Oran 2012, xvi–xvii.

76 Öktem and Kadioğlu 2012, 6.

77 Davutoğlu 2010b; Öniş 2010.

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