The End of 'Turkish Exceptionalism'

Turkish foreign policy re-orientation during Erdoğan's era

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Abstract

This study investigates the foreign policy re-orientation Turkey has undergone since the Islamist AKP came to power in 2002. The analysis is conducted by way of a case study and use of the congruence method. The aim of the study is to explain the outcome on the basis of two competing theories, which may also be complementary. The first theory supposes that the re-orientation is a result of external events, while the other supposes that the re-orientation emanates from the political leadership's ability to deal with intrinsic constraints in the domestic political system. Conclusions show that the domestic political order and the external development are heavily intertwined and affect one another. The conclusions may apply for states whose politics are affected by strong ideologies, and additionally waver between traditionalism and modernization.

Key words: foreign policy change, Kemalism, Kurdish question, political Islam, political transition

Content

1 Introduction

The Islamist AKP came to power through a landslide victory in the election of 2002 and has ruled the country since. Under the leadership Recep Tayyip Erdoğan the party was expected to lead the country to membership in the European Union as well as into the future. The Helsinki Summit in 1999, where Greek objections were lifted, indicated a crucial step for Turkey's long-time desire to become a member of the European Union, and in the early 21th century the reform process largely went on according to plan.

Turkish domestic politics has traditionally been characterized by quick turnovers, with coalition governments consisting of odd partners. The power consolidation of AKP made the country enjoy a political stability and economic growth rarely seen. The party has ruled for almost two decades and Erdoğan has been in power longer than any other leader, even Atatürk. A common perception is that the Ottoman Empire lives further through Turkey, not the least by virtue of Sultanistic leaders.

The politics of AKP was mainly based on liberalism and political pluralism, as well as a more loose view on religion. This liberal politics also moved the country closer to the EU, which always has been seen as the anchor in the country's process of democratization. However, things did not develop as anticipated. When the possibility to enter EU began to slide away, the democracy process slowed down, paving the way for Islamization and dictatorship. In the early 2010s the former foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu declared that "if Europe does not want Turkey, we are fine with that", which indicated a discontinuity in the EU relations.

While the domestic political dynamic has changed, Turkey has been less fortunate at the international level, where not only the EU accession but also the attempt to play a bigger role in the region have failed. Due to the precarious situation the country and its people has become isolated and alienated. Turkey's search for a new position, which carried it to the Middle East seems, at least temporarily, to have ended in Moscow.

Since Turkey is located at the crossroads of Eurasia, thus connecting civilizations, it is considered having an important role to play. Turkish political leaders have therefore traditionally been prone to describe Turkey as a bridge as a way of emphasizing the need for states to maintain good relations to the country, thus the concept of "Turkish exceptionalism". Since the region seems to be more volatile now than ever, with porous nation-borders as a corollary, Turkey's position might have become even more significant, not the least since the war in Syria, the refugee crisis, the EU, and the Kurdish question are all intertwined.

1.1 Research problem

In great powers the foreign policy is a direct result of the domestic politics, while in smaller countries the development in the outside world to large extent determines the country's foreign policy. Turkey is in this sense interesting since it is a middle-sized country in a strategically important region, which is perceived as more volatile than ever. The country's strategic position between continents has always made it subject for great powers' interest. During the Cold War Turkey was tied to the Western alliance, which limited its foreign policy. After the end of the bipolar world order Turkey's alliances with the West diminished, since they did not have the same purpose to fill. Accordingly, Turkey's foreign policy is to much lesser extent influenced by foreign powers.

Turkey is furthermore interesting since it is a highly bureaucratic country, which is considered a factor that constrains foreign policy re-orientations. Previous literature mainly focuses on the internal and external constraints which small and big states encounter. Small states usually have small bureaucracies, which facilitates re-orientations. Turkey does not fit into either of these categories, since it is a highly populated middle-sized country with a developed bureaucracy. Additionally, Turkey's traditional foreign policy is a result of the prevailing of a certain ideology that tied the country to the West. As a result the Turkish foreign policy has been characterized by an isolationist attitude (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 35).

1.2 Research question and aim

The aim is to identify and illustrate the causes for the foreign policy re-orientation Turkey has undertaken. The research questions are as follows:

- Why has Turkey conducted a re-orientation of its foreign policy?
    - o Is it mainly a result of domestic or external changes?
- How has the foreign policy re-orientation been possible?
- How and why have changes in the external environment affected the domestic politics?

2 Theory

2.1 Previous research

Policy-makers observe reality through doctrines and ideologies, which in turn give meaning to messages from the international environment. Doctrines and ideologies additionally provide guiding for policy-makers in the sense that they provide them with national roles for the states. The doctrines furthermore set the goals of a state's foreign policy in a long term. Regarding the development in concrete situations the doctrines' relevance is, however, limited (Holsti, 1992: 296).

The doctrines may also be used to justify certain foreign policy-decisions. While foreign policy-decisions in countries in the Western world are usually justified and motivated by appealing values such as "freedom", foreign policies in countries such as China or previously the Soviet Union may be justified by consistency with the prevailing ideology. In the latter case the prevailing ideologies may be useful for policy-makers in order to evaluate the behavior of both the own state and other (Holsti, 1992: 296).

Doctrines consisting of liberal values have been highly present in the US foreign policy, where they have served to justify certain actions. The promoting of liberal, and democratic institutions have been particularly present when American leaders not have perceived the country's economic and security interests threatened. Seemingly, the advancing of liberal values has never been an absolute objective. Rather it has been overridden by objectives such as the defense of national security and the longevity of alliances. Seemingly, national interests trump ideology (Holsti, 1992: 297).

The actions undertaken are considered being a result of values, and beliefs learned from experience, and education. The values and attitudes are, however, not constant and may change depending on circumstances. A source for change may for instance be that it becomes obvious for policy-makers that the perceptions of the world, on which the policy is based, are no longer consistent with reality, and hence leading to losses. As a result of the adoption of new beliefs traditional hostility to a certain kind of states are re-considered, and new goals and purposes are defined (Holsti, 1992: 299). This resembles to the Turkish case, where policy-makers perceived Kemalism a liability in a new world order.

There is considered to be a relationship between personality and certain kind of behavior in foreign policy. Policy-makers with personal traits characterized by "high dominance" are more prone to preach "hard-line policies". The policy-makers with these personal traits are

supposed to have a predisposition to encounter adversaries as well as foreign policy-problems by the use of force, and they are usually unable to compromise on their goals and purposes. These personalities are supposed to be particularly prominent at times when they resonate well with the society's general social norms. In certain situations policies may be justified by national interest although being a result of the policy-maker's personal needs (Holsti, 1992: 300f).

Foreign policy re-orientation of small states has not been subject to big attention among scholars of international relations, who rather have focused on great powers. The traditional perception is that small states are prone to bandwagon with great powers they perceive as threatening instead of balancing against them (Gvalia et al., 2013: 99). The fact that small states usually have small bureaucracies may however facilitate foreign policy re-orientations.

The authors claim that this traditional assumption is not enough since it is limited to investigating structural and material factors rather than elite ideas and identities. Elite ideas, identities, and social order preferences are, according to the authors, expected to play a greater role in small states' foreign policy behavior than previously has been acknowledged. Elite ideas and identities are expected to serve as a filter by which threats and opportunities are viewed (Gvalia et al., 2003: 99f). This is of interest since Turkey from its foundation has sought integration with the West due to the prevailing ideology among the ruling elite.

Since Georgia's 'Rose Revolution' in 2003 the country has moved away from Russia's sphere of influence. Neither realist logic nor liberal theories about economic incentives are able to explain this behavior. The authors address their explanation to elite ideas, identities, and social order preferences, and see Georgia as an example on how elite ideas are able to affect the foreign policy in the same extent as regional balance of power (Gvalia et al., 2013: 101f). This has bearing on Turkey, since its regime shift in 2002 forced from office a generation of politicians that had been in charge since the 1950s, thus paving the way for a new elite.

According to traditional neo-realist approaches political leaders' ideas are insignificant. The international system is furthermore considered to limit the choices of small states in the decision-making process, since their smallness is perceived to bring a smaller margin of error, making them more preoccupied with survival. The authors claim that although elite ideas are of less importance when the state is threatened, they cannot be ignored in order to understand a small state's behavior and response to external changes (Gvalia et al., 2013: 101ff).

According to prevailing assumptions, small states are more likely to bandwagon if a threatening power is in the very proximity, and their defensive alliance partners are at distance. The authors, however, argue that the responses of small states to changes in the external environment are not always determined solely by the states' position in the international system. Accordingly they claim that traditional realist predictions are not enough to explain foreign policy behavior (Gvalia et al., 2013: 104f).

Foreign policy changes are expected to occur less frequently in democratic states that are also highly bureaucratic, than in states with authoritarian regimes, where the bureaucracy is less prominent in policy-making. Conversely, the more autonomy the decision-making unit has from political dependence from for instance the army or coalition partners, the more likely becomes change. In states that are democratic a change of foreign policy is more likely if the government consists of one single party, which is not affected by constitutional courts (Blavoukos & Bourantonis, 2012: 604). Although Turkey is less democratic the state is highly bureaucratic.

According to previous research there are three different decision units: the powerful leader (e.g. dictator), the single group (army officers engaged in a military coup), and the multitude of autonomous actors (coalition governments, etc.). Each group's properties determine its ability to induce foreign policy change. The electoral system, and the policy-making style of the regime leader are considered particularly important (Blavoukos & Bourantonis, 2012: 603f).

Regarding foreign policy re-alignments Blavoukos and Bourantonis pay attention not only to political leadership but also to policy entrepreneurs, which they claim play an important role. They distinguish policy entrepreneurship from political leadership, since the former is solely affiliated with policy change. Policy entrepreneurs in foreign policy are usually politicians who are able to master the inertia of the foreign policy conducted by previous decision-makers. Their will to change derive from a different understanding, conceptualization, and prioritization of international challenges, which stem from their belief systems and cognitive factors (Blavoukos & Bourantonis, 2012: 598, 601ff). Ahmet Davutoğlu may constitute an example of a policy entrepreneur.

The continuity of foreign policy may be explained by the fact that many foreign policy issues have relatively high entry barriers. However, these barriers lower during critical junctures, which are usually changes at the systemic level that change the conditions for international

involvement. Policy entrepreneurs capitalize from these systemic changes as well as domestic security crises since they denote the shortcomings of the conducted policy, an in turn makes the public more prone to accept a change (Blavoukos & Bourantonis, 2012: 598f, 603ff). This applies to Turkey since policy-makers have identified the need for new alliances due to new circumstances, and hence abandoned the traditional, prudent foreign policy.

Although changes in the external or internal system do not inevitably induce change they create an opportunity for change, by paving the way for alternative views to flourish. When previous policy proves to be a failure policy entrepreneurs can push forward their own policy agenda at the expense of the previous one. The new policy profits on generating desirable results, but if the expected results do not appear, reversals from the new policy are likely (Blavoukous & Bourantonis, 2012: 605). In Turkey there has been a widespread discontent among the ruling elite with the traditional foreign policy.

2.2 Theoretical framework
2.2.1 Re-orientation as a result of external shocks
The re-orientation is considered to be a response to shocks and backlashes Turkey has faced on the international level.

One perception regarding the systemic level's effect on states' foreign policies is that the bargaining behavior among states increases when the number of contested issues increases. In accordance with existing theory states in a multipolar system should oppose coalitions as well as single actors that attempts to adopt a dominant position. States should also confine actors that advocate supranational organizational principles. Alliances are furthermore supposed to be short-lived, and shifting due to needs (Hudson, 2014: 174f).

Features such as coastline borders, and neighboring countries are not able to determine what behavior states will conduct, but rather identify the constraints they may encounter. The geographic location may, however, have less importance if a state has great power capabilities (Breuning, 2007: 147). A small state located between two large states in conflict with each other may either stay neutral or align with one of them. The choice may, however, be a result of geographical conditions (Hudson, 2014: 162f). During the Cold War Turkey shared border with the Soviet Union, which carried the country to Western alliances. Seemingly, Turkey has altered its traditional perception of being located in a hostile environment, and instead decided to benefit from its geographical position.

A state's foreign policy may also be affected by its number of borders. One perception is that states that border more countries are more likely to be engaged in regional conflicts, thus proximity constitutes as source for conflict. Borders may additionally be a source of conflict if they make enemies end up within the same country, paving the way for ethnic and religious fractionalization (Hudson, 2014: 166f). This has bearing on Turkey, which is located at the crossroads of continents, and also encounters minority issues.

States considered as 'middle powers' have at times acted as 'norm entrepreneurs', which means that they, as a means to gain influence, aim to convince other states' representatives to adopt the state's norms. Middle powers do, nonetheless, not necessarily act as regional powers, which the latter are states with considered ability to exert influence in their vicinity. Brazil, India, Iran, and Turkey are usually referred to as countries belonging to this category. If states adopt the role of regional power is a result of their political leaders' preferences (Breuning, 2007: 150). Turkey has under AKP shown interest in exerting influence on its neighboring countries.

The stable nature the Cold War brought to the international system created the perception that political leaders identify their states with a certain role. The conception about a national role is characterized by the foreign policy behaviors the decision-maker perceives as suitable for the state. Decision-makers furthermore act in accordance with this role perception in particular situations as well as in relationships. This is particularly notable in the state's relation to its region, as well as its relation to certain other types of states (Breuning, 2007: 155). During the Cold War Turkey identified its role as an important Western ally towards the Soviet threat, as well as surrounded by hostile countries. In the 2000s Turkish policy-makers came to adopt the role of a regional power.

The end of the Cold War caused uncertainty among decision-makers regarding the national interests of their countries, which previously were heavily affected by the prevailing balance of power. At the end of the bipolar world order decision-makers faced an environment which no longer resonated with the policies they had pursued. Accordingly, decision-makers had to re-think previous perceptions and adopt a revised understanding of international politics (Breuning, 2007: 165f). In the 2000s Turkish policy-makers abandoned their previous perceptions about being surrounded by hostile countries, and instead began to see possibilities for increased power.

Since the domestic and international environment constitute the stage for foreign policy-making, they also set the limits for action. Due to the constraints of the international environment most decision-makers realize that they have a limited possibility to influence international politics by their foreign policy. Foreign policy-decisions may, at best occasionally, have the ability to change the conditions of the world stage, but change on this stage usually appears gradually (Breuning, 2007: 166). This has bearing on this case since the end of the Cold War induced a paradigm change, whose consequences were felt much later, not the least regarding 'opportunity windows' for policy-makers.

2.2.2 Re-orientation as a result of domestic and deliberate policies
The re-orientation is considered to be well-reasoned and part of Erdoğan's strategy to stay in power and shape the country according to his inclinations, thus making it necessary to overcome domestic constraints.

Decision-makers are considered to be not only representatives but also products of their societies. Their view on history as well as international affairs is therefore a result of their culture. Although political leaders have a refined understanding of the political system they work within they usually encounter domestic constraints regarding foreign policy-making. Since the domestic political system may serve as a constraint for them, they aim to achieve a profound knowledge of the domestic constituencies. Political leaders foreign policy-decisions are determined by their understanding of the domestic political environment, and their ability to manage limitations and identify the opportunities it offers (Breuning, 2007: 116f).

In cases where no single party achieves a majority, the formation of government is dependent on political parties' ability to form a coalition, consisting of at least two parties. Whether a single party or a coalition constitutes the government affects the process of decision-making, not the least since the minor coalition partner may exert influence over politics beyond its governmental representation (Breuning, 2007: 117f). This has bearing on this study since AKP no longer constitutes a single-party government, but has been forced to form a coalition.

The domestic political structure also affects foreign policy in the sense that political leaders have little influence of the agencies of the government bureaucracy. The agencies may facilitate the emergence of new ideas, as well as making change difficult to carry out. Since much of the decision-making is affected by government agencies, the government bureaucracy serves as a constraint on political leaders. The foreign policy-bureaucracy is

made up by several organizations and agencies, and the relationship between them affects the possibility for each of them to give prominence to its ideas (Breuning, 2007: 118ff).

The institutional constraints the decision-makers encounter stem from the separation of the government's branches. As a result the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary have the ability to confine each other. Accordingly, the democratic government's institutional constraints contribute to curb decision-makers' power by executing checks and balances. The institutions are more powerful in exerting influence on political leaders the more well-established they are (Breuning, 2007: 134). Seemingly, Turkish policy-makers have had incentives to overcome these constraints.

Agencies may be either insulated or embedded. An insulated agency is an autonomous entity within the government bureaucracy, which means it has its own structure regarding resources and organizational structure. An insulated agency is additionally more likely to maintain its core principles. An embedded agency constitutes a section of a larger unit, and its structure is a result of the bigger unit to which it belongs (Breuning, 2007: 118ff). While the military may be an example of the former kind of agency, the judiciary should be seen as an example of the latter.

The military as well as the judiciary are furthermore idea-based organizations, which means that they serve a particular purpose, and their employees usually agree upon both the purpose and the strategy to achieve it (Breuning, 2007: 118f). The Turkish military has been considered the custodian of the Republic and its ideals, thus giving it a unique position in exerting influence over policy-making. The judiciary has exerted influence over domestic politics in the sense that it has had the power to dissolve parties that have deviated too much from the state's secular character.

Political leaders in authoritarian countries usually have to be particularly attentive to the military. This applies especially to countries where support from the military is a necessity to stay in power. A military overthrow of the leader can be justified by popular discontent with the leader or the situation in the country. Therefore it is of importance for political leaders to understand the opinions of the military, as well as to understand the opinions of the civilian elites who may exert influence on the military (Breuning, 2007: 121). Several Turkish political leaders have been toppled by the military for conducting a policy too deviating from the Republic's ideal.

In states where the regime is dependent on the military's approval to maintain power, the military will enjoy a great role in the foreign policy-making, and its perceptions will override those of other governmental actors. The military's potential to exert influence creates in turn incentives for the regime to limit its power by jailing or dismissing military leaders. This may, however, turn out to be costly. Erdoğan has on several occasions attempted to reduce the military's influence (Hudson, 2014: 169f). The military's power may be particularly strong in societies with a limited possibility to create the political organizations needed to challenge the leader (Breuning, 2007: 121f).

Interest groups, media, and public opinion do also have capacity to exert influence on policy-makers. Although decision-makers are constrained by these domestic constituencies, they have interest in affecting the agenda of them, and their relationship to these domestic constituencies is partially a result of the society's political institutions. Although decision-makers may perceive some policies less optimal, they may have to choose these if they are considered acceptable to the public. There is, however, no guarantee that the public will continue to support a certain policy. Rather, decision-makers predicate their decisions on assumptions about the possibility to get certain policies accepted by the public (Breuning, 2007: 120, 123ff).

The media's role is a result of the prevailing political culture, which refers to the people's shared political values. Political culture as well as national history give political leaders the possibility to frame problems in a way that make them obtain a sense of unity among the population. In addition, some statements are expected to be particularly appealing to certain countries' populations (Breuning, 2007: 125ff). Erdoğan has frequently appealed to historical moments that have been crucial for the nation's survival, while labelling domestic opposition as threats towards the state.

Societal actors such as interest groups have larger possibility to affect decision-making the more open the institutional structure is, since openness provides more contact points. The more centralized a country's political institutions are, the less influence will the public have on the foreign policy. The public in countries with authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes has fewer channels to express discontent in comparison to the public in democracies, which means that political leaders in non-democracies have fewer explicit constraints to consider than democracies' leaders (Breuning, 2007: 122). This is applicable to Turkey, which by tradition is a highly centralized country.

3 Research design and Method

3.1 Research design – single case study

The analysis is conducted by a case study of Turkish foreign policy re-orientation and investigates 'how' and 'why' the re-orientation occurred. This makes a case study appropriate. Furthermore, the study elucidates operational connections that have to be studied over time. Since it is not possible to study the situation directly a historical study is useful, since it makes it possible to study the past. Historical studies are also useful for studying current event, thus making them overlap case studies (Yin, 2006: 22ff).

Case studies aim to shed light on complicated social phenomena, and by using a case study it is possible to focus on the entirety and the significant in the particular case. A common concern regarding case studies is that it is hard to make any generalizations on the basis of them, especially if the case study consists of one single case. It may, nevertheless, be possible to derive generalizations regarding theoretical hypotheses. An assessing on the hypotheses on other cases strengthen the extern validity (Yin, 2006: 17f, 28, 57f). Possible hypotheses may apply for other countries that are wavering between modernization and traditionalism, and whose politics are affected by strong ideologies, or countries in volatile regions that encounter minority issues.

A common critique towards case studies is that they suffer from lack of adequate measures, thus becoming subjective. It is therefore important to identify measures for what is being studied, which is done by identifying factors or course of events that cause change. Clarity on this process strengthens the reliability (Yin, 2006: 55ff, 59). Measure of the concepts are for instance how relations to traditional partners such as the US, and the EU have deteriorated, while relations to states Turkey traditionally has had a tensed relationship to, such as Russia, and states in the Middle East, have improved. Another measure is how Erdoğan has managed to remove intrinsic obstacles such as the bureaucracy, which have constituted bulwarks to foreign policy re-orientation.

Regarding decision-making approaches in foreign policy cognitive variables are of interest. Accordingly, most focus is directed to how decision-makers' beliefs regarding international politics may influence the policy they conduct. However, the beliefs and behavior of an individual are not always consistent due to for instance domestic and international constraints (George & Bennett, 2005: 192f). Accordingly, also the verbalized politics should be taken

into account; how politicians belonging to the country's leader cadre have expressed themselves about political issues.

3.2 Method – Congruence

Case study research has two explanatory approaches. Similar to process-tracing it is in congruence method sufficient to use only one single case. The congruence method focuses on evaluating competing theories and the case study serves to provide empirical evidence in order to strengthen the explanatory relevance of one theory in comparison to the other (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 145).

A congruence method is used in order to shed light on empirical patterns, and the theory is used in order to explain the outcome of a case. The chosen hypotheses presuppose that a variance in the independent variable causes a variance in the dependent variable. The measuring of the variance in the dependent variable requires the determination of the level of concreteness. Whether there is congruence between the independent and the dependent variable is likely determined by how good the measures are (George & Bennett, 2005: 181f). The dependent variable is Turkey's foreign policy re-orientation.

Since the study aims to compare two different explanations to the outcome to investigate whether one offers a better explanation the study may be seen as a plausibility probe (George & Bennett, 2005: 182). The first explanation is based on a structural perspective, and the other is based on a domestic and deliberate perspective. The explanations are therefore primarily seen as rivaling. The 'Kurdish question' is applicable for both explanations. The explanatory value of the explanation based on a structural perspective is determined by whether the re-orientation is a response to new environment. The explanatory value of the explanation based on a domestic and deliberate perspective is determined by whether the re-orientation is a necessity for Erdoğan to maintain power.

When assessing whether the congruity in a case has causal significance it is necessary to investigate whether the consistency is of causal significance or spurious, and if the outcome requires the independent variable. If it is not certain that the independent variable is necessary for the outcome, one may venture that the independent variable appears to favor a certain outcome. If the independent variable appears to be a necessary condition one should consider to what extent it explains the outcome (George & Bennett, 2005: 185, 189).

Although the theories compete they may also be complementary, and the fact that they address different variables does not mean they contradict one another. Complementary theories may therefore reinforce or obstruct the predicted effects of each other. Only the congruence method is, however, not able to determine whether both explanations are equally important factors, if one is more important, or if the outcome emanates from completely other variables (George & Bennett, 2005: 186).

If a theory's predictions corresponds well with the outcome it is usually seen as evidence for causality. Since a single congruence test rarely is strong enough to confirm or falsify a theory, one has to be aware of not only spuriousness, but also causal priority, and causal depth when determining the strength of the conclusions. The risk of a spurious consistency may, nonetheless, be diminished with strong and precise theories (George & Bennett, 2005: 183, 185, 188f).

3.3 Data collection and limitations

The method has a neo-positivist paradigm and a deductive, theory-driven approach, which means that hypotheses have to be set in the initial phase. Except from providing research questions the hypotheses constitute a model for delimiting, categorizing and analyzing the empirical material (Yin, 2006: 40ff).

Except from being familiar with the case the literature about this method pays little attention to how data for the empirical research should be collected. The data may include proper information, and relevant academic literature (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 157f). The material consists of secondary sources such as books, academic papers, and newspaper articles, provided by experts in within the field. The fact that the material deals with issues regarding security politics requires source criticism and usage of sources that are unanimous. Since the analysis investigates events from the past it is hard to apply additional sources of information such as observations (Yin, 2006: 125f).

The theories departure from 2002 and stretch until today. The reason for departing from 2002 is since it was then the Islamist AKP came to power and in the wake of 9/11. It is, however, necessary with a historical review to uncover the preconditions under which the nation was created. This is important since the country's traumatic past generated intrinsic constraints, which have had big impact on the political decision-making ever since. The historical review starts with the reforms the elites of the Ottoman Empire conducted, since they paved the way for a highly bureaucratized and militarized country.

No distinction between the concepts of "foreign politics", and "security politics" is made in the essay. This is since in most of the worlds' countries, and especially those located in volatile regions, there is no clear distinction between the concepts.

4 Background

4.1 The end of the Ottoman Empire

In the 19th century the Ottoman Empire began to lag to towards Western Europe. The ideas of the Renaissance had left little impact on the Turks and the political and ideological impacts of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution were felt decades later. As a result the Ottoman leaders turned to Europe in the search for new ideas of modernization. The Ottoman elite launched in 1839 the reform period known as Tanzimat, which included changes in law, administration, and culture to decrease the gap to the West. The elite decided to save what was possible of the empire, and modernize it after a European model in terms of political reforms and cultural progress (Halman, 2011: 63f).

Contrary to the European states ethno-nationalism had not yet appeared. Rather, nationalism was seen as something that would create separate identities, while religion was seen as creating cohesion. In 1908 a group of young military officers, who later were labelled the Young Turks, staged a coup in order to reform the society. The Young Turk movement's response to the decline of the Ottoman Empire was to adapt to the ideas of identity and ethno-nationalism, which had prevailed in Europe. Turkish nationalism quickly became the ideology of the state, which meant that it could use the instruments of the state in order to get impact (Robins, 2016: 19; Sekulow, 2016: 19f).

Nonetheless, the Ottoman Empire ended up on the losing side after World War I and was about to be divided according to the Treaty of Sèvres. The treaty, that was signed by Sultan Mehmet VI in 1920, got significant geopolitical effects since it led to large territorial losses for the Ottomans (Sekulow, 2016: 19, 34). The Treaty of Sèvres furthermore aimed to divide Anatolia into zones of French, Greek, and Italian influence, while the Turks would be left with a small piece of land in inner Anatolia (Robins, 2016: 23f).

4.2 The Turkish War of Independence

The highly respected Ottoman military leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk refused to accept the Treaty of Sèvres. Instead he launched the Turkish National Movement and gathered his troops in Ankara, where he also formed the Turkish National Assembly. Shortly after the Turkish War of Independence broke out, where all foreign armies were defeated (Sekulow, 2016: 34).

The Turkish War of Independence focused on Anatolia, which was what was possible to save. The rest was left to its fate (Robins, 2016: 23f).

The outcome of the war made the Treaty of Sèvres obsolete. The Ankara government signed the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which enabled an independent Turkey, with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as its president. Contrary to the Treaty of Sèvres the new treaty did not recognize any autonomous Kurdistan. The Ankara government made concessions by giving up the Arab provinces, but got in return a country free from foreign influence as well as membership in the League of Nations, which brought it international legitimacy (Selvik & Stenslie, 2011: 32; Robins, 2016: 23ff).

4.3 The foundation of the Turkish Republic

Due to the Ottoman heritage the new state had a developed bureaucracy and an active army, which Atatürk could utilize in order to introduce his reforms. The army and Atatürk's republican party thus served as the foundation of the new system (Selvik & Stenslie, 2011: 42). The reforms soon took the shape of a cultural revolution intended to turn Turkey into a modern state (Mango 2005: 9). The reforms conducted by Atatürk were framed as the six pillar program, which consisted of populism, republicanism, nationalism, secularism, statism, and reformism. These were also the foundation of the political ideology, Kemalism (Huntington, 1996: 144).

In order to achieve the goals Islam was abolished as the state religion, and the use of religious symbols were prohibited since they symbolized traditionalism. In sum, the reforms contributed to change the political, cultural, and religious identity of the Turkish people (Huntington, 1996: 144). Moreover, Atatürk advocated that Turkish should be written in Roman and not Arabic script. This reform contributed to alienate the younger generation from the Ottoman past, which was perceived as an obstacle to development. Regarding cultural cohesion and national identification the language reform is considered the most important one (Halman, 2011: 81).

The Turkish Republic was created after the French perception of a unitary state built on a national unifying culture and a single official language. The nationalism advocated by Atatürk was mainly civic and territorial, rather than ethnic, and according to the constitution all citizens of the Turkish Republic are Turks, independent of ethnic origin and religious beliefs. Accordingly, separatist nationalism is considered a threat to the social harmony of the Republic (Mango, 2005: 10; 89).

Since the armed forces had secular schools they became seen as reformists, and Atatürk frequently labelled the army as the custodian of the republic. The role of the military was therefore not only to protect the nation from foreign enemies, but also assure the political revolution's longevity. Even after retiring from military, Atatürk and his successor İsmet İnönü kept close ties to the army (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 31).

4.4 Traditional Turkish foreign policy

On the very same day the Turkish Republic was created, Atatürk proclaimed: "There may be a great many countries in the world, but there is only one civilization [the West]…". The adherents of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, known as Kemalists, have during the decades felt cultural affinity with Europe. Especially the understanding of secularism that had prevailed in France served as a reference object. In order to fulfill their goal of establishing a modern, democratic, secular state they perceived integration with Europe necessary (Haas, 2012: 202f).

The ideological transformation of Turkey has also been the core in Kemalist politics through the years. The Kemalists have accordingly always been keen on gaining accession to European institutions, since for them alignment with Europe would serve to promote secularization in Turkey and a European identity would contribute to suppress political Islam. Accordingly, the legacy of Atatürk has set the principles for the country's foreign policy in the sense that it created a link between the Kemalist elite and the state's international orientation. The foreign policy was, seemingly, a result of the goal to advance a certain social order (Haas, 2012: 202f).

Although Turkey's alliance with the West began with the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, followed by Atatürk's reforms, it intensified during the Cold War when Turkey became a military ally against the Soviet threat (Mango, 2005: 85). Not the least the threatening attitude Turkey perceived from the Soviet Union carried the country to the West. As a result of the Truman Doctrine, implemented in 1947 in order to support Turkey and Greece against Soviet, the country's foreign policy fate was sealed (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 35f).

Despite the alliance with the West Turkish foreign policy has traditionally been characterized by introversion, which may be in accordance with Atatürk's statement "peace at home, peace abroad". In reality it meant that the Republic should not engage in the Middle East, but only look to the West, and hence not face the same destiny as the Ottoman Empire once did (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 35; Haas, 2012: 202).

4.5 Intrinsic conflict dimensions within Turkish politics

The issue of secularism versus Islam emanates from the 19th century when the Ottoman Empire launched reforms inspired by Western Europe. During this era the people was divided into Islamists and Westerners (Çağaptay, 2014: 32). Since conservatives from the very beginning have sought to obstacle reforms by using religion secularism was adopted by the Turkish constitution in 1937, in order to stop the use of religion for political purposes (Mango, 2005: 59).

Ever since the one-party politics was replaced with a multiparty system in 1950, political leaders have, nonetheless, appealed to religious perceptions in order to gain votes (Çağaptay, 2014: 32f). In the election of 1950 Atatürk's republican party lost power to the Islamist *Demokrat Parti* under the rule of Adnan Menderes. Turkey at the same time had interest of being accepted in organizations such as the Council of Europe and NATO, which both demanded Turkey to have a democratically elected government (Robins, 2016: 113f).

As a result of the original sociopolitical synthesis of the Kemalist Republic, based on Kemalist secularism and Turkish nationalism, the Turkish society has intrinsic sociopolitical conflict dimensions. These are primarily secular Kemalists against religious Islamists, and Turks against Kurds. The nationally conscious Kurds, and the politicized Muslims may accordingly challenge the secular and nationalist principles of the Republic (Kramer, 2000: 86). Due to the threat of Kurdish separatism and political Islam the Kemalist principles of nationalism and secularism became deeply intertwined during the Republic's two first decades (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 27, 30f).

These intrinsic conflict dimension have always required Turkish policy-makers to address problems correctly to prevent them from jeopardizing the social fabric of the society. These problems have for instance been the consequences of economic and social change, urbanization, and social security, as well as ethnic and religious diversity, the rise of political Islam, and the problems stemming from the development of civil society (Kramer, 2000: 85).

The perennial military interventions in politics have not only aimed to obstacle deviations from the principles set up by the secular Kemalist Republic and its deputy, the military leadership, but also to prevent undesired ideologies from gaining influence. The military interventions may therefore be seen as resulting from failures to implement the "right" kind of democracy (Kramer, 2000: 85; Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 20, 31; Karaveli, 2019).

4.6 Party politics à la Turca

Democracy in Turkey is inexorably connected to secularism, and those who belong to the Kemalists equal secularism with democratic beliefs, while political forces that have not been secular have implacably been considered as non-democratic. Nevertheless, the prevail of liberal democracy altered the conditions, since it accepts religious views under its umbrella. There are, however, secular forces which can be questioned from a democratic viewpoint. This applies not the least to the military, which constitutes the strongest secular bastion (Kramer, 2000: 83).

Until *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party; hereinafter, AKP) came to dominate the political stage with its landslide electoral victory in 2002, Kemalism had to various extent been the prevailing ideology. The biggest Kemalist party is *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (Republican People's Party; hereinafter, CHP). Nevertheless, Kemalism is also, to various degree, present in other parties' political agenda. *Milleyetci Hareket Partisi* (Nationalist Movement Party; hereinafter, MHP), for instance, emphasizes the Turkish nation and state while leaning on a synthesis of Turkishness and Islam (Way et al., 2018: 4f).

Regarding AKP's Islamist legacy there have been debates whether the party should be considered Islamist. Although the party has been clear on not mixing politics and religion and its ideas are not formulated on the basis of an Islamic identity, its leaders have their political background within Islamist parties (Selvik & Stenslie, 2011: 135). The current President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, became in 1998 suspended from politics for having read a controversial part of a religious poem (Jacoby & Tabak, 2015: 347).

5 Empirical section
5.1 Structural explanation
5.1.1 Accession failure to the EU

The September 11 terrorist-attacks had at least initially impact on Turkey's EU application since the country was considered playing a key-role in a polarized world. Additionally, the fact that the country applied for membership under a government with roots in political Islam was seen as remarkable. After the election 2002, the US initially had a positive approach towards the newly elected Islamist regime since it identified Turkey's 'soft Islam' as a bulwark against the hardcore Islam which had prevailed in the US arch-enemy in the region, Iran (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 28f, 39; Haas, 2012: 211).

Nonetheless, the conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdish rebellions showed to obstacle Turkey's plan for EU membership, since the EU and Turkey appeared to have completely different perceptions of the conflict. In opposite to the Turkish government, the EU perceived the Kurdish struggle as an ethnic group, which got its cultural and political rights denied by an authoritarian regime (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 28). Western liberals on the other hand viewed *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* (Kurdistan Workers' Party, hereinafter, PKK) as an expression of Kurdish national aspirations, which has paved the way for the Turkish perception that West wants to weaken the country (Mango, 2005: 35, 84).

In the AKP government a widespread perception is that the country for long time has punched below its level on the international arena. This is based on the perception that Turkey has not been able to benefit from its geostrategic position when it comes to executing influence in the region (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 42). The former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu claimed in his book *Strategic Depth* that the elite of AKP has had the long-time perception that Turkey should benefit if its traditional connections to the West were complemented with alliances in the Middle East and Asia (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 4ff).

5.1.2 The Zero-problem doctrine and the dilemma of ethics
Under foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu Turkey sought influence in its immediate vicinity (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 42). The policy AKP conducted towards the Middle East before the outbreak of the Arab Spring was popularly known as "Zero problem with neighbors"-doctrine and was based on soft power. It was based on principles of parsimonious gains through economic interdependence, and close political cooperation based on cultural affinity. However, the policy was not based on democratic development, but rather on realist perspectives of respect for other states' sovereignty, and to not intervene in other states' internal affairs (Öniş, 2012: 46).

As a result of Turkey's previously rapidly growing economy, pluralistic political system, and the EU candidacy the country has become very popular in the Middle East. The popularity may also be explained by that the "New Turkey" under the rule of AKP appears more appealing to Arab elites than the traditional Turkish model of state-led modernization by secular elites. Most important is likely the view on religion, which AKP has given more prominence in daily life, thus abandoning the Kemalist view on secularism in favor of a more loose understanding of "secularism" (Öniş, 2012: 55).

AKP has additionally showed willingness to engage with the West in order to benefit from global integration, and similarly, it has shown ability to challenge the West (Öniş, 2012: 55). This was the case in Syria during the 2000s when the AKP government showed entrepreneurship in the sense that it undermined the US strategy to isolate the country, but instead aimed to reduce its isolation by diplomacy. Turkey has additionally undermined Western consensus regarding the Palestinian *Hamas*, by inviting its leaders to the country. This, however, contributed to wither Turkey's stance regarding antiterrorism (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 42).

As part of the active foreign policy Turkey had established trade linkages with Syria during the last decade. Since the relations had remained poor during the 1990s but enjoyed a belle epoque during the AKP era, Syria was often used as an example to show the success of the Zero problem-doctrine (Öniş, 2012: 46, 52f). The tensed relations were to large extent a result of Syria's support to PKK, which Syria used to create instability in southeastern Turkey (Klare, 2001: 176ff).

5.1.3 The miscalculation of the Arab Spring

The policy-makers behind the "Zero problem"-doctrine had made the assumption that the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East were likely to persist for a foreseeable future. The "Zero-problem"-doctrine became, accordingly, problematic when the Arab Spring unraveled. Although Turkish political elites hailed the uprisings against the regimes they were well aware of the conflict of interest it brought about, not the least since they challenged the economic linkages Turkey had invested in with the countries' political elites (Öniş, 2012: 49f).

The development hence put ethics against self-interest, especially in internally polarized states like Syria. The dilemma AKP faced was primarily whether one should encourage the regimes to conduct reforms, or support the public uprisings. Since the "Zero-problem" doctrine was based on good relations with the states' ruling elites, a support for the uprisings would make the doctrine useless (Öniş, 2012: 46, 49f). This dilemma of ethics versus self-interest could also contribute to explain why the AKP government responded differently to the developments in Egypt, Libya, and Syria. In the case of Egypt, the AKP government was very clear on its position and supported the pro-democratization forces, while the support for the uprisings was much more ambiguous in the case of Syria (Öniş, 2012: 50f, 52f).

The relations between Turkey and Syria deteriorated when it became evident that Turkey, contrary to its official policy that Syria should conduct reforms within the system, supported opposition groups. Turkey changed its official approach to Syria when it became obvious that good relations with the Assad regime would have a negative impact on the country's international position. Instead, Turkey adopted a confrontational approach to the Assad regime and supported the solution advocated by the Arab League and the UN (Öniş, 2012: 54f).

The choice of AKP to abandon the cooperation with Bashar al-Assad was also based on the party's calculation that free elections in Syria would bring the Muslim Brotherhood to the power, which had been the case in Egypt. Turkey calculated that if also Syria came under control of the Muslim Brotherhood, it would enable a cooperation based on a Sunni Muslim identity (Özdalga, 2016: 24f). During the uprisings in the Arab world Turkey identified its role as a leader for the Sunni Muslims, while likely also nourishing the dream of re-establishing a lost empire. However, Turkey's passion for the Arab uprisings got a thorn when Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood government was forced from power (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 6f).

5.1.4 The Syrian proxy-war
The uprisings in Syria soon took the shape of a proxy-war, where global and regional powers sought to increase their sphere of influence at the expense of each other. From the very start of the war Turkey demanded the resign of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The Arab opposition against the Assad regime was shattered, and the lack of unity paved the way for the Sunni extremist group Islamic State (hereinafter, ISIS) (Özdalga, 2016: 22, 25).

At the same time the Kurdish opposition in Syria grew bigger and incorporated the political branch of the Syrian Kurds, Political Union Party (hereinafter, PYD). The movement has close connections to PKK and also has a military branch, known as YPG. In early 2014 PYD established autonomy in the Kurdish part of Syria. PKK and YPG joined the combat against ISIS, which contributed to upraise their standing internationally (Özdalga, 2016: 22f).

The combat that attracted most attention internationally was likely the one in Kobane, located on the border between Turkey and Syria. In early 2015 the Kurdish coalition consisting of YPG, PKK, and peshmerga managed to defeat ISIS thanks to bombings led by the US. The triumph of the Kurds caused tensions between the Turkish state and the Kurds, since the Turkish government complicated the border crossing for Kurds who wanted to take part in the

defense of the city. Turkey's ambition to conduct its own policy in relation to oppositional groups is, however, dependent on border control (Özdalga, 2016: 23f, 26f).

Although the development has not gone in the direction Turkey desired, the government has continued to support the Sunni-Arab groups oppositional to the Syrian regime. While complicating the border passage for Kurds Turkey permitted Islamist groups to get a foothold there (Hammargren, 2015). Except from giving war waging groups free passage over the border Turkey has supported them with weapons, housing, and medical care, which has caused critique domestically as well as from the international community, not the least from the US (Özdalga, 2016: 25ff).

In the summer of 2015 the Syrian-Kurdish PYD/YPG managed to take control over the border crossing and thereby stop the inflow of rebels and weapons. The fact that the Kurdish coalition was able to achieve what the Turkey was unable to contributed to further wither Turkey's reputation internationally (Özdalga, 2016: 26f). Turkey, however, eventually allowed the US to use Turkish airbases for attacking ISIS in Syria, while launching military operations against PKK in Turkey and Iraq (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 8).

Turkey has moreover eagerly advocated that the Syrian-Kurdish PYD/YPG should be declared a terrorist organization, while demanding that violent Islamist groups not should be deemed as terrorists, but instead be part of an eventual peace solution. The question has been further complicated by the fact that the Kurds in northern Syria have claimed the former ISIS controlled areas. This is perceived as problematic by Turkey since PYD would benefit from that, which in turn would strengthen PKK (Özdalga, 2016: 26f). Turkey, on the other hand, wanted to gain influence in northern Syria, while preventing Kurdish autonomy (Hammargren, 2015). Erdoğan was, however, aware that the goal was dependent on cooperation with the US (Karaveli, 2018).

Turkey's unwillingness to participate in the combat of ISIS created tensions between Turkey and the US, while Turkey's relations to the EU reached a new low. The refusal of Washington to support Turkey's desire for regime change in Syria created a sense of resentment in the AKP government. The fact that the Arab Spring, opposite to Turkish expectations, had surrounded the country with governments hostile to the country, nourished the perception that Turkey had ended up on the losing side in the Syrian war (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 7).

Turkey's behavior together with the development contributed to isolate the country on the international stage. Except from appearing on the losing side in Syria, Turkey had no possibility to stop US support for Kurds, and had tensed relations with Iran and Iraq. On top of this occurred the downing of the Russian fighter jet. All of this contributed to make the country vulnerable (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 7ff).

5.1.5 The unlikely alliance with Russia

Turkey and Russia, under the rule of Erdoğan and Vladimir Putin, have established an economic cooperation, which has managed to transcend traditional animosity. The implementation of agreements between them has been possible since both Erdoğan and Putin for long time have enjoyed a relatively unchallenged political position. What has further strengthen the bonds is that Erdoğan and Putin have many characteristics in common, such as an authoritarian style of governance, and possibly a shared dream of re-establishing lost empires (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 2, 6).

Although the Turkish downing of the fighter jet tensed the relations, the economic activity between the countries has remained strong, and Russia remains Turkey's biggest supplier of natural gas (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 2, 5; Özdalga, 2016: 27). Albeit Turkey and Russia were on opposite sides in Syria, where Russia allied with Iran in its unyielding support for the Assad regime, they managed to keep their different perceptions apart from their mutual economic interests. This has worked well as long as the stalemate in Syria has remained (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 7).

Turkey's interest for Russia may, however, be seen as a panicky response to the pro-Kurdish policies the US conducted in Syria. The fact that Turkey has turned to Russia and Iran may indicate how severe the Kurdish autonomy is perceived by the AKP government, not the least since Turkish right-parties, to which both AKP and MHP belong, have traditionally been pro-American and deeply hostile towards Russia. The US support for Kurds has seemingly trumped this hostility (Karaveli, 2018).

5.1.6 Empirical analysis

The 'External constraints'-perspective on Turkey's foreign policy re-orientation emphasizes a number of very interesting points. These are for instance that:

Turkey's miscalculations in the Arab Spring followed by the failure in the Syrian war forced Turkey to divert its foreign policy. Seemingly, Turkey became trapped since its approach to Syria was based on the assumption that the Assad regime would fall. When the Arab Spring

unraveled Turkey abandoned its "Zero-problem"-doctrine in favor of an expectation of increased power based on a Sunni Muslim identity. Although Turkish policy-makers began to nourish an expectation of Turkish hegemony as Islamist powers initially gained momentum, this expectation was soon abandoned due to the development.

The war in Syria and the Kurdish steamrolling that followed from the power vacuum made the situation even more precarious since Turkey became isolated on the international stage, while Kurds were gaining momentum on the battle ground as well as in the Turkish parliament. Instead Turkish policy-makers had to re-think their strategy, and rather than seeking increased power in the region they had to shift focus to preserving the state. The decision to finally give the US access to the Turkish airbases for attacking ISIS was likely a concession in order to get a carte blanche for fighting the Kurds in PKK.

The development that resulted from the war in Syria showed that Turkish foreign and domestic politics are deeply intertwined. The development in Syria and the mobilization among Kurds it created meant the definite end for Erdoğan's desire to create a sociopolitical synthesis based on Sunni Muslim identity, which should override the conflict dimension of Turks and Kurds. From this point of view Erdoğan's coalition with the ultra-nationalist and as well EU-hostile MHP appears like a corollary.

Turkey's traditional allies ended up on the same side as the Kurds in the Syrian war, and the country's reluctance to let Kurds who fought ISIS pass the border gave birth to the international perception that Turkey cooperated with ISIS. Turkey, on the other hand, criticizes the EU and the US for not recognizing the threats the country faces. The Western powers has clearly not been in favor of Turkey in the Kurdish question, forcing Turkey to find new alliances. At the same time each side is accusing one another for fraternizing with terror organizations.

Contrary to previous governments, AKP did not have the EU as the only point of reference in the foreign policy. When the door to the EU closed Turkey sought to increase its power in the Middle East. When this failed due to external events such as the Arab Spring, and the development of the Syrian war, Turkey turned to Russia. Contrary to the EU, neither the Middle Eastern regimes nor Russia demand Turkey to conduct any democratic reforms or solve minority issues.

5.2 Domestic and deliberate explanation
5.2.1 The power consolidation of AKP

With labels such as 'moderate Islam' and 'conservative democracy' AKP managed to appeal to large, long time neglected sectors of the society, including not only religious conservatives but also Alevis, Kurds, and non-Muslims. Except from emerging victorious in 2002, the party also won the elections in 2007 and 2011, thus making it dominate domestic politics in a way unprecedented in Turkish political history (Way et al., 2018: 2). However, the AKP politicians as well as its voters stemmed from well outside the traditional state nomenklatura (Jacoby & Tabak, 2015: 347).

The first two mandates of AKP were characterized by reformations of infrastructure, education, medical care, human rights, and judiciary in order to meet the requirements for EU membership set in 1999, when Turkey was approved as a candidate state. Due to the political reforms the support for AKP broadened among the population, and it gained adherents also among liberals, who identified the possibility to escape the military's guardianship (Özdalga, 2016: 5f).

With the election victory of AKP, the movement of Fethullah Gülen began its journey to power. The Gülen movement is a Sunni Islamic movement based on the ideas of the preacher Fethullah Gülen, and its adherents are encouraged to invest in schools and civil institutions (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 29). The strongest fortress of the movement has been found among the lower middle class, which made the Gülen movement an important actor in the modernizing process. The relation between AKP and Gülen has previously been ambivalent, since political Islam in Turkey can be divided into two branches: one that is focused on party politics, to which AKP belongs, and one that stems from civil society, to which Gülen belongs. However, the relation between them thawed in the early 2000s, and the Gülen movement expressed its support for AKP (Özdalga, 2002; 2016: 14; 95).

The alliance between AKP and the Gülen movement aimed to suppress the military's influence on politics in order to limit the impact of the Kemalist secularist politics, which has been highly present since the foundation of the Republic. AKP's strategy to curb the Kemalist influence was to appoint Gülenists in key institutions such as the judiciary and the police. The strong loyalist presence in institutions thus ensured AKP's influence (Way et al., 2018: 3). Prosecutors and judges affiliated with the Gülen movement could then participate in the trials, which started in 2007 and were supported by Erdoğan, against military personnel and state

officials, who were accused for planning military overtakes (Robins, 2016: 114; Özdalga, 2016: 14f).

The trials resulted in almost 300 high-ranking military officers, and journalists being prosecuted, and either jailed or dismissed. As a result, religiously-oriented military officers with lower rankings could achieve higher ranks. With the help of the Gülen movement, AKP had managed to replace military officers hostile to the party with loyalists to the political agenda of AKP (Way et al., 2018: 3).

5.2.2 The EU accession – political liberalism as a means?

The landslide victory of AKP in 2002 can to large extent be explained by its pro-EU campaign. AKP could also benefit domestically from its European calling, since it made the party legitimized by the Kemalist establishment, which was more prone to accept a political party with a European agenda, than one with anti-Western inclinations such as the Islamist predecessors of AKP (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 28f). In the initial phase of AKP's mandate period, accession to the EU had the highest priority (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 4).

While AKP remained keen on joining the EU, the Kemalists began to falter in their previous unyielding perception regarding EU membership. Although the Kemalists had identified accession to the EU as fundamental for establishing their desired social order, they became hostile towards the EU in the early 2000s since they perceived it as a threat towards their principal ideological interests: secularism and assimilationist nationalism. The Kemalists in CHP as well as in the military abandoned their long strive for European integration and turned into outright critics of Turkish EU membership (Haas, 2012: 203, 206).

Conversely, AKP claimed the party shared the same liberal values as Western Europe, hence membership was seen as a corollary. The then Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that a Turkish membership would be the biggest democratization project since the establishment of the Republic. The keenness of AKP to join the EU was, however, not only a result of perceived ideological affinity, but the party also identified EU as a tool for giving its political agenda domestic prominence at the expense of the Kemalist one. The requisites EU demanded Turkey to fulfill for accession were increased political, religious, and cultural liberties as well as reduced military influence, which resonated deeply with AKP's goals for domestic politics (Haas, 2012: 206ff).

AKP calculated that an EU membership would make it easier to establish its political agenda based on political liberalism and social Islam, since the more politically liberal Turkey became, the easier it would be to protect religious freedoms. Since the military has been the bastion of secularism a reducing of its power of the society was hailed by AKP. Furthermore, EU in the 2000s increasingly emphasized religious freedoms and multiculturalism in order to improve the linguistic and cultural rights of minority groups. Since Kemalism is based on assertive secularism and assimilationist nationalism this composed a direct threat to the Kemalist Republic (Haas, 2012: 208).

Erdoğan, on the other hand, was a stubborn opponent to all kind of bans on Kurdish political parties. In the local elections of 2004 the view AKP advocated on popular religiosity appeared to be more appealing among the Kurds than the secularism advocated by PKK. As a result PKK and its leader Abdullah Öcalan relinquished their perception of Islam as having an unfavorable effect on Kurdish societies and serving as a means for Turkish hegemony, and instead moved closer to a religious discourse more corresponding to the one of AKP. AKP also benefitted from a cooperation with Kurdish deputies in order to abolish the headscarf ban at universities in 2010 (Jacoby & Tabak, 2015: 347, 350).

5.2.3 The end of the AKP-Gülen alliance

The alliance between AKP and Gülen came to an end in 2013 as a result of the accusations of corruption directed to high-ranking state employees. Ministers of parliament and government employees as well as family members of Erdoğan were objects for investigations, since wiretappings revealed how they received big sums in foreign currency (Özdalga, 2016: 11f). There were, however, rumors claiming that the corruption accusations were instigated by Gülen loyalists in the judiciary (Way et al., 2018: 3).

AKP response was to by all means encountering the trials. The government has furthermore re-casted the judiciary according to its own needs. As a result the power of various ministries have been undermined by making them come under the government. The government further reduced the number of courts from 93 to 6, thus facilitating the control of legal actions by appointed judges. Also the police has been subject to restructuring, which has tied it closer to the government in order to undermine its power. Its place has been taken by the security police, which is directly under Erdoğan's control (Özdalga, 2016: 12f).

While denying the accusations Erdoğan took the opportunity to reframe the trials of the military personnel, labelling them as a conspiracy against the military, instigated by the Gülen

movement through its personnel in the judiciary. Seemingly, the government managed not only to move focus from the corruption affair, but also to get rid of the Gülen movement by purging personnel affiliated with it (Özdalga, 2016: 15).

Erdoğan further claimed that Gülen aimed to overthrow the government, and that the movement had infiltrated governmental institutions in order to establish a parallel structure within the Turkish state. Erdoğan additionally labeled Gülen a terrorist organization, and journalists, prosecutors, and police officers associated with the movement were dismissed or incarcerated. AKP has furthermore purged Gülenists in state institutions and departments (Way et al., 2018: 3; Özdalga, 2016: 13).

5.2.4 The backlash of the 2015 election

The general election that was about to take place in Turkey in the summer of 2015 became heavily affected by the development in Syria and the Kurdish autonomy that resulted from it. During the election campaign, which was characterized by national hysteria, Erdoğan uttered that the Syrian-Kurdish PYD composed a bigger threat than ISIS (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 8).

In the election the pro-Kurdish *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (Peoples' Democratic Party; hereinafter, HDP) managed to get 13 percent, to large extent due to support from CHP voters in order to prevent AKP from achieving majority. Except from entering the parliament, the success of HDP impeded AKP from getting majority for the first time since the party had come to power. Erdoğan refused any attempts to form a coalition government, since it would pave the way for an independent judiciary, which would have been worrying for him due to the corruption accusations (Hammargren, 2015).

In the aftermath of the election AKP adopted a new discourse about "war of liberation", against external as well as internal enemies. In pro-government media allegories to the foundation of the Turkish Republic such as "resistance to the occupation of Anatolia" appeared, and perceptions about a global conspiracy to weaken Turkey were frequently uttered by journalists and parliamentarians belonging to AKP (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 8).

Erdoğan calculated that an extra election, during conditions when Turkish military fought against PKK would decrease the support for HDP among CHP voters, making the party end up without parliamentary representation, thus giving AKP majority (Hammargren, 2015). Shortly after the election the ceasefire between the Turkish state and PKK was broken (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 8).

In the re-election Erdoğan and AKP were, however, forced to collaborate with the ultra-nationalist MHP in order to achieve a majority in the parliament (Karaveli, 2018). MHP has always had a very critical stance towards the EU, and its primary aim has instead been to emphasize Turkish culture, which is considered dependent on a powerful state and a strong sense of community among its inhabitants (Haas, 2012: 205f). MHP, additionally, does not have any interest in changing Turkey's policy vis-à-vis the Kurds (Karaveli, 2019).

5.2.5 Domestic political turmoil

In the summer of 2013 the Turkish government was plagued by the protests that became known as the "Gezi Protests", which challenged the state power. Erdoğan condemned the protests, which turned the aggression against himself and the government. In pro-government media the protests were referred to as "outside influence", "foreign intervention", "using democracy as a disguise", and "Western interests" (Aydıntaşbaş, 2016: 7). For many people the government's reaction to the Gezi protests came to symbolize the end of the liberal politics that had characterized the party's two first eras in power (Özdalga, 2016: 7f).

The political climate, however, became even worse with the coup attempt in July 2016. Immediately after the failed coup President Erdoğan and the government accused Fethullah Gülen for having staged the coup attempt by his loyalists in the military. In the aftermath the government initiated a purge of high-ranking military officers, and personnel in the judiciary. The purge was also directed to human rights activists and leftist groups (Way et al., 2018: 3).

Already in 2015 AKP started to refer to the Gülen movement as a terrorist organization, relabeling it Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ). Although Gülen himself has condemned the coup attempt, AKP has made efforts in order to prove Gülen's involvement. However, neither governments in Europe nor in the US have find any evidence of Gülen's participation in the failed coup (Way et al., 2018: 3).

After the failed coup MHP's leader Devlet Bahçeli embraced the idea of presidential system. The reason for this was not to satisfy Erdoğan's demand for power, but rather that MHP should benefit from it. Although MHP has chosen to not occupy any mandates in the government, the party exerts influence over the politics due to the thousands of positions it occupies in the bureaucracy. The concentrated power that results from the presidential system additionally limits the space where political forces can grow, thus ensuring that factors such as the Gülen movement will not gain influence in the future (Karaveli, 2018).

5.2.6 The end of the Kemalist Republic

The military has traditionally been the country's most respected institution, and its popularity is to large extent a result of its role in the Turkish War of Independence. Especially the Kemalists have often put their faith in the military to solve political issues, which, as a side-effect has brought "indolence" regarding political participation (Çağaptay, 2014: 46ff, 51). The military's ousting of the Islamist *Refah Partisi* (Welfare Party, hereinafter, RP) in 1997 appeared, however, to be a Pyrrhus victory for the Kemalists, since it made that moderately Islamic politicians began to see the advantages of liberal democracy. This may explain why the leadership of AKP was eager to become a member of the EU (Barkey & Taspinar, 2011: 29). RP was eventually banned by Turkey's supreme court for its Islamist inclinations (Çağaptay, 2014: 26f).

The economic growth that occurred during AKP's first terms of office led to increased support for the party at the expense of the military. Additionally, the party implemented reforms which curbed the military's influence over civilian politics. While the military could exercise power over previous civilian governments, it was not possible on AKP. When the military in 2007 accused AKP for violating Turkey's secular character, the party, contrary to previous governments, referred to the unacceptability of military involvement in civilian politics. Thus, the military was no longer available to exert checks and balances on the government (Çağaptay, 2014: 47ff).

Although the military's reputation among the public was already in decline it got its death blow when the plans of military overtakes, most notably *Ergenekon*, unfolded. The lost popularity has made the military more dependent on the government, and as a result a new relationship between AKP and the military has taken form. Their interests regarding Syria and PKK have furthermore converged, and they have agreed upon a nationalist foreign policy, aimed to gain regional power. Turkey's precarious situation has further tightened the bonds between them (Çağaptay, 2014: 49ff, 53f).

5.2.7 Empirical analysis

The 'Domestic constraints'-perspective highlights several key aspects in Turkey's foreign policy re-orientations, such as:

Since AKP did not stem from the traditional nomenklatura the party lacked people in the bureaucracy. The leader cadre of AKP realized that they were dependent on getting people loyal to the party's political agenda employed by the state apparatus in order to exert the

desired politics. Except from being pious the Gülenists were also relatively educated and could hence get employment in state institutions such as the judiciary, which the traditional social conservative voters could not due to their lack of education. Previous Islamist parties did never establish these alliances and could hence not curb the bureaucracy's power. When these parties reached power, the traditional nomenklatura was still in the bureaucracy, thus preventing their politics from prevailing.

The relatively high threshold of ten percent for entering the parliament gave HDP power to prevent AKP's majority. In order to achieve majority Erdoğan turned to the ultra-nationalist MHP, thus initiating a policy hostile towards the Kurds. The coalition between the Islamist AKP and MHP may therefore be seen as an intensifying of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis that followed from the military coup in 1980. The coalition additionally ruled out an approximation to the EU.

The war against Kurdish separatists that started in the summer of 2015, made Erdoğan dependent on the military, whose power he previously had tried to confine. The failed coup became a golden opportunity for Erdoğan to get rid of the military, as well as the Gülenists. Additionally, Erdoğan used the turmoil to justify restrictions of the political sphere with reference to the nation's security. Western powers have not been helpful regarding Turkey's struggle for maintaining domestic order, which is shown in their approach towards associations Turkey considers terrorists.

The Kemalists had for long time been dissatisfied with the AKP-Gülen alliance and were therefore initially satisfied with the purge of Gülenists. However, things went from bad to worse for the Kemalists, since the power became even more centered around Erdoğan. The power concentration of Erdoğan necessitated a historically unthinkable alliance between CHP and a pro-Kurdish party in order to contain Erdoğan's power demand.

Due to their high numerical presence in the bureaucracy the Gülenists could exercise influence on the government. That ability seems now to have been transferred to the MHP. The increased power of MHP does also make an approximation to the EU seem distant. The presidential election in 2017 in which Erdoğan, due to support of MHP, emerged victorious, contributed to concentrate the power and tighten the political sphere even more, thus preventing influence from societal groups such as Gülen.

6 Conclusions

The uprisings in the Arab world and the war in Syria put Turkey in a precarious situation, thus forcing Erdoğan to re-calculate his politics and abandon all demands for increased power in the region. Since Turkey in the new political environment could no longer benefit from its Western alliances, AKP sought cooperation with Kurdish-, and EU-hostile MHP, which in turn ruled out certain alliances. Davutoğlu's claim to complement the country's Western alliances appears retroactively almost clairvoyant.

The study shows that Turkish domestic and foreign policy are deeply intertwined, thus affecting one another. The alliance between AKP and MHP appears to be a panicky response to contain Kurds in domestic politics as well as to deal with the precarious situation the country found itself in due to the development that resulted from the war in Syria. In that sense MHP's support for increased power for Erdoğan's appears like a corollary to maintain the state. This shows that the 'External constraints'-perspective provides explanatory power for the foreign policy re-orientation while also explaining the changes in domestic politics.

Contrary to AKP's expectations Turkey's geographical position once again turned out to be a liability. Seemingly, the development in the outside world brought a necessity to re-orient the foreign policy, which in turn has permitted Erdoğan to respond in a way that has made him more authoritarian. The re-orientation have in turn been possible as a result of the reforms in the bureaucracy the EU accession process paved the way for, not the least the military withdrawal, thus facilitating the drastic re-orientation.

The current regime's immediate need to contain the Kurds ruled out all Western alliances and eventually brought Turkey to Russia. It furthermore became obvious that some domestic-ideological relations, in this case the Kurdish question, may be incompatible with certain foreign policy relations, thus making Turkey tied to a limited number of alliances. As a result Turkey has ended up isolated on the international stage, and left with a few allies such as Russia and Venezuela.

AKP initially seemed to have a formula for the 'Kurdish question'. By replacing the focus on "Turkishness", with greater focus on minority interests within religious frames, according to EU's perception of minorities' rights the Kurds were incorporated in the society's social fabric. Thus, Erdoğan and AKP managed to re-draw the sociopolitical synthesis by emphasizing a Sunni Muslim identity in order to reach and consolidate power. The Kurdish

mobilization that followed from the war in Syria, however, meant the nail in the coffin for a Sunni Muslim unity.

Due to the development in the region Turkey has involuntarily been forced to head back to a traditional prudent foreign policy, focused on by all means preserving the state, thus making Erdoğan appeal to historical allegories about the nation's survival. This gives further power to the perception of Erdoğan as a politician without any clear ideology, but rather one that shifts ideology according to current needs.

Erdoğan distinguishes from previous decision-makers with the same Islamist inclinations in the sense that he has been able to affect the political system from within. While previous political leaders have tried to adapt to and encounter existing conflicting dimensions Erdoğan has created his own, which has been possible due to the centralization of political institutions. Former political leaders have in that sense been policy-takers, while Erdoğan has been a policy-maker. When previous politicians have come to power they have shown unable to cope with the current problems, and thus been short-lived, due to the bureaucracy's power.

The power consolidation of AKP shows that it is not possible to extinguish ideas. Although political parties have been ousted by the military and dissolved by the supreme court for being Islamist they have always resurrected in other guises. AKP is yet another example of this. Instead of facing the same destiny as previous Islamist parties, AKP managed to remove the domestic constraints by getting loyalists in the state bureaucracy, which also facilitated the implementation of legislations corresponding to the party's visions. The EU accession process was helpful since it demanded religious freedom and military withdrawal from politics, thus providing Erdoğan with good cards at hand.

The study also sheds light on the difficulty to implement a certain social order in a society, which to large extent is rooted in completely different traditions and perceptions about the world. The social order the Kemalists sought to implement stemmed from abroad, which made it harder to identify with for the majority of the people outside of the cities who were never embraced by the secular reforms, but rather felt more affinity with social conservative values. Contrary to the CHP perception of top-down modernization based on urbanization and Western modernization, the key for the future appeared to be the pious people in the rural areas.

AKP could likely also benefit from not stemming from the traditional nomenklatura, since it made the party less affiliated with the political elites which in various guises had dominated the politics since the 1950s. This likely permitted AKP to adopt a more "eclectic" approach to foreign policy in the sense that it not only had the EU as reference point. Seemingly, there is in Turkey a strong link not only between regime type, but also preferred social order, and foreign policy orientation. The Kemalists aimed to secularize the country and hence once sought integration with Europe for that purpose. AKP, on the other hand, sought European integration to advance religious freedom within liberal frames, which was the then prevailing paradigm in the EU.

While the Kemalists focused primarily on approximation to Europe regarding culture and social order, AKP focused on approximation to Europe economically, while letting the society keep social conservative values. The vast majority had little interest of adopting the European social order, but rather the economic system. Seemingly, the synthesis of Islam and capitalism trumped the social order, thus permitting the "Turkish exceptionalism" of secular unity and popular religiosity to abide.

The Kemalist CHP, as well as MHP, both suffer from the inability to solve minority issues due to their nationalist legacy, based on cultural and linguistic unity. All political parties that lean towards Kemalism have mainly, although to various degrees, emphasized the principles of nationalism, populism, and secularism but paid lesser attention to reformism. If Kemalism, with its focus on assertive secularism and assimilationist nationalism, in Turkey seems to have reached its end, its ideas seems to enjoy a revival in Western Europe, where more and more politicians have experienced problems emanating from culturally heterogenous societies and hence have identified and emphasized the need for cultural and linguistic unity.

AKP's coalition with MHP indicated the definite end of the liberal politics and a big step towards a new social order. At the same time political systems based on principles of liberal democracy are collapsing worldwide as a result of existing ideologies' failure to face current issues. Similar as Kemalism appeared to reach the end of the road in the 1990s, political liberalism seems to face the same destiny, and therefore has to be replaced with something else. When fewer and fewer feel that they can identify with the established ideologies democracy becomes irrelevant, which has been shown several times through Turkish political history.

Turkish politicians have always been oscillating between modernity and traditionalism. While on the one hand claiming that their country is a European country, they have on the other hand had to adapt after the domestic public's religious inclinations. Similarly, Turkish politicians have eagerly emphasized the importance for the world's great powers to have good relations to the country due to its strategic position between civilizations. Turkey has, however, not been able to become a part of either civilization, but rather turned out to be alienated, which brings to the fore the old saying that "a Turk's only friend is mere another Turk". Seemingly, the "Turkish exceptionalism" of modernization and good relations to the West has come to an end.

In sum, the 'External constraints'-perspective has shown to override the 'Domestic and deliberate'-perspective. The country's geographic location, and the ethnic fractionalization that has followed from its borders, have not only paved the way for, but also made the re-orientation necessary for the country's survival. AKP could furthermore benefit from the reformations in the domestic political system in order to conduct the foreign policy re-orientation. If it were not for the removal of the domestic constraints, the re-orientation might not have occurred. The development in the domestic political landscape appears to be a recoil to the external shocks the country encountered.

The case study served the purpose well, since it helped illuminate various aspects of a multi featured phenomenon. Although it is hard to make any conclusions regarding a wider population of cases, the case study has brought some interesting hypotheses, for instance that although Turkey is a highly populated middle-sized country, the structural factors yet appear to override the domestic ones. Conclusions may, however, mainly apply for other countries located in volatile regions, since these are particularly vulnerable.

The congruence method was useful in order to shed light on and evaluate competing theories. It was additionally useful to separate domestic and foreign politics, even though some aspects inevitably overlapped. To further strengthen the explanatory power additional variables may be included in future research. It is moreover evident that the history still has a very strong influence on Turkish politics, which may reveal the need for traditional theories based on structuralist and rational actor perspectives to be complemented by perspectives that pay attention to historical and cultural legacy. This may especially apply when investigating foreign policy re-orientations in countries whose political systems are a direct result of a traumatic past.

Erdoğan inherited a political system with a tradition of despotic leaders. His propensity to use constitutional constraints to limit his opponents indicates that those who have managed to topple an authoritarian system perpetuate subconsciously the same values and thoughts they have crushed. As long as the constitution primarily is considered a means for annihilating opponents there is no democracy in sight. Although Erdoğan changed the country's future, he has shown unable to change the past.

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