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The case of Erdoğan's Turkey

Supervisor:

Ch. Prof. Kerem Halil-Latif Oktem

Assistant Supervisor:

Ch. Prof. Federico Donelli

Graduand

Matilde Spinelli

Matriculation number

861647

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*To everyone who shared
this journey with me*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BFI	Big-Five Inventory
CMI	Chr. Michelsen Institutt
DDD	Digital Domestic Diplomacy
EU	European Union
GNA	Government of National Accord
IO	International Organization
ISIS	Islamic State of Syria and al-Sham
JDP	Justice and Development Party
LNA	Libyan National Army
LTA	Leadership Trait Analysis
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
MIT	National Intelligence Organization
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MTTB	National Turkish Student Association
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Countries
PKK	Kurdistan Worker's Party
PM	Prime Minister
PYD	Democratic Union Party
SNC	Syrian National Council
TİKA	Turkish International Cooperation Development Agency

UN	United Nations
US	United States
WP	Welfare Party
YPG	People's Protections Units

ABSTRACT

Dall'elezione del partito della giustizia e dello sviluppo (JDP), la Turchia ha assistito ad un cambio importante dal punto di vista politica, sia domestico che internazionale. Le riforme decise e fatte dal nuovo governo sono fondamentali nella creazione della Turchia che noi conosciamo oggi.

Nel periodo post-guerra fredda, la Turchia ha dovuto reinventarsi come una potenza politica, economica e diplomatica. Per fare tutto ciò, iniziò ad espandere la sua politica estera, ampliando la sua area di influenza. Questa decisione portò anche allo sviluppo del soft power nell'ordine internazionale, con una economia forte, una popolazione giovane, e un collegamento culturale con il Medio Oriente. Il JDP, quando fu eletto nel 2002 fu capace di fare tutto ciò, ed è anche riuscito ad utilizzare le importanti riforme domestiche per migliorare la propria posizione internazionale: quello che la Turchia voleva era diventare un paese leader del Medio Oriente. Inoltre, le riforme domestiche portarono anche all'ammirazione dei paesi occidentali, soprattutto per il fatto che il partito di Erdoğan era un partito di destra, religioso, con una forte base islamista. Nonostante ciò, la situazione iniziò a cambiare lentamente in concomitanza con il rallentamento del processo per entrare nell'Unione Europea e con la primavera araba. Nonostante la Turchia vide le rivolte nel Medio Oriente come una opportunità di "ristorazione democratica", quello che in realtà successe fu la trasformazione della Turchia in una zona di crisi croniche. La situazione era molto complicata, e il fatto che la Turchia stava anche sperimentando un cambio di regime politico significò anche la necessità per il JDP di riprendere il supporto dalla comunità internazionale. Tra due anni sarà il centenario della creazione della democrazia turca: è stato un cammino lungo, ed Erdoğan deve essere considerato uno dei maggiori protagonisti di questa storia. È stato in grado, dal punto di vista politico, di cambiare drasticamente l'approccio del suo paese, dando alla turchia più visibilità e potere internazionale. Quello che il JDP fu in grado

di usare la combinazione del contesto internazionale, riforme domestiche e i tratti internazionali del suo leader, cioè Erdoğan , per creare un cambio in politica estera.

La mia tesi esplorerà i vari fattori che influenzano la politica estera utilizzando la Turchia sotto il JDP come caso studio, utilizzando la teoria delle relazioni internazionali del costruttivismo come base teorica. Grazie al costruttivismo spiegherò come la politica estera turca è strettamente connessa all'identità turca stessa e la sua interazione con gli altri partecipanti della politica internazionale. Ci aiuterà inoltre a mostrare come la personalità di Erdoğan dia forma alla politica estera usando le proprie azione e interazioni personali.

Per fare ciò, nel primo capitolo analizzerò i vari fattori interni che influenzano la politica estera come la storia del paese, in questo caso la Turchia, la sua cultura e valori, e la sua politica interna promulgata dal JDP nei primi due mandati.

Nel secondo capitolo analizzerò il contesto internazionale e regionale. In questo caso mi focalizzerò sul contesto regionale e le istituzioni internazionali che formano come la Turchia prende decisioni di politica estera. Per questa ragione, parlerò della dottrina di Davutoglu in politica estera e la primavera araba e come questo periodo di rivoluzione ha condizionato e rivoluzionato la politica estera turca.

Il terzo capitolo si concentra sulle caratteristiche personali del leader del paese e di come queste influenzino la politica estera. Di conseguenza, parlerò della storia di Erdoğan e capire come il suo percorso al governo ha influenzato le scelte di politica estera e come utilizza i suoi contatti internazionali per concluderle.

La divisione di questi tre capitoli può essere anche collegata all'analisi in tre livelli, in quanto ogni capitolo si concentrerà su un livello, e più specificamente livello stato, internazionale e individuale.

La tesi si concluderà con l'analisi delle scelte prese dalla Turchia durante il biennio 2018-2020. Dopo il disastro politico del colpo di stato fallito del 2016, Erdoğan e la Turchia avevano bisogno di attrarre di nuovo l'approvazione sia della popolazione turca, sia della comunità internazionale. Purtroppo, il contesto internazionale cambiò drasticamente dopo le rivolte della primavera araba, e il fallimento della Turchia di quel periodo significò anche la ricerca di una nuova strategia di politica estera per recuperare la posizione internazionale persa.

Ho scelto la Turchia come caso studio perché il partito JDP ed Erdoğan sono stati in grado di creare un cambio sociale, politico ed economico all'interno del paese che è stato in grado di influenzare come la Turchia era vista dagli altri, ma sono stati anche in grado di cambiare il proprio approccio in politica estera. Inoltre, la Turchia è stata in grado di utilizzare le

proprie riforme domestiche e l'orgoglio presente nell'identità turca per creare una nuova politica estere in grado di provvedere la piattaforma per fare un ulteriore passo e diventare uno stato molto importante (e anche controverso) dell'ordine internazionale.

INTRODUCTION

Since the election of the Justice and Development Party (JDP), Turkey has experienced a major change of policy direction, both domestically and internationally. The reforms put in place by the new government were critical into shaping the Turkey we see today.

In the post-Cold War period, Turkey had to reinvent itself as a political, economic, and diplomatic power. In order to do so, it started to amplify its foreign policy, spreading its area of reach. This decision also started a process for Turkey to become a new soft power in the international arena, with a strong economy, young population, and cultural ties to the Middle East. (Kalin,2011) The JDP, when it got elected in 2002, was able to do so, and it also managed to take advantage of a big domestic reform to amplify its international resonance: what Turkey wanted was to become the leader country in the Middle East. Furthermore, at first Western countries were amazed by how Erdoğan and his party were able to be a conservative party with ties with their religious roots while creating a process to a more democratic Turkey. However, the situation changed slowly as the process of Turkey for entering the European Union stopped. With the Arab Spring, even though Turkey saw it as an opportunity for “democratic restoration”, it actually turned Turkey’s region into a zone of chronic crisis (Yeşiltaş, 2014). The situation in which Turkey found itself was very complicated, and the fact that it was also going under a change of political regime also meant the necessity for the JDP government to collect again the support from the international community.

In two years, it will be the centenary of the creation of the democracy in Turkey: it has been a long journey, and Erdoğan can be for sure considered one of the main protagonists of this story. He was able, foreign policy wise, to change drastically the approach of his country, giving Turkey more international visibility and power. What the JDP did was using the

combination of international context, domestic reforms, and the personal trait its leader, Erdoğan himself, to create this change in foreign policy.

This thesis will explore the various factors that influence foreign policy using Turkey under the JDP as a case study, through the lenses of the constructivist theory. Thanks to this theory, I am going to explain how the Turkish foreign policy is deeply connected to the identity of Turkey itself and its interaction with the other players of world politics. It will also show how the personality of Erdoğan actually shapes foreign policy through his actions and interactions.

In order to do that, first chapter will analyze the various internal factors that influences foreign policy such as the history of the country, in this case Turkey, its culture and values, and the domestic policy put in place by the JDP government at the beginning of its mandate. The second chapter is going to analyze the regional and international factors. In this case, the focus will be put on the regional context and the international institutions that shapes how Turkey make its foreign policy decisions. For this reason, it is going to be discussed the Davutoglu doctrine of foreign policy and the Arab Spring and how this period of revolution affected Turkey's foreign policy and reshaped it.

The third chapter will focus on the personality traits of the leader of the country and how they influence foreign policy. For this reason, in the first part of the chapter some theory about personal characteristics and try to give a theoretical framework that will enable the thesis to later analyze the personality of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Therefore, it will talk about Erdoğan 's early story and investigate some studies on Erdoğan's personality and how his journey in Turkish politics influenced the choices in foreign policy and how he uses his personal international contacts to conclude those choices.

And finally, in the last chapter the choices taken in foreign policy by Turkey in the last years are going to be put into investigation, specifically the 2018-2020 years. After the political disaster of the failed coup of 2016, Erdoğan and Turkey needed to collect approval both from the domestic constituents and the international one. However, the international context had changed drastically from the Arab Sping, and Turkey's failure during that period also meant the research of a new foreign policy strategy to gain the lost international position.

I chose Turkey as a case study because JDP and Erdoğan were able to create a social, political, and economic change from within the county that was also able to influence how Turkey was seen from others, but also it was able to change how Turkey related with the other players of the international arena. Turkey was able to use its domestic renovations and pride

of its identity to shape a foreign policy that provide Turkey the possibility to step up and become a very important (and also controversial) international player.

CHAPTER 1: INTERNAL DETERMINANTS

1.Theoretical framework: constructivism

Before entering into details about the various determinants that influence foreign policy (and in our specific case Turkey's), it is important to give some space to a theory that will help to understand how and why a state takes decisions in the matter of foreign policy. The theory that I have chosen is constructivism. I chose constructivism because the theory focuses both on the relational influence of international politics and how it creates a framework of behavior that states can follow, and the influence that the international context, national context, history, and culture poses in international relations, enabling decision-makers to use their knowledge and relationships to "predict" other states behaviors.

Constructivism is not born as a theory of international relations. In facts, constructivism starts as a social theory. As Wendt (1999) explains, it is a theory open-ended and applicable to any social form, and in order to say anything concrete we need to specify which actors and structure you want to analyze. Even though its origin, constructivism now is a young international theory that explains how international relations are socially constructed. According to constructivists, interests are shaped through the identity of the actors, both the politicians in command and the state as a unitary actor. Differently from classical theory where identities and interests are based upon an exogenous structure such as anarchy or democracy, constructivists think of these 2 main factors as internal to the structure of the actor instead. Identity refers to the intrinsic, self-organizing qualities that constitute actors individually (Wendt, 1994). However, identities are nothing without the relationships with the other: to understand the identities, and therefore interests, of the actor, it is always needed the social interaction with another actor.

Actors and structures are mutually constituted, meaning that actions are possible only within an intersubjective social context (Hopf, 1998). States develop a relationship through norms and practices. This is because they give stability to the system, as they regularize behavior (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). In stabilizing behaviors, this allows to the states to almost predict how a state is going to act on a specific situation, making the relations between the parties easier. This means that historical relationships and facts matter in understanding the other.

As one of the common arguments of all international theory is the explanation of anarchy, also constructivism gives its view of it. Alexander Wendt in one of his papers gives a definition that explains very well the constructivist view: "*Anarchy is what states make of it*". Anarchy does not have a fixed structure, but it is constituted by mutual rules and social practices: it can have multiple meanings for different actors, because it is based on their understandings of norms and behaviors. We could give as an example the fact that in the 20th century United States (US) feared more the missiles of the Soviet Union rather than the British ones, and this derives from the understandings of norms and expectations between the countries (Wendt, 1992).

As social interactions are the core of international relations according to constructivists, it is also important to underline the power of practice. Through practice states are able to reproduce their interests and identities. Constructivists give importance to the discursive power, meaning ideas, knowledge, culture, and ideology. Moreover, it is important to underline that those practices depend on the presence of "precedents and shared symbolic materials, in order to impose interpretations upon events, silence alternative interpretations, structure practices, and orchestrate the collective making of history" (Ashley, 1988). On the other hand, however, constructivism does not forget that material power and resources are a mean for the actors to employ their discursive power through social interactions. (Hopf, 1998)

International theory also wants to explain change in world politics. Constructivism does not explain that but tries to give an explanation of how and where change may occur. As already said, social interactions reflect identities and interest of the actors. In doing so, it gives the world order a sense of stability, since it gives it a sense of predictability that allows the various players to act without any dilemma on how to act. The only way for this order to become more instable is the presence of alternative actors with different identities and sufficient material resources that can affect the order. Another way for having change is given by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) when they talk about normative change: as norms evolves

during history, ideational shifts and norm shifts are the main vehicles for the transformation of the world political order.

1.1 Constructivism and foreign policy analysis

After having summarized the main thesis and propositions of constructivism, how can this theory be used to explain foreign policy? Actually, one of the main works in the foreign policy analysis underlines already the importance of ideas in the decision process. As Valerie Hudson (2002) explains in a revisited edition of the work of Sapin, Bruck and Snyder of 1962, the three authors discuss two important concerns of the constructivist theory, meaning the agent-structure debate and the cultural dimension of foreign policy. Moreover, in the book we can read for the first time after the Second World War the proposition that interests are constituted by ideas, not already given (Houghton, 2007). Furthermore, Snyder, Bruck and Sapin for the first time highlight the fact that in order to understand foreign policy, it is important to understand how the decision makers perceive the world. In other words, the world is how decisions makers *makes of it*: how the elites in the decision-making groups see the world reveals how the state is going to act and for which reasons.

Concerning the agent-structure debate, they say that both the agent (decisions-maker) and the structure (e.g., history, ideology, governmental system) both influence policy outcomes. Once again, they were able to express another important pillar of constructivism, that is the fact that agent and structure are mutually constituted, they cannot exist alone.

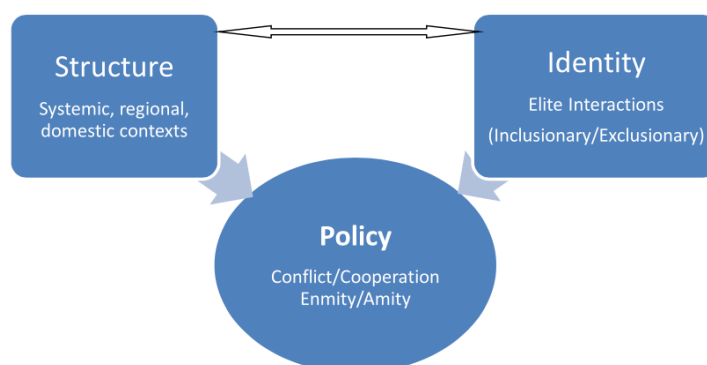


Figure 1: Structure-identity

Source: Marwa Daoudy, 2016

On the other hand, when they talk about the importance of culture in the foreign policy decision-making process, they explain the fact that the decision maker themselves derives “from a larger social system in which they also retain membership.” They should be considered as a “culture bearer” (Houghton, 2007).

The book by Snyder et al. is not the only one that links constructivism with foreign policy. For example, Joseph de Rivera in his book of 1968, *Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy*, explore the way in which people construct the reality they live in and then how they react accordingly to it. What Snyder, Bruck, Sapin, de Rivera and all the researchers of those years wanted to do was to transform the study of foreign policy into a science, and more specifically, they wanted to explain what drives the decisions made by the states in foreign policy. This first generation of researchers did not achieve its goal, and the second generation continues the research for a unified theory of foreign policy, even if the approach is not unified, from an advanced statistical procedure to the more traditional case study approach (Houghton, 2007).

However, the linkages between the study of foreign policy at its earliest stages and the most up-to-date constructivism need to be cautious: nowadays constructivists and foreign policy researchers of the Sixties did not have the same purpose, nor the same objective. They treated their commonalities in different way, making the two terms of comparison diverse. But on the other hand, what it is important to notice and to recognize is the willingness of foreign policy study to rely not only on material resources, (that anyway are also important to constructivists), but that they started to address the issue of how agents constructed reality (Houghton, 2007). As Breuning and Thies wrote “FPA generally, as well as cognitive approaches specifically, and IR theory generally, stand to benefit from the result of dialogue between former’s largely agent-based role theory and the latter’s largely system-based agent-structure debate”. (Breuning and Thies, 2012:4)

2. What is foreign policy?

The study of foreign policy is a rather new discipline, as it started only after the end of World War II. Throughout the history of foreign policy analysis, the definition has changed many times, depending on the author and the models they were trying to explain. To give a very general and broad definition is Marijke Breuning, that in her book defines foreign policy as “the totality of a countries’ policies toward and interactions with the environment beyond its borders”. (Breuning, 2007:5) With the end of the cold war, states experienced a more

aggressive and spread globalization that enabled the states, multinational companies, and international organizations to communicate and have relationships on more than just one issue. In fact, foreign policy usually was referred only to the goal of maintaining security. In the new international context, security was not the only issue states needed to have attention on economic issues, as the interdependence built through globalization needed to be taken care. This interdependence brought to the foreign policy attentions also other issues such as environment, human rights, population growth and migration, food and energy policies, foreign aid, development, and the relationship between poorer and richer countries (Breuning 2007).

Foreign policy is always in evolution, due to its nature of studying decisions and the context in which they were made, and nowadays we can say that foreign policy is multidimensional, as it involves various fields of action. In other words, foreign policy is how the states behave and decide in relation to others. In doing so, they express the interests and intentions of a state, since the decision-making process counts many factors that derive both from the domestic and external world (Khara, 2018).

2.1 The 2-level games

As foreign policy finds itself in the middle between two macroworld that are the international system and the domestic one, it is needed to define and explain a theory by Robert D. Putnam, that is the 2-level games.

The author explains that many researchers in foreign policy and international relations recognized the connection and linkages between the state level and international level, but none of them tried to create a unified theory that could explain how the synergy between the two levels works, and that is what Robert Putnam tries to do with the 2-level game theory. When a negotiator, a decision-maker, has to find an agreement with another international player, they find themselves into two negotiations at the same time: first, they need to take into account the positions inside their national territory, with interest groups making pressure and forming coalitions to make their interests matter. At the same time, the negotiator needs to find an agreement with the international part, so they need to find a balance between these dimensions. Moreover, the international player that is negotiating has the same issue to tackle, making the process very entangled and difficult.

For these reasons we can divide the process in two stages:

- The first stage is the discussion and negotiation with the international part,
- The second stage is then the discussion and negotiations back home to ratify the deal discussed internationally.

The two stages are so entangled between each other that an amendment or any kind of editing of the international agreement would mean to re-open the negotiation and start over. In fact, when an international agreement is to be ratified in a national parliament, it needs to be ratified as it is, if not the international negotiations will need to happen again.

Whether the negotiator in charge passes these two stages easily, with some problems or doesn't succeed depends on the win-set and its size. The win-set is defined as "for a given level 2 constituency, the set of all possible level 1 agreements that would win" (Putnam, 1988:12), meaning all the international agreement possibilities that the national constituency would approve without any amendment. The definition of win-set gives more clarity about how domestic and international levels are entangled between each other. In order to not remain stuck inside the entanglements of the 2-level game and all its possible variables, the negotiator needs to have a large win-set, meaning they have a larger field in which they can operate and therefore it becomes easier for them to negotiate. However, it is important to also take into account the win-set of the other part involved in the negotiation: in fact, in order to reach a mutual agreement, that can pass not only through level one, but also through level 2 without any problems, the win-sets of the two or more parts involved in the negotiation need to overlap.

Another important thing to underline about win-sets is which factors determine them. They are level II preferences and coalitions, level II institutions, level I negotiators' strategy. These three factors underline the importance of the national system into foreign policy, but it also highlights the connection and linkages that international and national systems have.

To conclude, the 2-level games theory tries to give an explanation about the link between national and international levels in an international negotiation. It states that political leaders, when talking about foreign policy, always try to reconcile domestic and international problems simultaneously (Putnam, 1988), and this is important because it gives also to foreign policy that national dimension needed to explain why decision-makers act and decide certain policies.

Even if Putnam was the first researcher to theorize the connection between the domestic and international level, some scholars have also criticized his approach, stating that something was lacking. Leonard Schoppa (1993) does that in his paper using the Japanese

case of how the *Gaiatsu*, foreign pressure in Japanese, in some cases works and in some does not. The author states that Putnam did not describe all the possible strategies to deal with both domestic and policy domains. As a consequence, he adds two: participation expansion and alternative specification. Both strategies have as main part the effect that foreign pressure may have on the domestic policy to change its strategy towards the international arena. In this sense, the author provides new material to add to Putnam's two level- game.

Moreover, there are other authors such as da Conceição-Heldt & Mello (2017) and Bjola & Manor (2018) that try to adjust Putnam's theory to the new changes of the international context. The formers agree with Putnam in his theory but add to it the importance of the various interests and various new actors. The globalization has brought to the international politics new figures that throughout the years had acquired more importance: transnational actors and international diplomats. In facts, they have different interests that need to be taken into consideration in the two-levels dialogue.

On the other hand, Bjola and Manor (2018) transported Putnam's theory into the digital era. In facts, in the last years, institutions, organizations and Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) have increased their presence in social media, as a way to communicate faster and with more reach to their followers. As a consequence, the authors have created the concept of Digital Domestic Diplomacy (DDD) that is defined as "the domestically oriented use of digital platforms by governments in support of their foreign policy" (Bjola and Manor, 2018:7). DDD means that now government and MFAs can directly broadcast their foreign policy strategy with domestic constituency, listening to the opinions and questions about it and then engage with the public, increasing their level of reach and also having the possibilities to improve the rate of approval of their foreign policy strategies.

3. What influences foreign policy: domestic factors

After having established some theory about the interaction between domestic politics and international relations, the next step to make is to understand which factors can influence the decision-making process of a government in foreign policy. This chapter is going to analyze the so-called "internal" factors, meaning the one who comes from inside the national borders.

First of all, it is important to make a distinction between internal factors: structural and conjunctural. The former refers to the determinants of foreign policy that are not related to

the development and current issues of international politics, while the latter are the ones that changes with the developments in domestic and international politics (Aydin, 2019).

3.1 Structural determinants

Structural determinants are static factors that are embedded in Turkey's past. They have a long-term impact on the foreign policy. Usually, they are identified as:

- *Geography*: the geographical position in which a state finds itself is important as it is one of the first factors that always comes into mind when someone talks about international politics. More specifically, three main aspects are always regarded carefully when we talk about geography: location, natural configuration, and neighbors. All of these three aspects can be a double-edge sword because, on one hand, they can help you facilitate the development of foreign policy, but on the other they can also facilitate the raising of security problems.
- *History*: history is another important aspect to take into consideration. As individuals, nations react both to internal and external stimuli. Since foreign policy is also how a state reacts to another state's action, what the history of a state can do is to help the current government to process the information that arrive and to decodify them, because it all passes through the lenses of historical events, traditions, and values, enabling decision-makers to act accordingly to what their state believes.
- *Culture*: culture goes hand by hand with history, as culture evolves with history and history evolves with culture. The present cultural situation of a state derives from the precedent years and how the then population reacted to changes in paradigms.

3.2 Conjunctural determinants

On the other hand, conjunctural determinants are influenced to the development of foreign policy. If structural determinants give the framework in which decision-making elites uses to decide which direction to take, conjunctural determinants influence the implementation process (Aydin, 2019). Another important factor to underline is the dynamism that these determinants have. Since their dynamic nature, they are heavily influenced by the changes both on domestic and international level. (And in this chapter, domestic changes will be

highlighted, specifically in the analysis of Turkey). James Rosenau was one of the first authors to describe these variables: in fact, according to him, foreign policy was based on the continuous adaptation of fixed variables that change throughout time (Smith, 1983). In this sense, the main task of a state is to follow the dynamic changes happening and adapt to them in the most functional way possible.

In addition, as already highlighted by the two-level game theory by Putnam, foreign decisions must be approved also at home, giving another issue to solve to politicians: to make decisions that can help him to keep its seat in the government. In order to do that, decision-makers need to take into account:

- *Constituents*: what remains of a government if it does not have the support of the voters? Based on the type of government, authoritarian, semi-authoritarian and democratic, the quantity and way of their influence may vary, but the fact that politicians want to retain their office, it puts the influence of the constituents on the decision-making process of any people involved in politics. It is important to also say that foreign policy is most of the times considered as “thin interest-group environment” (Breuning 2007:122). So, what politicians tend to do is to anticipate the reaction of their voters on certain foreign policy matter, and moreover they try to shape the perception of facts through a particular perspective.
- *Public opinion*: politicians try to shape the opinion on foreign policy of their voters, but they have another obstacle to pass, and that is the press. Press matters because they are the intermediate between the government and the constituents, and because of the fact that in reporting the news, a journalist can choose how they want to portray the event. An example for this practice is given by Breuning: when reporting a speech, the press usually will use quotes. Quotes are decided based on the reference they have with a specific issue and how it relates with the values of a state. And this brings into the field another issue that is how much the press is free. Based on the type of government, the press can have more liberties or not. If the press is controlled by the government, then it will report the news in a way to always support the government in charge, even omit some, and vice versa.

To conclude, it is difficult to have fixed determinants, because foreign policy is a field that is always in evolution. However, this section tried to give some framework of the factors that usually repeat themselves when we talk about foreign policy. These determinants will help to

understand now the case of Turkey, how history, geography and culture create a base of values, ideas and tradition that influence how the Turkish elite make decisions in foreign policy. Then, this base will be put inside the domestic changes Turkey went under with the born of the JDP government, that was the beginning of a change both domestically and internationally (that it is going to be analyzed later in chapter 2).

4. The case of Turkey: structural determinants

Turkey's connection with its history, traditions, culture, ideas, and values has always been strong. It allowed Turkey to keep its foreign policy always rationale, responsible, long-term oriented and real (Aydin, 2019). Understanding which are the main characteristics of Turkish history, culture, geography allow to get to know better how the Turkish government decides on the matters of foreign policy.

The way the three structural determinants are constituted in the case of Turkey is going to be the analyzed in the following order. First, how Turkish geography both makes easier for the Turkish government to create foreign policy, but at the same time it can be a weakness security wise. Second, how recent history shaped the identity of Turkey, from the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and Turkey's adjustment to a more "western" state. And finally, the evolution of how Turkish culture evolved in the recent history is going to be analyzed, taking into consideration Kemal's doctrine and which changes this brought into the Turkish identity and culture, but also the most recent return of a more Islamic identity.

4.1 Turkish geography

Turkey is located in one of the most strategic area of the world (Aydin, 1999), since it shares borders with 3 main regional areas: Europe, Middle East, and the Balkans. Thanks to this position, Turkey can play a greater role in international politics and other fields such as energy and economy (Khan, 2015). Moreover, its position is historically relevant because it finds itself at the crossroads of the three regional areas already cited, transforming Turkey into a bridge for cultures and traditions of Europe, Balkans, and Middle East (Elhousseini, 2017; Keyman, 2009). But most of all it means that Turkey is very sensible to the changes in both the international balance and the regional one, and any state who resided in the Anatolian peninsula had always big influence and had big consideration from its neighbors.

If all these different neighbors are a strength as it brings to Turkey more influence in the international arena, it could be also a weakness. That is because having states with different national characteristics, political regimes, ideologies and aims can bring insecurity. Relationships with neighbors are not always peaceful, and the possibility of spillover effects from an instable Middle East has always been a concern in the Anatolian Peninsula.



Figure 2: Map of Turkey
Source: Blendspace.com

For its physical characteristic, the Anatolian peninsula is also considered easy to protect from a military point of view. In fact, its natural borders allow Turkey to be well protected: first with the Mediterranean and Black Sea protect the south and north borders, and then the mountain chain that protect it at East, Turkey is considered difficult to attack. On the other hand, its border in the west is very easily attacked, as the Strait is vulnerable (Aydin, 1999). However, the fact that the Strait is part of the Turkish territory makes it actually very important for bringing to Turkey a geopolitical influence advantage.

Another geographical weakness of the Anatolian peninsula is the Aegean Islands: if they are under the control of an enemy, it would become very difficult, if not impossible, for Turkey to use two of its main ports, that is Istanbul and Izmir. That is why the question of Cyprus is important to the Turkish government.

To conclude, the geographical configuration and borders can be both a strength and a weakness. They can be a strength because they allow Turkey to always have a sphere of influence in international politics. In fact, Turkey uses its geographical advantage to pursue national development (Alam, 2015). On the other hand, the diversity of the neighbors with which Turkey shares its borders makes the environment more unstable. That is why it is important for Turkey to have a multi-dimensional foreign policy strategy, because it will allow the government to reduce the level of instability perceived.

4.2 Turkish historical context

In the 20th century, Turkey has undergone some major changes. First of all, the end of World War I was the last straw that put an end to the Ottoman Empire, one of the last big empires present in Europe up to that point. With the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, the Turkish Republic was born. It was imperative to create a state that possessed different characteristics of the empire. In fact, Turkey is a nation-state, the political regime chosen was a parliamentary democracy (that from 2017 has become a presidential republic), it had no intention to keep the imperial principle of expansion, making the maintenance of status quo the main principle, and the willingness to create a common Turkish identity (Aydin, 2019). Even with the creation of a new state, the ruling elite of the Ottoman Empire remained to also guide the Turkish state. This was good news for Turkey because, in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, it started a period of approach to the West regarding administration and education, making the ruling elite of the Ottoman Empire very close to the kind of “western” state the newly Turkey wanted to accomplish. As a consequence, the input of Western values in Turkish society, Turkish ruling elite being more “westernized”, and the fact that the new Turkish state was based on a European state model, brought Europe and Turkey closer (Khan, 2015). In fact, after World War II, it joined various international organizations with a western predominance such as NATO, the Council of Europe, or the IMF.

However, the Ottoman past also brought some problematic issues that affect still today Turkish foreign policy, that is the fact that in the last period of the Empire, it played a very aggressive foreign policy, making Turkey beware of its surroundings, being skeptical and cautious, and it can be reflected in a Turkish saying: “Water sleeps, enemy never sleeps”.

This caution affected the presence of Turkey in international politics too. As already written, the geographical location of Turkey has its perks, but it also can be a weakness. And from

the creation of the Turkish state, the ruling elite decided to limit its presence in international politics to a very minimum base. What was important for the government was the finding of a new internal balance.

4.3 Turkish culture: Kemalism and new Islamism

History and culture go hand by hand. One of the strengths of the Ottoman Empire was the identity unity it created among its population. Every Ottoman citizen shared the pride of being part of an Empire that was able to achieve big things and rule a substantial part of the world. The changes that, historically speaking, were affecting Turkey after World War I, with the end of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the Turkish state, created the perfect environment for a change of values and ideas.

What Mustafa Kemal, the first President of the Turkish Republic, did was exactly that: what he wanted to achieve was a modernized Turkey, and in order to achieve that, Turkey had to undergo a process of renovation that was supposed to cut all the attachments with the past, even the one regarding culture and identity.

In the Kemalist view, Europe was the model to follow to create a modern civilization, based on secularism and nationalism. The Ottoman Turkey was very different from the European Model, and Kemal had to restructure completely Turkish society, politics and cultural life. The biggest change Mustafa Kemal had to make was the elimination of Islam from the definition of State. In order to achieve a secularized state that could be able to be ally and at the same level of Europe and the western powers, it needed a strong separation from its Ottoman Past.

The inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire were very connected to their identity based on the political Islam and the grandness of the empire, and the Kemalist elite wanted to replace this sentiment based on Islam with a new one based on “Turkishness”, so that could become the new basis of a new modern national identity that could accompany the population through this radical change (Bozdaglioglu, 2008). One of the most important elements of this transition of identities is how the new one is formed: while the Ottoman identity was based on ethnicity, the Turkish identity, according to Kemalists, does not differentiate, as “all citizen of Turkey are Turks” (Aydin, 1999).

However, the design thought by Mustafa Kemal for Turkey encountered many difficulties in its path: the fact that only a small group of individuals actually benefited from the new system, leaving most of the population out of this revolution, and adding to the facts also

the momentum that the revival of Islam got into 80s and 90s, put into question the effectiveness of the Kemalist state. As identity shapes interests in foreign policy, while Kemalists argued that in order to achieve Turkish interests and maintain a secularized state Turkey had to continue a western-oriented policy, the Islamists believed that it was time to open foreign relations with the Muslim world, as they shared various elements of their identity.

The momentum of the revival of Islamism got its peak in 1995 with the parliamentary election. For the first time since the creation of the Turkish republic, a party rooted in Islamism, the Islamic Welfare Party (WP), was elected as first party with a 21% of preference. Its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, was the first Islamist as Turkish Prime Minister since the beginning of the Republic. For the first time inside the government was possible to find the two dimension that could be considered the main characteristic of the Turkish identity: the secularist part guided by the Kemalists, and the Islamic part.

Erbakan and WP used their Islamic identity as a base for its policy both internal and foreign. Some examples that could be cited to also understand the entrance of the Islamic identity into politics are his first foreign visitor, that was the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, or for domestic policy the bill to abolish the prohibition of wearing the Islamic headscarf in public buildings. Moreover, as a way to recover Turkish Islamic identity, Erbakan suggested the creation of an Islamic Union (a sort of Islamic UN) in which Turkey would have a leading role. However, what was evident was the lack of a structure in these actions (Donelli, 2019). The big gap that Erbakan was creating with previous administration was evident, and the military, that since the beginning of the Republic was the protector of the Kemalist view, was starting to be worried about the policies that the Prime Minister was putting in action. The military was convinced that this strong return of Islamism was the main security threat Turkey was facing in that moment.

The first Islamist experience at the government did not end well: in facts, in 1997, the military released a list of obligation that the WP government was obliged to execute, for example the re-introduction of the ban of the Islamic headscarf in public buildings. Moreover, the military started a series of mass arrests in the Islamic movement, as to cut the base for the electorate of Erbakan. In the end, in the first months of 1998, the constitutional Court proclaimed the ban of the WP, ending the Erbakan government, who was banned from politics for 5 years.

5. The case of Turkey: conjunctural determinants

The previous pages helped in the creation of the context in which Turkey was at the beginning of the 21st century. In the Turkish people, the self-perception of their identity has always proved to be a determining factor both in domestic policy and foreign policy. The various identities and values present inside Turkey itself had created a very insecure environment.

In this climate of instability, a new party was able to find fertile ground to its expansion. The Justice and Development party was born in 2000, out of a branch of WP. The leaders of this new party were also two prominent figures of the WP too: Erdoğan (future Prime Minister) and Gül (future President). As the JDP wanted to affirm the values of a more conservative party, it needed to eliminate the label of Islamic party, the same label that the Welfare Party of Erkaban had. For this reason, the JDP was defined as a “conservative party that support Western values such as the respect of diversity and pluralism, that were considered two ways to reach a more open, democratic and liberal State” (Donelli, 2019). In this way, the JDP positioned itself in a transversal way, and it made it able to reach the two main parts of the Turkish constituency: the Kemalists and the Islamists.

In 2002, the JDP was put into test with the national election. The party won the election with the 34% of preferences. Gül was the first Prime Minister for the JDP, because Erdoğan was still banned from public activity (a conviction he was sentenced to during the time the military was trying to overthrow the WP government). However, the ban was easily lifted up with the help of the government, making then Erdoğan Prime Minister.

The constituents had voted the JDP because they saw in the party the possibility to have a big transformation that could enable Turkey to modernize itself and to have a more prominent role into the international order.

5.1 JDP first mandate and the meetings of the Copenhagen criteria

The JDP's vision for Turkey meant a restructuration of a multitude of domestic institutions that weren't ensuring a process of modernization. The path towards modernization was long and very difficult to imagine, but the JDP was able to use at its own advantage the factors that enabled the party itself to be elected: mistrust of the civil society of the government (Turkey has a history of unstable governments overthrown by the military, considered the protector of Kemalism), and the need of a change. As it will be explained later, another

important factor to add to this is the charisma of Erdoğan, that was seen by the population as the only one able to have a huge impact Turkish politics.

The two issues the Erdoğan government had to tackle in its first mandate were the economic crisis and the accession to the European Union (EU). Concerning the economic crisis, the JDP government used liberal and neoliberal theories to try to save the market, leaving it freer to operate on its own. Moreover, the government was able to take advantage of the 20 billion dollars loan by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that arrived few months before the election. Thanks to this initial push, the government was able to attract international investors, and the arrive of foreign direct investments helped the economy grow. During the first 5 years of the JDP government, the GDP annual growth was at the average of 7%.

Erdoğan and the JDP government, in their first mandate, were also able to use the request of filling the Copenhagen criteria to be part of the EU to push a series of reform packages. This process of democratization was meant to change domestic balances (Müftüler-Baç, 2011). In facts, with these reforms the military would have seen reduce its secularist power, and consequently of its influence on the government. Another important domestic balance change to consider is pluralism. The JDP used the European accession platform to also implement a reform packet for human rights, individual freedom, religious tolerance and multiculturalism. With multiculturalism, various social groups that were not represented. This brings another important change in the Turkish society, that is the presence of different identities, and each one has interests that the political parties and the government need to satisfy.

As the Turkish people start to have more rights and the process of democratization, they start to be more aware of their role into the society and being more interested in politics. As a consequence, society's interest in politics, its opinions become more and more important for the policy makers. Kiliç Bugra Kanat (2014) in his paper uses the definition and framework of public opinion by James Rosenau (1992), dividing it in three groups:

- *Elites*, formed by both public administration and media, are the one that were always interested in foreign policy. while on public administration there have been changeovers between old military representatives with civilian elected officials, in the media we had an increase of TV programs and articles covering on foreign policy issues, also pushed by a crescent interest by the population.

- *Businessmen and intellectuals*, that during the process of Europeanization and reforms of the JDP started to be more invested in foreign policy. The government project of developing Turkish economy thanks to regional integration, and of course to the accession to the European Union, brought special interests to businessmen to be involved in facilitating international economic relations (Kanat, 2014). Intellectuals, on the other hand, started to conduct more research on foreign policy issue and case study, as it became a hot topic to discuss.
- *The general public*, With the changes that were happening at the same time in the media groups and in labour world, changed its approach to foreign policy too. As the population got more involved in the Turkish political live, foreign policy issue were not anymore something that the public would react, but it would form an opinion on it and defend it and have an influence over the decisions of the government on foreign policy.

Erdoğan was aware that if he wanted to achieve a socio-political revolution, first a cultural revolution needed to happen. The involvement of the society into the political sphere was what the JDP needed to start it. Before the JDP government, Turkish society, even if embedded since the 19th century in the concepts of secularism and nationalism, was not seen as an element of the democratic states, but merely an instrument for state policy implementation (Chometowska-Kontkiewicz, 2013). The success of JDP in this sense comes from the fact that they were able to put the focus on the “society”, thus enabling those characteristics that Turkish society always had, but was never able to implement (Khan, 2015). Turkey wants to present itself as a central culture and society, that has an constructive role towards the nearby regions (Duran, 2013).

Moreover, what Erdoğan and the JDP government were able to do was to find a balance between the two “souls” of Turkey. According to Kalin (2012), Erdoğan’s advisor one of JDP’s Ideologists, they were able to embrace values such as “democracy, human rights, and the rule of law without giving up on the traditional conservative values of Turkish-Islamic culture” (Kalin, 2012: 13). This successful combination was defined as the “Turkish Model”, a praised by many the West. President of the United States George W. Bush sensed that Turkey could serve as the “perfect example of coexistence between modernity and Islam” (Murinson, 2012).

5.2 JDP second mandate and the consolidation of a conservative identity

When in 2007 Turkey voted again, it was clear that the JDP was gaining more support and appraisal in the electorate: in fact, the JDP won the election with 47% of preferences. However, something changed related to the first five years of government. The duplicity of the JDP's identity, that was of the element that permitted the party to have a huge amount of appeal to different parts of the population, started to disappear to leave space to only the conservative part of its identity.

The party started two processes: the first one being the concentration of influence and power towards the figure of its leader, Erdoğan. The second one the concentration and use of power inside the government. In order to do that, the JDP challenged the old institutions (the secularists one), that were having power and were preventing the JDP to acquire more power. In fact, in 2007 the JDP nominated for the role of President Abdullah Gül, a man tied to its Islamic roots. For this reason, the military posted an "e-memorandum", stating the importance of having a laic state and the willingness of the military to fight for it (Cağaptay,2018). In the end, the JDP was able to limit and then eliminate the political power from the last stronghold of secularist power present in Turkey, meaning the military. This was possible thanks to a referendum in 2010. The population was called to decide the amendments of 20 articles of the Turkish constitution. Some of them were about important themes but all the focus on the media was on the amendment regarding the military, that would have brought the scaling of its political role and the possibility for military men to being adjudicated for their actions (Donelli, 2019). In the end, the population voted in favor of the amendments with 58% of yes.

The JDP changed also its economic policy turn completely: while on the first mandate the government used a liberal framework to relaunch Turkish economy, both internally and internationally, Erdoğan and the government decided to reduce the liberty of the market and augment the presence of the State in the market itself. Even the entrepreneurship had a change: from a dynamic environment, it all passed to the preferring the development of Islamic businesses.

Another important factor to consider is the media. The Turkish population had become more interested in politics, also bringing a change in how media groups manage their TV programs or newspaper. However, Turkish media were never totally free, but this action of concentration of power and a turnover in the management of the media groups was the signal of a reduction of the liberty of the press (Cağaptay,2018).

The various changes made by the JDP government on the Turkish economy, politics and society were made thinking about creating a more conservative state. Every decision brought closer the Islamic countries in the Middle East, and at the same time pushed away the Western Countries and Europe. Turkey was also attracted to the Middle East countries as they share various values and tradition. And since identity for Turkey is an important factor that always influence every politics decision, the choice to change the way foreign policy were made was also driven by the re-emergence of a more conservative and Islamic sentiment, rooted in the Ottoman past.

Erdoğan was able to initiate a cultural revolution, that was exactly what he needed to achieve in order to also have a social revolution that would have accompanied him and the JDP towards a Turkey more conservative. He knew and still knows that the Kemalist part of Turkey is difficult to eradicate completely, because Atatürk, like Erdoğan, was able to bring a cultural shift that transformed the Ottoman Empire into a secular Turkey. Moreover, as it is going to be explained in the next chapters, the process of concentration of powers towards the figure of Erdoğan is going to continue, and it is going to bring another important domestic change: the Turkish Republic underwent a regime change, as it became a presidential republic, and with the role of President Erdoğan himself. As it going to be explained in the next chapter, these domestic changes and factors also influenced the way Turkey decided its foreign policy and relationships with international organizations and state, but the factor that did not change was the importance of identity in the shaping the interests and the action of the Turkish Republic.

CHAPTER 2: EXTERNAL DETERMINANTS

1. What influences foreign policy: external determinants

If domestic politics and other factors such as history, culture, geography influence the decision-making process of the elites, it is also important to not forget external determinants. As in foreign policy states need to interact with each other, it is needed the understanding of those factors that do not come from inside a country.

Rizwan (2009) and Breuning (2007) both emphasize the dynamism of the external determinants, since they depend on the continuous changes that happens in the international arena. In this sense, the international power structure determines the way foreign policy is thought. The power context in a specific set of time gives to the decision-making elites the perception of where the power resides, and according to it, they decide to act (Elhusseini, 2017). For example, with the end of the Cold War it there was a power structure transition happening: from the bi-polar power structure governed by the United States and the Soviet Union to a unipolar structure with the United States as only power. The situation however created a void of power that many states, including Turkey, tried to fill in the following years. An empirical way that can help researchers and policy makers to understand the international balance of powers is through capabilities. Capabilities are defined as “*measurable assets*” by Breuning (2007:142), and they can include geographical size, population size, natural resources, economic and military size. According to Breuning, these capabilities are a clear-cut way to rank states according to independent variables. Moreover, they can give policy makers an idea of which direction other state’s foreign policy. If a state has a strong and open economy, but limited natural resources, policy makers will expect that this state will focus on its economy and engage in a foreign policy that will enable the state to enhance its relations

with state partners for economic reasons, having an open strategy to give its economy the boost and dependence needed due to its limited natural resources.

Another important external factor that determines foreign policy is the state's presence in International Organizations (IOs). As IOs try to have a say in international issues and tackle them to preserve the international peace, they have a big impact in a state foreign policy, as the state only adherence to an IO's membership already gives a direction of which kind of foreign policy choice a state is going to have (Rizwan, 2009). Moreover, the example of the United Nations (UN) is clear to understand the influence an IO can have on a state. The fact that the UN covers many relevant roles in tackling different international issues with various background (just to name a few economic, political, and humanitarian) and its mission to preserve international peace through a common and shared view of international politics is a way to determine and limit state's actions in foreign policy. In fact, States cannot act solely based on their national interests, because then IOs such as the UN or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) can react with an international response that could be dangerous for the one who is receiving it and undermine its position in the international arena.

The process of globalization that accelerated during the last decades of the 20th century brought into the light another important determining factor that influences foreign policy: interdependence. That is because the process of globalization brought the states connected between each other: an issue in one country could create a snowball effect and cause repercussions outside its national borders. In this sense, it is more difficult to tackle these issues because they spread worldwide, and therefore it becomes challenging to find a solution that fits for all. Moreover, one of the consequences that derives from this situation is the fact all the relations between states and the actions of states in foreign policy go under a very careful scrutiny because, as it was already said, the action of a state can provoke consequences or reactions in another state, and this complicate then the process of resolution. In this sense, it is important to also understand the connection between the dependence now present in the international arena and the current power structure: Breuning (2007: 152) defines dependence as “*an asymmetric pattern of interaction between a more and less powerful state*”. Thanks to this definition, the author wants first to underline the relational part of dependence, focusing on a strong-weak state relation. This focus enables her to create a framework of foreign policy orientations divided in 2 pairs:

- *Consensus-oriented foreign policy*: this type of foreign policy entails that a leader of a small country decides voluntarily to align its foreign policy with the one of a much powerful state, that has also the power to influence the small state.
- *Compliant foreign policy*: this means that a small state does not want to align with a bigger state their foreign policy, but the powerful state has the capabilities to put pressure on the smaller one that in the end will make foreign policy align.
- *Counterdependent foreign policy*: in this case, the smaller state wants to end the dependence issues and tries to find a way to exit it. This orientation can also create disapproval of bigger states.
- *Compensation foreign policy*: the smaller states does not follow the bigger state almost to a level of estrangement. This happens because the smaller state wants to satisfy the domestic constituents.

Breuning then highlights the difference inside these pairs: according to her, what differs between the pairs consensus-oriented/ compliant behavior and counter-dependent/ compensation of foreign policy is the motivation behind the behavior.

This framework also helps to understand how a state adapts itself to the world order: if we consider the case of the first pair, the smaller state is aware of the difference of influence between itself and the other, but anyway decide to collaborate and align with the international balance of power. On the other hand, in the case of the latter pair, the smaller state does not want to comply with the existing power structure, and therefore tries to find new solution to overcome this difficulty.

1.1 The rise of soft power

As the interdependence between states grew, the concept of power had also to change. After World War II, when the globalization started spreading all over the world, it became more difficult for a state to react to maintain the balance of power, as many fields of foreign policy such as economic relations and humanitarian aid, started to become more intertwined between each other. This situation did not allow to use a “hard” solution to resolve the international issues. If before the mere use of military could be a game changing factor in a state quest to gain or maintain power, now every aspect of foreign policy action must be put

into a more connected context where what before could be considered doable, now it was not (Nye, 1990).

Therefore, the strategies of foreign policy have also changed, as the need for cooperation becomes more relevant. Nye (1990), in his paper *“Soft Power”*, affirms that the traditional factors that have always characterized powers such as military, geography and raw materials are losing importance. On the other hand, globalization brought into light the importance of economy, technology advancement and education into the definition of power. What was happening was an exponential shift in how power was perceived: if before it was something more tangible and material, as states fought for their piece of power physically, now power was changing into something more ideational, as information and knowledge became relevant for international relationships.

The author continues in finding at least 5 new trends that have changed the way states see and perceive the diffusion of power: economic interdependence, transnational actors, nationalism in weak states, spread of technology and changing political issues.

All these trends have been deeply influenced by the growing globalization process and the end of the cold war, as it was seen as a relevant international change that modified the international balance of power, going from a bipolar world to a unipolar world. In this new world order, it was imperative to find a new way to exert power using the new trends in the most efficient way. Therefore, the term soft power was coined, and it was defined as the *“ability of a country to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define interests in ways consistent with its own”* (Nye, 1990: 16). Soft power is the opposite of what is called hard power that makes other countries do what they want. Soft power relies on ideational resources and culture to appeal another country into a more friendly foreign policy. This new concept of power was created to explain the power that the foreign policy of the United States had acquired exactly in the period after the end of Cold war, where the US were acting unilaterally in the international arena, developing their soft power.

If the US were able to exploit their capacity of using their soft power to always improve their situation in the international balance of powers, also all the other states have started to understand the relevance that knowledge, ideas, and culture can do in foreign policy. More specifically, if a bigger state can choose not to employ soft power in their international relationships as it always has the option of using hard power, smaller states cannot afford this strategy (Breuning, 2007). Therefore, it becomes important to understand how smaller states exercise their soft power in their foreign policy, and in the following pages it is going to be explained how Turkey decided to use it.

What it was described in the previous pages highlights once again the two main dimensions of the constructivism theory: the ideational and the relational. The path of cooperation that the international order has undergone in the last decades had to also cause a change of what matters when a state need to decide which set of actions to take in foreign policy. What is going to be described in the following pages and for the rest of the chapter is the research of power and relevance in the international arena for Turkey, most specifically during the first years of the JDP government thanks to the theory developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu. The rising of the Arab Spring has to be considered as a watershed for the Turkish foreign policy, as the quest for becoming the most influential power in the region was stopped and left Turkey with many problems to resolve.

2. Turkey, Soft Power, and the Turkish International Cooperation Development Agency (TİKA)

The Turkish International Cooperation Development Agency (TİKA) was created in 1992 with the Statutory Decree Law No.480 and was put under the Ministry of Foreign affairs, and then in 1999 it was given to the Prime Ministry¹. It is possible to divide the work of TİKA in 2 phases: 1992-2001, with the first years of the Agency, and then 2002-2011 with the JDP's first governmental years (Akili and Çelenk, 2019).

In the first years the TİKA's efforts and objectives were focused on the help of the development of the former territories of the Soviet Union. In facts, the dissolution of the Soviet Union left the Caucasus and Central Asia with the necessity of a complete reconstruction and development of new states. For this reason, TİKA focused the majority its projects and its Official Development Assistance (ODA) towards the region.

The 2002-2011 decade can be considered game changing for the spread of influence of the Agency. The first important factor to consider is the placing of the TİKA under the Prime Ministry enabled to work in synergy with the government and improve its range of action and improve its efficiency in the projects (Pinek, 2015). Another important factor is the JDP government. The Justice and Development Party was always clear in its foreign policy in wanting to expand its area of influence and become the regional power. To achieve this objective, the Turkish government used the Turkish International Cooperation

¹ Information found in the official website of the Turkish International Cooperation Development Agency.

Development Agency as an instrument to augment its sphere of influence and therefore its soft power.

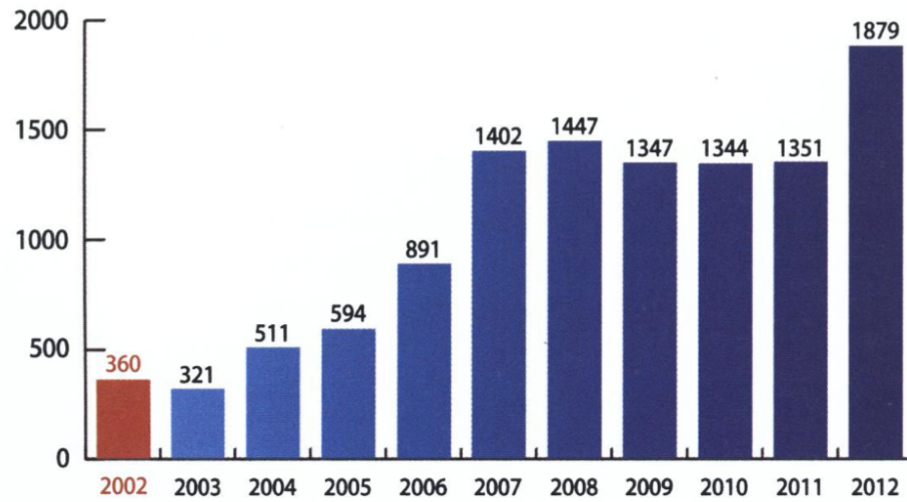


Figure 3: Number of Projects implemented by TİKA

Source: Haşimi, 2014

To give some data, the projects that the Agency in the first period undertook 2,241 projects. Under the JDP government and in the second period, the project that the TİKA undertook almost quadrupled (Akilli and Çelenk, 2019). This relevant increase of projects and funds available also enabled the Agency to enlarge its range of action. In facts, since 2002, TİKA has shown its *geographical depth*, as the range of action of the agency has spread in all the regions, tackling issues of Asia, Africa Europe, Latin America, and Middle East (Haşimi, 2014).

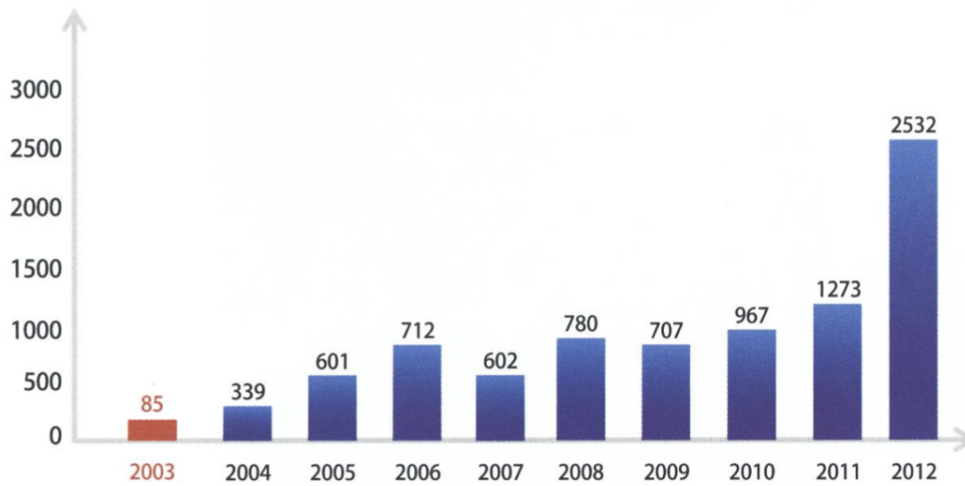


Figure 4: ODAs between 2003 and 2012

Source: Source: Haşimi, 2014

Moreover, the improved relationships of Turkey with its neighbors and the important economic development that the country was experiencing in the first decade of the 21st century can also be explained through the lenses of the TİKA: in facts, the work the Turkish Agency did can be considered relevant in the improving of the relationships with Turkish neighbors that also lead to an increase of both Turkish imports and exports, contributing in the Turkish economic development (Pinek, 2015).

According to Pinck (2015) this important shift in the Agency activities can be attributed to two factors: The change of Turkish capabilities due to the new world order that had been established after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the change in Turkish domestic policy and economic interests. However, these two new dynamics in Turkish political life does not explain completely the effectiveness of the Turkish International Cooperation Development Agency. In facts, the joining link that was able to connect two favorable conditions towards Turkey is the normative change and the material interests that the Turkish government had into improving its own position in the international order with the new foreign policy tools that the globalization had created.

TİKA, in this sense, was a fundamental instrument for the development of areas of influence for Turkey to exert its own soft power. However, the Turkish International Cooperation Development Agency was not the only reason why Turkey experienced very positive years of economic growth, improved foreign relationships and a general wellness of the State. If the domestic changes were discussed in the first chapter, the foreign policy changes are going

to be explained in the following pages of the chapters, where the focus will be put in the strategic depth doctrine by Ahmet Davutoğlu.

3. Ahmet Davutoğlu and his Strategic Depth Doctrine

Before the 2002 election with the win of the JDP, Turkish foreign policy did already have a change in its strategy for foreign policy. Until 1990s, Kemalism and its maxim “Peace at Home, Peace Abroad” marked the strategy for foreign policy for nearly all the 20th century, that meant a period of non-involvement in the international arena, as the objective was the development of the domestic society. However, in 1991, as the Cold War came to an end, Turgut Özal laid the foundation of a new Turkish way of thinking foreign policy. He was able to take advantage of the new international order and give Turkey a place in it. Following this path, also Erkaban during his government continued a more open and active foreign policy and opened most specifically to countries that in the history of the Turkish Republic were not considered, as Turkey opened to Middle East countries.

When the JDP party won the national election in 2002, the new President Erdoğan decided to use Ahmet Davutoğlu’s knowledge of international relations, as he was nominated Prime Minister’s Chief Advisor on Foreign Policy, and then later in 2009 Minister of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, Davutoğlu has always been considered the father of the new Turkish foreign policy doctrine, that is based on the Islamist roots of the new JDP government (Murinson, 2006).

Turkey has always treated foreign policy as an extension of its domestic policy. In facts, the Kemalist’s approach almost blocked the development of a Turkish foreign policy. So, the first objective of Davutoğlu’s foreign policy approach was to detach the domestic politics dimension to foreign policy (Kardaş, 2012). In this sense, the Strategic Depth doctrine was helped by the economic and social change created by the JDP government. Once the detachment between the domestic and international dimension has been defined and detached, Davutoğlu’s strategy focuses on two characteristics that have always defined the identity of Turkey: history and geography, that are shared with Turkey’s neighbors (Kalin, 2012).

According to the Davutoğlu’s doctrine, the geographical position of Turkey poses expectations and importance to what Turkey can achieve in international relations. The fact that Turkey finds itself in this position of crossroads between various regions could enable the Turkish foreign relations to have a bigger sphere of influence and power in the

international world order. For this reason, Davutoğlu with his doctrine wanted to amplify the reach of Turkish foreign policy. In fact, Davutoğlu (2008: 78) himself in one of his papers on the subject wrote:

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

Geography however is not the only factor that derives from the identity of Turkey that the Strategic Depth doctrine wants to exploit. In fact, the other important dimension that, according to Davutoğlu need to be taken into consideration, is the historical one. The past historical events and the cultural roots are the most important connections that a nation can have to start developing a relationship with another country. The commonalities and the shared beliefs that are present between countries can enable Turkey to also reach countries that are not immediate neighbors (Aras, 2009).

Considering these two dimensions, it is easy to understand why Turkish foreign policy opened a new era of involvement, especially in the Middle East region, where Turkey could use the many commonalities between itself and the other states. The closeness that the strategic depth brought into the Middle East countries, also considering the negative representation of them after the attack at the World Trade Center, was also emphasized by the maxim obtained by the principle of the doctrine that is "zero-problem policy". Historically speaking, the Middle East was never a stable region. If we consider the recent history, the Middle East struggled in finding its path toward a united region due to various factors. For this reason, the "zero-problem policy" was a way for Turkey to enable the region to find some stability, but also a way for Turkey to find a prominent and relevant role in the regional arena as regional power (Bingöl, 2019). It is true that the use of the strategic depth contributed to the increase of foreign policy activities in former Ottoman territories, making critics' view of the Davutoğlu doctrine as Neo-Ottomanism, but it is also important to underline the Turkish foreign policy strategy made by the JDP was a way to re-organize all the projects that the JDP inherited from the previous governments, like the EU membership transition, and put all together in a cohesive way (Aras, 2009).

The basis of the doctrine enables Turkey to be more pro-active in the international arena. Moreover, the fact that Turkey's identity is not composed by single elements brings the necessity to be involved in different areas of the world, and in all Turkey must use its commonalities to pursue its objective of a stable region. In addition to this, the general growth of Turkey during the first decade of the 21st century also brought a new sense of power, self-confidence, and willingness to act to ensure the success of Turkish foreign policy. The active role that Turkey with time acquired was possible thanks to various mechanisms of foreign policy. Aras (2009) has found 5:

- The first mechanism is to create an approach to foreign relations that is comprehensive of various areas of the international order. In fact, the fact that the Turkish identity is composed by various parts that derives also from the particular and unique position of the country. Therefore, Turkey has the possibility to be involved in different international issues that comes from different regions. Since strategic depth is based on Turkish social identity, Turkish foreign policy has amplified its presence in the Middle East. Even if Turkey continued its journey towards the accession in the EU, in the NATO summit of 2009 it was possible to see some conflict with the West. In fact, Erdoğan threatened to veto the election of the new General Secretary based on irrelevant motivations (Koprulu, 2009).
- The second mechanism described by Aras is the use of diplomacy. Davutoğlu wanted Turkey to use its geographical and historical characteristics to contribute to create a more stable and relevant Middle East. For example, in his book, Davutoğlu criticized the non-pro-active behavior of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). As the strategic depth doctrine creates the opportunity to more involvement, in 2004 Davutoğlu, when he was Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister (PM), pushed for the election of the Professor Ekhmeleddin İhsanoğlu to the role of General Secretary of the OIC (Aras, 2009). The example cited and the pro-activeness that Davutoğlu wanted to achieve in Turkish Foreign Policy were a path towards the “zero-problem policy”.
- The third mechanism to employ Strategic Depth is the presence on the ground. The active role that Turkey wanted to have in international relations also meant the need to have diplomats present on the grounds. To contribute to this mechanism described

by Aras, it is also possible to add the prominent role that the TİKA was starting to cut out in the humanitarian arena.

- The fourth mechanism described is having an all-inclusive policy, meaning the inclusion of all the actors involved in order to find solutions to issues or to create new initiatives (Turan, 2012).
- The last mechanism found by Aras is the total performance in foreign policy. Davutoğlu's strategy in foreign policy pushes to find commonalities and shared beliefs. A way to amplify the effect of the Strategic Depth is the use of the all the parts of the society to reach the goal of foreign policy. For this reason, the actions of NGOs, businesses and civil organizations matter in the design of a performative Turkish foreign policy.

The doctrine Davutoğlu created is perfectly in line with the constructivist theory of international relations. The fact that the theory is based on geographical and historical characteristics that are relevant for the Turkish identity explains well why constructivism can be associated. Moreover, the pro-active behavior that strategic depth has in searching to be involved in numerous international issues can relate to the societal nature of constructivism. In this sense, the agent-structure dichotomy pillar of constructivism is relevant in explaining strategic depth: it is true that geographical and historical depth constitute the basis of Turkish identity and therefore the basis for international relations, but it is also true that the Turkish elites are relevant in the evolution and development of the structure. As it was said in the first chapter, agent and structure are mutually constituted.

3.1 Balance shift in the Strategic Depth

What we have seen in the domestic changes of JDP government between the first and the second mandate happened in the same way in the approach to Turkish foreign policy. in the 2002-2003 period, the Turkish government was happy to collaborate with EU and the Western institution towards its process of EU membership (Bingöl, 2019). On the other hand, from 2005, and more evidently after the second election in 2007, Turkish foreign policy started to shift towards the Middle East. Turan (2012) points out that even if Davutoğlu himself rejected the critics about a shift of interest in Turkish foreign policy, it is also true that the ties with the Western countries were slowly disappearing. Moreover, the author continues in explaining that it is true that the presence of Turkey in territories such as Iraq,

Iran or the Middle East in general is aligned with the objectives of its western allies, but it is also true that the interests of Turkey were shifting away from its traditional Western allies. Kemal Koprulu, one of founders of the ARI movement, also described the new approach to Turkish foreign policy as confusing. He continued saying (2009;1):

Turkey could both manage its public sensitivities and its pivotal geostrategic position without alienating its allies, raising questions about its motive, confusing its public, and causing long term detriment to the country's strategic interest. Not doing so is either the choice or the mismanagement of the government, and often the mixture of both.

Erdoğan, under the recommendation of Davutoğlu, wanted to use a Neo-Ottoman discourse, meaning the remembrance of past relationships that happened during the Ottoman Empire, remembering its grandeur, to elevate Turkey to the role of impartial arbiter in the Middle East conflicts (Murinson, 2006). Following this mentality, Turkey started to get involved more in conflicting issues of the Middle East. In the following pages three conflicting issues and countries are going to be taken into consideration to further explain the new approach to Turkish foreign policy and understand the changes in the relationship itself. The three examples that are going to be analyzed are the Turkish-Syrian relationship, the Turkish-Israeli one and finally the relationship with Iran.

3.2 Turkey-Israel relationship

As we have seen in the first chapter, the Kemalist tradition was focusing its actions on the reconstruction of the domestic balance and to strengthen its ties with the West. Consequently, Turkish-Israeli relationships has always been difficult and tied to the relationship of Turkey with the United States. The lack of transparency and an increasing skepticism in the relationship between the two countries was one of the factors that did not allow Turkey to finish the period of foreign policy isolationism towards the Middle East (Kanat, 2014). However, in the end of the 1990s some agreements were signed and created a peaceful relationship between the two countries, even if with some problems (Bağcı and Erdurmaz, 2017).

The Strategic Depth doctrine called for an active role in foreign policy. That is why Prime Minister (PM) Erdoğan engaged in various international visits in its neighbor and regional countries. In 2005, Erdoğan made an official visit Israel, in which the Prime Minister

reiterated the willingness of Turkey to maintain relationship with Israel, and to offer the service of Turkey as a Middle East peace mediator (Singh, 2017). However, the changing rhetoric of the JDP government and Erdoğan towards the Islamic root of Turkey could be considered as a cause of tension between the two countries. In facts, in numerous occasions JDP officials have been critical on the Israeli policy in the West Bank and Gaza, and even Erdoğan called Israel “State terror” in referring to the disproportionate use of violence against the Palestinian population (Warning and Kardaş, 2011).

The tension between Turkey and Israel mounted during the first years of the 21st century and it exploded when the Israeli government approved the military operation *Cast Lead* in Gaza on 27 December 2008. According to the Israeli government, the military operation objective was to stop Hamas to fire rockets but lead to the death of 1400 civilians (Dinc and Yetim, 2012). The authors also point out that this particular incident was pivotal for researchers for the definition of axis change in the Turkish foreign policy.

However, the first public clash between Turkey and Israel happened in Davos in 2009 during the World Economic Forum. Prime Minister Erdoğan and the President of Israel, Shimon Peres, were on the stage during a conversation regarding the crisis in Gaza². During the conversation, it is possible to see Erdoğan not satisfied on how the moderator, Washington Post columnist David Ignatius, was managing the discussion and also the fact that he had less time than Peres to explain his reasons and his thoughts about the subject of the debate were contributing to Erdoğan’s mood. During the debate, Erdoğan explicitly addressed President Peres saying: “When it comes to killing, you know very well how to kill. I know very well how you killed children on the beaches”, referring to the targeted assassination of 2006 in Gaza (Warning and Kardaş, 2011). Near the end of the discussion, Erdoğan was explaining his thoughts when the moderator stopped him, because the time was about to finish. Erdoğan asked for “one more minute”, but Ignatius did not allow it. For this reason, Erdoğan decided to storm off stage and abandon definitively Davos and the World Economic Forum.

The tension between the two countries, however, did not end with the diplomatic incident of Davos. In facts it followed two years of statements and actions that ended in amplifying the climate of insecurity and tension in the relationship between Turkey and Israel. However, the biggest event that caused the rupture between the two countries was the *Mavi Marmara* Episode. On May 31st, 2010, on the *Mavi Marmara*, a ship under Turkish flag sent to Gaza

² The entire debate can be seen on the YouTube page of the World Economic Forum at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cR4zRbPy2kY>

for humanitarian aid purposes, was involved in an Israeli military operation that led to the wound of many people and death of 10 Turkish people. Erdoğan called this episode “State Terrorism” (Singh, 2015). The Turkish Ambassador to Israel was sent back to Ankara and the incident caused the Turkish-Israeli relationship to be at its lowest level: in fact, it was downgraded to the chargé d’affaires level, the lowest one (Bağcı and Erdurmaz, 2017). The only way to have a rapprochement with the Israeli State was only through a formal apology. However, Israel was willing to recover the relationship with Turkey, but it was not willing to apologize (Lubell, 2011). In the end, under the pressures of the President of the United States Barack Obama, the Israeli apology arrived on 22nd March 2013. Obama was ending its official visit in Israel when he convinced President Netanyahu to call Prime Minister Erdoğan. The Turkish Prime Minister accepted the apology by Netanyahu and both parties agreed that it was in their best interest to leave in the past the tensions between the two and to focus on the new common challenges that the Syrian Civil War was causing (Heller, 2013; Arbell, 2013).

3.3 Turkey-Iran relationship

The relationship between Turkey and Iran goes back to 16th century and in many ways shared a similar history. In fact, the two countries in the past were imperial powers, that then were transformed into modern states and considered the heirs of the former empires, looking for an increase in their area of influence (Sinkaya, 2019). Iran’s action in the past, before the JDP government, were not always aligned with Turkey. For example, it is possible to cite the Iranian support to the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), a sensible subject for Turkish policy, and for this reason Turkey decided to treat the Iranian relationship separately to the West (Demir, 2017).

With the election of the Justice and Development Party in 2002 there was also a shift in the way the relationship with Iran was treated. In 2004, Erdoğan made the first official visit to Teheran, during the which the two countries signed an agreement involving many fields: the relevant two were a commitment to support Turkey in the issue of the Kurds and a series of economic agreements (Murinson, 2006). These agreements led to a \$15 billions of annual trade between Turkey and Iran (Khan, 2015).

The Turkish Prime Minister paid another official visit in 2006. During this occasion, Erdoğan wanted to pull focus on another issue: the nuclear. Turkey, following the doctrine of Strategic Depth, showcased its willingness to become a more active player in the Middle

East region, and the Iranian nuclear program was a way to demonstrate the increased relationships with the region and with the international arena. In fact, Turkey played the role of a mediator, with also the help of Brazil, between Iran and the rest of the world, as it wanted to avoid conflicts near its borders (Turan, 2012). Moreover, Turkey defended in the international arena the right of Iran to have a peaceful nuclear program, and asked Iran to remove any kind of doubt regarding the program (Sinkaya, 2019). In the end, an agreement was signed on May 17, 2010. However, this agreement was dismissed by a large part of the international community and even Brazil, under the international pressure, pulled out its support (Turan, 2012).

In 2009, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan visited once more Teheran to show support to the re-election of President Ahmadinejad, even if the election has been defined controversial (Sinkaya, 2019).

Overall, it was essential for both countries to maintain a good relationship between each other. They were both two national-state countries with the interest of having a pivotal role in the Middle East. More specifically, Turkey needed to keep a good relationship with Iran because in case of any conflict, Iran could have a big impact in Turkish domestic and foreign policy. In fact, Turkey was still remembering the Iranian support in the 90s of to the Kurdish cause. (Demir, 2017). On the other hand, Iran had also interest in keeping a good relationship with Turkey mainly for two reasons: first, Iran was worried for its security after the US entrance in Afghanistan, so having an ally like Turkey that is part of the NATO and historically had a better relationship with the US could help in this sense (Sinkaya, 2019). The author continues in explaining that Iran had interests in maintaining a good relationship with Turkey was also economical. In fact, one of Iran's exports of energy major trade partner is Turkey, and a new economically developed Turkish peninsula could be an influent market for basic goods. However, even if Turkey desecuritized its relationship with Iran, they remained regional powers and competitors (Demirtaş, 2013).

Turkish foreign policy in general saw the Arab Uprising as a watershed in how it is conceived and executed and created important ruptures in the relationships with the other countries. Iran was one of them, and it is going to be discussed later in the chapter, after having explained the effect of the Arab Spring to Turkey.

3.4 Turkey-Syria relationship

In the last years of the 20th century, the relationship between Turkey and Syria were on the verge of a break. In fact, in 1998 a conflict between the two countries was avoided, as Syria signed the Adana Agreement and therefore stopped supporting the PKK and sheltering its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, that was finally imprisoned in Istanbul (Warning and Kardaş, 2011). From that moment on, the relationship between the two countries improved tremendously. In the first year of the 21st century, the Middle East region was having a moment of destabilization due to the US invasion of Iraq after the event of 9/11. In fact, US asked Turkey the permission to pass US troops in Turkish territory to arrive to Iraq. On March 1st, 2003, during the parliamentary session in which this motion was discussed, the Turkish Parliament voted 266-251 in favor, with 19 abstentions, not reaching the quorum for three (Atatüre, 2015). This historical decision is also pivotal in understanding the relationship with Syria and Iran. In fact, the close and stable alliance between Turkey-Syria and Iran sought to counterbalance the image of the unstable region created by the US foreign policy of Bush Jr. administration (Daoudy, 2016).

The new closeness acquired between the two countries brought important achievements. It is possible to cite two main fields: Turkey saw Syria as a strong ally in its campaign of economic development. For this reason, it was established a Joint Economic Committee to promote economic agreements or events such as the industrial exhibition of Damascus in 2004, during the which Turkey's businessmen returned home with \$250 worth of contracts (D'Alema, 2017). Turkey was very invested in its objective of economic integration to the point that in 2009 the two governments, together with Iran and Iraq, created a joint visa policy, taking inspiration from the Schengen system, that made rose the Turkey's export to Syria from \$187 millions in 2006 to \$ 662 millions in 2010 (Demirtaş, 2013; D'Alema, 2017). The sign that the relationship between Turkey and Syria was becoming more friendly and collaborative are various official visits done by both Country: The Turkish President Necdet Sezer in 2005 visited Syria for the funerals of Hafız al-Assad and the visits in Turkey of 2004, 2007 and 2010 made by Bashar al-Assad can be cited as another sign of the improved relations between Turkey and Syria (Khan,2015).

Moreover, the proactive behavior of Turkey towards a more stable and balanced Middle East region were showed in Turkish willingness to mediate between Syria and Israel over the Golan Heights territories. Prime Minister Erdoğan declared that Assad was willing to have peace talks with Israel, and the Syrian President "intends to take all the necessary steps to

attain arrangement of peace in the Middle East” (Benn, 2004). Even if the negotiations were going towards a positive conclusion, the operation *Cast Lead* of 2008, where many Palestinian civilians were killed interrupted the conversation between Israel and Syria (D’Alema, 2017). Once again, the Arab Uprising can be considered an important watershed in the Turkish-Iranian relationship. The hard work done in the previous decade to mend the relationship after 1998 had brutally stopped because of the Arab Uprising and the divergent view of the two countries, as it is going to be described in the following sections of the chapter. Furthermore, the Syrian civil war can be considered as a perfect case-study to explain the difficulties that the Turkish foreign policy was dealing in the years of the Arab spring, and it is also going to be discussed later in the chapter.

4. The Arab Uprising

In 2010 a wind of change arrived in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The younger generations, that were born in an already globalized and interconnected world, more educated than the previous generations, went into the streets to show their indignation regarding the economic and political situation of their government (Hashemi, 2011). The only solution, according to the protesters, was a more democratic regime. This wave of change that involved the majority of countries in the MENA region was called by the newspaper “Arab Spring”, remembering the wave of protests of 1968.³

The first country that showed the first signs of frustration regarding its regime was Tunisia. The protests began after the suicide by self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian vendor that had been harassed by the police (Blakemore, 2019). The death of Bouazizi inspired the protestors to demonstrate against the authoritarian regime of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, that after one month of popular protests was forced to flee out of Tunisia to Saudi Arabia. These Tunisian protests spread throughout the MENA region and reached in 2011 Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria, while Jordan and Oman had some repercussion about this movement (Ma’oz, 2012). The wave of dissatisfaction of the various regimes created by the protests in the region had as a result a regime change. For example, Ma’Oz (2012) cites two important examples: the first one is Tunisia, as in October 2011, the county held free democratic election that saw the victory of Rashid Ghanushi of the

³ The Guardian made a clear interactive report of the various stages of the spread of the Arab Spring for the 10th year anniversary of the beginning of the movement, and it is available at this link: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2021/jan/25/how-the-arab-spring-unfolded-a-visualisation>

Islamic Nahda Party. The new government was able to create a modern Islamic government, with intentions to have as an ally the West. Another important example cited by the author is Egypt. After the protests and the resignation of Mubarak, also Egypt experience free democratic election, that in this case were won by the Muslim Brothers leaders Muhammad Morsi. The new Egyptian leader was able to create a government able to embrace not only the Islamic part, represented by its party, but also the secular tradition of Egypt. However, in the case of Egypt, the hope for a politics change was cut short when in 2014 the army made a military coup that ended with the destitution of Morsi and put in the President position General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (Aspden, 2016).

The wind of change that overwhelmed the region was not expected at all by the international arena. All the most important actors both in the region and in the world, were not expecting, after the peaceful protests in Tunisia, a very aggressive spread of general dissent towards domestic regimes in the MENA region, that in some cases led also to violent civil wars, like Libya and Syria, that are going to be discussed later in connection with the choices of Turkish about the matter.

What worried the international actors was which kind of new regime were going to be established after the protests. In facts, the West, mainly US, was worried about a repetition of 1979 with the rise of the Islamic regime in Iran. Hashemi (2011), in its paper regarding the connection between religion and politics, states that the concern of the West, mainly the US, is because they are not sure that the new regimes will take political decisions that follow their foreign policy. Consequently, the author notices that the doubts that the Western countries have in general is about more the Muslim Brotherhood, and not about the Al-Nahda organization in Tunisia. Any previous attempt of the United States to support an autocratic regime in the Middle East had brought important consequences in the reaching of a more democratic society. The example cited is Iran in 1979 and the remark made by Secretary of State Madeline Albright in 2000, in which she corroborated that (Hashemi, 2011:18):

“The United States played a significant role in orchestrating the overthrow of Iran’s popular Prime Minister, Mohammed Mossadegh. The Eisenhower Administration believed its actions were justified for strategic reasons; but the coup was clearly a setback for Iran’s political development.”

Finally, Hashemi (2011) explains that the historical connection of state and religion is very different between the Western countries and the Muslim countries. European and American history have always struggled since the Middle Age with the influence and power that the Church had. This tension between the secular and religious power created conflicts, wars, and deaths. Consequently, it is possible to say that this was one of the principal reasons why the Western state model is based on the separation of Church and State. The Muslim countries, on the other hand, did not have this tense and difficult relationship with its religion. No important wars were done based on religion, and the pre-modern Muslim societies were more tolerant in relation to the West. For this reason, religion in the Middle East is seen by the population as unifying factor that could bring stability to a difficult environment.

4.1 The Turkish Model

In this environment of instability, Turkey had the biggest opportunity to exit as a more relevant player not only in the MENA region, but also in the world. What researchers and politicians have asked themselves: can Turkey become a model for the region?

For sure the declaration of President Bush Jr., that were briefly discussed in chapter 1, had an influence on how the world and the MENA region saw Turkey. In facts, Turkey under JDP describes itself as “conservative democratic”, as it is political and economic liberal, but it also is careful about societal values and traditions (Sengupta, 2015). Moreover, according to Dede (2011), the Turkey of the 21st century can be a valid model for the new regimes born after the Arab spring, as it is based on “a bottom-up connection with Islam” (Dede,2011:27) and its connection with economy. This means, according to the author, that the connection between state and Islam in Turkey is more tolerant and takes into consideration the secular part of the society, where success is linked to the economic gains. Even if the connection was weaker than in other states, Islam is still a fundamental part of Turkish politics, even if the JDP denies the Islamic characterization of the party (Murinson, 2012).

Kemal Kirişci (2011) also highlights the importance of “demonstrative effect” that Turkey can have on the MENA region. Samuel Huntington in his book *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late twentieth Century* (1991) explains that the success of the democratization in one country can inspire other countries to follow the same path. In facts, it shows that it is possible to change, and it also shows how it is possible to change. Huntington finds that the globalization had a relevant influence in the third wave of

democratization, as communication was improved, and it was possible to be in touch with different and far regions. So, following the concept of Huntington's book, Kirişci (2011) explains that Turkey has been both affected by "demonstrative effect" and can affect the MENA region with it. For example, Turkey has been affected by this effect in the field of cultural rights for minority. As Bulgaria did similar reforms, Turkey felt in positive in its policy towards the Kurd minority. At the same time, the transformation that Turkey had thanks to the JDP government made other countries studying this new successful regime model of Turkey and how they can implement it in their national borders. Finally, the author ends its discourse in defining Turkish Democracy as a "work in progress". The fact that Turkey is still going under a process of democratization makes it easier also for the other countries to relate more easily (Kirişci, 2011).

However, during the years Turkey has also showed some cracks in its model. Turkish democracy has not always been clear. To cite some examples, the Ergenekon affair, that resulted in various arrests after discovering the plotting of a military coup, and the aftermath of the Gezi Park protests in 2013 raised questions about the freedom of speech and media (Sengupta, 2015). Moreover, it is also important to highlight the fact that some Turkish politicians had acknowledged the numerous steps that the Turkish democracy had to make.

In 2003, Abdullah Gül, that at the time of this declaration was Minister of Foreign Affairs, during a meeting of the OIC stressed the fact that the Muslim world, Turkey included, needed to "pay greater attention to human rights and women's right as well as to greater transparency in governance" (Kirişci, 2011: 40).

Finally, it is important to mention that the Strategic Depth doctrine helped Turkey to spread in the MENA region their model. The pro-active behavior of Turkey and the enlargement of its historical partners was attractive to those countries who have similar culture and tradition with Turkey that were experiencing some problems. The Arab Spring, in this sense, could have been the biggest opportunity for Turkey to complete its transformation into regional power, and also acquire more power in the international world order. As it is going to be explained in the following pages, Turkish Foreign Policy towards the Middle East during the Arab Uprising did not have the effect that Turkish policymakers expected, making Turkey's position in the region more precarious.

4.2 Turkish foreign policy during the Arab Uprising

The Arab uprising has been defined by many researchers as a rupture event with the zero-problem policy that Davutoğlu initiated with its doctrine (Kuru, 2015; Murinson, 2016; Elhousseini, 2017). Moreover, Turkish foreign policy during the Arab Spring was various and as it introduced at least 5 different model of response to the issue (Elhousseini, 2017). What Turkey was dealing during the protests that were spreading around the MENA region was a conflict “Ethics versus Interests” that changed the position and relationship of Turkey within the region (Aydin and Dizdaroğlu, 2018)

The protests in Tunisia took by surprise the entire world. Everyone did not know how to act, and while Western embassies were trying to connect with the protesters, Turkey focused on the evacuation of Turkish citizen in Tunisian territory, and only after the end of the protests Turkey started to reach the new heads of the government to propose itself as a model for the new regime (Turan, 2012).

The protests in Egypt brought another set of actions in Turkish foreign policy. If in Tunisia Turkey assumed the role of an observer, Egypt represented for Turkish policymakers a more delicate issue, as the role of Egypt in the MENA region is more influential than the one of Tunisia (Elhousseini, 2017). Turkey’s strategy changed and gave its support to the protesters, as it would be an opportunity to sponsor its model. In facts, in September 2011, PM Erdoğan and Minister of Foreign Affairs Davutoğlu made a tour in the countries of the Arab Spring, that in that moment were Tunisia, Egypt and Lybia. PM Erdoğan made important speeches in which he stated his support for the protesters and described the Turkey and the Turkish model as a “democratic, secular and social state of law”, to the surprise of the Muslim Brotherhood, that had always been a supporter of Erdoğan’s policies (Tol, 2011). However, the positive relationship between Egypt and Turkey did not last long, as the Egyptian military made a coup that overthrown Morsi government. The new military-led government expelled the Turkish ambassador in 2013, and as a reaction to that, the Egyptian Ambassador to Ankara was declared a *persona non grata*, and the Turkish-Egyptian relationship were downgraded (Aydin and Dizdaroğlu, 2018).

The first shake-up of Turkish foreign policy during the Arab spring happened in the Libya case. As it happened for Egypt, Libya was a strong and important trade partner for Turkey, as various Turkish citizes were working in Libya or making businesses with Libya (Sengupta, 2015). For this reason, Turkish policymakers had some hesitation before stating or supporting one of the two sides of the conflict. The Libyan case clearly showed the strategic

minds behind Turkish foreign policy: if on one hand Turkey wanted to continue to use foreign policy as one of its instruments for economic interests, on the other hand it would have been impossible for Turkey to fully support Qaddafi if it wanted to continue to spread the Turkish model as a democratic one (Murinson, 2012). It took over one month, and some Anti-Turkish protests in Benghazi to support NATO's action in Libya and the rebel support, even though Turkey did never rupture completely with Qaddafi (Elhousseini, 2017). Turan (2012) explains that the Libyan crisis was a watershed for JDP's foreign policy in the Middle East. If in the previous years, Turkey acted differently from its main allies in the West concerning the Middle East, as Turkish policymakers wanted to lift Turkish regional and international status, now the Libyan case showed that Turkey was still dependent from its Western allies when it concerned relevant issues.

If Libya was the first red flag for Turkish policymakers, the spread of the Arab Spring in Syria was the biggest challenge and defeat in Turkish foreign policy of the period. As it was described previously, Turkey and Syria in the first decade of the 21st century were able to mend their relationships after the tensions of 1998. During these years, Turkish-Syrian relationships were mending and the economic cooperation between the two countries helped the situation. When the Arab Uprising arrived at Syria's door, the Turkish government was ready to act thanks to the failure in Libya. Erdoğan asked Assad to make some reforms in the political system to mediate with the protesters and avoid further violent clashes (Demirtaş, 2013). However, the refusal of the Syrian government to negotiate with the demonstrators and the violent repressions of peaceful demonstrations led to a final rupture between the two countries (Daoudy, 2016). Moreover, Turkey, in this case, was the pushing actor that wanted the other, the Western allies, to intervene in the situation like they did in Libya, but they did not want to (Turan, 2012; Aydın and Dizdaroğlu, 2018). The Syrian crisis transformed itself in a civil war, with on one side the Assad regime, and to the other side the opposition group in exile, the Syrian National Council (SNC), supported by Turkey that declared that "Syria is Turkey's internal affairs" (Elhousseini, 2017: 248). In fact, the Syrian conflict, that basically ended the de-securitization process of the Turkish-Syrian relationship, brought two sources of instability inside Turkey's borders: the first one regards the deaths of several Turkish civilians living in the border region with Syria (Demirtaş, 2013). The second one regards the humanitarian crisis, as 3.5 million Syrian refugees were received by Turkey (Aydın and Dizdaroğlu, 2018). In addition to that, Turkish north borders with Syria had become a danger zone for Turkey. In fact, the area has seen the rise of two Jihadists

groups like Al Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the Syrian branch of the PKK, the democratic union party (PYD) (Oktav, 2015).

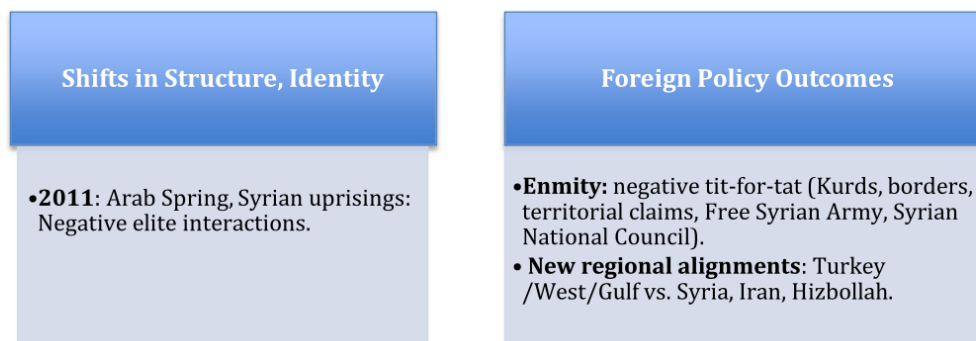


Figure 5: Structure-identity nexus in 2011

Source: Marwa Daoudy, 2016

Marwa Daoudy (2016) analyzed the rupture between Turkey and Syria using the structure-identity nexus. According to her, the Arab Spring, and in particular the Syrian crisis, was a determined factor that made the regional structure change. As the structure changed, the agent also needed to adapt to the balance, triggering different choices both in domestic and foreign policy, that in the end brought to the estrangement in the Turkish-Syrian relationship. To conclude, the Syrian crisis, did not break only the Turkish relationship with Syria itself. It also broke the relationships with Iran. However, Iran had two main reason to keep a friendly relationship with Turkey: first, for security reason, and second it could afford to lose Turkish gas market (Oktav, 2015). Turkey and Iran had different views on the Syrian crisis, as Iran saw Turkey's policy towards the conflict as a US-led plot to undermine Iran's regional reach (Yücesoy,2019). In facts, Turkey's host of American radars has been seen as very threatening for Iranian, and in 2012, Minister of Foreign Policy Davutoğlu visited Teheran to reassure Iranian elites about security issues, not fully convincing them (Sinkaya, 2019). In the long run, the estrangement between the two countries led also to a fall of the economic relation: if in 2012 the amount of trade between Turkey and Iran was around \$22 millions, in 2014 it fell to \$13.7 millions (Yücesoy,2019; Sinkaya,2019). The Turkish-Iranian relationships started to return to a similar level of pre-Arab Spring only in 2016, after the failed coup in Tukey plotted by the Gülen movement. To conclude, Kuru (2015) explained the failure of the Turkish foreign policy using the three level of analysis:

- *Individual level:* The figure of Erdoğan and his tendency to centralize power in his hand did not pay off during the Arab Spring. His populist rhetoric, using international politics as a way to increase domestic constituency did not help in the making of a clear and organized policy towards those countries who were experiencing daily protests, asking for a regime change.
- *State level:* the choices described in the previous pages explains the failure also at state level in the Arab Spring. Turkey was not able to respond correctly, both militarily but also diplomatically, to the changes of scenery that the Arab Uprising brought to the MENA region.
- *International level:* Turkey deteriorated many allies during the period of the revolts. Just to cite two examples, Syria and Iran. In addition to that, the Turkish foreign policy actions were also able to deteriorate the relationships with Western allies.

5. Turkey's position after the Arab Uprising

After the Arab Spring, Turkey found itself in a worst position than the beginning, putting most of the blame on the foreign policy choices made to tackle the Syrian crisis, that brought more instability in the MENA Region. According to Murinson (2012: 24) one of the biggest weaknesses of the Strategic Depth doctrine had been the “undifferentiated notion of ‘problems’ that lumps together the minor and major issues with the short- and long-term issues”. In addition to that, Yeşilyurt (2017) criticizes Turkish tendency to associate domestic issues with foreign issues, as it did not make possible for Turkey to pursue a flexible foreign policy that could enable Turkey to recover from the failure of the Arab spring. In addition to that, it is important to highlight how the national elections of 2014 may have amplified this tendency of mixing domestic and foreign for the approval of the domestic constituency, to the point that Han (2015) titled one of his works “*Turkish Foreign Policy or AKP's Public Relations?*”.

The Arab uprising brought to the table new challenges, and also the need for Turkey to re-think about its foreign policy strategy. Yeşiltaş (2014) argues that Turkey will continue to pursue a flexible geopolitical strategy that could enable the Turkish government to start over in the region. The author then continues in explaining that geopolitical flexibility is not the only strategy that Turkish foreign policy will use. In facts, the new Davutoğlu vision of “restoration” is based on four pillars: domestic restoration, identity restoration, economic restoration, and foreign policy dynamism restoration (Yeşiltaş, 2014).

The new international world order that shifted with the Arab Spring meant also to find new ways to relate with the other actors present in the international arena. In 2014 Turkey, when Davutoğlu had been nominated Prime Minister, was one of the few countries to have contemporaneously diplomatic relations with Israel, Syria, Egypt, Cyprus, Armenia, Russia, Iraq, Iran, the EU, and occasionally the US (Bekdil, 2017). However, it is important to underline the major domestic regime change that also Turkey went under, transforming itself from a Parliamentary Republic to a Presidential Republic. Erdoğan was Turkey's first directly elected President with the 51.5% of the votes (Bekdil, 2017). This shift of type of regime created consequences in how power was distributed and how foreign policy was perceived and executed, but this particular aspect is going to be discussed in the following chapter.

What could have seemed like an opportunity to legitimize Turkey's journey of the 21st century towards a new prestigious role both in the MENA region and in the international order transformed itself into the failure of the same policy that launched Turkey towards new responsibilities (Daoudy, 2016; Murinson, 2012; Han, 2015; Turan, 2012). Turkey found itself in a situation that was not new for the country, but it needed a new strategy to exit it. The fact that the figure of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan grew of importance as a central figure could be seen both as an advantage and as a disadvantage. In fact, the following chapter will focus on Erdoğan himself, his life and his personal traits that defines his leaderships skills, but most importantly, how these traits that constitute his figure interacts and influence the choices in foreign policy.

CHAPTER 3: PERSONAL FACTORS

1. The importance of leaders in decision-making process

After having analyzed internal and external factors that influence foreign policy, it is time to turn the attention towards another variable: leaders. Since the time when first scholars started to write about foreign policy (and we have seen Snyder et al. previously) attention was drawn to how leaders perceived the environment around them and how they would react to certain situations. As the discipline started to grow, also the interest towards leaders grew. As a consequence, international relations researchers started to give attention to psychology research and theories that would help them understand psychological traits of the leaders in charge of decisions in foreign policy.

In this sense, constructivism embraces the importance of personality traits and perception of the environment. As it was described in the first chapter, constructivism sees the world as socially constructed, and based on the mutual constitution of agent-structure. Following this logic, leaders become important actors because their background, culture, personality, and perception of the world can be a game-changing factor in the decision-making process.

For this reason, in the next pages, it is going to be explained some of the theory that can help in understanding who makes decisions and how, the influence that personality can have in the decision-making process, and finally, how the world perception of a leader influence the actions in foreign policy. After having laid down a theoretical basis, the rest of the chapter is going to be focused on Erdoğan's history, personality and how these characteristics have shaped the leader known today, also analyzing the Turkish path towards a new Republican regime, where the majority of the power officially passed in the hands of Erdoğan himself.

1.1 Who makes decisions?

Foreign policy researchers have asked themselves: do leaders matter in foreign policy decisions? According to Breuning (2008: 31) “it is difficult to explain foreign policy decisions and behaviors without reference to leaders”. Perceptions and interests can play pivotal roles in the understanding and later in the actions of a state in foreign policy. For this reason, the research has focused on the role of the leader as such.

To understand how leaders make decisions, it is important first to define leadership psychology. Leadership Psychology has been defined as the “varied psychological elements and assumptions that every leader brings to the decision process” (Renshon and Renshon, 2008: 510). So, there are various variables that influence the thinking process in a leader’s head. The authors give some examples such as stress, time pressure or emotions. Moreover, leaders have always two dimensions to consider when they need to take a decision: their experience and the context of the situation. It is nowadays clear that these two dimensions cannot be separated, and they need to be analyzed altogether. In fact, the situational context pass through the filter of the experience of the leader, and thanks to this filtering leaders arrive to a final decision.

Hermann and Hermann (1989) went further into explaining this process. In fact, in their paper, they classified three type of ultimate decision units:

- *Predominant Leader*, defined as an individual with the power to decide. The authors to better explain this type of decision unite chose a quote from President Lincoln during one cabinet meeting: “Gentlemen, the vote is eleven to one and the one has it”, meaning that the only vote that mattered was the one of the predominant leader. In this scenario, it is important to understand personal characteristics, because they are the filter through which a leader pass the information that they receive. In the case of Turkey, Erdoğan can be considered a predominant leader, and for his reason it is going to explained later the origin of the Turkish leader.
- *Single Group*, a set of individuals belonging to a same group that decide together which action to take. In the case of single group, it is more difficult to understand how decisions are taken because there is to analyze how internal group dynamics influence the process of decision making. Nevertheless, usually single group members share common beliefs and ideology, so these two factors should make the decision process easier. To better understand where we can find the single group ultimate decision

unit, the authors give some examples: the Standing Committee of the Communist Party in China and the National Security Council in the US.

- *Multiple Autonomous Actors*, that are separate individual with separate powers that however cannot decide alone. This type of ultimate decision unit is the more complex because it is composed by independent actors that have independent powers, but most importantly they have different methods to block one another. Hermann and Hermann (1989) also in this case gives some examples: the Fourth Republic of France, or Italy in the 70s and 80s.

However, when analyzing the personal life of the leader, it is important not to overinterpret what a person has passed in his life (Breuning, 2008). It is true that personal experience of the past shape the personality and vision of the world of a person, but they are not always fixed variables. Nevertheless, the analysis of the biography of a leader can be used as a guide to understand the leader.

1.2 How are decisions made?

If the relevance of leaders in foreign policy choice has increased throughout the years, it is fundamental to also understand how they decide. For this reason, the study of foreign policy has crossed its path with psychology, with the objective to better comprehend how personality traits can actually influence the decision-making process, therefore the foreign policy strategy.

Margaret Hermann (1980) is the creator of the Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA). In her study, she analyzed seven personality trait that, if present in a leader, can help to understand how someone can decide. These personality traits are belief in ability to control events, conceptual complexity, self-confidence, need for power, distrust of others, in-group bias, and task orientation.

LTA Trait	Description
Belief in ability can control events	Perception of own degree of control over political power
Conceptual Complexity	Ability to distinguish complexity of political life
Need for Power	Interest in developing, persevering, or restituting own power
Distrust of Others	Suspicious, Skepticism, worry about others outside own group
In-group bias	Belief that the own group constitutes center of political world
Self-Confidence	Notion of self-importance, and of capacity to take on political environment
Task Orientation	Focus on problem solving vs. building relationships

Figure 6: Personality Characteristics in LTA

Source: Kaarbo, 2017

The various combination of these seven characteristics creates different profiles of leader, but most importantly, it creates two orientations in foreign policy:

- *Independent Leaders* are nationalists, believes they have the power to control events, have need for power, they do not have much conceptual complexity, and do not trust others.
- *Participatory Leaders*, on the other hand are not much of a nationalist, they do not believe they have the power to control events, they need affiliation, are big in conceptual complexity and they trust the others.

Using the LTA method, we can say that Erdoğan belongs to the first orientation explained, and it will be explained later in the chapter why. The LTA method is able to use the agent-structure dichotomy as it provides specific expectations of which characteristic matters and how it influences the relationship of the agent with the structure (Kaarbo, 2017).

However, one critic that can be moved towards the LTA approach is that it was formed and tested using public speeches and appearances of leaders. Therefore, it is solely based on the public figure of leaders, where they have little room to play and change public's perspective and opinions about them (Kaarbo, 2017; Breuning, 2008). Moreover, people change and progress over the years. As we expect society to evolve and grow, it is important to expect

the same from leaders to not remain static in their views and actions. To give an example using the leader that is going to be analyzed in this chapter, Erdoğan, we have seen his opinion evolve with time. If in his first mandate as PM, even if pushed by the process of European membership, Erdoğan acted to improve human rights and women rights, then later in his future governments this effort stopped. In fact, in 2014, PM Erdoğan stated during a conference that: “Islam already gave a role to women: motherhood. To put men and women on the same level is against nature” (La Repubblica, 2014). He continued stating that women should be happy about motherhood as it is something they only can achieve, and that for this reason they should be held high in the society. A further step back in women rights from the Turkish government was taken early this year, when it decided to opt out of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as Istanbul Convention. Gülseren Onanç, the founder of the Equity, Justice and Women Platform in Turkey, in an interview for L’Espresso declared that in the last ten years the women situation in Turkey had worsened: right now, there are two femicide per day and a worrying decreasing participation of women in the work and political life of Turkey (Bianchi, 2021).

Breuning (2008) adds an important aspect to the study of personality traits, that is the impact of human emotions. Emotions have a big impact on the decision-making process, and they are able to pull focus out of the objective. Moreover, what makes emotions difficult to analyze is their significance inside the various cultures. In fact, all the world’s cultures have different norms on the expression of emotions, and this could also bring to misunderstandings in foreign policy.

1.3 The Big-Five and the Dark Triad

The LTA method by Hermann was not the only one developed and used in international relations. A series of studies into psychology helped international relation researchers to find new frameworks that could help them understand better the mental process of leaders.

One of the more recent and used framework is the Big-Five Inventory (BFI). BFI was introduced in 2008 by John, Naumann and Soto with the objective of focusing on the prototypical elements of each domain and creating clarity using the five subdivisions (John and Soto, 2017). The personality traits described by the BFI are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness. According to Hassan, Asad, Hoshino (2016) the BFI was able to achieve the objective of creating a framework that could help in

the study of leadership to frame the various reference and create an empirical base to use for future studies.

BFI is usually associated with another personality framework, that is the Dark Triad. The Dark Triad was created by Paulhus and Williams in 2002, and they created a personality trait framework based on these three aversive traits that however are within the range of normal functioning (Furnham, Richards and Paulhus, 2013). The three traits described by this framework are narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. Even if these three personality traits derive from very different fields, they share many features, as they “entail a socially malevolent character with behavior tendencies toward self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity and aggressiveness” (Paulhus and Williams, 2002:3). In the first paper discussing the Dark Triad, Paulhus and Williams admitted the connection of their framework with the BFI, using it as the base to understand where their three dark personality traits placed in connection with it. The study showed right away the link between the “positive” traits of the BFI and the “dark” traits of the Dark Triad, creating a more complete framework to use for the study of leader’s personality.

Nai and Toros (2020) used the combination of these two methods to describe the personality of peculiar public figures that the two authors call strongmen. In the study they analyzed 14 autocratic political figures such as Jair Bolsonaro, Benjamin Netanyahu, Vladimir Putin, Matteo Salvini or Donald Trump. But the result that are interesting for this thesis are the one regarding President Erdoğan.

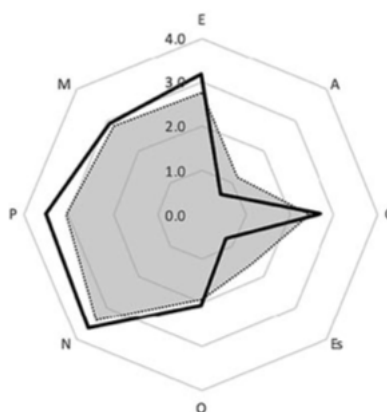


Figure 7: Erdoğan’s result

Source: Nai and Toros, 2020

In the image it is possible to see the result concerning President Erdoğan. The grey area represents the average result of the study, while the black bold line represents the result of Erdoğan. The letters on the corners represent the personality traits of the BFI and the Dark Triad. More specifically: E= extraversion, A= agreeableness, C= conscientiousness, Es= emotional stability, O= openness, N= Narcissism, P= Psychopathy, and M= Machiavellianism.

From the results it is possible to see that Erdoğan's personality traits analyzed follow the average, with three exceptions: the first one is agreeableness, in which he scored very low, and likewise for emotional stability. On the other hand, he scored high on psychopathy. This study can also be associated of another work of Nai, in this case pairing up with Martínez i Coma (2019), in which they tried to find the major characteristics of a populist. According to this study (2019: 1359):

“Populists score significantly lower than non-populists in perceived agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability but score significantly higher in perceived extraversion, narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism. [the study] portrays them as disagreeable, narcissistic and potentially unhinged, yet extrovert and socially bold- in short, bad tempered and provocative, but charismatic”

From both results of the studies, it is possible to define the personality traits of the Turkish leader as a populist and autocrat. Moreover, these can give us a first view of which characteristics of Erdoğan are more probable to influence his decision-making process: the Gezi Park protest and the failed coup, that are going to be analyzed later in the chapter, can be significant examples of the low emotional stability of the Turkish leader. Or for example, the slightly high results on narcissism can be explained in Erdoğan capacity to focus all the attention on him, and this allows him to also accumulate power in his hands.

2. Leader's perception of the world

If personality traits help in the creation of a psychological profile of a leader to later understand how its decision-making process works, so does the perception of the world. Perceptions guide us in how we see the world, and even if partially they are based upon our personality and past experiences, they are relevant because they are the first filter in which new information goes through (Breuning, 2008). There are several factors that comes into

play when perception is the main subject of the conversation, but in the following pages two theories with leader's perception as pivotal point are going to be discussed. They are prospect theory and national role conception.

2.1 Prospect Theory

Prospect theory was first introduced by Kahneman and Tversky in 1979 with the objective of creating a new framework to analyze decisions under risks. This newly created framework encompassed the analysis of how decisions are made: a first stage is composed by the framing of the situation and the problem to tackle, so the way information is delivered becomes important (Kahneman and Tversky, 1981). The second stage involves the analytical part of the problem-solving process, in which loss and gains are investigated and through the prospect theory, researchers found out that decision-makers tend to risk more when they are in a loss-situation, and on the contrary they tend to risk less when they find themselves in the gain-situation (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984).

The prospect theory has become very useful to understand many political choices, even the one who seemed irrational or not well thought. One example has been given by Rose McDermott (1992) trying to understand which factors influenced and pushed US President Carter to approve the Iranian hostage rescue mission. In her paper McDermott investigate the Iranian affair starting first from the context in which President Carter was. In facts, Carter was not in a positive context for his position mainly for two reasons: first, the failing of the negotiations over the Teheran hostage situation and second the electoral campaign for re-election was not going well.

Given this loss-environment, it becomes important to understand how Carter's advisors perceived the risk of the options available to solve the problem, in order for us to understand the way the information was presented to the US President, and therefore analyze why Carter chose that precise solution. According to the paper, there were five solutions on the table, each presented by a different advisor. In this case, it is important to understand the origins and the position held by these advisors, because thanks to this it is possible to understand another important factor in the solution proposed, that is the concept of win. In the Iranian hostage crisis, five solutions were presented, from minimal intervention to military intervention. What was important for the situation was to find a balance between the political and military risk (McDermott, 1992).

Using the prospect theory, it is possible to argue that since President Carter was not finding himself in a good position, he would choose a risky option with high gains, and that is exactly what he did. In fact, President Carter chose the rescue mission as an option, that had more gains for him. If the rescue mission was a success, he would have gained all the things that he lost in that year, securing him also four more years in the White House. However, the situation did not go as Carter planned: the rescue mission proved to be a failure and that costed him credibility both at domestic and international level, and in the end was one of the main factors that stopped the American voters to vote him as President for the second mandate.

The prospect theory helped to understand the importance of perception of gain and loss in a risky and under pressure situation, putting into focus how one person sees the world and a specific situation can actually be a determining factor when decisions are involved. Moreover, the presence of advisors with different views and different method of framing and delivering information could be considered a game-changer, as new perspective can influence one's decision-making process.

2.2 National Role Conceptions

Perceptions are also at the base of another relevant sociological theory used in international relations that is national role conceptions. Holsti (1970) was the researcher who integrated this theory to international relations and foreign policy. National Role conceptions is defined as the "policymakers' own definition of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state and of function" (Holsti, 1970: 245-246). So, the international status of a state becomes relevant in this theory since the perception of the state's position at international level gives already a foreign policy direction to the leaders. In fact, if a leader perceives their national position as dominant, they will follow a more participatory role in the international arena (Wish, 1980). In this sense, according to the theory, not only is important to analyze how a person influence the position is in, but also how the norms, traditions, and behaviors that derive from the role one person is also a factor that influence the leader decision process.

Mehtap Kara and Ahmet Sözen (2016) used the national role conceptions theory to understand the impact of JDP and Erdoğan on Turkish foreign policy. Using official speeches regarding foreign policy and transcripts, the two authors Turkish foreign policy

from the 1980s, and codified thirty-three national role conceptions that are written in the graph below.

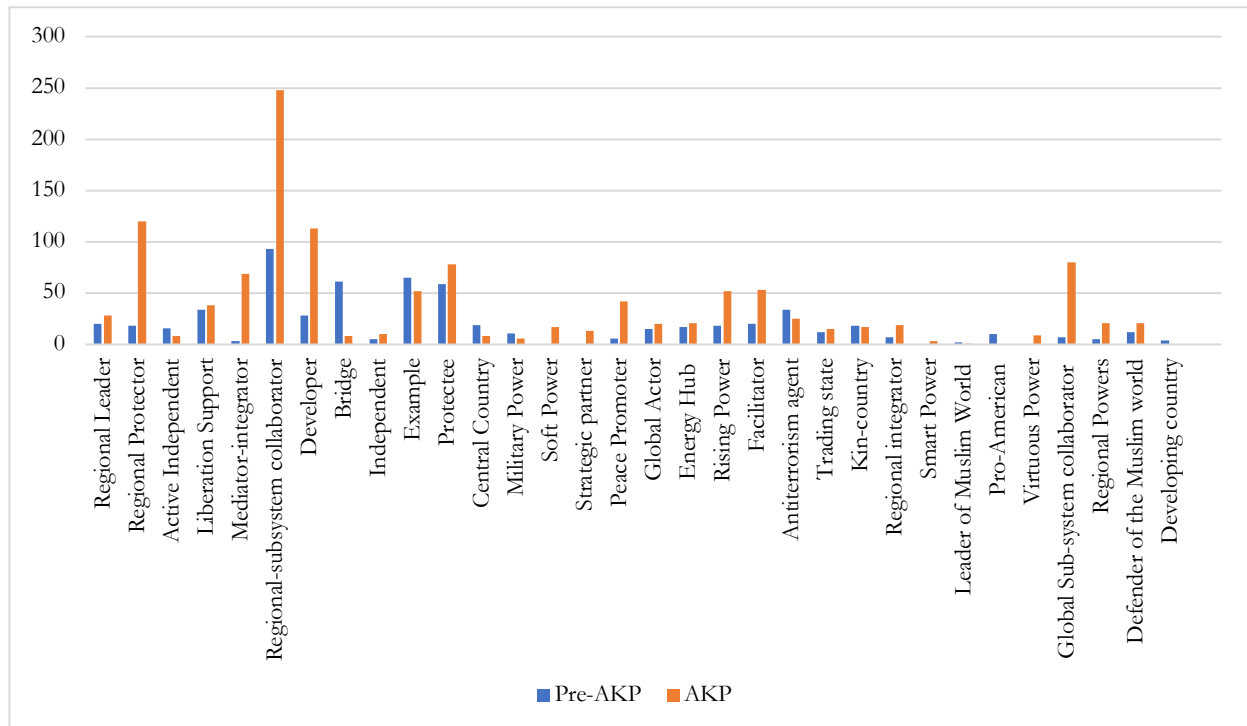


Figure 8: Comparing National Role Conceptions pre-JDP/JDP periods

Source: Kara and Sözen, 2016

The result of the study highlighted a marked difference between the period pre-JDP and the JDP period. In this sense, Ahmet Davutoğlu’s strategic depth doctrine can be considered the motor behind the change of pace of Turkish foreign policy. In facts, strategic depth wanted to create a more “self-confident and independent foreign policy as an “active independent” actor” (Kara and Sözen, 2016: 56). The pro-activeness showed by Turkish foreign policy also brought to a more participatory role for Turkey into the international arena. As it is shown in the graph, Turkey was increasingly perceived as a “regional-subsystem collaborator” and “regional protector” due to the strategic depth doctrine and the years of campaigning towards better relationships with its neighbors (zero-problem with neighbors) and increasing trade with them. Furthermore, Turkey’s active role also increased its own perception of global power, as shown in the graph in the “global-subsystem collaborator” column. Moreover, as already explained in the second chapter, the Turkish foreign policy enabled the use of soft power, a concept that before the JDP was never linked to Turkey’s strategy to foreign policy.

What national role conceptions and the study highlight is the importance of perceptions in leader's mind: in facts, one way to define Turkey's change of pace in foreign policy is to attribute to the leaders' own perception of Turkey and how to use it at its own advantage.

3. Understanding the Turkish leader: Erdoğan's origins

Following the theoretical notions of the first part of the chapter, it is important to ask some questions: Who is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan? Where does he come from? Which kind of education did he get? This kind of questions allows to create a context around the figure of President Erdoğan that, later combined with the studies done on his personality, will create a psychological picture that will make easier the analysis of how decisions are made in Turkey. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was born February 26, 1954, in Kasımpaşa, a poor neighborhood of Istanbul. His father Ahmet and his mother Tenzile moved from Rize, a little conservative town near the mountain, to which Erdoğan still maintains a close relationship (Donelli, 2019; Livet, 2018). During the 50s and 60s, the neighborhood in which Erdoğan grew, Kasımpaşa, was considered a very conservative neighborhood and an industrial area in decline, and the only people living there were the families that moved from the hinterland trying to run from poverty (Cağaptay, 2018). Already living in a difficult neighborhood, Erdoğan and his brothers and sisters had one more difficulty to overcome: the violence of their father. In facts, Ahmet Erdoğan has been described as a man with a lot of vices, a disrespectful husband, and an unreliable father (Donelli, 2019). In this home environment, the figure of Tenzile, his mother, will become important and a pillar for the emotional stability of the Turkish President.

The difficult family environment and the difficult neighborhood Erdoğan lived his childhood and teenager years can give already some information about the Turkish President: even if the Kasımpaşa neighborhood was not the easiest place where to grow up, the community that formed around it was a support system for Erdoğan and his family and helped the Turkish President to develop some skills such as pragmatism.⁴ Moreover, growing up in a difficult neighborhood was a first step towards negative thoughts about the Turkish elites. They were the opposite of Erdoğan: wealthy, western-oriented and Kemalist, and this complete differences between them created a sentiment of disdain in the Turkish president (Cağaptay, 2018).

⁴ President Erdoğan made a TV interview in 2013 in which he talked about his life. It is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILv6etEDASg>

Another important difference and important factor of Erdoğan's early life is his education. In fact, Erdoğan's father decided to send Recep to an *imam hatip*, a religious school that forms Imams and preachers, so a religious school. What is important to highlight is the different educational path that the Turkish President was doing in his early life. In fact, it was not common to attend a school with a strong religious base in a laic Turkey with a clear distinction between religion and state. During his school years, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan came into contact with an author that later, during his political career, he will often quote: Necip Fazıl Kısakürek. He was an Islamist writer and based his discourse of democracy around the *milli irade*, the national interests. In fact, the state leader needed to be one, and could do whatever he wanted to achieve the national interests (Singer, 2013). Not only Kısakürek is an author that the Turkish President often quote, but it can be affirmed that is at the basis of his idea of leadership and government.

To confirm Erdoğan's interest for religion, he joined during his high school years the National Turkish Student Association (MTTB), a right-wing youth association. MTTB wanted to mobilize student from conservative backgrounds, and during the 60s and the 70s was the "ideological breeding ground for the generation of Islamist cadres that went on and found JDP" (Karaveli, 2016: 126). In fact, during those years, Erdoğan met Abdullah Gül, 2007-2014 President of Turkey, and Bulent Arinc, 2009-2015 Erdoğan's deputy prime minister.

Erdoğan's involvement in conservative parties did not end in high school. In fact, he joined the *Milli Görüş*, an Islamist organization in which he met Necmettin Erbakan, his "political-father" and the first Turkish Islamist Prime Minister since the creation of the Republic of Turkey. Erdoğan was very close to Erbakan, and thanks to his charismatic personality and the security showed by him, he was able to move up the hierarchy of the organization, and later of the WP, to become one mayor of Istanbul in 1994 and one of Erbakan's number twos (Donelli, 2019 and Livet, 2018).

What is possible to analyze here is the importance of the origins of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in his upbringing. It was his father, Ahmet Erdoğan, a very conservative man, to enroll him in a religious school. In addition to that, it was the neighborhood he lived in that attracted him towards Islamism and more religious view of politics. To combine these factors, and the personality traits that are going to be analyzed after, we can already have a first idea of what kind of a man he is and what kind of background the Turkish president have. Bakışhan Jr. (2013:62) said that "Erdoğan rose from intelligence, drive and undoubted ambition. [...] Erdoğan is a devout Muslim who often waxes nostalgic about the good old imperial days".

Even Daniele Santoro (2016a) highlights the importance of history and the imperial past of Turkey for Erdoğan. In fact, according to the author, every action made by the Erdoğan's governments are always thought and compared to a past event, and the connection with the imperial past is very important for the Turkish President.

Having said that, it is understood that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is a very religious man, deeply connected from its place of origin, and with a deep connection with the imperial and Islamist past of Turkey. This background, combined with some research studies done on his personality, will allow us to understand some of the decisions made by the Turkish President.

4. Erdoğan's personality and leadership

Now that some information about Erdoğan's early years have been analyzed, the focus will turn on the personality traits of the Turkish Leader. If in the first part of the chapter it was used the BFI and the Dark Triad to evaluate Erdoğan's personality, in this part of this thesis it will be used another theory briefly explained in the first part of the chapter: LTA. Using Hermann's methodology, it is possible to also understand which type of decision a leader can make, and this part is important for the last part of the chapter, in which some important moments of the political career of Erdoğan will be examined keeping in mind the result of the LTA of the Turkish President.

Various studies were done on Erdoğan's personality, mainly for two reasons: first, the study of leader's personality is a discipline rising and gaining more and more importance. Second, due to the emerging importance of the discipline, personality traits could be used to evaluate using a different method Erdoğan's actions and go deeper to understand them better. Görener and Ucal (2011) wanted to understand the effect of the JDP leader on the choices on foreign policy. For this reason, they used the LTA method, and discovered some facts about Erdoğan's leadership style.

LTA characteristics	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan score		Political leaders N = 214	Middle East N = 83
BACE (Belief Can Control Events)	0.40	<i>High</i>	0.34 Low < 0.30 High > 0.38	0.33 Low < 0.29 High > 0.37
CC (Conceptual Complexity)	0.60	<i>Low</i>	0.65 Low < 0.61 High > 0.69	0.64 Low < 0.60 High > 0.68
DIS (Distrust of Others)	0.16	<i>High</i>	0.01 Low < 0.01 High > 0.01	0.01 Low < 0.01 High > 0.01
IGB (Ingroup Bias)	0.12	<i>Low</i>	0.51 Low < 0.44 High > 0.58	0.5 Low < 0.43 High > 0.57
PWR (Need for Power)	0.26	<i>Average</i>	0.26 Low < 0.22 High > 0.30	0.25 Low < 0.22 High > 0.28
SC (Self-Confidence)	0.30	<i>Average</i>	0.36 Low < 0.27 High > 0.45	0.37 Low < 0.26 High > 0.48
TASK (Task Focus)	0.65	<i>Low</i>	0.73 Low < 0.67 High > 0.79	0.71 Low < 0.65 High > 0.77

Figure 9: LTA results of Erdoğan

Source: Görener & Ucal, 2011

To determine if one characteristic score is high or low, the authors had to first analyze 214 political leaders and compare the scores. From the results on the figure above, five out of seven characteristics can be considered important:

- *Belief in ability can control events*: the high score on this characteristic reveals the importance of perception for Erdoğan. As a consequence, he prefers to take act fast, and in order to act fast, it is important the decision-making process has himself as the top figure (Görener and Ucal ,2011)
- *Conceptual Complexity*: the low score on conceptual complexity indicates that for Erdoğan the world is black or white, and it is very difficult for him to evaluate the possibility of a grey area. Therefore, it is more likely that he will surround himself with advisors that have the same thoughts as him.
- *Distrust of others*: the high score describes a leader that is not secure about the environment around him, and every action has the potential to become a threat against him.
- *Task orientation*: low scores on task orientation reports a leader whose only important mission is the pleasing of the public. Therefore, all the attention is not on the problem-solving of a situation, but on the perception of the public around that same situation.

More recently were made other studies on the same subject, and these are useful to understand how the personality of the Turkish President has evolved during his years in the

government, considering the major events that happened in the 2010s. Balcı and Efe (2017), Kesgin (2020), Çuahdar et al. (2021) are some of the studies made on Erdoğan’s personality, but they are relevant to understand the evolution of the personal characteristic of the LTA discipline. What has changed from the results of the study of Görener and Ucal (2011)?

LTA Trait	Balcı and Efe (2017)	Kesgin (2020)	Çuahdar et al. (2021)
Belief in ability can control events	0,399 ↑	0,384 ↑	0,384 ↑
Conceptual Complexity	0,601 ↓	0,599 --	0,598 ↑
Need for Power	0,279 ↑	0,240 ↓	0,243 ↓
Distrust of Others	0,229 ↑	0,114 ↓	0,116 ↓
In-group bias	0,150 --	0,087 ↓	0,090 ↓
Self-Confidence	0,402 ↑	0,357 --	0,356 ↓
Task Orientation	0,612 ↓	0,645 --	0,632 ↓

Figure 10: LTA results in Balcı and Efe (2017), Kesgin 2020 and Çuahdar er al. (2021)

Note: this table is a resume of the results of the three studies cited. The symbols stand for: ↑ higher than the average, -- on average, ↓ lower than the average. The average is based on the specific studies. Moreover, the results of Balcı and Efe (2017) are an average of the entire results discussed in the paper.

Every study has a common objective: the definition of the personality traits of Erdoğan, so that his decision-making process would be clearer. However, every study has different objectives.

Chronologically speaking, the first study of Balcı and Efe (2017) wants to understand the implication that traumatic events and longevity of office can have on leadership traits, and therefore on decision-making process. The two authors discovers that stable traits are not efficient in the analysis of a leader such as Erdoğan that has retained powers for such a long time. In this case, it is important to also investigate on the effects that experience, and traumatic events have on how the leader decides.

On the other hand, Kesgin (2020) highlights the difference perceptions of Erdoğan’s LTA traits based on the different foreign policy audiences. The author takes the different perceptions from the West, the East, Europe, US, and the Middle East and sees how the LTA characteristics vary based of where the survey was taken. What comes out of it is the pragmatic side of the Turkish President. In facts, analyzing different foreign policy audiences

can give a new perspective on how leaders can change their leadership style based on which kind of audience they are talking to.

Finally, the study conducted by Çuhadar et al. (2021) analyzes various Turkish leaders and compares them using the LTA method. Thanks to this study, it is possible to put into comparative terms some of the most important Turkish leaders of recent history, and therefore compare the various leadership and decision-making styles.

From what comes out of the four studies here briefly described, it is possible to find some commonality in Erdoğan's LTA characteristics: he is a firm believer of his own capabilities to change events, therefore he will be a pro-active leader, even if his rate of success could be low due to too direct and open to the use of army power (Kesgin, 2020).

He is described as a leader with a limited view of the world, as every issue he must tackle is black or white, and he is not willing to explore the grey areas (Görener and Ucal, 2011; Çuhadar et al., 2021). Furthermore, this limit view of the world is augmented since he surrounds himself only with advisors with the same opinion, not providing an environment where the opposite thoughts is welcomed (Lancaster, 2014). Moreover, the low task orientation of Erdoğan's also explains his tendency towards a more populist politics. Baykan (2017), reviewing the book *Political leadership and Erdoğan* by Akdoğan (2017), highlights the process putting public opinion on the center of the political arena, therefore the action of Erdoğan and the JDP are based now on the importance of it, changing completely the scope of politics. Moreover, leaders with low scores of task orientations tend to focus on the constituent's opinion when they need to solve a problem, and this is visible in some of the statements Erdoğan made throughout his political career. Santoro (2016b: 1-2) collected some of these statements and it is possible to see how completely opposed opinions are stated by the Turkish President. For example, when talking about the Kurds, in 2005 said:

“The Kurdish problem is not a problem for a part of the nation, it is for all nation. Based on the Republican doctrine and principles that the founders of this country left us, we will solve every issue inside the constitutional order with more democracy, more laws on citizenship and more prosperity. We are solving and we will continue to solve problems”.

In 2016, on the other hand, he commented:

“Dear brothers, in this country there was never a Kurdish problem. However, there is someone who is trying to keep it on the order daily agenda. We solved this problem with the speech I gave in Diyarbakır in 2005. [...] They keep talking about a Kurdish problem. But what are you talking about? Which

Kurdish problem? What did you miss? Did you have a Kurdish President? Yes, you had. Did you have a Kurdish Prime Minister? Yes, you had. Did you have Kurdish Ministers? Yes, you had. Are there Kurdish people inside the current bureaucracy and on the army? Yes, there are. What else do you want? For the love of God, what don't you have that we have? You have everything.”

Another example could be the Syrian war. September 24, 2015, after a meeting with President Vladimir Putin, Erdoğan said that it was possible to have both a process of transition with or without al-Asad. The next day, after a meeting with the Qatar Emir, on the contrary stated that the transition process was possible only without the presence of al-Assad, confuting a what he just said a day earlier.

The leadership style that comes out of these studies, following Hermann's method, is a leader with both expansionistic and actively independent styles, based on how he is open toward information (Çuhadar et al., 2021). This means that he focuses his foreign policy actions with the objective in mind to expand his power, and he will try to find a way to maintain some independence over his own action compared to the international order.

To conclude, for sure the Turkish President is a charismatic persona with the ability to engage the public, but it is also true that the picture depicted by the studies analyzed reveals a leader whose ambitions can become dangerous for the national and the international arena. Moreover, sentiment of distrust to all the people surrounding him in the long period can elevate the emotional instability present in his personality, and therefore can bring more instability inside Turkey's government.

5. The JDP intra-democracy problem and Erdoğan's personal diplomacy

Erdoğan's own perception of its ability to have an influence on events has also elevated, even evolved to the use of personal diplomacy in the Turkish foreign policy strategy. However, before talking about that, it is important to underline a situation common in the Turkish parties, JDP included. Intra-democracy is the situation where parties in democracies tend to develop oligarchic tendencies in their party organization (Michaels, 1911). Turkey has always had an authoritarian leadership, but Lancaster (2014) argues that the level of authority reached during the government of Erdoğan is higher than in the entire Turkish history. She poses importance to the figure of the Turkish President as he is the connector that enables the JDP to continue its ruling in Turkey. Without Erdoğan, the JDP would collapse. As a consequence, the Turkish President was able to match his desire of increasing his power with

the Turkish political context. He centralized the power of the party and his country in his hands, and he made it possible thanks to a transition towards the years. If the party was able to be pragmatic at the beginning of its political journey and collect supporters from the center-right field of the Turkish political arena, during time it was more and more visible the process of centralization of power in the hand of the JDP'S leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Lancaster, 2014; Bashirov and Lancaster, 2018; Yilmaz et al., 2020). As it was discussed in the first chapter, the JDP was able to perform democratic reforms, also pushed by the EU accession process. The beginning of the second mandate in 2007 signed the beginning of more autocratic reforms and the beginning of the JDP'S transformation into an autocratic party, and one already provided example are the process to the failed military coup of 2007 and the following 2010 referendum that took power from the military. However, the year that can be considered the watershed in JDP autocratic path is 2011 (Bashirov and Lancaster, 2018). During these years, Erdoğan changed the internal structure of his party, surrounding it with conservative politicians, eliminating the central part of the party that was the determining factor of the first JDP election in 2001 (Cağaptay, 2018). In facts, both Bashirov and Lancaster (2018) and Yilmaz et al. (2020) analyzed the JDP path towards radicalization through the elimination of the various constraints present inside the Turkish government, and then how then the JDP was able to also gain the support of the secular opposition, that is the opposite of JDP. However, it is also true that the autocratic regime ruled by Erdoğan had also some relevant negative point. In facts, Karaveli (2016) observed that Erdoğan 's conservative views did not create an environment to foster development, and therefore the only possible solution would be a shift towards democratization. Confirming Karaveli's statement there are 2 events: the Gezi protests and the 2016 failed coup, that are going to be briefly discussed in the next pages.

The intra-democracy issue amplified the centralization of power in the hands of the Turkish President and the fact that he has a substantial perception of his own persona in the policy areas and his influence on it bring an important consideration to make in analyzing foreign policy, that is the implementation of a personal diplomacy strategy (Santoro, 2016a). in Personal diplomacy can be described as the use of personal relationships between the leaders of different countries to conclude foreign policy actions. Considering this description, the leaders' perceptions can play an important instrument, and it is relevant in the attempt of investigating Turkish foreign policy. In facts, as it was argued throughout the chapter and the thesis, personality traits, perceptions and social relationships need to be considered when the argument is foreign policy. Ülgül (2019) investigated on the relevance of personal

relationship between leaders and President Erdoğan, especially after the Arab Uprising. He discovered that the regional instability that the Middle East revolts brought in the regional arena created the need of new strategy to implement foreign policy. Another important element to add to this environment is the charismatic personality of the Turkish president: in facts, Erdoğan has become the most popular leader in the Middle East thanks to personal diplomacy (Kanat, 2014), and the increased popularity had pushed him to believe more about his influence power over the other leaders. Ülgül (2019) gives a successful example to explain personal diplomacy, and this example is the relationship with Russia. Turkish - Russian relationship were at a low point already during the Arab Spring, but the situation deteriorated after that Turkey shot down a Russian jet in November 2015 (BBC, 2015). Turkish military only took 17 seconds to make the call, and it is said that this decision was also taken due to the 2012 incident, when the Russian military took down a Turkish jet that entered Russian airspace (Galeotti, 2015). Putin and Erdoğan during the years were always compared for their political style and personal characteristic, and in this particular situation seemed to be a negative factor, as both leaders are stubborn and sensitive. However, in this case it seemed that Erdoğan's objective was to retie Turkey and Russia, and this meant to use the commonalities between himself and Putin to do so. In the end, President Putin in 2019 declared that the improvement of the bilateral relations had been able to Erdoğan due to his willingness and personal relations with him (Ülgül, 2019).

6. The failed coup of 2016 and the consequences on Erdoğan's regime

The effects of the Arab Spring were not what Turkey had hoped. The fact that the MENA region was having a full variety of problems was an obstacle for the Turkish foreign policy. what the Turkish government had noticed was the gap between the rhetoric and the action taken, and the situation that emerged put Erdoğan in a difficult situation, both at home than in the international arena (Fradkin and Libby, 2013). The climate of instability first had brought to the Gezi protests, that were one of the most revealing signs of Erdoğan's turn to autocracy and creating an even more tense and unstable environment as the opposition towards the Turkish President grew (Gunter, 2018). However, the biggest shock for Erdoğan's government was the Failed Coup of July 15, 2016. The coup was orchestrated and executed to a movement that was a very close supporter of Erdoğan's government (until 2015), the Gülen movement. The effects of this coup on Erdoğan's persona and the Turkish

government were massive, and a signal that something needed to change, both in domestic policy and in foreign policy.

6.1 the Gülen Movement

Before discussing the event per se, it is important to briefly focus the attention of this chapter to the Gülen movement, the perpetrators of the coup d'état of 2016.

The Gülen movement is a community of people created by Fetullah Gülen, a scholar and imam, who focused his movement to the promotion of a tolerant Islam based on altruism, modesty, hard work and education (BBC, 2016). Fetullah Gülen has always been considered one of the most important man of Turkey, and his relevance in the Turkish political arena had forced him to flee to the United States in 1999 (Gunter, 2018). Even the physical absence of its leader, the Gülen movement continued to grow. The movement is present in Turkey since the end of the 20th century, even if it was never active politically. This decision changed after 2003 and the election of Erdoğan and AKP, even if the two parts involved have divergent opinions (Donelli, 2019).

If the movement was useful for Erdoğan to continue his run to win over Turkish constituency, the situation started to change in the 2010s. However, the big rupture between Erdoğan and Gülen was in 2013, after Gülen accusing Erdoğan of corruption (Gunter, 2018; Donelli, 2020). Erdoğan's reaction was immediate, as he started to stop the support of Gülenist companies and persons part of the movement stopped to get promotions in their job or to governative roles (Cağaptay, 2018). The rupture between Erdoğan and Gülen was complete, and now the two allies had transformed themselves into rivals.

6.2 The July 15 Coup and the effects on foreign policy

In the previous pages, Erdoğan has been described as a charismatic leader with the capacity to engage the voters, yet he also has a very suspicious character, as it is very difficult for him to trust people. Moreover, the health issues that he had to deal with, and the domestic and international situation instability had not helped him into improving this characteristic. However, the big shock for the Turkish President arrived directly from former ally Gülen and his movement. July 15, 2016, when part of the army connected to Gülen and his community attacked two tactical points for Turkey: Izmir and Istanbul (Azeri, 2016). However, as it was already said in chapter 1, the army has always been the keeper of the

secular-Kemalist tradition, therefore one of the main reasons why this coup failed is the fact that the majority of the army did not support it and it was also not well organized (Cağaptay, 2018). Where was Erdoğan while all of this happened? He was in Marmaris, a city by the sea to spend the weekend. It will be discovered later that a group of militaries was discovered to have left Izmir to reach Marmaris with the objective to kidnap, or even kill President Erdoğan (Donelli, 2019).

The attack on his government and life was a shock for the Turkish President. However, thanks to his ability to speak to the masses and his pragmatism that had always showed since the creation of the JDP he was able to turn the failed coup in an occasion to strengthen his autocratic power and center even more the decision chain in his hands (Azeri, 2016; Aras, 2017). In facts, Erdoğan right away stated that the coup of July has been the second Turkish independence war, giving it an important connotation (Cağaptay,2018). This connotation also made possible an alignment with the opposition that has tried to limit Erdoğan's actions. In facts, as the opposition also condemned the attack on the government and on the person of Erdoğan, it aligned with the JDP, legitimizing its further actions (Yilmaz et al., 2020).

What were the effects of the July 15 coup on Turkish foreign policy? First of all, as in the domestic arena Erdoğan started to tighten political powers in his persona, this also happened in foreign policy. Aras (2019) discussed the effects on foreign policy considering first four crises that Turkey had to overcome: systemic, political, security and identity crisis. Even if opposition and JDP found a common opinion about the coup itself, this did not help to tie the relationship between the two. Therefore, the environment in which Turkey found itself was more unstable than before, and this augmented the perception of threat and constant emergency not only inside the national borders, but also in the regional arena. Aras (2019) continues in stating that the only way for Turkey to exit this vicious circle is to stop worrying about short term problems and to focus on the long-term relationship and to build a more sustainable foreign policy, and the next chapter will try to understand which direction Turkish foreign policy is taking.

CHAPTER 4: TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY DURING 2018-2020

1. Wind of changes

During this dissertation it has been made the point that there are three factors that influence foreign policy: the domestic arena, the international arena, and personal characteristics of the leader in charge. If in the three previous chapter these factors have been explored singularly, in this chapter it is going to be analyzed the 2018-2020 period, therefore the chosen period will be analyzed using the same methodology. It was chosen this two-years period because Turkey's objective and methods in foreign policy changed respect the previous years, therefore it is interesting to investigate what are the factors determining this change.

The focus of this chapter will be put on first to the changes to the Turkish regime after the 2017 referendum. Second, the change in foreign policy strategy will be discussed. As case-study for this chapter, the Syrian crisis will give the framework to understand the new Turkish foreign policy and how the relations with the actors involved in the countries evolved throughout time. Finally, it will be analyzed the Turkish military intervention in Libya of 2019.

2. Domestic changes: the presidency and the new decision-making chain

The domestic arena has been subject to major changes in the years before 2018. The first important event was the first direct presidential election of 2014. In this case, Erdoğan won with the 52% of the votes, and even some doubts about the legitimacy of the vote were raised due to suspicious financial transactions in support of the presidential campaign of the JDP (Donelli, 2019). Ahmet Davutoğlu was promoted to Prime Minister, and the partnership between the two Turkish leaders continued for two more years, until 2016 when Davutoğlu

resigned. In his period as Prime Minister, Davutoğlu started a campaign to make sure that Erdoğan could become the center of the decision-making process, and this happened in 2017 with a constitutional referendum, in which the JDP won with a small margin (OSCE, 2017).⁵ However, before the referendum could happen, the role of President in Turkey was more symbolic than operative, and Erdoğan still needed a platform that would enable him to still have a saying in the matter of domestic and foreign policy. For this reason, newly elected President Erdoğan started to use mukhtars' meeting to indirectly talk to the domestic constituents, the JDP party and the international arena (Ülgül, 2018). Mukhtars are a local figure that first appeared in Turkey in the 19th century, and their role was, and still is, to be a bridge between the local people and the central government. President Erdoğan decided to use the figure of the mukhtars for his own advantage, participating to their meetings. As the presence of the Turkish President gave more importance to mukhtars meetings, at the same time Erdoğan was once more able to reach its domestic constituency using a new communicational vehicle, considering the circumstances of his new role.

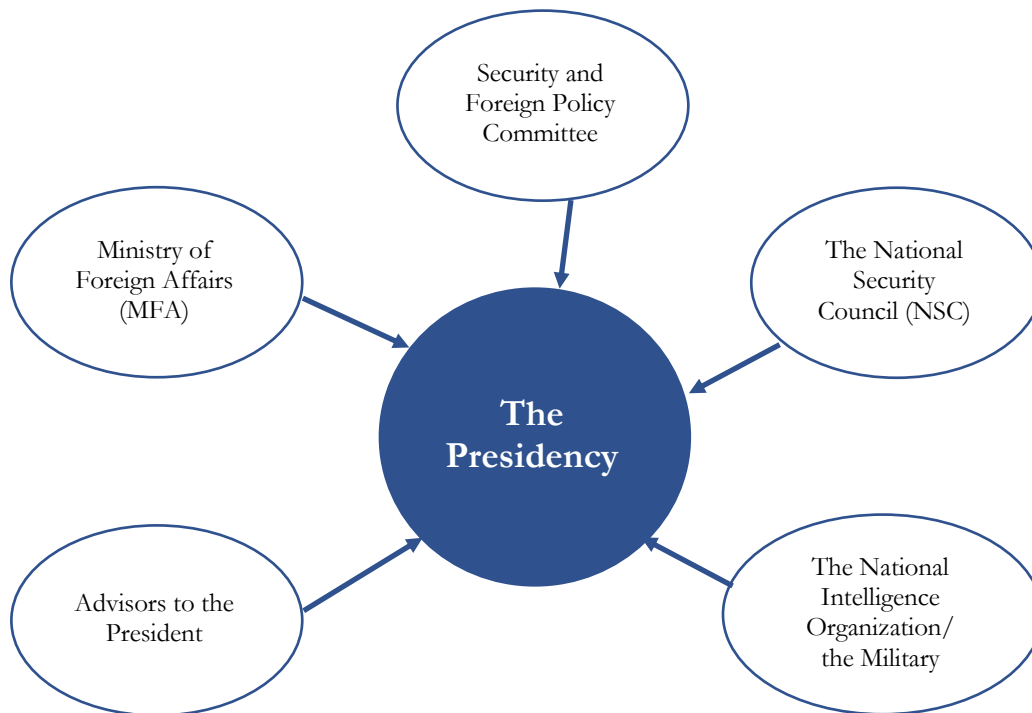


Figure 11: new decision-making chain after the 2017 referendum

Source: Neset et al., (2019)

⁵ Full report on the Turkish constitutional referendum is available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/303681>

The situation changed thanks to the referendum of April 2017. In fact, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became at the same time head of state, head of government, head of JDP, Turkish ruling party, and head of Turkish military and police (Cağaptay, 2019). As it is possible to see in the image above, the chain of decision-making changed related to foreign policy after the referendum. As a matter of fact, the Chr. Michelsens Institutt (CMI) in 2019 made a study to understand how foreign policy decisions have been taken in Turkey since the 2017 referendum. They discovered that all process had been centralized to the figure of the President, meaning Erdoğan himself, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs covering just an advisory role on their competence. Moreover, the Security and Foreign Policy Committee, the National Security Council (NSC) and the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) also cover an advisory role on foreign policy.

Another source of information for President Erdoğan are his close circle of advisors, that according to the CMI research, these formal institutions give the information to President Erdoğan directly, and this gives to the President himself more power and more importance to his perception of the environment around him. As it was already described in chapter three, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is a man with a very limited view of the world, everything for him is divided black or white. Moreover, he has a tendency to distrust the people around him. For this reason, all the decisions taken need to be framed in how the Turkish president perceives the world and the environment around him. As a consequence, the various threats that the Turkish republic had to tackle in the recent years had posed a relevant challenge to Erdoğan's personality and perception of the world: if his vision was not the most open and very limited, the events that de-stabilized Turkey closed even more the vision of the Turkish president, augmenting his sense of threat, and therefore his needs to be in control of the situation started to augment as well, increasing the process of power centralization towards his hand. Babacan (2019) poses an important matter regarding the process of democratization of Turkey: if Turkey had started to experience a change in the first years of the century, to then later be interrupted by new policies, a new international order and new security threats, the only way for the Turkish republic to restart this process is to change the Turkish political culture, and therefore the entire constitution. In fact, the author continues in explaining that the three Turkish constitutions were not democratic, but "undemocratic texts solidifying the authoritarian state structure" (Babacan: 2019: 173). If we consider the process described earlier towards a new chain in the decision-making world, it is possible to argue that Turkey was and still is following the opposite direction towards a more democratic state.

Once again it is clear the connection that domestic policy and changes have on international politics and foreign policy. The unstable domestic environment that Turkey was experiencing translated also to the threats that the Turkish republic was dealing in the international arena. Moreover, it is important to also highlight once more the fact that during the JDP government the use of foreign policy is directly proportional to its objective in the domestic arena. As a consequence, all the foreign policy decisions must first face the domestic constituency. Therefore, the new role of Erdoğan, and the changes he made to the office of President become fundamental to explain the new set of foreign policy decisions after the resignation of Prime Minister Davutoğlu in 2016.

3. The new Turkish Foreign Policy after Davutoğlu

The end of the partnership between Davutoğlu and Erdoğan was the signal to the end of an era. An era that was characterized by the search for influence over the Middle East region through soft power and the creation of long-lasting relationships. However, the Arab Spring hit and showed all the weaknesses of the Davutoğlu approach to foreign policy, leaving Turkey more isolated in the region. Moreover, Turkey had also seen the ties with the traditional Western allies to become weaker: to cite an example, the United States of President Trump was following an *America first* path, leaving Turkey out of US' global security umbrella (Cağaptay, 2019). So, when Davutoğlu announced his resignation in 2016 this meant the opening of a new era in foreign policy for Turkey, with Erdoğan as the creator of this new strategy.

The Erdoğan's vision of the world is very different from the one of Davutoğlu, and this also meant a change in the mean of performing foreign policy. The new "Erdoğan doctrine" is formed by various factors: first, Kutlay and Oniş (2021) argue that the world order is changing, and the Western powers are losing their dominant role in favor of other countries such as China and Russia. Moreover, Erdoğan sees Turkey as part of the global South (and can also be considered a possible candidate to join the BRIC group), so as a consequence of that Erdoğan's new strategy has been called "strategic autonomy". As a consequence, the new objective of Turkish foreign policy is to find "new autonomy that allows to reduce their dependence on the western-led hierarchical order and precludes the needs for 'subtler' balancing strategies" (Kutlay and Oniş, 2021: 1088). Second, the search for new autonomy brought back one important dimension of the previous foreign policy strategy: securitization. The revival of the securitization dimension of Turkish foreign policy has been based upon

the increase of military means and through the principle of pre-emptive actions, meaning that the environment around the Turkish Republic poses different threats to the Republic itself, and it is the job of Turkey and the government to adopt preventive policy to avoid further escalations (Donelli, 2020). As a consequence of the use of the principle of pre-emptive actions, Turkey has used in the last years more its hard power, most specifically the use of force. Later in the chapter, it is going to be discussed how and when Turkey has used its military force as pre-emptive, following the securitization path created by President Erdoğan, to avoid more instability inside Turkey and in the MENA region.

Turkish quest for autonomy must come through the analysis of the new global structure. According to Altunşik (2020a), the transformation of the world balance of power poses both advantages and constraint for Turkish foreign policy. The author also quotes Ibrahim Kalin, one of President Erdoğan most trusted advisor, when he said “The world is bigger than the US and Europe. Thus, trying to only remain in the Europe-centered global order is a concept we should avoid” (Altunşik, 2020a: 13). The words of Kalin are very important also considering one of President Erdoğan’s phrase during a speech at the UN Head Quarters in 2016: “*The world is bigger than five*”. The phrase was a direct critic to the functioning of the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) and the veto powers that the five permanent members, United States, United Kingdom, China, France, and Russia, have. However, this phrase is revealing the changes of the international world order. As a matter of facts, the international balance of power is shifting towards multipolarity. Therefore, it is imperative for all the countries, especially the developing one, to cultivate relationships not only with the old powers, but with everyone (Aras, 2019). According to Kaliber and Kaliber (2019) Turkey started to seriously detach itself from its traditional Western allies first in 2013, after the demonstrations of Gezi Park, and more definitively after 2016 and the failed coup d’etat of the Gülen movement and the late response of the western allies to denounce it. Another element that can be brought into the discussion, according to Kaliber and Kaliber (2019), regarding the estrangement between Turkey and the West, is the populist narrative of an Islamophobic Europe, that is plotting against Islamic countries, causing the death of Islamic people. Another important domestic factor to consider in the new foreign policy strategy is the alliance of the JDP with the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). In facts, after the 2015 parliamentary election, the JDP almost lost its parliamentary majority against the opposition (Oktay, 2020). As a consequence, the gain of the MHP as an ally made domestic and international decisions more supported and had enabled the JDP and President Erdoğan to push for a more nationalistic policy (Koru, 2019): for example, domestically

speaking, the MHP support for the 2017 referendum made possible the regime reform that centralized the power in Erdoğan's hands (Duran, 2018). On the other hand, internationally speaking, the new turn of Turkish foreign policy towards securitization has encountered the approval of the MHP, especially in the military intervention of Syria and Libya (Oktay, 2020). The MHP-JDP alliance divides the experts in who is having the actual control of it: for Sazak (2019), even if the MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli is not taking the decisions, his ideology is ruling, giving him almost more power than President Erdoğan. On the other hand, Koru (2019) argues that even if the MHP ideology is the ruling one, it is the same one that the JDP would have chosen to follow. The "People's Alliance", the given name of the alliance, for the author is not actually an alliance, as the two parties are not on the same level, being the JDP the Turkish democratic system. Bahçeli recently stated that the "People's Alliance is based on the historical rights of the Turkish nation" (Hürriyet Daily News, 2020), proving its nationalistic ideals and its willingness to continue his alliance with President Erdoğan and the JDP towards more reforms.

The new foreign policy strategy, the "Erdoğan doctrine", combined with the criticism of President Erdoğan towards the international institutions and the changing international environment has brought also to see relationships in a different way: if before, thanks to the Strategic Depth Doctrine, the idea was to build a long-lasting relationship based on commonalities, now relationships are not fixed and based on interests (Altunşik, 2020a). Reading this affirmation, it is possible to notice that it goes against the theoretical framework that it was discussed throughout this dissertation. Nevertheless, it is also important to remember the importance of the agent-structure dichotomy, and the fact that they both create each other. Given the current structure, and international context in which the agent, Turkey and Erdoğan, need to construct new relationships, and considering the evolution of the character of Erdoğan due to the domestic and international insecurities, it is normal to assume a radical change in foreign policy. As a matter of fact, for Erdoğan it was clear that the approach chosen by Davutoğlu did not bring the hoped results, and as a consequence it was important for the Turkish minister to pose a clear distinction in the foreign policy approach between himself and former Prime Minister Davutoğlu. Moreover, as it was already discussed in chapter 1, material resources still are determining factors in foreign policy strategy. So, the general development that Turkey had experienced in the first years of the 21st century also augmented the importance for the Turkish Republic of more material "influence" over other states. Furthermore, Batashvili (2017) claims that even if Turkey's resources are not to be compared to the largest modern powers, Turkey possesses ambitions

that their mean can sustain. Therefore, Turkey will remain a geostrategic partner for most of the international players with interests in the region.

Having considered that, in the following pages first it is going to be analyzed the perception of the Turkish citizen regarding Turkish foreign policy and the work of TİKA and the humanitarian support of Turkey in 2018-2020. Later, the chapter will focus on the major foreign policy development of the period, meaning the Syrian war, and the connected relationships with Russia and Iran, the intervention in Libya and finally the intervention in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict of October 2020.

3.1 TİKA's work and Erdoğan's diplomacy

If in the previous section was discussed the securitization of Turkish foreign policy due to the various internal and external threats, it is also important to underline the work of TİKA, the Turkish Agency in charge of the support of other states' development, in the humanitarian field and international aid.

According to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2020), Turkey's humanitarian aid policy is placing Turkey with the Western powers. What it is possible to understand by the statement it is the determination of Turkey to be present in the world and to spread their influence, for example hosting four intergovernmental summits and using its strategic geographical position to foster mediation, cooperation, and multilateralism. On the other hand, it is also possible to see the securitization tendency of Turkey foreign policy in the passage regarding terrorism, as it promises to continue their counter terrorism activities.

To complement and act on the humanitarian projects of Turkish foreign policy, TİKA has always been an important ally in this sense. In facts, TİKA, since its creation, has always worked towards the help of those countries and population in need and the development of infrastructure to sustain them. Even if the principles of Turkish foreign policy have changed, the work of TİKA had not stopped. It is possible to see the work done by the Turkish Agency using the development assistance reports present their official website.⁶ Considering the development assistance reports of 2018 and 2019 it is possible to see the nations and regions in which TİKA has contributed.

⁶ However, not all the development assistance reports are present, as some years are missing (e.g., 2020 is not available at the moment). The collection of development assistance reports is available at: https://www.tika.gov.tr/en/publication/list/tika_annual_reports-22

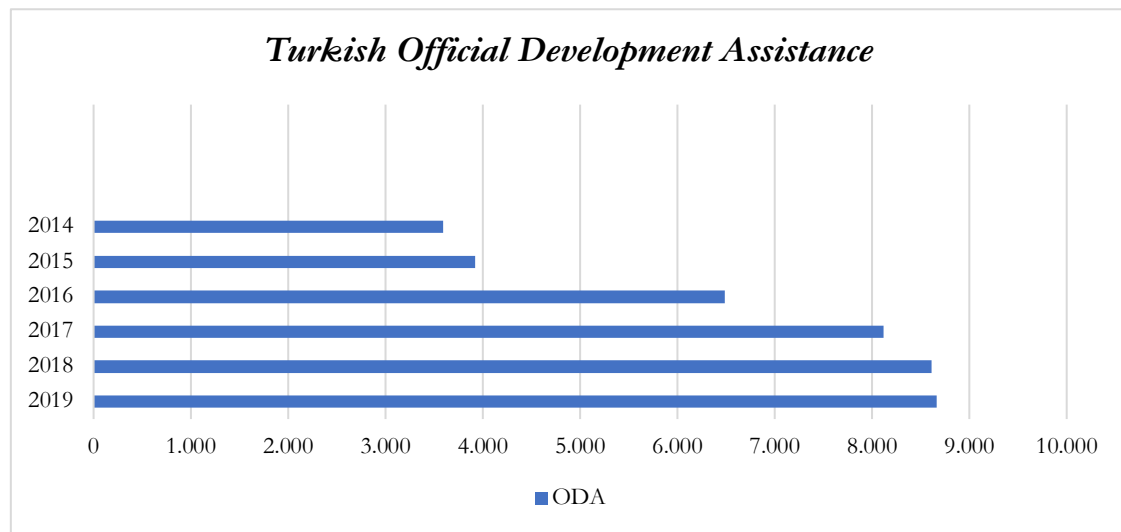


Figure 12: Turkish Official Development Assistance [in Million Dollars]

Source: Turkish Development Assistance Report, 2019

From the graph it is possible to see a continuous growth of the ODA the Turkish government is using to finance humanitarian missions and diverse projects that contribute to the development of least developed countries. Moreover, the amount of funds the Turkish government is allocating in the aid area makes Turkey the “most generous” country, according to the OECD data, using the ratio between the ODA provided and the percentage of national income.⁷ In fact, Turkey, between 2018 and 2019 used 1,10% and 1,15% of its national income to provide funds in development assistance.⁸ Of the Turkish ODA, more the majority have been allocated to emergency and humanitarian aid assistance, respectively \$7.351,3 million in 2018 and \$7.541,34 million in 2019⁹. In addition to that, the country who has been benefitting the most out of the Turkish ODA is Syria, as the majority of the funds of the emergency and humanitarian aid assistance have been allocated in the country due to the civil war and the refugee crisis that has also been affecting Turkey. To give an exact number of the funds allocated to Syria, in 2018 Turkey put \$6.698,51 million, and in 2019 \$7.202,36 million¹⁰.

⁷ Data available in the Turkish Development Assistance Report of 2019 at this link:

<https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/sayfa/publication/2019/TurkiyeKalkinma2019WebENG.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Data available in the Turkish Development Assistance report of 2018 and 2019 at these links:

<https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/sayfa/publication/2019/TurkiyeKalkinma2019WebENG.pdf> and

<https://www.tika.gov.tr/upload/sayfa/publication/2018/TurkiyeKalkinma2018ENGWeb.pdf>

What it is interesting to note is how Turkish humanitarian aid foreign policy has continued to grow, even if the securitization principle replaced the Davutoğlu approach of soft power. These data demonstrate the pragmatism of President Erdoğan, as it is still important for Turkey to continue to spread and increase their area of influence, especially in the MENA region after the debacle of Turkish foreign policy during the Arab Uprising. In fact, if we continue to look at the Turkish development assistance reports, it is possible to see that not only is Turkey allocating funds to the region, but it is creating and developing specific projects that the MENA population can benefit from, for example the building of schools and hospitals, or works for the improvement the quality of water.

If TİKA is the biggest way for the Turkish government to be present in the region through humanitarian and development projects, the new Presidential Republic regime has also changed the way diplomacy have been conducted. As it was described in chapter three, the use of personal relationship to develop new diplomatic contact has always been an important principle for President Erdoğan. Duran (2019) also highlights how diplomacy still poses an important principle for Turkish foreign policy. As a matter of fact, Erdoğan's years of experience are an advantage for Turkish foreign policy in this new multipolar world order, as it allows the Turkish President to use the contacts developed in the years as the Turkish head of government to further develop foreign relationships. Moreover, according to the author the experience that Erdoğan has developed throughout the years will enable him to understand better the international dynamics, and therefore act accordingly. However, as we have seen previously, even if experience is an important element, President Erdoğan's personality is very charismatic and prominent, and therefore it is also important to put into consideration the effects that the Turkish president's personality will have on the decisions taken.

4. Turkey in the Syrian crisis

The situation in which the MENA region found itself after the Arab Uprising created a more hostile environment. As a consequence, Turkey, with its new principle for foreign policy being securitization, needed a new way to maintain or improve the already existing relationship and trying to create new one. The main event influencing the region was for sure the Syrian war, that also brought to the region the Russian Federation. So, Turkey needed to also establish an effective relationship with Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

In this part of the chapter some Turkish relationships are going to be analyzed. First of all, the relationship with Russia. Then, how the relationship with Iran has evolved in relation to the Syrian crisis. Finally, the Astana Peace Process regarding the Syrian crisis will be analyzed, and it will be briefly explained why it has been a failure.

4.1 The arrival of Russia in the MENA region

The arrival of Russia in the MENA region was only a matter of time. In fact, Russia's interest in the MENA region, and more specifically in Syria, is based on two issues: an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea and gas pipelines (Cengiz, 2020). Russia is one of the main gas exporters of the world, and for this reason it has always been important for the Russian Federation to have deals on energy with Turkey due to its strategic position, even in the low point of the Turkish-Russian relation (Cağaptay, 2020). The complex relations surrounding the energy and gas market are not likely to produce a more stable regional order, and for this reason it is relevant for both Turkey and Russia to collaborate in this sense (İşeri and Bartan, 2019).

When Russia saw its interest in the region being jeopardized by the Syrian war, the Russian government decided to intervene in the Syrian conflict in 2015, backing the Assad regime. In that moment the Turkish-Russian relationship was not at its best, and, as it was described in chapter three, it suffered a big setback after Turkey shot down a Russian jet in 2015. It took Erdoğan's personal relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin and the failed coup of 2016 to patch the relationship between the two countries. A demonstration of the regained relationship between Russia and Turkey could be the purchase by Turkey of the Russian S-400 air defense system, that if installed completely, will enable US sanctions, and bring tighter the Russian relationship in defense (Dalay, 2019).

President Putin knows that Turkey is an important ally in the fight for power against the US. As a matter of fact, Turkey's geographical position and its traditional allies make it for Russia the perfect candidate for this objective. The presence of Erdoğan as Turkish president for Putin has both its pros and cons: on one hand, it allows Russia to have an ally inside NATO and therefore it can help in the long run for gaining more influence. On the other hand, the presence of President Erdoğan is not the best option for Putin mainly for two reasons: first, the possible success of political Islam could bring the Muslim-Russian population to go against the Putin regime, and second, Erdoğan's objective of becoming a regional power could undermine its economic and political interest in the MENA region (Cağaptay, 2020). In fact, as both countries are looking to implement their influence in the region, the

relationship between each other will be cooperative or competitive, depending on the situations and issues (Dalay, 2019).

Concerning the Syrian crisis, even if the two countries supported the two different factions, respectively Russia backed the Assad regime, while Turkey supported the SNC, they were able to still work together, and also with Iran, towards a peace agreement for the Syrian conflict, that is going to be analyzed later.

4.2 Turkish-Iranian relationship in the Syrian Crisis

Turkish-Iranian relationship had seen an improvement in the first years of the JDP government, that was cut due to the Arab Uprising and the different views of the two countries.

With the Syrian conflict, it became clearer that the relationship between Turkey and Iran would have been more competitive than cooperative. In fact, the conflict has seen the practical demonstration of the fight between the “Turkish model”, already described in chapter two and based on soft power, and the “Iranian model”, that on the contrary is based on hard power (MacGillivray, 2020a). So, when Turkey and Iran found themselves on the opposition factions of the Syrian conflict, at first the two countries were able to detach the Syrian crisis from their normal relationship (Altunışık, 2020b). However, with the time passing and the conflict becoming more complex and destabilizing for the entire region, this first separation was not sustainable anymore. As a consequence, the two governments started a “war of words”, with which the two countries tried to diminish each other, and their relationship started to fall. For example, President Erdoğan in 2015 called out Iran for their attempts to dominate the region and how those attempts have started to annoy other countries too (Pamuk, 2015). Various responses were given by Iran, but one that is rather significant was in 2016, when the Iranian ministry of foreign affairs accused Turkey of being irresponsible, as their interferences in the other states’ business has brought more insecurity, war, and terrorism to the region (TV Press, 2016).

Furthermore, the entrance of Russia in the Syrian crisis has helped Iran also in having the upper hand in its relationship with Turkey, as Ankara was forced to change its policy towards the crisis, as it became more convenient for Turkey to enter a peace process in order to influence the direction towards its interests (Linderstraus, 2018). Nevertheless, both Turkey and Iran had found themselves affected by the policies of two extra-regional players: the US and Russia. For Iran, the arrival of Trump in the White House meant security issues, that

brought the relationship with Russia on security even closer (Altunışık, 2020b; MacGillivray, 2020a). On the other hand, Turkey was experiencing from some time some issues with US, therefore the arrival of Russia in the Syrian conflict brought these two countries closer, as Turkey needed Russia and Iran cooperation from preventing an independence revolt of the Syrian Kurds (Linderstrauss, 2018).

4.3 The Astana Peace Process and the Sochi Memorandum

As mentioned before, the Syrian war became a major factor of instability in the MENA region, but also in the international arena. Therefore, right at the beginning of the conflict, UN nominated Kofi Annan Special Syria Envoy, to deal with the crisis (Cengiz, 2020). Kofi Annan's initiative was launched with the Geneva I process that was supposed to bring stability and peace in less time possible. However, the project ended being a failure, with Special Envoy Annan blaming the international community's discord on the issue to be decisive (The Guardian, 2012). The UN tried two other times to start the peace process for the Syrian conflict, with one time in 2014 (Geneva II) and another time in 2016 (Geneva III), but every time the process failed due to impartiality of the mediators on the field and the lack of inclusivity of all the key players of the conflict (Cengiz, 2020).

What changed this trend of failure in the peace process for Syria was the military entrance of Russia in the Syrian crisis. With its interest at stake, Russia became a decisive factor both on the military side and on the peace process. As a matter of facts, in January 2017, Russia, with the collaboration of Iran and Turkey, that were the other two international major players, started their peace talks in the Kazakhstan capital, Astana, to oppose the failed UN peace process (Dacrema, 2018). In the Joint Statement of January 23-24, 2017, released by Iran, Turkey, and Russia after the first round of talks it emerged the willingness of the parties to:

- Achieve peace and maintain its territorial integrity
- Cooperate to deal with the elimination of ISIS
- Create functional de-escalation zones
- Use the framework given by UNSC Resolution 2254 to create an inclusive intra-Syrian dialogue, making the Syrian people decide the fate of their country
- To create an environment that can develop a new constitution, and as a consequence, to hold democratic election under UN supervision.

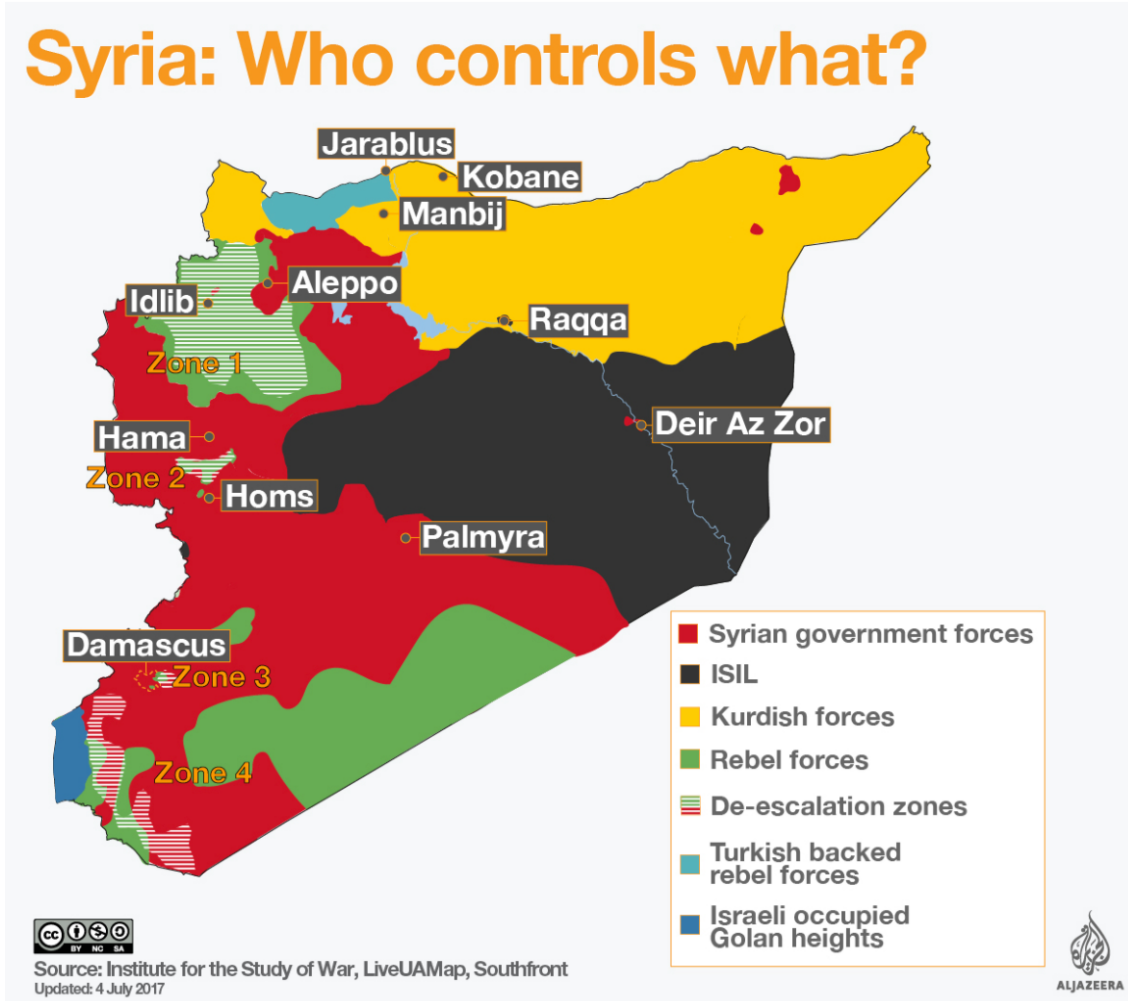


Figure 13: De-Escalation zones in 2017

Source: Al Jazeera, 2017

The main source of difference between the Geneva processes and the one of Astana is the basis of the ceasefire: if the Geneva processes were based on a national ceasefire, and multiple long-term objectives, the Astana Peace Process is on the other hand based on local ceasefire, that are supposed to be more manageable, and its objective are less and short-termed (Dacrema, 2018). The main difference, however, are the four de-escalation zones that were: the Idlib province, The Rastan and Talibesch enclave in northern Homs province, Eastern Goutha, and the Rebel controlled south that coincide with the Jordan border (AlJazeera, 2017; Talukdar and Anas, 2018). The functioning of these de-escalation zone was meant to be the reach of a local truce between the rebel forces and the Assad army, with the use of Turkish or Russian military policy as mediator to the reaching of local peace (Dacrema, 2018).

The Syrian conflict, as it was already said, was very destabilizing for Turkey. In fact, Turkey shares with Syria the largest border, and every menace threatening Syria becomes relevant also for the Turkish government. In chapter two was explained the failed attempt of Erdoğan to foster a democratic revolution in Syria, that was followed by Turkey supporting the opposition in the SNC.

The Astana Peace Process saw Turkey as the international player “defeated”, as it was supporting the opposition groups that in that moment were losing the conflict, while Iran, later joined by Russia, were supporting the Assad regime, and Russian military support was fundamental for the Assad regime. So, entering the Peace Process, Turkey needed to bear in mind that the objective was to find an agreement that could maximize its interests and, in the process, minimize the impact of the Syrian conflict on Turkish policy. In fact, Cengiz (2020) claims that Turkey was actually the more affected by the Syrian crisis of the three international players due to the vast shared border with Syria that brought a major flow of refugee and terrorism. In addition to that, Russian and Iranian support of the Assad regime had changed the Turkish interests from removing Assad as head of state to ensure the Turkish-Syrian border security due to the presence of Syrian Kurds, as they are ally with the PKK and the Turkish government did not want these two allies to become closer as it does not want the increasing of Kurdish independence talks. (Talukdar and Anas, 2018).

Unfortunately, what have seemed like a functional plan to restore stability in Syria failed once more. The Syrian National Dialogue Congress that was held in the first months of 2018 in Sochi has been considered a debacle. What was supposed to be the first encounter between the Assad regime, the opposition, and the Kurdish parties did not happen. In fact, both the Kurdish parties and the opposition boycotted the Congress not showing themselves, and the only achievement announced was the creation of a constitutional committee that already had a framework (Hauer, 2018).

Meanwhile in Syria, the de-escalation zones created by the Astana process were turned into a strategic framework for the Assad regime to focus his military forces in one area at the time, conquering them (Dacrema, 2018). The last de-escalation zone left was the Idlib province, that in the meantime became the destination for all the opposition groups kicked out of the other de-escalation zones. To deal with this additional crisis, President Erdoğan and President Putin on September 17, 2018, signed in Sochi the “Memorandum of understanding on *Stabilization of the Situation in Idlib’s De-escalation Zone*” (Salaymeh and Acun, 2018). The memorandum introduced a mechanism of demilitarization that would guarantee

a ceasefire and timelines to ensure the normal and safe functioning of two motorways: M4 (Latakia-Aleppo) and M5 (Damascus-Aleppo) (Kardaş, 2020; Salaymeh and Acun, 2018).

However, the Sochi Memorandum did not bring a change in the Idlib province. As Kardaş (2020) underlines, the presence on the ground of groups such as Hayat Tahir al-Sham connected to the international network of Al-Qaida is actually bringing more instability to the province, as they are not willing to give up their political control and military presence of the province. For Turkey the de-militarization of the area and the elimination of radical groups from the political leadership of the province meant more stability and avoiding a refugee outflow to the Turkish republic (Salaymeh and Acun, 2018).

Unfortunately, even the Sochi Memorandum proved not to be effective in bringing some peace to the Idlib province. As a consequence, March 6, 2020, the Turkish and Russian governments released an additional protocol to the Sochi Memorandum. In this additional protocol, the two governments re-stated the importance of the Astana Peace Process and the UNSC 2254 Resolution and give further deadlines for ceasefire and the creation of security corridors around the M4 and M5. The need of this further official document and adjustment to the Astana Peace Process signaled a new failure in the solving process of the Syrian crisis. As a matter of facts, the instability of the Idlib province forced Turkey and Russia to be more present in the region with their military.

The Syrian conflict had important consequences for Turkey regarding foreign policy. First, the “People’s Alliance” created in 2018 between JDP and MHP gave a revisionist dimension to Turkish foreign policy. As a matter of facts, this new approach meant for Turkey to find new ways for gaining power in the region (Siccardi, 2021). Second, the lack of engagement of the Western powers, and also specifically the US deal with the Syrian Kurds made Turkey be more dependent on the Russian Federation in foreign policy. The securitization problem that the Erdoğan doctrine brought to the Turkish arena also posed importance on the resolution of the Syrian conflict. With that being said, Turkey also hoped that the Astana and Sochi framework would conclude with the resolution of the conflict and could also bring more international players to actively work towards the end of the Syrian conflict, as it saw its borders more insecure and with the need of having more military present in Syria to protect Turkish interests (Dacrema, 2018).

4.4 Turkish military interventions in Syria

The Syrian war had many implications for Turkey that were described in the previous pages. But since the focus of Turkish foreign policy had shifted towards securitization, it is relevant to talk about Turkey's perceived threats in the Syrian conflict.

In 2014, the Assad regime decided to leave a space for Syrian Kurds in the borders shared with Turkey alarmed the Ankara government (Tol, 2019). As a matter of fact, the Turkish government had always considered the People's Protection Units (YPG), meaning the Syrian Kurds, strictly connected with the PKK that Ankara, but also the EU and the US considers a terrorist group (Weise, 2019). So, it is logical to think that the Turkish government, that was living both domestic and international instability and that its new foreign policy principle was about pre-emptive actions, was ready to use its military forces to secure the Turkish-Syrian border and avoid any spillover effects with PKK.

Following this line, the Turkish government launched four military interventions in Syria, the first one between 2016-2017, and the remaining three in the timespan of 2018-2020 analyzed in this chapter. They are:

- *Operation Euphrates Shield*: the first operation went on from August 2016 to March 2017 in the Syrian border, more specifically in the region between the Euphrates Rivers and the Afrin region. The Turkish military were able to eliminate from the Syrian border the Islamic State forces and to take control of a strip of territory to avoid the linking of Kurds forces (Siccardi, 2021).
- *Operation Olive Branch*: this operation went on from January 2018 to March 2018 in the Afrin Canton region. In this case, the Turkish military was sent to eliminate the YPG presence in the area.
- *Operation Peace Spring*: the third military operation was sent once more in the area of the Turkish-Syrian border in October 2019. Also in this case, the objective of the Turkish military was to limit the presence of the YPG from the border and avoid spillovers.
- *Operation Spring Shield*: the last Turkish military operation, on the other hand, was sent in the Idlib province from February to March 2020, as a way to avoid that the Assad regime could take over the last zone that was in control of the rebel forces (the part of the conflict supported by Turkey), and as a reaction of a Russian airstrike that

killed 33 Turkish soldiers, which Turkey blamed on the Assad regime (Siccardi, 2021; Friedman and Logan, 2020).

What all of these four military interventions have in common are the preservation of Turkish interests in the region and in Syria. If the first three operations meant the preservation of a safe zone for Turkey to use in the fight against PKK and the YPG, the Operation Spring Shield was the first time Turkey deployed a considerable amount of its army forces to support the opposition's counteroffensive and avoid the victory of the Syrian regime for the Assad regime (Kardaş, 2020).

It is very clear that the Syrian conflict changed the way Turkish foreign policy has been strategized, and as a consequence, it had also an impact on the relationships with foreign countries. If we have seen a rapprochement between Turkey and Russia, what Stanicek (2019) notes is the decoupling from its more traditional Western allies like the EU and the US. The author also notes how the Operation Peace Spring was another step away from the US and EU for Turkey. As a matter of fact, it was the US military withdrawal of 2018, decided by President Trump, which opened the gate for Turkey's military intervention of 2019, that however, according to the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, will bring more instability to the area, facing the possibility to see a new rise of ISIS in northern Syria (Stanicek, 2019). To add to the situation, the US's undecisive and changing response to the Turkish military intervention could also be listed as another factor that is pushing away Turkey from its western allies (Weise, 2019).

4.5 Syrian struggle

After ten years of crisis, the situation in Syria is yet to be solved. Turkey's involvement over the Syrian crisis has changed forms and methods many times. As Talbot argues (2021), Turkey's strong support of the opposition in the first period changed in 2015 with the rise of the Syrian Kurds. From that moment, the primary objective of Turkey became the securitization of its south border and avoid further escalation, and for this reason the Turkish Republic launched the four military interventions previously discussed. Then, the arrival of Russia in the Syrian arena helped the implementation of this new vision, but also changed once more the perspective of Turkey in Syria. Siccardi (2021) stated that the first military operation revealed the new power dynamics in Syria: Turkey's military intervention were always supported by Russia because they matched the long-term intentions of weakening the

US, the Islamic State and the YPG, meaning giving power to Russia, that now was the international winning part of the conflict.

As in 2020, Yildiz (2021) argues that Turkey's strategy in Syria may face another change. In fact, the author states that the only way for Turkey to achieve something in the Syrian conflict is to choose one of its two conflicting approaches: the northeast approach with the Kurds, with the objective of taking all territories, political influence from them or the northwest approach with the objective of gaining as much as autonomy is possible for the Turkish-backed opposition. A more drastic approach has been discussed by Friedman and Logan (2020), stating that Turkey should retire its forces from Syria. In their article, the two authors express their doubts about the presence of Turkey in Syria, as it poses various security threats for the creation of a new Syrian regime and the international arena. However, what all authors agree on is the risks and political and economic costs that Turkey is facing in keeping its presence in the Syrian territory. Nevertheless, the participation to the Astana Peace Process and its continuous presence in the north of Syria signals its willingness to continue pursue its interest in the region and to influence the outcome of the conflict, giving to Turkey a long-term game still to play (Talbot, 2021).

5. Turkey's military intervention in Libya

As it was repeated throughout this chapter, Turkey's problem with instability inside its domestic borders and in the region brought Turkey to the use of pre-emptive action to prevent the escalation of delicate issues. The focus on short term objectives and interests, united with the securitization principle, brought Turkey to more use of its military forces (Altunşik, 2020a; Donelli, 2020). If in the previous pages it was analyzed the Turkish military intervention, this section is focused on its intervention in Libya.

Since 2011, Libya's situation has been very unstable since the revolts of the Muammar Al-Gaddafi regime, as it continued to be invaded by the presence of militia groups with the intent to seek political control (MacGillivray, 2020b). The conflict, however, has been divided by two main forces the Government of National Accord (GNA), led by Fayeze Al-Sarraj interim government supported by UN, and the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by General Khalifa Haftar.

The continuous struggle for reaching the political power have left in Libya a geostrategic vacuum that new international players wanted to fill. As the EPC's paper (2020) states, Turkey had three major determinants to intervene in Libya: first, to fill the void left from a

divided EU and a backed down US from the country. Second, as in 2019, there were no international force that could defeat Turkey in case of a military intervention in Libya. Third, as it was seen also for Syria, to protect its interests. To be more precise, to protect its economic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, as it contains natural gas and Turkey was quarreling with Cyprus, Greece, and Israel for the drilling rights of the area near Northern Cyprus (Sahinkaya, 2020).

So, to protect its interest, November 27, President Erdoğan signed with GNA leader Fayez Al-Sarraj a memorandum which aim was to agree on maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean that would counterbalance the advantage of Cyprus and Greece perceived by Erdoğan in the area. The memorandum basically stated that island cannot have a continental shelf, therefore they cannot have Economic Exclusive zone in the sea, giving Turkey more area of maneuver in pursuit of the drilling of natural gas (Seufert, 2020). In return, Turkey would give its military support to the Tripoli government to fight the LNA (Tol, 2020).

As a consequence of the Memorandum, Turkey started Operation Peace Storm in January 2020, and Turkey's presence in Libya intensified the fighting between GNA and LNA (Seufert, 2020). According to Eljarh (2020), the presence of the Turkish army had shifted the tide of the conflict in favor of the Al-Sarraj government, that since that moment was suffering important losses on the military side of the conflict. As a matter of fact, it is estimated that GNA has more or less thirty thousand fighters, while the LNA has twenty-five thousand, and as a consequence the military of Turkey in support of the GNA becomes an important strategic advantage (Esen, 2020).

6. The consequences of the new Turkish foreign policy

In this chapter it was analyzed the shift in Turkish foreign policy towards a more active strategy, based on strategic autonomy and pre-emptive action, with an increase of the use of force. The new Erdoğan doctrine was meant to mend the relations that were broken with the Arab Uprising. However, many experts and journalists agree on the fact that it actually left Turkey more isolated than before.

Tol (2020) argued that the Turkish active military involvement in Syria, Libya and East Mediterranean have increased an anti - Erdoğan sentiment in the West, and it has also unified diverse actors with the objective to oppose Turkish policy, and Erdoğan himself. Topchinejad (2021) argues that the fact that Turkey pursuing a multilateral and interest based foreign policy is not sustainable for Turkey itself. What, according to the author, Turkey

needs to do is to create a more united and focused foreign policy that could actually bring long-term benefits.

Another relevant factor against this new Turkish foreign policy doctrine is the economic crisis Turkey has endured since 2018, when the Turkish started experiencing a currency crisis (Tastan, 2020). As a consequence of the currency crisis, the Turkish economy and finance had become more dependent on its traditional Western allies like the US and EU. Moreover, the revised relationship with Russia discussed in the chapter can be seen as another factor for the US to not mend the Turkish relationship. MacGillivray (2020), talking about the military intervention in Libya, stated that Turkey did not possess right now the financial and material capabilities to become a regional power, and, as it was stated many times in this dissertation, Turkish foreign policy is strictly connected with its domestic policy. Ulgen (2020) makes this important statement in saying that the multiple fronts in which the Turkish military had and is still intervening gives the impression to the Turkish constituency of a nation under siege, with the need of strong leader and leadership to guide it through this moment of difficulties. To add to this already critical situation, the coronavirus pandemic was another important hit for Turkish economy. To try to use the pandemic for economic and foreign policy advantages. In facts, Turkey is a producer of mask, protective equipment, and disinfectants, and to mend the relationship with the West, initiated a highly publicized aid diplomacy to send these important materials to those West countries more affected by the pandemic (Tastan, 2021). Nevertheless, the Turkish economic situation cannot be sustained with short-term interests, it needs to have objective that can stabilize not only this moment, but the future (Ulgen, 2020).

From what it has been written it is possible to state that Turkey in this moment needs to rethink its foreign policy strategy in order to gain a new position in the international arena and to try to exit from this moment of instability. Tastan (2021) says that Turkey has already in place some institutions that could help in this process of renovation of Turkish foreign policy: the Yunus Emre Institute, TİKA, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, and the Maarif Foundation of Turkey. The only left step for Turkey now to use those already in place institution in a coordinated way that reflects the global realities, so that they could help Turkey gain their spot in the international arena.

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation's aim was to clarify which are the determining factors that influence a state to take foreign policy choices. In order to find these factors, this thesis employed the constructivist theory of international relation to find them, and then, as a way to apply the theoretical framework, it was used the case study of Turkey of 21st century, that has seen to be its only leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

The argument of the thesis is divided in four chapters. The first chapter explains the theoretical framework of the international relations theory of constructivism, that enables us to give importance to the ideational part of international relations and the importance of the dichotomy agent-structure. More specifically, the first chapter deals with the internal determinants, such as geography, history, culture, and domestic policy. So, to further explains those determinants, the chapter focused its case study part on giving some information about Turkish geographical importance, some facts about Turkish recent history, and finally the domestic changes that the JDP party made during their first two mandates, from 2002 to 2011.

The second chapter focuses on the external determinants of foreign policy. Given the international world order and balance of power, it is important for states to find allies that share the same values, traditions, and beliefs in order to achieve a functional relationship. This idea was at the base of the Strategic Depth Doctrine of Ahmet Davutoğlu, that was the base for the new Turkish foreign policy in the first years of the 21st century. Nevertheless, this foreign policy doctrine proved to be not efficient for Turkey as the Arab Uprising showed the weaknesses of the Turkish approach. In facts, the Arab Uprising for Turkey showed the Turkish dilemma of interests over beliefs, and the different strategies developed by Turkish foreign policy in different theatres of the Arab Spring proved not to be efficient.

The third chapter focuses on the last part of the theoretical framework laid down in the first chapter: personal determinants. This chapter explains some theory closer to psychology to study and classify leadership and personality, and then understands how this classification can be imported in the international relation realm. The case study part of this chapter focuses on the Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Using the theoretical framework of chapter three, some facts about his life were used to later dig in his personality, and what are the implications in foreign policy based on his personal character.

The final chapter is a case study of Turkish foreign policy during the two-year period 2018-2020. Using the same approach of the entire dissertation, the three determinants, internal, external, and personal were used to later explain the change of strategy in Turkish foreign policy, putting more focus on the situation of the MENA region, meaning Syria and Libya, and with the importance of Turkish support of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

Thanks to the arguments made in this final dissertation it is possible to affirm that the constructivist approach can be used to the full analysis of the case study chosen, meaning Turkey. Of course, the first period analyzed in this thesis is clearer in his connection with constructivism. As a matter of facts, the Strategic Depth Doctrine bases its foreign policy actions on principles near the constructivist theory: Turkish foreign relations need to be based in countries that can share a part or the entirety of its traditions, history, culture, and beliefs. To be put in another way, Turkish foreign policy under the Strategic Depth doctrine favored the ideational side of a relationship, in order to achieve long-term benefits from it. Using this framework, the Arab Uprising could have been for Turkey a big opportunity to finish its work towards becoming a regional power, and Strategic Depth and soft power could have been the answer to it. Unfortunately, this was not the case as the ideational part was overthrown by the increasing interests of Turkey in the region, creating different policy based on Turkish interests in the various fields of the Arab Spring, that in the end left Turkey more isolated. On the other hand, it is more difficult to explain the connection between the new Turkish foreign policy of the last years with constructivism. As a matter of facts, Turkish foreign policy moved towards a strategy focused on short-term interests and more active militarily, that at first sight could not be considered as a constructivist choice. But in this case is important to remind two important concepts of constructivism: the dichotomy of agent-structure, and the connection of the ideational part to material resources. Regarding the former, according to constructivism, agent and structure are mutually connected as they created each other and influence each other. So, if the situation analyzed in which Turkey found itself, it is possible to see how this relationship works. Turkey found itself in an

unstable domestic and international arena, having security doubts and fear of spillover effects due to its highly strategic geographical position. As a matter of facts, the Turkish Republic had been two important events that shook the domestic arena: the Gezi protests and the failed coup of 2016, leaving President Erdoğan insecure. On the international side, the ongoing Syrian conflict troubled the Turkish borders, and the reaction to the failed coup from the West powers was slowly leaving Turkey without its traditional Western allies. Having an unstable environment, the Turkish government, more precisely Erdoğan, did not feel safe, both inside his country and in the international world order. To add to the situation, Erdoğan personal characteristic may have enhanced this feeling of insecurity, leading towards a securitization policy based on pre-emptive actions, and led Turkey towards new allies such as Russia. Regarding the connection between ideational part and material resources, it is always important to remind that it is true that constructivism is principally based on the ideational part of foreign policy, but material resources still have a relevant position. Concerning the case of Turkey, it is clear that the economic development that the country underwent during the first years of the 21st century have augmented the importance for Turkey to rely on material resources than before. Another important thing to add is that Turkey never stopped to try to increase its area of influence: during the dissertation it was highlighted the work of TİKA in humanitarian aids, helping to also improve the relationship with neighborhood states. Finally, it is true that Turkey's foreign policy has been based on short-term interests, but the case of Nagorno-Karabakh proves that the identity ties still matter for Turkey: as it was discussed in chapter four, Azerbaijan and Turkey shares almost the same language and their ethnic origin is the same, making them have an identity bond really important that is at the base of their relationship.

In 2023 there is going to be the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Republic, and Turkey's role in the international arena is yet to be fully deployed. The Turkish Republic now finds itself in a moment of time in which it has to choose which kind of direction it needs to take. In this thesis it has been made very clear that the choices taken in this last years are not permitting Turkey to take a further step in becoming more influent in the international arena. It is up to the Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to change the flow and allow Turkey to exploit its potential.

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