

**T.R.
YILDIZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
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POST GRADUATE THESIS**

**TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY ON SYRIA
AN APPROACH FROM CONSTRUCTIVIST
POINT**

**ÖZGE ÇARPAR
11716017**

**THESIS ADVISOR
Prof. Dr. ÖMER ÇAHA**

**İSTANBUL
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ÖZ

TÜRK DIŞ POLİTİKASINI SURİYE İLE İLİŞKİLERİ ÜZERİNDEN İNŞACI YAKLAŞIM İLE OKUMA

Özge Çarpar
Mayıs, 2017

Dış politika davranışlarını devletlerin sosyal olarak kodlanan kimlikleri, çıkarları ve etkileşimleri üzerinden açıklayan İnşacı yaklaşım, kimliğin ve buna bağlı olarak dış politikanın sürekli yeniden inşa süreci ile oluşturulduğunu ifade etmektedir. İnşacı yaklaşımın dış politika tercihlerinin temeline oturttuğu devlet kimliği anlayışından hareketle, bu çalışmada Türkiye'nin değişen politik aktörleri tarafından, yerel ve uluslararası siyasi dinamikler çerçevesinde yeniden inşa edilen devlet kimliği ve buna paralel olarak dış politika davranışlarındaki yeni yönelimleri, Türk dış politikasının aktivizmi ve Suriye krizindeki değişen politik yaklaşımları analiz edilmiştir. Kimlik kurgusundaki dönemsel farklılıkların anlaşılabilmesi ve kimliğin sosyal uzlaşısı sonucu politik aktörler tarafından formüle edildiğini ortaya koyması açısından bu çalışma, Türkiye'de politik aktörler tarafından inşa edilen devlet kimliğini, geçmiş dönemlerde inşa edilen devlet kimlikleri ile karşılaştırmıştır. Farklı siyasal aktörler tarafından oluşturulan kimliklerin, farkı dış politika seçimlerine yol açtığını göstermiş, Türkiye'nin Suriye'deki gelişmelere değişen yaklaşımlarını dönemsel olarak ele almıştır. Günümüz Türk dış politikasını analiz etmede kimlik ve ideolojiye dayanan İnşacı yaklaşımın daha açıklayıcı olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Çalışma kapsamında incelenen Suriye krizi, politik aktörlerin devlet kimliğinde, pratiklerinde ve siyasal söylemlerinde yarattığı dönüşümün dış politikaya nasıl yansıdığının görülmesine olanak tanıyacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kimlik, Dış Politika, Suriye Krizi, İnşacı Yaklaşım, AKP, Değişim

ABSTRACT

READING TURKEY'S FOREIGN POLICY ON SYRIA AN APPROACH FROM A CONSTRUCTIVIST POINT OF VIEW

Özge Çarpar

May, 2017

Since the establishment of Turkey, 1923, there have been efforts to form a homogenous Turkish state identity but there has never been a compromise over Turkey's national identity. Reforms which aimed Westernization and carried by state elites did not get absolute recognition both within the country and from the West. Debates on Turkish identity have increased since the end of the Cold War and reached to a climax during the JDP period. Turkey's political development depends on its national identity. Its ability to develop an international role that is proportional its size and capabilities is also linked to its state identity. This thesis examines implications of a complex and contested Turkish identity that have led to different foreign policy practices in different eras depending on changing nature of Turkish state identity. Focusing on diverse actors such as political parties and taking key role of international institutions such as NATO and EU into consideration, this thesis underlines how current foreign policy of Turkey operates in Syrian crisis within constructivist context. This thesis argues that a constructivist account of Turkish foreign policy is more helpful to explain current activism seen in recent Turkish foreign policy conduct during JDP period when we take Turkey's relations with the Middle East especially changing parameters of relations with Syria in the post-Cold War period into consideration. The transition from Turkey's relations with Syria from an enemy to an alliance and then recently to a highly problematic relationship is consistent with a constructivist explanation that takes state identities into consideration to explain the shift in foreign policy choices. It is important to show the connection between Turkish identity and foreign policy preferences by analysing the preferences of diverse state actors during key periods in Turkish history. This thesis aims to shed light on the relationship between diverse identities of the state constructed by political elites, its connection with foreign policy conduct. As indicated throughout the thesis, the shifts in Turkish foreign policy have resulted from the changes of political elites with different identities in power. An identity based explanation can throw light on the relationship between political actors' own perception of themselves and their comprehensions of others as a key determinant of Turkey's foreign policy choices. iv This thesis has contributed to the understanding of the formulation of Turkey's foreign policy by showing how diverse state identities and their subjective interactions have shaped Turkish national interests which in turn formulated foreign policy and paved the way for the activism in the Middle East especially in Syrian crisis. It also implies that a contested state identity is an obstacle to pursue consistent foreign policy goals by underlining the view that a secure

identity is very important to have a stable and powerful role in the international system.

Key Words: Identity, Foreign Policy, Syrian Crisis, Constructivism, JDP, Change

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İstanbul; May, 2017

Özge Çarpar

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADL	:Anti-Defamation League
AFAD	:Prime Ministry Disaster Emergency Management Authority
ASALA	:Armenian Secret Army For The Liberation Of Armenia
BMENA	:The Broader Middle East and North Africa
BSEC	:The Black Sea Economic Cooperation
CHP	:Republican People's Party
DEIK	:Foreign Economic Relations Board
EC	:European Council
EU	:European Union
FP	:Virtue Party
GAP	:South East Anatolian Project
HRW	:Human Rights Watch
HDP	:People's Democratic Party
IR	:International Relations
ISIS	:Islamic States of Iraq and Syria
JDP	:Justice and Development Party
MGK	:National Security Council
MP	:Motherland Party
NATO	:North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	:National Security Council
NVM	:National View Movement
OECD	:The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PKK	:Kurdistan's Worker's Party
PYD	:Kurdish Democratic Union Party
TAF	:Turkish Armed Forces
TOBB	:The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey
TUSKON	:Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists

UN	:United Nations
UNICEF	:United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UNSC	:United Nations Security Council
USA	:The Unites States of America
USSR	:The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WP	:Welfare Party

1. INTRODUCTION

JDP came to power in 2002. In this thesis, the political identity of Justice and Development Party (JDP) and reformulation of Turkish state identity and the changes in foreign policy conduct will be examined by analyzing whether constructivist approach is useful to explain the changes brought by the new foreign policy approaches implemented by JDP state elites.

Stemming from but also diverging from the National Outlook (Milli Görüş) Movement, JDP (Justice and Development Party, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) as an important political party created an identity by describing itself democratic and conservative and has stresses democracy, civil and political rights in its political discourses.

By looking at how Turkish state identity is formulated by state elites in key periods of Turkish history and comparing them with the state identity reformulated by JDP, this thesis tries to shed light on how foreign policies are socially constructed and change from time to time depending on political elites' representations of the reality of the system. Relations with countries are also set up by social will and relations with Syria show how a relationship transforms from enmity to an alliance and to antagonism if the representations of political actors change.

After coming to power, JDP implemented policies that show divergences from traditional leanings of Turkish foreign policies. Ahmet Davutoğlu formulates a state identity that combines historical and geographical assets and aims to place Turkey into the system as an influential power. He defines Turkey as a central state, proposes a zero problem with neighbors strategy, portrays Turkey as the protector of oppressed, or play the role of the mediator or order provider in the disputes of the region. In parallel to this new rhetoric and foreign policy conduct, Turkey's relations with the countries in the Middle East have improved. Relations with Syria formed a striking example because relations changed course and reached a level unseen before.

In the decade leading up to the Arab spring and the subsequent Syrian civil war, relations between Turkey and Syria changed course from confrontation to cooperation then again confrontation. While improved relations with Syria resulted in an increase in economic interactions, cultural exchange, diplomatic activities, deteriorated relations signaled conflict and confrontation.

Turkey's foreign policy change in the early years of the 21st century can be explained by a change in government, ideology of political decision makers and political identity. When the JDP came to power, it formulated a new approach called a zero problem with neighbors strategy which explains its shift towards Syria and the reason of goodly and flourishing relations. However, Turkey's latest shift towards Syria is also confusing because the JDP is still in power in Turkey but because of human tragedy resulted from Syrian civil war, representations constructed by state elites about Syria have changed dramatically.

The purpose of this study is to analyze Turkey's foreign policy change towards Syria after the beginning of the Arab spring by a constructivist point of view. To understand why Turkish and Syrian relations have changed course from conflict to cooperation and again confrontation, the thesis explores Syrian-Turkish relations going back to the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

Examining the troubled relations of the 1980s and 1990s, causes that lead to improved relations after the 1998 and reasons for the relations to deteriorate since the beginning of the Arab spring, this thesis puts a special emphasis on JDP's foreign policy activism and its reflections on relations with Syria from constructivist point of view.

Thus, this thesis aims to analyze Turkish foreign policy change in order to enlighten what motivated Turkey's foreign policy change towards Syria by utilizing core concepts of constructivism. Constructivism which concerns itself with identity and ideology of political actors in power and mutual construction of the agent and structure is used to explain changing parameters of relations with Syria after Arab Spring.

2. CONSTRUCTIVISM AND ITS REPRESENTATION OF REALITY

Identity plays a significant role in politics and representation of the reality in constructivism. The processes of identity formation, key aspects of inter subjectivity, the creation of the self and other, the boundaries resulted from difference and similarity between countries, their occurrence in international relations are very important issues that have been discussed. In this chapter, the concept of identity in constructivism, how it is formulated and its connection with foreign policy conduct are analyzed.

It is important to look at the emergence of identity in International Relations (IR) and assess its role and influence in foreign policy preferences of countries. The role played by ideas, discourses and practices is crucial to comprehend the motivation behind political changes and attitudes that lead to socialization or boundary drawing in relations between countries.

It has been argued that preferences, interests and structures are linked to actors' state identities, which need to be analyzed to understand state action, foreign policy choices and international culture of the system.

Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper identify five key uses for the term. Identity can be understood “as a ground or basis for social or political action, a collective phenomenon denoting some degree of sameness among members of a group or category, a core aspect of individual or collective selfhood, a product of social or political action, or the product of multiple and competing discourses”¹.

Christian Smith states that “constructivists see international relations as deeply social, as a realm of action in which the identities and interests of states and

¹ Richard Lebow, “Identity and International Relations”, **Sage Publications**, vol. 22, no. 4 (2008): 73.

other actors are discursively structured by inter subjective rules, norms and institutions”².

To offer a more detailed understanding of identity, its influence on state interests and the diverse roles it plays in international relations, I examine the existing literature of constructivism, look at the conceptualization of identity in international relations and utilize an analytical framework mainly driven from the thoughts of Alexander Wendt.

2.1 Identity Construction

In constructivist analysis, identities of states play a significant role because they form state interests and foreign policy choices. Therefore, the concept of identity is in the center of the constructivist approach. It is important to look at how identity of a state is constructed, the process during which it is shaped by giving references to the thoughts of Wendt.

To explain the link between identities of states and their interests, Wendt stresses that states do not have a “portfolio of interests that they carry around independent of social context”³. Identities and interests of states are formed and get meaning depending on social and historical settings.

Alexander Wendt expresses how world politics is constructed by stating that the structures of international politics are social and ideational rather than strictly material. These structures shape actors’ identities and interests, also actor’s identities and interests shape the structure.

As identities of states are formed in social context, they are not fixed and they can change over time. So, the structure of the international system is ideational created by social consensus rather than strictly material. The change of the identities leads states to produce new foreign policies and these policies mutually have effects on the structural characteristics of international system. There is always a reciprocal

² Christian Smith, “Imagining Society: Constructivism and the English School”, **British Journal of Politics and International Relations**, vol. 4, no. 3 (2002): 488.

³ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics”, **International Organization**, vol. 46, no. 2 (1992): 396.

interaction and a possibility of a change that depends on mutual relationship between the agent and the system. The reality of the system is socially created so if the ideas of the political actors change, the structure also could be created differently

Constructivism focuses on binary creation of the self and the other by stressing that identity creation can lead to the creation of the self and the other at the same time. During a social encounter, a state can identify the self and the other who does not share the same values or norms with the self. Identity creation also leads to isolation of the other if the association with the other is connotated with negative ideas or thoughts.

Bernd Bucher and Ursula Jasper state that “the constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an inside from an outside, a self from the other, a domestic from a foreign. Hence, identity is known by what it is not, that is difference”⁴. Differentiating between self and the other serves to formation of interests accordingly.

Wendt shows that an identity can be created without the simultaneous creation of negative or opposite stereotype of the other. During identity creation, the others that do not share same values with the self, need not to be associated with negative connotations or binary ideas. Identity construction can take place through positive interactions with others. The boundaries between self and the other can be broken if the self is positively associated with the other.

To explain why anarchy or enmity prevail in the structure, Wendt adds that social structures are defined by shared understandings, expectations, or knowledge of its actors. A conflict occurs when states are self-regarding and are not trustful that they make worst case assumptions about each other’s intentions and interests. As a result, states do not respect each other, take strict measures and define their interests in self-help terms in an aggressive way.

As explained above, depending on the acceptance of a state as the other or looking alike, foreign policy conduct is shaped and gets meaning during interaction with other states. In relation to the state identities that are alike, state behaviors that

⁴ Bernd Bucher, Ursula Jasper, “Revisiting Identity in International Relations: From Identity as Substance to Identifications in Action”, **European Journal of International Relations**, (2016):1-26.

can be accepted appropriate are formed collectively and the rules of international system are set up socially.

Ted Hopf states that identities perform necessary functions in a society. “They tell you and others who you are and tell you who others are”⁵. By telling you who you are, identities determine sets of interest and frame sets of acceptable behaviors for actions. These sets of interests imply foreign policy choices or behaviors. The relationship between identity and interests, the connection between the interests and choices, define the structure by prioritizing some international structures over others.

Constructivists suggest that social entities are not given apart from social contexts and they are historical constructs in specific contexts. Nicholas Rescher conceptualized social entities as ‘complex bundles of coordinated processes that exhibit varying degrees of stability’⁶. Identity is not a unified and given thing, a “substratum underlying actions, but as a unity of functioning”⁷. Identity shows itself in practices.

Bucher and Jasper describe identity as “a bundle of identifications that emerges through discursive practices and that, in turn, shapes social ties. Analyzing discursive practices, then, aims at grasping how bundles of identifications are tied together and how they are temporarily privileged or relegated within specific contexts, and in relation to other actors who themselves are continually reimagined in narratives of the self”⁸.

Depending on historical and social context, there can be changes in foreign policy choices in parallel with changes in identities and identifications of the states. As exemplified in the case of Western Europe, before the disintegration of the USSR, Western Europe is considered as the other that does not share the same values as the self. After the disintegration, the identity and meaning of Western Europe has changed. Western Europe that is considered as the other during the cold war years is

⁵ Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory”, **International Security**, vol. 23, no. 1 (1998): 175.

⁶ Nicholas Rescher, **Process Philosophy: A Survey of Basic Issues**, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 9.

⁷ **Ibid**, 16.

⁸ Bucher, Jasper, **ibid**, 6.

socially transformed into an identity that can be model for the new established countries.

Systemic or regional changes can create new interests and opportunities for states to increase their influence across the region. Recently, the Arab Spring and Syrian Crisis can be given as an example. Turkey's changing foreign policy approach to the Syrian crisis has connection with the description of the identity of the state as related to the self or isolating it as the other depending on common values and norms that are supposed to be shared or not.

Domestic problems such as shift of political elites in power are influential in the change of state identity and state interests. Without denying the importance of interests, Wendt claims that "no one denies that states act on the basis of perceived interests and few would deny that those interests are egoistic. I certainly do not. What matters is how interests are thought to be constituted"⁹.

2.2 Construction of Interests

There is a relation between identity and interests. Identity construction during which interests of a state are also determined is an important process that should be explained in order to understand the foreign policy approaches of the countries in the international system. In this part, the formation of interests is explained to comprehend the behaviors of the state and their conflicting or harmonious relations according to formation of their interests.

Wendt emphasizes that interests of states are created only through and restricted to systemic subjective interactions. Interests are formulated during social interactions depending on state identities considered alike or different. The process of interaction during which interests get meaning needs to be inquired to understand the relations between the interests and the choices the countries make during foreign policy formation. Constructions of the interests are the products of identities of the states and very influential in determining foreign policy conduct.

Wendt argues that power politics are the result of ideas or knowledge held by actors and reproduced during subjective interaction by practices. "I argue that self-help and power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy and

⁹ Alexander Wendt, **Social Theory of International Politics**, (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 113.

that if today we find ourselves in a self-help world, this is due to process, not structure. There is no logic of anarchy apart from the practices that create and instantiate one structure of identities and interests rather than another; structure has no existence or causal powers apart from process”¹⁰.

To Wendt, the system that is described by self-help or collaboration is a constructed and self-imposing behavioral pattern in practice. If the behavioral pattern in practice changes, the system will also be exposed to change. In fact, “there is no structure of identity and interest that follows logically from anarchy”¹¹.

One of the most important things that Wendt shows is that state identities and interests can change depending on social interactions. “Actors define their interests in the process of defining situations”¹². State interests are basically ideas about states’ needs. Wendt stresses that interests are simply cognitive, and they exist in actors’ ideas about how the world works and articulated as if they represent reality. Interests are determined by the social meaning attached to objects and practices. There is a social content in the production of interests depending on situations.

Wendt underlines that there are three elements in the structure of any social system. They are material conditions, interests and ideas. Although social structures include material resources they do not have meanings by themselves. Ideas give meaning to material conditions and interests. They only get meaning for human action through the structure that is formed by socially shared knowledge. Social structures exist in practices. If the structure is formed ideationally, Wendt implies that self-help which is central for rationalist theories is a socially constructed norm which could theoretically be transcended.

To enlighten the process of interaction, Wendt explains that when actors start interacting with each other, or when two actors meet for the first time, each actor begins to encounter with private beliefs about self and the other. These beliefs help actors define the situation, constitute their interests and choose an appropriate foreign policy behavior.

Wendt focuses on socially shared knowledge or culture, which is rooted in the relative and subjective experience of actors interacting. Yücel Bozadağlıoğlu

¹⁰ Wendt, **Anarchy is What**, 394.

¹¹ **Ibid**, 396.

¹² **Ibid**, 398.

“therefore advocates the beginning one’s theorizing about international politics with the distribution of ideas, especially culture, in the system, and then bringing in material forces, rather than the other way around”¹³.

Wendt puts it clearly that the interests of states are linked to their identities and they cannot be thought apart from social meaning. In this account, they can vary depending on historical, political and social context. Identities and interests are the results of ideas and subject to change that results in a shift in the culture of the system.

Wendt asserts that material capabilities are important but identities are not objectively grounded on material forces. While explaining constructivism, Bozdağlıoğlu state that “the significance of material conditions is constituted in part by interests...Similarly; interests are constituted in part by ideas”¹⁴. Material forces get meaning when we attribute ideas to them.

Bozdağlıoğlu explains that “people act toward objects, including each other, on the basis of the meanings those objects have for them and material consequences are the result of how we have socially constructed the meaning and relevance that material objects have for us”¹⁵. It is crucial to look at the importance that material objects have for states to analyze the drivers of political actions correctly. If a hostile relationship is perceived, a country has an interest in resisting the material capabilities that the other country has. If the relationship is not hostile, the material power that the other country has does not constitute a threat and there is no need to resist. The meaning of material power changes depending on the ideas held about the owner the power and whether it is considered threat or not by the actors in the system.

Identity generates a code of behavior deriving from an actor’s self-understanding and self-knowledge. The meaning of those understandings depends on mutual recognition. Mutual recognition is important because the ideas held by self needs to be acknowledged or reassured by the other actors in the same way as the country defines itself.

¹³ Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, “Constructivism and Identity Formation: An Interactive Approach”, **Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika**, vol. 3, no. 11 (2007): 127.

¹⁴ **Ibid**, 126.

¹⁵ **Ibid**, 127.

Constructivists portray a world system in which a possibility of change in international structure exists. Contrary to neorealist assumptions, according to which systemic structure is given and defines the national interests and foreign policies, constructivism asserts that there is a dialectical interaction between states' identities and structure and the reality of the system is socially created by practices and articulated in political discourses.

This interaction also exists between state and international system by suggesting a mutual constitution. The structure has an influence on the state identities as well as state interests and policies. At the same time, state identities affect the structure as well as foreign policy and interests.

Nicholas Onuf explains that "rules, as the links between states and structure, and practices, as the method of dealing with rules, form a stable pattern suiting agents' intentions"¹⁶. Rules and practices depending on agents' intentions and identities direct and are directed by the system by forming patterns for appropriate behaviors.

Viewed in this manner, Samuel Stanton underlines that "constructivism is both idealistic and structural, which makes constructivist theory a richer and more vibrant account of the structure of international relations than offered by Neorealism, which ignores idealism in favor of naked structure, or by Marxism or World Systems Theory, which ignores structure in favor of ideas. It also makes constructivism a richer theory than liberalism or neoliberalism"¹⁷.

According to Wendt, "to analyze the social construction of international politics is to analyze how processes of interaction produce, reproduce the social structures, cooperative or conflictual that shape actors' identities and interests and significance of their material contexts"¹⁸. During the process of interaction, the system is constructed mutually depending on determination of both the agent and the structure.

¹⁶ Nicholas Onuf, "Constructivism: **A User's Manual**", **International Relations in a Constructed World**, eds. Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas Onuf, and Paul Kowart, (London and Armonk, Sharpe, 1998): 61.

¹⁷ Samuel Stanton, "What are We Making, The Constructivist Approach to International Relations Theory", **Arkansas Political Science Association Annual Meeting, 22-23 February 2002**, (Jonesboro, AR: 2002)

¹⁸ Alexander Wendt, "Constructing World Politics", **International Security**, vol. 20, no. 1 (1995): 81.

During the interaction, an inter subjectively shared set of meanings is socially formed by the actors. Thus, appropriate social practices at home and abroad become the limits or constraints to the state actions and create behavior patterns in the foreign policy choices and thresholds in the structure in which they operate.

Constructivist theory accepts the anarchy as a culture or structural pattern, however, according to the theory, anarchy is “mutually constituted by actors employing constitutive rules and social practices”¹⁹. If states’ identities change, social practices will also be exposed to change thereby anarchy is not the ultimate structure or inevitable culture that can prevail in the system. There is the possibility of different cultures that can dominate the system.

Wendt identifies four kinds of state identities: “corporate, type, role and collective”²⁰. Corporate identity consists of “intrinsic, self-organizing qualities that constitute actor individuality’ and therefore it is exogenous to otherness”²¹. Corporate identity generates four basic interests: “physical security, predictability in relationships to the world, recognition as an actor by others, economic development”²².

How a state satisfies these corporate interests “depends on how it defines the self in relation to the other, which is a function of social identities at both domestic and systemic levels of analysis”²³.

A social identity or role identity is defined as “a set of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspectives of others, that is, as social objects”²⁴. Mutual recognition by other states is very important. “While actors have one corporate identity, they usually have several social identities that enable them to determine who they are in a situation and exist only in relation to others”²⁵.

¹⁹ Hopf, *ibid*, 173.

²⁰ Alexander Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State”, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, no. 2 (1994): 385.

²¹ *Ibid*, 385.

²² *Ibid*, 385.

²³ *Ibid*, 385.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 385.

²⁵ Bozdağlıoğlu, *ibid*, 132.

Lars Erik Cederman and Christopher Daase explain that “social identity captures the group’s defining characteristics or the members’ collective conception of the group’s mission or role within a given social setting”²⁶.

Type identities that consists of people who have common languages, history and culture are exogenous and they do not depend on other states for their existence.

Collective identity “takes the relationship between self and the other to its logical conclusion, identification, which refers to a cognitive process in which the self-other distinction becomes blurred”²⁷. In brief, collective identity can be explained by the combination of role and type identities.

Constructivists claim that the way how different identities and interests are formed, gives us a clue about the international system in which states operate and the normative rules that are accepted appropriate. By looking at the process during which state identities are created, it is possible to guess the nature or culture of the system.

Constructivist theory explains that there are three types of security cultures that are constructed according to the type of state identities prevailed in the system. When states see other as not alike or enemy, they acquire selfish and hostile identities and they do not positively associate with the other and respect the other’s right to exist. They have an interest for resisting or confronting with the other actors in the system. This leads to violence and aggression towards each other so Hobbesian culture of anarchy emerges in the international system. Voluntarily restriction of violence or mutual respect towards each other is not observed in the system.

While the Hobbesian culture is associated with enmity and hostility, the Lockean culture is characterized by rivalry. There is neither positive nor negative association with the other. Representations of Lockean culture are less threatening when compared with Hobbesian culture of anarchy. In Lockean culture, self and the other respect each other’s right to exist and rivalry is the dominant structure. The culture is individualistic, pillarized and self-regarding about security and interests.

In Kantian culture of anarchy, states associate positively and respect each other’s right to exist. They develop a collective identity and common interests so they support nonviolence and respect towards each other. Cooperation or alliances is

²⁶ Lars Erik Cederman, Christopher Daase, “Endogenizing Corporate Identities: The Next Step in Constructivist IR Theory”, **European Journal of International Relations**, vol. 9, no. 1 (2003): 7.

²⁷ Wendt, **Social Theory**, 229.

developed depending on common interests. The culture of the system is cooperative, “contributing to a beneficial outcome by negotiation and respectful behaviors, seeing as their responsibility to cooperate, to adopt prosocial behavior”²⁸. Kantian culture emerges and is observed in democratic states of the world.

Bozdağlıoğlu underlines that “the nature of the system, Hobbesian, Lockean, Kantian is determined by a history of interaction”²⁹. The existing culture in the international system is determined by the majority of its members and compels states to behave in a certain manner by framing normative rules and principles for foreign policy behavior.

As the members of the system socially create prevailing culture of the system, a transformation from a culture of anarchy to another culture is possible. Wendt argue that “anarchies acquire logics as a function of the structure of what we put inside them”³⁰.

Wendt’s point of view has important implications because Karen Smith explains that “it bears on the transformative potentials of the international system”³¹ which “through the interaction of state agents the structure of the international system is produced, reproduced and sometimes transformed”³².

Wendt stresses that “anarchy can have at least three kinds of structures at the macro level, based on what kind of roles enemy, rival or friend, dominates the system”³³. Depending on identities of states, majority of the dominant groups determine the culture of the system and the normative rules states are subject to.

Bozdağlıoğlu declares that “whether or not states acquire selfish or collective identities and interests depends on the nature and the manner in which social identities involve identification with the fate of the other. Identification is a continuum from negative to positive form conceiving the other as anathema to the self to conceiving it as an extension of the self”³⁴.

²⁸ **Ibid**, 400.

²⁹ Bozdağlıoğlu, **ibid**, 133.

³⁰ Wendt, **Social Theory**, 249.

³¹ Karen Smith, “A Mixed Media Approach to International Relations”, **Politicon**, vol. 30, no. 1 (2003): 86.

³² Wendt, **Social Theory**, 366.

³³ **Ibid**, 247.

³⁴ Bozdağlıoğlu, **ibid**, 133.

Bozdağlıoğlu adds that “as part of their corporate identities, states often define their interests in egoistic terms and they are likely to start their interaction with the others on the selfish side of the identity continuum. Through social interaction, states may as well define their interests in collectivist terms, creating new definitions of self and other during interaction which may lead to a structural or cultural change”³⁵.

If the collective identity is formed by the actors at the systemic level, it in turn will define the meaning of actors’ power, because material capabilities will not be perceived threatening when collective identity is formed, such a process could generate cooperation or collaboration.

Identification with the other as an extension of self enables states to acquire collective identities and the system is developed depending on mutual respect and cooperation. However, if the state does not conceive the other state alike to the self, it acquires selfish identity and the system is characterized by enmity and rivalry. While mutual respect and recognition lead to cooperation, isolation and humiliation by other states lead to aggression and violence towards the other.

Wendt brings a new insight by highlighting that transition from one culture of anarchy to another is possible, anarchy is not ultimate end and the culture of the system is shaped by the identities of the states in which they operate.

Constructivists argue that material power does not have meaning in itself, it gets meaning in social context. Perceptions that are the result of ideas are important to attribute meaning to material power. Power can be interpreted as a threat within certain set of understanding and representations. Identity of states plays a defining role in shaping perceptions towards other states material capabilities.

Material capabilities acquire meaning according to who has those capabilities. It depends on the perception of whether a state which is identified as a friend or an enemy has material power. “States act differently toward enemies than they do towards friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not”³⁶. If an enemy has material capabilities, it forms a threat but if a friend has material capabilities, it

³⁵ **Ibid**, 135.

³⁶ Wendt, **Anarchy is What**, 397.

does not constitute danger because of shared values and principles of states' identities and common interests.

Underlying the importance of perceptions, Ronen Palan also states that "structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature"³⁷.

Constructivist theory highlights that it is important to look at the meanings given to the objects, because people act toward objects depending on the meanings they attribute to those objects or the meanings those objects have for them. Carol Atkinson states that "material consequences are the result of ...the relevance that material objects have for us"³⁸. Meanings of objects are socially attributed. Stefano Guzzini also underlines that "there are some facts which exist only because we attribute a certain meaning or function to them"³⁹.

Identity of a state is a defining factor not only in the construction of threats but also it is very influential in the construction of the alliance that can lead to cooperation and collaboration. Identity makes some states more attractive, but the choice and maintenance of alliances depend on parties' mutual identification, formation of common interests and mutual respect.

Accordingly, shared ideas about an identified threat are important in the formation of the alliances. A collective identity that is the result of identification with the other state as an extension of self also plays a crucial role and makes easier to form and maintain alliances.

Identity is not always stable and secure. Identity of a state is shaped by the most dominant groups, individuals and political actors in the society. These political actors or groups attempt to impose their own values in the formation of identity of a state and interests by institutionalizing them at both internal and international level. To secure their identity in the system and justify their policy preferences, states try to

³⁷ Ronen Palan, "A World of Their Making: An Evaluation of the Constructivist Critique in International Relations", **Review of International Studies**, vol. 26, no. 4 (2000): 576.

³⁸ Carol Atkinson, "Constructivist Implications of Material Power: Military Engagement and the Socialization of States, 1972-2000", **International Studies Quarterly**, vol. 50, no. 3 (2006): 534.

³⁹ Stefano Guzzini, "A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations", **European Journal of International Relations**, vol. 6, no. 2 (2000): 160.

be part of international organizations that have codes of behavior and sets of shared values for its members.

To understand the culture of the system in which states operate in, Wendt suggest looking at the interaction between states. He further argues that “the logic of the interaction at a given moment will reflect the characteristics of state agents and the systemic structures in which they are embedded but the process of interacting adds an irreducible and potentially transformative element which must be studied on its own terms”⁴⁰.

Role identities demonstrate how states see self and other. Wendt assumes that continuous interaction is influential among states and it has a transformative effect. The change in ideas and therefore in role identities consequently leads to a change in states’ interests and behaviors.

During interaction, identities of the agents who make choices are in the process in which actors “produce and reproduce identities, narratives of who they are, which in turn constitute the interests on the basis of which they make behavioral choices”⁴¹.

It is important that whether identities of states are constructed homogenously or heterogeneously by the state elites. If the state identities are homogenously created, identity security is observed and states can pursue foreign policy in a more stable and secure way.

If the state identities are heterogeneously constructed, the conflict among state actors is more likely to happen, there can be clash of interests between diverse groups. Syrian crisis can be given as an example.

Considering these assumptions, it can be concluded that there is a possibility of change in the identity of a state, state interests, the structure and foreign policy behaviors of states according to constructivist theory.

In sum, constructivism makes the role of identity central in international structure. The theory puts it clearly that identity as the state of being similar to some actors and different from others is constructed during social interactions and gives the shape of foreign policy by formulating interests by assessing the features of

⁴⁰ Wendt, **Social Theory**, 366.

⁴¹ **Ibid**, 366.

social encounter. So, identity plays a crucial role in the determination of the nature of the relations in international politics and it is a defining factor that influences the system.

Finally, Constructivism aims to show how the subjective, intersubjective, material worlds interact in the construction of the reality and interests of the states accordingly. Thus, international politics and the prevailing culture of the system are ideationally created and depend on the historical and social context.

2.3 Inter subjectivity

While explaining how the reality of the international system is socially created and depend on historical context, constructivism puts much emphasis on the concept of inter subjectivity. Inter subjectivity is another important core concept during which the identities and interests of states and the structure of the system reciprocally constructed, reconstructed and transformed. Therefore, a special emphasis should be given in order to comprehend how the reality or knowledge is created during inter subjective interactions. This part of the thesis will shed light on the issue of intersubjectivity.

Constructivism underlines the mutual constitution of agents and structure, states and international system by opening a possibility of a change in international structure. The theory does not depict a deterministic world and prioritize the system or structure over agent or vice versa.

Alexander Wendt explains that states operate in a social structure qualified by “shared knowledge, material resources and practices”⁴² that are the result of the intersubjective relations between states and the international system.

Wendt asks questions about how states acquire identities and whether such identities give ideas about the system that shape states’ behaviors in international system. According to Wendt, “to go from structure to action, we need to add a fourth: the inter subjectively constituted structure of identities and interests in the system”⁴³.

Identities are not given and formed during interactions with the other identities and strengthened by practices. Through practices, actors acquire

⁴² Alexander Wendt, “Constructing World Politics”, **International Security**, vol. 20, no. 1 (1995): 73.

⁴³ **Ibid**, 401.

expectations or knowledge about each other's intentions and behaviors. Wendt highlights that "identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity within a specific, socially constructed world"⁴⁴.

Wendt explains that "a state may have multiple identities as sovereign, leader of the free world, imperial power, and so on. The commitment to and the salience of particular identities vary, but each identity is an inherently social definition of the actor grounded in the theories which actors collectively hold about themselves and one another and which constitute the structure of the social world"⁴⁵.

There are different state identities and different identities of each state are the main reason of the inter subjectivity. Thomas Banchoff explains that "the identity creates a set of shared norms and narratives that sustain we-ness through time"⁴⁶. This provides the state to locate its position in the inter subjective relations with the other international actors in the system. However, Ted Hopf stresses that "the producer of the identity is not in control of what it ultimately means to others; the inter subjective structure is the final arbiter of meaning"⁴⁷.

So, every interaction between the states is subjective, based on ideas and it is in the realm of mutual construction of reality that socially shapes and is shaped by the system. Dale Copeland explains that "constructivists focus largely on the intersubjective dimension of knowledge, because they wish to emphasize the social aspect of human existence, the role of shared ideas as an ideational structure constraining and shaping behavior"⁴⁸.

Copeland adds that structure formed by the ideas of actors "shapes the very way actors define themselves, who they are, their goals and the roles they believe they should play"⁴⁹. Structure is not exogenously given and it is not fixed but "exists

⁴⁴ **Ibid**, 398.

⁴⁵ **Ibid**, 398.

⁴⁶ Thomas Banchoff, "German Identity and European Integration," **European Journal of International Relations**, vol. 5, no. 3 (1999): 268.

⁴⁷ Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory", **International Security**, vol.23, no.1 (1998): 173.

⁴⁸ Dale Copeland, "The Constructivist Challenge to Structural Realism", **International Security**, vol. 25, no. 2 (2000): 189.

⁴⁹ **Ibid**, 190.

only through reciprocal interaction of actors. This means that agents through acts of social will, can change structures”⁵⁰.

The political and historical context is influential in the formation of intersubjective meanings. Jutta Weldes suggests the term of ‘representations, which contains already available cultural and linguistic resources, ...out of situations, descriptions and problem definitions through which state officials and others make sense of the world around them’⁵¹.

Weldes explains that representations that are formed by institutions and practices to make sense of the world around “posit a well define relations among diverse objects”⁵². Interests emerge out of representations stemming from states’ identities and the relationship is constructed by state actors inter subjectively. Representations provide a picture or a vision of international relations.

In short, Weldes concludes that “representations created by state officials make clear both to those officials themselves and to others who and what we are, who and what our enemies are, in what ways we are threatened by them and how we might best deal with those treats”⁵³.

State actors play a significant role during the formation of the representations and its reflection on the foreign policy choices and conduct. Representations constituted form historical, cultural and linguistic resources shape perceptions about the system and direct appropriate code of behavior for the actors in international system.

Weldes states that “these representations serve firstly, to populate a national vision with a variety of discourses, to accentuate the differences between the self and others; secondly, posit well-defined relations among diverse discourses; and finally, locating a vision through well-defined relations with the others, the state provides convenient background to define national interests”⁵⁴. The representations and their functions make clear to the country its place in the international system with a legitimate course of actions formed according to national interests.

⁵⁰ **Ibid**, 190.

⁵¹ Jutta Weldes, “Constructing National Interests”, **European Journal of International Relations**, vol. 2, no. 3 (1996): 280.

⁵² **Ibid**, 282.

⁵³ **Ibid**, 283.

⁵⁴ **Ibid**, 280.

There are two defining terms that forms representations of the political actors. While explaining the representations of the reality a state has, Weldes suggests the terms of articulation and interpellation. According to Weldes, articulation and interpellation constitute the main dimensions of the representations, which are influential in the formation of state identity, interests and the reality of the system.

Accordingly, articulation refers to the “process through which meaning is produced out of cultural raw materials or linguistic resources whereas interpellation refers, situating this meaning to the social world to specify the location of the state identity in the world level”⁵⁵. Producing meaning linguistically in discourses and then situating meaning as if it is reality by interpellation, the state actors specify the country’s place in the system inter subjectively.

According to Weldes, “the process of articulation is one in which extant linguistic resources are combined to produce contingent and contextually specific representations of the world”⁵⁶. State identities and interests are formed by articulation and linguistic elements come to seem as if natural and accurate description of reality. Although articulation gives sense of description of reality, in fact, the reality is socially constructed, historically contingent and contextually specified or by inter subjectively produced knowledge.

The meanings that are created by the rhetorical representation of the reality need to be followed by interpellation because it results in situating the meanings into the system as if meanings are essentially representing reality in a logical way.

Interpellation results in placing a state in a social system by construction of normative rules of the system and its appropriate way of behavior. Different representations of the world lead to different identities. Different identities in turn resulted in diverse interests and ways of functioning in the system. So, they are located within different power relations and make possible different structures or cultures.

Weldes points out that “concrete individuals come to identify with these subject positions and so with representations in which they appear. Once they identify with these subject positions, the representations make sense to them and the

⁵⁵ **Ibid**, 284.

⁵⁶ **Ibid**, 284.

power relations and interests entailed them naturalized. As a result, the representations appear to be common sense to reflect the way the world really is”⁵⁷.

Articulation of the meanings and the interpellation of the reality form a system with normative rules and behavioral thresholds. “The meanings which objects, events and actions for states have are necessarily the meanings they have for those individuals who act in the name of the state”⁵⁸. States actors and political elites articulate reality and interpellate or attribute meaning that enables diverse ways of functioning in the system.

If analyzed from a constructivist point of view, Turkey pursued a foreign policy during 1990s that has various aspects than the more active foreign policy pursued during 2000s. Yasemin Çelik states that “Turkish foreign policy in the region was guided by the principles of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of the Middle East and noninterference in conflicts between Middle Eastern states”⁵⁹. However, during 2000’s, Turkey has been more active in the regions traditionally stayed away such as the regions in the Middle East and more proactive in the events in Syria, the most striking country with which Turkey has continually changing nature of relations depending on changing representations of political decision makers.

The reason behind the change is that Turkish state identity was reformulated by new state elites according to the representations they have about the international system. State elites have articulated and interpellated Turkish state identity according to representations they attribute to the realities. Ian Lesser predicts “a future which Turkey can play a pivotal role as a security partner for the West, but only if Turks are convinced that their own judgments are taken seriously and that cooperation supports Turkey’s own more finely gauged national interests”⁶⁰.

Traditionally, Turkey did not choose to interfere in the affairs in the Middle East by pursuing a foreign policy that did not contain pro-activism. However, recently, Turkey has been more active in the Middle East as an important player

⁵⁷ **Ibid**, 287.

⁵⁸ **Ibid**, 280.

⁵⁹ Yasemin Çelik, **Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy**, (USA: Praeger Publishers, 1999): 141.

⁶⁰ Ian Lesser, “Beyond Bridge or Barrier: Turkey’s Evolving Security Relations with The West”, **Turkey’s New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy**, ed. Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (USA: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000): 203-220.

especially during Syrian crisis. Turkish activism can be analyzed by the newly redefined or articulated characteristics of its state identity and new geography attained or widened for its area of influence.

During 2000s, Turkey emphasizes the geographical advantages it has and creates an identity that embodies characteristic of west and east. Turkey is articulated as a country that not only has a western orientation but also connection with Ottoman and Islamic heritage. By articulating historical bonding, and placing itself both in the West and in the East, Turkey has started economic and cultural initiatives that are aimed to increase its influence and place in the Middle East. As a result, newly defined state identity of Turkey has led to a foreign policy that is more active and independent.

Turkish political elites have reformulated Turkish state identity and state identities played a key role in political decision making process. To understand Turkish foreign policy thoroughly after 2000, it is important to look at how Turkish identity is formulated and evaluate the relationship between Turkish state identity and foreign policy choices Turkey has made during the relations with Syria.

3. THE ROLE OF IDENTITY IN DETERMINING TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

In previous parts of the thesis, the key concepts of constructivism are explained to indicate its connection with foreign policy of the countries. In the second chapter, the role of identity in determining Turkish foreign policy will be discussed by comparing Turkish state identity formulated by different state elites during key periods of the country with the foreign policy choices that were preferred.

Turkey as a powerful country constitutes a special case because since its foundation, there is always a discussion about its state identity and there is no compromise on its identity internally or externally. If the state identity is contested or there is no consensus on it, the conflictual characteristics of the state identity resulted in different foreign policy preferences, instability or ambivalence. In this chapter, the contours of Turkish state identity, how it was created in Republican era, during the Cold War, during Turgut Özal, Necmettin Erbakan and JDP era are explained to further understand foreign policy context in which Turkey has operated in key periods of its history.

Since its foundation, Turkey describes its national identity according to its relations to the West. Turkish state identity is associated with Western civilization and foreign policy is produced accordingly in line with Western interests.

Gerry Alons states that “it is commonly acknowledged that to understand the preferences and behavior of states in international relations, we need to take both domestic considerations and international considerations of states into account”⁶¹. How state identities are formed at the domestic level and how those identities, once formed, can influence state interests and behavior at the systemic level, need to be analyzed.

⁶¹ Gerry C. Alons, ‘Predicting a State’s Foreign Policy: State Preferences between Domestic and International Constraints’, **Foreign Policy Analysis**, vol. 3, no. 3 (2007): 211.

Since the establishment of the country, Turkey associates itself with the West. When analyzed from a constructivist point of view, Turkish identity was constructed by political actors with an aim to embody and reach to the values of Western civilization. Representations that Turkish political elite had during the Republican era shaped state identity of Turkey. State elites articulated Western values such as democracy and secularism as the main pillars of Turkish state identity.

Political elites situated the place of the country in Western system. Discourses of Turkish foreign policy actors contained metaphors that highlight the country's connection with the Western civilization and formulated foreign policy in line with Western interests and norms.

During 2000s, there are nuances of change in Turkish state identity. Nicholas Danforth states that in parallel with a change in state identity, “recently, the rhetoric of east and west has been matched by the rhetoric of Islam and democracy. As a result, the geographic coincidence of being in both Europe and Asia has become fused with the historical circumstances of being both Muslim and democratic or alternatively both Muslim and secular”⁶².

During JDP era, by combining geographical traits with historical assets, Turkish political elites have recently reconstructed state identity with a new emphasis on coexistence of the West and the East, Islam and democracy, also complemented with a highlight on Ottoman cultural heritage.

In such a situation, Turkish identity has been reformulated with a focus on previously neglected or disregarded aspects of its identity. Therefore, it is important to ask to what extent, the role of identity has determined Turkish foreign policy, whether there is a change of axis in its relations with the West. It is also beneficial to look at the changes in Turkish foreign policy in parallel with changes in the definition of Turkish state identity reformulated by influential political actors during key periods in Turkish history.

In the following chapters, key periods in Turkish history, during Rebulican era, during the Cold War, during Turgut Özal and Necmettin Erbakan era are briefly analyzed to assess the relationship between identity and foreign policy. There is a

⁶² Nicholas Danforth, “Ideology and Pragmatism in Turkish Foreign Policy: From Atatürk to AKP”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 3, (2011): 84.

special focus on Turkey's relations with Syria and a detailed analysis of JDP's activism, Davutoğlu paradigm and shifting aspects of Turkish state identity during JDP era.

3.1 Creation of Turkish State Identity during Republican Era and Its Reflections on the Relations with Syria

Republican era is a period during which Turkey as a modern country was established. The norms, values and representations that the state elites had during Republican period need to be evaluated to understand the process and the principles on which Turkish state identity was based. In this part, the formulation of Turkish state identity will be examined to indicate the parallelism between the principles of Turkish state identity and foreign policy conduct by implying that the foreign policy preferences of Turkey during that period were based on its state identity.

From declaration of the Republic onwards, during nation building process, the modernization project and to the relations with the West were crucial for Turkey. Turkey's reforming elite perceived Europe, West as a source of modernization and an embodiment of civilization that should be taken as an example. Principles of Turkish state were shaped according to Western norms and values and these principles were institutionalized.

During early Republican era, Turkish political elite formulated the basic principles of Turkish state identity by taking Europe as a model. Westernization is the basis of all the reforms and the distinctive feature of the Turkey's newly formed identity. As a result, Turkey was founded as a modern, secular nation state by formulating a self, associated with Western norms and by building a culture which reflects Turkish state identity based on Western values and norms. Religion is kept in private realm and there is no emphasis on Ottoman heritage.

When we look at the political actors that shaped the identity of Turkish state, military was influential and played a defining role in the establishment of Turkish State and its institutions since Turkey's foundation. Turkish national identity was constructed as Western, homogenous and secular by giving its Ottoman heritage less attention. After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, political elites in Turkey had concerns about Islamic reaction and were sensitive about disintegration. Şaban Kardaş states that "partly for ideological reasons, they wanted to accentuate the

country's break with its Ottoman and Islamic past and its reorientation toward the West"⁶³.

During the creation of a modern state, Turkey's aim was to reach to the level of contemporary civilizations. As the representations of contemporary civilization were associated with West, reforms that institutionalized state identity were carried out accordingly.

To institutionalize its state identity formulated according to the principles of Western civilizations, Turkey implemented reforms. The abolition of the Sultanate, Caliphate, the proclamation of the Republic, reform of the calendar, adoption of Latin alphabet, replacing the sharia with European legal codes, closing religious institutions and orders, enforcing to dress European style hat, expanding women's right were some of the reforms carried out reaching to the level of contemporary civilizations.

When analyzed from a constructivist point of view, during republican era, Turkish identity was constructed according to the representations that Turkish political elites had depending on the inter subjective understandings that give meaning to the relationship between countries in the international system and persuading others to accept Turkey's proposed understanding of state identity.

Dimensions of Turkish state identity were articulated in discourses that highlighted its relations with the West. Lisel Hintz implies that the country was situated or interpellated under Western camp by the Turkish military elites by "delineating standards such as the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, friends and enemies, desired goals of the group, essentially who we are and how we should behave"⁶⁴.

During the interactions subjectively conducted, Turkish state interests were formed and Turkey had a place in the system that resulted in practices of foreign policy within certain normative rules that were accepted appropriate by western political system. In Turkey's case, borrowing values and practices of Western civilization as the bases of state identity, forming its interests in line with Western

⁶³ Şaban Kardaş, "Turkey: Redrawing the Middle East Map or Building Sand Castles?", **Middle East Policy**, vol: 17, no. 1 (2010): 121.

⁶⁴ Lisel Hintz, "Take it Outside, National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena", **European Journal of International Relations**, vol.22, no. 2 (2016): 340.

interests, Turkey implemented Western oriented foreign policy under Western umbrella in line with Western interests.

To institutionalize its state identity, Turkey participated in Western international organizations. Other actors also need to acknowledge an actor or a state in the same way as it does. Therefore, reassurance of the state as an extension of the self by other actors gives a country a secure place in the system.

To be accepted by other states as a country with Western values, Turkey joined the Council of Europe and OECD. By pursuing western oriented foreign policy, Turkey participated in the Korean War between 1950 and 1953, joined NATO in 1952. The international organizations that Turkey involved in strengthened Turkey's place in the system as a country that embodies values and practices of Western civilization.

To be acknowledged as a part of the European Community, Turkey applied to be a member of the European Economic Community in 1959. Turkey signed Ankara Treaty by which Turkey became an associate member and intended to gain full membership until today.

Henri Tajfel underlines that “that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group... together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership provides individuals with a mechanism for generating self-esteem by fulfilling a need not only for distinctiveness but also for positive distinctiveness”⁶⁵.

Social identity of a state and its acceptance by other actors in the group is important and Turkey has tried to show that it belonged to Western camp by participating in international organizations and institutions.

During that time, Turkey had a strategic importance for the security of the members of the European Community. Because of this reason, Turkey's state identity and its Western credentials were not questioned. While Turkey was accepted an extension of self, The Soviet Union was seen as a treat and the material power it had was perceived lethal by other countries in the system. Because there was a

⁶⁵ Henri Tajfel, **Human Groups and Social Categories Studies in Social Psychology**, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981): 255.

common interest and treat, alliances were maintained easily. The West had an interest to acknowledge Turkey as an extension of self.

During the time of identity creation, Turkey mainly preferred to focus on the West and behaved as if it did not have any cultural and historical connection with East. Therefore, Turkey conducted a cautious foreign policy that chose to stay away from the affairs of Middle East and stayed as the observers of the events in the Middle East.

During the process of developing a nation, Hakan Yavuz states that “Turkish state has implemented a far-reaching policy of de-Arabization and de-Islamization of Turkish society”⁶⁶. Islam was constrained in private domain and linkage with Ottoman heritage was not underlined. Hintz claims that “the state’s own previously dominant Western modeled understanding of Turkishness does not include any references to Turkey’s glorious Ottoman past or conservative values of Islam”⁶⁷.

In line with state identity that was formulated by taking the West as a model, Turkey pursued foreign policy that was cautious and passive when compared with current active foreign policy. Turkey chose not to intervene in the affairs of neighboring countries in the Middle East unless needed. When we look at the relations with Syria during that period, it is observed that Turkey chose to be observer and was not eager to develop political, cultural and economic relations with Syria.

Michael Bishku summarizes that “since the founding of the Turkish Republic under Kemal Atatürk (1923-1938), Turkey's general indifference toward the Middle East was represented by an old Turkish proverb: Neither sweets from Damascus nor the face of the Arab. Then, during the tenure of Atatürk's successor, İsmet İnönü (1938-50), Turkey kept aloof from momentous developments in the Middle East ... [and] made no effort to prepare the ground culturally and psychologically for better understanding and cooperation with the Arabs. Even when the pro-Western and pro-Turkish Colonel Husni Zaim was in power in Syria briefly during 1949, there was a

⁶⁶ Hakan Yavuz, “Turkish Israeli Relations Through the Lens of Turkish Identity Debate” **Journal of Palestine Studies**, vol. 17, no.1 (1997): 23.

⁶⁷ Hintz, *ibid*, 336.

half-hearted mission led by General Kazım Orbay to see what could be done to modernize the Syrian military”⁶⁸.

Nicholas Danfort claims that “the essence of Atatürkism oriented Turkey firmly toward the West to transform it in to an advanced and westernized state. For well more than half a century, under the rule of Atatürkists, Turkey behaved almost literally as if the Middle East did not exist. That region represented an unhappy association with Turkey’s past”⁶⁹.

Traditional Turkish foreign policy demonstrated a lack of interest in Middle Eastern affairs, and isolationism from the region was Turkey’s foreign policy preference. Turkey chose to stay away from the affairs of the Middle East. According to Danfort, the reason of the lack of interest is that “Turkey could not have had a Middle Eastern policy that was separate from its relations with European states. In this context, the only important decision facing Turkey’s leaders was whether or not to challenge mandate powers in the hope of reasserting influence in the region”⁷⁰. He adds that Turkey as a newly built modern and secular country had little to gain through involvement with the Arab world.

Danforth further asserts that “decisively rejecting the Ottoman era claims to the Middle East was certainly one of the more revolutionary decisions Atatürk made, also one of the most pragmatic”⁷¹.

Turkey’s foreign policy approach as moderate isolation from the Middle East and its preference to not involve in Middle East politics is compatible with the state identity that was organized by taking West as a model and leaving Middle East behind. Danfort concludes that “it is possible to ascribe Atatürk’s Middle East policy to his nationalism, rationalism and his desire to renounce Turkey’s Islamic Arab past”⁷².

Historically, it has been very important for Turkey to be associated with the West as a contemporary civilization and to have an respected international status. Its state identity formed with the Western orientation and its Ottoman cultural heritage

⁶⁸ Michael Bishku, “Turkish Syrian Relations: A Checkered History”, <http://www.mepc.org/turkish-syrian-relations-checkered-history> [01.05.2017].

⁶⁹ Nicholas Danforth, “Ideology and Pragmatism in Turkish Foreign Policy: From Atatürk to AKP”, **Turkish Policy Quarterly**, vol. 7, no. 3 (2011): 84.

⁷⁰ **Ibid**, 85.

⁷¹ **Ibid**, 85.

⁷² **Ibid**, 85.

also linked with the East has created a complementary but also ambiguous status in its identity.

According to Özlem Demirtaş Bagdonas “Turkey’s late entry to the modern international system, along with other traditional agrarian empires in the East, through the tumultuous modernization of its domestic structures against the Western states that had driven the processes of transition from the pre-modern era to modernity makes Turkey be sensitive about its standing with the West”⁷³.

Bagdonas goes on explaining that “this produced the drive for catching up with the West, making Western-orientation one of the lasting elements of modern Turkish foreign policy while at the same time reproducing perceptions of inferiority vis-à-vis the West”⁷⁴.

Bernard Lewis tells that the goal of becoming a part of the West emerged long before the foundation of the Republic in 1923 and claims that “most of the late Ottoman intelligentsia shared the view that the only way to secure the empire was by way of Westernizing, as summarized in the following words of Abdullah Cevdet, who was one of the co-founders of the Committee of Union and Progress: there is no second civilization; civilization means European civilization, and it must be imported with both its roses and thorns”⁷⁵.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk headed the establishment of the modern Turkey with the Republican People’s Party (CHP). Domestic reforms were implemented during the 1920s and the 1930s, the main goal of which was to reach the level of the contemporary civilization. States elites defined the civilization to be pursued as Western or European civilization and aimed at the modernization of the Turkish state and society by taking a respected status among the European countries. Relations with the countries in the Middle East were not prioritized while political actors tried to strengthen ties with the West.

⁷³ Özlem Bagdonas Demirtaş, “A shift of Axis in Turkish Foreign Policy or a Marketing Strategy Turkey’s Uses of its Uniqueness’ via a vis with the West Europe”, **Turkish Journal of Politics**, vol. 3, no. 2 (2012): 116.

⁷⁴ **Ibid** 117.

⁷⁵ Bernard Lewis, **The Emergence of Modern Turkey**, (Oxford University Pres, New York, 1961): 326.

Lewis states that “this linear and hierarchical relationship formed between the Ottoman/Middle Eastern versus European/Western civilizations was indicative of Turkey’s ontological anxiety towards Europe, for it did not suggest taking a respected status among the European countries as a consequence of an already embraced European identity but rather conditioned Turkey’s self-esteem and survival on a corollary acceptance of its Europeanness by the host civilization”⁷⁶.

During Republican era, Turkey did not develop relations with Syria or other countries in the Middle East. Turkey formulated a state identity by taking West as an example so turned to Europe for identity affirmation. It was important for Turkey to resolve the identity insecurity by becoming a member of the European community.

While Turkey tried to improve relations with the West in harmony with its state identity formulated according to principles of Western civilization, relations with the countries in the Middle East were ignored or neglected. Relations with Syria were tense because of the water issues (Tigris, Euphrates, Orontes) and province of Hatay. Syria strongly opposed projects that Turkey planned on the Euphrates and the Tigris. There was a fear and mistrust between two countries so it is important to look at whether the relationship between Turkey and Syria got better or worse during the Cold War. It is also crucial to examine how Turkish state identity and interests were reformed during Cold War in order to understand Turkish foreign policy orientation and conduct.

3.2 Turkish State Identity and Relations with Syria During Cold War

In Republican era, during nation building process, Turkish state identity was formulated with a strong emphasis on principles of Western civilizations. In previous part, the creation of Turkish state identity during Republican era and foreign policy choices that were shaped accordingly was underlined to show the link between state identities and foreign policy preferences. In this part of the thesis, it is interrogated that whether there was a change in the formulation of state identity during Cold War that shows difference from the one formulated during Republican era. This interrogation is important to observe whether there was a change of axis in Turkish foreign policy during Cold War period in parallel to the change in reformulation of Turkish state identity.

⁷⁶ **Ibid**, 117.

When Turkey's foreign policy choices during the Cold War are analyzed by taking constructivism core concepts into account, it can be claimed that there was no drastic change in the formulation of Turkish state identity when compared with Republican era and Turkey's membership in NATO has served as the defining feature of its relationship with the West.

Turkey's membership in NATO has been accepted as evidence of Turkey's European identity. Turkey's NATO membership gave Turkey a new position inside Europe by institutionalizing its state identity. Nicholas Danfort states that "Turkish army took the role of gatekeeper defending Europe's southeastern flank"⁷⁷.

During the Cold War, the defining the relationship between identity and foreign policy was the significant division between the communists and anticommunist identities in the system. In the structure shaped by two opposite identifications, the ideological concerns of the East and West distinction basically hold the relations. Turkey was accepted as an important strategic partner for the containment of the Soviet Union. Because of security priorities, the identity differences between Turkey and Europe was over passed or covered.

In a binary system, where the East had a communist identity and West did not have, using NATO membership as distinctive characteristics of its state identity, Turkey conducted its foreign policies under NATO umbrella and separated the East as the other that had conflicting interests and norms with the West.

During the Cold War, Turkey had the same strategic stand against Soviet Union as US and Northern Europe because of common foreign policy goals. In an international system which was characterized by polarity that was created inter subjective interpretation of identities, Soviet Union was portrayed as the other who posed danger and needed to be contained.

Under Soviet threat, Turkey was important for the European security. As a result, Western values that Turkey was assumed to have, were not questioned. However, after the end of the Cold War, Turkey's importance for the security of Europe relatively decreased, Turkey's democratic credentials were questioned. To reaffirm, institutionalize its state identity and secure its place in Western countries,

⁷⁷ Nicholas Danforth, "Ideology and Pragmatism in Turkish Foreign Policy: From Atatürk to AKP", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2011): 87.

Turkey participated in the Gulf war in 1991 in the side of the Western alliance although the war made Turkey lose its economic interests in the region.

The dissolution of Soviet Union ended an era and new opportunities were opened for Turkey. Turkey had historical affinities with the newly founded states of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. These new geopolitics could mean a new area of influence for Turkey. Although new options were on the stage, they were not supposed to be appealing without increasing and consolidating relations with western countries.

Because of this reason, Turkey prioritized its relationship with West and pursued a foreign policy conduct that was under the influence of its state identity constructed according to values and norms of western contemporary civilizations.

With the end of the Cold War, the bipolar structure ended, security concerns decreased and the issues related with values such as democracy and human right standards became crucial to be identified as a country that is a member of Western civilization. States that embody these values are considered among contemporary civilizations. Identities of states started to be evaluated according to these norms and internalization of these values has gained importance. The democratic values have prominence and whether Turkey has internationalized these norms have started to be questioned.

During the time when Turkey's western credentials were questioned, Turkey applied for full membership to European Union to secure its place. Institutionalization of the self by participating into the Union and reassurance by other countries in the system is important for Turkey's state identity especially during time when Europe has hesitation about integration of Turkey into Union.

Europe has still had hesitation about the integration of Turkey into the Union. Because the possible integration would shift the borders of European Union towards to East that would make security issues, instability in the region, sectarian conflicts, terrorism in the Middle East on the European agenda.

European attitudes towards Turkish membership remain ambivalent because of the democratic credentials Turkey has. The requirement of changes in Turkey's own policy regarding human rights standards, internalization of European norms such as democracy is expected. Cyprus and Kurdish issues are issues that need to be

addressed in EU context. To be a member of EU, Turkey is supposed to improve its democratic credentials and human rights standards at the same time to solve Kurdish issue.

Since the end of the Cold War, democracy has been emphasized as a vital norm and most important characteristics of being European or belonging to Western civilization. Turkey has been alleged to have low democratic credentials. When the political issues gained priority over security concerns in the beginning of 1990s, Turkey's state identity was challenged and democratic credentials started to be questioned.

Turkey implemented EU reforms but had difficulty to carry out its obligations. There is also a fragmented public opinion towards the Union in Turkey. Some groups are against idea of being part of the Europe. There is a common public view that a duality exists during the acceptance process of the countries who has applied for a full membership.

Duality during accession process and European Union's reluctance to give full membership to Turkey create resentment and identity insecurity. Turkey started to pursue more independent foreign policy. Siret Hürsoy adds that "throughout the period of the Cold War, a relatively passive foreign policy in the Balkans, Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia marked the first 70 years of the Turkish Republic since it was founded in 1923. Largely as a result of the bipolar bloc dynamics, Turkey was restricted to acting outside mainstream Western policies and most of the time, was prevented from acting independently and being assertive in its foreign policy"⁷⁸.

Due to its Western orientation in its state identity, Turkey chose to conduct foreign policies that were compatible with or fitted Western interests. There was a dependence on the West for economic and political needs and strengthening its ties to the Western bloc limited Turkey to pursue an independent foreign policy.

Hürsoy explains that "the Western directed Turkish role in the Baghdad Pact and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), which included Britain, Iran and Pakistan and was backed by the US, its initial resistance to the US demand for

⁷⁸ Siret Hürsoy, "Changing Dimensions of Turkey's Foreign Policy", **International Studies**, vol. 48, no. 2 (2011): 150.

stopping the production of opium in the 1950s, which it was forced to comply with later, and the imposition of an embargo by the US following Turkey's intervention in the Cyprus conflict in the 1970s are some of the examples of the Western restrictions on Turkish foreign policy”⁷⁹.

When Turkey's relations with Syria are analyzed during Cold War, it is seen that being in two different camps during the Cold War years limited the contacts between Damascus and Ankara. State identities of both countries were formulated in opposition with each other. Therefore, interests were conflicting. Turkey's membership of NATO and Syria's close relationship with the Soviets during the Cold War defined the general framework of bilateral relations.

Michael Bishku states that “Ankara acted under NATO umbrella and aimed to protect the region against Soviet penetration and ... especially Syria from falling under Soviet influence”⁸⁰. Because of ideological differences, the issue of Hatay province and the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris were politicized and securitized by Syria and Turkey.

To threaten Turkey, Syria gave shelter and supported the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), which Turkey considers to be a terrorist organization. The relations became more problematic after Syria used PKK against Turkey and deteriorated more during the Cold War period.

The end of the Cold War brought changes and opportunities for the actors in the international system included Turkey. Until then Turkey had adopted a foreign policy in line with the security needs of the West based on common threats. Kürşat Turan discusses that “with their common enemy out of the way, it began experiencing an identity crisis and trying to find itself a new role in the changing environment”⁸¹.

Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür explain that “the Turkish regime was also facing serious internal challenges with the increasing power of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism. NATO's refusal to consider protecting Turkey from attack under Article 5 during the Gulf crisis of 1990 and the EU's rejection of Turkish

⁷⁹ **Ibid**, 150.

⁸⁰ Michael Bishku, “Turkish Syrian Relations: A Checkered History”, <http://www.mepc.org/turkish-syrian-relations-checkered-history> [01.05.2017].

⁸¹ Kürşat Turan, “Changes in Trukish Foreign Policy: a Shift or a Passing Interest?”, **Akademik Bakış**, vol. 6, no. 11, (2012): 1.

membership in 1997 created intense frustration in Turkey and led to the questioning of Turkey's Western orientation"⁸².

Turkey had concerns about a possible disintegration of Iraq and the establishment of a Kurdish state in the north. As a result of increasing threat perceptions in relation to the Middle East, Turkey started a policy of active engagement in the region and thus became an important country in regional politics.

Given the historical background on the formation of Turkey's identity during republican era and Turkish foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, it can be concluded that the state identity constructed during republican era followed its traits and foreign policy orientation during Cold War era. There was limited interaction with Syria relations were securitized, economic cooperation was not developed by both countries..

William Hale states that "the end of Cold War had not been all bad news for Turkey and its new opportunities were complementary rather than contradictory to its links with the Western powers"⁸³.

3.3 Changing Parameters of Turkish State Identity and Foreign Policy Conduct during Özal Era

Turkish foreign policy became relatively more independent and multi directional with the end of Cold War. There were instances of attempts to reorient Turkish foreign policy and foreign policy approach that was traditionally characterized by security centered visions of the political elites started to lose its prominence and gave way to a more dialogue oriented conduct. Since the early republic until 1980's, Turkey pursued a cautious foreign policy that was in accordance with its state identity siding with the Western civilizations.

When we look at the Turkey's foreign policy in 1980's and compared with previous periods, changes in the definition of Turkish identity had an influence on the foreign policy applied. In this part, the differences that were on the formulation of Turkish state identity during Özal era were indicated as the first instances of change in foreign policy orientation and direction of interests to the Middle East and Turkic countries.

⁸² Meliha Benli Altunışık, Özlem Tür, "From Distant Neighbors to Partners? Changing Syrian Turkish Relations", *Security Dialogue*, vol. 37, no. 2 (2006): 234.

⁸³ William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003): 193.

According to Constructivist ontology, the agent and the structure inter subjectively affect each other and there is not decisive power of the structure over the agent or the agent over the structure. The change in political elites also leads to change in foreign policy choices and interpretation of culture of the international system. This deduction and its connotations can be exemplified by analyzing the Turkey's foreign policies pursued during 1980s under the influence of Turgut Özal.

The change of political elites in Turkey, the end of Cold War, economic and political liberalization since 1980s such as EU related reforms had influence on Turkey's state identity. These developments enabled the possibility of a change on Turkish foreign policy therefore a shift in legitimate political behaviors for Turkish political actors.

In Turkey, the military played a key role in foreign policy conduct since the foundation of the republic. During 1980s, Turkey witnessed tension between military and the civilian rule. Transition from military to civilian rule in the context of EU political reforms showed its effects on the conduct of foreign policy. One of the most important developments that EU reforms brought was Turkey's transition to civilian rule in order to be a more democratic country.

The military was very influential on foreign policy orientation. The National Security Council (NSC) was an important institution that had effects on foreign policy conduct and gave decisions about national security matters. There were differences in formulation of state identities therefore there was a tension between the military and the civilian rule in formulation of state identity and execution of foreign policy.

Paula Sandrin states that "the meeting of the NSC originates the National Security Policy Document, commonly referred to as the Red Book, which establishes the threats to national security, the priorities and the policy guidelines. In 1992, the document was updated to include Kurdish separatism as the major security threat and in 1997 to include radical Islam. No civilian government should pursue a policy that contradicted this document"⁸⁴.

⁸⁴ Paula Sandrin, "Turkish Foreign Policy After the End of Cold War: From Securitising to Desecuriting Actor", www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/ContemporaryTurkishStudies/PaperPS.pdf [19.01.2017].

Sandrin claims that “the traditional security discourse of the military, ...has three main components: a fear of abandonment, a fear of loss of territory and geographical determinism. All these seemed to have been aggravated with a rise in PKK attacks, the rise to power of the Islamic Refah Party, the very end of bipolarity which heightened the fear Turkey would lose its strategic importance to the Western community, the fact the NATO was reviewing its mission and that the EU was enlarging without Turkey”⁸⁵.

1983 elections marked the beginning of Turgut Özal’s era that redefined Turkish state identity and foreign policy by transforming Turkey economically and politically. With the civilian rule, political elites had a say in politics, modified their identity conceptions by emphasizing Turkey’s multi-civilizational characteristics that embody values of East and West.

Özal was sworn in as President of Turkey on 9 November 1989. Özal’s presidency coincided with the end of the Cold War. According to Nicholas Danforth, although it “has greatly complicated the task of understanding whether the changes that occurred in Turkish foreign policy in the early 1990’s were the result of a more active, less traditionally Kemalist policy or were a result of the radically altered global circumstances”⁸⁶, a constructivist explanation that highlights interaction between the agent and the system is helpful to understand the changes in this era.

When analyzed from a constructivist point of view, the system and identity reciprocally construct and reconstruct each other so the change in Turkish foreign policy can be the result of change in state identity that also affects and is affected by the change in the system.

Examining Özal’s policies and the systemic structure make us understand the circumstances in which Turkish foreign policy choices were made while taking the intersubjective interaction between agent and structure into consideration.

Constructivist theory underlines that the identity is not stable and the change of political actors or rivalry between them could easily be reflected in the foreign policy. Any tension between political camps or political actors can be directly reflected into the foreign policy. If the dominant actors change, the state identity,

⁸⁵ **Ibid**

⁸⁶ Nicholas Danforth, “Ideology and pragmatism in Turkish Foreign Policy: From Atatürk to AKP” **Turkish Policy Quarterly**, vol.7, no. 3 (2011): 87.

interests and foreign policy will be redefined by new emphasizes and will be shaped according to ideologies of the new ruling elites.

Turkey's state identity started to be challenged with the emergence of new political elites. This new political elite underlined religion as an essential part of Turkish state identity and saw religious bonding with historical and cultural affinities as an instrument in foreign policy implementations during 1980s.

Özal reformulated the state identity by giving priority to the previously neglected aspects of the Turkish identity, mainly Islamic identity and Ottoman political and cultural heritage. He carried out political and economic reforms that empowered Islamic groups which eventually started to question Turkey's state identity and foreign policy practices.

Yaser Esmailzadeh states that early 1990s, Özal formed and supported a movement known as "neo Ottomanists or Second Republicanists according to which Turkey should be a Eurasian power not an isolated state from East"⁸⁷. Religious bonding and Ottoman heritage were emphasized as the important characteristics of Turkish identity when compared with the traditionally formulated western state identity that left the Ottoman heritage and religious affinities back stage.

Özal reformulated Turkish state identity and after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. He supported active participation or involvement of Turkey in the Muslim areas and Turkish speaking republics of Caucasus and Central Asia by improving bilateral economic relations. According to Özal, Turkey could easily cooperate in such areas because of common historical and cultural affinities mainly bounding of Islam.

Özal formulated a foreign policy by locating Turkey's geopolitical sphere from the Adriatic Sea to Central Asia because according to Özal, this space was formed by Muslim Ottoman Turks. Association of a zone depending on certain characteristics of an identity that is an articulation of state identity which is followed by interpellation, Özal placed Turkey in a new area of influence in the system, that contained the new regions previously ignored such as the Middle East.

⁸⁷ Yaser Esmailzadeh, "Turkey's Foreign Policy towards the Middle East 2002-2013" **Switzerland Research Park Journal**, vol. 13, no. 1 (2014): 329.

According to Esmailzadeh, for Özal, “the Ottoman Muslim population shares the same historical legacy and fate as the Turks of Anatolia and they will regard themselves as Turk in religion cultural sense”⁸⁸. Cultural and historical heritage stem from Ottoman Empire and Islamic identity were highlighted as the prominent components of Turkish state identity. Turkey’s area of influence was widened for more active foreign policy conduct accordingly.

Ziya Öniş mentions that “Özal’s rural and religious background enabled him to pass the boundaries between the traditional and modern and construct strong links with the Anatolian masses by using religion”⁸⁹. Öniş adds that “Özal’s moderate Islamist leanings enabled him to appeal to the conservative masses on the periphery of the Turkish society, whilst he could also appeal to the secular elites through his attractive projects aimed at modernization and economic reform through closer integration with the western world”⁹⁰.

Özal pursued liberal economic policies and gave way to the emergence of Anatolian bourgeoisie by promoting traditional religious interest groups to enter the economy. The change in Turkish political elites led to new definitions in Turkish state identity, new orientations and new areas of influence for Turkish foreign policy.

Political developments enabled previously isolated political groups such as Islamic groups and Kurds to enter the politics, challenge state identity constructed and ask for a new definition of citizenship that would include diverse ethnicities and political ideas instead of ignoring or assimilating them. There were political actors with different ideologies and conflicting interests. Turkish identity that was tired to be homogenously formed in early republican era was challenged to be more inclusive by the demands of different political actors that gained power during Özal era.

Özal constantly made references to the Ottoman past and characteristics of its political system. According to Sedat Laçiner, “most of his suggestions ... such as the adoption of the state system, the localization of the administration, and the presidential system were inspired by the Ottoman past”⁹¹.

⁸⁸ **Ibid**, 329.

⁸⁹ Ziya Öniş, “Turgut Özal and His Economic Legacy: Turkish Neo Liberalism in Critical Perspective”, **Middle Eastern Studies**, vol. 40, no. 4 (2004): 116.

⁹⁰ **Ibid**, 116.

⁹¹ Sedat Laçiner, “Turgut Özal Period in Turkish Foreign Policy: Özalism” **Usak**, vol. 2, (2009): 167, http://www.usak.org.tr/images_upload/files/makale9_2009.pdf [19.04.2016].

In his political discourses, Özal highlighted nationality and religion as essential characteristics of Turkish state identity and he designed a Turkish version of Islam by stating that it more tolerant of other religious groups. According to Laçiner, “he sought a middle way between Islamism and Turkish nationalism. His goal was to formulate a religious understanding which was suitable for democracy, liberalism and capitalism”⁹².

Özal formulated Turkish Islamic synthesis (Türk İslam Sentezi) “which represented an official re-evaluation of Islam as part of Turkish identity and as an instrument for foreign policy”⁹³. During Özal era, foreign policy orientation was formulated according to Turkish Islamic synthesis.

Laçiner points out that, “Islam held a special attraction for the Turks owing to a number of striking similarities between their pre-Islamic and Islamic cultures”⁹⁴. Along with Islam, for Özal “Turkism was an important element in Turkish citizens’ identity and in Turkish foreign policy particularly after the Cold War, when the new world order was based on economic alignment and solidarity among kin states”⁹⁵.

Laçiner states that Özal “redefined Turkism and saw Turkism as one of the cornerstones of Turkish modernization inside and of the transformation of Turkish foreign policy. However, territorial nationalism or an irredentism did not match his Turkism. Turkism was used as a cultural concept that aimed at economic and cultural leadership of the Turks.”⁹⁶. Özal saw “Turkey at the heart of a possible Turkish bloc and he predicted that it would benefit from the leadership of a Turkish alignment”⁹⁷.

Laçiner claims that the shift of focus on Turkey’s identity during the Özal period created a new foreign policy understanding “which manifested itself in a wider identity abroad, Ottoman rather than Turkish covering all neighboring Muslim peoples and all minorities in Turkey”⁹⁸.

In line with this new identity conception and foreign policy understanding, Turkey aimed to be influential in the Turkic world. Turkey began pursuing a much more active foreign policy in its own region to increase economic and cultural

⁹² **Ibid**, 168.

⁹³ **Ibid**, 168.

⁹⁴ **Ibid**, 168.

⁹⁵ **Ibid**, 169.

⁹⁶ **Ibid**, 169.

⁹⁷ **Ibid**, 169.

⁹⁸ **Ibid**, 164.

cooperation between with its neighbors. Turkey started to formulate its foreign policy towards the Balkans and the Middle East grounding on common religious and cultural values.

During Özal era when compared with previous decades, there were attempts to improve relations with the Middle East, Balkans and Turkic Republics. These developments with neighbors were aimed to increase Turkey's importance to the West. Western orientation of Turkish foreign policy since its foundation continued to be the main pillar of Turkish foreign policy. However, there were also activism in the Turkic world and the Middle East because Özal made efforts to combine Turkish and Western interests in the Middle East, the Balkans, Central Asia and Caucasus.

By trying to combine Turkish and Western interests in the Middle East, Özal tried to convince the West that Turkey was still a strategic ally, an influential regional power that could be a good model for countries sharing common historical and cultural values such as ethnicity and religion.

Özal was a pragmatist politician that saw the Gulf crisis as an opportunity for Turkey to show its value to the Western security system. Gencer Özcan explains that "...Chief of the General Staff Necip Torumtay and President Özal disagreed over the extend of Turkey's participation in the Gulf War. As President Özal revelead his personal plans, which required the involvement of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) in the occupation of Mosul and Kirkuk, the debate ended with the resignation of Torumtay in protest".⁹⁹

Özal targeted to use each opportunity to strengthen Turkey's place in the system and widen its area of influence. Lenore Martin states that "Özal policy of providing the allies with the use of Turkey's air base at İncirlik to bomb Iraq and blocking the use of the Iraq Turkish oil pipeline suddenly thrust Turkey into an active role in the international relations of the Middle East."¹⁰⁰

State identity reformulated by political elites during Özal era focused on political and economic relations with the West. Cultural dimensions of being part of the Western civilization were not seen essential and promoted. One of the important

⁹⁹ Gencer Özcan, "The Military and the Making of Foreşgn Policy in Turkey", **Turkey in World Politics An Emerging Multiregional Power**, ed.Barry Rubin, Kemal Kirişçi, (İstanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2002): 21.

¹⁰⁰ Lenore Martin, "Turkey's Middle East Foreign Policy", **The Future of Turkish Foreign Policy**, ed. Lenore Martin, Dimitris Keridis, (England: the MIT Pres, 2004): 160.

foreign policy initiatives of Özal was Turkey's application for full EC membership in 1987. According to Laçiner, "Özal prioritized political Westernization rather than the cultural side of it. Turkey did not change its civilizational mode to be European"¹⁰¹. In line with this view, "Özal made efforts to persuade the Europeans to accept the Turks as Muslim Europeans in political European system"¹⁰².

Özal's period can be considered as the first instances through which traditional Turkish foreign policy started to diverge from its traditional orientation. In line with a newly reformulated state identity, Turkish Islamic Synthesis, Turkey's national interests were redefined and a new foreign policy understanding focused on regions stretching from Middle East to the Central Asia.

Laçiner claims that "Mustafa Kemal had dreamed of a Turkified, secular, Western society in Europe. Özal's dream was of a Muslim, democratic, liberal, capitalist society with multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religion aspects and with a secular state which respected its subjects' cultural and religious differences"¹⁰³.

Özal sought opportunities to advance Turkish interests by increasing Turkey's regional influence and economic position. Özal's activism aimed at taking advantage of the new opportunities that the Soviet collapse brought by widening Turkish area of influence through reformulation of Turkic Islamic state identity. Özal also tried to demonstrate that Turkey was still valuable to the West.

Economy was very important for Özal and he conducted liberal policies to improve Turkish economy. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) can be given as an example. In reaching out Turkic republics of Central Asia, Özal aimed to contact an area that was traditionally secluded for Turkish diplomacy. He enhanced political ties in order to strengthen economic relationship. By the late 1980's, Turkish economy was flourishing and more integrated into the world economy.

Özal reformulated state identity as Turkic Islamic and targeted to broaden Turkey's area of influence. During his era, Özal pursued liberal policies to put Turkey's regional relations in the service of its economic interests and attempted to contact areas traditionally isolated for Turkish diplomacy. In line with a newly

¹⁰¹ Laçiner, *ibid*, 165.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 166.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 171.

reformulated state identity, Turkish Islamic Synthesis, Turkish foreign policy started to diverge from its traditional orientation and focus on Middle East and Caucasus.

Turgut Özal era in Turkey witnessed a departure from traditional policy line. Özal approached traditionally sensitive issues such as Kurdish issue in a different manner and recognized the Kurds as a different ethnic group. Kurdish issue was exploited by Syria and used as leverage against Turkey. Özal, during his prime ministry, tried to normalize the relations with Syria and get some support from Syrian policy makers in its war against PKK. Despite tense relations with Syria, Özal visited Syria to improve bilateral relationship but the course of the relation did not change.

During 1990's, there was a deteriorated economic and political climate in Turkey. Following Özal's unexpected death, Demirel was elected as the president of Turkey. The government did not have strong economic plan, privatized Turkish state enterprises and ran huge deficits. Extensive unemployment was the result and had a distortive affect. Because of deteriorated economy, the gap between the rich and the poor deepened.

In addition to economic problems, Kurdish issue challenge Turkish society to reformulate state identity by designing it to be more inclusive for different ethnicities and religions. These pressures increased when the EU began to underline cultural side of European identity and question Turkey's European or democratic credentials and human rights standards.

The reevaluation of Islam as part of Turkey's national identity during Özal period prepared the way for the rise of political Islam. As Cemal Karakaş states that "the ideology of Turkish Islamic Synthesis did not only led to a nationalization of Islam but also to an Islamization of the Turkish nationalism"¹⁰⁴. According to Dov Waxman, that is "the construction of a Turkish style Islam and the Islamization of the Turkish nationalist ideology"¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁴ Cemal Karakaş, "Turkey, Islam and Lacicism between the Interests of State, Politics and Society" **Peace Research Institute Frankfurt**, PRIF Report No:78, (2007): 2.

¹⁰⁵ Dov Waxman, "Islam and Turkish National Identity:A Reappraisal" **The Turkish YearBook**, vol. 15 (2000): 5, <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/44/670/8527.pdf> [01.04.2016].

Throughout the 1990s the role of Islam was evident in political and social life. Political actors with different ideologies became more visible and pressed for representation in politics. At the national elections of 1995, Welfare Party emerged as the largest single party. Necmettin Erbakan attempted to redesign state identity and reorient Turkish foreign policy towards the Islamic world during 1996-1997 by formulating pan Islamic projects. Change in state elites also led to a change in the articulation of Turkish identity and transformed Turkish foreign policy according to the visions that political leaders had.

Political Islam and the revival of Kurdish nationalism in the 1990's challenged Turkish state identity that was assumed to be formed homogenously. Kurdish issue and the rise of political Islam transformed Turkish foreign policy and there was a contestation between diverse political identities with diverse interests.

Turkey's contesting identities has affected its ability to pursue a stable foreign policy line. Change in political elites during Özal era and after has led to reformulation of Turkish state identity and defined new orientations or targets for Turkish foreign policy.

Constructivism claims that states are not static and states' elites dynamically produce and reproduce national identities. States' interactions can change the representations or understandings of actors and transform their identities which have important consequences for a state's foreign policy. So there is always a possibility of change in the system.

When we ask how political actors define situations and shape their foreign policy behavior, constructivism explains that political actors decide how to give reaction to a situation by interpreting a situation according to the representations created during social interactions. After interpretation of the situation, actors look for a rule or norm that shows appropriate code of foreign policy behavior and acceptable options for that situation. Norms are expectations about how a given identity behaves in a specific environment. They can regulate behaviors. If an actor has knowledge about the identity of the state with which it interacted, it expects some behavioral patterns for that situation. If there are contesting identity definitions, the norms or expectations for a given identity cannot be clear that lead to unstable or changing foreign policy preferences.

If there are contesting identity definitions, there are different expectations about appropriate foreign policy conduct. Political actors that have different representations or definitions about the Middle East, lead to different norms and foreign policy behaviors. As a result, Turkey has been pursuing an ambivalent foreign policy in its relations with the countries in the Middle East.

So, the next chapter is a general look at the Turkish state identity and foreign policy conduct during Necmettin Erbakan era by examining whether there is a change or continuity in foreign policies of Turkey. Erbakan era is also important to understand JDP's period and policies that were formulated. The following chapter will concentrate on Erbakan era, the mutual construction of perceptions between Turkey and Middle East because they also influence the political attitudes and behavior of foreign policy makers.

3.4 Erbakan and Reformulation of Turkish Foreign Policy with Developing Eight

To understand the evolution and dimensions of the JDP's foreign policy better, it is important to look at the foreign policy visions and practices of the Islamist parties that came before the JDP. Before JDP, Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare (Refah) Party, and the Virtue (Fazilet) Party, affected the JDP and its foreign policy approach. Therefore, it is essential to indicate the developments in Erbakan era and compare them with previous and forthcoming ones to comprehend whether there was a break from foreign policy practices.

The Welfare Party, under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan had an influence on the JDP, and the Virtue Party before it. Galip Dalay and Dov Fiedman state that "because of the deep links among, and common political Islamist tradition of, the parties' respective founders, their foreign policy visions may be better understood when situated within a historical narrative"¹⁰⁶.

It is claimed that when looked at historically, there is not total continuity or break from foreign policy views and practices of Islamic parties, but they were motivated by different dynamics and JDP learned from past experiences of previous Islamist parties. Although there are similarities, the differences in reinterpretation of

¹⁰⁶ Galip Dalay, Dov Fiedman, "The AKP Party and the Evolution of Turkish Political Islam's Foreign Policy", *Insight Turkey*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2013): 124.

state identity and foreign policy conduct needs to be indicated to offer a more complex understanding of JDP and motivations behind its policies.

Dalay and Fiedman state that “the ways the JDP understands Welfare’s failure and seeks to transcend it help frame the evolution of JDP’s foreign policy, particularly in its first term, and illuminate the reassessment necessitated by the Syrian uprising”¹⁰⁷. To comprehend JDP’s construction of state identity and its foreign policy attitudes in Syrian crisis, it is important to study the Erbakan era.

Necmettin Erbakan had a vision that aimed at the Islamicization of cultural and political life in Turkey. He proposed an Islamic unity by advocating Islamic world as a key ally and opposes EU membership when compared with Özal and its policies that support Turkish Ottomanist discourse by advocating EU membership and chose US as an important ally. Erbakan established a party named National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi). The Constitutional Court closed the party on 20 May 1971 and the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi) was established in 1972.

Zeynep Çağlayan İmişikler state that “in the 1973 national elections the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – CHP) obtained the largest number of votes (33.3 percent). It was also an unexpected success for the MSP with 11.8 percent of the votes. The CHP under Bülent Ecevit formed a coalition government with Erbakan’s MSP on January 1974. Thus, the party became one part of the government and Erbakan the deputy prime minister. That one-year coalition caused splits in the Islamist front”¹⁰⁸. After the Cyprus Operation of 1974 the coalition government of the CHP and the MSP was dissolved.

İmişikler explains that “since Ecevit failed to form another government, the following three years became the years of the Nationalist Front Governments (Milliyetçi Cephe Hükümetleri) Erbakan could not work in harmony with Demirel during the first Nationalist Front government. The MSP also took part in the second Nationalist Front. The 1977 elections were surprising for Erbakan since there was an

¹⁰⁷ **Ibid** 124,

¹⁰⁸ Zeynep Çağlayan İmişikler, “The Changing Nature of Islamism in Turkey: a Comparision of Erbakan and Erdoğan”, (Master of Arts, The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences of Bilkent University, 2002): 18.

important decrease in the percentages of the votes from 11.8 percent to 8.6 percent and in the number of deputies from 48 to 24”¹⁰⁹.

The military coup of 1980 brought the end of the MSP. The military was very influential in domestic politics and sensitive to Islamic developments. Fehmi Çalmuk states that as a solution to the problem of exploiting religion in politics, the military suggested “providing religious education under the control of the state”¹¹⁰.

Erbakan established The Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) in 1983. İmişikler tells that “in the 1994 local elections the party captured the metropolitan municipalities of Ankara and Istanbul as well as 300 others in small towns and cities”¹¹¹.

The 1995 general elections were a total success for the WP. İmişikler explains that “it became the largest political party in the parliament with 158 deputies and 22 percent of overall votes. Erbakan and Tansu Çiller (the leader of the True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi – DYP) formed a coalition government in June 1996”¹¹².

It was the first time that an Islamic-oriented party formed a pro-Islamic government. However, the party was closed on 16 January 1998 and Erbakan was prohibited from active politics.

When the Welfare Party rose to power in 1996, formulation of Islamic state identity and Islamicization of political life in Turkey based on the “National View” (Mili Görüş) was the main dimensions of Erbakan’s policies. For Erbakan, identification with Muslim countries was very important and he suggested political and economic unity with Muslim countries. İhsan Dağı claim that “it espoused a foreign policy vision centered on a binary, identity-based worldview: the West and the Muslim world were in opposition”¹¹³.

Erbakan created an identity based ideology and criticized Turkey’s Western alliance through the Cold War and Turkey’s forming its interests siding with the West and its attempts to acquire EU membership. Improving political relations and

¹⁰⁹ Ibid 19.

¹¹⁰ Fehmi Çalmuk, **Selamun Aleyküm Komutanım** (Ankara: Kim, 2000): 90.

¹¹¹ İmişikler, **ibid**, 20.

¹¹² **Ibid**, 21.

¹¹³ İhsan Dağı, **Kimlik, Söylem ve Siyaset: Doğu Batı Ayrımında Refah Partisi Geleneği** (Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 1998).

economic cooperation with Islamic countries were on his agenda. The privilege given to the relations with the West started to be questioned.

Erbakan asserted that international system was serving only the interests of the Western world by ignoring the demands of Muslim world. Erbakan thought that Turkey's foreign policy was improperly oriented and its relations with the West were overemphasized in previous decades. In response to the Western dominated international system, Erbakan argued that it was necessary for Islamic world to create a similar but independent structure to serve the interest of Muslim world. Moreover, Islamic Union was emphasized as an alternative to the European Union.

Cengiz Dinç states that “the Welfare Party advocated Islamic analogs to the UN and UNESCO, an Islamic common market, and a unified Islamic currency, the dinar. Erbakan initiated a Developing 8 mirroring the then Group of 8 developed economies comprised of Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Egypt and Nigeria”¹¹⁴.

Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu claims that “as a part of his ambition to reorient Turkey eastward, Erbakan initiated projects such as the D-8 (Developing Eight), association of Muslim countries and the Economic Cooperation Organization, which gave clues about his pan Islamic ideology”.¹¹⁵

Erbakan reoriented Turkish foreign policy towards Muslim countries. The D-8 was established through the Istanbul Declaration on 15th June 1997 in Istanbul. The D-8 was Erbakan's attempt to reformulate Turkish interests siding with Muslim world and it consists of countries, namely Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey. The D-8's basic principles are “peace instead of conflict, dialogue instead of confrontation, justice instead of double-standards, equality instead of discrimination, and democracy instead of oppression”¹¹⁶.

The D-8 cooperation aims to increase economic interactions among its member countries characterized by close religious and historical ties. By D-8,

¹¹⁴ Cengiz Dinç, “The Welfare Party, Turkish Nationalism and its Vision of a New World Order Alternatives”, **Turkish Journal of International Affairs**, vol. 5, no. 3 (2006): 1-17.

¹¹⁵ Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, **Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity A Constructivist Approach**, (NewYork: Routledge, 2003): 135.

¹¹⁶ “Developing Eight”, www.developing8.org/Contact.aspx [13.04.2017].

Erbakan proposed cooperation among Muslim countries stretching from South East Asia to Africa. According to Mehran Kamrava, Erbakan believed that “Turkey should lead the establishment of this new trans-national Islamic system”¹¹⁷.

Hasret Dikici Bilgin state that “one of the most important developments of the Refahyol period was the establishment of the D8 (Developing Eight) composed of Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia Nigeria, and Pakistan as an alternative to the G-7, in line with the policies stated in Election Manifesto on the Islamic Union”¹¹⁸.

Erbakan organized two main foreign visits to the countries with Muslim populations. The first visit was to Asia; Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia and the second one to Africa; Egypt, Libya and Nigeria. The visits were the result of Erbakan’s intention to improve relations with Muslim countries as a foreign policy choice.

Hasret Dikici Bilgin states that “the Iran visit stands out because of its economic content, during the course of which Turkey signed a natural gas agreement with Iran, ... the Libya visit was important for its political reflections on the domestic sphere, as Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi called for an independent Kurdish state and criticized the treatment of the Kurdish minority in Turkey during the visit. Moreover, Erbakan signed a communique accusing the United States of engaging in state terrorism”¹¹⁹. Özal’s visits to Libya and Iran implied the new orientation of Turkish foreign policy that diverged from traditional leanings. For Turkey, during Erbakan era, West lost its prominence in relations.

Erbakan had a negative stand against US. US were transformed from an ally to a treat depending on representations that Erbakan had. He declared the United States as a terrorist state. Such a declaration was interpreted as a bold evidence of shift from traditional foreign policy preferences. Dikici explains that “The RP leadership renegotiated a natural gas pipeline agreement with Iran at a time when the

¹¹⁷ Mehran Kamrava, “Pseudo-Democratic Politics and Populist Possibilities: The Rise and Demise of Turkey’s Refah Party,” **British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies**, vol. 25, no. 2 (1998): 291.

¹¹⁸ Hasret Dikici Bilgin, “Foreign Policy Orientation of Turkey’s Pro-Islamist Parties: A Comparative Study of the AKP and Refah”, **Turkish Studies**, vol.9, no:3 (2008): 410.

¹¹⁹ **Ibid** 410.

Clinton administration was signing the Iran Libya Act to prevent foreign investment”¹²⁰.

Bilgin stresses that “as far as the Balkans, Central Asia, and the Caucasus were concerned, Erbakan employed a religio nationalist rhetoric, however he did not make any visits to those regions despite the intention he had expressed earlier to increase relations through the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in Central Asia and the Caucasus”¹²¹.

Bilgin claims that “given the party’s diplomatic visits and policies towards the Middle East and the lack of any actual measure in other regions, it is possible to argue that the Islamic perspective dominated the National Outlook Movement’s nationalism”¹²².

Erbakan reformulated Turkish state identity by emphasizing the significance of religion as the main tool of foreign policy. Bilgin adds that “the emphases on religion and orientation towards Islamic countries in the foreign policy of Erbakan period were accompanied by a negative stance towards the West and Westernization, contemplating the influence of West within the framework of degeneration and cultural contemplation”¹²³.

Ziya Öniş argues that Welfare’s foreign policy was shaped in opposition to the West. He claims that “Erbakan attacked Western values and imperialism in keeping with the party’s Third Worldist perspective. He accused the West of under developing the Muslim countries. Beyond these familiar critiques, Erbakan used Turkey’s historic alignment with the US to set Welfare apart. Other parties had done the US’s bidding for decades he argued. These imitator regimes had been eager to serve the US and Europe”¹²⁴.

Depending on Islamic identity and foreign policy reformulated with a strong emphasis on religion, Welfare Party offered an alternative international alignment by stating that foreign policy independence was constrained because of Cold War alliances and privileged relations with the West.

¹²⁰ **Ibid** 410.

¹²¹ **Ibid** 411.

¹²² **Ibid** 411.

¹²³ **Ibid** 411.

¹²⁴ Ziya Öniş, “The Political Economy of Islamic Resurgence in Turkey: the Rise of the Welfare Party in Perspective,” **Third World Quarterly**, vol. 18, no. 4 (1997): 743-766.

Dalay and Fiedman claim that “Welfare described its foreign policy as possessing an independent character (şahsiyetli dış politika) that gives priority to the interests of Turkey and reflects its values. Erbakan’s identity driven vision of Turkey leading the Islamic world was in part an early effort to increase power and carve out maximum flexibility in foreign policy”¹²⁵. Though there were new nuances and ideas in foreign policy conduct of Welfare Party, the party was unable to implement its foreign policy vision or goals.

From the military’s perspective, both Islamic and Kurdish identities posed treats and challenged the secular and Turkish nature of the republic. WP’s Islamic leanings roused the suspicions of the military. Dalay and Fiedman state that “the armed activity of both the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) and the Hezbollah of Turkey contributed to the securitization of these identities and the increased power of the military in matters of security and foreign policy. The military perceived Erbakan’s revisionist foreign policy as a threat to the secularism and Turkishness of the republic”¹²⁶.

Erbakan was critical of the European Union and opposed to the accession process. Şaban Tanıyıcı states that “Erbakan possessed limited direct power over foreign policy, his brash statements and actions alarmed the military and simply reinforced the military’s narrative that the Refah-led government threatened the secular nature of the state”¹²⁷.

Pınar Bilgin and Ali Bilgiç claims that “the Welfare Party, which remained in office as part of a two-party coalition government during 1996–1997, introduced elements of change by organizing controversial official visits to Libya and Iran and emphasizing a future role for Turkey as the leader of the Muslim world. Not long thereafter, the Welfare Party was removed from power by the postmodern intervention of 1997.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Galip Dalay, Dov Fiedman, “The AKP Party and the Evolution of Turkish Political Islam’s Foreign Policy”, **Insight Turkey**, vol. 15, no. 2 (2013): 125.

¹²⁶ **Ibid**, 126.

¹²⁷ Şaban Tanıyıcı, “Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey: Islamist Welfare Party’s Pro-EU Turn,” **Party Politics**, vol. 9, no. 4 (2003): 463-483.

¹²⁸ Pınar Bilgin, Ali Bilgiç, “Turkey’s “New” Foreign Policy toward Eurasia”, **Eurasian Geography and Economics**, vol. 52, no:2 (2011):176.

The Welfare Party reconstituted itself as the Virtue Party. There was a rivalry between Erbakan's followers and Turkish political Islam's younger leaders that would found the JDP because of ideological divergences.

Dalay and Fiedman claim that "this younger generation grew disenchanted with Erbakan for political, personal, and ideological reasons. As the central figure within Turkish political Islam from the 1970s onward, Erbakan was a known commodity and one that attracted the scrutiny, skepticism, and ire of the Kemalist establishment and military."¹²⁹

Dalay and Fiedman state that "...the new generation of Turkish political Islamists... that would go on to found the JDP understood that Welfare had advanced a polarizing vision but ultimately failed to implement it in concrete policies"¹³⁰.

Dalay and Fiedman explains that "with the EU no longer viewed through the prism of religion as a Christian club, opposition dissipated and was replaced with savvy recognition of its value to Turkey as a liberalizing and democratizing force. The EU's values and accession requirements would diminish the military's influence over politics"¹³¹.

As seen, political actors articulated a foreign policy vision according to their perceptions about the international system during the key periods in Turkish history, If there is rivalry between diverse political actors with different ideologies, there is always a tension about foreign policy preferences. This tension was clearly observed in Erbakan era between the civilian rule and the military.

The military was very influential in foreign policy until the JDP era so it is also important to look at the relations that were shaped under the influence of military in a more detailed way.

3.5 Clashing Identities, Turkish Military, Its Vision of Turkish State Identity and Reflections on Foreign Policy Approach

Constructivism indicates that identities of a states define the foreign policy conduct and form expectations for given identities by regulating policy behaviours. As seen in Turkey's case, different formulations of Turkish state identity lead to

¹²⁹ Galip Dalay, Dov Fiedman, "The AKP Party and the Evolution of Turkish Political Islam's Foreign Policy", *Insight Turkey*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2013): 126.

¹³⁰ *Ibid* 126.

¹³¹ *Ibid* 127.

different foreign policy pathways. Turkish military played an important role to construct Turkish state identity since the establishment of Turkish Republic. The tension between military and civilian rule needs to be analyzed to show how clashing identity formulations by military and civilian rule led to ambivalence on foreign policy conduct and insecure state identity that was continuously contested.

Gencer Özcan states that “the military enjoys influence over state bureaucracy. Particularly after its September 12, 1980, coup the military has possessed sophisticated institutional instruments to affect political developments”¹³². There was the increased role of Turkish military in shaping foreign and security policy.

The variations in the state identity of Turkey influence its relations with the Middle East. It is important to look at changes and the reasons behind the changes in the relationship between the Middle East and Turkey within the context of constructivist approach and its core concept, identity to comprehend the clashing policy attitudes of the military and the political parties in Turkey.

Indicated through the thesis, Turkey has historical and cultural links with the countries in the Middle East. Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Turkish governments did not directly interfere in the affairs of the region but chose to stay away and be the observer of the events in the Middle East.

The reason why Turkey was not inclined to have relations with the states in the Middle East was that Turkey had an aim to create a secular civilized nation with a state identity formed according to the norms of western civilizations. Therefore, Turkey prioritized its relations with the West and oriented its foreign policy accordingly. Relations with the Middle East were neglected.

Turkish military was sensitive about the interactions with The Middle East. The position of Turkish military on relations with the Middle East was influenced by Kurdish nationalism and political Islam. From the lens of military, Kurdish nationalism and political Islam posed treat or constituted challenges for its aim of maintaining a secular, homogenous, modern nation state.

¹³² Gencer Özcan, “The Military and the Making of Foreign Policy in Turkey”, **Turkey in World Politics An Emerging Multiregional Power**, ed. Barry Rubin, Kemal Kirişçi, (İstanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2002): 21.

Enver Gülseven states that Kurdish nationalism and political Islam “were perceived and portrayed as Middle Eastern in origin. By staying away from the Middle East, the military externalized these characteristics of Turkey’s identity as depicting them belonging to the Middle East”¹³³. In case of a crisis in the region, military preferred not to interfere in if necessary to use hard power to solve or eradicate the problem that could pose an existentialist threat.

In this context, there was little communication with the countries in the Middle East. The economic cooperation and political interaction was kept to a minimum level. Turkey stayed away from the developments in the Middle East as much as possible. To summarize Turkey’s Middle East policy, it is inferred that Turkey generally looked for stability in its Middle East policy and alienation from the countries in the Middle East was observed.

Sustaining stability in the Middle East was a choice of foreign policy behavior for Turkey. Turkey involved in initiatives such as The Saadabad Pact that was signed by Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan to guarantee noninterference in domestic affairs among its members and the stability in the Middle East.

The Baghdad Pact was also a defensive organization founded in 1955 by Turkey, Iraq, Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran. Although the Baghdad Pact can be considered cooperation between Turkey and The Middle East, it is linked with the NATO. As a result of bipolar system, the main purpose of the Baghdad Pact was to prevent communist influences in the Middle East. In order to reassure security of its Western identity, Turkey acted under the NATO umbrella and formulated its Middle East policy from NATO perspective by combining its and Western interests together.

During 1990’s, Islamic political activism became increasingly important in Turkey. It was seen in the success of Welfare Party in the municipal elections of 1994. The change of state elites at home also challenged the state identity searching for pluralism and foreign policy conduct.

¹³³ Enver Gülseven, “Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy In the Post Cold War Period: Relations with EU, Middle East and Greece” (Department of Politics and History, Brunel University, December 2010): 172

Çakır mentions that novel identities that did not previously exist such as “liberal-democratic Muslim”¹³⁴ emerged. Those were the outcomes of accepting diversity, respecting civil rights, recognizing ethnic and religious differences and allowing them to have a say or representation in politics.

In addition to change of state elites, Turkey’s Western identity and its democracy credentials were highly questioned after the end of Cold War. The EU showed hesitancy about declaring Turkey as a candidate although it declared the entry of former Eastern bloc countries. This decision of EU created negative feelings and insecure identity. There were concerns about the duality of the EU and EU’s hesitancy to declare Turkey as a candidate resulted in challenging Western, modern, civilized state identity of Turkey.

It is important to institutionalize state identity at home and abroad to acceptance from other actors to conduct stable foreign policy. Despite Turkey’s implementation of reforms and efforts, EU hesitancy about declaring Turkey as a candidate led to rising identity insecurity in Turkey. To overcome Turkey’s isolation within the Western world, the military formed new alliance with Israel. For military, Israel was the only country that shared Western values in the Middle East. The similarity between the state identities of both countries led to common threat perceptions and common foreign policy conduct and easily maintained alliances. In this regard, from the lens of the military, relations with Israel were perceived compatible with Turkey’s traditional western orientated foreign policy.

Israeli Turkish military cooperation increased in 1990s but the emergence of Welfare Party with new political elites with Islamic identity disrupted the process and changed the course to a certain extent by opposing interactions with Israeli.

The political actors of the Welfare Party were willing to develop closer ties with Islamic world and to abolish agreements with Israel. After WP became the largest single party in 24 December 1995 elections, relations with the Middle East witnessed struggle between the civilians and the army about the foreign policy conduct and its orientation.

¹³⁴ Ruşen Çakır, **Ne Şariat Ne Demokrasi: Refah Partisini Anlamak** (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994): 111.

When Welfare Party leader, Necmettin Erbakan established a coalition on 28 June 1996, he signaled a change of direction in Turkish foreign policy towards the east, especially to Islamic world depending on his identity politics. He showed enthusiasm to reorient Turkish foreign policy and develop relations with Islamic world instead of Western world.

Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu states that “the leaders of the WP... promised to change the direction of Turkey’s foreign policy away from Europe towards the Muslim world. During their short stint in power in 1996-1997, the WP initiated some Pan Islamic projects seriously challenged Turkey’s Western identity”¹³⁵. The idea of an Islamic NATO and Islamic common market were on his agenda. Identity politics ascended. Erbakan formulated policy that focused on improving relations with Islamic countries.

Bilgin Hasret Dikici states that “an Islamic Union was proposed as a future to a solution on the ground, not only for foreign problems but also for domestic problems, including terror. An ...Islamist versions of NATO, the United Nations, and UNICEF were suggested. In terms of economic dimension of foreign policies, moral values, Islamic principles were again central in proposing a self-sufficient independent economy that could rely on Turkish migrant workers abroad and financial assistance from Muslim countries”¹³⁶. Islam, as a common characteristic of state identities between Muslim countries was utilized as a foreign policy tool by Erbakan.

Hakan Yavuz states that during Erbakan era, “Iranian ambassador, Ali Reza Bagheri attended an event held by the mayor of Sincan whose municipality was in Welfare Party’s control on 30 January 1997 and called for implementation of Shariah. The military reacted harshly by sending tanks to the town and arrested the mayor and launched an investigation against the Welfare Party”¹³⁷.

Chief of Staff, General Ismail Karadayı responded to the event in Sincan by visiting Israel without informing the government. Gülseven also adds that “this visit

¹³⁵ Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, **Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity A Constructivist Approach**, (NewYork: Routledge, 2003): 7.

¹³⁶ Gülseven, **ibid**, 409.

¹³⁷ Hakan Yavuz “Turkish-Israeli Relations Through Lens of Turkish Identity Debate”, **Journal of Palestine Studies**, vol.27, no.1 (1997): 30.

was interpreted as a reaction to Erbakan's attempts to reorient Turkish foreign policy and to develop ties with the Islamic world"¹³⁸.

The military had concerns about political Islamic movement that was seen as a treat to the secular nature of the state. Gülseven states that "the National Security Council ordered the government to take measures to prevent the spread of Islamic political and social movements in Turkey which was interpreted as a post-modern coup"¹³⁹.

The disagreements between the government and military reached a climax when Israeli foreign minister David Levy visited Karadayı in Ankara on April 1997. Gülseven states that "during this visit, Prime Minister Erbakan was forced to sign a free trade agreement with Levy"¹⁴⁰. The military intended to indicate that they were influential actors to formulate Turkish foreign policy. When the pressure from the National Security Council increased, Erbakan gave his resignation in June 1997.

When we survey the relations with Syria under the influence of the military, it is observed that, tension between Turkey and Syria escalated in late 1998. Turkey threatened Syria with military action if Syria continued to provide shelter for PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. After the capture of Öcalan, relations between Ankara and Damascus changed course and started to improve gradually.

Steven Cook and Elizabeth Sherwood Randall refer that "while the United States and other European countries were united in their efforts to isolate Syria diplomatically for its role in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri"¹⁴¹, Ankara's relations with Damascus did not deteriorated and stayed friendly. Turkey had neighborly relations with the Syrians because for Turkey, isolating Syria was more likely to damage regional stability than engagement positively.

In general, the Kurdish issue was driving force behind the Turkish-Syrian relationship. In a dramatic change from the 1980s and 1990s, Turkey and Syria had

¹³⁸ Gülseven, **ibid**, 175.

¹³⁹ **Ibid**, 198.

¹⁴⁰ **Ibid**, 175.

¹⁴¹ Steven A Cook, Elizabeth Sherwood Randall, "Generating Momentum for a New Era in U.S-Turkey Relations", **Council on Foreign Relations**, (2006): 19.

common interests on the Kurdish issue after destabilization of Iraq that made act in unison easily.

Gülseven states that “the parameters of Turkey’s relations with the Middle East started to change after 1999. The transformation of Islamists with the establishment of JDP, the capture of the leader of the terrorist organization PKK and the approval of Turkey’s candidacy by the EU enhanced the security of Turkey’s identity and paved the way for the activism in foreign policy”¹⁴².

The norms of democracy supported by EU legitimized the civilian rule, the activities of the political parties in power thus were justified and EU reforms empowered civilians against the military. The approval of candidacy increased security of Turkish identity and values Turkey embodied as a state. The military tolerated EU related reforms which resulted in a decline in their power.

Gülseven underlines that “military preferred to remain silent regarding foreign policy issues such as the Annan Plan in Cyprus and the Turkish Parliament’s refusal to support the US led coalition in Iraq”¹⁴³. Within the EU context, Turkey went through democratization process and the military gradually took less part in the formulation of foreign policy toward the Middle East by leaving its place to political parties.

The positions of political parties and its state elites that formulate foreign policy become more important. JDP created a new Islamic identity that is not opposed to EU, the democratic credentials of West or internalization of norms. JDP elites reformulated foreign policy and an activism is seen in current Turkish foreign policy that diverges from traditional approaches. Islamic roots of JDP with its new tendencies toward globalization have contributed the transformation of Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East.

Turkey has been more active and tried to become an important actor in the Middle East and chosen not to stay as a passive observer. As an attempt to become an active player, Turkey has established close links with Syria and Iran and became a mediator between Israel and Arabs. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu was elected as the

¹⁴² Gülseven, **ibid**, 204.

¹⁴³ **Ibid**, 176.

Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference that was seen as a sign of rising prestige of Turkey in the Middle East.

Different from the traditional foreign policy orientation, Turkey recently has addressed to the countries in the Middle East, an area where previously avoided and showed active involvement. Syrian crisis is an example of pro activism seen in current Turkish foreign policy and a striking example of how a relation between Syria and Turkey transformed from enmity to friendly relations and again enmity that resulted in confrontation because of the repressive nature of the Syrian government against its own people and Turkey's stand against it.

Şaban Kardaş states that “the JDP's hosting of Hamas leader Khaled Mashal in 2006, subsequent visits by Saudi King and Iranian president, Ankara's position on the Iranian nuclear issue and its attempts to forge economic and political ties with Syria and Iraq are indications that Turkish foreign policy has been increasingly Middle Easternized reflecting the religious conservative ideology of the ruling elite”¹⁴⁴.

There have been developments in the relationship with the Middle East in recent years. Despite improvements, Turkey's ability to engage in the Middle East is limited because there are intersecting interests of regional and global powers as well as domestic instability in the region. Identity driven politics such as Kurdish nationality and the possibility of sectarian conflict in the Middle East put obstacles to Turkey act independently. It is most easily observed during Syrian crisis. In order to analyze the changing parameters in relations with Syria, it is important to look at the foreign policy divergences during JDP era and its reflections on relations with Syria.

3.6 From 1999 Onwards, Turkish State Identity and Foreign Policy

From 1999 onwards, Turkey witnessed democratization process that enabled civilian rule took control over military on politics. Turkey has been candidate for EU membership since 1999. During democratization process in EU context, political parties have started to play greater role in the formulation of Turkey's policy and as a result Turkey's interest towards the Middle East started to be seen when the political actors that pursued identity politics came into power.

¹⁴⁴ Şaban Kardaş, “Turkey: Redrawing the Middle East Map or Building Sand Castles?”, **Middle East Policy**, vol:17, no.1 (2010): 121.

In parallel to the shift in state elites, a change of foreign policy attitude towards the Middle East has been strikingly observed. While in previous periods, the Middle East was an area that were neglected or stayed away, from 1999 onwards, it has gained importance and foreign policy activism towards the countries in the Middle East has been observed. In this part improving relations with the Middle East and the reasons of the improvement are indicated to realize motivations behind the political developments from 1999 onwards. It gives us clue to comprehend the process that forms a basis for the activism of JDP and the dynamics that trigger JDP's foreign policy shift to the Middle East.

Nowadays, Middle East is seen as an area that could be easily connected because of common historical and cultural values. After coming to power, JDP highly emphasizes its Ottoman past and perceives its Muslim identity as a tool to develop economic and political relations with countries in the Middle East. As a foreign policy preference, Turkey announced an interest in cooperation and the maintenance of stability in the region.

Valeria Giannotta states that “without any doubt, between Turkish government and some other Middle Eastern countries relations are helped by that emotional feeling based on shared values and religion beliefs”¹⁴⁵.

While trying to improve relationship with the Middle East and the Islamic world, it is important that Turkey has been cautious not to damage strong ties with the West. Trying to have a balance in relations, Turkey has played the role of mediator between the Islamic world and the West by making use of various institutions such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Turkey has made attempts to intensify the cooperation between the West and the Middle East. It aims to have a balanced relation with the West and Islamic world without sacrificing one for another. Turkey's foreign policy approach is pragmatic but its implementation is complicated because of the complexities and delicate balance of Middle East.

Recently, Turkey has started to pursue foreign policy that is more autonomous than traditional foreign policy conduct and tried to prioritize national

¹⁴⁵ Valeria Giannotta “Is Turkey turning its face form the West,” **SGIR 7 TH Pan European Conference Politics in Hard Times**, Stockholm, Sweden, 9- 11 September (2010): 8.

interests. One of the important foreign policy tests for Turkey was the crisis between the USA and Iraq in 2003. USA asked Turkey to open a northern front for the invasion of Iraq and allow the deployment of soldiers on Turkey's southern border. Turkey chose its national preferences rather than its commitment to the NATO and his strategic ally, USA and did not open northern front for the invasion of Iraq.

Turkey's decision not to open northern front has changed Turkey's negative image in the Middle East to a more positive image. By not opening a northern front for the invasion, Turkey proved country's strategic importance for the West. At home, it was the democratic foreign policy decision that was depending on national interests and it was the turning point for the relations with the Middle East that marked the rising prestige of the country as an independent power in the region.

Bülent Aras and Aylin Görener state that Ankara did not join the occupation in Iraq, but supported "territorial integrity and political stability of Iraq"¹⁴⁶. The Turkish government initiated a platform for Iraqi neighbors which met in İstanbul for the first time on 23 January 2003. There was sympathy for Ankara in the Middle East because of the Iraqi diplomacy in the region.

Turkey's invitation to Arab League was important because according to Bülent Aras, "Turkey's participation in a mainstream Arab international political organization was something that could not be easily imagined in the previous decade. In the minds of policy-makers, Turkey's new regional rhetoric sows the seeds of future support and sympathy for its Iraqi policy, which consolidates and strengthens new regional rhetoric and orientation"¹⁴⁷.

Turkey's rising prestige in the Middle East enabled Turkey to be a mediator in the conflicts of the Middle East. Arab Israeli conflict is an important example and gaining confidence of the both sides to be a mediator has been a difficult task for Turkey but in line with its foreign policy preferences.

Aras and Görener indicate that "states may hold a number of identities, and that what matters most for foreign policy is the role conceptions that shape the ruling

¹⁴⁶ Bülent Aras, Aylin Görener, "National Role Conceptions and Foreign Policy Orientation: the Ideational Bases of the Justice and Development Party's Foreign Policy Activism in the Middle East", **Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies**, vol.12, no. 1 (2010): 88.

¹⁴⁷ Bülent Aras, "Turkey's Risen in the Greater Middle East: Peace Building in the Periphery" **Journal of Balkan and Near East Studies**, vol.11, no.1 (2009): 37, <http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/pdfs/6.pdf> [18.04.2016]

elite's imagination. National role conceptions... considered as the core of a grand policy vision through which policy-makers explain the world around them and their state's existence therein. This approach assigns the capacity to construct or articulate new role conceptions to the elite, while depersonifying the state. From this perspective, the active engagement of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East is best accounted for by the construction of a newfound national role that envisions Turkey as a global actor simultaneously fulfilling multiple roles in separate issue areas and geographical regions"¹⁴⁸.

Turkey's drift to the affairs of the Middle East and willingness to play the role of mediator in disputes can be explained by Turkey's envisioning of itself as a regional power and attributing the role of negotiator to itself.

In line with its policies that aim at developing relation with all parties in the system, Turkey has established close ties with Iran and Syria in 2006, with which Israel has very tense relations. The leader of Hamas, a fundamentalist Islamist group, Khaled Meshal was invited to Ankara in February 2006. Turkey made criticism about Israeli policies in Palestinian territories in the Arab League Summit in 2006.

Not to deteriorate the relations with Israeli after an interaction with the leader of the Hamas, a non-state actor, the Israeli side was informed that the aim of meeting with Hamas' leader was to announce to stop violence. JDP proposed to send Turkish troops to Lebanon. After the meeting, Israeli ambassador Avivi stated that "the relationship between Turkey and Israel is excellent. Hamas should not influence our relations"¹⁴⁹.

Not only with Israel, Syria and Iraq, in recent years, Turkey's relations with Iran have also witnessed improvement. There have been initiatives in different areas such as terrorism, energy, issues such as promoting stability in Iraq. Turkish President Abdullah Gül invited Iranian President Ahmedinejad. Ahmedinejad arrived in İstanbul on 14 August 2008. This diplomatic contact showed the improving relations between two countries.

¹⁴⁸ Aras, Görener, *ibid*, 74.

¹⁴⁹ Enver Gülseven, "Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy In the Post Cold War Period: Relations with EU, Middle East and Greece" (Department of Politics and History, Brunel University, December 2010): 179.

Despite the efforts of USA to isolate the Iran, Turkey's cooperation with the country gave the message of an independent Turkish foreign policy pursued by prioritizing national interests. Ankara has strengthened its relations with the countries in the Middle East.

Although the situation is very different today, Turkey established close ties with Syria in 2003 after the problematic relations experienced during 1980's and 1990's. As the representations that political elites of both countries had changed, cultural and economic contact was encouraged by the leaders of both countries. Gülseven states that Syrian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa Miro visit of Turkey in July 2003 was the turning point and "the highest level of diplomatic contact between Turkey and Syria since 1985 paved the way for cooperation and agreements on health, oil, natural gas and customs"¹⁵⁰.

According to Nikolaos Raptopoulos, "the fact that pro-Islamic party, with a sensibility to cultural matters was in power in Turkey was perceived by Syria, a fellow Muslim country as a factor that facilitate the bilateral relations"¹⁵¹. Turkish state identity reformulated with new emphasizes on Islam by the political elites of the JDP acts as a tool to promote relations with Syria.

Beyza Tekin and Barış Tekin declare that to improve relations with Syria "Turkey resorted to a wide array of policy initiatives, ranging from the visa liberalization, to free trade agreement and encouraging bilateral investment"¹⁵².

President Bashar al-Assad visited Turkey in January 2004. This visit was important because it enhanced the dialogue and cooperation. Since then, Turkey was accepted as the mediator in Syria's peace talks with Israel.

As the result of establishing close links with Syria, Syrian President Assad supported the approval of Turkish parliament to operate in Northern Iraq. Syria as an act of good will, showed its support for Turkey in its war against PKK. Syrian support for Turkey's military operation in Northern Iraq in 2007 as a response to

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 179.

¹⁵¹ Nikolaos Raptopoulos, "Rediscovering Its Arab Neighbors: The AKP Imprint on Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East", *Les Cahiers Du Rmes*, no.1 (2004): 8, <http://www.rmes.be/1-NR1.pdf> [24.04.2016].

¹⁵² Beyza Tekin, Barış Tekin, "The Limits, Dilemmas and Paradoxes of Turkish Foreign Policy: A Political Economy Perspective" *LSEE Papers on South Eastern Europe*, (2015): 9.

rising terrorists' attacks in the country was the result of the flourishing relations with Turkey.

Gülseven claims that Turkey has improved its economic and political relations with the Middle East, especially "Arab monarchs who owe their legitimacy to religion and have felt more comfortable to deal with JDP"¹⁵³.

For the countries in the Middle East, the existence of a conservative government has transformed Turkey into an appealing country that can be easily connected because of religious bounding and common cultural traits.

To conclude, Turkey has played a more active role in the Middle East and improved relations with the countries in the region after 1999. The disengagement from the Middle East was replaced with proactivism as a foreign policy behaviour when the political elites and the representations about the Middle East modified. This has raised concerns about Turkey's ties with the West and the maintenance of state identity that was constructed as western and secular aiming to reach to the norms of contemporary civilizations.

Gülseven states that "when JDP's Islamist roots, its contact with a fundamentalist Islamist groups like Hamas and slowdown in the accession of EU were considered, there were suspicions at home about where Turkey was heading"¹⁵⁴. These concerns about state identity have also repercussions on Turkish foreign policy conduct and its drift to Middle East.

According to Gülseven, despite the positive political and economic relations in recent years, "Turkey's economic ties with the Islamic world continue to be volatile due to its fluctuating identity security"¹⁵⁵.

It is concluded that Turkey has been more active in the Middle East after the change of state elites and reformulation of state identity with a focus on religion and Ottoman heritage by the JDP. Despite recent developments, Turkey has not fully realized its geographic and cultural proximity with the Middle East because regional and global powers with different interests operate in the region that prevents Turkey to act independently.

¹⁵³ Gülseven, *ibid*, 193.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 178.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 196.

4. IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND FOREIGN POLICY DURING JDP GOVERNMENT FROM 2002 TO ARAB SPRING

4.1 Composition of JDP's Identity and Ideology

The JDP is a conservative democratic political party developed from the tradition of moderate Islamism and founded in 2001. Since 2002, Turkish foreign policy has been guided by the political elites of JDP, mainly by Erdoğan's strong leadership skills.

JDP created an identity and portrayed itself as conservative democrat, a pro-Western party that advocates a liberal market economy, Turkish membership in the European Union and strong supporter of advanced democracy. In chapter 3, Turkish state identity reformulated by JDP and its different aspects from previous Islamists parties are underlined in order to comprehend how new activism seen in recent foreign policy is the product of newly reformulated state identity.

Ihsan Dağı explains that in November 2002 elections "the JDP captured 34 % of votes and 363 seats in the parliament, a landslide victory, while its nearest contender, the Republican People's Party could only get 178 seats with 19 % of the votes, and pro-Islamic Felicity Party received an all-time low 2 %"¹⁵⁶.

JDP has created an Islamic identity that is different from its predecessors. Ihsan Dağı further adds that "after the elections of 2002 the JDP leader Tayyip Erdogan underlined that the JDP was not a religion centric but conservative and democrat. This has been the language of the JDP spoken constantly since its formation in an attempt to disassociate itself from the political movement, to a large extent, it was originated from, namely the National View Movement (NVM) led by

¹⁵⁶ Ihsan Dağı, "The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti", ed. H. Yavuz **The Justice and Development Party: Identity, Politics, and Discourse of Human Rights in the Search for Security and Legitimacy** (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, (2006): 88-106.

Necmettin Erbakan since 1970. As a mass political movement, the JDP carries conservative, nationalist, Islamic and democratic messages and credentials”¹⁵⁷.

While Islamic political identity was traditionally formulated in opposition to the West, pro-Islamic politicians in the JDP realized that they needed the western values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law to acquire legitimacy at home and abroad. The party portrayed itself as guarantor of democracy and justified its policies resting them on the consent of the nation.

Based on such a rethinking, the policies of the JDP have supported the integration with the EU. Integration into the West and maintaining Islamic identity are no longer accepted as mutually exclusive choices.

The JDP’s position on the EU membership and globalization reflects a rethinking which differs significantly from any conventional Islamic stand. The party program explained globalization and expresses “its determination to open up Turkey to the globalized world as an influential and competitive country”¹⁵⁸.

Dağı claims that “by continuing with the previously accepted IMF program, the JDP takes a pro-globalization stand. The government has not so far confronted but cooperated with the actors, processes and premises of globalization”¹⁵⁹. JDP has aimed to place Turkey in integration with the external world for further democratization, economic developments and legitimacy of its authority.

Dağı claims that “JDP, by the virtue of its support base, does not represent an Islamist alternative but instead reflects demands of the periphery that is traditionally pragmatist and developmentalist, yet disenchanted from the authoritarian state tradition of Turkey”¹⁶⁰.

JDP has formulated its identity as a democratic conservative party and been the ruling party in Turkey since 2002. By underlining compalibility of Islam and democracy, integrating them with neoliberal economic policies, JDP conducted a line of politics that seemed to fluctuate between reform, democratization and EU-oriented change.

¹⁵⁷ **Ibid**, 89.

¹⁵⁸ Ak Party’s Party Program, Ekonomi, http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/akparti/parti-programi#bolum_ [05.05.2017]

¹⁵⁹ Dağı, **ibid**, 92.

¹⁶⁰ **Ibid**, 93.

Kürşat Ertuğrul claims that “...while JDP succeeded in breaking the grip of military-bureaucratic establishment over society and politics, its political discourse particularly against dissidents and opposition, and several policies (and policy proposals) in the fields of education, rights of women and workers, art and culture, and daily life exhibited a religion-based authoritarianism, monism and majoritarianism”¹⁶¹.

JDP pursues neo liberal economic policies. Ertuğrul explains that “it is dependent upon the global movement of financial capital while it sticks to anti inflationary sound money and tight budget policy and competitive free market. In this sense, the politics of JDP is a case of neo liberal governmentality”¹⁶².

The practices carried out by the JDP government are marked by a conservative understanding of culture and social life. In this ideology, the political power is attributed a significant role to combine the socio-economic developments with the religious values and morality.

Ertuğrul explains that “...the ideological constitution of the party in terms of a process and evolution in which the search is for the reconstitution of the right-wing politics and the centre without falling into the position of the classical right wing parties and under the category of political Islam yet caring for the religious values. In this sense, ...the party is reformatting the modern conservative understanding in the socio-cultural structure of Turkey. ... the ideological project is to convert cultural values including religion into a political identity in an appropriate format”¹⁶³.

JDP describes a historical, geographical and civilizational heritage as the fixed identity of Turkish society and the state. Hence, Turkey is eager to represent Islam in the world politics or become mediator in conflicts between the Islamic countries and the West. JDP promotes itself as a model for other Muslim countries.

JDP gives reference to the history to affirm a moral ground for domestic and foreign policy, JDP aims to place Turkey as a regional power with an expanding sphere of influence. Accordingly, JDP formulates foreign policy that seeks activism

¹⁶¹ Kürsat Ertuğrul, “AKP’s neo-conservative politics of change and its social bearers”, http://paperroom.ipsa.org/papers/paper_7950.pdf p.1/ 1-11. [08.03.2017].

¹⁶² Ibid 1.

¹⁶³ Ibid 3.

in the previously neglected spheres of the system such as the Middle East and North Africa.

Hüsna Taş Yetim states that “with the JDP’s coming to power, the security oriented domestic and foreign politics in Turkey has been rapidly altered, furthermore, Turkey has adopted new foreign and domestic policy orientation, including soft power, zero problems with its neighbors and last but not least a mediator role”¹⁶⁴. As a result, since 2002, Turkey has tried to find solutions for possible arrangement of the conflicts in the region.

From this perspective, JDP leaders have developed a new discourse about the role of Turkey in the international system which differs considerably from its traditional role by combining and internalizing both Western and Eastern values. Turkey has been portrayed as an influential country that exerts its power to institute order and stability.

After coming to power, JDP always put special emphasis on social services and economic development. The party made investment to make healthcare, housing more accessible, gave minority rights for Kurds priority, improved infrastructure for poorer districts and tried to increase the country’s prosperity. During 2008-2011 the party consolidated its power. Burhanettin Duran claims that there was “the replacement of the JDP’s previous emphasis on service (i.e. economic development and concrete projects) by ideology and mission... marked with references to historical symbols of the great nation as a search for a new Turkish-Islamic synthesis”¹⁶⁵.

Burhanettin Duran explains that “conservative democracy...reshuffles Islamist, nationalist, pro-Western and Ottomanist elements that collectively constitute the Ottoman-Turkish modernization process’ alternative ideological currents”¹⁶⁶.

Duran claims that in line with the period’s overall atmosphere, JDP “...that appeared pro-Western in the EU context and now emerges as a pro-ummah and Middle Eastern is seeing actors puts forth one set of credentials without abandoning

¹⁶⁴ Hüsna Taş Yetim, “The Role of Identity in Turkey’s New Middle East Policy: The Case of JDP’s Palestine Policy”, <http://www.izu.edu.tr/Assets/Content/file/20130613-05.pdf> [23.04.2017].

¹⁶⁵ Burhanettin Duran, “Understanding the AK Party’s Identity Politics: A Civilizational Discourse and its Limitations”, *Insight Turkey*, vol.15, no.1 (2013): 91.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid* 92.

the others. The party views this synthesis as an extension of Turkey's strategic, historical, economic and cultural coordinates. Thus, it claims that it can simultaneously push for EU membership and greater integration with the Islamic world"¹⁶⁷. The term, conservative democracy used by the state elites of JDP had implication of belonging to the Middle East and the Islamic world.

Duran explains that "the civilization concept's central position in the JDP ideology and its multilayered nature (national, Islamic, and universal) does not represent a novel phenomenon. From its rise to power in 2002 to 2006, the party utilized the EU membership process as the main engine behind Turkey's democratization drive and presented Western integration as an alliance of civilizations. Again, in the same period, a similar conceptualization dominated the party's prescription of democracy and human rights to the Islamic world. In recent times, however, an emerging discourse of common Islamic civilization plays a more noteworthy role as part of the JDP's efforts to control the wave of regional transformation that arose out of the Arab revolutions. This conceptualization of civilization is thus employed to prevent sectarian polarization and conflict in the Middle East"¹⁶⁸. JDP's stand in Syrian crisis signaled its will to take part in the transformation of the region.

Duran says that "politics of patience serves as a key concept to describe the AK Party's strategy during its first term (2002-2007) in power. This approach effectively employs the EU membership process and foreign policy to establish a civilian control over the military. In an attempt to accumulate actual power without antagonizing the military and the Kemalist establishment, the party highlighted the bureaucratic elite's authoritarianism to get support from the liberal sectors of Turkish society"¹⁶⁹.

This political position that aims to reform itself and its opposition, waiting for maturing of Islamist demands and elimination of anti-democratic attitudes, prosperity in economy remained the party's main strategy until the 2007 presidential election.

Duran explains that the 2007 presidential election and a 2008 closure case against the JDP were formative in a new political strategy, "the politics of controlled

¹⁶⁷ **Ibid** 92.

¹⁶⁸ **Ibid** 93.

¹⁶⁹ **Ibid** 98.

tension. This approach worked to erode the Kemalist elite's hegemony and allowed the JDP elite to accumulate real power... The process began with harmonization packages that altered civil-military relations at the latter's expense and continued with several coup trials including the Sledgehammer case, the September 12 trial and the February 28 case¹⁷⁰. Following its electoral victory in June 2011, referendum for presidency in April 2017, the party found nearly no limitation to its agenda to transform Turkey and to direct Turkish foreign policy.

Turkey presents itself as a central country that assumes a constructive and proactive role in its surrounding regions by exerting its soft power. Aware of its position as a supporter of democracy, Turkey has intervened in the civil war in Syria for humanitarian reasons and tried to be more influential in the region by combining its central country position with its strategic depth and assertive foreign policy.

It is hardly possible to comprehend the JDP's new foreign policy without taking into consideration of Ahmet Davutoğlu's vision and Strategic Debt book in which he formulates and articulates Turkey's new foreign policy principles and conduct. It is important to look at Davutoğlu paradigm and beneficial to understand the changing dynamics of Turkey's Syrian relations accordingly.

4.2 Davutoğlu Paradigm, New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy, The Main Principles of Strategic Debt

Ahmet Davutoğlu was an important political actor that directed Turkish foreign policy during JDP era and shaped the transformation of Turkish foreign policy with new terms, approaches and orientations. Strategic Debt is the theoretical background for Turkish foreign policy under JDP government written by Ahmed Davutoğlu. To get a clear picture of Turkish foreign policy conduct during JDP era, it is essential to survey Davutoğlu's ideas and vision and look at the descriptions and terms used in his discourses.

In his book, Davutoğlu mentions the methods of how to conduct a new foreign policy approach that shows the value of a state in international system. The main principals of Turkish foreign policy are explained and an assertive foreign policy is suggested by Davutoğlu in Strategic Debt.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid 98.

In this part of the thesis, Turkish foreign policy under Davutoğlu's affect, the new theoretical framework outlined by him, the identity and role he ascribed to Turkey in the system and new terms used in his discourses are analyzed to explain the new activism seen in recent Turkish foreign policy, especially in relations with Syria that has changed course frequently.

Representations of JDP's elites have shaped the current foreign policy preferences of Turkey. Beyza Tekin and Barış Tekin claims that "notwithstanding their differences, Turkey's staunch secularists and current and former Islamists have both found in geopolitics a language for making sense of the surrounding world. Whereas the former have lauded geopolitics for its scientific quality, the latter have found appealing its God-given authority. Both versions of geographical determinism have allowed otherwise highly political choices to be de-politicized and presented as a *fait accompli* of geography"¹⁷¹. According to political elites of JDP, Turkey's leading role in its region is ordained by its geography and history.

Davutoğlu and other JDP policymakers' discourses are distinctive in the way in which they make references to civilizational geopolitics. John Agnew explains that civilizational geopolitics is "an understanding of culture and civilization as preordained determinants of international behavior"¹⁷². Davutoğlu suggests Turkey to take responsibility of its role stem from its history, geography and culture by embracing the leadership of its own "civilizational basin"¹⁷³.

In his book, Davutoğlu characterizes societies within the international system according to the types of behaviors and ascribes an active role to Turkey by categorizing it as a third type of society. According to Davutoğlu, there are three types of societies in the international system. The first types of societies are characterized by their acception of static behavior. These countries prefer to wait, do not participate and interfere in until dynamism ends in the international system. Hüseyin Bağcı and Nilhan Açıkalın explain that "if a society has no self-confidence

¹⁷¹ Beyza Tekin, Barış Tekin, "The Limits, Dilemmas and Paradoxes of Turkish Foreign Policy: A Political Economy Perspective" **LSEE Papers on South Eastern Europe**, (2015): 180.

¹⁷² John Agnew, **Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics**, (London, UK: Routledge,1998): 87-94.

¹⁷³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007," **Insight Turkey**, vol.10, no:1 (2008): 77-96.

to lead its dynamism and is even afraid of its dynamism, they would generally prefer to behave in a static way”¹⁷⁴.

Davutoğlu mentions that second type of societies can be considered as an ordinary actor. They do not take active part in the events and stay until the great powers shape the course of dynamism. They choose to be passive observers until dynamism ends. Bağcı and Açıkalın state that second type of societies “leave their fate in the course of dynamism of international system under the influence of great powers”¹⁷⁵.

As for Davutoğlu, the third group of societies is termed as power indicators. Davutoğlu underlines that “while the first and second types of societies are struggling with self-confidence and identity problem, the third type of societies who have power from their self-confidence by history and geography can put across a determinant performance. They can transform their own potential dynamism into the dynamism of the international system”¹⁷⁶.

The third type of societies does not wait to see or leave their own fate what dynamism in the international system brings. They do not adopt static behavior. They are not passive observers or ordinary actors under the influence of great powers. They are proactive and interfere in whenever necessary. They make attempts to shape the events instead of leaving them on their own fate to get desirable outcomes. They are proactive in shaping the course of conflicts and influential to lead economic or political cooperation among countries.

The third type of societies can lead the course of the events in the system by putting a determinant or defining performance. Bağcı and Açıkalın point out that “third type of societies try to use all different internal dynamics in suitable moments to strengthen their power while the first and second type of societies try to inhibit internal dynamism and start to alienate from their culture and be part of global trends”¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁴ Hüseyin Bağcı, Nilhan Açıkalın, “From Chaos to Cosmos: Strategic Debt and Turkish Foreign Policy in Syria” **Chaos, Complexity and Leadership**, eds. Ş.Ş Erçetin, S. Banerjee (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015): 13.

¹⁷⁵ **Ibid**, 13.

¹⁷⁶ **Ibid**, 13.

¹⁷⁷ **Ibid**, 13.

Davutoğlu suggests that Turkey as an important and powerful country in its geography should use its internal dynamics and be an important actor that shapes the system it operates in as a third type of society instead of waiting to see what the system brings. Davutoğlu envisages a proactive role for Turkey by putting a determinant performance to lead the course of the events in the system and transform the dynamism of the system with a strategic foreign policy conduct.

Bağcı and Açıkalin indicate that “the first type of society tries to protect itself from chaos, the second type of society prefers letting itself into the chaos, and the third type of society aims to be the actor of transformation from chaos to cosmos”¹⁷⁸.

Davutoğlu states that Turkey has potential of being the third type of the societies that can read and transform the dynamism of the system. Turkey has a unique geographical position. It has historical and cultural connections with many countries. In order to use its internal dynamics that are mainly connected to Ottoman heritage and Islam, Davutoğlu suggests Turkey to combine its geographical, historical potentials with strategic foreign policies.

Özlem Demirtas Bagdonas explains that “the state has no pre-discursive and stable identity apart from the acts that constitute it. ...identity requires difference and a discourse articulating that difference for its existence...In portraying the enemy as dangerous, inhuman, cruel, authoritarian, violent or unjust, states do not only seek to objectify and legitimize their actions to deal with the identified threats, but also attribute diametrically opposite values to themselves”¹⁷⁹.

Davutoğlu attributed a special place to Turkey because of its geography and history by formulating a state identity characterized by its difference. During Syrian civil war, Turkey portrayed Syria as a treat for the stability of the region and for its own people. Turkey harshly criticized the regime because of human rights abuse, cruelty, authoritarianism and .legitimized its policies by attributing opposite values to its own state identity.

Davutoğlu reformulates Turkish state identity by underlining Turkey’s potential to be one of the leading countries of the international system. Therefore, he suggests that Turkey should be a core or central country which has power from

¹⁷⁸ **Ibid**, 13.

¹⁷⁹ Özlem Demirtas Bagdonas, “Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy on Syria: The AKP's Construction of a Great Power Identity and the Politics of Grandeur”, **Turkish Studies**, vol.15, no.1 (2014): 144.

geography and history. Turkey should put a determinant performance that directs the system by using its internal dynamism,. While formulating its foreign policy, Turkey should be more active, self-confident and autonomous because of internal dynamics it historically and geographically has.

Davutoğlu proposed the term central and core country, instead of traditionally used bridge country metaphor to convey the message that Turkey is no longer only a Western ally that behaves in parallel with Western interests but Turkey is an autonomous country that prioritizes its national interests and has important historical and cultural connections not only with the West but also with the East.

Şaban Kardaş explains Davutoğlu's vision by stating that "a central country with such an optimal geographic location can not define itself in a defensive manner. It should be seen neither as a bridge country which only connects two points nor a frontier country, nor indeed as an ordinary country which sits at the edge of the Muslim world and the West"¹⁸⁰. It is implied that Turkey as a central country is an autonomous power that has a balanced relation with all parties and makes foreign policy decisions independently according to its own national interests.

Kardaş states that Turkey "should understand and transform dynamic interpretation of her power parameters"¹⁸¹. After decoding its dynamic parameters, Davutoğlu advises Turkey to use its soft power as a tool to achieve its real potential in the international system and to realize its capacity as a third type of societies that has a unique geography and history.

According to Davutoğlu, Turkey should pursue a policy which is multidimensional depending on its dynamic parameters that need to be clearly described. Bağcı and Açıkalın explain that "Turkey's constant and potential parameters can turn into kinetic and dynamic parameters through a multi-dimensional foreign policy formulation"¹⁸².

Turkey can easily engage with countries in different regions because of common historical and cultural values. As an inheritor of the Ottoman Empire,

¹⁸⁰ Şaban Kardaş, "Turkey: Redrawing the Middle East Map or Building Sand Castles?" **Middle East Policy**, vol.17, no.1(Spring 2010): 131.

¹⁸¹ Bağcı, Açıkalın, **ibid**, 14.

¹⁸² **Ibid**, 14.

Turkey is historically connected with many countries and should interpret its dynamic parameters to pursue a multidimensional foreign policy.

In Davutoğlu's thinking, Turkey should not pursue reactive policies and wait until any crisis ends or is shaped by great powers of the system. Turkey's security is closely connected with developments in the regional systems so Turkey should pursue proactive policies and shape external political developments in order to advance its interests in a stable region and get desirable outcomes.

Davutoğlu provides ideational base for foreign policy practices and states that if Turkey transforms its internal dynamics, it can be influential not only within the region and but also among global powers. Kardaş states that "Turkey's growing influence in hinterlands will serve as a springboard for its power position visa vis the West and the global powers"¹⁸³.

Kardaş explains that "soft power and instruments of economic interdependence constitute the basic elements of the Turkish diplomatic toolkit under Davutoğlu"¹⁸⁴. Davutoğlu implies that economic cooperation with different countries that are historically and culturally interconnected are the tools that should be utilized in foreign policy of Turkey as instruments of Turkey's soft power.

In his book, Davutoğlu mentions about an unnatural break that Turkey went through. According to Davutoğlu, ideologies of Turkish political elites and changes in the system such as Cold War made Turkey an alliance of Western block. Bağcı and Açıkalın explain that "Turkey had to leave its influential zones which were inherited from the Ottoman Empire. Davutoğlu calls this situation of Turkey a break from historical continuity and he furthers that this break off caused instabilities in domestic policy of Turkey"¹⁸⁵.

Davutoğlu states that although there was unnatural break or disengagement from Turkey's "...influential zones inherited from the Ottoman Empire, historical assets of the Ottoman Empire are still potential assets for Turkey"¹⁸⁶ and Turkey can easily reconnect with these zones by pursuing a multidimensional foreign policy that contains assets of soft power, economic cooperation and interdependence.

¹⁸³ Kardaş, **ibid**, 124.

¹⁸⁴ **Ibid**, 124.

¹⁸⁵ Bağcı, Açıkalın, **ibid**, 14.

¹⁸⁶ **Ibid**, 14.

Bağcı and Açıkalin indicate that Davutoğlu focuses on geographical uniqueness by stating that “geography is a stable parameter when it combines with politics, a potential power parameter, they both lead to geopolitics. That is why geopolitics as a potential power assessment cannot deal with static behavior choice”¹⁸⁷.

Davutoğlu combines Turkey’s historical assets with geography and suggests that Turkey should not be a country with static behavior but be an active and assertive country. He mentions that Turkey lies on dynamic regions so Turkey needs to comply with dynamics of the international system by having a multidimensional and proactive foreign policy.

Bağcı and Açıkalin analyze Turkish foreign policy by deducting that “Turkey’s geographical debt is based on her identity which is basically Turkish, Ottoman and Islam”¹⁸⁸. By basing Turkish foreign policy on geographical and historical debt, Davutoğlu basically redefines Turkish state identity as Turkish, Ottoman and Islam. He suggests multi-dimensional foreign policy that describes clearly internal dynamics of Turkey and combines them with active involvement in the regions historically connected. Davutoğlu suggests identity based politics to be influential in different parts of the world.

Davutoğlu talks about three major regional areas of influence: “near land basin: the Balkans, the Middle East and Caucasus; near maritime basin: the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf and the Caspian; near continental basin: Europe, Northern Africa, Southern Asia, the Middle and Eastern Asia”¹⁸⁹.

Bağcı and Açıkalin stress that according to Davutoğlu, Turkey should increase its cultural, economic and political power in the near land basin, the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus. So Turkey becomes more powerful in the near maritime and continental basin. Turkey should cooperate with the countries in the region. Regional cooperation, cultural integration and economic interdependence are very important to empower Turkey in the region and in the international system. According to Bağcı and Açıkalin, “Davutoğlu suggests that

¹⁸⁷ **Ibid**, 14.

¹⁸⁸ **Ibid**, 14.

¹⁸⁹ **Ibid**, 14.

Turkey's influence power in the near land basin is guarantee of politics in the near maritime basin and near continental basin”¹⁹⁰.

When compared with traditional Turkish foreign policy that stays away from the affairs in the Middle East, there has been an interest and activism in the Middle East in Turkey's current foreign policy approach. Davutoğlu suggests improving relations with the Middle Eastern neighbors and sees it as normalization of international relations after unnatural break Turkey has gone through.

Özgür Özdamar, Toygar Halistoprak and Erkam Sula state that “reconnecting with the Middle East through the cooperative initiatives serves to resolve the anomaly created by republican Turkey's one directional Western orientation and the Cold War geopolitical conditions that erected artificial boundaries between Turkey and the Middle East and hence represents the fulfillment of a historic mission”¹⁹¹.

Turkey's rapprochement with the Middle East and its new activism in Syrian crisis are considered as the attempts in the process of normalization of the international relations. Turkey has got involved in the transformation of the region by leading proactive role.

The rhetoric and discourses of Turkish politics, used to articulate Turkish state identity, have served to place Turkey in a unique position in international politics. Turkey has been portrayed as being exceptional because it is part of both Western and Eastern civilizations. So according to Özdamar, Halistoprak and Sula “this provides Turkey the opportunity to be a mediator, peacemaker in world politics and is fed by Turkey's cosmopolitan and hybrid character inherited from its Ottoman history”¹⁹².

According to this reasoning, being a mediator in regional disputes or between the East and West is easier for Turkey than any other countries because of the common values it historically and culturally shares with the countries that had Ottoman influence.

¹⁹⁰ **Ibid**, 15.

¹⁹¹ Özgür Özdamar, Toygar Halistoprak and Erkam Sula “From Good Neighbor to Model: Turkey's Changing Roles in the Middle East in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring”, **Uluslararası İlişkiler**, vol.11, no.42 (2014): 124.

¹⁹² **Ibid**, 99.

Davutoğlu put much emphasis on zero problems with neighbors approach. Under zero problems with neighbors approach, Turkey has established relationships with regional actors and played an active role in the solution of regional conflicts in the Middle East. Zero problems with neighbors approach promotes stability in the region so as to develop political and economic interdependence that prevents conflicts to escalate.

Nihal Çelik and Emre İşeri state that “the last decade has witnessed the predominant party JDP’s leading Turkey into a ‘new foreign policy activism throughout the former Ottoman lands by mutually constitutive material (i.e. economic investments) and discursive (‘civilizational dialogue,’ ‘honorable foreign policy,’ ‘Turkish politics of grandeur,’ etc.) means, which carries implications for its domestic politics”¹⁹³.

Davutoğlu advocated developing close relations with the countries surrounding Turkey and finding peaceful resolutions to conflicts in the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans.

Çelik and İşeri explains that Davutoğlu “presented the notion of geo culture as a factor in geopolitical planning. In this respect, Turkey is not an ordinary nation-state emerging out of conjectural developments. Rather, it is the center of a civilization that struggled against the domination of Western civilization, but that chose to sever its ties with its immediate geo cultural zone to become a peripheral country during the Cold War and an aspiring member of the West. This led to its alienation, especially from the Muslim Middle East, and a loss of economic and political position, especially with the reconceptualization of Western civilization that followed the end of the Cold War”¹⁹⁴.

Şaban Kardaş states that “Davutoğlu has increasingly referred to Turkey’s order instituting role in the surrounding regions. Nonetheless, he and other JDP leaders reject the neo Ottoman term, preferring less controversial ones such as zero problems or limitless cooperation”¹⁹⁵.

¹⁹³ Nihal Çelik, Emre İşeri, “Islamically oriented humanitarian NGOs in Turkey: AKP foreign policy parallelism”, *Turkish Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3 (2016): 430.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 431.

¹⁹⁵ Kardaş, *ibid*, 128.

Turkey aims to have conflict free and balanced relationship with the neighbors in order to ensure stability and economic and political interdependence. As a result, Kardaş states that “Turkey acts as a trading state or a benign regional power. Ankara’s emphasis on the advancement of commercial interests through mutually beneficial positive sum policies reduces strategic competition and contributes to a peaceful neighborhood”¹⁹⁶.

Creating secure borders is important for the stability in Turkey’s domestic politics and for expanding trade, cooperation and investment in neighboring countries. As a result, Kemal Kirişçi states that “the conception of Turkey as a “trading state”¹⁹⁷ nicely captures the ongoing dynamic laying the basis of Turkey’s rediscovery of its neighborhood during this period”¹⁹⁸.

Barış Yinanç explains that with the rediscovery of its neighborhood, Turkey’s trading partners became diversified and there were attempts to improve economic relations with the countries in the Middle East. However, Yinanç adds that “...in 2010, the tide began to turn, ... as the gradual return of the West and the decline of the Rest”¹⁹⁹. The rise of chaos in Turkey’s neighborhood led to the loss of markets and the deterioration of economic relations with the Middle East and Syria.

Kardaş claims that “Davutoğlu maintains that the scope of activism for Turkish diplomacy should be the entire globe”²⁰⁰. Because of its geopolitics and geoculture, Turkey can operate actively in the different parts of the world. Davutoğlu’s thinking implies a proactive foreign policy beyond Turkey’s borders. According to Özdamar, Halistoprak and Sula “such a neo Ottomanist portrayal has potential to clash with the traditional foreign policy vision based on Kemalism and its emphasis on purity rather than cosmopolitanism”²⁰¹.

Turkey as the center of different regions, cultures, economic relations, is identified as an active, independent, democratic country with a Muslim majority.

¹⁹⁶ **Ibid**, 128.

¹⁹⁷ Kemal Kirişçi, “The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Case of Trading State”, **New Perspectives on Turkey**, no.40 (2009): 40.

¹⁹⁸ Ziya Öniş, “Turkey and the Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence in a Turbulent Middle East”, **Mediterranean Politics**, (2014): 4.

¹⁹⁹ Barçın Yinanç, “The rise and demise of the Turkish Trading State”, **Hürriyet Daily News**, 17 May 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-rise-and-demise-of-the-turkish-trading-state.aspx?pageID=449&nID=79756&NewsCatID=412> [25.08.2016].

²⁰⁰ Kardaş, **ibid**, 128.

²⁰¹ Özdamar, **ibid**, 99.

Davutoğlu suggests that Turkey should use its position in the Middle East, Balkans, Asia, and Europe by utilizing each character of its identity. Turkey should not choose one region over another. Reformulation of Turkish state identity with new emphasizes and recent reconnection with different regions, interactions with different countries in the Middle East depending on common identity implies that Turkish foreign policy has been recently pursued according to the visions of political elites of Turkey.

Davutoğlu advocates that Turkey has the power to defend the rights of Muslims and according to Kardaş “the government has been seeking to assert itself as a facilitator in various disputes and to defend Islamic causes in multilateral fora”²⁰². Davutoğlu reformulated the state identity of Turkey by underlining religion as main component, therefore he concludes that Turkey can play the role of mediator in case of conflicts and associate itself easily with Muslim countries. Kardaş claims that “a geopolitical approach envisages a leadership role for Turkey in historical trajectory of Islamic world”²⁰³.

Bagdonas explains that “a state’s identification of a particular group or a nation as the one that is in need of protection from an oppressive and authoritarian regime does not only help defining the state’s characteristics vis-a`-vis a threatening regime, but also serves to constitute the identity, authority and the role of the state in relation to those that are denoted as in need of help and liberation. Moreover, identifying those in need of protection does not only constitute the state as the liberator and the responsible one, but also constructs hierarchies of power and morality vis-a`-vis the one in need of protection, as well as the other actors in the conflict”²⁰⁴. Turkey’s post-2011 foreign policy discourse on Syria involved similar dynamics. In political discourses used by JDP ‘s elites, the government in Syria was portrayed as a threat to be contained while at the same time Syrians were indicated as others who has been victimized and in need of protection.

It is articulated that Turkey has a unique state identity. Democracy and Islam coexist. According to Özdamar, Halistoprak and Sula, “after 9/11 attacks that heritage became a marketable attribute together with the country’s democratic

²⁰² Kardaş, **ibid**, 128.

²⁰³ **Ibid**, 124.

²⁰⁴ Bagdonas, **ibid**, 144.

structure and Turkey became a potential role model for the countries in the region and an important ally for the Western countries, especially US”²⁰⁵.

Being a Muslim country with democratic credentials, Islam is also underlined as one of the main pillars of Turkish identity. Davutoğlu claims that Turkish elite developed a Western secular identity to become a part of Western civilization, and overlooked Islamic identity. Özdamar, Halistoprak and Sula state that “JDP leaders attempted to change Turkey’s identity from a Western identity towards a progressive, democratic, Muslim identity”²⁰⁶.

The role of political actors and subjectivity in making of Turkey’s foreign policy are seen in the reformulation of Turkish state identity and interests. The representations of new political actors have affected Middle East politics of Turkey. Kardaş states that “Turkey’s Middle East agenda is driven by identity related dimensions of JDP leadership’s strategic culture”²⁰⁷. Kardaş implies that Turkey has prioritized to cooperate or contact with some countries in the Middle East over others because of common characteristics of state identities.

Constructivism attaches importance to the articulation of state identity and interpellation of the reality. It is important to look at the terms used in political elites’ rhetoric to understand how Turkish state identity is articulated and its role in the international system is reformulated. It is an important inquiry to understand the role of agency in foreign policy making by scrutinizing discourses used by political elites to construct or deconstruct reality.

Özdamar, Halistoprak and Sula explain that from 2002 to 2011, six terms were mostly used. They state that Turkey was depicted as a “mediator, defender of regional peace and stability, regional subsystem collaborator, good neighbor, bridge across civilizations, trading state that are built on soft power instruments”²⁰⁸. These terms depict Turkey as a soft power that is open to economic collaboration and cultural interaction.

However, after 2011, with the break out of Arap spring, terms that were frequently used in political discourses changed. More emphasis is placed on

²⁰⁵ Özdamar, *ibid*, 100.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 100.

²⁰⁷ Kardaş, *ibid*, 124.

²⁰⁸ Özdamar, *ibid*, 102.

Turkey's roles such as "central pivotal country, active independent country, developer (assisting developing countries), protector of the oppressed, model and example country"²⁰⁹.

Different from pre-Arab uprisings, these terms such as protector of the oppressed, model country require material capabilities, leadership and capacity to influence the course of events in the region and find solutions to the conflicts. These terms refer a country that can have an influence, capacity to engage in the regions it operates and find settlements for conflicts.

Stephen Larrabee and Ian Lesser explains that "population, location and economic and military potential are key requirements for pivot states. But defining quality of a pivot state is above all the capacity to affect regional and international stability."²¹⁰ By these terms, Turkey is portrayed as a more powerful, active, order instituting country. In addition to being a soft power, regional leadership role is also assigned to Turkey that implies capacity to exert power to solve the disputes of the region. In a way, Turkey was portrayed as a pivot state by Davutoğlu and Turkey's stand in Syrian crisis was shaped accordingly by attributing Turkey to the role of order instituting power .

Bagdonas summarizes that "as of August 2011, Turkey's legitimization of its stance against the Syrian government involved the demonization of the Assad regime for its violation of human rights, democratic norms and religious principles, juxtaposed to Turkey's selfless stance on the side of the Syrian citizens and on the right side of the history. The JDP government's references to Turkey's capability to avert the threats posed by the Syrian government promoted an image of a powerful regional actor who would not hesitate to show the limits of the actors who failed to recognize Turkey's superior status"²¹¹.

The terms that were used in political discourses of JDP have progressively changed depending on the events took place in the region. Özdamar, Haliştoprak and Sula explain that "the government began with an active EU membership perspective stressing Turkey's ideational assets as a potential bridge between civilizations (ideational responsibilities between Muslim and Christian civilizations, references to

²⁰⁹ **Ibid**, 102.

²¹⁰ Stephen Larrabee, Ian Lesser, **Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty**, (Santa Monica: Rand, 2003): 2.

²¹¹ Bagdonas, **ibid**, 144.

civilizational dialogue, (becoming the voice of Muslim world in the West), a mediator in regional disputes (perceptions of continuing task to help adversaries reconcile their differences) and a secular democratic model for Middle Eastern regimes”²¹².

When Turkey’s European membership was stalemated, leaders started to stress Turkey’s role as a central pivotal country, which engages independently and actively with the politics of the region to sustain stability. The defender of the peace, the protector of the oppressed are the metaphors used especially after the uprisings and human tragedy experienced in Syria. The terms used in discourses of political elites during Syrian crisis are getting stronger with powerful connotations that show difference when compared with the terms that were used to emphasize soft power of Turkey with an active EU membership perspective.

Davutoğlu suggests that Turkey with its unique geographical position and history needs to pursue a complex foreign policy that embodies pro-activism. Bağcı and Açıkalın explain that in order to be active and autonomous “Turkey needs to establish a widespread network of interrelations, which include maximum diversity with sufficient cooperational debt and harmony. In other words, Turkey should have a highly complex and effective foreign policy to transform and manage chaos to cosmos”²¹³.

It can be inferred that by stressing Turkey’s order instituting role in the surrounding regions with zero problems approach and suggesting limitless cooperation by portraying Turkey as a trading state, Kardaş states that Davutoğlu has defined Turkey as a “supra regional power, adding, we will also be global power, God willing”²¹⁴. Davutoğlu advocates that Turkey’s historical legacy and geographical uniqueness would give an important advantage to Turkey in foreign policy making.

While it is claimed that the improved relations with the other countries and positive process of EU membership are the results of the attempts of previous governments, some scholars state that there is a new activism and approach in Turkish foreign policy conduct with Davutoğlu and Strategic Debt.

²¹² Özdamar, **ibid**, 107.

²¹³ Bağcı, Açıkalın, **ibid**, 15.

²¹⁴ Kardaş, **ibid**, 128.

According to Kardaş “although Turkey’s ambition to play a regional power role and the instruments it uses are not new what is unique in JDP’s approach is its emphasis on action independent of the West. A defining pillar of Turkish agenda in the 1990’s was its Western orientation. At the time, Turkey was considered a pivotal country that facilitated Western access to the region. Now it increasingly defines its regional interests autonomously”²¹⁵.

When compared with previous decades, Turkey as a more active country is willing to play an important role in the affairs of the region by prioritizing its interests. It can be concluded that with the changing parameters of Turkey’s state identity and foreign policy conduct accordingly during JDP period, Western connection seems to lose its privilege in foreign policy preferences, reduced to one of the many relationships that Turkey has and it is balanced with the progressing relations with the East.

According to Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Davutoğlu’s aspirations for improving the bilateral relations between Turkey and its neighbors and thereby enhancing the relations among the regional states in the Middle East is commendable however it takes two to tango...similar intentions must be shared by all involved actors”²¹⁶.

After Davutoğlu paradigm and the new approaches he suggested for foreign policy conduct, it is highly discussed that whether there is a break or continuity when traditional Turkish foreign policy approaches are taken into consideration. Some scholars claim that there is continuity in Turkish foreign policy rather than a deviation from past practices.

According to Öniş, there is continuity in Turkish foreign policy. He expresses that “the origins of this multidimensional foreign policy and rapprochement process involving countries like Greece and Syria pre-date the JDP era and important progress had been achieved under the coalition government of the 1999-2002 era, with İsmail Cem, a social democratic politician in charge of foreign policy”²¹⁷.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 131.

²¹⁶ Mustafa Kibaroglu, “What Went Wrong with the Zero Problem with Neighbours Doctrine”, **Turkish Policy Quarterly**, http://turkishpolicy.com/pdf/vol_11-no_3-kibaroglu.pdf [08.05.2016].

²¹⁷ Ziya Öniş, “Turkey and the Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence in a Turbulent Middle East”, **Mediterranean Politics**, (2014): 3
http://88.255.97.25/reserve/resfall14_15/Intl525_Syilmaz/week11.pdf [06.05.2016].

To assess the changing parameters of Turkish foreign policy under the leadership of Davutoğlu and JDP's state elites, and to decide whether they are effective in solving disputes of the region, it is important to examine the role of Turkey and its regional policy in recent years in the context of ongoing and uncertain progress described as Syrian crisis.

Syrian crisis in the Arab Spring is a difficult test for Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision based on Strategic Debt. Crisis in Syria is still going on with destructive effects on the region. According to Kardaş, it is vital to look at "...whether the Turkish state can sustain its ambitions multidimensional foreign policy agenda and fulfill the many expectations created by its involvement in so many critical situations without overstretching both its material and human resources",²¹⁸

²¹⁸ Kardaş, *ibid*, 131.

5. CHANGING DYNAMICS OF TURKISH SYRIAN RELATIONS AFTER ARAB SPRING

5.1 Relations with Syria Until 1980s

It is important to look at the relations between Syria and Turkey from a constructivist point of view and with reference to history and show how their state identities were constructed by perceptions of the state elites. The thesis will give special focus on the relations with Syria during 2000s under the influence of JDP rule. However, in order to understand the changing dynamics between two countries, it is also important to look at the identity constructions and relations until 2000s.

In chapter five, relations with Syria are historically analyzed to understand the changing nature of the relations and the reasons of the confrontation that were the result of conflicting state interests of two countries. By looking at how their state identities were constructed and the main issues between two countries, it is possible to infer that changing course of the relations is the result of the policies formulated by representations that state elites have about each other that is the creation of the self and the other. As identities of states are historical constructs, change in state identities result in different policy pathways in different times. It is clearly seen in Turkey's relation with Syria.

Ronen Palan states that “structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces and identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature”²¹⁹. The relations between Turkey and Syria are also shaped by shared ideas socially constructed and historically contingent that show drift from time to time.

Having been ruled by Ottoman Empire, Turkey had cultural connection with Syria and Syria was profoundly affected by the changes especially during the collapse of the empire. Meliha Altunışık and Özlem Tür state that “it was the growth

²¹⁹ Ronen Palan, ‘A World of Their Making: and Evaluation of the Constructivist Critique in International Relations’, **Review of International Studies**, vol. 26, no. 4, (2000): 576.

of Arab nationalism, especially in the Syrian provinces, in the last decades of the Empire that shaped perceptions on each side. These perceptions were strengthened by World War I and the alliance of the Arabs with the Allied forces against the Ottoman Empire”²²⁰.

Historically, Turkey and Syria were not positively associated with one another because of the representations that were already formed in opposition to one another during subjective interactions. Bülent Aras and Hasan Köni add that “alliance of the Arabs with Allied forces ... left a large imprint on the minds of the Turks and marked the Arabs as untrustworthy, a mental map that to some extent continues today”²²¹. On the Syrian side, it was believed that Arab underdevelopment was linked with to the rule of Ottoman Empire.

During the nation state building processes, Turkey and Syria constructed their state identities on otherness by emphasizing difference between two countries. Both countries had negative connotations about each other during interactions when the actors communicated their interests through inter subjective knowledge.

As a result, the relations between Turkey and Syria were shaped by isolation, rivalry, mistrust and enmity. Both countries were ready to expect the worst case scenario and escalate the tension and if necessary to employ hard power.

The province of Hatay is one of the issues that Syria and Turkey has conflicting interests. Syria did not accept the unification of the Hatay with Turkey in 1939 and responded it with feelings of displeasure and resentment. Syria regarded it as a loss of territory. Altunışık and Tür explain that for Syria “Hatay was stolen territory, grasped by force by Turkey and that in the whole event Syria was cheated”²²². Mistrust between Turkey and Syria and expectation of betrayal from one another, clashing interests as a result of different state identities always characterized the relations.

Altunışık and Tür add that “the treatment of Hatay was perceived by Syrian nationalists as a sign of Turkish expansionism, as Turkey being the occupier of Arab

²²⁰ Meliha Benli Altunışık, Özlem Tür, “From Distant Neighbors to Partners? Changing Syrian Turkish Relations”, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 37, no. 2 (2006): 231.

²²¹ Bülent Aras, Hasan Köni, ‘Turkish–Syrian Relations Revisited’, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 24, no.2 (2002): 50.

²²² Altunışık, Tür, *ibid*, 231.

lands for four centuries was now taking Hatay and was therefore a threat to Syria”²²³. The subjective interactions between two countries resulted in conflicts of interests strengthening the construction of the negative stereotype of one another and relations were generally securitized.

Bülent Aras and Rabia Polat explain that “from the perspective of securitization theory, security is not framed as an objective and material condition. It is seen rather as a speech act, that is, something is a security problem when the elites declare it to be so”²²⁴.

Security, from this perspective, is understood as a socially constructed concept and articulated perceptions of political elites. Aras and Polat further add that what makes a particular issue a security issue is “presentation of the issue as an existential threat that calls for extraordinary measures. By labeling something a security issue, an actor claims a need for the use of extraordinary means, emergency measures, and other actions out-side the boundaries of normal/ordinary political procedures”²²⁵.

It is clearly seen that relations were generally securitized by Turkish and Syrian political actors by calling for extraordinary measures. Michael Williams underlines that “securitization is a power laden process that is structured by the differential capacity of actors to make socially effective claims about threats”²²⁶. Perceptions about reality were constructed through the lens of securitization by Turkey and Syria. Therefore, political actors of Turkey and Syria, in their speech acts declared any issue as a threat to obtain the support of society for a certain policy or justification of a certain course of action.

The unification of Hatay with Turkey lost its prominence in relations after the establishment of Israel. Although Syria still placed Hatay in its official maps,

²²³ Altunışık, Tür, *ibid*, 231.

²²⁴ Bülent Aras, Rabia Polat, “From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey’s Relations with Syria and Iran”, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 39, no. 5 (2008): 496.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 496.

²²⁶ Michael Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2003): 514.

Muhammed Muslih states that it “disappeared from the official jargon of the Syrian regime, especially after 1973”²²⁷.

In addition to the issue of Hatay, the waters of the Euphrates and the Tigris emerged as a problem in relations between the two countries during the 1960s when both countries started projects for damming.

There was a disagreement about legal usage of the two rivers; the disagreement also marked the process of interaction. Altunışık and Tür point that “the water issue was never just a conflict over a technical matter for Syria. It was closely related to identity issues, such as the ideology of self-sufficiency, full independence, and Arab nationalism”²²⁸.

For Turkey, the water development project was devised for the development in southeastern Anatolia. Its basic aim is to create new employment opportunities, raise the standards of citizens in this region, to support economic growth. GAP (Southeastern Anatolia Project) was thought as a solution to Kurdish issue, the economic development and welfare of the region.

Muslih explains that “feeling threatened by what it perceived as Turkey’s sovereignty claims over these rivers and use of water for its own interests regardless of Arab interests, Syria resorted to balancing acts against Turkey by providing sanctuary to the PKK (Workers Party of Kurdistan), the ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia)”²²⁹.

Altunışık and Tür stress that Syrian support for PKK “increased further after the 1980 military coup in Turkey, when many of these groups sought refuge abroad”²³⁰. Ali Çarkoğlu and Mine Eder further add that “by 1983, Turkey publicly announced its displeasure with Syria for backing anti-Turkish elements”²³¹. Declaring its red line and concern about the PKK, Turkey put a distance to its relations with Syria and considered its support given to PKK as a treat that needed to be contained by taking strict measures.

²²⁷ Muhammad Muslih, ‘Syria and Turkey: Uneasy Relations’, **Reluctant Neighbor**, ed. Henri Barkey, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996): 115.

²²⁸ Altunışık, Tür, **ibid**, 233.

²²⁹ Muslih, **Ibid**, 122.

²³⁰ Altunışık, Tür, **ibid**, 232.

²³¹ Ali Çarkoğlu, Mine Eder, “Domestic Concerns and the Water Conflict over the Euphrates–Tigris River Basin”, **Middle Eastern Studies**, vol. 37, no. 1 (2001): 60.

During nation building process of Turkey, the state identity was tried to be homogenously formed by gathering people that belong to different ethnicities, religions or minorities under the concept of Turkish citizenship that was designated as an inclusive national identity.

It is very important to look at the Kurdish identity in Turkey because since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the security of Turkish state identity was challenged by Kurdish identity. The domestic conflict over Kurdish identity has influenced foreign policy of Turkey, accession to EU and its relations with Syria and other countries in the Middle East to a great extent.

Kurdish separatism has been a critical issue for Turkey's domestic politics and in its relations with the Middle East, particularly with countries that have Kurdish citizens such as Iraq, Iran and Syria. Kurdish issue has also implications in EU context because it has connection with the development of democracy and human right standards. For these reasons, it is important to show briefly how the changes in the identity security of Turkey when challenged by Kurdish identity influence its relations with Syria and its Middle East Policy in general.

Murat Somer explains that “ethnic Kurds clashed with the secular, Turkish, and centralist characteristics of the state right from the beginning. In fact, for various identity related, demographic, geographical, and historically contingent political and socioeconomic reasons, Kurds posed the major challenge to the state's attempts at nation building through the homogenization of people's identities, loyalties, and language”²³².

Kurdish identity has challenged Turkish state identity which was constructed to contain a sense of one unified or homogenous Turkish nation. There is not any ethnic distinction drawn in the definition of Turkish nation. Kurdish issue that represents the struggle of an ethnic minority to achieve legal recognition in cultural and political realm of Turkey is a highly sensitive issue at home and Kurdish separatism or the loss of Kurdish inhabited southeast would be perceived as disintegration.

²³² Murat Somer, “Resurgence and Remaking of Identity: Civil Beliefs, Domestic and External Dynamics and the Turkish Mainstream Discourse on Kurds”, **Comparative Political Studies**, vol. 38, no. 6 (2005): 595.

Enver Gülseven explains that “a state’s survival is increasingly identified with the maintenance of territorial integrity. ...Giving up predominantly Kurdish Southeastern Anatolia is currently an unimaginable option for Turkish governments since this is perceived as an existential threat to the spatial identity of Turkey”²³³.

Although Turks and Kurds founded the Republic of Turkey in 1923 and actively participated in the foundation of modern Turkey, Somer stated that “there were Kurdish rebellions during the 1920s and 1930s, which the Kemalist regime forcefully suppressed”²³⁴.

Somer claims that “until the 1980s, the state adopted an assimilationist melting-pot ideology, which people internalized partially or fully through education and other means of state and nation building. The existence of Muslim minorities was officially denied, and the expression of the Kurdish identity was heavily suppressed, to differing degrees in different sub periods”²³⁵. Kurdish people lived their ethnicity in personal realm by embracing Turkish citizenship as an overarching national identity.

Gülseven asserts that “Kurdish identity challenges the Kemalist aim of creating a modern, secular, centralized nation state with a Western identity. The recognition of the existence of the Kurds in Turkey makes rejecting the Middle Eastern identity more difficult for the Turkish state”²³⁶. Gülseven claims that Kurdish identity makes implications that are connected with the Middle Eastern identity which was externalized during the construction of Turkey’s state identity. He explains that Kurdish nationalism was seen as an external issue with its roots in the Middle East. Therefore, Turkey isolated itself from the region and pursued a passive foreign policy to secure its identity unity and cut the bonds with Middle Eastern characteristics of its state identity.

Kurdish issue carries the possibility of internal ethnic conflict. Turkey was against the idea of the local autonomy of the region. Ankara perceived it as territorial separation. Turkey applied policies that targeted the assimilation of the Kurds.

²³³ Enver Gülseven, “Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy In the Post Cold War Period: Relations with EU, Middle East and Greece”, (Department of Politics and History, Brunel University, December 2010): 38.

²³⁴ Somer, *ibid*, 595.

²³⁵ Somer, *ibid*, 596.

²³⁶ Gülseven, *ibid*, 182.

Kurdish identity was culturally denied and kept in a private domain. There was a ban on the usage of Kurdish language. In Turkey, the Kurds remained as a semi feudal society without any real chance for economic development.

In the 1960s, new nationalist ideas spread among Kurds and inspired Kurdish movements in neighboring countries such as Iran and Iraq. Kurds in Turkey were also affected by nationalistic ideas. Somer explains that “educationally mobile young Kurds initially sought political expression mainly within leftist movements with mixed Turkish-Kurdish membership. In the 1970s, many of them broke away partly in response to what they perceived as these movements’ inattention to Kurdish concerns”²³⁷.

Somer claims that “the military regime of 1980 to 1983 produced a new peak in the state oppression of the Kurdish identity and, thus, of its politicization. The regime was especially harsh on leftists, political Islamists, and Kurdish nationalists. It went as far as decreeing a law banning the use of Kurdish in public, which was later lifted in 1991”²³⁸. Gülseven adds that “the Kurdistan Worker’s Party politicized and united Turkey’s Kurds on an ethnic nationalist basis and started a guerilla war against the Turkish state in 1984”²³⁹.

Turkish state responded to Kurdish terrorism or insurgency by military power that weakened the integrity of the Kurds to the Turkish state. Gülseven adds that “thousands of Kurds migrated to Western Europe due to unstable conditions, which to a certain extent internationalized the issue”²⁴⁰.

Kurdish issue in domestic politics found its repercussions in relations with neighboring countries. The PKK posed a significant challenge to the territorial integrity of Turkey, and therefore Turkey increasingly viewed its foreign relations with Syria through the lens of that issue and the tension escalated when Syria supported the PKK.

Altunışık and Tür state that Syria “perceived its support to the PKK as an opportunity to quell the possible aspirations of its own Kurdish population”²⁴¹. Turkish foreign policymakers hold Syria responsible for giving external support to

²³⁷ Somer, *ibid*, 596.

²³⁸ Somer, *ibid*, 596.

²³⁹ Gülseven, *ibid*, 183.

²⁴⁰ Gülseven, *ibid*, 184.

²⁴¹ Altunışık, Tür, *ibid*, 233.

Kurdish separatists. Any support to the PKK was a red line for Turkey and destructed the relations with Syria a considerable extend.

The difficulty of achieving cooperation between countries with diverse political identities and interests led to failure of political and economic cooperation between Turkey and Syria. While Turkey chose to stay away and avoided interaction with Syria, PKK found shelter in Syria. Until the end of 1990's, Syria supported PKK and tried to use it as leverage its relations with Turkey.

Altunışık and Tür explain that “the PKK and its leader Abdullah Öcalan, at least initially, had no difficulty in building alliances within Syria, especially with leftist groups and intellectuals. Most of these perceived the PKK as a Marxist national liberation movement, and supporting such a movement was in line with the ideas of the Syrian left”²⁴².

Gülseven indicates that “the PKK changed its ideology from Marxism to Islamic discourse after the end of the Cold War which boosted its popularity among the traditionally religious Kurdish society of Turkey”²⁴³. PKK's Islamic discourse gained support among religious Kurdish people of Turkey.

Rising domestic instability and international pressure for Kurdish cultural and political rights in EU context led Turkish state abandon the denial of Kurdish identity as a different ethnicity. Turkey focused on economic and cultural aspects of the Kurdish issue. Kurdish identity began to be recognized in the 1990's on a cultural level.

According to Somer, “foreseeing the potential disintegration of Iraq after the Gulf War, Turgut Özal determined that the best Turkish response to the possibility of a US backed Kurdish entity in Iraq was to sponsor Kurds”²⁴⁴. As a result, the state policy of avoiding any formal relations with the Kurdish leaders or denial of Kurdish identity at home and abroad was abandoned.

Turkey has had problems with Syria particularly within the context of its fight against Kurdish separatism and terrorist attacks. Since 1984, the PKK has launched terrorist attacks against the Turkish state and many people have been killed. Syria, as

²⁴² Altunışık, Tür, *ibid*, 233.

²⁴³ Gülseven, *ibid*, 184.

²⁴⁴ Somer, *ibid*, 618.

a bordering neighbor, gave shelter to a terrorist organization and used Kurdish issue as retaliation in its relations with Turkey.

According to Altunışık and Tür, in addition to the conflict over the water issue and support of Syria to PKK, on Syrian side, “there was a perception that, following the 1982 Hama incident, the leaders of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood had escaped to Turkey and found shelter there. Supporting Turkish opposition both as a counter move to this development and in order to push Turkey for more water was therefore thought to be a natural policy by the Damascus regime at the time”²⁴⁵.

Bülent Aras and Rabia Polat stress that “for a long time, Turkey and Syria were locked in a relationship shaped by historical enmity, the prevalence of hostile establishment ideologies, and the attempts of policymakers to externalize a number of major domestic problems”²⁴⁶.

Cold War politics, the bipolar system, communist and anti communist identities largely framed the relations between Turkey and Syria, which were attached to opposite camps with conflicting interests. Altunışık and Tür indicate that “the shifting balance of power that emerged with the end of bipolarity thus led to redefinitions of their places in the regional subsystem. Locked in a zero sum game on issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity, Syria and Turkey engaged in an effort to balance threats”²⁴⁷.

Relations between Syria and Turkey remained tense until the 1990s. The two countries interacted negatively and had relations characterized by rivalry, enmity, resentment, victimization and displeasure. There was limited contact between Turkey and Syria and self regarding stand in issues that created conflicts.

Muslih tells that “owing to Turkey’s membership in NATO, it was seen by Syria as a protector of the Western bloc, trying to find ways of serving not only its own interests but also the interests of the Western bloc in general at the expense of genuine Arab needs and interests”²⁴⁸. Turkey was accused of behaving under the influence of Western powers by ignoring demands of other countries in the system. William Hale claims that Turkey also perceived “Syria’s Arab nationalism and its

²⁴⁵ Altunışık, *ibid*, 232.

²⁴⁶ Bülent Aras, Rabia Polat, “From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey’s Relations with Syria and Iran”, *Security Dialogue*, vol.39, no.5 (2008): 496.

²⁴⁷ Altunışık, Tür, *ibid*, 230.

²⁴⁸ Muslih, *ibid*, 113.

instability as providing an opportunity for Soviet influence in the region”²⁴⁹. Turkey also charged Syria with being a gateway for Soviet influence that posed a treat and had to be contained for the peace and stability of the region.

Mustafa Aydın and Damla Aras summarize that “thus, up until the end of bipolarity, the Cold War provided the dominant framework for Syrian Turkish relations. Although there was no open conflict during this period, the two countries had no significant political contact and official trade relations were negligible”²⁵⁰.

İbrahim Kalın states that “neither Turkey’s security concerns emanating from the PKK, the Kurdish separatist movement nor its economic interests extending to multiple regions could be secured with the strategic mindset and instruments of the 1980s and 1990s, during which time Turkey mostly acted with limited means and refrained from taking independent initiatives”²⁵¹.

According to Raymond Hinnebusch, bilateral relations between Syria and Turkey were affected by transformations in the new international and regional environment, as well as by how the two countries saw their roles in that context. Hinnebusch states that “the Syrian strategy was based on keeping Syria involved in the peace process and engaged with the United States, on the one hand, and strengthening its alliances with some regional powers on the other”²⁵².

After the end of Cold War, Syria improved its relations with countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, while it continued to foster ties with Iran so as not to be isolated because of the US policy of containment and made new political and economic alliances in the system.

Leslie Kumar states that “Turkey aligned itself firmly with the Western bloc. This was seen both domestically and internationally as not just a strategic ploy but

²⁴⁹ William Hale, **Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774–2000** (London: Frank Cass, 2002):128.

²⁵⁰ Mustafa Aydın, Damla Aras, ‘Political Conditionality of Economic Relations Between Paternalist States: Turkey’s Interaction with Iran, Iraq, and Syria’, **Arab Studies Quarterly**, vol. 27, no. 1 (2005): 21–43.

²⁵¹ İbrahim Kalın, “Turkish Foreign Policy, Framework, Values and Mechanisms”, **International Journal**, (2011-12): 9.

²⁵² Raymond Hinnebusch, ‘The Foreign Policy of Syria’, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, **The Foreign Policies of Middle East States**, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002): 159.

also as the next step in the conscious process of Westernization and secularization Turkey had adopted after the First World War”²⁵³.

As seen there was is no significant change in relations with Syria during 1980s. Political and economic relations were kept in a minimum level and issues were securitized and interests were formed conflicting. Both countries showed resistance to have positive representation of one another and took part in different groups during bipolar system. The nature of relations was characterized by enmity, hostility, rivalry and resentment.

5.2 Relations with Syria during 1980s

Relations between Syria and Turkey were affected by the global and regional changes that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s and by the mutual reconstruction of the agent and the system. The 1990s was a decade that marked the relations and changed the course of it. Before looking 1990s, it is important to look the relations with Syria that showed small improvements during 1980s by the taking intensification of international pressure and sanctions on Syria in to consideration.

However, although the perspectives both countries were reshaped, there was continuity in the conflicting nature of bilateral relations. In this part, the relations with Syria during 1980’s are explained shortly to compare them with the improved relation seen until Syrian crisis.

In 1983, Turkey’s the Southeast Anatolia Development Project (GAP) strained relations with Syria. In July 1987, Turkish Prime Minister Özal visited Damascus to normalize the relations. Özal aimed to initiate contact with the countries in the Middle East and improve political and economic relations.

During the visit, while the Turkish side demanded that Syria stop sheltering the PKK, Altunışık and Tür explains that in return “Syrians demanded a treaty that would lead to the sharing of the waters of the Euphrates. According to the protocol that was signed during this visit, Turkey agreed to release 500 cubic meters of water per second to Syria”²⁵⁴.

²⁵³ Leslie Keerthi Kumar, “Examining AKP’s Impact on Turkey’s Domestic and Foreign Policy”, **Comparative Review of The Middle East**, vol. 1, no. 2 (2014): 207.

²⁵⁴ Meliha Benli Altunışık, Özlem Tür, “From Distant Neighbors to Partners? Changing Syrian Turkish Relations”, **Security Dialogue**, vol. 37, no. 2 (2006): 232.

Attempts to improve bilateral relations brought small results. Altunışık and Tür state that “there was also a Security Protocol signed during the meeting that included provisions that both sides would prevent activities against each other originating in their countries and enable the extradition of individuals suspected of involvement in insurgent actions”²⁵⁵.

With the 1987 Protocol, water and security issues were discussed together. Altunışık and Tür explain that despite the protocol, “PKK attacks from the Syrian side continued. At the same time, Syria increasingly began to bring the water issue into a pan-Arab agenda”²⁵⁶. Although 1987 Protocol could be described as a positive attempt to improve bilateral relations concerning two critical issues between Turkey and Syria, security and water management, it did not give the expected results.

After the end of Cold War, Syria found itself in a disadvantageous environment. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of bipolarity meant the end of Soviet aid to Syria and the disappearance of its room for maneuver. Altunışık and Tür claim that “the Syrian regime read this new strategic environment correctly and used the Gulf crisis of 1990 to reposition itself in the regional balance of power. Syria thus became part of the US-led coalition against Iraq and eventually agreed to participate in the Madrid Peace Conference”²⁵⁷.

Malik Müftü states that “Syria adopted a strategy of power-balancing against Turkey. Syria’s developing relations with Armenia, Greece, and Iran were considered by Turkey as attempts to encircle it”²⁵⁸.

Altunışık and Tür explain that “... threat perception from Syria contributed to Turkey’s decision to sign a military agreement with Israel in April 1996, as both Turkey and Israel shared a common threat perception in relation to Syrian-sponsored ‘terrorist’ groups. Through this alignment, Turkey aimed not only to deter Syria but also to obtain Israeli military technology and to secure the support of the pro-Israeli lobby in Washington to counter the Armenian and Greek lobbies in the USA”²⁵⁹.

²⁵⁵ **Ibid**, 232.

²⁵⁶ **Ibid**, 233.

²⁵⁷ **Ibid**, 234.

²⁵⁸ Malik Mufti, “Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy”, **Middle East Journal**, vol. 52, no. 1 (1998): 34.

²⁵⁹ Altunışık, Tür, **ibid**, 235.

The alignment was a clear warning to Damascus. Ofra Bengio and Gencer Özcan add that “perceiving Israel as its arch-enemy, Syria felt threatened by the agreement, which also caused an uproar in the Arab world at large. Syrian Vice-President Abdal-Halim Khaddam characterized Turkish–Israeli relations as the greatest threat to Arabs since 1948”²⁶⁰. Raymond Hinnebush claims that “when Turkey and Jordan also began to develop their military relationship in the second half of the 1990s, the Asad regime’s sense of encirclement increased”²⁶¹.

All official contact with Syria was suspended during 1995-1997 because Syria did not expel the PKK leader Öcalan and continued to help militarily and logistically to PKK. Turkey reacted rigidly when it was reported that Öcalan entered Syria in March 1995. Abdullah Öztürk state that “Egyptian President Hosni Mubarek and Iranian Foreign Minister Kemal Kharazzi sought to mediate between the parties by means of shuttle diplomacy”²⁶². Afterwards, Syria began to take the Turkish threats more seriously and obliged to expel Öcalan. Öztürk indicates that “Assad informed Ankara that Damascus had already started to arrest PKK members and would extradite them, along with expelling Öcalan. The crisis was brought to a conclusion when Turkish Prime Minister Yılmaz announced that Öcalan had already been expelled from Damascus, and the Adana Accord was signed on October 20, 1998”²⁶³.

Relations with Syria until 2000s are mainly securitized and cooperation has not been observed. There is limited political and economic contact and the relationship is characterized by rivalry, aggression and enmity. As majority of the political actors at the state level directly affect the foreign policy decisions, it is important to examine the foreign making process from 2000s onwards in Turkey during JDP era and its reflections on relations with Syria. The relations with Syria changed course and deteriorated after Arab Spring.

²⁶⁰ Ofra Bengio, Gencer Özcan “Changing Relations: Turkish–Israeli–Arab Triangle”, **Perceptions**, vol. 5, no.1 (2000): 138.

²⁶¹ Raymond Hinnebush, “Globalization and Generational Change: Syrian Foreign Policy Between Regional Conflict and European Partnership”, **The Review of International Affairs**, vol. 3, no. 2 (2003): 199.

²⁶² Abdullah Öztürk, “Turkey’s Relations with Syria in the Context of the Kurdish Issue: 1980-2014(Department of International Relations, Middle East Technical University, December 2014): 40.

²⁶³ **Ibid**, 42.

In order to understand dynamics of the change in relations with Syria, it is important to briefly summarize what happened in Arab Spring, how it spread to Syria and led to civil war. It is also important to evaluate the political reactions Turkey gave during this Syrian crisis. The next part will briefly mention about the Arab Spring and its spread to Syria.

5.3 Arab Spring

Arab Spring is a wave of demonstrations and public unrest resulted from demand for democracy, political reforms and social justice. In this part, Arab Spring is briefly assessed to show how it spread to Syria and followed different path in Syria then other countries. It is a turning point because the balance in the region was challenged and relations with Syria changed dramatically after Arab Spring spread to Syria.

The Arab Spring started with Muhammed Bauzazi burning himself in Tunisia and spread other countries by triggering upcoming events. Stephan Rosiny states that “on 17 December 2010, a municipal inspector in Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid confiscated vegetable seller Mohammed Bouazizi’s cart because he did not have a vending license. His appeals to the powers that be were denied. This mixture of humiliation and powerlessness was apparently what drove him to the desperate act of publicly self-immolating in front of the local government building”²⁶⁴.

Arab Spring was the result of the demand for democracy, basic freedoms, economic justice, equal socio economic opportunities, rule of law and human rights. Most Arab regimes suffer from authoritarianism, legitimacy deficits, and the citizens are demanding to participate more fairly in political, economic and societal events and have a representation in a democratic system.

Sertif Demir and Carmen Rijnoveau indicate that “the general causes of uprisings are rooted in a common set of conditions: autocratic regimes, lack of representative institutions, flagrant inequities, corruption, poor living conditions, nepotism and exploitation of public resources by the ruling classes”²⁶⁵.

²⁶⁴ Stephan Rosiny, “The Arab Spring: Triggers, Dynamics and Prospects”, German Institute of Global and Area Studies”, no.1 (2012): 2

https://www.giga-hamburg.de/de/system/files/publications/gf_international_1201.pdf

²⁶⁵ Sertif Demir, Carmen Rijnoveau, “The Impact of the Syria Crisis on the Global and Regional Political Dynamics”, **Journal of Turkish World Studies**, vol.8, no.1 (2013):56.

People protested against authoritarianism, despotism, political repression since 2000, these protests have increasingly developed into transnational movements called Arab Spring and spread to other countries in the Middle East with distortive affects.

During Arab Spring, the first reaction that the governments gave was to suppress the insurgencies. Protestors were killed by security forces. The use of lethal forces against innocent people got reaction from all over the world.

The protests quickly reached the capital city of Tunis and spread to neighboring countries. In less than two months, Tunisia's Zine el-Abidin Ben Ali on 14 January 2011, and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak on 11 February 2011 were overthrown.

Arab Spring resulted in a change of regime in Tunisia and then Egypt. Toby Dodge states that "the uprisings against Gaddafi's regime triggered a military intervention by NATO that drove the Libyan leader and his entourage from power. Ali Abdullah Saleh finally relinquished his grip on power in Yemen. However, the ramifications of regime change for state-society relations in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya are still uncertain. Mubarak may be on trial, Gaddafi is dead and Ben Ali is currently enjoying the dubious pleasures of exile in Saudi Arabia. But the ruling elites they created, the state structures they built, the powerful secret services and crony capitalists they nurtured did not disappear when the despots were deposed"²⁶⁶.

At the beginning of 2011, protests and unrest broke out in almost every Arab country. El Hassane Aissa state that "starting with the Jasmine revolution in Tunisia, the shockwave swept through the area and threatened the stability of this oil rich region with repercussions felt internationally"²⁶⁷.

The hope that the autocratic rulers or authoritarian regimes would fall one another has not been realized so far. Since March 2011 autocratic rulers have been adapting to the new situation. In case of Syria, the government met the demonstrators' demands by promising reforms and increased use of force against protestors.

²⁶⁶ Toby Dodge, "Conclusion: the Middle East After the Arab Spring", 64.
http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/SR011/FINAL_LSE_IDEAS__ConclusionsTheMiddleEastAfterTheArabSpring_Dodge.pdf

²⁶⁷ El Hassane Aissa, "The Arab Spring: Causes, Consequences, and Implications", (United States Army War College, Strategy Research Project, 2012): 1.

Autocratic rulers have failed to meet the legitimate demands of the Arab people. These include political freedom, economic prosperity, equal social economic rights and human dignity.

Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud, Andrew Reynolds indicate that “Tunisians, who lit the torch of revolution in December 2010, now walk a precarious line between institutional reform and social violence. In Egypt, a fitful transition to democracy, marked by intense polarization between Islamists and their opponents, seems to have been stopped in its tracks by a military coup and followon strife. More than a year after the overthrow of Yemen’s dictator, that country has yet to hold multiparty elections for a new government. Meanwhile, violent militias and endemic state weakness threaten Libya’s democratic experiment”²⁶⁸.

Looking at the political change in the region after Arab Spring, it is hard to say that what is expected has been achieved up to now. The degree of progress accomplished so far, instability in the region, the possibility of sectarian conflict and the persistence of authoritarian structures has led to disillusionment.

The outcome of mass protests, the level of cohesion among protestors, the movement’s spontaneity and broadcasting protests with new media tools, and its leaderless nature initially surprised the regimes.

Syria is one of the countries that has been mostly affected by the upcoming events triggered by Arab Spring. However, Syria forms a special case with its own dynamics when compared with other countries that are influenced by the Arab Spring such as Libya. To understand the dynamics behind the civil war in Syria, and changing policy of Turkey considering its relations with Syria, it is crucial to analyze Syrian crisis and evaluate Turkish foreign policy directed during JDP era.

5.4 Changing Nature of Relations with Syria

Turkey and Syria are two neighboring countries that share historical and cultural assets. Turkey under the influence of zero problems with neighbors doctrine to spread its power in the region and to improve its economy, Syria with an aim to have an ally to aid its weak economy during a difficult decade of US-led international isolation, reengaged because of pragmatic and ideological reasons.

²⁶⁸ Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud, Andrew Reynolds, “Tracking the Arab Spring, Why the Modest Harvest?”, **Journal of Democracy**, vol. 24, no. 4, (2013): 29.

However, after Arab Spring, the relations changed course. In this part, relations with Syria are analyzed from the lens of constructivism to explain the changing course of the relations after Arab Spring.

To describe Turkish Syrian relations, Raymond Hinnebusch states that “in less than a decade, the two states went from the brink of war, engaged in a very realistic power struggle in the late nineties to amity, even alliance in the 2005-10 period, and then after 2011, regressed again to enmity”²⁶⁹.

Graham Fuller explains that “the relation between Turkey and Syria has historically been defined by tensions based on identity, territory, ideology and Cold War alignment, the Kurds, water and Israel”²⁷⁰. Szymon Ananich indicates that “Turkey’s policy towards the crisis in Syria can be divided into three stages: diplomacy, confrontation and defence”²⁷¹.

To understand the changing nature of Turkey’s relations with Syria and Turkish foreign policy during the Syrian crisis, it is important to look at the short history of Syria, its demographic structure and parameters of its relations with Turkey. As relations with Syria until 1990’s was analyzed in previous chapters, this chapter focuses on relations after 1990s until now.

Demographically, Syria is home to diverse religious and ethnic groups. Richard Adigbuo states that “the country’s largest group is ethnic Arabs (% 53) who follow Sunni Islam. Next to the Sunni Muslims are the Alawites that are about 12 percent of Syrian population, the Alawites are Shia’ Muslims. The Ethnic Kurds (%5) long oppressed in Syria, have taken up arms against the regime. Other groups are Greek Orthodox Christian (%10), Armenian Christian (%4), Arab Druze (%5), Arab Ismaeli (%2) and Turkmen, Circassian, Assyrian, and Jewish minorities”²⁷².

Syria has been ruled by Assad family and Alawite community has been employed in key positions of the government and the army since 1963. Because of the majority of the population consists of Arabs that follow Sunni Islam, Adigbuo

²⁶⁹ Raymond Hinnebusch, “The Study of Turkey Syrian Relations”, **Turkey- Syria Relations Between Enmity and Amity**, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch, Özlem Tür, (England: Ashgate, 2013): 1.

²⁷⁰ Graham Fuller, **The New Turkish Republic**, (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008): 93.

²⁷¹ Szymon Ananich, “Helpless and Lonely: Turkey’s Attitudede towards the War in Syria”, OSW Commentary, **Centre for Eastern Studies**, no.136 (2014): 2.

²⁷² Richard Adigbuo, “Cold War Resurgence: The Case of Syrian Uprising”, **IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science**, vol.19, no.8 (2014): 39.

claims that “the concentration of power in Assad family and Alawite community led to protests among the Sunni dominated rural areas, towns and cities”²⁷³. In addition to demand for democracy and basic freedoms, Adigbuo also implies that political power long held by Alawite elite has been challenged by Sunni Arab majority. Adigbuo claims that “the ethno-religious composition of Syria has given rise to sentiments of sectarianism”²⁷⁴.

The wave of unrest started in March 2011 in Syria. People protested against the government and demanded an end to the repressive acts of the regime of Bashar al-Assad, corruption on state level and asked for democratic reforms and rule of law. Richard Adigbuo mentions that “one of the major sparks of uprising in Syria occurred on March 6, 2011 when fifteen school children were arrested and tortured in the southern city of Dara‘a for painting anti-government graffiti on the walls of a school”²⁷⁵. People protested against the reaction of the government to the children and called on regime to put an end to widespread violence.

Instead of stopping the violence, the government ignored the demands and continued responding harshly to the protests. Adigbuo stresses that “this resulted in the death of six protesters whose funeral procession on March 7 attracted some 20.00 people”²⁷⁶. The number of protests increased when the government again responded to the protests by use of force. The civil war started and the armed opposition has taken the form of the Free Syrian Army.

The civil war in Syria is a tragedy with human rights abuse, destruction of lives, properties and violence exposed to innocent people. It is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time. Adigbuo declared that “there is no home in Syria without a missing father, a raped daughter, a detained young man or violated child”²⁷⁷. The civil war between the government and armed opposition forces led to the destruction of innocent people and the future remains uncertain for Syrians. “By January 2013 an estimated 120.000 people were believed to have died as a result of uprising and the number of Syrian refugees in bordering countries totals above two

²⁷³ **Ibid**, 39.

²⁷⁴ **Ibid**, 39.

²⁷⁵ **Ibid**, 41.

²⁷⁶ **Ibid**, 41.

²⁷⁷ **Ibid**, 41.

million”²⁷⁸. The UN Refugee Agency reported that “2 million Syrians have been killed. By 2016, 5 million Syrians had become refugees”²⁷⁹.

Binnur Balkan and Semih Tümen state that “according to the United Nations (UN) figures, the total number of Syrian refugees in Turkey has reached 1.6 million as of September 2014”²⁸⁰. Balkan and Tümen states that “the cities of origin and the corresponding refugee ratios among the entire population of refugees in Turkey are as follows: Aleppo (36 %), Idlep (21 %), Raqqa (11 %), Lattika (9 %), Hassakeh (5.4 %), Hama (7.5 %), and other provinces (10 %)”²⁸¹. This showed that Syrians have crossed the border to the accommodation camps constructed by the Turkish government. The UN Refugee Agency reported that Syrian refugees reached “2,5 million”²⁸².

Although there is an ongoing human tragedy in Syria, the United Nations Security Council has not taken any action to interfere in or reached a solution to restore the order in the country. Adigbuo stats that “on February 4, 2012, the hope for a United Security Council resolution was dashed when Russia and China vetoed the Western backed Arab resolution that called for the resignation of the Syrian President, Bashar Assad. This was repeated on July 19, 2012, when Russia and China again vetoed a United Nation Security Council resolution that threatened the Assad regime with sanctions if it would not end violence against the Syrian opposition groups”²⁸³.

There has not been any consensus about the steps that needs to be followed by international community during Syrian crisis. Global and regional powers have different agendas. Russia is against the idea of military intervention and regime change in Syria. While Russia has been advocating the Assad regime, USA, Turkey and European countries have been supporting regime change for a democratic transition and the security of the region.

Özlem Demirtas Bagdonas stresses that “the Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu asserted that the extensive cooperation between Turkey and Syria in the

²⁷⁸ **Ibid**, 41.

²⁷⁹ “Searching for Syria”, **The UN Refugee Agency**, <https://searchingforsyria.org/en/> [6.05.2017]

²⁸⁰ Binnur Balkan, Semih Tümen, “Immigration and prices: quasi-experimental evidence from Syrian refugees in Turkey”, **Springer**, (2016): 1.

²⁸¹ **Ibid** 658.

²⁸² Searching for Syria, **ibid**.

²⁸³ Adigbuo, **ibid**, 43.

last decade stood as the most striking example of the success of Turkey's policy of zero problems with neighbors and a model of progress for the rest of the region, as well as an indicator of Turkey's rising regional status. Nonetheless, the decade long rapprochement between Turkey and Syria ended following the Syrian government's refusal to cease its violent crackdown on the regime's opponents and Turkey's overt support for the Syrian opposition as of 2011²⁸⁴.

Ingrid Habets states that "the involvement of superpowers such as the US and Russia, and also the EU, supporting one or another faction in the civil war may complicate the process of ending the war and make it even more difficult to find a peaceful solution"²⁸⁵.

Syrian uprising has polarized the world into two camps. The group known as Friends of Syria Group gathered on to unite opposition and find a solution to the crisis. While the Friends of Syria Group has supported the regime change, Russia, China and Iran advocated the status quo in the Middle East, supported the maintenance of Assad regime by helping the current government to resist any regime change. Because of the two camps with different agendas, international community has not been able to reach a solution about the crisis in Syria yet or agreement about the steps that would be followed to end the crisis in Syria.

Adigbuo indicates that "on August 21, 2012, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov after meeting Chinese two diplomats warned the West against any unilateral action on Syria"²⁸⁶. This warning was again repeated on May 14, 2013 "when the Russian President Vladimir Putin warned against any measure that would further fuel the ongoing crisis in Syria and destabilize Arab Country"²⁸⁷.

Although international community had irreconcilable stands at the beginning of the crisis because of conflicting interests, as Syrian crisis has worsened, the United States and Russia has agreed to work together to find a solution for the civil war and to end the human tragedy. This is the basis for the Geneva Conference. The conference aims to bring the government and the opposition groups together to

²⁸⁴ Özlem Demirtas Bagdonas, "Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy on Syria: The AKP's Construction of a Great Power Identity and the Politics of Grandeur", **Turkish Studies**, vol.15, no.1 (2014):139.

²⁸⁵ Ingrid Habets, "Obstacles to a Syrian peace: the interference of interests", **European View**, (2016): 78.

²⁸⁶ Adigbuo, **ibid**, 45.

²⁸⁷ **Ibid**, 45.

discuss the process to end the conflict and transition for the democratic order in Syria. The Conference has not reached any solution to restore the order in the country yet.

Faith Olanrewaju and Segun Joshua state that “in early January 2013, Basher al Assad assured his loyalists that his regime would defeat the Syrian opposition and stability would be brought back to Syria”²⁸⁸.

As seen up to now, the crisis will not disappear without international involvement and it is likely to create more problems and carries the potential of sectarian conflict that will disturb the peace of the region. Turkey tried to internationalize the Syrian crisis however global actors did not approve the military action to end the crisis. Emel Parlar Dal explained “the Turkish approach as charging the West with the promotion of a democratic double standard”²⁸⁹.

Habets explains that “due to its strong security apparatus, the Assad regime has been able to hold on to power for much longer than its counterparts in the region. The opposition is fractured into many factions. Some receive support from the West, Russia and/or Turkey. Others have been rejected by one or more of these same three entities. Radical Islamist groups have arisen, and Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda have also contributed to the destabilisation. Finally, the chaos in the region has allowed IS to rise up and create fear, while conquering large swathes of territory”²⁹⁰. There has not been a unity between the opposition groups and their interaction with extreme radical Islamists groups brought uncertainty about the future of the Syria which is home to people with diverse ethnicities and religions.

Umut Korkut underlines that “Turkey has faced a more complex refugee problem since summer 2014 with the emergence of so-called the Islamic State (IS), as the Syrian civil war spilled into Iraq and engulfed the Kurdish areas in Syria bordering south-eastern Turkey”²⁹¹.

²⁸⁸ Faith Olanrewaju, Segun Joshua, “The Diplomatic Dimensions of the Syrian Conflict”, **Sage Publications**, vol.19, no.1 (2015): 47.

²⁸⁹ Emel Parlar Dal, “Assessing the EU’s and Turkey’s Democracy Promotion Policies in the Post Arab Spring era: Dynamics and Limitations of Joint EU-Turkey Cooperation in MENA”, **Ortadoğu Analiz**, vol 5, no. 59 (2013): 46.

²⁹⁰ Habets, **ibid**, 79.

²⁹¹ Umut Korkut, “Pragmatism, Moral Responsibility or Policy Change: the Syrian Refugee Crisis and

After uprisings in Libya, Syrian crisis was expected to take similar course. Turkey assumed that there would be an international intervention that would end the repressive nature of the regime by instituting democratic order. However, Syrian crisis did not follow the same course. The reason is that Syrian crisis has different dynamics than the crisis in Libya.

Adigbuo explains the reason by stating that Syria is too stable under the Baathist regime since 1963. Syria has maintained “a nationalistic foreign policy which is opposed to Western activities in the Arab world”²⁹² and people in Syria have also supported anti-Israeli West stand. Different from Libya, Syria has strong support of Hezbollah and Hamas. Adigbuo states that Syrian case is also special because “Syrians have a relatively young leader as distinct from the aging Ben Ali, Mubarak or Libya’s Gaddafi”²⁹³. Syria is considered more immune to the uprisings when compared Libya, Egypt and Tunisia.

The civil war in Syria, which has lasted since 2011, has become a significant test for the efficiency of Turkish foreign policy based on a new foreign policy orientation in Davutoğlu’s Strategic Debt. This new vision is ground on redefinition of Turkish identity by combining geographical assets of Turkey with historical values that underlines Turkey’s connection not only with the West but also with the East, Ottoman culture and Islam. The course of relations with Syria was repetitively constructed depending on the foreign policy vision of the political elites in Turkey.

Özlem Demirtas Bagdonas states that “Turkey’s discourse toward Syria went through several stages before 2011: Westernism/ anti-communism, anti-terrorism and partnership.” She explains Turkey’s changing stance toward Syria by “focusing on the construction of Turkey’s regional role and self-image during the crisis”²⁹⁴.

When JDP came to power in 2002, the party had a goal of a multidimensional and active foreign policy under the guidance of Ahmet Davutoğlu. Until he was appointed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2009, he worked as an advisor to the Prime Minister Erdoğan. Then he was appointed as a Prime Minister in 2014.

Selective Humanitarianism in the Turkish Refugee Regime”, **Comparative Migration Studies**, (2016): 3.

²⁹² Adigbuo, **ibid**, 41

²⁹³ **Ibid**, 41.

²⁹⁴ Özlem Demirtas Bagdonas, “Reading Turkey’s Foreign Policy on Syria: The AKP’s Construction of a Great Power Identity and the Politics of Grandeur”, **Turkish Studies**, vol.15, no.1 (2014):140.

According to Davutoğlu, Turkey's influence "is based on a critical equilibrium between conscience and power. In this equation, if a state has conscience but no power, it shows weakness. If it has power but no conscience, it becomes a tyranny. Our idea is for Turkey to be a compassionate and powerful state. One will be compassionate if one's conscience dictates where one should go and to whom one should reach, as can be seen from the examples of our aid to Somalia and Syrian refugees. At the same time, one will need to have power, so that one has the ability to reach where needed"²⁹⁵.

Özlem Demirtas Bagdonas claims that "The JDP government's demonization of the Assad regime and depiction of Turkey's moral responsibility toward the Syrian people served to constitute Turkey's great power role and assert Turkey's moral superiority vis-a-vis the other actors in the conflict. Turkey's policy of grandeur has been an integral element of Turkey's moralist and humanitarian, as well as national security discourse on the Syrian case"²⁹⁶.

JDP's new foreign policy vision regarding the Middle East and Turkey's approaches towards Syrian Crisis did not follow a linear pattern and Turkey changed its stand as the crisis deepened with destructive effects. While some scholars claim that Ahmet Davutoğlu's political approach has been completely new, the others have criticized that it is the continuation of previous policies with a new rhetoric and terms.

Öniş and Yılmaz claim that "there is considerable continuity in terms of foreign policy activism and a multilateral approach to policymaking during the JDP era. Yet at the same time, a certain discontinuity or rupture may be identified towards the middle of the first JDP government, signifying a shift from a commitment to deep Europeanization to loose Europeanization along with a parallel shift to what may be classified as soft Euro-Asianism"²⁹⁷.

Ekrem Başer states that "there has been a change in Turkey's foreign policy roles since the JDP came to power in 2002, this change is predominantly about

²⁹⁵ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's humanitarian diplomacy: objectives, challenges and prospects", **Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity**, vol.41, no.6 (2013): 867.

²⁹⁶ Özlem Demirtas Bagdonas, "Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy on Syria: The AKP's Construction of a Great Power Identity and the Politics of Grandeur", **Turkish Studies**, vol.15, no.1 (2014):140.

²⁹⁷ Ziya Öniş, Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and EuroAsianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era", **Turkish Studies**, vol. 10, no. 1, (2009): 78.

Turkey's level of activism in the international arena, as deemed fitting by the JDP foreign policy elite. From a long-term perspective, it is difficult to label this change as a rupture, or a transformation"²⁹⁸.

Cenk Saraçoğlu and Özhan Demirkol states that "throughout modern history, it has been commonplace for foreign policy to contribute to the construction of national identity and to the perpetuation of nationalism by addressing an other or outside against which the interests of nations are to be protected"²⁹⁹. After 2011, Turkey addressed Syria as the other against which the stability and security of the region need to be protected.

When we analyze JDP's new foreign policy vision and its implementation on Syrian crisis, there is compatibility between the formulation and execution of the new foreign policy vision. JDP has been flexible to take a pragmatist stand by changing its attitude according to the progress in Syrian crisis.

In the party program of JDP, foreign policy was formulated to be based on "multiple axes and reciprocal interests so as to establish flexible relations with power centers"³⁰⁰. Hasret Dikici Bilgin explains that beginning of the JDP era "the importance of relations with the EU was underlined, and improving relations with the US, Russian, Central Asia and the Caucasus was mentioned to be among the foreign policy targets. A noticeable approach in the party program in terms of foreign policy is the repeated emphasis on the leadership role for Turkey in conflict and crisis resolution, as well as regional initiatives, ... taking an active role in peace building in the Middle East, and increasing efforts to improve Turkey's position in European Security and Defense Concept (ESDC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in the Black Sea region, Central Asia and the Caucasus were identified as key foreign policy aims"³⁰¹. In parallel to Turkish position explained in party program and its role in peace building in the Middle East, Turkey took an active part in Syrian crisis.

²⁹⁸ Ekrem T. Başer, "Shift-of-axis in Turkish Foreign Policy: Turkish National Role Conceptions Before and During AKP Rule", **Turkish Studies**, vol.16, no.3 (2015): 305.

²⁹⁹ Cenk Saraçoğlu, Özhan Demirkol, "Nationalism and Foreign Policy Discourse in Turkey Under the AKP Rule: Geography, History and National Identity, **British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies**, vol.42, no.3 (2015):302.

³⁰⁰ "AKP's Party Program" (AK Parti Programı) 14 August 2001, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/>, [05.04.2017].

³⁰¹ Hasret Dikici Bilgin, "Foreign Policy Orientation of Turkey's Pro-Islamist Parties: A Comparative Study of the AKP and Refah", **Turkish Studies**, vol.9, no:3, 412.

Öniş and Yılmaz describe the golden years of the JDP as the period from November 2002 until the formal opening of EU accession negotiations in October 2005. They claim that “the positive effects of the deep Europeanization process manifested itself in three interrelated and mutually supporting areas. First, this was one of the successful periods of economic growth in recent Turkish economic history. The EU anchor together with IMF-induced reforms were instrumental in generating monetary and fiscal discipline as well as important regulatory reforms, which in turn contributed to the achievement of single-digit inflation and high rates of economic growth...Second, the golden age was characterized by major reforms on the democratization front. Turkey took giant steps in the direction of democratic consolidation through a series of major reforms, building upon the initiatives of the earlier administrations (involving such key steps as eliminating the death penalty) and dealing with its perennial Kurdish problems through a series of democratic openings that involved the extension of cultural and language rights to its citizens of Kurdish origin. The third area affected Europeanization in the conduct of foreign policy³⁰².

Saraçoğlu and Demirkol state that “JDP has reformulated the notions of nation, national history, national homeland and national interest and try to demonstrate the role foreign policy has played in these reformulations.”³⁰³ They further argue that “Islam is no longer a cultural component of Turkishness, but has rather become an independent identity in itself, and is no longer necessarily derived from or instrumentalized for the idea of Turkishness”³⁰⁴.

When analyzing JDP’s ideology Saraçoğlu and Demirkol assert that “the qualitative and the critical difference between JDP’s nationalism and the Turkish-Islamic synthesis is that the main claim of the latter was that Turkishness and Islam cannot be listed in order of priority and cannot be treated as separate identities. As the word ‘synthesis’ itself suggests, their major goal was to strengthen the symbolic power and popular appeal of Turkishness by blending it with Islamic values. This is not the case for JDP’s nationalism, however, since, as stated above, this party conceives Islam and Muslimhood as the core and integral element of the national

³⁰² Öniş, Yılmaz, *ibid*, 78.

³⁰³ Saraçoğlu, *ibid*, 303.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 307.

identity, which is not necessarily synthesized or combined with the idea of Turkishness”³⁰⁵.

By the time this thesis was written, the war in Syria was evolving in a direction that is not favorable for the region. Emile Hokayem states that “the growth of actors with local and transnational agendas and resources has fragmented both the regime and the rebellion; they have lost coherence in the process, making a settlement with widespread regional support even more difficult to reach and implement”³⁰⁶.

This chapter aims at analyzing Turkish foreign policy in Syria based on concepts about Turkish state identity and ideology formulated during JDP era, foreign policy strategies described in Strategic Debt and the party program of JDP. When looked at in a detailed way, it is observed that Turkey focused on different foreign policy approaches depending on historical context and adopted a pragmatic stand when the circumstances changed. When JDP came to power, the foreign policy direction was characterized by democratization in EU context and dialogue with all parties by using soft power assets of Turkey. After the consolidation of power, JDP became more assertive in his policies and with Syrian crisis Turkey played the role of supporter of democracy as an order instating country in the Middle East.

In the next part, there will an analysis of the characteristics of Syrian crisis and an evaluation of a new Turkish foreign policy vision by indicating whether it realized its targets and has been effective by taking constructivist ontology into consideration.

5.5 Syrian Crisis from March 2011 to the Present Day

Syria is the country that has been mostly affected by the upcoming events triggered by Arab Spring and in its sixth year, the civil war has continued with destructive effects, humanitarian crisis and a future that is uncertain.

Syria forms a special case with its own dynamics when compared with other countries that are influenced by the Arab Spring such as Libya. In this part, Syria and its internal dynamics are discussed to understand how the government still holds the

³⁰⁵ **Ibid**, 307.

³⁰⁶ Emile Hokayem, “Iran, the Gulf States and the Syrian Civil War”, **Middle Eastern Security**, (2014): 41.

power until today and to see the intersecting interests of both regional and global powers that deteriorated the crisis even more.

Syria is an important country that has been at the center of regional politics and has features that are different from other Arab countries. According to Demir and Rijnoveau, these features such as “the rigid state structure based on Nusayri minority, a continued anti US and Israeli policy, close relations with Russia and Iran and its profound influence on Lebanon”³⁰⁷ give the answer why the Syrian case is special and the example of how an authoritarian political leader, Basher el Assad has been able to hold on to power despite popular resistance and international reactions.

Syria has been ruled by Assad family for a long time. Demir and Rijnoveau state that it is generally agreed that “the repressive years of management by the Baath regime through secret police in Syria has established the rooted and well set governance that can not be overthrown with internal dynamics”³⁰⁸.

Although there are some similarities between Syria and other Arab Spring countries, some features are only peculiar to Syria. Syria is a country which has connections with regional powers such as Iran, and global power such as Russia and China and non state actors. It has a rigid and repressive state structure. The Syrian army is well equipped while the opposition arms are heterogeneous, are not united and linked with radical Islamic groups.

In Syria, the new era of Bashar al Assad was expected to be more democratic and less authoritarian. When Hafız Assad died, no one expected Bashar al Assad to be the president. But when his older brother died in a car accident, Bashar Assad was called. After coming to power, Bashar al Assad made some reforms.

Demir and Rijnoveau state that “coming to power in 2002, ...implemented neoliberal economic policies”³⁰⁹. Demir and Rijnoveau add that Bashar al Assad removed the state of emergency and returned the rights of citizenship. However, these reforms were found insufficient. There was an increasing public demand for equal human rights, basic freedoms and socio economic equality but they were left unanswered.

According to Hüseyin Bağcı and Nilhan Açıkalın, Bashar al Assad did not expect uprisings to spread over the country “because the young population which has

³⁰⁷ **Ibid**, 57.

³⁰⁸ **Ibid**, 57.

³⁰⁹ **Ibid**, 57.

been the backbone of uprisings did not become popular in Syria at first”³¹⁰. The reason why uprisings in Syria did not become popular initially is that “the economic gap between the ruling elite class and poor young mass in Syria is not as much great as in other Arab countries”³¹¹. This is one of the reasons that made Syrian case special.

Another reason why protests were not expected against the government in Syria is that after Hama Massacre which was a regime reaction to uprisings in 1981, any insurgence or protests against the regime would not be anticipated because it would be suppressed. Rigid state structure prevented uprisings and took strict measures against any protests.

Demir and Rijnoveau highlight that “the autocratic Baath Party has absorbed Syrian nationalism and socialism through secular society in which all various groups have enjoyed much of religious and sectarian differences”³¹². Syria has a secular society in which different religious and ethnic groups has coexisted. The Assad regime has also the support of Christians, Dourzhis which also makes uprisings in Syria surprising and unexpected when compared with other countries affected by Arab Spring.

Demir and Rijnoveau add that “during its decades of rule, the Assad family developed a strong political safety net by firmly integrating the military into the regime, the Syrian regime embraced the labor movement and villager’s alliances”³¹³. However, they state that Assad has lost his main supporters consist of labor and villagers “as a result of cuts in fuel subsidies and new laws restricting the sale of tobacco their primary crop for centuries”³¹⁴.

It is generally claimed that there is dissatisfaction about the position of different sects in the Syria. Majority of people in Syria belongs to the Sunni sect while the Alawite forms minority but has key positions in the government and the army. Although opposition forces are stated to mainly belong to the Sunni sect of Islam, Demir and Rijnoveau claims that “after Sunni uprising and the massacre of

³¹⁰ Hüseyin Bağcı, Nilhan Açıkalın, “From Chaos to Cosmos: Strategic Debt and Turkish Foreign Policy in Syria” **Chaos, Complexity and Leadership**, eds. Ş.Ş Erçetin, S. Banerjee (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015): 15.

³¹¹ Demir, Rijnoveau, *ibid*, 58.

³¹² *Ibid*, 58.

³¹³ *Ibid*, 58.

³¹⁴ *Ibid*, 58.

Muslim Brotherhood by Syrian forces in 1982, Sunnis have been incorporated into governance and more Islamists approaches have been embraced”³¹⁵. There is a possibility of sectarian conflict in Syria and the course of events followed a different path by the emergence of radical terrorist organization, ISIS, having dramatic consequences for the region and leading to a human tragedy.

When we looked at the course of conflict in Syria, people of Syria expressed their democratic demands through nonviolent means in the beginning. They protested against corruption, state repression, unemployment and lack of basic freedoms. These demands were left unanswered and the government suppressed the opposition harshly.

Demir and Rijnoveau state that “starting summer of 2011, religious groups supported by Saudi Arabia, Libya and Qatar deliberately began to protest against the Assad regime”³¹⁶. Syrian National Council supported by Muslim Brotherhood was formed and the military power, the Free Syrian Army was constituted to oust Assad regime. The regime used lethal forces against the demonstrators. This raised negative feelings and anti-Bashar views around the world.

It is very striking that when Syrian uprisings started in March 2011, relations between Turkey and Syria were better than any previous periods. Demir and Rijnoveau claim that “relations with Syria epitomized the very principles on which the new Turkish foreign policy was based, a combination of economic interdependence and cultural affinity with no explicit agenda for democracy promotion”³¹⁷.

Turkey and Syria improved bilateral relations and made cooperation in many areas between 2002-2011. Social and cultural interaction was better than any previous periods. But it changed its course when the demand for reforms was left unanswered and the regime continued using lethal forces against demonstrators. The relations showed deterioration from 2011 onwards to an observable degree.

In the initial phase of the crisis in Syria, Turkey demanded political and economic reforms from Assad, to put an end to use of violence against citizens and to have better relations with opposition groups. However, Syria was slow on reform

³¹⁵ **Ibid**, 58.

³¹⁶ **Ibid**, 58.

³¹⁷ **Ibid**, 61.

making and did not put an end to use of violence against citizens. In March 2011, protests against government spread to all regions of Syria. Turkey's stand against the crisis started to change when the regime did not make reforms and stop the violence against its citizens.

Özlem Bagdonas asserts that “the official discourse also involved juxtaposing the rights of the Syrian citizens to the inhumane acts of a single person. Assad became the personification of the unacceptable, illegal and dangerous acts of the regime in being defined as heading towards his father's record of killing, breaking the promises he had made to his citizens, Turkey, and the international community, and posing a threat to regional security with the chemical weapons at his disposal”³¹⁸.

When the government did not put an end to use force against protesters and implement reforms, Turkey stood against repressive nature of the government, crimes against humanity. Turkey supported a democratic order in the region and the legitimate demands of the Syrians.

As a neighbor of Syria, Turkey is the country that is most affected by the civil war in Syria and applied new foreign policy approaches and activism during the conflict. In April 2011, Ahmet Davutoğlu visited Syria. Bağcı and Açıkalın state that Davutoğlu “had three suggestions which were abolishment of state of emergency, giving national identity to Kurdish population and preventing any military intervention in the protests”³¹⁹. Davutoğlu proposed that Turkey could be a mediator between the opposition and the government as a result of the friendly and improving relationship with Syria.

According to Hüseyin Bağcı and Nilhan Açıkalın, Erdoğan, as a friend of Bashar al-Assad “announced that he would talk with Assad and counseled him on implementation of social, economic, and political reforms while offering Turkish help to achieve the changes. Erdoğan hoped that his close friendship could be effective in the regional change”³²⁰. Despite Turkey's attempts to help Syria go through the reform process, the government was reluctant to carry out any reforms.

³¹⁸ Özlem Demirtas Bagdonas, “Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy on Syria: The AKP's Construction of a Great Power Identity and the Politics of Grandeur”, *Turkish Studies*, vol.15, no.1 (2014): 145.

³¹⁹ Bağcı, Açıkalın, *ibid*, 15.

³²⁰ *Ibid*, 19.

Turkey believed that Turkey's proactive policies, improving and friendly relations with Syria in the last years were enough to convince Assad to implement reforms and stop state violence. However, demand for reforms was left unanswered by Bashar al-Assad.

Following the deterioration of the relations with Syria and the government's use of force against its citizens, Turkey's stand against the crisis and rhetoric of political elites changed rigorously and foreign policy was developed accordingly. There was a change of tone in Turkish political leaders' rhetoric after November 2011.

Burch Jonathan mentions about the warning of Erdoğan to Assad that is "without spilling any more blood, without causing any more injustice for the sake of peace for the people, for the country and for the region, you should finally step down"³²¹.

When the government did not step down, Free Syrian Army was formed in June and Davutoğlu visited Damascus in August 2011. According to Bağcı and Açıkalın "they agreed on a fourteen-point reform road map which is about reform schedule and the action plan for the Syrian government"³²².

However, Syria was slow on reform making. Norooz Erfaun states that "the Syrian regime under Bashar al-Assad resorted to violence against the protesters and many foreign journalists were banned from Syria. After several weeks, the Syrian regime adopted a harsher strategy and bombarded Deraa, the city where the protests broke out, and made the rebels withdraw. In 2012, the growing unrest reached Damascus, the capital city, and Aleppo and the risk of a full-fledged civil war became a reality for Syrians"³²³.

Syrian crisis has spilt the international community in two pillars. While Turkey, USA, France, Britain and other EU countries, the Arab League, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have supported regime change as solution for ending the crisis and

³²¹ Burch Jonathan, "Turkey tells Syria's Assad: Step Down", **Reuters**, 22 November 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-idUSL5E7MD0GZ20111122>. [01.02.2017]

³²² Bağcı, Açıkalın, **Ibid**, 20.

³²³ Norooz Erfaun, "Responsibility Protect and Its Applicability in Libya and Syria", **ICL Journal**, Österreich, 31, https://www.icljournal.com/download/1d60bf91da3f98e153088f67d3676e5a/ICL_Thesis_Vol_9_3_15.pdf [09.05.2015]

answering democratic demands of people of Syria, Russia, Iran and China have supported the Assad regime and statusquo in the Middle East.

Because of the split in international community, there has not been any consensus to impose decisions to end the crisis. Erfaun states that, “Syria has become a regional and international battlefield with various groups of very different ideologies involved in a multi-layered battleground”³²⁴.

When demands were left unanswered by the regime and the government did not stop violence, Turkey started to search support from United Nations, NATO and United States on 13 August. It was another turning point for Turkish foreign policy and Turkey’s stand against Syrian crisis because the crisis was internationalized by this attempt. Bağcı and Açıkalın state that “there was UNSC meeting in October 2011 and it could not draft any imposing decisions due to the Russia and China veto”³²⁵.

The government used force against protestors and opposition groups in Hama in 2012. Bağcı and Açıkalın further add that “UNSC meeting gathered for the second time with two vetoes but the UNSC announced that they would agree on Arab League decisions about Syria”³²⁶.

Doğan Ertuğrul highlights that between March 2011 and May 2012, Turkey’s overall Syrian policy can be separated into three periods: “pressure on the Bashar al Assad government for constitutional reform, attempts at unifying dissidents groups under a single roof and promoting international sanctions, a return to efforts towards a UN based solution”³²⁷.

When Assad regime did not answer the calls for reform, oppositions groups were organized under a body. Demir and Rijnoveau adds that “Syrian National Council has not enthusiastically embraced all opponents and moreover due to its fractured structure as well as possible connection to al Qaida, it was thought that it

³²⁴ **Ibid**, 32.

³²⁵ Bağcı, Açıkalın, **ibid**, 20.

³²⁶ **Ibid**, 20.

³²⁷ Doğan Ertuğrul, “A test for Turkish Foreign Policy: The Syria Crisis” **Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation**, http://tesev.org.tr/wpcontent/uploads/2015/11/A_Test_For_Turkeys_Foreign_Policy_The_Syria_Crisis.pdf [12.05.2016].

was necessary to redesign opposition by bringing together the various political and military opponents of the regime”³²⁸.

Since June 2012, Turkey and Syria relations deteriorated quickly. Bağcı and Açıkalın explain that “Turkey requested consultations under article four of NATO’s founding Washington treaty” ³²⁹. Turkey’s request for consultation was another important step to internationalize the Syrian crisis and called for international effort to find a solution to the crisis in Syria and its spread to the neighboring countries.

Turkish activism in Syrian crisis and its efforts to find a solution has direct influence on Turkish security. The number of terrorist attacks has increased since the civil war started. Reyhanlı bombing happened in May 2013. Reyhanlı bombing is one of the bloodiest terrorist attacks of the country, killing 51 people. Many innocent people who lived in Reyhanlı, a town near the Syrian border, died.

According to Ziya Öniş, “the attack on Reyhanlı, home to thousands of Syrian refugees, and gathering point for rebels fighting to topple President al-Assad amplified the fears that the Syrian conflict had moved to Turkey”³³⁰.

From June 2012 to May 2013 when Reyhanlı bombing happened, Turkey’s insistence on US or NATO to intervene in Syria became the priority of Turkey’s agenda however, there was not any intervention even for humanitarian reasons in Syria and terrorist attacks killed many people in Turkey.

Bağcı and Açıkalın state that “Davutoğlu even blamed the world’s inaction on the Syrian conflict for the barbarian act of terrorism that claimed the dozens of lives near the border”³³¹. Insecurity is still a problem in Turkey not only in the cities near the Syrian border but also in the capital Ankara and in big cities such as İstanbul because of the terrorist acts of radical Islamic groups such as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) targeting civilians in Turkey.

After Reyhanlı bombing, it was claimed that the regime used chemical weapons attack against civilians around Damascus. Russia came up with a proposal for Syria “to put its chemical weapons stockpiles under international control and then

³²⁸ Demir, Rijnoveau, *ibid*, 59.

³²⁹ Bağcı, Açıkalın, *ibid*, 20.

³³⁰ Öniş Ziya, “Turkey and The Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence In A Turbulent Middle East” *Mediterranean Politics*, vol.19, no.2 (2015):13.

³³¹ Bağcı, Açıkalın, *ibid*, 20.

have them destroyed by 30 June of 2014”³³². The Syrian government accepted the Russian proposal. Syrian government’s usage of chemical weapons on 21 August of 2013 invoked harsh criticism but the international community did not intervene even using chemical weapons was considered as the red line.

Bağcı and Açıkalın indicate that Davutoğlu called “on the international community in this situation where the red line was crossed long ago to intervene as soon as possible”³³³. But there was no intervention because international community chose to pursue diplomacy to deal with Assad regime and learned from the previous examples that there was no guarantee of the improvement after possible intervention. USA and NATO learned their lessons after Iraq and Libya intervention. They did not want to involve in a crisis beyond their borders and selective engagement was on their agenda.

Bağcı and Açıkalın claim that “Geneva meeting and developments showed that Turkey did not find any support for international intervention”³³⁴. It can be inferred that Turkey did not get the support of international community in its proactive Syrian policy. Even US and Russia which are on different camps about Syria agreed on destruction of chemical weapons and to push Islamic State out of Raqqa.

Lavrow stated that “we are ready to coordinate our actions with the Americans, because Raqqa is in the eastern part of Syria, and the American coalition is mainly ... acting there”³³⁵. Although Turkey played an assertive role in Syrian crisis, Russia’s role and influence directed the affairs in Syrian crisis.

Although Turkey pursued an active diplomacy and foreign policy as an order instituting country in the region according to JDP’s new foreign policy approaches, Öniş states that “a cursory examination of the recent peace initiatives to try to resolve

³³² ‘Viewpoints: Can Russia’s chemical weapons plan for Syria work?’ **BBC News**, 12 September 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-24045429> [11.08.2016].

³³³ Bağcı, Açıkalın, **ibid**, 20.

³³⁴ **Ibid**, 21.

³³⁵ “Russia ready to Cooperate with US led coalition in fight for Syria’s Raqqa:Interfax” **Reuters**, 14 March 2016, <http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCAKCN0WG0IC> [05.08.2016]

the Syrian crisis in the context of the ongoing Geneva talks points towards the United States and Russia as key actors, with Turkey occupying a marginal role”³³⁶.

There are outcomes of Turkish activism in Syrian conflict. Assad regime gave reaction to Turkish involvement in Syrian crisis. Demir and Rijnoveau state that “the Assad regime has painted Turkey as trying to meddle in Arab affairs with a Sunni neo Ottomanist agenda”³³⁷. Assad reactions to Turkey’s Syria policy were hostile because Assad used Kurdish issue against Turkey once more again.

In June 2012, a Turkish aircraft was shot down by Syrian missile. The shells of Syrian artillery killed Turkish citizens in cities in Syrian border. Demir and Rijnoveau state that “Turkey demanded from NATO the deployment of Patriot missile and early warning system at Syrian border to prevent any attack from Syria. Turkey started to control all military and civilian flights that transit its air space as to detect those carrying military equipment and weapons to Syria”³³⁸.

Demir and Rijnoveau point that as the relations deteriorated and the security of Turkey was challenged, “Turkish government also received a mandate from the parliament to station troops abroad if necessary for responding to Syria’s attack”³³⁹.

Assad used Kurdish issue as a leverage and response to Turkey’s demand for regime change. The regime allowed some parts of northern region to be under the control of Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) by creating Kurdish issue at its border. PYD is considered a terrorist organization by Turkey and it has connection with Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) also a terrorist organization that constitutes red line for Turkish security and integrity.

By allowing the control of PYD, Assad opened way for the possible reestablishment of PKK terrorist groups’ camps in Syria. Demir and Rijnoveau claims that “from refugee crisis to the treat of violent spillovers, possibly involving armed jihadist groups, Ankara faces a growing security challenge from this quarter”³⁴⁰.

³³⁶ Öniş Ziya, “Turkey and The Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence in a Turbulent Middle East” **Mediterranean Politics**, vol.19, no.2, (December 2015):9
http://88.255.97.25/reserve/resfall14_15/Intl525_Syilmaz/week11.pdf [26.05.2016]

³³⁷ Demir, Rijnoveau, **ibid**, 63.

³³⁸ **Ibid**, 63.

³³⁹ **Ibid**, 63.

³⁴⁰ **Ibid**, 64.

Turkey has engaged in Syrian crisis by pursuing its new foreign policy vision that suggests a proactive and strategic interference. As a result, there has been insecurity in the bordering cities and an increase in the number of terrorist attacks targeted civilians in the country. Ankara, the capital witnessed deadliest bombings. Don Melvin mentions that “two powerful bombs exploded at a peace rally near the main train station in Ankara, killing at least 95 people and wounding 246 others in the deadliest attack in the Turkish capital in recent memory on 10 October 2015. Suspicion immediately fell on either the ISIS terrorist group or Kurdish separatists in Turkey”³⁴¹.

A car bomb exploded in Güven Park in the Kizilay district, “a key transport hub and commercial area, killing 32 people and wounding more than 100”³⁴². Growing insecurity in the country and increase in the number of terrorists attacks is the spill over effect of Turkey’s involvement in Syrian crisis.

Faith Olanrewaju and Segun Joshua state that “ISIS is likely to engage in gross abuse of human rights and ensure the insecurity of western and anti-Islamic states. ISIS could attempt to engage in genocide of Alawite population and even some of the moderate Islamist rebel groups. Religious minorities such as Christians and Yazidis would also feel threatened on the basis of their faith”³⁴³.

Turkey had more intensified relations with Syria. The crisis in Syria affected Turkey more than any country in the region. There was an improving relationship between Turkey and Syria before the uprisings. During JDP’s era, two countries abolished visa regimes. Economic and diplomatic ties and improved cultural relations with Syria make the situation more complicated. With the outbreak of crisis and Turkey’s support for the opposition groups, Demir and Rijnoveau state that “2,5 billion-dollar foreign trade with Syria, one billion dollar revenue from Syrian tourists has also been cut off. Approximately 107.00 Turkish trucks have lost travel ability through the cheapest route annually”³⁴⁴.

³⁴¹ Don Melvin, “At Least 95 Killed in Twin Bombings Near Train Station in Turkey’s Capital”, CNN, 11 October 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/10/10/middleeast/turkey-ankara-bomb-blast/> [05.06.2016]

³⁴² “Turkey Explosion: Ankara Car Bomb Kills at Least 32”, BBC, 13 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35798517> [15.03.2017]

³⁴³ Faith Olanrewaju, Segun Joshua, “The Diplomatic Dimensions of the Syrian Conflict”, Sage Publications, vol.19, no.1 (2015): 59.

³⁴⁴ Demir,Rijnovea, *ibid*, 63.

“From April 2011 when Syrians first started to come in until January 2013, no record was kept since it was believed that they would soon return back”³⁴⁵. According to AFAD sources “there are 270,000 refugees in 25 camps located in 10 border provinces; ten times as much as this are out of camps, mainly in such border provinces as Urfa, Hatay and Gaziantep where they stay with their relatives or just anywhere, trying to survive”³⁴⁶.

Recently, Turkey has pursued more active and assertive foreign policy in Syria that can be considered as a deviation from traditional Turkish foreign policy. The conflict in Syria enters its sixth year and a political solution has not been found. Human rights violations committed by the regime and the opposition, millions of people that migrated and poor living standard of migrants are main concerns for Turkey. Despite crimes committed against humanity, there has not been any international action or solution found to end the conflict up till today.

Turkey has ethical concerns for the Syrian people and prioritized humanitarian reasons over economic relations. Although Turkey has prioritized humanitarian concerns for the people of Syria; opened borders for the refugees, Turkey has a limited capacity to find a possible settlement for the crisis and end violence in Syrian crisis. The crisis still goes on and Turkey has not found any international support for the intervention in Syria. US, Russia and EU have tended to find more diplomatic way of solutions rather than any military action. Turkey’s capacity hosting increasing number of refugees and their legal and social adaptation in Turkish society is still a problem.

Özden Zeynep Oktav and Aycaan Çelikaksoy explain the “challenges to Turkey’s response to the Syrian refugee crisis. The first can be described as the... nature of Turkey’s bifurcated diplomatic posture. Even though Ankara has adhered to the EU directive to provide temporary protection, it has also opposed any oversight of its work by the international community. The second factor is the unevenness of Turkey’s open door policy at the operational level. Specifically, while Ankara has indeed provided safe haven and refuge to hundreds of thousands of Syrian civilians, it has also reportedly allowed its Syrian border to become a jihadist

³⁴⁵ “War, Migration and Health; Experience of Turkey”, **Turkish Medical Association Publications**, 8 http://www.ttb.org.tr/kutuphane/siginmacilar_rpr_en.pdf [12.12.2016]

³⁴⁶ **Ibid**, 8.

highway that has enabled thousands of international Sunni terrorists to travel to Syria. Finally, Turkey has struggled to gain international support for its response...As the number of Syrian refugees has increased with each passing day, Turkey has struggled to preserve its own international interests and has blamed the international community for its feelings of isolation”³⁴⁷.

It is seen that international community chose to observe the events in the region and did not engage militarily. USA chose not to involve in Syria after Iraq and Afghanistan disappointments. USA was not willing to intervene in Syria even after the red line about the usage of chemical weapons was crossed by Syrian government.

When looked at from constructivist point of view, it can be stated that Syria which was the former friend that Turkey had favorable relations with and similar state identities transformed into a country that does not share the same values with Turkey after subjective interactions. Perceptions towards Syria have changed and its reflections have been seen in Turkish foreign policy conducted by the elites of JDP.

Demir and Rijnoveau claim that “once a close ally, and a key piece in its strategic setting, Syria became the great challenge that Ankara needs to face in order to preserve its leading role and regional posture and avoid the emergence of a counterweight to its regional preeminence”³⁴⁸.

There is no doubt that during JDP era, there has been an activism in Turkish foreign policy based on reformulated Turkish state identity and formation of allies and enemies accordingly. Demir and Rijnoveau summarize JDP’s stand against Syria as follows: “Turkish action to date has involved taking a clear stance against the Syrian regime, housing and supporting the opposition, welcoming refugees, helping to build an international coalition, and working to provide humanitarian assistance”³⁴⁹.

Turkey has supported the regime change and chosen not to be an observer but to be an active player in Syria when the human rights violations the government inflicted on its citizens continued. Under new foreign policy activism, Assad’s

³⁴⁷ Özden Zeynep Oktav, Aycan Çelikaksoy, “The Syrian Refugee Challenge and Turkey’s Quest for Normative Power in the Middle East”, *International Journal*, vol.70, no.3 (2015): 409.

³⁴⁸ Demir, Rijnoveau, *ibid*, 64.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 63.

removal in Syria would increase Turkish regional and political prestige as well as its credibility as the leading nation and its order instituting capacity in the Middle East.

The increasing prestige would make easier to manage the Kurdish problem in the neighboring region that poses a threat to Turkish security. Demir and Rijnoveau states that “changing the power distribution by weakening Iran Syrian axis would enhance Ankara’s influence in shaping the future of a new Middle East”³⁵⁰.

From the economic perspective, the end of Assad regime would decrease the financial burden that resulted from the flow of Syrian refugees in Turkey. According to Demir and Rijnoveau “Turkey could increase its regional leading standing through building the Sunni axis with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, countries that share similar anxieties towards the Iranian growing influence”³⁵¹. The room of maneuver or an area of influence in the Middle East would expand.

Turkey’s stance during the Syrian crisis suggests more active and assertive Turkish foreign policy based on an identity reformulated by the elites of JDP as Turkish, Muslim and having the Ottoman roots. During Syrian Crisis, Turkey has redefined its power parameters according to its unique identity that is characterized by its geography and history. Turkey has conducted proactive foreign policy and supported the rights of Syrians by standing against the Assad for humanitarian reasons and democratic order in the region.

³⁵⁰ **Ibid**, 65.

³⁵¹ **Ibid**, 65.

6. SYRIA AS A DIFFICULT CASE OF CURRENT TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

In Middle East, it is very risky to involve in the domestic politics of individual states. Global and regional powers have different agendas and relations are connected with each other. Political change in one country easily affects the other countries in the region. Crisis in Syria contains risks and involvement in crisis increases the possible negative outcomes even interference has the concerns about humanitarian reasons.

After rising to power, JDP's foreign policy approaches have reflections on the relations with Syria. Although there was a good relationship between the Syria and Turkey before the crisis, the course of the relations dramatically changed and foreign policy was reformulated accordingly.

JDP has tried to redesign Turkey's foreign relations mainly by supporting closer relations with neighboring countries, especially those that had been parts of the Ottoman Empire. By using soft instruments, like economic relations and cultural assets, JDP tried to improve relations with countries that share common history and cultural traits. Syria is the country that JDP has applied its foreign policy vision more than any other. In this chapter, it is discussed whether Turkish new foreign policy activism directed by political elites of JDP proved to be successful and reached the desired targets or outcomes.

JDP's main aim was to turn Turkey's security centered foreign policy to a more active one characterized by economic and cultural cooperation and complemented by instruments of soft power. At the center of this approach lay the Middle East, the region with which JDP politicians have historically identified Turkish state identity.

Stemming from the National Outlook (Milli Görüş) Movement, the JDP continued to pay close attention to the Middle Eastern politics. Within this perspective, the JDP government's relations with Syria were marked by a level of

cooperation and closeness. Its concrete achievements include the lifting of visa requirements, increasing trade, commercial and cultural relations.

The relations began to change with Arab Spring in March 2011. Although the initial Turkish response to the Syrian uprising was balanced and cautious, it became more assertive and supported the Syrian opposition and legitimate rights of Syrians. Birgül Demirtaş indicate that “it was in such an atmosphere that JDP’s foreign policy approach towards Syria became more security centered”³⁵² and representations between Turkey and Syria changed from friendship to enmity.

Birgül Demirtaş explains that “since the foundation of the republic, Turkish decision makers have not been able to establish a stable policy toward its Middle Eastern neighbors, usually perceived as the other. Arab peoples were remembered as the ones who stabbed Turks in the back during World War I, when they cooperated with the occupying countries and betrayed the Muslim Ottoman Empire”³⁵³.

Demirtaş continue telling that during the Cold War, Turkey was part of the Western bloc, while neighboring Arab countries were enjoying friendly relations with the Soviet Union. During Cold War, Turkey followed rather pro-Western policies toward the Middle East to decrease the possibility of improvement in bilateral relations between Turkey and Middle East.

Demirtaş points out that “then Turkey experienced major crises with its Western allies, due to its dispute with Greece over Cyprus, and developed a cooperative policy toward its neighbors. It insisted on its neutrality in regional crises like the Iran-Iraq War”³⁵⁴.

With the start of the PKK attacks in 1984, the Kurdish issue became defining dynamic behind Turkish policies toward its southern neighbors. Since Syria gave the logistical and military support to PKK, the decades of the 1980s and 1990s witnessed the securitization of Turkey's Middle East policy, deterioration of the relations and escalation of tension.

³⁵² Birgül Demirtaş, “Turkish Syrian Relations: From Friend Esad to Enemy Esed”, <http://www.mepc.org/journal/turkish-syrian-relations-friend-esad-enemy-esed><http://www.mepc.org/journal/turkish-syrian-relations-friend-esad-enemy-esed> [23.03.2017].

³⁵³ **Ibid.**

³⁵⁴ **Ibid.**

Turkey's security relations with Syria deteriorated to such a degree that even Prime Minister Turgut Özal's approach and his interest to form economic and political relations with Syria could not achieve a meaningful change.

The situation began to change at the end of the 1990s. With the collapse of bipolar system or the socialist regimes, Turkey found more space to formulate its foreign policy and to act independently.

Demirtaş explains that “the regional balance of power started to change, ... there was increasing criticism of the government for not taking harsher measures against Syrian support for the PKK. As a result of all these factors, Turkey initiated coercive diplomacy against the Assad regime and managed to get Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the PKK, expelled from the country in 1998”³⁵⁵.

Demirtaş claims that “when Damascus stopped its support for the terrorist organization, and its bilateral relations with Turkey were transformed from enmity to friendship. What Özal started but could not complete was being realized by the coalition governments of the second half of the 1990s. Hence, when the JDP came to power in 2002, the ground was already laid for the improvement of Turkey's relations with its immediate neighbors”³⁵⁶.

In Davutoğlu's view, the stability in the region is sustained by using economic instruments, cultural and historical bonding and dialogue with all actors in the region without prioritizing one over another. As a result, Turkey should contact with the countries in the Middle East where stability is needed to be maintained for economic and cultural developments. Good economic and political relations with countries in the Middle East such as Syria were important for the stability of the region and diversification of Turkish foreign policy.

Turkey with its new active foreign policy approaches has tried to turn negative representations such as enmity to positive ones such as neighborly relations because it would contribute to improve relations with Syria, enhance the security of the region and decrease the treat of PKK that could easily find shelter in the bordering areas.

³⁵⁵ **Ibid.**

³⁵⁶ **Ibid.**

By underlining its state identity that carries the features of West and the East JDP' showed willingness to play the role of facilitator or mediator for the settlements in conflicts and disputes. Its efforts to bring together the opposition groups and the government in Syrian case, its role to contribute to a solution by cooperating with international actors in the solution of regional problems are examples of the JDP's new foreign policy vision.

With the Adana Agreement in 1998 and following the capture of Abdullah Öcalan, a new era began in Turkish-Syrian relations. The JDP government gave a special emphasis to relations with the Damascus regime.

For the first time in its history, during JDP era, Turkey developed a discourse aimed at economic integration with Syria. Demirtaş explains that “the concept of Şamgen was even developed concerning the formulation of a joint visa policy among Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq, taking its inspiration from the Schengen system of the European Union. These developments all point to a new era in Turkey's Middle Eastern policy. One can perceive the impact of the Davutoğlu doctrine on Turkey's changing relationships”³⁵⁷.

When the protest movements started to spread, Turkish leaders first tried to convince the Assad regime to carry out reforms in the political system. But when President Bashar al-Assad insisted on using lethal forces against protestors and were slow on implementing reforms, Turkey started to take a harsher line, beginning in June 2011.

Demirtaş claims that “its new civilizational identity and geographical imagination, emphasizing the imperial Ottoman past and insisting on Turkey's exceptionalism because of its unique geographical location and historical legacy have led to overambitious goals. One can argue that the JDP, under the leadership of Ahmet Davutoğlu, developed a new identity for Turkey as the inheritor of the Ottoman legacy because of its extraordinary location. Thanks to its history and geography, Turkey is defined as having missions and responsibilities for its brother and sister nations in the former Ottoman territories. Davutoğlu argued that Turkey should be the subject not the object of regional affairs, contributing to the unfolding of events and not just following what was happening. But this new identity caused a

³⁵⁷ **Ibid.**

capability-expectations gap, since Turkish efforts have not thus far resulted in any change of regime”³⁵⁸.

Ziya Öniş states that it is very risky interfere in a region “where global powers such as the United States, Russia and China as well as rival regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel are very much present and where politics is complicated not only by rivalries among different states but also profound ethnic and sectarian divisions”³⁵⁹. Global and regional powers have been actively engaged in Syrian crisis with different agendas that limits the space that any single regional power could exploit.

Turkey has tried to improve its relations and widen its area of influence in the Middle East by focusing on economic cooperation, using Ottoman heritage and Islam as the defining features of its state identity and the bases of cultural affinity. According to Öniş, “the underlying logic of the JDP’s foreign policy was based on a new kind of nationalism, nationalism with conservative and religious overtones, yet outward facing and globalist in its orientation”³⁶⁰. Construction of an active foreign policy with a strong emphasis on religion and Ottoman heritage differentiate from Western-oriented stance of traditional foreign policy which was more cautious for the affairs in the Middle East.

Although there is new activism in Turkish foreign policy, Turkey’s capacity to have an area of influence in Syria is limited. Aswini Mohapatra explains that “obstacles to democracy in the Arab world go well beyond the autocratic nature of present regimes to include a host of factors, underdeveloped bourgeoisie, prevalence of patrimonialism in state structures, fear of Islamists capturing state power, and the multiple Western security concerns that guarantee external support to authoritarian rule in several states”³⁶¹. These factors have also pervasive in Syria that makes the crisis more difficult to end and reduce Turkey’s foreign policy effectiveness.

Marc Lynch, Deen Freelon and Sean Aday express that “Syria became far more polarizing issue with a high degree of sectarian rather than pan Arabic identity

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Öniş Ziya, “Turkey and The Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence In A Turbulent Middle East”, **Mediterranean Politics**, vol.19, no.2 (2015): 13.

³⁶⁰ Ibid, 12.

³⁶¹ Aswini Mohapatra, “Democratization in the Arab World: Relevance of the Turkish Model”, **International Studies**, vol:45, no.4 (2008): 289, 271-294.

narrative”³⁶². In Syrian case, according to Lynch, Freelon and Aday, “Arap Spring lens was replaced by both a regional sectarian and Isamist narrative and by a focus on the immediate neighbors most affected by the conflict”³⁶³.

Öniş claims that recent foreign policy executed by JDP in Syrian crisis “might be conceptualized in terms of the security-economy and identity nexus”³⁶⁴. Öniş explain security economy-nexus by indicating that secure borders affect economic interdependence and decrease risks of regional conflicts. He adds that institutions like The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) and Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) have emerged as non-state actors and enabled diversification of relations with neighbors.

Öniş implies that improving relations with Syria had also economic reasons. He states that “the global financial crisis of 2008-2009 and the ensuing stagnation in EU markets, Turkey’s main trading partner injected additional momentum to this diversification process as Turkey searched for new markets to make up for the loss in EU trade”³⁶⁵. And Syria was one of the new markets where Turkey could utilize to make up for the loss.

Although Turkey’s interest during JDP era in its neighbors especially in the Middle East can be explained from economic perspective, it gives partial explanation if the identity of the state and its relation with foreign policy making are not taken into consideration.

Öniş states that “identity considerations or civilizational geopolitics are also crucial in terms of understanding the changing dynamics of Turkish foreign policy, notably its increasing focus on the Arab Middle East”³⁶⁶.

Using Turkey’s multi civilizational identity with emphasis on religion and Ottoman heritage, JDP has tried to initiate a dialogue with the countries that have similar state identities in the Middle East. Relations with Syria are epitomized under

³⁶² March Lynch, Deen Freelon, Sean Aday, “Syria in the Arab Spring: The Integration of Syria’s Conflict with the Arab Uprisings, 2011-2013”, **Research and Politics**, (2014): 1-7.

³⁶³ **Ibid**, 6.

³⁶⁴ Öniş, **Ibid**, 3.

³⁶⁵ **Ibid**, 4.

³⁶⁶ **Ibid**, 4.

the influence of this new foreign policy activism that has been shaped by an identity nexus.

Aylin Güney and Nazif Mandacı state that “the Arap Spring, especially the Syrian crisis shifted the focus of Turkey’s foreign policy in BMENA (the Broader Middle East and North Africa) from cooperation to conflict. This has led to a resecuritization of Turkey’s geopolitical codes, discourses and security practices in the region, prevailing the limitation of Turkey’s current geopolitical imagination”³⁶⁷.

During JDP era, Turkey’s geopolitical imagination and political behaviour regarding the Middle East and North Africa has changed dramatically. Güney and Mandacı claim that this change has been considered by some “as a shift of axis from its traditional pro-Western leaning towards a pro Middle Eastern one. This new activism coincided with the victories of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party in general elections from 2002 onwards particularly after Ahmet Davutoğlu became an advisor ... and later Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2009”³⁶⁸.

Faruk Yalvaç states that “with Turkey’s Muslim identity as a solution to both its own domestic identity and democratization problems as well as the basis of good relations with its neighbors, identity based politics began to replace the Cold War policies that had been grounded in Turkey’s geopolitical significance”³⁶⁹.

The development of this new geopolitical imagination, which depicts BMENA as an important geography and reformulation of Turkish state identity with focus on Islam led to Turkish geopolitical codes being reformulated and security discourses reshaped.

The reason behind the reformulation of Turkish state identity and foreign policy conduct is the shift of power in the domestic politics of Turkey. According to Öniş, “The JDP, as a post Islamist party with a powerful religious conservative core was better placed to engage with the Muslim world, compared with its predecessors... With the rising tide of conservatism and rediscovery of the Ottoman past in Turkish politics, it was perhaps inevitable that the Muslim world in general and the Arab world in particular would occupy the center stage in Turkish foreign

³⁶⁷ Aylin Güney, Nazif Mandacı, “The Meta Geography of the Middle East and North Africa in Turkey’s New Geopolitical Imagination”, *Security Dialogue*, vo.44, no.4-5 (2013): 431.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid* 432.

³⁶⁹ Faruk Yalvaç, “Strategic Debt or Hegemonic Depth? A Critical Realist Analyses of Turkey’s Position in the World Sytem”, *International Relations*, vol.26, no.2 (2012): 167.

policy, a process driven not only by mutual economic interests but also by common identity based on cultural affinity”³⁷⁰.

Hüseyin Bağcı and Ali Serdar Erdurmaz summarize that “during the period between 2007, when the Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power for the second term, and 2011, when the Arab Spring broke out, Turkey’s foreign policy toward Middle Eastern countries gained importance. It included the resolution of problems through face to face negotiations, cooperation, common action, close friendship, and forming and executing high advisory boards. Ankara, by this means, became a role model for mediation, with the awareness of the role of political, economic and social cooperation in terms of ensuring peace and stability in its near neighbours, especially in the Middle East pivot”.³⁷¹

The neoliberal ideology of the Justice and Development Party and Islamic values were significant in terms of implementing an independent policy, for the countries where the Arab Spring was mostly effective.

In this period, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the most widely recognized and respected political leader by the peoples of the countries in the Middle East. Turkey a powerful and stabilizing actor formed close political, economic and social relations with countries in the Middle East and with Syria.

But the relations changed dramatically when the uprisings demanding reform transformed into a civil war and President Bashar al Assad decided to use the armed forces and violence against civilians. The conflicts changed into sectarian violence, resulting in the emergence of the radical Islamic groups. These developments and the instability posed significant obstacles for the Turkish policies related to being a regional power.

Syrian crisis has occupied an important place on JDP’s agenda According to Şule Kut, “still in a chaotic environment resulting from drastic developments that had caught everyone unprepared and often brought serious miscalculations in other

³⁷⁰ Öniş, *Ibid*, 5.

³⁷¹ Hüseyin Bağcı, Ali Serdar Erdurmaz. “The Middle East Seen from Ankara” **Under the Shadow of Arab Spring**, ed. İdris Demir (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017): 7.

countries, Turkey navigated its difficult transition without making any serious foreign policy mistakes”³⁷².

The civil war in Syria got complicated when the ISIS and the Kurdish forces in Syria (PYD) got involved. The US and European countries are reluctant to get involved in a military operation. ISIS gained power in the region and despite Ankara’s strong objections US supports PYD for the ground operation.

Syria is a country with which Turkey has deep historical, social, economic, demographic and political ties. Öniş states that Turkish foreign policy under the leadership of Davutoğlu can be criticized because Turkish political actors “underestimated the resilience of Ba’athist establishment and over-estimated the capacity of the opposition forces to mount a major challenge to the existing regime”³⁷³. The government expected that the Assad regime would fall after the strong opposition. There would be international pressure and intervention from the West, as seen in the case of Libya. However, the case in Syria has gone in a different way than expected.

Öniş goes on stating that “Turkish policy makers failed to recognize the reluctance of international community... to engage in another intervention”³⁷⁴. USA and the West had negative experiences from Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. Even in the case of Libya, the outcome of the intervention was the polarization and instability in the post Qaddafi era. The international community has been reluctant to intervene in Syria although the government has committed human rights violations and used chemical weapons. The international community is not sure about the course that would be followed after possible intervention.

Another criticism directed to decisions of political elites of the JDP is that Iran and Russia are important actors in the region which have supported Assad regime in Syria. So the government has had to take influence of Iran and Russia into account by being aware that an area of influence is limited. Iran has link with Syrian regime and Shi’a influence. Russia is a global power and an ally of Syria. Russia and Iran are important supporters of the regime that has prevented to oust Assad.

³⁷² Şule Kut,” The Contours of Turkish Foreign Policy in the 1990s”, **Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multinational Power**, ed: Rubin Barry, Kirişçi Kemal, (Boğaziçi University Press: İstanbul, 2002): 15.

³⁷³ Öniş, *Ibid*, 9.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 9.

In a region where global and regional powers have rivalry and influence, Turkey could not act alone in line with its new activism based on multi-dimensional foreign policy. There are limits imposed on the influence Turkey has aimed to create. There are different forces at work in the region.

According to Güney and Mandacı, Davutoğlu's concept of geographical debt "referred the regions surrounding modern Turkey where Ottoman Empire ruled for many centuries, thereby locating Turkey at the epicenter of a massive hinterland. The goals of Davutoğlu's proactive regional policy are first sustaining a balance between Turkish national interests and human conscience and universal values, second, creating a belt of peace, stability and security around Turkey"³⁷⁵. Turkey's rapprochement with Syria and then the deterioration of the relations with Syria show how this new geopolitical code translated into foreign policy practices.

Turkey as a powerful regional country has an economic and diplomatic capacity however, it is not enough to make a change in such a region where global and regional powers have conflicting interests. Turkey is an important regional power however, leading a proactive role in the Syrian crisis has not produced the expected results. Turkey's effort was not supported by international community and Sertif Demir and Carmen Rijnoveau state that "Syria's future will determine Turkey's future role and its say on the evolution of the Middle East architecture"³⁷⁶.

According to Barış Tekin and Beyza Tekin, the main features of the recent Turkish Foreign Policy during JDP era and its reflections on the relations with Syria can be summarized as follows: "increasing foreign policy activism and quest for greater autonomy, zero problems with neighbours' approach and a proactive regional policy, the emergence of the Middle East as the main target sphere of influence and fading EU membership prospects, ascendancy of economic diplomacy and the growing role of economic and commercial relations in foreign policy making, growing involvement of business groups in foreign policy implementation, and a declining use of traditional security discourse and a growing use of soft power instruments"³⁷⁷. During Syrian civil war, foreign policy approach of Turkey is again

³⁷⁵ Güney, Mandacı, *ibid*, 437.

³⁷⁶ Sertif Demir, Carmen Rijnoveau, "The Impact of the Syria Crisis on the Global and Regional Political Dynamics", *Journal of Turkish World Studies*, vol.8, no.1 (2013): 64.

³⁷⁷ Beyza Tekin, Barış Tekin, "The Limits, Dilemmas and Paradoxes of Turkish Foreign Policy: A Political Economy Perspective" *LSEE Papers on South Eastern Europe*, (2015): 12.

securitized and the roles that need military capacity instead of soft power are attributed to Turkey.

As a regional power, Turkey has tried to lead the change in Syria by portraying the Syrian regime as a serious threat to the stability of the region. John Mitton explains that "... allowing crisis like Syria to fester and boil unabated drastically increases the potential for unforeseen strategic consequences, a humanitarian and refugee crisis that threatens ... the stability of immediate region, high profile acts of international terrorism linked to Islamic State, clashes between a NATO member (Turkey) and Russia, the possibility of contagion sparking a regional war along sectarian lines"³⁷⁸. Realizing the potential treats and negative outcomes, as the crisis deepened, Turkey turned out to be more pragmatic than proactive.

By implying Syrian crisis, Öniş states that "what the era of Arab revolutions so far has demonstrated is not only the limits on Turkey's ability to play a grand leadership role but also the inherent adaptability and pragmatism of Turkish foreign policy in line with changing external circumstances"³⁷⁹.

Syrian crisis is thought to be a difficult test to examine the foreign policy in action. According to Beyza and Barış Tekin, "truth conditions for Turkey's international identity claims of representing a centre of gravity or central power capable of order building in the Middle East are considerably weakened"³⁸⁰.

Özden Zeynep Oktav and Aycan Çelikaksoy state that "the regional response to Arap Spring and the escalating war in Syria revealed the limits of Turkey's capability to build a community of likeminded actors in the Middle East and to cope with the spillover effect of the chaos in the region"³⁸¹.

Oktav and Çelikaksoy further add that "The Syrian experience indicates that Turkey has the potential to do more, however at present, its limited resources and internal political challenges prevent Ankara from achieving its ultimate goal"³⁸².

³⁷⁸ John Mitton, "The Problem with Everybody's Favourite Solution in Syria", **International Journal**, vol.71, no.2 (2016): 285. p.283-290

³⁷⁹ Öniş Ziya, "Turkey and The Arab Revolutions: Boundaries of Regional Power Influence In A Turbulent Middle East" **Mediterranean Politics**, vol.19, no.2 (December 2015): 7.

³⁸⁰ Tekin, **ibid**, 3.

³⁸¹ Özden Zeynep Oktav, Aycan Çelikaksoy, "The Syrian Refugee Challenge and Turkey's Quest for Normative Power in the Middle East", **International Journal**, vol.70, no.3 (2015): 412.

³⁸² **Ibid**, 419.

Turkey's post-2011 foreign policy discourse on Syria portrayed Turkey as the protector of oppressed and the supporter of the democracy, legitimate right of Syrian people while attributing the regime in Syria lack of morality and inferiority.

Özlem Demirtaş Bagdonas claims that "JDP elites' articulation of Turkey's unique position as the representative of international law, human rights, democracy, core Islamic values, as well as trans-religious principles thus served to present Turkey as the sole moral actor in the region that has stood on the right side of history, and as a basic model of the way authoritarianism and cruelty could be confronted and democracy and justice consolidated in the Middle East"³⁸³.

The JDP government employed several terms or linguistic tools to legitimize Turkey's changing stance toward Syria. Bagdonas explains that discursive tools such as "the moral and legal negation of the regime; the moral criticism of other actors in the crisis; the identification of the expectations and demands of the Syrians, as well as the international community; the promotion of Turkey's political institutions as a model for the Muslim countries in the region; the objectification of threats to Turkey's security; the demonstration of Turkey's superior military capabilities; and lastly, the glorification of Turkey's historical and cultural assets, defined as the fundamental sources for Turkey's great power status. Each discursive move depicted a certain role, image and identity for Turkey that was juxtaposed to the characteristics of others"³⁸⁴.

Bagdonas concludes that "drawing such thick boundaries between the self and the negative other, and emphasizing Turkey's responsibility toward those in need of protection in comparison with the attitude of others, the Turkish official discourse of danger on Syria thus constituted a moral, physical, as well as a historical and cultural space of inferiority superiority while identifying the threats to Turkey and the region and legitimizing Turkey's stance toward them"³⁸⁵.

The Syrian crisis is one of the most urgent problems in international politics. It has become a civil war destructing the country and an international battlefield involving many regional and global actors with different interests. As a result of the civil war, millions of people have lost their lives, become refugees in neighboring

³⁸³ Özlem Demirtaş Bagdonas, "Reading Turkey's Foreign Policy on Syria: The AKP's Construction of a Great Power Identity and the Politics of Grandeur", *Turkish Studies*, vo.15, no.1 (2014): 147.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid* 150-151.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid* 151.

countries. Turkey is the worst affected country in the region. In response, Turkey has been implementing policies to prevent a humanitarian disaster by welcoming refugees from Syria.

Although the crisis in Syria has distortive effects on Turkey, Turkey's stand in Syrian crisis should be appreciated and justified in supporting democratization process and criticizing for the human rights violations. Turkey acted against authoritarianism, crimes against humanity and behaved as a responsible country that aims to institute a more democratic order in Syria in accordance with the legitimate demands of the Syrians. Turkey has approached Syrian crisis in a more humanitarian way based on ethical values and welcome more Syrian refugees than any European countries. Turkey has also given accommodation to a large group of refugees escaping from civil war, tried to incorporate them in social realm by embracing them more than any country.

7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis is to show the complex links between identity and Turkey's foreign policy and understand how redefined Turkish state identity influences Turkey's recent foreign policy activism in the Middle East especially in Syria. In line with this purpose, a constructivist approach which argues that the identities of states are important for understanding international relations is used to explain the relationship between Turkish identity and changing parameters of its relations with Syria.

Richard Ned Lebow explains that "identity can be understood as a ground or basis for social and political action, a collective phenomenon denoting some degree of sameness of a group or category, a core concept of individual or collective self-hood, a product of social and political action or the product of multiple and competing discourses"³⁸⁶.

Constructivist approach contributes to a better understanding of Turkey's foreign policy in the post-Cold War period because constructivist theory sees identity and interest as endogenous, socially constructed and historically contingent. Consequently, they can vary depending on historical, social and cultural context.

Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu states that "Turkey constitutes a unique case study to assess the validity of the constructivist perspective as an alternative explanation of how foreign policy preferences and consequently interests are formulated. Turkey holds a special place in the international system because it is on the very borderline between the North versus South. Turkey also holds a special place among different civilizations: the Muslim Middle Eastern and the Western"³⁸⁷.

Unlike rationalist approaches that argue that states' preferences and identities are exogenously given by the international system and all states have fixed interests that are limited to utility maximization,³⁸⁸ constructivist view reject that there is a

³⁸⁶ Richard Ned Lebow, "Identity and International Relations", **International Relations**, vol. 22, no.4 (2008): 474.

³⁸⁷ Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, **Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity A Constructivist Approach**, (New York, Routledge, 2003): 4.

³⁸⁸ Waltz Kenneth, **Theory of International Politics**, (New York: Random House, 1979): 246-311.

single culture of anarchy and argued that relations between states are shaped and reshaped by the agent and the system by creating a possibility for a change in the international structure. Georg Sorenson explains that “change from one type of anarchy to another is due to changes in the structure of shared knowledge, those changes are effects of social interactions among state actors”³⁸⁹.

Wendt categorizes the cultures of anarchy as Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian. Each culture is constituted by the relationship between self and the other. Depending on the process of subjective interaction with others, states can define and redefine their identities and interests thus foreign policies they pursue.

Changes in domestic elites may change the identity of the state, which can transform interests, expected behaviors and the culture of the structure. According to constructivism, it is possible that there can be a shift from one culture to another, if the representations that the political elites has are exposed to change.

Enver Gülseven explains that after the end of Second World War, a shift from a Hobbesian to a Kantian culture of anarchy started to develop in Western Europe. Turkey’s participation in security communities has influenced its culture of anarchy. Gülseven states that “the long tradition of seeing the world from a realpolitik perspective relates to Turkey’s political culture that is under the influence of military,”³⁹⁰ has started to change.

Turkish state identity has been also shaped and exposed to change in a historic process. There has not been a homogenous or unified Turkish identity and it is contested. Lisel Hints states that “Turkey’s identity is implicated in multiple international roles such as NATO ally, European Union candidate country, Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member and aspirant regional power broker”³⁹¹. Therefore, an examination of domestic and international context in which Turkey’s national identity and interests have been formed by political elites is essential to understand Turkish foreign policy.

³⁸⁹ Georg Sorenson, “The Case for Combining Material Forces and Ideas in the Study of IR”, **European Journal of International Relations**, vol.14, no.1 (2008): 10.

³⁹⁰ Enver Gülseven, “Identity Security and Turkish Foreign Policy In the Post Cold War Period: Relations with EU, Middle East and Greece” (Department of Politics and History, Brunel University, December 2010): 207.

³⁹¹ Lisel Hintz, “Take it Outside National Identity Contestation in the Foreign Policy Arena”, **European Journal of International Relations**, vol: 22, no.2 (2015): 335.

As mentioned in previous chapters, it is important to analyze the political elites that play key role in creation of state identity. The military and their representations about the system played an important role during the establishment of Turkish state identity and its institutions. Reforms were carried out and reflected themselves in the state identity of Turkey formulated by military. This state identity was reflected on foreign policy as a passive stand especially in issues mainly regarding the Middle East. Therefore, the foreign policy of the republican period pursued stability and non-interference in domestic affairs of neighboring countries while, prioritizing relations with the West and conducted foreign policy in accordance with western interests.

Turkey's construction of state identity according to norms of contemporary civilizations brought an approach of international politics that showed itself in Turkey's Western orientation in foreign policy especially on the basis of its NATO membership. Therefore, Turkey prioritized its relations with the West and formulated foreign policy interests in line with interests of the Western countries.

During the Cold War, foreign policy issues were formulated in line with Turkey's NATO membership and other Western institutions compatible with its state identity. Gülseven claims that while the Ankara approached Western countries with Kantian culture, "Ankara's position towards its Middle Eastern neighbors was continued to be shaped by a Hobbesian logic as Turkey perceived itself as the only civilized country in its uncivilized neighborhood"³⁹².

Gülseven adds that since 1980s, Turkey went through political and economic transformation that brought Turkey much closer to Kantian values which were reflected in its domestic and foreign policy behavior. The membership process of European Union has been critical in the transformation of Turkey's domestic and foreign policies to a more Kantian logic.

This transformation can be fully understood by considering the changes in Turkey's identity and state elites during 1980s. Political and economic reforms led to democratization and the emergence of a Turkish civil society by empowering Islamic groups. The revival of Kurdish nationalism and political Islam in the 1990s along

³⁹² Gülseven, *Ibid*, 208.

with EU context increased civilian rule while reducing the army's influence. These developments led to a redefinition of Turkey's state identity and reformulation of Ankara's foreign policy approach which manifested itself in a wiser identity that is Ottoman with emphasis on Islam, covering new geography with all neighboring Muslim peoples.

According to constructivist approach, identity security is important and identity insecurity can lead to ambiguous foreign policy choices because of the rivalry between different identities and interest groups. The transformation of Turkish domestic and foreign policies was negatively influenced by the increasing identity insecurity in the context of Turkey's isolation in the West by the EU's hesitation to declare the country as a candidate. As a result, the influence of military and Turkey's "viewing of the world from a realpolitik perspective"³⁹³ by responding by hard power came back in the second half of the 1990s.

Turkey's state identity is notably influenced by the Kurdish issue. According to Kemal Kirişçi, "the violence surrounding the Kurdish problem and the security challenges created by the PKK left Ankara on various occasions emphasizing the significance of military capabilities and means over political ones"³⁹⁴. Consequently, Turkey regularly intervened in Northern Iraq. With the suspicion that neighboring countries supported PKK, Turkey threatened to use military force against Syria in 1998.

Nevertheless, the EU's decision to recognize the country as an official candidate for membership in 1999 had a positive influence on Turkey's identity security and its shift towards a Kantian vision, and the importance of soft power as a tool in its foreign policy. The EU's conditionality has been a legitimate base for change and reforms in Turkey's domestic and foreign policies.

The transformation of Islamists' position from an anti-Western to pro-European took shape when JDP came to power with changing demands of Islamic groups. It is believed that democracy will enhance civil liberties in Turkey including conservative Muslims. In this context, JDP presented the EU related reforms by highlighting the positive impact of EU on human rights and democracy in Turkey.

³⁹³ *Ibid*, 209.

³⁹⁴ Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey's Foreign Policy In Turbulent Times", **European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)**, no.92 (2006): 101.

İhsan Dağcı states that “the Islamists’ recent departure from their traditional anti-West and anti-westernization position seems to have transformed the Islamic self in Turkey, opening up new possibilities for the coexistence of Islam and the West”³⁹⁵.

Islamic groups in the past opposed Turkey’s integration with the West and preferred its integration with Muslim countries in the East. However, during the JDP period, Turkey’s integration with the West has been actively supported.

After coming to power in 2002, the JDP carried out reforms based on EU norms. In brief, change in domestic elites has enabled Turkish political actors to legitimize the construction of new state identity and interests that are also in line with EU related reforms.

Turkish foreign policy becomes more proactive and assertive in the affairs of the countries in the Middle East. With the rhetoric of good relations, economic cooperation and the goal of developing an area of influence, Turkey has tried to improve its relations with its neighbors in a cooperation oriented and soft power based way. This is manifested with dialogue oriented policy towards Iran, Iraq and Syria. All these policies showed a change in behavior of Turkey in the Kantian direction.

Policy change has been most evident in Turkey’s policies towards the Middle East. Turkey has tried to enhance relations and to improve cooperation with its Muslim neighbors in different areas.

Turkey has attained a role of mediator between the West and Islamic world as a result of its ties with Muslim countries. Turkey has put some efforts to improve its regional diplomacy especially with the Palestinian issue. Gülseven state that “Ankara mediated between Syria and Israel during the Lebanon war in 2006, between Israel and Hamas in 2008, between the West and Iran concerning nuclear program in 2010”³⁹⁶.

Structural explanations are less helpful to explain why different political leaders adopted diverse approaches of foreign policy and different tools to formulate Turkish foreign policy and its targets.

³⁹⁵ İhsan Dağcı, “Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization” **Turkish Studies**, vol.6, no.1 (2005): 16.

³⁹⁶ Gülseven, **ibid**, 213.

To understand the reasons behind Turkey's shifting foreign policy in the Middle East, it is crucial to examine the perceptions and visions of its political leaders at decision making level and the construction of these perceptions that led to changes in foreign policy conduct.

Each perception possesses an inter subjective meaning of the self which shape the interpretation of the other and their foreign policy preferences. As mentioned before, national interests are defined and redefined depending on social context through a clash of identities during interaction. This is well illustrated with the change of foreign policy in the Middle East and proactivism in the Syrian Crisis.

Turkey's rising interest in the region in the Post-Cold War period relates to the political transformation of the country and social actor's perceptions that shapes foreign policy orientation. Turkey turned to Middle East and tried to improve relations after the JDP came to power in 2002.

Through a process of identity reconstruction by underlining the Islamic dimension of Turkey's identity and its relation with the Ottoman heritage, JDP has promoted multi-dimensional and proactive relationship with neighboring countries. It emphasizes the use of soft power tools to enhance Turkey's influence and prestige in the region.

Faruk Yalvaç summarizes the principles upon which Turkish foreign policy should be based according to Davutoğlu. He explains that Turkish foreign policy "has strike a balance between security and freedom, it should involve zero problems with Turkey's neighbors (which implies more institutionalized regional engagement and an eagerness to play third party roles in regional conflicts), it must be multidimensional and multi tracked, its diplomatic discourse should be based on firm flexibility and it has to pursue a rhythmic diplomacy that is adaptable to different circumstances"³⁹⁷.

According to Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkey is a powerful and central country with multiple regional identities stem from geographical advantages Turkey has and should not be limited to one character or within one region. In contrast to the

³⁹⁷ Faruk Yalvaç, "Strategic Debt or Hegemonic Depth? A Critical Realist Analyses of Turkey's Position in the World Sytem, **International Relations**, vol.26, no.2 (2012): 168.

understanding of Turkey as part of the West, Davutoğlu's doctrine claims that Turkey is also the part of the Eastern civilization.

One of the key principles of strategic debt doctrine is the policy of zero problems with neighbors. Özgür Özdamar, Toygar Halistoprak, Erkam Sula state that "this policy implies a reintegration with neighbors to solve existing problems and prevent issues from erupting into hostile relations"³⁹⁸. The outcome of strategic debt is that Turkey's identification with the former Ottoman regions and return to the Middle East with an activism during Syrian crisis that is a difficult test for Turkish recent foreign policy preferences.

Turkey seeks to enhance ties and have a balanced relation with all of its neighbors. Turkey's continuing demand for EU membership implies that Turkey's Middle Eastern policy and its importance as a regional active power is not incompatible with its ties with the EU and the West in general.

The transition from Turkey's relations with Syria from an enemy to an alliance and then recently to a highly problematic relationship is consistent with a constructivist explanation that takes state identities into consideration in order to explain the shift in foreign policy choices.

According to Özgür Özdamar, Toygar Halistoprak, Erkam Sula Turkey's response to Syrian crisis shows "how ruling elites' worldview may intervene in a country's foreign policy and create tensions between the local capabilities and the structural pressures of the international system"³⁹⁹.

As indicated throughout the thesis, the shifts in Turkey's foreign policy have stemmed from the change of political elites in power. A constructivist approach is more useful to understand the dynamics of Turkey's foreign policy behavior shift in the Middle East during Syrian crisis.

It underlines and explains the shift in Turkish foreign policy. In addition to explaining the discontinuity, identity based explanation shows the relationship between Turkish leaders' own perception of self and the others as an important defining feature of Turkey's foreign policy choices.

³⁹⁸ Özgür Özdamar, Toygar Halistoprak , Erkam Sula "From Good Neighbor to Model: Turkey's Changing Roles in the Middle East in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring", **Uluslararası İlişkiler**, vol.11, no.42 (2014): 106.

³⁹⁹ **Ibid**, 108.

The significance of decision maker's perception is not related with only material interests but also with their views regarding the nature of international relations, which ultimately influence formulation of their interests and execution of foreign policies.

This thesis has contributed to the comprehension of the formulation and implementation of Turkey's foreign policy. It explains how state identities formulated by political elites and their subjective interaction have shaped Turkish national interests which in turn formulated foreign policy and paved the way for the activism in the Middle East especially in Syrian crisis.

It examines Turkey's state identity and its impact on the foreign policy orientation. In doing so, it has provided further insight to the changing parameters in the formation of Turkey's treat perceptions and national interests. Thereby, this thesis shed light on how Turkish state identity is reformulated by state elites and has affected Turkey's political development, foreign policy and its activism in Syrian crisis.

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