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Turkey's Foreign Policy Towards the Western Balkans.

A Hundred Years of Change and Continuity

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Année académique 2020/2021
Master 120 en sciences politiques, orientation relations internationales,
finalité spécialisée : diplomatie et résolution de conflits

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Acknowledgments

I would first like to express my gratitude to Professor Struye de Swielande, my research supervisor, for his guidance and trust.

I would also like to thank my dearest friend Arda Tahiroğlu for providing me with an inside look of Turkey and for his precious help in translating Turkish sources.

Finally, special thanks must be given to my mother, my father and my brother for their invaluable support.

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Introduction

A century has passed since Mustafa Kemal, later Atatürk, proclaimed the founding of the Republic of Turkey. Adverse regional circumstances led Turkey to devote itself primarily to the preservation of its territorial integrity and to the project of nation building. In doing so, Turkey was forced to neglect relations with states that did not pose a direct threat to its territory, including the Balkans. Turkey has always had strong historical, cultural and ethnic ties with the Balkans due to the Ottoman past of the region, which was one of the principal branches of the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, the Balkan states, once emerged from the Balkan wars, were assorted by the search for independence and autonomy on a nationalist and ethnic basis. For seventy years Turkey maintained contacts with the Balkan states without being an influential player in the region. In this period of identity-building the principles of Turkish foreign policy were consolidated. Traditional determinants constitute the ground of Turkey's foreign policy: they rely mainly on a deterministic view of its geopolitical position, on a defensive and cautious approach aimed at maintaining the status quo, on a view of regional dynamics based on realpolitik on the balance of power, and finally on a decisive and obstinate Western orientation.

Under the rule of Özal, Turkey had gradually rediscovered its Ottoman identity, which was kept dormant for half a century by the predominance of Kemalism. The neo-Ottomanist approach makes identity, domestic and foreign policy indivisible, and considers the formation of a Turkish-Ottoman identity essential to promote the geopolitical initiatives of Turkey. Starting from the Yugoslavian wars in 1991 and especially from the advent of AKP, Turkey has implemented a foreign policy based particularly on identity, religion and historical commonalities. The fact that large parts of the Balkans were part of the Ottoman Empire from the 14th century until the early 20th, and the remaining presence of Muslim and Turkish minorities spurred Ankara's desire to develop economic, political and cultural relations with the Balkans. Davutoğlu's declination of neo-Ottomanism thus led Turkish foreign policy to increasing activism in the ancient Ottoman provinces and thus in the Balkans. Since Erdoğan's authoritarian turn after the failed coup attempt in 2016, Turkish foreign policy has become more assertive and confrontational as demonstrated by recent military operations in northern Syria and by distinct involvement in Libya. Even if the Balkans do not represent a "hot zone", we witness a further change of perspective. Activism in the Balkans and, above all, Davutoğlu's soft power approach have been scaled down and domestic political struggles come to dominate relations with the Balkan countries.

This thesis intends to deal with the question of the evolution of Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans under the AKP rule. In particular, the first objective of this thesis is to identify the elements of continuity and discontinuity in the AKP's foreign policy approach towards the Western Balkans, answering the following question: how and to what extent the AKP's

foreign policy in the Balkans is influenced by historical constraints and foreign policy traditions? Since the neo-Ottomanist paradigm has been often used to describe Turkish foreign policy towards the Balkans from the 90's to nowadays, the second purpose of this thesis is to determine how the range of foreign policy approaches that lies under the neo-Ottoman umbrella has evolved according to the changes in Turkey's identity and role.

To answer my research questions, in this study I will adopt a qualitative methodology. This thesis will rely mainly on the existing literature, for instance, traditional principles of Turkey's foreign policy will be drawn through the consultation of secondary sources.

As I will examine the relations between Turkey and the Western Balkans, it is important to take into account the official documents, policy papers and project reports. Other elements that are worth studying in Ankara's foreign policy are the speeches and public statements that Turkey's officials have made through the years while visiting the Western Balkans. In this analysis, I will consider, on the one hand, the Balkan region as a whole as regards certain historical and political aspects. On the other hand, I will examine in particular the relations between Turkey and Western Balkans. This geographical notion takes into account the ex-Yugoslavian countries that are not (yet?) members of the European Union with the addition of Albania. Not only for their affiliation to the EU but also for the limited relevance in the matter, Slovenia and Croatia will be only marginally treated. Hence, this thesis will cover Turkish relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and the Republic of North Macedonia.

In analyzing the foreign policy of one state towards another or, as in this case towards a region, constructivism appears among the most functional theories of international relations. The constructivist approach in international relations theorizes that the structures of human association such as identity, culture, threats, goals, common historical heritage and social realities, are determined by shared ideas and not only by material forces (Wendt 1992). Constructivism stresses that the search for power suggested by realism and the need for cooperation against anarchy suggested by the liberal approach, are not always sufficient to explain the reasons and functioning of international relations. Moreover, another key assumption of Wendt's *Social theory of international politics* (1999) is that agents and structures are mutually constitutive and are constantly co-shaping each other's identity. In this thesis, I will investigate the structure-agent relationship, taking the AKP party and its representatives as agents and dependent variable; and I will consider the foreign policy determinants of modern Turkey towards the Balkans as structure and independent variable.

As the micro-level is concerned and as actors interact with each other and renew the structure, I will seek to explore the structural changes that new actors coming to power can produce and, in the case of the Balkans, I will investigate the actual changes and elements of novelty in Turkish officials' Balkan policy formulation.

At the macro level, I will argue that in recent times, Turkey's foreign policy towards the Balkans is dictated not only by historical, cultural and religious constraints, as the Neo Ottoman paradigm would suggest, but also by geopolitical interplays and strategic interests in the region. The main intention of this step of analysis will be to demonstrate that, despite changing tactics, approaches and narrative, the AKP's neo-Ottoman foreign policy in the

Balkans has deep commonalities with the Turkish foreign policy adopted between Atatürk and the end of the Cold War.

In chapter one I will examine three constructivist approaches that constitute the theoretical ground of this thesis, namely historical sociology, agent-structure relations, and the concepts of identity, strategic culture and critical geopolitics. The social theory of Alexander Wendt will be the link between these three approaches and the source of a number of theoretical elements presented in this work. The conceptual framework created in this chapter will be helpful in order to explain how identities, strategic culture and other pre-existing ideational structures participate in the construction of Turkey's foreign policy.

The second chapter will contextualize the most important principles that have shaped Turkish foreign and domestic policy after Mustafa Kemal until the end of the Cold War to identify Turkish macro foreign policy tendencies. Drawing on the research of Aydin and other scholars I will determine four major traditional determinants that have constitutively shaped Turkish foreign policy.

In order to guarantee a substantive historical depth, in chapter three I will provide a historical overview of both the Ottoman past of the Balkans and the relations that the region maintained with the Republic of Turkey during its first seventy years of life. At this stage the figure of Özal and the effects of the first wave of Ottomanism on Turkish foreign policy will be addressed. I will then study the role of Turkey during the Yugoslav war, focusing, in particular, on the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. I will conclude the chapter by providing a short assessment of the influence of traditional structures in the two wars period.

The fourth chapter examines the trajectory of changes in the AKP's domestic and foreign policy dynamics. The chapter begins with an introduction to the political rise of the AKP and then continues with an analysis of Davutoğlu's foreign policy principles to determine the degree of influence of traditional determinants. The chapter explores the AKP's foreign policy toward the Balkans (2002-2021) by dividing it into three phases. In each of the three phases, an attempt is made to explain how internal and external processes have contributed to influencing the trajectory of Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans and to identify the elements of continuity and rupture between the phases.

I will conclude this thesis by arguing that traditional principles have remained largely embedded in Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans, nevertheless I will identify some elements of novelty in AKP foreign policy.

1. Theoretical Framework

The last three decades have witnessed a significant change in the study of international relations, with a growing interest in social theories and concepts taken from sociology.

Such resurface has been a response to the theoretical shortcomings that have emerged in the explanations of the end of the Cold War of the dominant approaches, namely neo-realism and neo-liberalism. The weaknesses of these approaches stem to a large extent from their underestimation of the dynamics within states. The theoretical re-orientation has prompted more attention to the way in which the characteristics of societies influence international behaviour.

This thesis will rely mainly on three approaches: historical sociology, agent-structure relation, and social constructivism. Insofar, these approaches and in particular the constructivist perspective will be present as an analytical prism throughout this work, and they will serve to determine the domestic structure and foreign policy determinants of Turkey, to study its strategic and security cultures and to study the direction of its foreign policy towards the Western Balkans.

Furthermore, the analysis here will be particularly rooted in a constructivist approach. This implies that theories from social sciences will be mobilized in both inter and intra-state relations.

1. 1. Historical Sociology

Historical sociology problematizes state entities and seeks to understand how they have evolved over time. This differentiates it from neorealism, which has a static and timeless conception of the state. Historical sociology shows how the political units that make up international systems have changed over the years. Changes occur through the interaction between endogenous dynamics and exogenous dynamics . At the same time, historical sociology shares an interest with realism/neorealism in the study of war and its role in international affairs. This interest was already at the heart of the classical works of Max Weber (1930) and Otto Hintze (1975). According to John Hobson, historical sociology allows us to overcome the ahistorical feature that characterises most of the dominant theories of international relations which he breaks down in two forms: *chronofetishism* and *tempocentrism*. The first refers to the fact that the international behaviour of states is explained without reference to the historical dimension, resulting in three illusions:

- 1.The reification of the present reflects the tendency to separate the present from the past, explaining international politics solely by reference to temporally static variables.
2. The naturalisation of the present: refers to the erasure of the past from the explanatory framework of social processes through which the present reality has been constructed.
3. The immutability of the present eternalises the characteristics of contemporary international politics, obscuring the processes that reconstitute the present as an immanent order of change.

These three illusions can be debunked by showing how current international politics is resulting from: first, rooted historical dynamics that are not born spontaneously but have

arisen from state's domestic struggles. Second, the way the present arrangements are not immutable but are maintained over time, only insofar the behaviour of the relevant actors favours its reproduction (Hobson, 2002, p.7).

The second flaw of the non-sociological approach is the tendency to retrospectively project the characteristics of contemporary international politics, tracing similarities with the present reality in other historical periods. Historical sociology instead, tries to differentiate the roots of international systems and to understand their peculiarity and specific dynamics. From this approach derives the definition of historical sociology: "a critical approach that refuses to treat the present as an autonomous entity outside history, but insists on embedding it within a precise socio-temporal place" (Hobson, 2002, p.13). Following this approach, a whole series of concepts commonly used by international relations scholars can be problematized. For instance, as we will see in the next section, the nature of the units that make up the international system, are regarded in Waltzian neorealism as similar political units or "like units" whose internal characteristics do not matter in explaining international choices.

On the contrary, historical sociology shows the presence of unlike or functionally differentiated units participating in international politics. The different nature of political actors is not irrelevant, since domestic politics influences international politics and vice versa. States are not all driven in the same direction by the pressures of the external environment and are inclined to react differently to the challenges posed by anarchy and wars. Likewise, Hobson raises awareness on biases that might occur while projecting contemporary logic onto past international dynamics and vice versa or while establishing analogies between different historical periods assuming that the structure of the system would not have substantially changed over the centuries.

Lastly, in line with the purpose of this thesis, historical sociology urges us to consider the foreign policy decisions of actors and policymakers not as the result of rational choices, but rather as the outcome of a constant process of reiteration and embedment of a historically-rooted strategic culture.

This relation between ever-changing representatives of a collectivity and the underlying structural dynamics of a state foreign policy have been the focus of several theories of international relations which we are going to explore in the following sections.

1. 2. Agent-Structure Relations

The agent-structure dichotomy has been a subject of considerable importance for philosophy and social sciences. This dialectical tension is paramount in the social theories of Weber, Durkheim, and Marx which formulation cannot prescind from the interrelation between agency and structure. All three have underlined the importance of social structure, which is created by human action and at the same time, constraints human action within its limits. As Marx already observed in the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852), "Men make

their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.” In other words, in human behaviour there are structural and systemic constraints.

In international politics, states are the actors and their interactions form the structure of international political systems, Kenneth Waltz argues that “a system is composed of a structure and of interacting units. The structure is the system-wide component that makes it possible to think of the system as a whole” (Waltz, 1979, p.79).

Neorealists scholars like Waltz as well as Marxists, stress the fact that states, while all being sovereign, are characterized by inequality of military (or economic for Marxists) power. However, in the realists perspective, power can increase or decrease, for instance as a result of alliances: hence the mutual insecurity and the conflictual character of the interactions. According to structuralists or globalists, the behaviour of states is a dependent variable and is primarily determined by the international system which represents the independent variable. Therefore, following Waltz theorization, the analysis of international relations should not only be focused on the actors but rather on the structure of the system.

The debate on agent-structure relationships is connected with the problem of levels of analysis, which was brought in international relations in a review by David Singer (1960) on Kenneth Waltz's essay *Man the State and War* (1959) in which, studying the causes of wars, he proposed three levels of causation, which he called images.

In the first level, the behaviour of states in the international arena is seen as a consequence of the actions and interactions of individuals, notably decision-makers, governments, heads of state, etc. thus the cause of war is identified in human nature, which following realists (and thus Hobbesian) premises, is ontologically conflictual.

At the second level, Waltz identifies in the nature of the state, in its political and socio-economic institutions and the quality and origins of its elites the characteristics that determine the behaviour of a state. (Singer, 1960) In other words, he emphasises the consequence of domestic politics, state's apparatus but also people and societies on war and relations among states.

Lastly, in the third level, while ignoring both the nature of man and domestic politics as explanatory causes of state behaviour, the independent variable represents the behaviour of the state, the independent variable represent the anarchic structure of the international system, which has as its intrinsic characteristic the principle of the balance of power.

Which of these three levels of analysis should the RI scholar favour is still unclear but Waltz argues in favour of the superiority of the systemic approach over the individual level or the foreign policy of states and societies (Waltz, 1979, p.18).

Waltz adopts a holistic approach à la Durkheim stressing that if the variability of the attributes of the international units is greater than the variability of the attributes of the international system then it is necessary to adopt a perspective of analysis that disregards the characteristics of the units, allowing one to explain how different units can behave similarly

and how similar units can behave differently (Waltz, 1979, p. 37). For Waltz, who accuses of reductionism those who limit their analysis to the lower levels, the permissive cause of war (the anarchic condition of the international political system or, more exactly, its instability) is systemic, while the efficient causes can be found at the other levels of analysis (individual, state/society) (Waltz, 1959, pp. 231-232).

Besides the fact that it is not always possible to separate the three levels clearly, there is no general consensus on which of them should have priority. If it is true that international relations scholars tend to privilege systemic analyses because they are generally more elegant and parsimonious, it goes without saying that the choice of the level also depends on the kind of issue to be analysed.

Here, despite not relying directly on Waltz theory but rather on constructivists' premises, I will nonetheless base my analysis of Turkish foreign policy on the relation between micro and macro structures, a concept that Wendt developed through a critique on Waltz level of analysis. Thus if to be read under neorealist terms my study will first focus on a second-level analysis in order to extrapolate the determinants of Turkish foreign policy; and then on a third level analysis to identify the position and the behaviour of Turkey in the Western Balkans.

The agent-structure relation has been further developed into the field of international relations by Alexander Wendt, the most prominent exponent of social constructivism, a theoretical perspective established in the last decades with the aim of overcoming neorealism without falling into the excessive subjectivism of postmodernism (Wendt, 1987). The relationship between the social construction of meaning and the construction of social reality is at the heart of constructivism. As Berger (1966) explains, along with Luckmann in one of the most important books of contemporary sociology *Reality as a social construction*, reality structures that make associated life "plausible", are socially constructed and what we call reality is just a process of social interaction and reproduction of norms. Therefore, by studying both the social sphere and the natural world, our understanding of people and their actions in the social sphere can make a tangible difference in the natural world. For instance, in the context of negotiations, to be considered an opportunistic state may affect available options, narrow the range of action and eventually reduce bargaining power.

The question of whether to give greater importance to human agents such as decision-makers or to structural factors such as the distribution of forces, leads us to the primordial dichotomy between voluntarism of the agent and determinism of the structure.

The dialectic tension between agent and structure can be expressed as follows: is the structure that conditions the behaviour of the agent-actor, or on the contrary, is the latter autonomous compared to the system in which it is inserted? The debate concerns, in fact, the interrelation between actors (I and II level of analysis) and structure (III level). Wendt argues that the international political system as theorized by Waltz, may be plausible, but that social interactions and their meaning within this system relies on an intersubjective complexity of meanings. (Friedmann and Starr, 1997 p.55). Wendt (1992a, p. 401) therefore criticizes Waltz's three-images definition of structure which he sees as underspecified. He then adds that "In order to go from structure to action, we need to add a fourth: the intersubjectively

constituted structure of identities and interests in the system". Likewise, Dessler (1989, pp. 459-60) observes, "scientific realism insists that all social action depends on the pre-existence of rules, implying that even under anarchy, rules are an essential prerequisite for action. It asserts the impossibility and inconceivability of social behaviour without rules." He continues arguing that positional structure as conceived by neo-realists persists as: "a set of relatively fixed causal conditions, reproduced unintentionally; and while behaviour is shaped, shoved, constrained, and disposed, structure endures without measurable change". Dessler thus theorizes a transformational model of social structure in which rules are intersubjectively realized and enable and shape agency actions.

In the transformational view, structure is a medium of activity that in principle can be altered through that activity. [...]

Agency invocation of these actions, in turn, serves to (re)construct these meanings. Simply, meaningful social action and attendant social construction are the defining elements of the international political system (Dessler, 1989, p.461).

For their part, neo-institutionalists apply the idea of the constitution of the agent by structures to other situations implying that the more an environment is institutionalized and constrained by roles, the more interests are identified through the acceptance or the attribution of these roles by agents (Guzzini, 2002, p.12).

These approaches often focus on how, in the course of time, structures and in particular institutions, could influence individual beliefs, which independently of any material change, could then influence behaviour. In both cases preferences may change, interests undergird.

Constructivists argue that through shared beliefs structures influence the very definition of identity, then interests and finally behaviour. For such reasoning to be sustainable, however, constructivists must first redefine what they mean by "structure" (Wendt 1995, pp. 73-74). First, structure has to be conceived as a set of social practices, not as an objective constraint. Second, it cannot rely entirely, or even partially, on materialist premises. Material factors indeed, cannot be conceived as causal factors withstanding the meaning assigned to them. Meaning, in turn, is not something "subjective" but is rather based on a network of shared knowledge and understandings (Wendt, 1995, p. 73).

In redefining structures Wendt borrows certain key concepts from the structuration theory, according to which social structures are real (although intangible) entities that create agents, but that are ontologically dependent upon (but not reducible to) their elements (Wendt 1987, p. 359). Structuration theory gives agents and structures equal ontological status and generates a "dialectical synthesis" that overcomes the subordination of one to the other. It makes agents and structures ontologically distinct yet "mutually constituted" entities (Wendt 1987, p. 339; 356).

In Social Theory of International Politics, Wendt argues that international structures exist only to the extent that social agents impute ideas to them. More specifically, he underlines that: "social theory is concerned with the nature of human agency and its relationship to

social structures, the role of ideas and material forces in social life, the proper form of social explanations, and so on” (1999, p. 5). Therefore, Wendt argues that the debate in international relations should focus on the ontological essence of the international world and what it is made of rather than how we can know it (Wendt, 1999, p. 16).

In openly criticising Kenneth Waltz, Wendt is convinced that a microeconomic approach to the study of the international political structure does not reflect what the latter is made of (Wendt, 1992b, p. 2). In discordance with the ontological materialism of neo-realism, Wendt assumes that social life is organised around ideational structures with constitutive effects on norms, rules and agents which lay down the regulation of social interactions (Wendt, 1999, pp. 90-91).

Wendt thus re-conceptualises the international political structure by focusing on its social and intersubjective ontology which enables living social agents to interact and structure reality (Friedmann and Starr, 1997, p. 14). In doing so, Wendt (1999, p. 5) removes the necessary elements for the idealist conception of the international political framework, which is structured around the principle of knowledge distribution. In short, Alexander Wendt's social constructivist theory is based on the assumption that “the most fundamental fact about society is the nature and structure of social consciousness” (Wendt, 1999, p. 24). In the author's view, “the character of international life is determined by the beliefs and expectations that states have about each other, and these are constituted largely by social rather than material structures” (Wendt, 1999, p. 20).

Wendt accepts the neo-realist assumption that the international political structure produces causal effects. However, Wendt distances himself from Waltz by insisting on the (mutually) constitutive effects of political actors and structures. As the structure of any political system consists of at least three elements - material conditions, interests and ideas. In Wendt's view, these elements should “fit together into some kind of whole” and are all equally important for explaining the outcome (Wendt, 1999, p. 139). These three elements cannot be understood separately, because “for any given social system there is just structure in the singular” (Ibid.). Wendt criticises Waltz, for neglecting interaction structures (micro-structures) in his theorisation of international politics and for confusing these structures as elements operating at the unit level. From a constructivist standpoint, “macro-level structures are only produced and reproduced by practices and interactions structures at the micro-level.” Therefore, Wendt considers that these “micro-structural foundations should be part of system theorizing” (Wendt, 1999, p.150).

Micro-structure is the structure of interaction and it explains the relations of agents with structure and other parts of a social system (Wendt, 1999, p. 148). According to Wendt, to explain agents' identity and behaviour it is not sufficient to take into account agents attributes alone, only by bringing the interaction level into the analysis we can reach a relevant explanation of their action. This interaction is constructed around the disposition of beliefs, objectives, strategies and capabilities of agents. Even if attributes help constitute the nature of interactions, the latter is a determinant factor that operates above and beyond the actors' attributes. (Wendt, 1999, p.149).

On the other side, under the macro-structure level of analysis Wendt refers to the structural explanation of the outcomes of anarchy. For an understanding of macro-level, the knowledge of the underlying micro-levels is fundamental but deficient. The macro-structure is an autonomous level yet dependent on micro-structures. To synthesize the relations between the micro and macro-structures Wendt uses the concept of supervenience. He defines supervenience as a non-reductive and non-causal relation of ontological dependency of one class of facts over another (Wendt 1999, p. 156).

Social structures supervene on agents because there can be no difference between those structures without a difference among the agents who constitute them. However this relationship is not causal but constitutive (Wendt 1999, p.156). Structures are built through practices and self-understandings of agents. At the same time, agents' behaviour and interests acquire meaning as they are built and explained by structures (Wendt, 1999, p.164).

This research will focus on the AKP party and its representatives and will analyze the evolution of the neo-Ottoman policy of the AKP, firstly under Davutoğlu and secondly, under Erdoğan. Dressler (1989, p. 461) has noted that “any given action will reproduce or transform some part of the social structure” and on the same line, foreign policy behaviours, interests and ideas of AKP officials are also influenced by pre-existing traditional foreign policy structures and at the same time they are shaping it. Therefore, I will try to identify changes that might occur when agents bring new identities and discourses into Turkish foreign policy tradition. This seems particularly relevant as the AKP is characterized by a strong degree of centralization and by a hierarchical decision-making system which tends to concentrate decision in the hands of its leaders. As highlighted by Neset et al. (2019), especially after Erdoğan's authoritarian turn in 2016, “decisions are taken within the Presidency in a highly compartmentalized and personalized fashion”. In this sense, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Davutoğlu and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan play a special role in formulating and shaping Turkish foreign policy, and are usually regarded as Turkey's spokespersons with the outside world. Hence, when studying the relationship between Turkey and the Balkan countries, focusing on these two figures seems inevitable.

1. 3. Identity, Strategic Cultures and Critical Geopolitics

Once the structure has been redefined in more conceptual terms, constructivists can re-conceptualise the effect that such shared meanings have on actual behaviour and they do that mainly through the concept of identity. A prominent example is brought by Lebow and Risse-Kappen (1994) who analyse the end of the Cold War through constructivists' lenses.

The Cold War can be analysed as a role game or as a system of interactions defined by a certain shared belief structure that suggests roles and norms that are interiorized by agents, becoming part of their self-definition (Fierke, 1998).

However, the reproduction of these practices depends on the process of role distribution and not on the “anarchic nature” of the system. When successfully applied, Gorbachev's “new doctrine” could modify the very definition of Soviet preferences and interests, redefining the role traditionally carved out for the Soviet Union (Guzzini, 2002, p.224).

He then underlines how these new doctrines or ideas “do not float freely” but result from decision-makers being exposed to several and often contradictory policy concepts and to what he calls domestic structure. Kappen defines the domestic structure of the state as “the nature of its political institutions, state-society relations, and the values and norms embedded in its political culture” (Kappen, 1995, p.187).

Through this example, Risse-Kappen (1995) highlights how domestic practices, such as the patterns of interaction between state and society, private actors’ different degree of accessibility to the centres of government, influence both how decisions are made and why.

The constructivist focus on identity reopens the “black box” of national interest (Finnemore, 1996; Katzenstein 1996; Weldes, 1999) as maximisation of utility defined in terms of power or security. Among realists, some had already shown that power maximisation was not empirically the only nor the best strategy (Aron, 1962; Wolfers, 1962).

The formation of identities determines the development of specific preferences. A country that sees itself as a mercantile or pacifist state will behave differently from one that builds its identity on power and material forces. Constructivists conceive national interests neither as an exogenous variable nor something to be taken for granted, but rather as something to be explained and inscribed in a wider picture.

By marking the distinction between micro and macro structures and by taking interests more seriously than realists and ideas more seriously than neo-institutionalists, Wendt positions the constructivist synthesis on the middle ground within the systemic theorisation of international relations (Guzzini, 2002, p. 12). His main aim is to enable theoretical reflection around states’ social interactions and to shed light on how these are constitutive of macro-structures, made of collective knowledge and “representational practices” on rationality, strategies and preferences of actors (Wendt, 1999, p. 159).

From this perspective, the macro-structures of international politics are above all “intersubjective” phenomena whose origin and meaning are to be found at the level of social interactions, since “culture is more than the sum of the shared ideas that individuals have in their heads, but a communally sustained and thus inherently public phenomenon” (Wendt, 1999, p. 164).

Thus, when Wendt asserts that culture has direct influence on actors, he supports the thesis that culture participates in the formation of actors’ identities and interests, and that actors’ actions continuously produce and reproduce identity representations of Self and Other (Wendt, 1999, p. 36). The process of constructing social identities is therefore purely relational and is the key for understanding the construction of the state’s preferences and interests.

Starting from Wendt's premises this work will study how traditional directives in Turkish foreign policy have influenced the construction of identity and interest of AKP and their officials and how this ideational structure has fuelled Turkey's interest in the Balkans.

He then argues that we can distinguish at least three types of "cultures of anarchy" that are organised around three "logics of social interaction" (Wendt, 1999, p. 249).

This intends that anarchy cannot be regarded as a unitary phenomenon that generates the same kinds of impulse everywhere. Different forms of anarchy generate different types of identities and roles that a state plays in the international system.

The culture of Hobbesian anarchy is characterised by a friend-enemy logic as in Carl Schmitt's political reflection. In a Hobbesian anarchist system, states interpret international politics as a zero-sum game, a struggle for survival, thus the other state is an enemy that must be annihilated if its own security is not to be jeopardised.

According to Wendt, this kind of international logic has often been dominant throughout history and still is in some parts of the world. But the last few centuries have actually been largely characterised by a Lockean culture of anarchy (Wendt, 1999, p. 260).

The culture of Lockean anarchy took hold with the establishment of the Westphalian system of states, in which the main actors no longer saw each other as enemies but as rivals. The difference between enemy and rival is essentially linked to the emergence of the idea of sovereignty: although there may be deep disagreements between states and heated conflicts, they recognise each other's right to exist, they recognise the authority of a government in domestic affairs and its autonomy in the conduct of foreign policy. The prevalence of the Lockean culture of anarchy explains, according to Wendt, the low rate of "mortality" of states in recent centuries (Wendt, 1999, p. 278).

Finally, the third type of anarchy culture is the Kantian one, not yet fully established, although already present in some international sub-systems, such as the transatlantic one. In an international system in which a Kantian culture of anarchy prevails, the significant actors see themselves as friends: they resolve disputes using peaceful means and are ready to help each other should a threat to the security of one of them emerge. (Wendt, 1999, p. 297).

Such cultures of anarchy are also often regarded as strategic cultures that reflect the behaviour and the posture of a state on the international chessboard. In this sense, it is particularly relevant for this thesis the analysis of foreign policy that relies on the concept of strategic and security cultures. Kenneth Booth (1990, p.121) defined strategic culture as a "nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behaviour, habits, customs, achievement and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems with respect to the threat or use of force".

The study of security cultures and their impact on states' foreign policies are the object of Peter Katzenstein's (1996) research. His starting point is that states' interests and behaviour

are culturally determined and he identifies two conceptual elements that affect the security policies of states: cultural-institutional context and political identities.

The first element refers to the set of norms, procedures, principles and rules that influence the behaviour of political actors. The different political-organisational cultures of France and Japan, for instance, condition the process of foreign policy formation. French organisational culture favours a centralisation and hierarchization of the decision-making process and the figure of the president is dominant. The Japanese culture, with its emphasis on hierarchy and respect for the principle of seniority, produces a political system dominated by the upper level of the ruling class. At the same time, the search for the consensus of as many people as possible leads to a decision-making style that encourages the flow of information and continuous negotiation (Katzenstein and Okawara, 1993, p. 85-6).

The second element refers to how states define themselves and how identities are formed through interaction with others and the operation of internal dynamics. The military defeat of Germany and Japan in World War II played a key role in the emergence of a “pacifist” political identity. The dynamics of domestic politics played an equally important role. (Berger, 1996).

The interests that states pursue with their foreign policies can change as social identities change, which in turn change as a result of the processes of interaction with other states.

National security policies are influenced by cultural factors that provide the “lens” through which international politics is analysed and response strategies devised: with greater or lesser emphasis on peaceful or military, defensive or offensive means. There are five ways in which cultural factors influence states’ security policies (Jepperson, Wendt, Katzenstein, 1996, p. 52).

1. Cultural and institutional elements directly influence the security interests and security policies of states. The refusal of some countries to contemplate the use of force as a viable policy option directly affects the level of military budget, the format of the Armed Forces, and the tendency to militarise security issues.
2. Cultural and institutional elements influence the identities of states. In this case, the cultural influence is indirect, as it is mediated by the development of a social identity that then influences state preferences and its foreign policy.
3. Changes in identities influence national interests. Japan’s transition from a militaristic and expansionist to a ‘mercantile’ state after the Second World War exemplifies these dynamics.
4. State identities influence international structures. This is what Wendt refers to when he speaks of cultures of anarchy as we have seen above, arguing that the different structures of international systems are essentially defined by the intersubjective meaning attached to them, rather than by the distribution of power.
5. State’s policies contribute to the construction and reproduction of international structures. Anarchy is not an inevitable condition of the relational life of nations, but the result of the reiteration of states actions which through their behaviour and posture contribute to generating the security dilemma (Wendt, 1992).

In more recent times the concept of security culture has been integrated by other concepts brought by post-constructivist studies and in particular by critical geopolitical theory which has introduced a whole new set of terminology and conceptual tools in constructivist analysis such as political memory, geopolitical thinking, and strategic perspectives.

Critical geopolitics draws on the already rich baggage of critical reflections on the relationship between power, geography and discourse, conducted especially by French "heterodox" scholars Yves Lacoste and Claude Raffestin in a context intellectually dominated by Anglo-American neo-classic geopolitical theories. Yves Lacoste (1976) geopolitical conception proposes a realistic but constructivist approach based on a double critical analysis. On the one hand, 'situations' of power rivalries are inscribed in space, in territories, no matter their scale. On the other hand, spatial "representations" of these rivalries and territorial political stakes are inscribed in people's minds, imaginations and ideologies. There are thus two possible fields of analysis for geopolitical scholars.

The first, favoured by realists and Anglo-American school, emphasises the study of "geopolitical situations" that bind and profoundly condition the political conduct of states and that tend as much as possible towards objectivity.

The second a sort of psychoanalysis of "geopolitical ideas", preferred by critical geopolitics and constructivists, deals with the understanding of the system of representations and geographical imaginaries that constrains political action of those who govern (Frank, 2012, p.150).

Likewise, Claude Raffestin (1980, p.12) argues that if neoclassical geopolitics rediscovered the relevance of the geo-structure of international political reality (the geographical and spatial bases of the power and security of states), critical geography preferred to focus instead on meta-geography, in the sense of geographical discourses and representation that participate in the construction and reproduction of international political reality.

Thus, while classical and neo-classical geopolitics highlight the binding factor of geographical and spatial factors and structures in which a state's foreign policy remain constrained, critical geopolitics set out the ways in which a polity (governments, dominant social groups) thinks, imagines and constructs geographical spaces. In short, if classical geopolitics assumes geography as a political factor, critical geopolitics assumes politics as a geographical factor (Dodds, 2001; Kuus, 2010).

Critical geopolitical theory takes into consideration a wide spectrum of socio-political aspects and processes including representation about population, territory, ethnic groups, borders as well as conceptions and models of the state and its internal and external projection. (Kolossoff & Scott, 2013).

Critical geopolitical tools will be used to identify the evolution of Turkish strategic culture and to investigate the transformation of foreign policy approach towards the Western Balkans. Within this framework, I would argue that political memory, geopolitics and foreign policy of Turkey are indeed intertwined and reciprocally influential.

Perceptions of domestic and strategic environments play an important role in the orientation of foreign policy and they consistently influence the narrative through which foreign policy is conducted.

In this sense, what Guzzini (2012) calls geopolitical memory influences directly the perception of security that a country has in relation to its past and the threats it had to endure in order to survive and defend its existence. The construction of geopolitical memory is thus tied to the political and social context of the polity. Nilufer Narli (2019, pp. 59-60) argues that political memory is linked to “political and public discourses, it is connected to personal and public identities, political actor’s visions, and ethnicity, and nationalism, religious and linguistic groups” and can be defined as “what a society in each era can remember about the past political events by reconstructing the past within its contemporary frame of reference and needs”. Whether conscious or not, this re-interpretation of the past contributes to the shaping of the identity of a state and in the definition of its interests which is precisely the case of the AKP’s neo-Ottoman discourse in both domestic and foreign policy.

No matter how dominant a narration can be, there will always be competing visions of past and national identity and Turkey offers a paradigmatic example of conflictual identities ranging from Kemalism to Turkism and neo-Ottomanism.

In a self-defined post-constructivist perspective Rihard Lebow (2016) claims that national identity should not be regarded as a unitary notion but rather as the interaction of multiple self-identifications “that are labile in character and rise and fall in relative importance” (Lebow 2016, p. 7). According to the English sociologist, constitutive elements of national identity are status/roles, affiliations among state’s actors, relationships to territory and population, and understanding people have of their past. Drawing on Guzzini, Lebow (2016, p. 33) defines political memory as “biographical narratives of the state and its people” which reflects the historical and memory heritage that the state draws on to define itself.

2. Turkey’s Foreign Policy Determinants

For those involved in studying and making international relations, defining the strategy of an actor and especially a nation-state is a crucial step. Strategy and power are structured around what Renouvin (1964) calls “deep forces”, which includes both material factors like geography, demography, economy and also non-material factors, which he defines as “collective psychology”. These psychological traits of the state are indeed to be found in the different expressions that form a collectivity or a state and, in particular, in its ultimate strategy for survival in an anarchic international system. Strategy represents what a power must necessarily achieve, its fundamental needs, the absolute priorities related to its environment and to its historical, cultural, anthropological, demographic and economic characteristics.

In order to debunk the classic concept of a strategy that is pre-designed and just to be discovered. We have to recognize its constitutive elements and study the continuity of foreign

policy traditions. There are thus recurrent tendencies in a state foreign policy history that seems to have structural basis and from which we can define foreign policy determinants.

In his article "*Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy*" Aydin (1999) draws on Rosenau's (1971) concept of time continuum that divides dynamics that tend to change slowly and dynamics that undergo rapid change. Aydin argues that, while studying the segments of foreign policy, we should distinguish between structural variables and conjunctural variables. The firsts are long-lasting and rather static, the latter are shifting more easily under the influence of domestic and foreign policy.

In this chapter, this thesis is going to focus on the structural variables and the traditions, values and norms that have created a set of relatively inflexible principles that guides Turkish foreign policy.

The traditions and principles of Turkish foreign policy can be traced back to a plethora of articles published in the 1990s and 2000s (Aydin, 1999, 2003; Bilgin, 2012; Bozdaglioglu, 2004; Henze, 1993; Karaosmanoğlu, 2000; Sander, 1984; Stone, 2001, 2004).

The following traditions of Turkish foreign policy often overlap in these texts, but it is the emphasis and weight given to each that divides the opinions of the above-mentioned authors although, in general, there seems to be a certain degree of convergence of opinion.

According to Aydin, three main traditional inputs of Turkish foreign policy such as the Ottoman experience and its long-lasting legacy; the geopolitical realities of Turkey; and the ideological foundations defined under the leadership of Atatürk, have structural influence on decision-makers.

Alternately, Stone (2001, 2004), draws four pillars of Turkish foreign policy; namely the pragmatic principle, Atatürk's principles, geopolitical position and vital economic interests. In the author's view, these pillars are subordinate to a long-lasting inclination towards the west that he conceives as "a central plank of understanding a first principle and, above all else, a force of continuity in Turkish foreign policy" (2001, p.14).

In line with Stone, Sander (1984) Bozdaglioglu, (2004), Aydin (2003) recognize as well the primacy of western orientation constant in Turkey's foreign policy tradition and its European vocation.

Moreover, notwithstanding the above mentioned dimensions, Bilgin (2012) focuses on geopolitical assumptions and perceptions while Karaosmanoğlu (2000) analyses the role of national security culture and the role Turkish military in shaping foreign policy.

2. 1. Geopolitical Position and Geopolitical Dogmas

Turkey's strategic importance is first and foremost, the natural consequence of its geographical position, being part of five regional subsystems; the Eastern Mediterranean, the Near East, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It is the land crossroads between

Europe, Asia and Africa, as well as the watcher of the strategic choke points between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

In terms of history, culture and its area of influence, according to Davutoğlu (2007, p.77), “Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkans, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean Gulf, and Black Sea country all at the same time”.

Turkey represents a paradigmatic case study for assessing the relevance of geopolitical perspective in providing an explanation of how foreign policy preferences, and thus the interests of a state, are formulated. In addition to its unique geographical location, Turkey is also the crossroads of different civilisations: the Middle Eastern Muslim and the Western Europeans. “It is a country with a predominantly Muslim population, but at the same time, it represents a unique version of a secular state that comes close to a Western-style democracy” (Öniş, 1995 p.50).

Although modern Turkey has undergone major territorial changes and only covered 15% of the territories occupied by the Ottoman Empire at its peak, its position and strategic value have remained unchanged. Especially in the eyes of Turkish decision-makers, the geographical importance and foreign attention to this strip of land have not yet changed radically (Aydın, 1999).

In this sense, Bilgin (2012) defines four geopolitical dogmas that have marked Turkish imaginaries and, in particular, those of its officials. In fact, especially during the Cold War, Turkey was a state of deep strategic importance for the Western bloc as it bordered the Soviet bloc and could limit its action within the Black sea. By holding control over the straits of Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, Turkey and Western bloc would prevent the Soviets from accessing the Mediterranean sea, gaining then considering strategic importance. It is not by chance that during the hottest years of the Cold War the Americans deployed fifteen long-range missiles in five sites in the surroundings of Izmir, causing the year later the response of the U.S.S.R. culminating with the Cuban Crisis. It is in this context that Turkish officials like General İlhan imposed their geopolitical vision as preponderant in Turkish military and foreign policy discourse.

The first assumption is its traditional attachment to classical geopolitics which holds that geographical elements are given unchangeable and are waiting to be grasped by policymakers. Thanks to the “scientific” and “objective” character derived from the determinism of geography, geopolitical thinking is considered the only one capable of shedding light on world affairs. Geography, in particular, is regarded as the main variable that supervenes the demographic, military and economic dimensions.

The second feature of Turkish geopolitics is precisely the shared belief among officials in the primacy of geography as the driving force behind world politics. Since geographical knowledge is tangible and traceable to a map, policy recommendations that refer to geopolitics are portrayed as “*fait accomplis* of geography” (İlhan in Bilgin, 2012, p.154).

The third dogma of geopolitics is the perceived geographical uniqueness of Turkey's position. In the words of general İlhan (1989, p.61) "Turkey occupies a very significant position according to both the heartland theory [of Mackinder] and the rimland theory [of Spykman]... No matter which theory you adopt in your analysis Turkey is one of those countries that demand priority at both the regional and global levels." While it is true that its geographical position gives it added power, the perceived geographical determinism enchains policymakers by reducing the spectrum of possibilities for action. Bilgin points out that in İlhan's perception power is understood purely in material terms, with a focus on the military dimension, thus leaving out the economic, democratic and normative meanings that will be the basis of Özal's foreign policy conception first and Davutoğlu's later.

Another official Işık, (1987) assumes the extra deterministic influence of geography in Turkish foreign and domestic policy when he titled his book "Turkey has to be strong due to its strategic position".

From this comes the belief that Turkey has to become a strong state in order to survive. An assumption based on a deterministic distortion of the conception of geography, which in classical geopolitics was subservient to the needs and interests of a population while in Turkish'officials view emerges the dominance of geography over state structure and internal politics.

The last feature of the dogma of geopolitics is the portrayal of Turkey as surrounded by a circle of enemies who envy its position and want thus to take control over Turkey. This fear is exemplified in 2004 by the success of the dystrophic novel *Metal Fırtına* (Metal Storm) that tells the story of an imaginary US invasion of Turkey a few years later (Bilgin, 2012, p.155).

According to Kirisci (1999) this fear is the natural outcome of what has been referred as Sevres Syndrome, a perceived threat of being encircled by enemies, often neighbouring countries, from which Turkey must beware. The symptoms of Sèvres are still tangible and the heritage of the Ottoman legacy is long to be forgotten. Those historical traumas will be addressed more in detail in the next section.

2. 2. The Sèvres Syndrome and the Trauma of Ottoman Amnesia

Turkish foreign policy has always been influenced and continues to carry on its shoulders the burden of its imperial past. In Turkey, the history of the Ottoman Empire is collected in six encyclopaedic volumes, and however long the life of this mighty empire was, in this context I will focus on the last breaths of this long-lasting empire and I will analyse the influence it exerted in shaping the foreign policy of the Turkish Republic born from the Ottoman ashes.

The First World War ended in defeat on all fronts for the Ottoman Empire, which was forced to surrender with the Mondros Armistice. Soon afterwards, France occupied Cilicia, the British took control of Mosul and Samsun on the Black Sea and Italian troops seized the coasts of Antalya and Marmaris. Istanbul was divided between allied forces which then sent a joint expedition led by a British commissariat. The armistice was followed by the Treaty of

Sèvres (10 August 1920), in which the sultan renounced all governing rights over his remaining non-Turkish territories. The treaty also enshrines the right to self-determination for the Armenian and Kurdish populations, thus making the Empire a shadow of its former self (Bilgin, 2012). The Treaty of Sèvres was the culmination of the so-called Eastern Question, a set of issues centred on Ottoman anti-imperialist rivalry that led Tsar Nicholas to label the Ottoman Empire “the sick man of Europe” (Martin et al, 2004, p.9).

It was only with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1924, that Turkey's present borders were established (with the exception of the Syrian province of Hatay, which only became Turkish in 1939). The signing of the treaty also marked the end of a long period of war that led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and to the birth of the Republic of Turkey, proclaimed on 29 October 1923 by Mustafa Kemal.

These two treaties marked the beginning of a chronic Turkish insecurity complex, reinforced over time by further threats to the unity of the country, perceived up to the present day and known under the name of ‘Sèvres syndrome’. To this situation must be added real and perceived internal threats, namely the Islamist threat to demolish the secular state and the threat posed by religious and ethnic minorities, for instance the Kurds. The creation of a Kurdish state in the region remains among the visceral concerns of contemporary Turkey, which fears the imposition of conditions similar to the failed Treaty of Sèvres, should Turkey prove weak in the eyes of the West. This fear, which has accompanied the Republic of Turkey throughout its history, re-emerged powerfully in Turkey’s collective imagination with the 1991 collapse of Yugoslavia followed by the horrific war in Bosnia. This event like no others played a pivotal role in questioning Turkey’s Western orientation favouring the restoration of the Ottoman-Islamic heritage as a core component of Turkish national identity (Yavuz, 2020).

The “Sèvres syndrome” is crucial to understanding the evolution of the Turkish state and its perception of foreign policy. In fact, it has not only affected the political leadership but it has ended up involving shared and collective memory as well.

Although almost a century has passed, the aftermath of Sèvres and Lausanne still evokes traumatic symbolic imageries among Turkish people and finds room in the rhetoric of Turkish officials. President Erdoğan, in a public speech in December 2016 suggested that Turkey could extend its borders beyond those provided for in the Treaty of Lausanne, asserting that:

“At this critical time when there are attempts to restructure the world and our region, if we stop, we will find ourselves facing Sèvres conditions” (Kayaoglu, 2016).

Such trauma has generated a counter-process of remembrance and nostalgia of the Ottoman past of Turkey severely stigmatized by Mustafa Kemal and its officers in their construction of Modern Turkey. This process of identity schizophrenia dates back to when, in the mid of the XIX century, Europe’s “sick man” weakened by the Greek and Serbian revolution, tried a last-ditch effort by adopting a wide-ranging reform plan that went by the name of “Tanzimat” i. e. reorganisation. In its last days, the multi-ethnic empire had to deal with endogenous

issues of instability, administrative and economic inefficiency, and insurrections that threatened its very survival. The inability of the Ottoman administration to integrate a large variety of identity composition of populations within an equally large territory brought the Empire to a breaking point. The population was still classified following the “millet” system, which divided the autonomous religious communities. With the Tanzimat reforms, the millets were redefined in a secular and egalitarian way transforming religious groups into minorities and majorities (Karpas, 1988). The religious and ethnic multiplicity, which on the one hand formed the backbone of the Ottoman Empire, known for its cosmopolitan nature, on the other hand revealed the lack of a uniformly recognized identity. The attempt to create a supra ethnic and trans religious civic identity was dictated by the necessity to constitute a new social glue that could have made up for the lack of economic resources and legitimacy. This first step of westernization of the empire towards the nation-state, later-born under the aegis of Atatürk, was not the expression of a collective ferment. Therefore, this top-down attempt “to use one single citizenship as a common political identity in order to achieve equality and unity among all Ottoman subjects and supersede differences of faith, ethnicity, and language” failed under the pressure of separatist movements (Karpas, 1982, p.16).

The Ottoman legacy carries a perennial identity dilemma between imperial cosmopolitanism and homogenization under the cloak of the nation-state. Yavuz (2020) argues that the Kemalist state-building project made a clean break with the Ottoman past, but this traumatic process gave rise to an imperial “ghost” that has haunted the nation-state since the collapse of the empire. In her book *The Future of Nostalgia* Svetlana Boym (2001) reflects upon the etymology of the term nostalgia, marking a distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia deals with the “return home” portion, i.e. the *nostos*; while reflective nostalgia centres on longing and reconstruction of what has been lost, i.e. the *algos*. Drawing on this distinction Yavuz (2020, p. 22) coined the expression Ottomanalgia intended as the reproduction, the affirmation, the re-imagination of the past for the future of the Turkish society. This feeling which is the underlining leitmotiv of the Ottomanist, pax-Ottomana and neo-Ottomanist discourse in both domestic and foreign policy, recalls “the memory of the multidimensional loss in the process of the creation of the Republic” (ibid, p. 6). The sick man of Europe has survived but has not yet overcome its identity crisis, as a post-imperial melancholy spring in its society suggesting foreign policy directions.

2. 3. The Six arrows of Kemalism and a Bow pointing West

As seen in the previous section the westernisation process of Turkey started with the reforms of the XIX and XX centuries. Bozdaglioglu (2004, pp. 43-5) argues that Ottoman officials had foreseen borrowing Western cutting-edge technologies and scientific knowledge without incorporating western culture and values that could erode the Islamic character of the empire. However, the impact of westernisation got out of hand resulting in a new identity vocation for the Turkish state and its people. With the establishment of the Turkish Republic by the Young

Turks, Western identity came to compete with the other two fundamental identities of the country, namely the Ottoman/Islamic identity and the Turkish identity.

This polyhedral identity conception was resumed by Ziya Gokalp (1968, p. 48) in his main dogma of social catechism: “I am a member of Turkish nation, the Islamic community and Western civilization”. Gokalp was one of the architects of the Turkish nationalist project and his thought was deeply inspired by Durkheim and his interpretation of civilization as a broader concept than religion or culture. Such understanding allowed Gokalp to theorize the seemingly incompatible inscription of Islamic culture into the more developed Western civilization (Xypolia, 2016).

Mustafa Kemal, in the effort of designing the national state of Turkey, resumed the route to the West drawn by Gokalp. However, in his view Islam represents the antonym of civilization and progress. By rejecting both the Ottoman and Islamic characters and their institutions Kemal tried to westernize not only the core of the nation and its principles but also the identity of its population.

The Kemalist revolution was meant to radically affect most aspects of Turkish society and “to sweep away most, if not all, of its traditional beliefs and institutions” (Osman, 1984, p.51).

The unpicking of fundamental social structures generated a much deeper revolution understood in Pasolini’s (1975, p.40) terms as “anthropological mutation”, a process of substitution of social identities that pervaded both the public and private sphere of Turkish people. From the exclusion of Islam from social and political life to the adoption of new symbols and dress codes and to the introduction of the Latin alphabet, modernization of Turkey provided political, economical, legal and social reforms that were aimed at redesigning the basis of social and state legitimacy.

Reformism or “Revolutionism” was along with Nationalism, Secularism, Republicanism, Populism, Etatism one of the six arrows of Kemalism that guided the new Turkey in both domestic and foreign policy formulation. Atatürk’s foreign policy was indeed the natural corollary of his domestic policies as his motto *peace at home, peace in the world* testifies.

The nascent Republic of Turkey needed a solid foreign policy that could meet the challenges of the new international system without endangering the existence of the state. The new directions for Turkish foreign policy were thus extremely important for the years to come (Aydin, 2003).

Atatürk’s foreign policy objectives contrasted with the traditional expansionist ideology of the Ottoman Empire or other modern military regimes. The central aim of Turkey was to sit at the same table of Western civilized nations in pursuit of peace and friendship (Bozadglioglu, 2004, p.52). With the six arrows in the quiver, the bow of the new Republic was unequivocally pointing in one direction. In Atatürk words: “Turks have always gone towards the West. We want a European Turkey, in other words a Turkish country that looks towards the West” (Stone, 2001, p.3).

2. 4. Pragmatism and Balance of Power

Despite Atatürk trying to design a new direction for Turkey he could not totally depart from Ottoman security culture. Although he indeed tore down the political and religious pillars of the Ottoman tradition, as an experienced military man he and the other Turkish officials had long studied and admired Ottoman warfare (Walker, 2009). For instance, Keyman & İçduygu, (2005) underline that Ottoman state centered political culture permeated the Republic of Turkey and constituted the *modus vivendi* of Turkish modernity. Moreover, the pragmatic outlook of Turkish security culture was not only a prerogative of the military elite but also of Turkish people. As Sander (1984, p. 31) notes “the very quick adaptation of Turkish citizens to the concept of a secular nation-state was accomplished thanks to the Ottoman heritage of a practical, realistic outlook”.

Focusing on the evolution of security culture and the military in Turkey, Karaosmanoğlu (2000) explains that through the centuries the Ottoman Empire shifted from a predominantly offensive military character to a mostly defensive one, nonetheless the pragmatic *realpolitik* culture remained central in both phases. In his early period, the Ottoman Empire was aiming at maximising its power by annexing new territories and populations. Until the XVII century, it competed on an equal footing with the other European powers and contributed to balancing their influence on the continent. When Ottoman primacy started to falter the empire could not stand the military imbalance and thus adopted a more defensive diplomatic-strategic behaviour. As a secondary power, the core foreign policy interest of the Empire was to maintain the status quo and its territorial integrity with a smart but cautious diplomatic style. European powers, on their side, wanted to avoid the creation of a power gap in the region. “Thanks to the contemporary international system of the “balance of powers”, and the Ottomans' understanding of its main features, the Empire's decline took 300 years and its collapse came only with a world war” (Aydin, 1999, p.161).

From this moment onwards the concepts of balance of power and the sceptical and cautious diplomatic approach became first distinctive traits of the declining empire and then of modern Turkey. Between 1920 and 1952 the fragile Republic of Turkey signed multiple neutrality and friendship treaties and eventually committed to join NATO in 1952. This was made to counterbalance Russian rising power and to appease Turkish insecurity complex of never-sleeping neighbours.

3. Turkey and the Balkans

3. 1. The Heritage of the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman Yoke

The Balkans had been a central part of the Ottoman Empire for more than five centuries, yet during this period, the term “Balkans” did not exist. Western travellers referred to this region as European Turkey, a distant, exotic and unknown land on the fringes of Europe. In Constantinople, however, the Balkans (or Rumelia as it was called by the Ottomans) were by no means a remote periphery of the Empire, but rather its nerve centre, constituting some of

its most important provinces. For example, the practice of *devshirme*¹ was particularly widespread in the Balkans. As a result, the Ottoman high administration and army officials always included many brilliant minds from the Balkans. Dozens of grand viziers and many other officials of the empire were of Balkan origin. This is a good example of the kind of relationship Ottoman officers had with their home regions. In this regard, it should be underlined that the Ottoman Empire constituted an identity, to which the Balkan peoples contributed, built on a historical-political rather than an ethnic or religious ground. In this sense Todorova (2009, p.237) marks the point that among all historical legacies “it would not be exaggerated to say that the Balkans are the Ottoman legacy” .

Undoubtedly the Ottoman occupation, more than any other event, has indelibly marked the Balkan history. The Empire contributed greatly to the structural change in the Balkans in terms of economic prosperity, infrastructure and political development. The Ottoman heritage is so deeply rooted and internalised that it is no longer perceived as foreign but as a constitutive part of Balkan identity. In the words of Philliou (2008, p.661) “the Ottoman legacy is what is present but not perceived” .

The gradual withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans was a long and troubled process that began with the first Serbian uprising (1804) and the Greek insurrection of 1821. Nevertheless, the memory of that long period is still vivid, especially in the areas (Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo) that last broke away from the imperial cordon following the first Balkan War in 1912. The Empire's departure from the Balkans left deep scars in the collective imaginary of both Turkish and Balkan people. In these areas the Balkan peoples began to suffer from the same inferiority complex towards the West that had gripped Atatürk and his people. This sense of being behind in the race towards civilisation led to a tendency for the Balkan countries to distance themselves from the Ottoman past often associated with an era of political, social and cultural backwardness , a past opposed to the Western future that the region was awaiting. In the process of nation building the negation of the “other” seen as the ultimate enemy became a constitutive element in the formation of a new national identity. Balkans’ national leaders often resorted to discourse of the “Ottoman yoke” and used the rejection of the Ottoman past as a shortcut to strengthen national consciousness. Similarly, the Kemalist Republic tried to sever all ties with the Ottoman past, both constitutionally and territorially, nonetheless the imperial ghost continued to hover over Ankara and the orphaned provinces of the Empire.

3. 2. Republic’s Early Relations with Balkan Countries

Relations between the new Republic of Turkey and the Balkan states were profoundly marked by the decade between 1912, the year that ended the First Balkan War, and 1923, when the Greek-Turkish conflict ended with a massive exchange of population. Even though Turkey's founding father Mustafa Kemal was born in Thessaloniki in 1881 his policies

¹ This practice consisted of enlisting male children who were taken from Christian families to be converted to the Islamic faith and then trained as members of the Ottoman administration or enlisted in the influential and prestigious corps of the Janissaries.

neglected the Balkans for a long time. This choice led to an interruption of political, economic and cultural relations between two areas that until then had been deeply intertwined (Billette & Dérens, 2014).

The new Republic was focused on the construction of a nation state with a strong ethnic connotation. The process of constructing a Turkish identity also involved the negation of minority identities (Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, etc.) that were largely abandoned to their fate. For their part, the Balkan countries in turn sought other political models, other allies and other protectors. The difficult process of creating new Balkan nation-states from the ashes of the Balkan wars caused a huge flow of migration. On the one hand, Christians fled the remaining Ottoman territories moving to other autonomous states or in territories under Russian or Austrian protection. On the other hand, Muslim populations maintained close ties with Turkey: commercial, family, academic and even mass migrations. Muslim populations who identified with the empire migrated, or were forced to migrate, from the former Ottoman dominated territories to return to the new-born Turkey.

The decade of Balkan conflicts (1912-1922) was followed by a period of peace, resulting from Bulgarian revisionism and the growing influence of Mussolini's Italy on the Balkans. In this context, in order to create a Balkan space of security and cooperation and to re-establish relations with the Balkan countries, Turkey signed a Treaty of Friendship with Albania in Ankara on 15 December 1923, with Bulgaria on 18 October 1925, and a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Yugoslavia in Ankara on 28 October 1925 (Toumarkine, 2003).

Turkey, like Greece, was also behind the holding of three Balkan conferences from 1930 to 1932. On 9 February 1934, the Balkan Pact was signed in Athens. It was a defensive agreement between Turkey, Yugoslavia, Greece and Romania in a context of rising authoritarianism and militarism in Europe. The pact was functional to prevent foreign interference by balancing the influence of great powers over the region by building a solid Balkan block. Oksuz (2007, p. 135) believes that "the expectations in the formation of the Balkan Pact can be interpreted as the summary of Turkey's Balkan policy". Turkish approach is in line with its founding principle of maintaining the status quo and peace in the region while also ensuring its security. Turkish devotion to the pact and to stability in the region is proven by the multiple visits of Turkish statesmen up until 1938, the year of Kemal's death. Atatürk's death did not represent a critical juncture in Turkish foreign policy towards the Balkans as his friend and successor İsmet İnönü kept moving in the same direction. Despite holding the tension between revisionist and anti-revisionist states, the solidarity among Balkan states broke down under the involvement of Balkans in the Second World War

3. 3. From WW2 till The End of the Cold War

During the Second World War, the Italians and the Germans tried on several occasions to take control over the strategic Balkan regions. Turkey, despite its neutrality and good diplomatic relations with the region, found itself in a difficult situation having had to watch its back against a possible German invasion. Turkey kept intense diplomatic relations with Balkans

states but it secured its position by signing a non aggression treaty with Germany in 1941. By avoiding war and its catastrophic consequences, Turkey also relegated itself into a state of isolation in the international system. Isolation would become Turkey's most urgent foreign policy issue (Öksüz, 2007, p.138).

With the end of World War II and the cooling of global tensions, Turkey was pushed out of its neutrality camp and thrown into the strategic vortex of the Cold War. In 1945, Turkey and the Soviet Union could not agree to renew the non-aggression pact signed twenty years earlier. Ankara felt threatened on its North-East flank by the Soviet Union which aimed also to change the agreements established in the Montreux Convention regarding the Bosphorus Strait regime so Turkey gradually abandoned its neutral position and strengthened its ties with the Western Bloc. Being on the front line against the communist threat, Turkey welcomed financial and military aid from the US in accordance with the Truman Doctrine first and then the Marshall Plan. Eventually, the rising fear of the "communist threat" and the establishment of socialist regimes in Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia, accelerated Turkey's decision to enter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, at the same time as Greece, which had just emerged from civil war.

Tensions between Ankara and Moscow also contributed to the slowdown in Turkish-Balkan relations, in the overall context of the Cold War. At the same time, Turkey did not turn away from welcoming Balkan citizens, *muhacir* (refugees) or economic migrants, who came to Turkey on a voluntary basis and within the framework of bilateral conventions such as those signed in the 1950s with Josip Tito's Yugoslavia. The protection of Turks in the region was another factor guiding Turkey's Balkan policy during the Cold-War period. With the assimilationist policies of the communist regime in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, Turks were pressured to either disown their origins and identity or to leave the country.

Being still in a state building phase, the Republic of Turkey maintained friendly relations with the neighboring Yugoslavia. In order to protect its external security and the one of the Turks in the region, Turkey signed a series of agreements of mutual benefit with Yugoslavia. Considering the lack of personnel with technical knowledge in the young Republic, Adnan Menderes, Prime Minister and prominent member of the Turkish Democratic Party, agreed with Tito on the facilitation of migratory flows of Muslim citizens, in particular Albanians, Bosniaks from Bosnia and from the Sanjak² towards Turkey. The number of migrants leaving Yugoslavia towards Turkey varies according to sources, but between 1952 and 1967, Turkey welcomed around 175 000 immigrants from Yugoslavia, all of whom were free immigrants (Öksüz, 2007, p.146).

In turn, Tito facilitated the opening of Turkish departments in many universities throughout the territory of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and ensured the protection of all citizens of Turkish origin in Yugoslavian territory. On 28 February 1953, Turkey, Yugoslavia

² The Sanjak is a historical geo-political region across Serbia and Montenegro and a former district of the ottoman empire .This region was densely populated by Bosniaks (also referred as Bosnian Muslims), who once declared themselves Turkish obtained the right to emigrate to Turkey.

and Greece signed in Ankara the Friendship and Cooperation Agreement which was the prelude of the military treaty promoted by Tito the following year. The Pact had a clear anti-Soviet rationale. Through the entry into force of the pact in the event of Soviet intervention in the region, Yugoslavia, a non-member of the Atlantic Alliance unlike Greece and Turkey, could count on the support of the other two states. The mutual assistance pact was signed in Bled (Slovenia) in 1954: but Stalin's death along with Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement and the eruption of disputes with Greece over Cyprus in the same year made the circumstances for implementing the pact unfavourable.

While Albania, Bulgaria and Romania suffered heavily from Soviet domination, Yugoslavia maintained cordial relations with the Soviet Union but at the same time, it started working towards the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement. Turkey and Greece on their side remained committed to a pro-Western line (Billette & Dérens, 2014, p.22).

Bozadglioglu, (2004, p.58) underlines that “the Cold War order, for the first time, provided Turkey with the opportunity to establish organic links with the West”.

In the process of becoming a European state, Turkey sought early on to join the nascent European organisations. By becoming part of the broad system of Western cooperation under the umbrella of the United States and Europe, the Turkish Republic remained faithful to Atatürk's dream of modernisation and westernization (Müftüler-Baç, 1997).

Turkey's adventure with the European Union began in 1959 when, following Greece's path, it applied for an agreement of association with European Economic Community (EEC). As much as this move was aiming at bringing Turkey closer to becoming an European country, it was also dictated by suspicion and envy “that Greece had been and was still the golden child of the West” (Birand, 1978, p.52). Greece has always represented a main concern in Turkish foreign policy tradition and thus it has always been perceived as a rival power contending Turkey's position in Europe and in the Balkans. Parallel to all these international developments, a military coup took place in Turkey in May 1960 which eventually led to the adoption of the 1961 Constitution. The new legislative framework brought a series of progressive measures enhancing social justice and civil rights such as freedom of expression, press and association. This political ferment gave birth to new parties across the whole political spectrum, which, along with a nascent civil society, contributed to democratize both domestic and foreign policy's decision-making processes.

Although Turkish foreign policy between 1964 and 1971 was clearly guided by identification and alliance with the West, mutually reinforced domestic and international developments prompted Turkey to intensify its relations with the Soviet Union and the Third World without questioning its commitment to Western allies. After four decades of blind faith in the Western world, pluralism in decision-making , rising anti-Americanism on the domestic level , a climate of detente and the compromised reputation of the USA as protector of smaller nations on the international level, made Turkey rediscover its vocation for *realpolitik* (Pakin-Albayrakoglu, 2017, pp.40-43). For instance, regardless of President Johnson's letter of deterrence, Turkish armed forces carried out Operation Cyprus in 1974 which eventually resulted in an U.S. embargo on Turkey between 1975 and 1978.

The Cyprus crisis significantly distanced Turkey from its western partners, but thanks to an ample room for manoeuvre resulting from the détente between the two major geopolitical blocs, Ankara gradually resurfaced in the Balkans. At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s Turkey reached a series of trade agreements, friendship and cooperation treaties with Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania. However, the “national regeneration process” and the “Bulgarianisation campaign” conducted against the Turkish minority irreparably damaged relations between the two states. As a result of the communist regime's assimilation campaign, in 1989, 360,000 Turks, Tatars, Pomaks and Roma, left the country, causing the desertification of entire regions, especially in the Rhodopes³. Turkey-Bulgaria relations enshrine the essence of Turkey's Balkan policy after the Second World War, namely the protection of Turkish minorities in the region and the stemming of communism internally and abroad (Öksüz, 2007, p.149).

3. 4. Özal and the Neo-Ottoman turn

In the same iconic year Turgut Özal became the eight president of Turkey and gave a new imprint on Turkish policy. His political career started as deputy prime minister and responsible for economic affairs under the military regime that took over the country in 1980's coup. After years of domestic turmoil in Turkey, resulting from political collision between the government opposition and military apparatus and from a stagnant economy, the three years of martial law brought relative political and economic stability. On the political side the military reaffirmed Kemalism (and deriving principles) as core belief of the Turkish state. On the economic side, in line with the liberal tendency that characterized the early 80's, Turgut Özal undertook a series of privatizations that favoured medium-large entrepreneurs⁴ and boosted Turkey's integration into the global economy. Özal supported the rules of free market and encouraged the reduction of the role of the state in the economy. During his term in office, taxes, duties and import controls were reduced. The Turkish lira became fully convertible and the interest rate was taken out of the hands of the government and placed in those of the market. These liberal reforms fostered steady economic growth until the early 1990s. After the constitution's repeal and the re-establishment of elections, the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*) triumphed in both 1983 and 1987 elections, and Özal became prime minister. The advent of Özal marked a critical rupture with the first sixty years of modern Turkey, in both domestic and foreign policy. It is at this juncture that neo-Ottomanism, referred as “Özalism” in this phase, begins to take shape in Turkish politics. The figure of Turgut Özal anticipates to a certain degree the historical role that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

³ On muslim minorities in Bulgaria and Greece see Aarbakke (2000), Eminov, (1997) and Curtis (1992)

⁴ These entrepreneurs or “Anatolian tigers,” as political economists called them, were the class Özal personified and that he addressed with its economic reforms. Socially and culturally conservative, but well integrated in international business they challenged the supremacy of secular and industrial elites in Istanbul and Ankara. By enhancing Anatolian economic growth they created a fertile ground for the emergence of AKP's conservative-democratic electorate (Taspinar, 2008).

would later play. There are many similarities between the two leaders' profiles from both a personal and political point of view. Both Özal and Erdoğan were born in inland Turkey into conservative families and educated at the best universities : they both centered their domestic and foreign policy narratives on the rediscovery of the Ottoman heritage, Islamic faith and Pan Turkism. Cengiz Candar foreign policy advisor to President Özal considered by many (for instance Colak, 2006; Yanik, 2011) one of the architects of neo-Ottomanism, stated that Özal's era initiated the burial ceremony of Kemalism (Laçiner, 2009). Indeed, it is precisely in the wake of Özalism that Davutoğlu develops its doctrine to which the concept of neo-Ottomanism is widely associated.

Özal's neo-Ottomanism is characterised by a rediscovery of Turkey's multiple identities, in contrast to the unitary conception of the Kemalist Republic; and by a tendency to prioritise economic aspects rather than politico-state and security logics (Kaya, 2017). Following the Cyprus crisis, Turkey was experiencing a worrying political and economic isolation. Özal aimed to reinvigorate the status of the nation through economic progress. In turn, this progress increased the scope of Turkish foreign policy options as well as its international reputation. The quest to position the country on the international scene followed the domestic developments of the 1990s along with the rediscovery of pre-republican identities and memories. The recovery of Ottoman memory was strictly linked to a gradual restoration of Islamic identity, a process that had its roots in the 1950s under the Democratic Party governments and which gradually gained momentum in the 1990s with the peak of Fethullah Gülen's pan-Islamist movement (Narlı, 2019). Yavuz (2020, p. 124) remarks that “the Kemalist description of the Ottomans as backward, pre-modern, and too Islamic was challenged and the new emerging economic and intellectual class redefined the Ottomans as tolerant, cosmopolitan, sophisticated, European, and liberal”. The reassessment of the Ottoman identity contributed to change the dominant imaginary of the “Ottoman yoke” which portrayed the Ottoman past as a period of despotism and obscurantism.

In contrast to the secular Kemalist vision, Özal put Turkish Islam at the centre of his strategic perspective by proceeding to a gradual reintegration of religion in both the private and public spheres. Özalism promoted a moderate, tolerant and modern Islam that carried forward Kemal's dream of modernisation and Westernisation but at the same time maintained its roots firmly in the Muslim world. Özal's motto “the Qur'an in one hand and a computer in the other” reflects the essence of Özalism which lied in the merging of traditional Muslim culture and modernisation process (Kersten & Olsson, 2016, p.59). For instance, regardless of the multiple references to an “imperial vision”, Özalism used the Ottoman cultural identity to integrate itself into a globalising Western world and to reconstruct a pluralist, multicultural and multi-ethnic society (Colak, 2006). The Ottoman socio-political structure, just like the ideal model of the United States, had allowed different cultures to coexist freely and peacefully while preserving their religious differences. Concurrently, Özal undertook attempts to reform Imam Hatip schools and a programme to build new mosques. Özal also initiated the Islamic counter reform of dress codes and symbols by proposing the restriction of the ban on women wearing headscarves in public places. However, as Erdoğan later on, he would be confronted by secular political forces and by the Constitutional Court which

declared his proposition unconstitutional. Despite such failure, the gradual reconciliation between Islam and the Turkish Republic gave new impetus to the Gulen movement which was hampered by the military regime but supported by Özal. By sharing a similar vision on the necessity to integrate religious and modern sciences Özal admired Gulen's view on education and endorsed the establishment of his schools outside Turkey (Kersten & Olsson, 2016).

Another branch of projection of Turkish soft power abroad was the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı, TİKA*) funded by Özal in 1992. TİKA was created to promote Turkish interests in post-Soviet spaces and to balance the Slavic-Orthodox cultural axe. Although TİKA was not directly responsible for supporting Islamic NGOs, its activities began to distinguish itself from the secular bureaucratic apparatus that characterised the Turkish state. Mainly composed of young officers representing the new liberal and pro-Islamic Özalian bourgeoisie, TİKA supported the activities of Islamic foundations and other associations that mediated with Muslim communities abroad (Donelli & Chiriatti, 2017).

In Özal's vision, the Ottoman past would have given contemporary Turkey a global perspective. Indeed, the foreign policy of a modern Turkey had to be ambitious and all-encompassing, covering all the former branches of the empire: the West, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Anatolia, Central Asia, the Middle East and the Mediterranean (Candar, 2001). Considering that Turkey is surrounded by Muslim population, sometimes even ethnic Turks or Turkish-speaking, Özal sought to forge a new Turkey with a new identity, embracing all these spaces and societies. Taspınar (2008, p.11), among others, credited Özal for overcoming the Kemalist ethnic paradigm of Kurdish marginalization. Of Kurdish motherhood, Turgut Özal repeatedly denounced the unfavourable conditions faced by the Kurdish people. Özal, unlike Suleyman Demirel⁵, did not limit himself to an explanation of the Kurdish struggle as a reaction to poverty but recognised the need to transform Anatolia into a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural region. With the aim of encompassing rather than colliding with Kurdish dissent, he actively supported the recognition of cultural rights in Turkey and maintained cordial relations with Iraqi Kurdish leaders.

This diversity is therefore part of the continuity of Turkey's post-Cold War economic development. This has led to the questioning of Turkey's identity and its geopolitical position, pushing the politicians in charge of foreign affairs to review and diversify their strategies (Bilgin, 2012). It is to be read in this terms the gradual rapprochement with the Middle East and Central Asia. At the beginning of his presidency, Özal saw Central Asia rather than the Balkans as the region with which Turkey had the most linguistic, historical, cultural and religious ties (Larrabee, 2003). Turkey aspired to become a regional power representing the entire Turkish-speaking world and so it tried to contend the Russian influence over a region, where both actors had exerted imperial legacies. In spite of being at the forefront of Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, established in 1989, Turkey managed to include

⁵ A pioneer of the recognition of the Kurdish reality and one of Turkey's most important political figures, leader first of the Justice Party (AP) then of the Right Way Party (DYP), Demirel argues that the main cause of the Kurds' unrest stems from socio-economic poverty and therefore the economic development of south-eastern Anatolia becomes fundamental in solving the Kurdish question.

only Azerbaijan in its sphere of influence leaving the rest of the -stan under the control of Russia (Rašidagić & Hesova, 2020).

As for the pan- Kurdish nationalist struggle and later the Yugoslav war Özal saw in the disintegration of the soviet sphere” an opportunity for Turkey to expand its sphere of influence by stressing the shared history, culture, and memory with these new regions” (Yavuz, 2020, p. 119).

At the same time, not to lose its most precious allies, Özal tried to reconcile with both the United States and Europe. Once reelected in 1987, Özal formalized the submission of the application for membership of the European Community (EC), reiterating Turkish commitment to the West and European integration. This renewed activism testifies Özal's attempt to get the monkey (Kemalism) out of his back. However, as for domestic politics Özal did not depart completely from Kemal's Western vocation, but he integrated it with a renewed attention to neighbouring regions that had been neglected by foreign policy up to that point. The cautious and defensive foreign policy approach of Kemalist doctrine was functional for the survival of a fragile nation and for the maintaining of the status quo in a tumultuous regional context that could have easily jeopardized Turkish nation-building efforts. However, it confined Turkey “to a strictly ‘national’ foreign policy” (Taspinar, 2008, p.15).

Through an ambitious and all encompassing regional policy, Özalism made Turkey more daring and proactive, and led to open for new possibilities. Revitalized by the multicultural nature of its Ottoman identity, Turkish foreign policy aims to strengthen ties with former imperial territories, especially in the Middle East and the Caucasus, and to establish itself as a leading regional power in cultural, political and economical terms.

Turkey's exploration of new directions in both domestic and foreign politics in the 90's is an outcome of the interaction between radical international changes and new ferment in Turkish society. In a constructivist perspective national interests are shaped by human, material, ideological and cultural factors of a nation, namely its social identity. In other words, national identity is a constitutive element of foreign policy and agents cannot draw directions without taking it into account.

Turkey is thus an emblematic example of how foreign policy is shaped by shifting national identities and society's evolving self-perceptions. As stressed by Yavuz (2020, p.125) “Economic and societal developments, such as the Turkish- Islamic synthesis and the introduction of neoliberal economic policies, deeply shaped the identity, behavior, and memory of the state and society”. By embracing the Ottoman culture and memory, Özalism helped Turkey in reconstructing a new system of beliefs based on Islamic normativity towards a positive reinterpretation of Ottoman memory, an idea of national projection outside its borders. For Özal the Ottoman narrative was indeed functional for the democratic, Muslim, and capitalist society that he contributed to expand so that it could foster Turkish economic growth in a globalizing international system. Turkish evolving society and the increased role of public opinion in the foreign policy making led by empowered Islamic groups played a key role in orienting Turkey towards the protection of Ottoman legacies and Muslim communities in neighbouring regions.

On the structural level, Özal's narrative of Islam as a glue that bonds shared identities and belongings between Turkey and former Ottoman lands, found a fertile ground in the Balkans and the Caucasus due to the disorientation and the lack of political-identitarian leadership that followed the end of the bipolar world.

3. 5. Turkey's Sentimental Self Interest Diplomacy during the Bosnian War (1993-1996)

As outlined in the previous section, by the end of the 1980s, changes in the global and regional political order called for Turkey to turn its attention back to the Western Balkans.

By the early 1990s, Turkey had already revived its foreign policy from "the tail end of Europe into the centre of its own newly emerging world" (Vračić, 2016, p.7). During this period, Turkish foreign policy took several directions and, after moving towards Central Asia and the Middle East, the Bosnian and Kosovo Wars led to a quest for a new role in the Balkans. If Turkey had been keeping a solidary yet distant policy up to that moment, the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia prevented it from standing idly by. The death of Josip Broz Tito, an emblematic figure in some respects similar to that of Atatürk, followed by the difficulties in overcoming the political and economic crisis, sent out the first signs of fragility. However, the structural causes of the collapse were to be found in the deep religious and cultural divisions between the ethnic groups of the federation still marked by the vivid memories of the atrocities of the Second World War, and in the centrifugal nationalist forces that had taken over socialism. The return to a multi-party democracy turned out in a triumph of nationalist movements that won the elections in six federal states in 1990 (Öksüz, 2007).

As tensions mounted in the Balkans, Turkey's public opinion began to show the first signs of disquiet. Civil society, which had recently rediscovered its Ottoman-Muslim identity, was severely shaken by the oppression of Bosniaks. Turkish people pressured the authorities to take an active stance in defence of their co-ethnics and co-religionists (*soydaş ve dindaş*) (Bulut, 2006). In the process of creating a new identity and role within the international system, Islamic elites found in the ties with the Muslim-Turkish population the avenue of Turkey's foreign policy toward the region (Öksüz, 2007, p.151).

Yavuz (2020, p. 207) explains that these new elites used the events in the Balkans to reinforce their ideological narrative along three lines of discourse. First, the criticism of the secularist-Kemalist elites to whom they blamed the alienation of Turkey from its historical origins and responsibilities. Second, the application of a "double standard" by the West which did not stand against the genocide of Bosnian Muslims demonstrated the fallacy of the universal Western vocation. Third, Islamic solidarity should have become the main axis of Turkish foreign policy since the West, which revealed its tribalism, would have never welcomed Turkey into the EU. Faced with public opinion so inclined to support religious/civilizational kinship in the region, the Turkish authorities tended to refuse to come out explicitly in defence of Turkish or Muslim minorities, lending themselves to attacks from the opposition led by the Islamist party, at the time the *Refah Partisi*.

Both Rašidagić & Hesova, (2020) and Donelli & Chiriatti (2017), emphasise how social pressures considerably limited the newly formed government's room for manoeuvre concerning the crisis in the Western Balkans.

Turkey has faced the difficult problem of maintaining a secular polity in the face of increasingly popular Islamic parties. During much of the Yugoslav conflict, a coalition government, including parties representing moderate Muslims, controlled the government. Even the Social Democrats who were more concerned with secular governance realized “that a lack of concern about Bosnia would hasten their political decline” (Saideman, 2001, p.138).

The *Dogru Yol Partisi* (DYP – True Path Party, then after 2007, Democratic Party) which was leading the government coalition since 1991, could not leave the Islamist party with the ‘monopoly of indignation’. That is why Turkish first (and only) female Prime Minister Tansu Çiller, went twice to Sarajevo during the war to show her support to Muslim communities, to condemn the inaction of the UN, and to reassert Turkish mediating role in the region (Gangloff, 2005, p. 5). In analyzing political memory and identity politics Narli (2019, p. 60) points out that “there can be competing narrations of the past and competing politics of memory in line with the competing political interest of the political parties or actors in the political arena”.

In this case, rather than competing narratives, rival actors make different use of the same discourse, albeit with different emphasis to achieve divergent political goals.

There were indeed discrepancies between the emerging Islamist-oriented elites, who urged Turkey to assume its historical responsibility; and the secular authorities, which wanted to reassert Turkey’s position within the West and the international institutions. Regardless of the differences in viewpoint, these two competing identities shared the circumstantial need to move from a traditional passive position and to put an end to the conflict (Öniş, 1995). Turkey’s diplomacy thus followed two levels of action, which to a certain extent reflected the two competing social identities that were trying to take over foreign policy.

The result was a dual structure policy that was guided on one side by the “sentiment” of Turkey’s social forces, as expressed through electoral politics and public debate, and on the other by the “self-interest” of Turkey’s state apparatus (Davies, 2015).

Since the beginning of the war in Bosnia, Turkey supported various multilateral initiatives in international bodies such as the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and NATO, advocating for military intervention (Demirtaş, 2013). Meanwhile, after giving up on the possibility to maintain Yugoslavia's unity, in 1993 Özal travelled to Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania and finally to Croatia in an attempt to form a Balkan alliance against Serbia allied with Greece.

Later that year, the Bosnian Croats proclaimed the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, effectively declaring war on their Muslim fellow citizens. Even if Turkish diplomats tried to mediate directly with Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats they were actually reluctant to actively participate in military interventions and thus decided to follow US leadership. For example, Turkey signed military agreements with the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Bosnia-Herzegovina only after the United States’ direct involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1994-95 and after its recognition of Macedonia (Gangloff, 2005, p. 4). In 1992 the UN

launched a peacekeeping mission of special protection force for Bosnia and Herzegovina (The United Nations Protection Force, UNPROFOR) but Turkey contributed to the mission only from 1994.

The decision to join the UN mission was preceded by a series of meetings with other Muslim countries within the framework of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) where common lines of actions were to be decided.

“When in July 1993, at the Islamabad meeting, seven countries of the OIC proposed to contribute 17,000 soldiers to a United Nations force, Turkey offered only about a hundred men, whereas it declared being ready to contribute 5,000 troops to the UNPROFOR. After having pushed the other members of OIC to pressure the UN, it could not decently refuse to participate in this “Muslim force”, but reduced its contribution to a minimum” (Gangloff, 2005, pp.5-6).

In this context, Turkey proved that the founding principles of secularism and alignment with the West were still preventing it from making lighthearted use of the Islamic discourse. For instance, the never dormant Kemalist “guardian state” did not support Iran in labeling the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a war of religion. Furthermore, when utilized, Islamic discourse was instrumental for reaching political goals and for legitimizing Turkish position in the conflict. Gangloff argues that “Islam has been invoked only to justify or reinforce a pre-existing political decision and it has covered political and not religious common interests.” (Gangloff, 2001, p. 5).

James Pettifer puts forward the idea that the imperative of demonstrating Turkey’s importance for the United States, coupled with America’s need for a credible Muslim ally in the Balkans, had led to a situation where “Washington has Islamized Turkish Balkan policy” (Pettifer, 1998, p175). With the same intent, whenever necessary, Turkish leaders did not hesitate to emphasize the humanitarian rather than religious nature of their concerns. The flexibility of the Turkish discourse turned into a double advantage: on the one hand, by mobilising common past, Turkish aid was perceived as “legitimate”, and on the other, as a NATO member with a secular tradition, it was always considered a respectable partner. Hence, Turkey gradually began to portray itself as a powerful country capable of playing an important role on the international stage, yet no longer afraid to assume its historical responsibilities in the region. The official self-portrait, however, did not coincide with the more critical view that some parts of society held of the government's actions during the conflict. As Bosniaks were fleeing the war Turkey only accepted around 20,000 refugees while the majority found shelter in Western Europe. Moreover, Turkish authorities welcomed these refugees as “guests” (*misafir*) denying their refugee status to escape legal obligations that would have involved legal and financial responsibility. Therefore, Turkey managed to carve a new role for itself; but it probably failed to take full historical responsibilities and to develop a greater independent initiative. While maintaining diplomatic relations with all countries in the region, Turkey's impact remained essentially restricted to Bosnia-Herzegovina and later to Kosovo and fully within the framework of Atlanticism (Rašidagić & Hesova, 2020). Ankara took part in the string of countries that imposed international sanctions against Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). As the massacres and

ethnic cleansing by all three factions continued, NATO issued an ultimatum to Serbia and eventually decided to launch an air campaign called Operation Deliberate Force. Turkey certainly welcomed the late enforcement of collective security but offered its support in air strikes only for logistic missions. This engagement, albeit cautious and moderate, allowed Turkey to become part of the long-term UN-supervised stabilisation programmes in the Balkans (Tarik Oğuzlu & Güngör, 2006).

Not long after Dayton Agreements in November 1995, Turkey re-established trade and business relations with Serbia, its main economic partner in the region. Central to the establishment of trade relations between the two countries was the contribution of the MÜSIAD group (*Müstakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği*), which fully exemplified Anatolian pro-Islamic small and medium-sized enterprises. The pragmatic outlook of Turkish culture comes out once again as political and economic gains precede “Muslim solidarity”. The latter remained limited to the efforts of the Directorate of Religious Affairs of Turkey, the Diyanet, which expanded its influence in the region, particularly in Albania and Macedonia. The complementarity of state driven activities and Turkish-Islamic networks would become a permanent feature of Turkish policy towards the region (Donelli & Chiriatti, 2017).

3. 6. Turkey’s attitude towards the crisis in Kosovo (1998-1999)

While the Dayton Agreements managed to put an end to the conflict in Bosnia, they did not mention the issue of Kosovo. The Kosovar independence leadership was forced to take matters into its own hands and in 1996 formed the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

In 1998, clashes and violence on both sides intensified, attracting the attention of the United Nations Security Council, which passed a series of resolutions: first condemning the violence of the two factions, then calling for a ceasefire, and finally urging the parties to negotiate in 1999. As for the war in Bosnia, Turkey tried to mediate between the parties and proposed its support for peace-keeping operations. Ankara’s intent was not to compromise relations with Serbians and Albanians and thus its diplomatic activity was focused on maintaining territorial integrity of Yugoslavia while restoring autonomous rights that were recognised by Tito’s regime in accordance with Yugoslav constitution of 1974. In the case of Bosnia, the country's independence was widely accepted and recognised by the international community. Conversely, in the case of Kosovo, there was not widespread consensus to officially support the region's independence. Thus, the decision to defend the national integrity of Yugoslavia clearly reflected the conservative stance of the international community, but, at the same time, served the pursuit of the Turkish national interest (Roper, 1999). Gangloff (2001, 2004, 2005), as Donelli & Chiriatti (2017), agree on pinpointing two critical issues that determined Turkish position towards the entangled Kosovo crisis. Firstly, the simultaneous presence of a Turkish minority in Kosovo on the one hand and a strongly engaged Albanian community in Turkey on the other, contributed to further complicate decision-making for the Turkish leadership. Secondly, Turkey was concerned that an independent Kosovo could set a precedent for both the irredentism of the Albanian and Macedonian people and above all for

the cause of the Kurdish independence movement led by the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). The separatist claims of the Kosovar Albanians, unlike the Bosnian case, concerned the Turkish authorities closely as they were part of a conflict between different communities belonging to the same state. Gangloff (2005, pp.6-7) gives two examples of the mutual reinforcement of the Kosovar-Kurdish analogy that took place between Turkish and Serbian authorities:

“The Yugoslav ambassador in Ankara, did not miss an opportunity to refer to the fight against the PKK in Turkey - Turkey should understand Belgrade better than any other country since it is involved in a similar situation - In his letter to President S. Milošević dated 8 March 1998, former President Demirel himself emphasized that Turkey “too” had to fight “terrorism” on its territory” .

These two factors explain why diplomatic pressures were not as intense as in Bosnia and why, on the contrary, Turkey actively participated in NATO air raids in 1999 and promptly recognized Kosovo's independence. In June of the same year, Turkey participated in the international peace force in the framework of the KFOR (Kosovo Force), with a battalion of 1000 men based in the old Ottoman town of Prizren and in the Kosovar Turks-majority municipality of Mamusha. The involvement in the Kosovo crisis was justified domestically, especially with regard to the situation in the southeast of Anatolia, on the grounds of the “uniqueness” of Kosovo’s case. This argument was used by many other countries and also by the commission that drafted Ahtisaari's plan⁶, in order to prevent the escalation of separatist tensions in other parts of the world (Weller, 2008). In this regard, Turkish President Demirel stressed that Turkey supported NATO bombings to prevent “genocide”, while in Turkey most Kurds were firmly integrated into the rest of the social fabric. Similarly, the president expressly stated in an interview that “They call them a minority in Kosovo but we don’t have minorities in Turkey” (Gangloff, 2001, p. 7).

Notwithstanding that internal issues placed the country in an ambiguous position, Turkey's position in support of Kosovo's sovereignty was firm and clear. It is difficult to determine whether it was a “sentimental” choice or an unavoidable choice, but in any case it was a strategic choice that reasserted Turkey's Western aspiration once again.

Whereas Turkey’s approach towards Bosnia could have been considered in Davies (2015) terms, a case of “sentimental self-interest” because of the fact that historical-cultural religio-civilisational elements coincided with the *raison d’État* and as both sides of Turkey’s society wanted to put an end to the conflict; policies towards Kosovo were characterized by a

⁶ Here the full quote of Security Council’ draft resolution: “the specific circumstances that make Kosovo a case that is sui generis resulting from the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, including the historical context of Yugoslavia’s violent break-up, as well as the massive violence and repression that took place in Kosovo in the period up to and including 1999, the extended period of international administration under resolution 1244, and the UN led process to determine status, and that this case shall not be taken as a precedent by the Security Council”. Available at <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/kos-s2007-437.php>

greater preeminence of political interest over any kind of religious, cultural, and historical kinship. Religious and cultural cooperation acted only as a corollary of Turkish state's foreign policy and as independent axes of initiatives carried out by pro-Muslim organisations.

Turkey's different positioning in Bosnia and Kosovo can be better understood towards a concentric circle approach⁷, adopted by Donelli & Chiriatti (2017) and Narli (2019) among other scholars. The concentric circle approach helps in prioritizing national interests and foreign policy dynamics. Nonetheless, circles are not compartmentalized but rather fluid, complementary and overlapping according to shifting national, regional and international scenarios. In Turkey's case the inner circle of fundamental national interest involves the very survival of the nation namely its security and territorial integrity. The second circle involves regional dynamics or actors that can have a significant impact on Turkey's strategic environment namely the EU, NATO and US to which Turkey has traditionally committed its foreign policy. The third and more external circle involves Turkey's position on the global level as well as the support of Muslims and Turks and the spreading of Turkish culture in neighbouring regions (Narli, 2019). This structure has remained almost unchanged till the present day and will be also used in the following chapter to analyse AKP's foreign policy towards the Balkans.

There are several points in common between the Kosovan and Bosnian cases, most notably in Kosovo a large part of the victims of the harsh Serbian violence were of Turkish kinship and Muslim religion. However, the religious element and the support of the Kosovar Turks did not coincide with the core interest of not destabilizing internal security by supporting a cause potentially comparable to the Kurdish one. Hence, Turkey did not exert diplomatic pressure, as it did in the first phase of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Turkey constantly supported the maintaining of Yugoslav territorial integrity calling for enhanced autonomy for Kosovo with maximum rights for ethnic minorities. Its position shifted only after the international community established the uniqueness of Kosovo's case. Right after security issues, Turkey's attention was actually driven by the will to deepen its involvement in international structures such as NATO and to break its general lethargy seeking a new strategic repositioning. Turkey's overall contribution in settling the conflict was very limited but Kosovo was another occasion to prove to the West that Turkey was an important ally in the region. This explains why unlike in Bosnia, Turkey did not remain on the sidelines of international efforts but participated in the air strikes (Demirtaş, 2013).

On the whole, Turkish traditional determinants are still predominant in dictating foreign policy directions during the two wars period. As mentioned above, Turkey's geopolitical thinking and its Western vocation are still the solid pillars of foreign policy. Moreover, Turkish cautious and pragmatic security culture has been a determinant factor in counterbalancing social pressures that, for different reasons, wanted a deeper engagement in the conflicts which would have probably compromised Ankara's delicate position in the international arena. The pragmatic outlook was also visible in Turkey's constant concern to

⁷ The concentric circle theory was first proposed by Ernest Burgess (1929) to study urban sociology and later applied by political scientists.

avoid irreparably antagonizing Balkan populations, especially their most important economic partners, the Serbs. Neo-Ottomanism at this stage remained mainly confined within Turkey's public debate as foreign policy has proven to be still a prerogative of the Kemalist secular state-centric apparatus. However, the rising intensity of neo-Ottoman discourse as well as the gradual rehabilitation of the "Ottomuslim" identity surely contributed to the changing of political leadership that underwent in the country at the turning of the millenium.

4. Continuity and Change in AKP's Foreign Policy Towards the Balkans

4. 1. The Rise of the AKP

Turkey's involvement in the Balkans took a radical turn with the advent of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP), which represented a decisive break in Turkish politics. In the 2002 elections, the AKP, led by R. Tayyip Erdoğan, formed a clear majority government thanks to a solid electoral performance which managed to win 34.3 percent of the national vote and over two-thirds of the seats in parliament. Some analysts even refer to this event as a 'political earthquake' which has deeply shaken the country (Gruen, 2003, p. 87). Assuming that in few other countries more than Turkey domestic developments do shape the direction of foreign policy, it is worth considering the implications of the rise of the AKP and its political approach.

Building on the experience with Erbakan's government, which between 1995 and 1997 became the first Islamist-led government to break a 73-year secular chain, Erdoğan and Gül realised the importance of creating a hybrid political structure that reconciled the different facets of Turkish society. The AKP's exploit marked a break with Kemalism, but also with the old political Islamism, carving out a new political role for Islam within Turkey's secular democracy. In fact, the overwhelming victory also contributed to re-dimensioning the power of the military, which had always opposed the rise of political Islam, as guarantors of Kemalist principles. On the other hand, the promotion of a multi-ethnic national identity view of Islam in public discourse calmed, at least initially, Kurdish claims in south-eastern Anatolia and stemmed the threat of radical Islamism. Since its foundation a year prior to elections, the AKP defined itself as a *muhafazakâr demokrat* i.e. a conservative democratic party. Thereby, the AKP moved away from the more radical stances of its political predecessors namely the National Order Party and the Welfare Party, which were shut down by Turkish Constitutional Court. Wanting to secure the position of the AKP from attacks by the military and the judiciary, Erdoğan did not want to leave anything to chance and clearly stated that the AKP would have abandoned Erbakan's *Milli Görüş*⁸ (Ülger, 2017).

Another factor that played an important role in AKP electoral victory was the ability to mobilize a new urban class, "consisting of horizontally connected solidarity-based groups

⁸ Milli Görüş ("National Outlook" or "National Vision") is a religious-political movement founded in 1969 which advocates for moral and spiritual strengthening of Islamic faith (iman) and condemn Muslim world's imitation of the West. On "Milli Görüş" ideology see White (2014).

with rural origins and shared Islamic ethos” which was culturally and economically marginalized by secular elites (Yavuz, 2003, p. 257). This new urban class represented the evolution of the Anatolian Tigers, the entrepreneurial middle class that emerged in Anatolia following Özal’s liberal economic policies.

Özal’s winning model of combining compatibility of worldly success and Islamic identity was reinterpreted and revived by the AKP, which is thus largely in continuity with its predecessor. For this reason, both Yavuz (2003) and Bozdağlıoğlu (2008) are reluctant in describing AKP’s victory as an earthquake. In their eyes the election was rather an act of restoration, which nevertheless deeply affected Turkey’s political landscape. As for Özal, the specificity of the AKP lies in its ability to produce a political body that merges Islamic roots, traditional nationalist values, and a constant aspiration to move closer to the Western world and to the European Union.

As for Turkish foreign policy, all these elements have a direct impact on foreign policy making, as they are constitutive in the formation of state’s identity and preferences. Political stability, steady economic growth based on foreign investments and a comprehensive structural and democratic reform plan have provided a solid ground and brought a new verve in foreign policy. In addition, the domestic changes have also strengthened various economic and civil society actors who have increased their contribution to Turkey's external action (Ekinci, 2014).

Alexander Wendt (1992b, p. 398) argues that states do not deliberately choose the interests they wish to pursue in foreign policy independently of the social context; instead, 'they define their interests in the process of defining situations'. As seen in chapter one, Wendt points out that in defining a state's interests, power balances or material capabilities play a secondary role to inter-state relations and identity.

The decisive change of approach in Turkish foreign policy can therefore be explained by the widespread internal change that led Islamic elites and new social forces to transform foreign policy according to their own needs. Erdoğan, a leader adept at capturing the social ferment of Turkish collectivity and turning it into electoral success, is merely the insignia of the new Turkish identity. His political goals are therefore tendentiously in line with the newfound Islamic and Ottoman identity that he embodies and on which he leverages to promote Turkey's economic and political interests internationally.

In other words, the politically and economically active Turkish community demands a more dynamic and proactive foreign policy from its representatives.

Under Erdoğan leadership, identity-based interests and narratives play a more significant role in Turkish foreign policy, especially in the territories that lend themselves most to this kind of geopolitical discourse, namely Palestine, Chechnya and of course the Balkans (Yavuz, 2020).

4. 2. The Strategic Depth Doctrine and the Influence of Traditional Determinants

Under the guidance of the AKP, Turkey's foreign policy has evolved through several stages, but in this work three are the stages that will be analysed in relation with the Balkans. In order to explain the ruptures and continuities in identity and foreign policy it is relevant to explore the ideas of Ahmet Davutoğlu who was the architect of the new Turkish foreign policy concept. Although the evolution of the AKP's foreign policy has been shaped by several actors, in primis by Erdoğan, Davutoğlu provided the institutional, philosophical and ideological sources of the neo-Ottomanist foreign policy which had a great echo in the Balkans.

In spite of the fact that Davutoğlu has repeatedly stressed that he is “not a neo- Ottoman,” his name has nevertheless become synonymous with neo-Ottomanism (Raxhimi, 2011). Davutoğlu was Erdoğan's most trusted foreign policy advisor : he was foreign minister from 2009 to 2014. He may be seen as the architect of the second wave of neo-Ottomanism articulated according to his doctrine of “strategic depth” (*stratejik derinlik*). This concept became a leading doctrine of Turkish foreign policy in the period of AKP government and is eponymous with the title of Davutoğlu's most famous book.

This vision echoes Özal's neo-Ottomanism and Erbakan's 'multidimensional' foreign policy. Davutoğlu's innovative approach to geopolitics is also part of a broader and more complex framework of national identity rebuilding that aims at transforming Turkey from a “peripheral state” to a core actor in the regional and global context. According to Davutoğlu, geography, history, demography and culture are the four determinants that define a country's weight in international relations. In Davutoğlu's doctrine, Turkey needs to recover its "strategic depth" which is provided by two key factors: the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire and the resulting geopolitical memory. Hence, reworking of remembrance of a shared identity. In Davutoğlu's words, "this geographical depth places Turkey right at the centre of many geopolitical areas of influence" (Murinson, 2006, p.947). Thus, the “strategic depth” doctrine invokes an active and comprehensive engagement that embraces all regional systems in Turkey's neighbourhood.

According to Taspinar, three are the pillars that underpin and characterize Davutoğlu's strategic depth doctrine.

The first asset of Davutoğlu's doctrine is the gradual recovery of the Ottoman Islamic heritage, in both domestic and foreign policy. Unlike the Kemalist doctrine in the AKP's vision, Islam is no longer a destabilising factor but rather a social lubricant. Davutoğlu and Erdoğan, as well as Özal before them, share a dynamic vision of Islam that can adapt to globalised modernity. (Donelli, 2012)

Domestically neo-Ottomanism implies openness to the country's ethnic minorities, including the Kurds. The AKP proposes a conservative model of action that thus includes a symbolic rehabilitation of the Ottoman heritage, which along the sense of belonging to Islam, acts as a common denominator for a broader conception of citizenship (Polo & Üstel, 2014).

Externally, this rehabilitation reflects increased activism in the former territories of the Empire, in the fields of politics, economics and culture. In Taspinar's view Davutoğlu wanted to deepen Turkey's influence in the former Ottoman provinces rather than pursue a new phase

of imperialism. Therefore, Davutoğlu did not seek to Islamize the country but rather to reconcile it with Islam while, at the same time, regulating the laicism of Kemalism. The new strategic set-up implied the need to set aside high politics and the Hobbesian vision infused on politics and society by Kemalist principles and the militaries. The securitarian priority and militarism of the secular apparatus are being overridden by the soft and diplomatic Islamo-Ottoman discourse. Turkish foreign policy has to fully exploit its soft power potential by building diplomatic, cultural, historical and religious ties with all its affiliated regions, without forgetting the contribution of its democratic institutions and its flourishing market economy (Taspinar, 2008, p. 15).

As Davutoğlu's has often underlined in his speeches, historical and geopolitical depth entail a sense of duty and responsibility to contribute constructively in conflict resolution and international peace. For this reason, Taspinar's (2008) second factor relates to a renewed activism and sense of grandeur. This self-consciousness on the international stage leads Turkey to perceive itself as a major regional power with a unique geopolitical position and a broad scope for diplomatic action. The activism advocated by Davutoğlu pushes Turkey to play an increasingly influential role, not only with neighbouring countries with whom it is crucial to limit any kind of conflict but also within major international organisations. After the British and American *Pax*, Davutoğlu dreams, in idealistic and Kantian tones, of a *Pax Ottomana* that would make Turkey an indispensable mediator in the region.

Finally, the third factor emphasises the dual essence of Turkey, which, like its imperial capital Istanbul, is at the crossroads of East and West. It must therefore balance these two dimensions by detaching itself somewhat from the sphere of influence of Europe and the United States in order to acquire greater autonomy (Taspinar, 2008).

Davutoğlu's doctrine is strongly focused on the rhetoric of “meeting of civilisations” and of different geographical areas that Turkey embraces due to its unique strategic location and historical-cultural heritage. Davutoğlu's conceptualization of “strategic depth” leverages not only soft power and diplomacy but also Turkey's geostrategic and geopolitical aspects to support a new foreign policy path. Turkey, for Davutoğlu, is the gravitational centre of the Islamic-Ottoman geo-cultural basins (Yavuz, 2020). In this scenario, Turkey assumes a new position in which it does not have to guarantee the stability and security of a single region, but instead becomes a pivotal actor in several regions. This conception serves to eradicate the label of Turkey as a “bridge country”, and to project as the central ring of several chains (Heper, 2005). Davutoğlu's focus on the uniqueness of Turkish position recalls the fifth of Bilgin's (2012) political dogma, which has dominated Turkish authorities' imaginaries during the Cold War. If on one hand it is true that Turkey's geopolitical position implies a certain degree of determinism that constrains policy-makers at all times, on the other hand structure and security culture seems to supervene on agents like Davutoğlu. However it is worth mentioning that while cold war officials, like general İlhan, stressed the extra-deterministic feature of Turkey's positioning, focusing on hard politics and security concerns, Davutoğlu, as Özal before him, has a much more liberal and pro-active interpretation of Turkey's geopolitical position.

Once he took office as Foreign Minister, Davutoğlu's doctrine was confronted with the practicalities of foreign policy. As a Minister, Davutoğlu (2008, pp. 79–81) decided to set up Turkish foreign policy on three methodological and five operational principles. These principles are inevitably shaped by his previous works, but if analysed with a broader scope, they also express a certain degree of continuity with traditional foreign policy determinants.

The first methodological principle is based on a cooperative approach to promoting peace, stability and prosperity. This approach departs from the confrontational and assertive interpretation that prevailed during the Cold War and leads Turkey, at least partially, to overcome the enduring Sèvres syndrome. The second refers to a “consistent and systematic” foreign policy according to which engagement in one region is not antithetical to engagement in another as long as it is coherent and aligned on the same strategic line. The third methodological principle concerns the adoption of a discourse and diplomatic style that emphasises normative potential and civilian soft power of Turkey in its region of influence. In this regard, certain instruments become essential for a more transparent and idealistic, at times Wilsonian, diplomacy that facilitates commercial contracts between individuals, TİKA-managed development cooperation and cultural people-to-people relations (Davutoğlu, 2010, p. 3).

Regarding the five operational principles, Davutoğlu lists as the first point the balance between freedom and security, two fundamental elements that must be ensured to citizens and that can guarantee a solid domestic basis for Turkey's foreign initiatives. In this sense, Atatürk's motto *peace at home, peace in the world* seems to be present in this operational principle which reflects the need to achieve a certain domestic stability before projecting influence beyond national borders. However, if in Kemal's case this approach led Turkey to look inwards, in Davutoğlu's vision the balance between security and freedom is the premise for legitimizing an opening to the outwards.

The second principle, the well-known “zero problems with neighbour”, is also not completely a new one (Ruma, 2011). This policy of good neighbourliness, already applied in the early years of AKP, aims to harmonise relations with surrounding states that could potentially threaten Turkey's territorial integrity. Here, too, we find the same Kemal intent of pursuing peace and stability through a system of alliances and a secure neighbourhood that would allow Turkey to worry about its prosperity rather than mere survival. The end of the bipolar system and the advent of a new structural context entailed the reconfiguration of relational systems. Davutoğlu grasped this structural rupture and took distances from another geopolitical dogma that recalls the Sèvres syndrome. His perception of strategic environment is no longer characterized by a logic of enmity and distrust of never-dormant neighbours but rather by a logic of friendship and win-win cooperation. In the words of Gundogdu, (2001, p. 1) “a culture of cooperation formed on the basis of mutual trust and interests is obviously less threatening for security than a culture of conflict”. Decisive developments in the normalization of relations with countries such as Cyprus, Armenia and Greece have

demonstrated Turkey's concern to stabilize its surroundings without altering the balance of power in the region.

The third principle concerns proactive involvement and preventive peace diplomacy. Turkey's aim is to prevent conflict and foster prosperity through the creation of an interdependent economic space, peaceful coexistence between cultures and political dialogue. As an example of preventive diplomacy, Davutoğlu (2010) also mentioned Turkish efforts in the Balkans advocating for reconciliation between Serbia and Bosnia. This principle is probably the most neo-Ottoman insofar as it presents a positive, non-hegemonic reassessment of the empire's pacifying and *primus inter-pares* role vis-à-vis its provinces and cosmopolitan *millet*s, which at the same time constituted the primary economic network of the empire's prosperity (Güney & Mandacı, 2013).

The fourth principle reiterates the orientation of foreign policy, which must be multidimensional and balanced between the different regional and global actors. Despite the clear Western vocation to which Atatürk repeatedly referred, the principle of balance of power was part of his axioms (Mitrovic, 2014). Turkish balance of power regained momentum particularly during the last phase of the Cold War and the relaxation of relations with the USSR. It remains the case that with Özal and then Davutoğlu, Turkey gained greater autonomy and sought to differentiate its relations by opening up to the East and the globalized world.

Lastly, the fifth principle provided Turkey with a rhythmic diplomacy that allows it to play an active role on the global scale, within international organisations and multilateral forums. This is the most innovative principle of Davutoğlu foreign policy vision as it wishes Turkey to obtain a widely recognized civilian status fostered by aid diplomacy, south-south cooperation and development policies. Davutoğlu aims to make Turkey an alternative model of global citizen, especially for those non western-emerging countries that were looking for a new spokesperson on the international stage.

Throughout an assessment of Davutoğlu's foreign policy principles it is visible how foreign policy makers are influenced by traditional determinants. Pre-existing ideational structures have certainly participated in defining Ankara's strategy towards the Balkans, however some elements of novelty are also tangible. In order to best illustrate these changes in the trajectory of AKP's foreign policy, the latter will be divided into three stages. Having to make this simplification, one risks losing some nuances, so it is important to remember that some elements that are presented in distinct stages actually overlap and remain in continuity with the preceding and subsequent stages.

4. 3. The Three Stages of AKP's Foreign Policy Towards the Balkans

4. 3. 1. Neo-Özalism and the Liberal Turn (2002-2008)

Following the Dayton peace process and the normalisation of Kosovo's situation, Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans came to a standstill. Endogenously, the stagnation was the result of political instability caused by repeated government changes and the economic crisis that hit the country in 2001. Exogenously, the fragile regional stability that had just been achieved in the Balkans and the political transition pushed the new states to focus internally on the thorny process of state building. The Balkans moved away from being a priority on Turkey's foreign policy agenda until the gradual return to economic prosperity and the advent of the AKP and Davutoğlu.

In the aforementioned strategic depth Davutoğlu devotes two chapters to the Balkans in which he outlines two main axes for Turkish action in the region.

The first concerns relations with the two Muslim populations with whom Turkey has the strongest historical and cultural ties, namely the Albanians and Bosnians. Bosnia represents "Turkey's political, economic and cultural outpost for reaching Central Europe " while Albania is "the barometer of Turkish Balkan politics" (Davutoğlu, 2001 pp. 316-318). Turkey needs to cultivate close relations with these communities in order to establish a wider sphere of influence in the region. These two groups have historically formed the support base of the empire's Ottoman policy and are strategically located along the vital artery of Balkan Muslim geopolitics and geoculture (Demirtaş, 2015). The second element relates to the trans-regional dependence between the Balkans and Turkey that allows the latter to activate an all-inclusive and multidimensional policy. The intention here is to maintain an open dialogue with the various actors in the region, with the aim of accompanying the Western Balkans to a political independence from the external powers that have accompanied them in recent years. In order to do so, Davutoğlu has tried to entertain relations not only with Muslim communities, but also with Christian majority countries such as Macedonia and Serbia (Ekinci, 2014).

At this early stage, the AKP began to build the foundations for its economic boom and the maturation of its power. Its approach to the Balkans followed the historical path taken by Özal and was fully embedded in the framework of Atlanticism and European integration.

Economic interests were a purely marginal factor, at least at the beginning, given the persistence of economic problems in most countries of the Balkans. The latter, going through a period of transition, would only see their GDP return to 1989 levels by the end of the decade. As a partner of the EU and the North Atlantic Alliance, Turkey has been involved in regional peacekeeping operations and EU efforts to stabilise the region since the end of the armed conflicts. In particular, Turkey took part in the SFOR, KFOR and EUFOR peace-keeping initiatives in Bosnia and Kosovo.

Turkey has played an active role in the region, becoming a respected and reliable partner. Alongside its role in the aftermath of the violent civil war, Turkey also became a member of the Southeast European Cooperation Process (SEECP), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) and the South-Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) (Vračić 2016, p. 7-8).

The effects of the identity transformation of the country and its foreign policy implemented by the AKP and Davutoğlu are not yet fully tangible in this first phase in which the

traditional western identity seems to prevail. Nevertheless, the first signs of Davutoğlu's imprint are discernible, especially in terms of diplomatic activism and neighbourhood policy. Turkey benefited from a period in which, for the first time in the modern history of the region, it shared with the countries of south-eastern Europe the same approach towards the West and the EU.

Beginning in 2002, using the common platform of the EU accession process, Ankara's decision-makers began to emulate the European initiative of establishing a visa-free zone in neighbouring regions, including the Western Balkans as stated by Davutoğlu himself. Turkey began to employ a European-style neighbourhood policy seeking to achieve maximum cooperation with all countries in the region.

At this juncture, the zero problems with neighbours doctrine finds its sublimation, legitimised by the EU's similar and concomitant approach that facilitates the creation of an area of peace and security around Turkey (Terzi, 2016).

In order to strengthen cooperation with the Western Balkans, Turkey also moves to sign bilateral agreements in several fields, including trade, economy, cultural partnership and visa exemption which began in 2002 (Ekinçi, 2014). According to Demirtaş, (2015, pp. 9-10) the latter actually constitutes an outline to the creation of "a Turkish-style Schengen area".

Turkey's efforts did not go unnoticed by the European Commission, which in the Turkey 2010 Progress Report, underlined Turkey's commitment and contribution to the political and economic stabilisation of the Western Balkans: "Turkey has taken a number of initiatives in the Western Balkans, expressing commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region. Turkey supports integration of all countries in the region both with the EU and at the Euro-Atlantic level"(European Commission, 2010).

As we have seen, the main objective of AKP foreign policy in this period was to have zero problems and if possible good relations with its neighbours. In this sense, relations with the Western Balkans were guided by win-win policies and the common goals of stabilising the region and working together to achieve the golden apple of EU membership. AKP's interest in the region grew as the years went by and Davutoğlu's doctrine took root. What stands out, however, is that, during its first years in power, foreign policy towards the Balkans was characterised by a continuation of the previous governments' desire to bring the Western Balkans closer to the transatlantic community and its institutions (Aydıntaşbaş, 2019). The AKP quickly gained international credibility by pursuing reforms to accelerate Turkey's economic growth, the maturation of its power potential and the EU accession process. As part of these reforms, the AKP pursued a pragmatic economic approach, following the pro-capitalist reforms made before it came to power (Öniş, 2012). The AKP showed a good economic performance by unleashing the country's economic potential with its "TR 2007/15" goal of reaching the 15th position in terms of its impact on the global system by the end of 2007. The transition to a market economy has led Turkey to become an emerging economic power in its own right, reaching the 17th position in the global ranking in terms of GDP in 2007. As stated by Kirişçi (2009), Turkey began to act as a 'trading state' with the intention of becoming an important leader in regional economic affairs. Stone (2004, p.10) also argues that Turkey has adopted a new focus "on the distinctiveness of geoeconomics as a newly

hegemonic mode of locating Turkey within the competition for regional and global positionality."

Demirtaş, (2015, p. 9) argues that the leadership Turkey seeks to exercise in the Balkans stems surely from its new economic prosperity but also from its institutional partnership with European institutions. "Without the European anchor, Turkish leaders would not be able to promote Turkey as an example and invite other neighbouring countries to rally around it to play a greater role in global affairs." The AKP party's EU-oriented foreign policy has moved Turkish foreign policy in the Balkans closer to Kantian values. Kirişçi argues that it was the EU that influenced Turkey's "culture of anarchy" by shifting it from a Hobbesian to a Kantian culture (Kirişçi, 2006). Stone (2004, p. 78) on the other hand, takes a more conservative stance arguing that "The vital, essential thrust of Turkish foreign policy is that it continues to pursue the tenets of a progressive Atatürkist policy, along with, and here we locate a sequential change, new vocabulary of geopolitics." Turkey's Kantian approach to foreign policy has been dictated by the AKP's clear desire to reduce the influence of Turkey's Kemalist identity.

The AKP government has certainly replaced the republic's typical Hobbesian geopolitical vocabulary, based on zero-sum balances, self-help and mistrust with a more Kantian one that embraces dialogue, soft power and economic cooperation (Narlı, 2019). This shift is also favoured by a new structural context in which the promotion of liberal democracy and economic cooperation were the guiding principles of international relations. However, Turkey retained strong elements of realism; its surrounding strategic environment simply did not put its core interests and security at stake. In this sense, up to this point, the identity turn in foreign policy seems to be dictated more by external circumstances rather than the undergoing 'critical rethinking' of the country. The structural processes of identity change are long-lasting and the outcomes are hardly tangible over the period analysed. However, at this stage these processes have certainly begun their course and will leave deeper imprints in the phases to follow.

Benefiting from Western multidimensional examples of foreign policy implementation, Davutoğlu's principles will have a great influence on foreign policy. His perspective was reinforced by the new soft-power instruments that Turkish foreign policy acquired through socializing with the EU. Starting roughly with Davutoğlu's appointment as foreign minister in 2009, the AKP began to place greater emphasis on the cultural, religious and economic ties that united both Turkey and the Western Balkans.

4. 3. 2. Davutoğlu's Trinity: Neo-Ottomanism, Activism and Soft Power (2009-2014)

If in the initial phase, foreign policy of the AKP clearly represented a continuation of the pattern established by Özal and previous government, in this second phase a more independent and assertive style was displayed. Ahmet Davutoğlu's personal devotion to the Balkans played in favor of the expansion of Turkish activism in the region once he became Turkish foreign minister in May 2009. Although Ahmet Davutoğlu was an influential foreign policy actor in the AKP's first term, with his direct involvement in foreign policy formulation his principles became the cornerstone of Turkey's new foreign policy. His doctrine of

'strategic depth' gave Turkey new dynamism in the international arena. Turkey has perceived itself as a 'central country', ready to assume its responsibilities and exercise its leadership in the Western Balkans. (Onis, 2011, p.53)

The acceleration of relations between Turkey and the Western Balkans was based on two important principles of Davutoğlu's (2011) strategic research "*A Forward Looking Vision for the Balkans*": regional ownership and inclusion.

The first principle was regional ownership, which referred to the mobilisation of dialogue between conflicting parties to stabilise and pacify the region. The second was inclusiveness, which promoted Turkey's role as *primus inter-pares* in the region and therefore had to consider the vision of all parties involved and act accordingly. Those principles along with regional reintegration, emphasis on European integration and development of a common position in regional and international organisations guided Turkey's regional policy in the Balkans.

Relations between the Western Balkan states and both the EU and Turkey reached a turning point around 2008, when the EU's economic restructuring efforts were interrupted due to the global financial crisis. Western Balkan states, still economically and financially vulnerable, were severely affected by the crisis. Turkey seized the opportunity, as Ahmet Davutoğlu stated, to pick up where the EU left off by initiating independent political efforts in the region (Koc & Önsoy, 2018). Turkey embarked on an extensive diplomatic campaign throughout the Balkans, organising bilateral and trilateral meetings between Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims. Following the failure of the EU-led Butmir process⁹, Turkey organised several trilateral summits between Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, highlighting Turkey's growing influence in the region (Aydıntaşbaş, 2019). These summits were significant for the rapprochement of the parties and the establishment of a common space of peace and cooperation. Vracic (2016) argues that the results of Turkey's new diplomatic activism were evident. In April 2010, then-President Abdullah Gül brought together Serbian President Boris Tadić and Bosnia and Herzegovina's President Haris Silajdžić in a historic first meeting that resulted in the Istanbul Declaration. This event, together with the Balkan Summit in Istanbul, led the parties, including Serbia, to the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina's territorial integrity.

The active diplomatic approach has been a central feature of the AKP government since its first term. Commitment to the EU and the Western alliance were also pre-established state policies from Ataturk's time and therefore difficult to abandon under a single government. However, a rupture between the first and second phase was arguably the gradual weakening of the commitment to European enlargement. Davutoğlu's increasingly independent and self-confident foreign policy based on strategic depth reflected a desire to act as an independent regional power (Öniş, 2011). For example, Davutoğlu proposed to the Balkan countries to establish a different basin in order not to be confined to their role within the EU.

⁹ The Butmir process is an unfruitful EU-led step of constitutional reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina to be inscribed in a wider state-building process. For more see Zdeb (2017)

This kind of discourse manifested Turkey's leadership aspirations in the Balkan countries and at the same time Davutoğlu's desire, in line with Turkey's traditional principles, to balance the role of the dominant power in the region.

This regional strategy also found fertile ground thanks to the power vacuum in south-eastern Europe. The United States and the EU had different priorities, first and foremost overcoming the economic crisis of 2008. Furthermore, following the standstill in the enlargement policy, the EU eased its pressure in the region (Demirtaş, 2015). As part of this independent foreign policy Davutoğlu and the AKP government started to invest more in human capital and developed their arsenal of soft power concentrated in the following areas: culture, language, religion and education.

Before starting to analyse the various tools Turkey employed in these areas, it is fair to mention that Turkey's visibility in the Balkans during the AKP period had an earlier formative period. The Diyanet was founded in 1924, the TİKA was established by Özal, as well as religious groups like the Gülenists, the Süleymans and other non-state actors had started their activities well before the AKP (Öztürk, 2020).

The TİKA operates under the authority of the prime minister and has become an important arm of Ankara's influence in the Western Balkans during the AKP rule. Its field of action is mainly the renovation of Ottoman buildings, aid to educational institutions and the construction of new schools, hospitals and other infrastructure. As early as 2008 Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Serbia were among the top 10 countries that received direct investments from TİKA (Tika report, 2008, p. 31). In 2012 it allocated about 18.5% of its aid to the Balkans with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia as the three of the most aid-receiving countries. TİKA's tangible contribution helped increase both Ankara's influence in the region and its visibility among the local population (Öztürk, 2019). Similarly, the Diyanet was actively involved in the construction and restoration of mosques, financially supporting the pilgrimage to Mecca of thousands of Muslims and distributing scholarships to train imams and other scholars. The character of the Diyanet has changed over the years to become one of the largest state institutions. In less than a decade, since 2006, the Diyanet's budget has also quadrupled, its staff has doubled, and today it employs 120,000 people, the majority of whom are Islamic educated staff. The budget allocated in 2015 was 40% higher than the Ministry of Interior, equal to those of Foreign Affairs and Energy, and Culture and Tourism combined. (Lepeska, 2015)

From the early 2010s onwards the boom of Ottoman memory had more impact on Turkish foreign policy and geopolitical thinking. It is no coincidence that in this period the popularity of Turkish television series¹⁰, such as *Magnificent Century*, which depicted life at the court of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, skyrocketed. The Ottoman Empire as a political, social, and

¹⁰ For more on the influence of Turkish tv series in the Balkans see Hamzic *et al.* (2013) and Bilgin *et al.* (2016). For a wider overview on Turkey's "soap power" see Yörük & Vatikiotis (2013) and Rousselin (2013)

cultural form and project has been rehabilitated domestically by Gül and Erdoğan and by Davutoğlu's neo-Ottomanist foreign policy. The latter is particularly evident in the cultural diplomacy of the AKP, which took a decisive turn in 2007 with the foundation of the Yunus Emre cultural centres.

Based on the model of the Goethe Institute and the British Council, these local cultural institutions were supported by the Turkish government with the intention of spreading Turkish language and culture across the region. In 2015 the institute had 34 centres, twelve of which were located in six Balkan countries. Davutoğlu's intention in promoting these cultural diplomacy initiatives was to establish a sentimental bond, centred on Ottomanaligia, between Turkey and these Ottoman geographical spaces that he called "geographies of the heart" (*'gönül coğrafyası'*) (Demirtaş, 2015). Davutoğlu associated this pro-Ottoman cultural ferment induced by Turkish policies of remembrance with a kind of Turkish Renaissance. The maturation process of Turkish soft power thus reached its peak under Davutoğlu's foreign office term, yet results in the Balkans had been contradictory.

On the one hand, the multidirectional diplomacy and cultural initiatives raised Turkey's profile and generated positive feelings among Muslim elites in the country and region. On the other hand, Turkey failed to establish itself as a unifying leader in southeastern Europe as it overemphasized the weight of religion and Ottoman kinship. Davutoğlu and the AKP underestimated the adverse collective imaginary of Turkey's imperial past that was widespread among Balkan peoples. Yavuz (2020, p. 228) blames Davutoğlu "for trying to develop policies based on his fantasies". Furthermore, he argues that the main limitation of Davutoğlu's foreign policy was to portray and promote an idealised and unrequited image of the Ottoman past, most glaringly exemplified in his famous speech in Sarajevo in 2009:

"Like in the 16th century, which saw the rise of the Ottoman Balkans as the centre of world politics, we will make the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East, together with Turkey, the centre of world politics in the future. This is the objective of Turkish foreign policy, and we will achieve this. We will reintegrate the Balkan region, the Middle East and the Caucasus, based on the principle of regional and global peace, for the future, not only for all of us but for all of humanity" (Davutoğlu's speech, 2009)

In an attempt to draw a more active foreign policy that reflected the sentiment of grandeur of the new Muslim elites at home, the AKP relied on Ottoman-algia and Islamic discourse to deviate from the traditional transatlantic orientation.

With the exception of Albanians and Bosnians, most Balkan peoples associated Turkey's neo-Ottomanism with the "Ottoman yoke" rather than the "*pax-ottomana*" as Davutoğlu would have wanted. Moreover, the AKP's hostility to nationalism and secularism prevented it from understanding the Balkan desire, similar to the one that drove Atatürk to found the Republic, to put an end to ethnic-religious strife and build a modern secular and pro-western nation state. This lack of sensitivity was manifested in October 2013 in the statement of then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Kosovo: "Kosovo is Turkey and Turkey is Kosovo" which led Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić to cancel an announced trilateral meeting in response, calling labelling Erdoğan's allegation as "an aggression without arms".

On the whole, there had been a more visible and active Turkish presence in the region. Benefiting from the power vacuum left by the EU and favourable economic conditions, Turkey tried to present itself as a possible regional leader on the strength of its position as *primus inter pares*. Following international and domestic changes, the AKP started diverting from the Kantian outlook given to the country during the first phase. In line with Islamic identity restoration, the AKP adopted a firm neo-Ottoman rhetoric causing scepticism among its partners in the Balkans. These tendencies would gain further momentum with the externalisation of domestic developments such as Gezi protests, the Gülen-AKP struggle and the authoritarian turn that followed the failed coup d'état on 15 July 2016. In the third phase Erdoğan would make foreign policy of “New Turkey” deliberately anti-Western, Islamist, adventurist and ideological (Yavuz, 2016, p. 440).

4. 3. 3. Neo-Pragmatism and Ideology an Unconventional Marriage in Erdoğan's New Turkey (2014-2021)

The third and most recent phase of the AKP's strategy in the Western Balkans is marked by the resignation of Davutoğlu, who contributed significantly to put the Balkans back at the centre of Turkish foreign policy, and by the incremental institutionalisation of the “state of exception”¹¹ established by Erdoğan following the failed coup. If international and domestic circumstances marked the formulation of Turkish foreign policy already in the first two phases, they play an even greater role in this third era. Indeed, after two decades of relative domestic and regional peace, internal conflicts and regional destabilisation have resurfaced, of which the war in Syria, the Syrian refugee issue and tensions with the Kurds are only the most striking examples. Consequently, since 2014, security concerns and conflict dynamics have influenced Turkey's strategic environment. Some seemingly forgotten demons have powerfully re-emerged in the collective imaginary and public discourse. In the aforementioned speech following the launch of Operation Euphrates Shield, Erdoğan recalled traumatic memories for Turks such as the Treaty of Sevres and the War of Independence (Kayaoglu, 2016).

Previously, the failed coup of 15 July 2016 had been portrayed as a tragedy, a 'great betrayal' to the nation, an act of war and finally as a victory. In a work on the discursive construction of the 9/11 tragedy Richard Jackson (2018, p. 36) suggests that “one way to promote a discourse of violence which can motivate ordinary people to engage in or acquiesce to war, is to create or sustain a powerful sense of grievance and victim-hood. This induces anger, hatred, fear and a desire for revenge which then translates into support for the violent policies of leaders.”

Similarly, Erdoğan reflexively reconstructed around the events of July 15 what Jackson calls a “myth of exceptional suffering” in order to justify exceptional measures and launch the “Holy Walk of the Turkish nation” or the beginning of 'a new saga' and 'a new Turkey' (Narli,

¹¹ On democracy and state of exception see Agamben (2005)

2017). The geopolitical memory of the failed coup together with the "terrorist threats related to FETÖ and the PKK" contributed to multiplying the real and perceived security concerns. Ankara started reverting to a Hobbesian view of international relations that had dominated the years of the republic's foundation and the Cold War. As domestic and Middle East conflicts increased, the centre of gravity of domestic and foreign policy shifted from cooperation and soft power to the anxiety of struggling for 'national security' and territorial integrity (Narli 2019, p. 70). On top of the political instability, economic indicators started declining, bringing down Turkey's soft power capabilities as well (Öniş, 2019).

In this new domestic and regional context, the Western Balkans were no longer a priority. (Vračić et.al 2017, p. 199) In the Balkans, Turkey continued to externalise internal conflicts. Ankara increased pressure on the governments of the Western Balkans to close down structures linked to Gülen (i.e. schools, universities, cultural institutions) and thus associated with the FETO organisation which was deemed to be the main architect of the coup d'état. (Vracic 2017) In October 2017 in his visit to Serbia, President Erdoğan declared: "We will uproot this infidelity network [the Gülen Movement] from the Balkans, as we did in Turkey" (Erdoğan speech in Öztürk and Akgönül, 2019, p. 236).

In order to assert his position, Erdoğan leveraged investments and trade agreements with the respective Balkan countries. In Macedonia, for example, the government's lack of cooperation led to the cancellation of bilateral double-diploma agreements (Koc & Önsoy, 2018).

The fight against the Gülen movement in the region is not new, but following the coup it has become one of the most significant aspects of foreign policy in the Balkans. According to Bechev (2019a), this new priority reflects the nature of the AKP's Balkan policy driven more and more by domestic politics rather than geopolitical planning. He also argues that policy in the Balkans is 'a mixture of ideology and pragmatic calculations'. Similarly, Fuat Keyman (2017) calls the motto and *modus operandi* of this new era "proactive moral realism".

Since Davutoglu's departure from public office in 2016, Turkish ambitions have been downsized. Turkey has reduced the pace and intensity of its regional activism and diplomatic initiatives. While in the first decade of the AKP, Turkey played an important mediating role between Serbia and Bosnia, it is now excluded from the most important security issues in the Balkans such as the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. The trilateral summits between Serbia-Bosnia-Turkey have gradually depoliticised and addressed economic or infrastructural issues such as the highway connecting Belgrade and Sarajevo or the TurkStream natural gas pipeline.

The doctrine and grand designs of Davutoğlu have therefore given way to a responsive approach that adapts to circumstances and focuses on short-term gains. Furthermore, with the consolidation of transition to the presidential system in 2018 the Turkish president centralised power over foreign policy at the expense of the foreign ministry's bureaucracy and the military (Aydin, 2019).

Another feature of this new period is Erdoğan's direct engagement, through personal ties, with Western Balkan leaders. The blossoming of relations with Serbia, Turkey's historical and

geo-cultural rival in the region, for example, stemmed from the Turkish president's understanding with Serbian Prime Minister Aleksander Vučić. Serbia has in recent years become Turkey's main economic partner in the region. Between 2002 and 2019, Turkey's trade with the Western Balkans increased from USD 435 million to USD 10 billion, a third of which resulted from trade with Serbia (Rašidagić & Hesova, 2020). While pragmatism prevails over religious and cultural ties in Serbia, the same cannot be said for Bosnia. Due to the country's reduced economic capacity and the lack of attractiveness of the Bosnian market for Turkish investors, relations between the two countries are developing on a different ground.

If on the one hand trade relations do not flourish, on the other, the "ideological-emotional" relations between the leadership of the Bosnian SDA and that of the Turkish AKP remain very strong (Sasso, 2018).

The emphasis on the historical-cultural affinities between the Muslim-conservative elites of the two countries is functional for the former to give a vocation to their electorate (the Turkishophile affiliation assumes a parallel role to the Russophilia of the Bosnian Serbs and the Germanophilia of the Bosnian Croats) and for the latter as an external projection of their own moral and historical-cultural values.

At the same time, the emphasis on the Ottoman past reflects Erdoğan's desire to become the supreme leader of the Muslim world following the path of sultan Abdulhamid II. Erdoğan's Balkan message therefore has a double addressee: Bosnian Muslims and more generally Muslims abroad, and his electorate in Turkey.

As Tanaskovic (2012, p. 52) argues Turkey's Balkan policy plays a "central position in the neo-Ottoman definition of the identity of modern-day Turkey". Erdoğan as Davutoğlu before him tries to promote the "restoration" of a rewritten Ottoman history which is 'Turkified' and 'Sunnified'. As seen before, when not played wisely the card of neo-Ottomanism has antagonised non-Muslim populations in the Balkans and has eroded the credibility of Turkish agencies.

To sum up, neo-Ottomanism is therefore the packaging, not the substance and in the Balkans it is adapted to the circumstances (Bechev, 2019b). Öztürk and Akgönül (2019) argue that Erdoğan's neo-Ottomanism is multifaceted, pragmatic as it adjusts according to the context and the counterpart. Turkey, at this stage, has lost interest in the region and has downgraded its soft power diplomacy and long-term strategy in favour of short term gains in economics and domestic politics. Turkey has gone from being a mediator *inter pares*, as Demirtaş (2015) described it, to an "ambiguous, uncertain and unpredictable" player in the region (Öztürk, 2021).

Conclusion

Throughout this critical overview of a hundred years of Turkey's foreign policy in the Balkans this thesis aimed at identifying the element of rupture and continuity with traditional determinants. Although at the domestic level Turkey has gone through turbulent phases of change over the years, the fundamentals of foreign policy have not changed radically. Rustow (1989, p.84) Öniş (2011) and Aydin (2019) agree that pre-existing ideational structures have exerted a strong pressure on Turkish foreign policy, which has fostered “a considerable degree of continuity”. Nevertheless, elements of rupture and novelty in AKP governments are not lacking.

Since the founding of the Republic, under the leadership of Atatürk and later of İnönü, the adverse strategic environment constrained Turkey to focus on consolidating its national project and security. However, the Balkans represented a bridge to the European aspiration and so it was vital for Turkey to keep a foot in the region. When a power vacuum arose in the region between the two world wars, Turkey sought, in line with its foreign policy principles, to balance the weight of the great powers through multilateral initiatives and alliances such as the Balkan pact. With the signing of the pact, Turkey abandoned its traditional neutrality but remained faithful to maintain the status quo and a cautious, non-invasive approach.

The post-war period was marked by the same approach which reflected the cardinal principle of Kemalist heritage of *peace at home, peace in the world* as well as Turkey's firm commitment to the West and Atlanticism. It was in this phase that Turkey's geopolitical dogmas settled down, pushing it into a progressive position of international isolation that culminated in the 1970s. With the intensification of the Cold War, geo-strategic concerns and the fear of the communist threat dominated foreign policy making towards the Balkans. In its first seventy years of the modern Republic, Turkey remained a marginal player in the region and kept cordial yet distant relations with the Balkan countries. For most of the first century of the Republic's life the Balkans was not the focus of Turkey's interests. Nevertheless, there has been a more active involvement of Ankara in the region since the 1990s. This rapprochement is largely due to favorable international conditions and the gradual recovery of Turkey's neo-Ottoman identity that began with Özal. Turkey's dominant soul has moved from Istanbul to Anatolia and from secularism to Islam, and, thanks to the progressive democratization of foreign policy, these new tendencies become manifest in the Balkans.

In continuity with previous governments and in particular with Özal, the AKP completed Turkey's liberal and neo-Ottoman turn. As seen at the beginning of chapter four, there are several elements of continuity between the traditional determinants and the principles of Davutoğlu's doctrine. Yet the first two terms of the AKP marked the period of Turkey's greatest involvement in the Balkans and thus consequently the greatest departure from the path traced so far. I would argue that a tangible deviation from traditional principles and Turkey's experience in the Balkans occurred as three mutually constitutive factors were aligned. Firstly, a Kantian outlook which entailed a Kantian culture of anarchy and a Kantian perception of strategic environment, which was best evidenced in the emphasis on win-win

solutions, zero conflicts doctrine, soft-power approach, and commitment to multilateralism and EU.

Secondly, an assertive foreign policy attitude that reflects the desire for dynamism and pro-activeness of the globalized entrepreneurial middle class, especially in the areas of historical empire influence. Thirdly, a stable and important economic growth, in line with global trends, has provided the material capabilities for Turkish activism in the Balkans and for the development of soft power instruments.

Drawing on Öniş (2011) this thesis considers the shift of axis argument a “rather crude characterisation” of foreign policy behaviour, especially considering the exceptional nature of the concomitance of the three factors that determined this “shift”. In fact, as Wendt (1999, p. 260) points out, Kantian culture of anarchy, unlike Hobbesian and more recently Lockean culture, has never been predominant in the history of international relations. In the case of Turkey, in a century of existence, this view has only been consistent in some twenty years. Similarly, the period of economic stability that Turkey experienced until the 2008 crisis seems to be an exception within the Turkish continuum. The question then arises as to whether this shift is dictated by the at least partial disengagement of traditional principles from the collective imagination of Turkish representatives, or rather by the favourable circumstances of the regional and global context.

In this regard, however, it is fair to recall that in Wendt's theory as for agents and structure relations, interactions between international structure and ideational structure are not causal but mutually constitutive. If no major and persistent shift occurred in foreign policy orientation, subtle shifts as well as new determinants can surely be identified.

First of all the AKP has revived the ghost of the Ottoman past and has lifted it as a cultural determinant that has constituted the new “engine” of domestic and foreign policy. The newfound self-confidence and activism in the Balkans and more generally in Turkey's neighborhood is largely due to the revival of this long-dormant identity. Both in Davutoğlu's more moderate but still idealised vision and in Erdoğan's more ideological and at the same time pragmatic version, neo-Ottomanism has eventually antagonised the non-Muslim elites, undermining Turkey's credibility in the region.

Moreover the assertiveness that characterizes the AKP period designs certainly a new pattern in Turkish foreign policy behaviour but it is not equally present in all the regional systems in which Turkey is involved. During the 2010s, in line with changings in the domestic and regional environment, Turkey's focus has shifted from the Balkans and the Black Sea to the Middle East. After Erdoğan's authoritarian turn Turkey rediscovers its Hobbesian culture of anarchy but does not return to a cautious and status-quo oriented foreign policy, on the contrary it adopts a more assertive and risk-taking approach. The predominance of neo-Ottomanism over Kemalism as guiding geopolitical doctrine certainly weighs on this new approach as well as on Turkey's abandonment of Western vocation. Notwithstanding the obvious ideological disparities between the two doctrines there are also significant commonalities evidenced by Taspinar (2008, p.17):

“Both share a strong sense of patriotism and attachment to the Turkish nation-state. Neo-Ottomanism represents a more pragmatic and liberal mindset than Kemalism, but

it has successfully internalized the Kemalist paradigm of Turkish nationalism. [...] At the end of the day, both Kemalism and neo-Ottomanism share a state-centric view of the world and Turkish national interests.”

Following recent developments, neo-Ottomanism has moved from a liberal to a realist outlook, nonetheless it has reproduced similar dynamics that testify the embodiment of traditional principles in Turkey's behaviour on the international stage. By focusing on its process of state building and adopting a cautious foreign policy approach, the Kemalist Republic often suffered from international isolation. Although personalised and heavy-handed stances adopted by Erdoğan's “New Turkey” are at odds with some Kemalist determinants, the traditional Hobbesian security culture has ruthlessly led the country to a “precious loneliness” (Aydin, 2019). Similarly, in the Balkans the principles that find continuity in late AKP policies are those that most echo the Hobbesian paradigm, namely pragmatism, state centrism and balance of power. Enhanced trade and investments with historically rival countries such as Serbia are to be read in this terms. Concurrently, emphasis on Neo-Ottomanism and Islamic identity has widened the divide between Muslim and non-Muslim communities' perceptions of Turkey. Rhetoric and domestic political considerations came to dominate foreign policy priorities in a reverse version of the Kemalist motto “conflict at home, conflict in the world”. The Balkans have become a region in which AKP externalises domestic political struggles or tries to gain legitimacy for foreign policies carried out elsewhere.

Whether the impact of recent changes will have a substantial long-term impact, or remain limited to this stage, is still too early to determine. However, this thesis has shown that, despite changes in foreign policy approach and identity, pre-existing ideational structures have played a central role in foreign policy formulation. As a constitutive element of Turkish officials' imaginary, traditional foreign policy determinants will remain visible in Turkey's foreign policy towards the Western Balkans.

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