The Transformation in Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring: Syrian Conflict as a Case

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İçindekiler

1. Introduction

Since the Justice and Development Party (JDP) assumed office in 2002, significant transformations have taken place in both internal politics and foreign policy of Turkey. Domestically, the JDP brought the "politics of identity" basing on Turkish Islamism at the center of its political agenda. It undermined the influence of secular-Kemalist elite, which rejected Islamic Ottoman heritage. Internationally, the JDP embraced pro-active, multidimensional and assertive perspective of external relations. Its policy generally grounded on cultural and ideational affinities with neighboring countries that were formerly part of the Ottoman Empire. Economically, the JDP adopted neo-liberal policies.

On the basis of these policies, Turkey increased its engagement with MENA countries. These developments brought about the question of whether there is an "axis-shift" in Turkey's classic western oriented policies to the Middle East and Balkan oriented policies, which are interpreted by many scholars as "neo-Ottomanism."

The ideological underpinning of Turkey's new foreign policy is predicated on the "strategic depth" concept of Ahmet Davutoğlu, the previous Prime Minister of Turkey. Davutoğlu stated that Turkey overlooked its historical and cultural connections with the Middle East, North Africa, the Balkans, and Eurasia, which trace back to Ottoman rule, and did not succeed in establishing economic and political relations. Turkey ought to leverage its "geopolitical position and historical assets" to enhance its presence in these regions.

Davutoğlu enumerated several principles of Turkey's foreign policy. The initial principle is maintaining a "balance between

security and democracy." Davutoğlu asserts that civil liberties out to be advanced without undermining security of the citizens. This principle was addressed within the context of struggle with the PKK without narrowing down the area of liberties. The second principle is "zero problem policy towards Turkey's neighbors." It includes economic integration with neighborhood countries, playing mediator role in regional conflicts and active use of regional organization. The third principle is "multi-dimensional and multi-track foreign policy" that aims to formulate diversified policies with different states. These policies ought to be harmonious, but not in competition with each other. The fourth principle presents a diplomatic discourse that challenges the idea of Turkey as a "bridge" country, opting instead for an alternative view of Turkey's role as a "pivotal" or central state. The final principle is "rhythmic diplomacy," which emphasizes the importance of being adaptable to the ever-changing and dynamic conditions of international politics

Indeed, the JDP party made a good start in applying these principles on foreign policy in its early years of its rule. Politically, Middle Eastern and North African countries appeared to be a focal point of interest, which have long been denied by the Kemalist establishment. Harmonious relations with neighbors gave the opportunity to warm up frozen relationship with Syria and Armenia. Economically, transnational relations between Turkey and MENA countries were promoted. In this way, Turkey integrated Middle East countries by concluding free trade agreements and thereby developing economic and trade relations. Culturally, important networks were developed by civil society, educational and business organizations. Turkey has acquired an important popularity among

Arab people because of Turkish soap operas broadcasted in Arabic televisions. In sum, by utilizing new soft power factors such as promoting commercial relations, opening up Turkish speaking schools in MENA countries and public diplomacy, Turkey's role in the Middle East has transformed substantially.

Nonetheless, the impact of Turkey, achieved through the application of soft power strategies in the Middle East, has proven to be a subject of debate due to the regional and international changes occurring in the wake of the Arab Spring. After Arab uprisin, Turkey's relationships with Iran, Iraq, and Syria have significantly declined, as Turkey has been perceived to engage in regional conflicts along sectarian lines and to favor Sunni Muslim factions over Shiite groups in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Turkey's excessive involvement in the Syrian issue has rendered it susceptible to regional conflicts, thereby threatening its domestic stability. The manner in which Turkey has approached the Kurdish issue, both within its borders and in the regional context, alongside the suppression of protest movements like Gezi, has led to the questions with regards to Turkey's democratic credentials, which were often demonstrated to MENA countries as a "model." In light of these circumstances, the influence of Turkey's through the use of soft power instruments on MENA nations following the Arab Spring has been significantly challenged.

1.1.Research Objective

In the light of recent regional and domestic developments, this research aims to examine domestic, international, and cognitive

factors influencing shifts in Turkish foreign policy towards Middle Eastern countries following the Arab Spring,

Situating norms, interest and value based factors at the focal point of the investigation and as the foundations on which to evaluate foreign policy of Turkey, the proposed research intends to find out regional, international and domestic factors limiting Turkey's choices and effectiveness of being soft power in the Middle East countries over time.

1.2. Research Question

The main research questions of this study are:

- What accounts for the change in the foreign policy of Turkey towards Middle East countries, particularly to Syria after Arab spring?

- What are the reasons underlying behind foreign policy preferences of the JDP in the post Arab uprising period?

By answering those questions the study tries to provide a picture of Turkey foreign policy objectives and instruments in the changing geopolitical context of the Middle East.

1.3. Time Frames

The analysis covers the period starting from 2007 and ends in 2024. The justification of this period is that Ahmet Davutoğlu who is the intellectual architect and implementer of Turkish foreign policy was nominated as a foreign minister in 2007. Since this study focuses on Syria a case, the analysis continues as of today. The Syria civil has still important implications for Turkish foreign policy

1.4.Methodology

This study employs process tracing as "a method of within-case analysis (George and McKeown, 1985)." The rationale behind this choice is to understand the causal process behind certain foreign policy outcomes in Turkey's wider neighborhood. This procedure aims to explore and account for the process of decision-making through which "various initial conditions are translated into outcomes (George and McKeown, 1985 p: 35)." The process-tracing seeks:

> "to uncover what stimuli the actors attend to; the decision process that makes use of these stimuli to arrive at decisions; the actual behavior that then occurs; the effect of various institutional arrangements on attention, processing, and behavior; and the effect of other variables of interest on attention, processing, and behavior (George and McKeown, 1985 p. 35)."

As such, process tracing will provide important opportunity to explore the variations across different domestic and international variables in Turkey's wider neighborhood.

Having provided theoretically informed narratives that trace the sequences of events forming the process, the study will carry out content analysis of the discourses and parliamentary debates. The discourses of decision makers are analyzed to understand the perception of actors over certain international and domestic settings and then focus on parliamentary debates to identify how perception shifts are reflected in decision making process.

1.5. Structure of the Study

This study consists of three parts. In the first part, the study will provide literature review with regards to transformations in Turkish external relations. Having critically examined the state of art, the study attempts to discuss the gaps in the literature. In the second part, the study focuses on theoretical framework that is employed in this study. The conceptualization; operationalization and measurement of the variables are provided in this part. In the third part, the study will analyze main parameters of traditional Turkish foreign policy. It will attempt to understand how ideological foundations of the JDP challenged traditional Turkish foreign policy preferences. The fourth and fifth part will analyze Turkey's foreign policy to Syria before and after Arab uprising by making reference to the international, regional and domestic setting.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Literature Review

There are three groups of studies accounting the reasons of shifts in Turkey's foreign policy. The first group refers to domestic factors for understanding policy change in Turkey (Dalay and Friedman, 2013, Kennedy and Dickenson, 2013, Muftuler-Bac, 2011). They stresses domestic factors such as the rise of Justice and Development Party to power, the role of growing civil society organizations, (Rumelili, 2005), army (Ersen Aydınlı, 2006) and economic interaction in terms of trade (Civan et al., 2013, Kirişci, 2012, Akram, 2011, Kutlav, 2011, Kirişci and Kaptanoğlu, 2011, Tür, 2011) as important domestic factors in accounting for foreign policy shifts in Turkey.

There are also scholars focusing on the impact of the Strategic Depth doctrine developed by Davutoğlu with regards to Turkish external relations (Meral and Paris, 2010,Murinson, 2006, Yalvaç, 2012, Özpek and Demirağ, 2012). Firstly, some scholars criticizes that doctrine, as it symbolizes a new form of hegemony (Yalvaç, 2012). They also focuses on determinants of new foreign policy (Meral and Paris, 2010, Zarakol, 2012, Öniş, 2011) and its components (Fidan, 2013, Muftuler-Bac, 2011), Secondly, studies focuses on the shift in Turkish foreign policy orientation from West to East (Hursoy, 2011, Kirişci, 2012, Oğuzlu, 2008, Özcan, 2011, Pope, 2010, Robins, 2007, Sözen, 2010) and foreign policy activism (Ulutaş, 2010). Third group of studies focuses on ideology-identity related parameters (Cornell, 2012, Güner, 2012, Kalin, 2011-2012, Sadik, 2012) and the role of the decision makers (Görener and Ucal, 2011, Özpek and Demirağ, 2012) in re-shaping foreign policy orientation. Last but not the least, there are studies relying on the concept of soft power which is developed by Joseph S. Nye (2004) such as Oğuzlu (2007) debating Turkish model (Dede, 2011, Akram, 2011, Ayman, 2013, Noi, 2012, Önış, 2012) during and after Arab spring.

2.2.The Gap in Literature

Even though above mentioned approaches provide important accounts for Turkish's recent foreign policy activism in its wider neighborhood, these literature have several limitations.

Firstly, current literature does not include any theoretically informed systematic comparative analysis of Turkey's policies towards different countries in its wider neighborhood empirically.

Secondly, above mentioned literature mainly refers to either domestic or international factors respectively in their research designs. They fail to provide systematic and theoretically informed analysis of the interplay between international and domestic factors in accounting Turkey's recent engagement in its wider region. The present study is based on the argument that Turkey's recent engagement in its wider neighborhood is mainly driven by multi--track and intricate relationship between endogenous and exogenous settings. Hence, study refers to different sets of domestic and international parameters— to be explained below— in order to account Turkey's regional activism in its wider neighborhood.

Thirdly, current state of art does not make strong references to the perceptions of foreign policy actors in explaining certain foreign policy outputs. They fail to include in their research design how domestic and international settings are perceived by foreign policy makers. The study argues that its not only objective international factors do produce a change in foreign policy by itself. By the words of Gustavsson (1998 p: 24), it is not only "the objective reality that counts, but how this is perceived and reacted by the decision makers also gives rise to the change in foreign policy." In this respect, the study would contribute current state of art by bringing domestic, international and individual (perceptions) levels of analysis into research design in the mean time. It will try to find out how domestic and international settings are perceived by individual decision makers and how changing perceptions are translated into the policy change during decision making process.

Lastly, current literature on Turkey refers to either rationalist or realist approaches or constructivism in explaining the changes in

foreign policy. Those using rationalist or realist approaches argue that the change in international systems occurs because of the power struggle among regional actors. Major structural changes in certain foreign policies are believed to occur mainly because of the violent conflicts, war and coercion. On the other hand, liberal institutionalism which is a competing paradigm to realism, maintain that the sources of change can be non-involvement and peaceful, including the means of economic interdependence, regional integration, norms and identities.

Indeed, urrent literature on Turkey fails to bring a dialogue between these two different paradigms. They attempt to demonstrate whether interest or identity related factors explain recent foreign policy activism in Turkey's wider neighborhood. But they fail to show how interests and identities can have interactive impact on Turkish foreign policy. The study attempts to understand how two mechanisms, namely norms and interests intersect in Turkey's recent engagement in its wider region systematically. This is particularly relevant to understand whether Turkey would pursue a peaceful regional strategy basing on liberal norms and soft power instruments or Turkey increase the search for regional leadership role through the mechanism of war or conflict.

This study identifies domestic and international parameters accounting for Turkey's activism in its wider neighborhood so as to fill stated gap in the literature. These parameters are subdivided into norm-based and interest based sub-categories respectively. Interest based external parameters are a) international pressure or demands from powerful states or international organizations, b) power re-distribution after structural changes among actors. Interest based

internal parameters are a) economic gains from cross economic transactions and b) national security considerations. Certain foreign policy preferences can also be pursued because of the norm based factors. In other words, foreign policy change can take place because it is appropriate in the given identity and cultural context. Internal norm based factors refer to an identity related national values, cultures and historical legacies. External norm based factors are Western identity founded on universal values such as human rights.

2.3. Conceptual Framework

Theoretical frameworks analyzing "change" are particularly relevant for understanding the shifts in foreign policy in Turkey. These studies make reference to two strands of theoretical frameworks. The first one is theoretical studies analyzing particularly foreign policy change, emerging from "comparative foreign policy analysis" and the second one is "rational choice and sociological institutionalism."

Theoretical frameworks arising from foreign policy analysis attempt to provide explanations for the actor's choices in international politics. The theoretical framework generally starts from different levels of analysis, such as individual, institutional and social-cultural factors in accounting for certain foreign policy outcomes (Allison, 1971, Janes, 1972, Jervis, 1976, Snyder et al., 1962, Rosenau, 1968).

Initially, rather than providing comprehensive explanations, the scholars focus on single parameters to account for certain foreign policy outcome. Allison (1971) for example, analyze the role of bureaucracy in foreign policy making. Janes (1972) account for

political decision making process using psychological concepts. He attempts to find out how groupthink has an impact on foreign policy decision. Jervis (1976) also analyses how perceptions and misperceptions influence international politics. Snyder et al. (1962) bring individual and state level of analysis together to understand foreign policy change. He argues that foreign policy is not only determined by an external stimulus, but also how structural factors do the decision makers perceive?

Within the field of foreign policy analysis, some scholars attracted their attention to examine foreign policy change which gains momentum since the beginning of the 1980s (Goldman, 1988, Holsti, 1982, Hermann and Herman, 1989, Kleistra and Mayer, 2001, Rosenau, 1975). They specially interested in the outcomes where countries shift from their previous positions, particularly focus on how, when and why the changes occur. The focus in this respect is to find out international and domestic factors having an impact on foreign policy change.

Holsti (1982), in this regard, attempts to comprehend "foreign policy restructuring," which means a form of foreign policy behavior in which the states attempt to change "the total pattern of external relations." He differentiates "restructuring" behavior on this basis of four factors. These are "the pattern of external involvement," "external penetration," "the direction of external involvement" and "military and diplomatic commitments. Then, he developed four typology of foreign policy behavior such as "isolation, dependence, self reliance, and non alignment-diversification."

The independent variables stated by Holsti (1982) are "domestic and international military and non military threats, internal economic conditions, domestic factions, and colonial experiences and attitudes towards foreigners stated in the history and culture of a society." Intervening variables are mainly the perceptions, attitudes and characteristic of policy makers. Goldmann (1988) explains inertia and asks the question of why the states keep their foreign policies unchanged, even though there is a strong pressure to change usually in the form of changes in environmental circumstances, domestic political changes and learning. In this respect, Goldmann (1988) enlisted intervening cognitive, international and administrative factors that stabilize prevalent policy and hinder pressures for change from leading to an actual change in policy.

Hermann (1990b) also determines four degrees of foreign policy changes. These are adjustment changes, which occurs in the level of effort and in the scope of recipients, program changes which happens in methods or programs, goal changes: initial aims are replaced with the new ones, and lastly international orientation changes, which is the redirection of the actor's approach to a single issue or specific set of other actors. Gustavsson (1998) addresses how foreign policy changes occurs. According to him, decision makers who determine decision- making process mediate endogenous and exogenous sources of change. These parameters in turn result in "one of the four types of policy change identified by Hermann (1990b).

Apart from theoretical strands relevant to foreign policy analysis, this study draws its conceptual orientation from basic

premises of rational choice and constructivist institutionalism. According to rational choice institutionalism, actors have fixed set of preferences (Pollack, 2007, Hall and Rosemary, 1996). Within institutional constraints, they behave instrumentally and act according to the logic of consequentiality. In other words, they choose the actions that are likely to maximize their expected utility (Hall and Rosemary, 1996, Pollack, 2007, Bates, 1988). Certain actions took place, if the benefits of an outcome are bigger than its costs for the actors in question. In sociological institutionalism, actors are normatively oriented. They act according to the logic of appropriateness and choice the actions that are inconformity with their identity. Actors adopt "certain rules and practices that are sociology constructed." Hence, the motive of the actors is not interest, but norms and identities (March and Johan, 1998, Checkel, 2007).

This study draw its conceptual orientation from the basic premises of new institutionalism and linked it with the model of Gustavsson (1998) accounting for foreign policy change. Gustavson (1998) identify two broad categories. These are endogenous and exogenous sources of change. Exogenous factors are national security, power relations and economic factors. Endogenous factors are the political elements such voter support, political parties and societal actors. These factors shape decision making process

Different from Gustowson (1998) and in line with new institutionalism, this study adheres different international and domestic factors, which are illustrated in Table 1. These parameters are subdivided into norm and interest based sub-categories respectively. A decision to change can be given because of internal

and external interest based factors. Interest based external parameters refers to a) international pressure or demands from powerful states or international organizations, b) power re-distribution after structural changes among actors. Interest based internal parameters are a) economic gains from cross economic transactions and b) increased or decreased national security for a particular foreign policy outcome. A decision to change can be given because of the norm based factors.

In other words, foreign policy change can take place because it is appropriate in the given identity and cultural context. In this respect, internal norm based arguments refer to an identity related national values, cultures and historical legacies. External norm based factors are Western identity founded on universal values such as human rights.

Table 1: Factors Having Impact on Foreign Policy Change

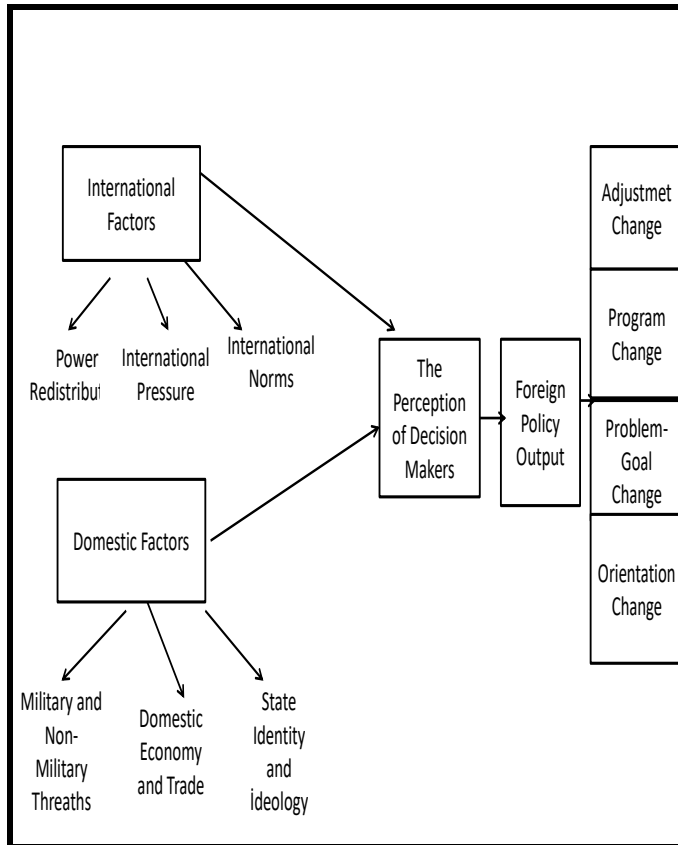|	**Interest-based**	**Norm-based**
International Factors	Power Distribution, International Pressure	Western Values, Norms and Principles
Domestic Factors	National security considerations, Political Economy	National-Cultural-Religious Identity

Source: Inspired by Gustovson (1998)

In line with Gustovson (1998), it is believed in this research that domestic and international factors do not produce a change in foreign policy by itself. By the words of the Gustovson (1998, p: 24), it is not only "the objective reality that counts, but how this is perceived and reacted by the decision makers" also gives rise to the change in foreign policy."Sources of change have to be comprehended by individual decision makers and such a comprehension needs to result in belief change among decision makers. In other words, in addition to structural domestic and international parameters, cognitive factors of the decision makers are relevant for foreign policy change. The belief change of decision makers because of the developments in international and domestic setting needs to be translated into the policy change in the course of the decision making process. Key decision makers changing their perception and beliefs have to persuade different groups to adopt a new policy perspective.

In this respect, foreign policy change takes place in three steps in Turkey (Figure 1). The first step is the changes in endogenous and exogenous factors. Endogenous factors are military and non military threats challenging national security, domestic economy in terms of foreign trade with the country in question and state identity and international norms. Exogenous factors are power redistribution, international pressure and international norms. The second step is how such sources of change is perceived and in turn leads to belief change among individual decision makers and the third steps is how perceptional shift reflected in the decision making process. As a result of these three steps, four different outcomes can take place as developed by the typology of Hermann. These outcomes are a)

adjustment change, b) program change, c) program/goal change and
d) international orientation change.

Figure 1: Causal Dynamics of Foreign Policy Change in Turkey

(Inspired from Gustavson 1998)

International Factors

Power Redistribut | International Pressure | International Norms

Domestic Factors

Military and Non-Military Threaths | Domestic Economy and Trade | State Identity and İdeology

The Perception of Decision Makers

Foreign Policy Output

Adjustmet Change

Program Change

Problem-Goal Change

Orientation Change

2.4.Variables

It is believed that foreign policy change results from not only domestic and international factors. The sources of change have to be comprehended by decision makers responsible for foreign policy making, leading individual decision makers to change their beliefs. Then, they translate their belief changes into the policy by placing them into a political agenda. In this process, the decision makers persuade the other actors in the decision making process in order to produce expected outcome. By employing this model to Turkish

case, the interaction of foreign policy analysis at the system, individual and state levels are analyzed.

2.4.1 Dependent Variable

On this basis, the dependent variable of this research is foreign policy change in Turkey after Arab spring.

Conceptualization: Borrowed from Hermann (1990a p: 5), foreign policy is conceptualized as a "goal oriented or problem oriented program by authoritative policy makers (or their representatives) directed toward entities outside the policymakers political jurisdiction." Put it differently, it is "a program (plan) designed to address some problem or pursue some goal that entails action toward foreign entities." On this basis, foreign policy change is different from redirection that takes place after regime change. It is a change when government in power decides to move in a different direction than its previous position in terms of its goals, programs and orientation.

Operationalization: It is possible to determine four degrees of foreign policy change borrowed from Herman (1990). The first one is a) "adjustment changes" which are the ones occurring at "the level of effort" and "in the scope of recipients." The content, goals and method of the foreign policy remain unchanged. The second one is "program changes." The method or "the means by which goal is addressed change." In other words, "what is done and how it is done changes, but the purposes for which it is done remain unchanged." The third one is "problem/goal change: the initial problem or goal is replaced with the new one." At this level, the purpose of the foreign policy also changes. The last one is the changes in "international

orientation," which means "redirection of the actors" entire orientation toward world affairs. In sum, foreign policy change is operationalized as the changes in program (method), goal and orientation towards MENA countries after Arab Spring.

Measurement: It is necessary to find out ex-ante and ex-post situation in order to measure foreign policy shift in Turkey. That is why this research starts the analysis by finding out general objectives, orientation and methods of Turkish foreign policy since 2007. Then I will try to find out whether there is a change in the foreign policy of JDP before and after Arab Spring. In order to determine whether there is a change in Turkish foreign policy in terms of its goals, methods and programs, I analyze government declarations, party programs and public speeches of the decision makers.

2.4.2. Independent Variables

As stated in theoretical framework, this study attempts to analyze Turkish foreign policy change in the post Arab spring by making reference to the interaction of internal and external structural factors of the operational environment of foreign policy, cognition of the decision makers and foreign policy outputs in the form of adjustment, program, goal and orientation change which results from decision making process.

As illustrated in Figure I, endogenous and exogenous factors in the operational environment have an impact on perceptional shift of the decision maker and this in turn result in adaptation of different foreign policy outcomes. It is argued that causal relationship exists between domestic and external structural parameters, the perceptions

and foreign policy outputs. Domestic and international structural parameters which form operational environment of Turkish foreign policy and cognitive factors shaping psychological setting of the decision makers offers three clusters of independent variables."

a. Domestic Structural Setting

Conceptualization: Domestic structural setting is the factors internal to actors that initiates foreign policy outcome. These include any "activities, conditions and influences operative on the domestic scene" that stipulate decision makers to change some aspect of foreign policy.

Operationalization: Domestic structural setting is operationalized as a) transformation in economy, b) re-conceptualization of national security due to regional upheavals and d) new state identity and ideology.

Measurement: Transformation in Turkish economy is measured in terms of the amount of foreign trade with Arab countries over time. The degree to which the emergence of state identity, founded on sectarian Islamic characteristics and a reassessment of national security, is measured in the public speeches of policymakers.

b. International Structural Setting

Conceptualization: International structural setting is conceptualized as "human and nonhuman activities, conditions, and influences, but these occur abroad and operate as foreign policy stimuli by serving as the objects that officials seek to preserve or alter through their undertaking (Rosenau, 1968 p: 313)."

Operationalization: International structural setting are operationalized, as the emergence or a decline of a political force because of war and revolution leading to new power distribution and international pressure to change for certain foreign output.

Measurement: I try to configure power distribution in the aftermath of the Arab spring and determine the positions of the global and regional actors. Then I will determine whether Turkey act in conformity with their positions or not and whether there is any pressure from global and regional actors on Turkey to change its position.

Measurement: It is measured by the content analysis of decision-makers records.

2.5.Methodology

This study adopts case study approach as a methodology. This choice is justified on the grounds that case study is compatible with the studies where the research is interested in accounting for not only outcomes, but also the factors leading to certain results. By analysing empirical material deeply, the analysis can have a better account of the setting in which the phenomenon under study has occurred.

In this respect, Turkey's external foreign policy towards Syria is as chosen as a cases. This choice is justified for several reasons. Syria had important economic relations with Turkey in terms of foreign trade before Arab spring. Turkey has used soft power instruments to a great extent in order to increase its political and economic influence.

Secondly, Syria has important number of Kurdish population, challenging national security consideration of Turkey. The developments in this regard have important impact on Turkey's own Kurdish question, making internal-external divide between Turkey and Syria meaningless. Stability in this region is particularly relevant for the internal security of Turkey. Last but not the least, the conflicts in Syria has global repercussions in terms redistribution of power between regional and global actors. As such, the analysis of Syria can bring important empirical evidence with regards to the changes in Turkish foreign policy. The case gives the opportunity to go deeper into the empirical material, easing a more direct understanding of the events. In this respect, rather that adopting cross case analysis, the study focuses on 'within case study.'

The case study method utilises different sources of material. The first group sources referred in this study are public documents of different nature, such as government declarations, government bills and party bills submitted to the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The second group of sources are the public statements and parliamentary debates of the decision makers concerning Arab spring. The content analysis of these documents is made in order to trace whether variables pertaining domestic, international and cognitive setting is relevant to a particular foreign policy outcome in Turkey.

3. Historical Evolution of Turkish Foreign Policy

3.1. Main Parameters of Turkish Foreign Policy

Turkish foreign policy has first changed in the course of Turgut Özal's presidency (1983-1993). Before the Özal period,

Turkish foreign policy depended on the principle of isolationism, as stated by the slogan of the founder of the Turkish Republic, Kemal Atatürk: "peace at home and peace in the world." The slogan is founded on the belief that Turkey has no claim to expand its borders based on *Misaki Milli*, nor does it want to unite Turkish people residing in the Caucasus and Central Asia with Western Anatolia based on pan-Turkism and pan-Turanism. Moreover, it founded on the principle of Westernization. During the Cold War, Turkey joined the Western alliance, attempting to institutionalize its connections with the West by becoming a member of Western institutions, and serving as a buffer zone in a bipolar world.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union posed a challenge to Turkish foreign policy choices based on isolation and involvement in the Western alliance system. It caused Turkey to lose its geostrategic significance as a buffer state between communist governments and liberal Western allies. It resulted in a reassessment of Turkey's geostrategic location in light of emerging international landscape. It has also given rise to the formation of many Turkic Republics in Central Asia and Azerbaijan. Thereby, the emphasis on Turkey's historical, cultural, and religious ties to Muslims in the Balkans, Caucasus, and Central Asia has intensified. In the international environment of post-Cold War, Turkey could no longer sustain its one-dimensional foreign policy and needed to adopt multidimensional and assertive foreign strategy that is not limited to conventional foreign policy considerations.

The changes in the external environment corresponded with the profound internal shifts occurring in Turkey. The transition to democracy in 1983, after the military coup in 1980, initiated a new

period that culminated in the emergence of Turgut Özal as the preeminent leader of the nation. Özal's administration was enacting the most severe economic and political liberalization measures, which diminished the authority of the military and authoritarian bureaucracy, while restructuring the nation for a new international order in the post-Cold War period.

In contrast to those who advocated for a single Western orientation and in parallel to liberalism in domestic politics, Özal government was pursuing an active and multifaceted foreign policy. It expanded the sphere of influence to the adjacent geo-cultural periphery by taking the advantage of the eastern and western national identities of Turkey. It also used multicultural and multi-ethnic legacy of the Ottoman Empire and sociological structure of Turkish society to gain influence in its foreign affairs.

Hence, foreign policy of Özal was accepted by many as an endeavour to stimulate the Ottoman Empire and hence considered as neo-Ottomanism. Özal government pursued two goals in the mean time. While it was attempting to increase its influence on its wider neighbourhood which Turkey has religious, historical, cultural and ideational connections, it was seeking the support of Western powers, particularly the USA, in extending its regional influence to the Balkans, Middle East and Turkic nations of Central Asia.

Following Özal death in 1993, an important vacuum in Turkish political structure occurred. In 1993, Tansu Çiller rose to power in 1993 and played significant role in the coalition governments that were established in between 1993-1996. Çiller era was one of the darkest periods of Turkish political history. Turkey went through

serious economic crisis and political instability. The political vacuum emerging from lack of strong leadership increased the power of military in addressing Kurdish question. Increasing role of the military resulted in brutal repression of Kurdish uprising and caused very severe human rights violations, suppression, and cruelty, political killings perpetrated by the deep state or illegal paramilitary structures within the state.

In addition to domestic developments, international setting shaped foreign policy preferences of the Çiller government directed by the generals of the military with regards to Kurdish question. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, Iraq lost its total control over its Kurdish regions. No fly zone was formed which provided the PKK camps with safe haven in the Northern Iraq. In order to control the flourishing of the PKK in this region, the Çiller government resorted to military means and made several cross border operations to the region. It searched international legitimacy for the military incursion and hence turned its face to Israeli relations to get Western support.

Tansu Çiller's inability to create a coalition government with the Motherland Party (ANAP) following the 1995 election led to the creation of a coalition government with the pro-Islamic Welfare Party, resulting in the emergence of Erbakan as Turkey's prime minister. Given the party's Islamic origins, the ascent of Erbakan was seen as a watershed moment.

The only divergence of the Erbakan government from ongoing foreign policy orientation at that time was within the context of its external relations with Islamic countries and its strong anti-Western rhetoric. Erbakan had a very strong anti Western rhetoric, if not

orientation. According to Erbakan, the West exploits and oppresses non-Western Islamic societies (Yavuz, 2003 p: 223). He refused the idea that the West possesses "a higher set and universal set of values" and argued that it used the issues of human rights instrumentally and self-servingly (Yavuz, 2003 p: 223). "

Compare to prior governments, Erbakan made strong emphasis on its Islamic identity in its relations with Muslim world and formed very close relations with Iraq, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. The most radical ambition of the welfare government in this respect was to create "a new world order," which includes "Islamic nations, Islamic NATO and Islamic United Nations, a common Islamic currency and an Islamic Common Market (Robins, 1997 p: 89)."

The Erbakan government became the target of the military, Kemalist establishment, and bureaucracy due to its domestic and foreign policies that prominently featured Islamic elements. It was subjected to the "28 February" military memorandum in 1997, resulting in the resignation of Erbakan and the dissolution of his coalition government. Following the post-modern military coup, Turkey's Constitutional Court dissolved the Welfare Party in 1998, citing violations of secularism. Consequently, Erbakan was barred from political participation for five years.

The 28 February process had two important and contradictory repercussions on shaping domestic policies of Turkey. Firstly, the "28 February Process" intended to redesign Turkish political and cultural life in parallel with Kemalist and secularist lines. Secondly, it led coincidently to the rise of the JDP government who has Islamic

tradition to the power. The party took the office after general elections held in 2002.

The party received 34.28% of the votes, securing a majority of the seats and thereby enabling the formation of a majority government. Aside from the CHP, which emerged as the primary opposition, no other party was able to surpass the 10 percent electoral threshold. The process led to the dominance of the JDP government in Turkey's political landscape, evidenced by its repeated electoral successes in the general elections of 2007, 2011, and 2015.

According to Kosebalaban (2011), there are three interrelated characteristics of the JDP government that determine domestic and international policies of the JDP government. These are "Islamic conservatism as a philosophy of life, liberalism as an economic policy orientation, and globalization as a foreign policy outlook." The JDP's foreign policy was a reaction to two transformations that took place in international arena. These are globalization and multi polar world established after Cold War. As a response to the globalization and multi-polar world, the JDP government attempted to harmonize its Islamic identity with the economic liberalism.

3.2. Ideological Foundation: Strategic Depth

Ahmet Davutoğlu, who served as chief foreign policy advisor and foreign policy minister from 2009 to 2014, is recognized as the ideological architect of the JDP's Turkish foreign policy. As a political science scholar, he establishes the foundational parameters of the JDP's foreign policy in his scholarly work "Strategic Depth:

Turkey's International Position," published in 2001 before the JDP assuming power in 2002.

The principal assertion of the doctrine is that Turkey has significant "strategic depth," based on "geographical and historical depth." Turkey's "geographical depth" positions it in the convergence of several "geopolitical spheres of influence." The "historical legacy" of the Ottoman Empire affords it significant influence over the Islamic nations within the region it once ruled. Consequently, Turkey needs to engage actively in all regional systems within its vicinity to augment its zone of influence.

Davutoğlu identifies several regions to which Turkey should exercise its influence. These regions are Middle East, Balkans and Caucasus in its land basins and Black, Eastern Mediterranean, Caspian Seas and the Gulf of Basra in its maritime basin. Furthermore, Turkey leverages its Ottoman heritage and Islamic identity as a means of soft power strategy.

In this work, Davutoğlu (2001) starts with his analysis by enumerating the parameters that determine the relative weight and strength of a country in international politics. According to Davutoğlu (2001), the sources and strength of states are derived from the aggravate sum of the constant and potential variables. He conceptualizes history, geography, population and culture as constant variables and defines respectively economical, technological and military capacities that can vary in time as the potential variables of a country. These variables can only function as sources of power in international politics with multiplier effect

provided that the states posses "strategic mindset, strategic planning and political will."

On the basis of these sources of power, Davutoğlu (2001) criticized pre-existing Turkish foreign policy in that it lacks a well-developed strategic planning and theory, which hinder Turkey to take the advantage of constant and potential variables. According to Davutoğlu, there is an important diversification in the standpoint of different actors and bureaucracy in addressing history, geography, culture and population of Turkey. For some of the actors, Turkish geography, culture, history and population provide important opportunity to Turkey to have active and multi-dimensional policy, the others consider those variables as stumbling blocks for pursuing such a policy. In addition to the inconsistency and diversification in the approaches, the existence of weak coalition governments in power and political instability in contemporary Turkey pose other challenges, as it leads to the variation in Turkey's foreign policy preferences depending on short-term political interests of the governments in power.

According Davutoğlu, Turkish foreign policy lacks well-developed and strategic planning thanks to the several institutional, historical and psychological factors. Institutional factors are bureaucratic structures accountable for foreign policy making, including Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkish Grand National Assembly, political parties and universities. These official institutions, however, are not endowed with sufficient financial and organizational infrastructure to conduct strategic analysis, which is necessary for coherent, consistent and multi-dimensional foreign policy free from political influence.

Secondly, historical factors are relevant with the tradition of Ottoman-Turkish foreign policy, which has no imperial colonial strategy. According to Davutoğlu, great powers developed their national strategies in the 19th century on the basis of policies of colonization. The main concern of the Ottoman Empire at that time, however, was to preserve its territorial integrity and prevent the loss of further territories. Turkey did not seek to increase its area of influence through intermediate strategies in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire. This situation gave rise to the emergence of static foreign policy tradition basing on defence strategy along the prevailing boundary lines.

Psychological factors are also relevant with Turkey's identity crisis. While Turkish Republic was adopting Western orientation and leaving Islamic policies in its external relations, it was constructing national identity, which is centred on Islam. He argues that Turkey granted non-Muslim groups minority status and signed population exchange agreements that homogenize "multi-cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire" in terms of ethnicity and religion. Turkey's alienation to its culture, history and geography resulted in identity conflicts between what he calls 'inner self' and 'outer self' and the failure of Turkish Republic to take the advantage of its Islamic-Ottoman identity and culture in its external relations.

Davutoğlu posits that the origins of traditional Turkish foreign policy can be traced to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The foreign policy of the Turkish Republic was informed by the insights gained by the Kemalist elite from the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Kemalist elites, who established new Turkish Republic, linked the disintegration of Ottoman Empire to its search for

international position disproportionate with its real power under the support of Germany during the cold war.

Having refused Ottoman legacy, the elites pursued four policies in the mean time. Firstly, they adopted western oriented foreign policy preferences and declared the new state as a "part" rather than an "alternative" to the West. Secondly, they accept status quo in international system and advocated the defence strategy of the existing borders rather than an assertive policy. Thirdly, they utilized the balance of power among major powers and use the conflicts among adversaries to ensure the survival and security of Turkey. Henceforth, they adopted an external policy, which was in line with Turkey's actual power.

Davutoğlu criticized pre-existing Turkish foreign policy in that it failed to utilize geo-political and geo-cultural factors such as geography, culture and population inherited from the Ottoman Empire to expand its sphere of influence. He criticized existing foreign policy for being a) contradictory with domestic identity and culture, b) mono-dimensional, c) static and defensive.

Firstly, he considered that policy contradicted with the domestic identity construction of new Turkish Republic. While Turkish Republic was adopting Western orientation and leaving Islamic policies in its external relations, it was constructing national identity, which is centred on moderate version of Islam. Despite western and secular emphasis, he argues that Turkey granted non-Muslim groups minority status and signed population exchange agreements that homogenize "multi-cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire" in terms of ethnicity and religion. This situation resulted in

identity conflicts between what he calls 'inner self' and "external self' and the failure of Turkish Republic to take the advantage of its Islamic-Ottoman identity and culture in its external relations.

Secondly, he expressed the disapproval of the current foreign policy, characterizing it as overly defensive and focused on safeguarding its territories within the framework of the Western alliance, which encompasses the US and NATO. He argued that this approach relegates the nation to a regional periphery of the burgeoning Western axis, rather than positioning it as a "weak centre" within its own region. This situation led to a one-dimensional approach to foreign policy and hindered Turkey's ability to expand its sphere of influence within its broader geo-cultural region, encompassing the Middle East, Balkans, and Caucasus, which lie beyond the confines of the Western alliance following the end of the Cold War.

Thirdly, the Turkish defensive and Western-oriented policy, adopted during the republican and Cold War periods, has proven to be static. It has inadequately addressed the evolving political, cultural, and economic dynamics that emerged in the post-Cold War. Turkey has to respond to these developments through a multifaceted approach to foreign policy.

Davutoğlu's perspective concerning Turkish foreign policy is very controversial. On the one hand, he overwhelmingly makes references to Western imperial geopolitical models and legitimizes the state's expansion of its sphere of influence (Ozkan, 2014 p:122). He underlines that the existing borders of Turkey do not represent the realities of today. The transformations that occurred in the

Middle East, Balkans, and Caucasus following the conclusion of the Cold War necessitate re-evaluation of Turkey's foreign policy, emphasizing the importance of maintaining peace and territorial integrity through a careful observance of national borders. (Ozkan, 2014). Davutoğlu advocated a strategy of forming a new hinterland or Lebensraum by enlarging Turkey's sphere of influence beyond Turkish national borders.

Turkey possesses the capacity to extend its influence across various regions by leveraging its Islamic identity while simultaneously fostering robust economic, cultural, and political ties with nations in the Balkans, Middle East, and Caucasus. Turkey has the potential to leverage the historical and cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire to connect with its hinterland. According to Davutoğlu, this geopolitical strategy will elevate Turkey's status in the international order from that of a regional player to a central power.

On the other hand, Davutoğlu supplemented the strategy of Islamist expansionism with several liberal principles, including soft power instruments, democracy and conflict resolution. He puts forward five principles that replace guiding norms of the pre-existing Turkish foreign policy. These are "balance between freedom and security, zero problems with neighbors, multi-dimensional and multi-track policies, and rhythmic diplomacy (Davutoğlu, 2008)."

Firstly, Davutoğlu articulates the necessity of preserving equilibrium between security and liberty, a consideration pertinent to both domestic and international policy. He posits that the validity of a political regime is derived from its ability to ensure the safety of

its populace. However, this security must not come at the cost of liberties, as a state of security devoid of freedom inevitably paves the way for authoritarianism. Consequently, Turkey must cultivate a stable and harmonious domestic environment as a foundation for developing a proactive foreign policy.

Secondly, Davutoğlu advocated a policy of fostering harmonious relations with Turkey's neighbours through the promotion of economic interdependence, which included initiatives such as free trade agreements, investments, visa liberalization, and regional economic integration. He posits that the augmentation of regional trade and investments would foster economic interdependence, thereby engendering mutually beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders and promoting peace among neighbouring nations.

Thirdly, Davutoğlu envisages multi-dimensional and multi track foreign policy. On the one hand, he underlined the necessity of Turkey to have an active engagement with all regional systems in Turkey's wider neighborhood, including Middle East, Balkans and the Caucasus and Central Asia and thus form its own axis (Murinson, 2006 p: 953).

On the other hand, Davutoğlu advocated a balanced perspective towards all global and regional actors and considered its relations with the NATO, the EU and the US as "integral parts of a consistent policy" that can complement Turkey's regional perspective. He anticipates a rhythmic diplomacy, which underlines active participation of Turkey to the international organization. He also added new principles in 2012, such as "order instituting actor,

value-focused, vision-centred and self-confidence based autonomous foreign policy and mentioned Turkey as wise country" (Davutoğlu, 2012).

Davutoğlu attempts to put together the parameters of value-based and ethnical foreign policy, which centers on the use of soft power instruments and Ottoman legacy. This implies that Turkey's forming close relations with the Middle East and Balkan countries, but in the mean time preserving its traditional relations with Europe and the US, and solving all regional disputes including Armenia and Cyrus questions.

By referring these new norms, Davutoğlu anticipated proactive foreign policy that underlines Turkey's stabilizing power and mediator-guarantor role in its region. The JDP was able to implement the vision of Davutoğlu with relative success in its first decades. However, the sustainability of a foreign policy referring to soft power instruments could not be possible when the geostrategic altered after the Arab uprising in 2011.

As such, the JDP could pursue normatively oriented foreign policy with relative success to the extent that domestic and international setting persisted. It uses value-based and ethical foreign policy discourses instrumentally in order to cover Davutoğlu's highly interest based, sectarian and expansionist foreign policy paradigms, which became more tangible in the aftermath of the Arab uprising.

Depending on external and internal constellations, the JDP varies in between norm-based and interest based foreign policy preferences in order to hide its actual objective of increasing its

sphere of influence in its environs. As such, it stands in between real politics and norm-based Islamism and searches for Islamic justifications to its real political choices.

3.3. Foreign Policy Objectives of the JDP

The JDP have two sources of inter-connected political and economic legitimacy. Its political legitimacy derived from its popular support. The party government gives particular importance to procedural democracy and upholds the normative principles of majoritarian rule and universal suffrage as the core of its authority. Substantive aspects of democracy, including the protection of civil liberties, the rule of law, and separation of powers, independent judiciary and organized oppositional groups are not as crucial as the procedural ones.

The JDP has always taken the advantage of procedural legitimacy arising from majoritarian rule for carrying out selective democratization reforms. Rather than consolidating participatory and pluralistic democracy, it has been using "democratization" reforms instrumentally to monopolize its power in legislative, executive and judiciary.

As Keyman and Gümüşcü put it, the JDP has instrumentalized democracy by limiting democracy to majority rule and ignore the quality of democracy in the areas, such as freedom of expression, assembly and association. Hence, the JDP government has never enjoyed overall democratic legitimacy coming from different segments of Turkish society locating outside the JDP's electoral bases. Rather than consolidating democracy, the JDP has sustained its mandate by establishing its domestic hegemony on the basis of

economy, identity and security, which renders Turkish domestic politics and external policies in the Middle East intertwined and interdependent.

The JDP depends on two electoral bases. The JDP establishes its domestic hegemony through realizing economic claims of electoral bases. The devout bourgeoisie of Anatolia and urban poor represent the main components of the JDP's mass support. The first group consists of Small and Medium Enterprises in Anatolia. This group had gained economic strength by neo-liberal transformation and export-oriented strategies taking place in the 1980s (Hoşgör, 2015, p: 143).

The Anatolian capital originally consists of non-monopolistic capitals, which lay outside the big and secular bourgeoisie of Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir. Despite the fact that they have Islamist and conservative worldview, the member of this bourgeoisie class intends to integrate global economy and have strong transnational networks. Operating mainly labour-intensive sectors of textiles, construction and services in the industrializing cities of Anatolia, they are subcontracted producers of domestic and foreign capital (Hoşgör 2015, p: 145). Their basic economic objective is the integration to the global economy through bringing together the values of Islam and neo-liberal capitalism.

Apart from Anatolian capital, underprivileged, alienated and poorest segments of the society form the second component of the JDĞ's electoral bases. They have competing interests with those of the Islamist bourgeoisie. While the former forms the winner of neo-liberal policies of the JDP government, the latter is the losers from

those policies (Öniş 2015) As Öniş puts it, the enduring success of the JDP government in the elections originates from its policy of redistribution that enables the JDP government to form broad-based and cross class electoral coalition between the groups having competing interest.

According to Öniş (2015) The JDP has sustained so far "cross-class electoral coalition" in two ways. Firstly, it pursued neo-liberal economic policy that centres on free market, deregulation and privatization in order to meet the claims of the Islamists capital. In this framework, it backed international trade and market expansion as the motor of Turkey's economic growth. Moreover, it reduced the government regulations; encompassing environmental protection, job security and worker rights, as they decrease the profits of the enterprises. It has empowered Islamists capital by the privatization of state owned enterprises, the credits issued by the public banks and public bids. The state support accelerated Islamists capital accumulation and increased international competitiveness in the labor intensity sectors.

Secondly, the JDP adopted particularistic way of redistribution to satisfy the needs of the poor, excluded and disadvantaged groups. It utilized informal channels of redistribution. Rather than institutionalizing universal social benefits to all citizens at the state level, the JDP adopted "particularistic" way of redistribution (Öniş 2015). It grants social benefits to the one close to the party through informal religious-sect networks and leaving the other groups outside the scope of social welfare system. In this way, the JDP has compensated social spending cutbacks that emerged from neo-

liberal economic policies and keep the integrity of the cross-class electoral coalition, including Islamist bourgeois and poor.

The JDP atones for the lack of political legitimacy deriving from substantive democracy through its economic legitimacy. It has redistributed social and economic benefits particularly to its electoral constituent to preserve its majoritarian rule and thereby consolidated its power regardless of democratic credentials. Such a policy made the JDP government subject to externally oriented economic growth basing on regional trade and constant foreign capital flow. Owing to geographical closeness and cultural and religious affinity, the JDP developed external policies that increase its market share in its region. It started depend on foreign capital flow from Gulf countries to balance the claims of poor electoral segments and Islamist capital. This situation pushed the JDP government to reformulate its policy towards the Middle East through expansionist means.

Apart from economy and security, Islamic identity has provided a significant pretext for the interaction of external and internal hegemonic policies. Indeed, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu— the ideological father of the foreign policy of the JDP— states in his scholarly work Strategic Depth that Turkey has to use its "culture, history and geography" to increase its influence in the immediate neighbourhood. He advocated a strategy of forming a new hinterland or "Lebensraum" by enlarging Turkey's sphere of influence beyond Turkish national borders. He claims that Turkey must "rediscover its historic and geographic identity" and "reassess its own position vis-a-vis regional and global issues" (Romano and Gurses, 2014). He asserts that Turkey should use "the historical and cultural legacy of the Ottoman Empire." The aforementioned

concepts serve as "indirect connotations" and highlight the significance of Islam as a foundational element for fostering relations with Muslim states in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire.

Davutoğlu utilized instrumentally Islamic identity as a legitimizing parameter for the expansionist strategy of the JDP government to reach its former Ottoman hinterland. On the other hand, Davutoğlu supplemented the strategy of Islamist expansionism with several liberal principles, including soft power instruments, democracy and conflict resolution. He puts forward five principles that replace guiding norms of the pre-existing Turkish foreign policy. These principles are "balance between freedom and security, zero problems with neighbours, multi-dimensional and multi-track policies, rhythmic diplomacy" (Davutoğlu, 2008). In this way, Davutoğlu attempts to put the parameters of identity and value based foreign policy.

The JDP could pursue normatively oriented foreign policy with relative success to the extent that domestic and international setting persists. It uses value-based and ethical foreign policy discourses instrumentally in order to cover Davutoğlu's highly interest based, sectarian and expansionist foreign policy paradigms, which became more tangible in the aftermath of the Arab uprising. Depending on external and internal constellations, the JDP varies in between norm-based and interest based foreign policy preferences in order to pursue its actual objective of increasing its sphere of influence in its environs. As such, it stands in between real politics and norm-based Islamism and searches for Islamic justifications to its real political choices.

Indeed, despite the importance of Islamic identity as a new source of external legitimacy, the JDP government made real political choices. Ideological, sectarian and authoritarian character of the Assad regime did not present any hurdle for the JDP government to develop political, security and economic relations with the Assad regime before the Arab uprising.

3. Syria Policy of the JDP before Arab Uprising

The doctrine of strategic depth has been put into the practice, when the JDP came into the power in 2002. Significant improvement was recorded in Turkey's relations with several Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq, Iran, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Armenia. Turkey took the advantage of soft power instruments encompassing technical assistance, economic cooperation and trade. It attempted to find out a solution to its long-lasting problems through these peaceful means.

Turkey pursued the principle of zero sum problem policy with relative success within the context of Turkey-Syrian relations before Arab uprising. The steps taken in this regard were particularly significant, as Syria and Turkey have had long-lasting unsettled disputes. The tensions between two countries revolved around three main issues. These are Syria's territorial claims over Hatay province, —Alexandra, which is an Arab-Alawite province annexed by Turkey in 1939—, water dispute over Turkey's excessive use of Euphrates river and Syrian's support for the PKK (Workers Party for Kurdistan).

Apart from these three issues, Turkey accused Syria for giving support to the ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of

Armenia) and Turkish radical left (Tür and Altunişik, 2006 p: 232). Syria claimed that Turkey provided safe haven to the leaders of Syrian Muslim Brotherhood that escaped to Turkey after 1982 Hama incident. (Tür and Altunişik, 2006 p: 232) The issue of Hatay lost its impact, since Syria abandoned its territorial claims over it—though Syria has never officially recognized Turkish sovereignty over Hatay and Turkish-Syrian borders (Jørum, 2015 p: 92-111). But strongly interrelated water dispute and Kurdish issue have being determining factors in Turkish-Syrian relations in the last three decades.

The relations with Syria have always been at odds thanks to the historical perceptions of the Kemalist elite as Arabs being the main actors responsible for Ottoman disintegration. During the Cold War, the relations were determined by alliance politics of the East and West divide which put two countries to the opposite camps. Syrian regime under Hafez-al Assad was a strong ally of the Soviet Union, while Turkey was the supporter of the USA and the member of the Western alliance.

In the early 1970s, with the launch of the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) by Turkey, aimed at harnessing the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris for electricity generation and irrigation, the dynamics of Turkey-Syria relations evolved significantly. Syria, which considers water resources as vital for its economic development and agricultural production, strongly resisted to the project. There is a concern that the project may reduce the volume of water flowing to Syria from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

The outbreak of Kurdish uprising in 1980 in Turkey added a new parameter to the dispute. With the aim of increasing its

bargaining power on the water issue, Syria used Kurdish card and provided members and leaders of the PKK with safe heaven within its borders and Syria dominated Bekaa valley in Lebanon. The two countries were on the verge of conflict in 1998 as a result of Syria's growing support for the PKK, which had been the source of tension among them.

On 30 September 1998, government issued an ultimatum for declaring a war to Syria. National Security Council ratified an action plan for mobilizing troops along the borders of Syria. The crisis ended with the signing of Adana Accord on 20 October 1998, by which the agreement Syria decided to expel PKK's leader from Syria and to cease giving financial and logistical support.

The Adana Accord prepared the grounds for Syrian-Turkish rapprochement since 1998. The rise of Bashar Assad to the power in 2000, Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's participation to the Hafız al-Assad's funeral in June 2000, and then Syrian Vise President Abd al-Khaddam expression of his willingness to "to turn over a new leaf" ushered a new era in Turkey-Syria relations.

Indeed, economic and diplomatic relations intensified to a great extent in between 1999-2001.Turkish-Syrian protocol in transportation, which anticipates joint development of railways, shipping and airway transportation come into the effect. Moreover, Joint Economic Commission, which had not been functional since 1988, was activated. A Memorandum of Understanding was established to facilitate and define the conditions of commerce. The agreement for the formation of the Turkish-Syrian Business Council was executed between Turkey and Syria. In 2000, the trade volume

rose to $724.7 million, up from $539.2 million in 1999 (Aydin and Aras, 2005 p: 33).

In order to utilize spill over effects of economic relations, political steps were also taken. In this context, land mines along the borders were dismantled, border controls were eased and a military training agreement was signed (Oktav, 2009 p: 108). In contrast to economic interactions, political ones were volatile. Syria did not accept a statement of principles that included respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of each nation as a prerequisite for enhancing ties. (Tür, 2010 p: 167). Syria was not ready to abandon the claims over Hatay and it preferred to keep its relations at low politics and solve long-lasting problems in the long run.

The ascent of the JDP to power has significantly deepened political and economic relations from 2002 onward. The diplomatic interactions between the JDP government and the Assad regime became more pronounced in 2003 as a result of the US military intervention. Both Turkey and Syria had similar security concerns over Iraqi disintegration that might take place after the US intervention. The dismemberment of Iraq was believed to lead Kurdish state, which would have diffusion effect on Turkey and Syria having Kurdish population in their territories. Syria had also concerned that Syria would be the next target of the policies of the US, which grew more and more hostile to the Assad regime.

Given these regional developments, two countries gave strategic decision to deepen their relations. The first attempt come from Turkey's Prime Minister Abdullah Gül. He visited Syria on 4 January 2003 in the framework of his diplomatic activities to prevent

the impending war in Iraq. As a response, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sarai paid an official visit to Ankara. After the collapse of the Iraqi regime, Abdullah Gül went again to Syria to discuss Iraqi crisis and security issues on 29 April 2003. Following that, the Syrian Prime Minister Muhammed Mustafa Miro's visited Turkey to develop 'strategic relations' and expressed "his hope that rapid bilateral developments in economic ties would spread to other areas" and discussed safety concerns about Iraq crisis.

The pivotal moment in the evolving relationship between Ankara and Damascus was marked by Basar Assad's visit to Ankara, representing the first high-level engagement between Syria and Turkey in 57 years. Economic relations characterized Assad's visit but regional problems were also addressed. During the visit, two treaties having the objective of promoting reciprocal tourism, trade and investment and prevention of double taxation were signed. These agreements are "Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation" and "Agreement on Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investment." The agreements were viewed as de facto recognition of Turkey's current borders by Syria, as they included provisions for establishing Syrian trade missions in Hatay (Scheumann et al., 2011 p: 309).

0n 22-23 December 2004, President Erdoğan visited Syria. The visit took place when the US president George Bush stated the necessity of strengthening political and economic pressures on Syria, which is regarded as a rogue state. The objective of Erdoğan's visit was again mainly driven by economic considerations. He wanted to promote the volume of trade with Syria. During the visit, Erdoğan signed Free Trade Agreement, whose objective is to gradually

remove custom barriers between Turkey and Syria. He stated that Turkey will cooperate regarding the water dispute and suggested initiating a "joint friendship dam project" on the Orontos River. A joint technical delegation is proposed to investigate the technical issues related to the establishment of joint projects. The "Turkish-Syrian Business Council" was established to enhance economic relations.

In 2005, intense pressure of the US administration was felt on Turkey-Syria relations Assad's government attempted to give the struggle for existence against great powers. In 2005, Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was killed in a bombing in Lebanon. Assad's alleged involvement in the assassination resulted in a diplomatic isolation of the Syrian regime. Bush administration regarded Syria as a member of "axis of evil" because of its support for Hezbollah and radical groups (Altunuışık and Tür 2006, p: 239).

The regime was also under international pressure for withdrawing Syrian troops in Lebanon. Erdoğan government supported Assad for getting out of diplomatic isolation. Notwithstanding American reservations, and the US considerations that Turkey "keeps its distance," Erdoğan visited to Syria. In 2008, Turkey assumed the role of mediator in the peace negotiations between Syria and Israel. Nevertheless, the negotiation failed to reach a conclusion due to the ongoing Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip.

In 2009, Turkey and Syria initiated the High Level Strategic Council to foster a long-term strategic partnership and collaboration across various domains of shared concern and interest. The inaugural

Ministerial Meeting of the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council took place in Aleppo and Gaziantep in 2009. The Meeting of the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council between Syria and Turkey convened in Damascus in December 2009. The meeting culminated in the establishment of various agreements, memoranda of understanding, and cooperation protocols between the two parties.

In that particular year, Turkey and Syria formalized agreements pertaining to the liberalization of visa regulations. The agreements facilitated the enhancement of economic and cultural relations, as well as trade, between Turkey and Syria. The relationships extended beyond mere economic considerations. On 27 April 2009, Turkey and Syria conducted a collaborative military exercise aimed at fostering friendship, cooperation, and mutual confidence between the two nations.

The JDP administration leveraged its rapprochement with Syria. Positive diplomatic relations with Syria ensured the security of Turkey's most significant border, thereby bolstering Turkey's stance in its struggle against the Kurdish movement. It also facilitated the advancement of economic and political relations with the broader Arab world. The diminishment of tariff barriers to trade has facilitated an increase in Turkish exports, extending not only to Syria but also to various other Arab nations. Erdoğan's determination to foster amicable relations with Syria, notwithstanding the opposition from the United States, has enhanced his reputation as a "regional leader" within Arab nations. This image subsequently gained prominence due to Erdoğan's public allegations regarding the Israeli assault on Gaza and the Mavi Marmara flotilla incident in 2010.

4.1. Domestic, Regional and International Setting (2010-2013)

Arab uprising and the Syrian crisis are turning point in terms of uncovering implicit sectarian and identity-oriented dimension of Turkish foreign policy. As it is discussed above, the basic objective Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East before the Arab uprising was to establish its regional hegemony in a way preserving and contributing its domestic hegemony. The JDP internally established its domestic hegemony through economic growth and democratization reforms, which open a political space for the party and conservative electoral bases in its initial years. In parallel, it resorted to soft power instruments in its external relations to extend its regional influence.

After 2007 elections, which led to the consolidation of the JDP's power, however, the JDP started to give the signs of leaving interest-based foreign policy in the Middle East. Indeed, Former President Erdoğan condemned Israel President Peres at the Davos World Economic Form in 2009 for Gaza policy of Israel. This was accompanied by Gaza flotilla raid in 2010, which deteriorated Turkish-Israel relations further. Through these actions, Erdoğan government increased his popularity in the Middle East, but real transformation in Turkey's external relations took place with the outbreak of Arab uprising. New regional setting refined the JDP's regional aspirations and re-definition of the instruments pursing those aspirations.

The JDP government pursued identity-ideology oriented external policies in order to establish its regional hegemony. Originating from Muslim Brotherhood tradition, the JDP used its ideological affinity with Muslim Brotherhood for the establishment

of its regional hegemony (Taşpınar 2015, 116). The Muslim Brotherhood is a form of "political Islam" that takes the advantage of democratic means for building Islamic regimes. The ideology of Muslim Brotherhood gives particular importance to the brotherhood of all Muslims, "umma," which is "a universal community of believers" (Taşpınar 2015, 116). Despite the fact that the JDP has always considered itself as a part of the wider networks of Islamic movement, the JDP toned down its close linkage with the Muslim Brotherhood until the Arab uprising.

Having read global and regional setting in the post Arab uprising, the JDP intensified the use of identity card and left behind its pragmatic and interest based foreign policy in the Middle East. It supported the establishment of new regimes in the Middle East on the basis of Muslim brotherhood ideology. In other words identity is used for regional hegemonic aspirations.

4.1.1. Regional Setting

One of the most important consequences of former expansionist policy, which centres on instrumental use of sectarian Islamic identity, was the intensification of Turkish-Iranian regional rivalry. New regional power redistribution redefined Turkish-Iranian relations and rendered regional rivalry between the actors more apparent within the context of Syrian conflict.

Iran approached Syrian crisis through defensive lenses. The existence of Assad regime in Syria has a vital importance for the survival of Iranian regime and national security (Goodarzi 2013, p: 38). Surrounded by international and regional enemies, Iran has essentially had two main foreign policy objectives. Firstly, it

intended to secure the survival of Iranian Islamic regime and national security, which has been under the threat of the US, Israel and Iraq expansionism.

Secondly, being non-Arab and non-Sunni power, Iran attempted to increase its leverage on Persian Gulf against Sunni and Wahhabi Arab states, which consider Shiite Muslims as "rejectionists" (Kane 2011, p: 8). Regional rivalry with anti-Iran front of Arab states and threat of Israel, Iraq and the US led initially Iran to form a political and defensive alliance with Syria (Milani, 2013). Later, Hezbollah— Shi'a Islamist militant group in Lebanon established and empowered by Iran—and Shia dominated Iraqi government joined Iran-Syria alliance and formed so-called "axis of resistance." That triple alliance—Iran, Syria, Iraqi central government and Hezbollah in Iran— provided substantial opportunities to Iran visa-a-vie its Arab and non-Arab rivals. Tehran successfully secured its western border, broadened its influence in Iraq, and occupied the power gap that emerged following the retreat of US forces in 2011.The establishment of Shia-dominated central government in Iraq extends Iran's control over internal affairs of Iraq. The end of Assad regime could be a real geopolitical challenge for Iran. It would undermine the triple alliance of Iran-Hezbollah-Syria and weaken thereby Iranian influence. (Nejad, 2014 p: 32).

Turkey attempted to increase its regional hegemony through leading the momentum of Muslim Brotherhood across the region and intended to replace Alawite Assad regime with the Sunni government of oppositional groups. In order to do so, Turkey allowed the transit of militaristic equipment and opposition groups from Turkish soil to Syria and provided safe heaven to the members

of Free Syrian Army (FSA) to organize revolt against Assad government. It organized oppositional groups in exile and attempted to strengthen Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

In order to counterbalance Turkey's policy, Iran has carried out a comprehensive and balanced strategy. Iran provided important security, military and logistic assistance to Syria to preserve Assad regime's hold on power. To pursue this objective, a) Iran security and intelligence services backed Syrian army; b) Tehran sent military supplies and deployed Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) in Syria; c) When Assad regime appeared to lose control over Syrian territory, Lebanese Hezbollah and Iraqi Shii'a militants— which are under the control of Iran— started to fight directly with the opposition groups in Syria (Fulton et al., 2013 p: 9). In addition, Iran attempted to cut off strategically Al-Nusra front and other radical jihadist group's main supply route from Turkey, rhetorically condemned and denounced Turkey's policy over Syria, particularly its military and intelligence assistance to radical jihadist opposition groups. In reaction to the threats of Turkey to intervene Northern Syria, Iran also warned Turkey "any attack on Syrian territory will meet with a harsh response, and the Iranian-Syrian mutual defense agreement will be activated."[1]

Nonetheless, Iran pursued very careful strategy and attempted to prevent the evolution of confrontation over Syria into open a confrontation with Turkey. It kept the tension to a level that actors would maintain their economic and political relations thanks to their

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[1]Al Arabiya News, Syrian ally Iran has warned Turkey of harsh response to potential strikes: report, 30 July 2012.

mutual interdependence. Turkey kept partially itself away from wider regional confrontation between Gulf States and Iran, which has been carried out on the basis of sectarian Sunni-Shia and ethnic Arab-Persian cleavages before Arab uprising. With the eruption of Syrian conflict in 2011, however, Turkey's sectarian neutrality in the face of broader regional confrontation between Sunni Arab and Shia Iran axis come to an end.

4.1.2. International Setting

Turkey's relations with the US provided a great opportunity to pursue a hegemonic regional external policy in the Middle East in between 2010-2013. The outbreak of the Arab Uprising led to the re-alignment of the United States and Turkey, which had diverged following the US's intervention on Iraq in 2003. Obama administration appeared to present Turkey as a role model to the Middle Eastern countries following the outbreak of the Arab uprising in 2010.

Turkey's liberal and secular democracy together with its moderate Islamic identity and economic model were presented by the US as an example of bridging the insurmountable gap between Western and Islamic values in the Middle East. In this way, as Karakoç (2013, p: 223), puts, the US pursued "indirect orientalism" in which "western superiority" over the East is sustained through Turkey, which has "an anti-Iranian, Sunni oriented and Israel biased perspective." By showing Turkey as a model and fueling its Islamists and neo-Ottomanist perspectives, Obama administrations wanted to shape the future of Middle East on the basis of moderate Sunni Islam and thereby to prevent the empowerment of radical jihadist groups.

The US wanted to take the advantage of Turkey as a regional actor to maintain its Sunni based Middle East policy, which underlines the divisions between Sunnis and Shiites (Karakoç, 2013 p: 223).

At the outset of the Syrian conflict, Turkey and the United States shared compatible perspectives concerning the situation in Syria. The JDP government and the Obama ruling both adhered to the goal of dismantling the regime of Bashar al-Assad, aiming to supplant it with a Sunni Islamist state that would align with the regional and global interests of the United States, Turkey, and Gulf states. Through the establishment of a Sunni regime, Turkey aimed to enhance its political and economic standing in Syria, thereby positioning itself more favorably against its regional adversaries, particularly Shia Iran. The United States was assessing that the Syrian state in the post-Assad era would likely oppose Russia and Iran.

In the mean time, Obama administration was attempting to move away from former aggressive and interventionist Middle East policy of the Bush administration. It intended to secure military de-escalation, to use its soft power instruments instead of military capabilities, to withdraw militaristically from Iraq and accordingly to recover tarnished image and moral standing of the US in the region. As such, it did not want to take part in another intervention that would take place in Syria. On the other hand, Obama administration found it important to overthrow Bashar al-Assad regime thanks to its geostrategic calculations. Being in between "wishful thinking" on the fall of Assad regime and non-interventionist foreign policy, it attempted to maintain its control over Syria through externalizing the burden of war. It filled the

power vacuum that would emerge from the US's non involvement by empowering non-state and state surrogates, including Turkey and Saudi Arabia. In this way, Obama calculated to reduce moral and material cost of direct intervention in Syria and maintained "the good, the safe and strong" Syrian policy (Fitzgerald, 2014). The proxy role granted by the US to Turkey was well received by the JDP government. Aiming to realize its foreign policy objectives centring on Pan-Islamism and Neo-Ottomanism, the JDP decided to carry out the burden of war in Syria. It took the advantage of the US's semi-interventionist strategy to increase its regional influence and hegemonic aspirations. Consequently, both the US and Turkey were able create symbiotic relationship at the very outset of the Syrian conflict.

4.1.3. Domestic Setting

The emergence of the Arab uprising prompted a re-evaluation of the JDP's stance regarding the Kurdish issue. The recent reconfiguration of power dynamics in the Middle East, following the Arab uprisings and the onset of the Syrian conflict, has created both opportunities and limitations for the JDP government in domestic politics.

On the one hand, the setting provided an important global and regional context for consolidating regional hegemony of the JDP government on Turkey's close neighbourhood. On the other hand, the same regional context favours the Kurds in the region, as instability and turmoil gives the opportunity to the Kurds to realize their territorial aspirations. In response to these developments, the JDP government pursued a new security perspective and contained

the spill over effects of the Syrian conflict to Turkey through democratization reforms and settlement process. Different from previous state discourses, which deny the existence of Kurdish identity in Turkey, the JDP discursively recognized the existence of the Kurds and introduced several reform packages relevant to minority rights protection, language rights, broadcasting, freedom of expression. In the mean time, it carried out negotiations with the PKK with the objective of ending violent conflict.

Within this framework, the JDP allowed broadcasting in Turkish public channels, led the use of Kurdish village names, and allowed elective Kurdish courses and established Kurdology departments. The process also involved series of negotiation between the members of Turkish Intelligence Service and government officials on the one side and Abdullah Öcalan, who is the prisoned leader of the PKK, and People's Democratic Party (HDP), which is political party backed by Kurdish masses on the other side.

The objective of the negotiations was ultimate disarmament of the PKK in exchange for improvement of democratic standards and recognition of Kurdish identity in Turkey. Indeed, the PKK started to withdraw from Turkey in 2013 onwards. This led to certain level of stability and security in Turkey and hindered the diffusion of turmoil in Syria to Turkey as of June 2015.

4.2. Domestic, Regional and International Setting (2013-2023)

In between 2013-2023, Turkey has changed its policy toppling down Assad regime and gave priority to internal and external security issues, as Syrian Kurds moved closer to the establishment

of Kurdish belt in the Northern Syria. Turkey had to change policy priorities in Syria thanks to the changing global, regional and domestic setting.

4.2.1. Global Setting

The Assad 's hold on power and the empowerment of radical jihadists groups thanks to the power gap in Syria gave rise to the alteration of the US's policy priorities in Syria, which centre on Asad's removal from power.

Nonetheless, Erdoğan government has maintained the policy of replacing Assad regime with a Sunni government. This position pushed the JDP government toward a more autonomous policy in Syria, which deteriorated Turkey's relations with the US and its wider regional neighbours. The actors could not keep going common position and coordinated action that existed at the beginning of the Syrian conflict. The agendas, priorities and policies of the JDP government and US administration appeared to diverge sharply.

The JDP government frustrated over the US's passive stance towards Syrian civil war. The US upheld a semi-interventionist approach and rather than sending its troops to Syria, it provided militaristic and logistic assistance to moderate oppositional groups.

There are several reasons behind Obama's position. Firstly, Obama and its inner circle concerned with the fact that direct military intervention might give rise to the escalation of wider conflict in the Middle East, which might include Russia and Iran. The administration did not want to launch a new proxy war with Russia similar to that in Afghanistan. It did not want to jeopardize nuclear

negotiations with Tehran, to which Obama gave particular importance.

Secondly, Obama administration apprehended that the intervention would create another Iraq war for the US and would contradict with the attempts of the Obama to divorce from interventionist perspective of Bush administration.

Thirdly, Obama administration also created an analogy between the cases of Syria and Libya—as Libya was a county in which the US had carried out military intervention. Particularly following the attack on American consulate in Libya by a local militia, which resulted in the death of the US ambassador to Benghazi in September 2013, Obama administration questioned the success of interventionism.

In contrast, the JDP government supported interventionist policy preferences. It has been attempting to convince the US to carry out direct military intervention that would change the balance of power in favour of Turkey. Ankara claims that intervention, if launched, would provide a solution to Turkey's refuge problems and facilitate Turkey's fight against the Islamic State (IS).

As a best alternative to direct military intervention, the JDP government advocated the establishment of buffer or no fly zone. By establishing safe zone, it intended to increase Turkey's influence on Aleppo even in the scenario of Assad regime survival. Safe zone would also prevent the establishment of Kurdish belt in the Northern Syria. However, Obama administration rejected the idea of safe zone in Syria. The administration believed that "a true safe zone requires us (the US) to set up ground operations." The Obama administration

considered that safe zone would also necessitate no-fly zone, which might create conflict with Russian jets.

The US and Turkey diverged over their priorities in Syria in the course of the Syrian crisis. Owing to the advances of the IS in Iraq and Syria in 2013 and 2014, Obama administration shifted its priority of removing Assad regime to the fight against radical groups. It sets its objective as the "degrading and ultimately destroying" the Islamic State (IS). Obama has concerned with the fact that that the removal of Assad would create a power vacuum and this would provide safe heaven to the jihadist groups in Syria. In contrast, the JDP government maintained the objective of removing Assad regime and replacing it by a Sunni government. Deep divergences appeared to emerge with the US and Turkey.

Washington and Ankara also diverged in terms of the groups that they rely on in its fight against the ISIS. Turkey opposes to any kind of militaristic operations led by anti-IS coalition that empower Kurdish groups in Turkey and Northern Syria, where the Syrian Kurds established semi autonomous cantons. In contrast, the US depends heavily on the Kurdish forces in northern Syria, particularly the PYD—which has an affiliation with the Kurdistan Worker Party (PKK)— and de facto to the PKK in its fight against ISIS. The JDP did not consider extremist rebel groups as uncontrollable actors, yet, as potential instrument to unwind the power of the Assad regime and Kurdish forces. Hence, the JDP government intensified its collaboration with the radical groups to bring an end to Assad regime, as moderate opposition groups had proved unsuccessful in toppling down Assad regime.

Turkey's aspirations to play a more notable and assertive role in the regional and international affairs, non interventionist policy of Obama and presentation of Turkey as a "model" to Arab countries' going through democratic transition all together provided favourable pretext for the syncretisation of Turkey's Syrian policy with that of the US.

However, the true challenge arose during the Syrian crisis. Turkey would find it challenging to adopt a bandwagoning approach with the US due to shifting objectives, proxies, tactics, and conflicting interests among the parties involved. The regional and international ambitions that aligned Turkey with the US generated significant tensions over the Syrian crisis. Turkey seemed to recalibrate its regional relationships as the PYD and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), mostly composed of the People's Protection Units, advanced west of the Euphrates in Syria, an area that Ankara has designated as a "red line" concerning national security threats.

4.2.2 Domestic Setting

The domestic context on which Turkey's Syrian policy based on altered to a great extent since 7 June 2015 election. After the election, the JDP government lost its votes and could not establish single party government, while the HDP passed ten percent election threshold and entered into the parliament as a party. This was an important blow to the JDP's major policy, which centres on the consolidation of domestic hegemony by mass support and economic growth.

The election results did not produce absolute majority which is necessary for Erdoğan to found presidential system, that confers more legislative and executive powers to Erdoğan and institutionalizes his power. Moreover, the election results marked domestic empowerment of the Kurds, being political group taking the advantage of the settlement process the most.

The HDP was able to unite Kurdish movement with Turkish leftist with its political project of "Turkeyfication" of the HDP, gained votes from conservative Kurds and formed a quasi coalition with the counter hegemonic, anti-establishment, socio-political agents," such as radical leftist, non-Muslim minority groups, Muslim democrats, unemployed people, workers, feminists, ecologist groups and LGBTs.

Turkey has implemented a strategy centers on the geographical containment. The containment policy aimed to hinder the PYD's territorial expansion, to weaken its authority over regions it had previously acquired, and to diminish its capacity to secure military resources. In order to pursue these objectives, Turkey facilitated the encirclement of the frontiers of the Kurdish region within Syria by the jihadist groups. In the mean time, it managed its borders in a way that prevent the transfer of economic and militaristic resources from Turkey to the PYD. It kept its borders along the three cantons in Rojava closed as of Kobani crisis in September 2014.

The settlement process has also formed domestic dimension of JDP's containment policy. The JDP government attempted to control spill over effects of the Syrian insurgency to Turkish-Kurds through

democratization reforms and ceasefire within the context of settlement process.

Given the empowerment of the Kurds after 7 June elections in 2015, the JDP altered its dual Kurdish policy. In retrospect, the JDP had given the signs to end settlement process when PYD got the control of Kobani in 2014. Despite these signs, Erdoğan had not brought an end to the settlement process at least discursive level.

Real blow come to the settlement process come after 7 June 2015. The JDP government has adopted a more-fine tuned strategy. Following the ISIS attacks to the leftist group in Suruç on 20 June 2015, it reached a deal with the US and allowed the coalition forces fighting against the ISIS to use Turkey's Incirlik basis for the airstrikes. In this way, the JDP attempted to appease possible the US's criticism and rectified its international legitimacy. As soon as a deal was reached with the US, it carried out a military strike to the PKK in the northern Iraq, on the grounds that the PKK killed two policemen in the town of Ceylanpınarı as a "revenge" for Suruç massacre.

By ending of ceasefire, the JDP government intended to compel the PKK to combat a two front war and in this way weaken militaristic strength of the PKK in Syria. Moreover, it calculated to increase its votes by playing the votes of the nationalists' electoral bases in early election that would take place on November 2015. In the wake of declaration of Dolmabahçe consensus, the public opinion polls was displaying that the votes of the JDP decreased, while the votes of the HDP increased in the settlement process.

4.2.3 Regional Setting

At the regional level, the involvement of Russia to Syrian civil war limited manoeuvring capacity of the JDP government. Turkey lost almost all influence in Syria, when Turkey downed Russian warplane that had violated Turkish air space for a very short time. The downing of Russian jet gave rise to not only severe economic and political retaliation of the Putin administration, but also the capacity of militaristic operation in Syria.

Russia reinforced its militaristic presence in Syria and deployed a sophisticated S-4000 air defence system in Syria. The deployment of Russia S-400 missile sent strong signal to Turkey that Russia would protect its assets in Syria. It would retaliate in case Turkey would violate the airspace of Syria.

However, the relations with Russia have improved again after failed military coup on 15 June 2016. This situation again gave great opportunity to Turkey to pursue its own foreign policy objectives of hindering establishment of Kurdish belt. In the mean time, it marked total transformation of Turkish foreign policy priorities in Syria.

5. Conclusion

The main research question of this study is why Turkish foreign policy has changed over time. The basic answer to this question is changing domestic and external setting. The external and domestic circumstances at the onset of the Syrian conflict provided the JDP government with the opportunity to pursue its ambitious foreign policy objectives. At the domestic level, the JDP was able to impose its will on society and decrease its vulnerability to Kurdish movement through settlement process. The US departure from the

Middle East and the positioning of Turkey as a role model for Middle Eastern nations created significant possibilities for the JDP.

Such an external and internal setting enabled Turkey to set higher expansionist foreign policy objectives and overestimated its capabilities. This external and internal context allowed Turkey to establish more ambitious expansionist foreign policy goals and to overrate its capabilities. This overconfidence impeded the JDP's leadership from analysing the evolving internal and external setting throughout the Syrian crisis.

At the regional level of analyses, I agreed with the arguments of Buzan and Waener (2009), who see "the regions as having considerable autonomy and their alignments are mainly driven by regional conflicts and security dilemmas." Regional powers do not merely align themselves with the global hegemonic powers; rather, they may leverage the influence of global powers to enhance their standing in regional disputes.

In line with the idea of middle powers, regional powers attempt to increase their spheres of influence. At the beginning of Syrian conflict, Turkey pursued its regional aspirations by using its relations with the global hegemon. To a certain level, the US co-opts with Turkey and enhances its ability to exercise its regional influence, but this situation deteriorated Turkey's regional relations with other countries. As such Turkey could not counterbalance the US policies through re-alliances with other regional actors, when the US policies contradict with Turkey's national interests.

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