

ABSTRACT

Erdogan and modern Turkey: an analysis of Turkey's foreign policy

The Ottoman Caliphate saw its demise in the end of 1923, when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's army defeated the imperial troops in Izmir. Since then, Turkey has sought to establish a new perspective concerning the political aspects of the country.

Whereas hitherto religion was used as the country's guidance, that was to be replaced by secularism. Atatürk sought a sophisticated, mostly western, and secular direction for Turkey. New alliances had been sealed, those who were in enmity with Turkey throughout World War I were now allies, of which political models were to be incorporated into Turkey.

What Atatürk tried to achieve was first of all peace, a peace which had to be achieved both inside and outside the country, as his most famous quote says: "peace at home, peace in the world". He therefore disassociated Turkey from its old diplomatic partner, all of which belonged to the Islamic world. Such a world was indeed rejected by the Kemalists, Atatürk's revolutionary brigade, who believed in western ideals' superiority.

The State's conduct, inspired by Atatürk, has paved the path for those who succeeded him: a cautious foreign policy combined with a strict secularism which has managed to keep Turkey away from any belligerent situation.

Turkey's bid for European Union membership was definitely suggested by the sincere admiration that the Turkish government had for the western world. Talks between Turkey and the EU began in 1963 with the so-called "Ankara Agreement". However, the situation reached a stalemate because of Brussels's unwillingness to accept a member which would not fulfill the so-called "communitarian acquis". Such acquis, outlined the political and social characteristics that a country had to have in order for its bid to be taken into consideration.

Turkey had various political problems within its borders: first of all, it had a situation of inner enmity with its Kurdish minority, it had a democratic deficit and restricted freedom of press. If these issues had frozen its bid politically, it had not frozen them economically: Turkey and the EU worked for a custom economic union which was to connect Ankara with Brussels (and the rest of Europe as well.)

The main core of this dissertation lies on a time span between 2002 and 2014, in details, it analyzes Erdogan's, and Davutoglu's role in making of Turkey a corridor, rather than a simple bridge, between East and West; thus attempting to reevaluate Turkey's position according to an economic and strategic perspective.

About Davutoglu, it will inspect the controversial figure of Ahmet Davutoglu, Foreign Minister from 2009 to 2014 and as of August 2014, the reelected Prime Minister of Turkey . His book, named "Strategic Depth", constitutes the foundation of Turkey's modern foreign policy.

What his work mostly focused on was the "Zero Problems Policy" doctrine, which is devoted to restore diplomatic ties with their Ottoman-era allies. States which shared with Turkey a historical and cultural heritage: the neighbouring Islamic countries.

This decision had come up following the EU's institutions perplexities over Turkey's EU accession bid, making Turkey more aware of its importance in the Middle East and therefore shifting from a dull, and mainly passive, to a strong foreign policy.

Some examples of what it may be considered as a strong foreign policy is the pruning of Turco-Israeli relationship. This occurred toward the end of May 2010, following the aftermath of the "Mavi Marmara" incident in which 9 Turkish citizens were killed by the Israeli Defence Force (hitherto referred to as IDF) whilst attempting to break the Israeli naval blockade imposed on Gaza.

Turkey tried to impose its secular and democratic type of government throughout the Middle East. A perfect occasion to implement such plans occurred during the so called "Arab Spring". People from Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Algeria and so on, sought to battle their governments in order to excise the despotic governors who had been ruling in their countries for decades.

During Egypt's first democratic elections ever, Erdogan delivered a speech advocating the importance of secularism in a democratic government, promptly irritating the supporters of the Islamic party, the "Muslim Brotherhood." Yet, the same Muslim Brotherhood would later emerge victorious in the same elections.

Davutoglu also recommended Assad to take example from Turkey and to implement serious democratic reforms before waging war on its own citizens. When Assad failed to follow

Davutoglu's instructions, Turkey decided that the Assad's regime had to be put down. Therefore, Turkey helped create the Free Syrian Army, an insurgent's army which seeks to remove, to this day, the Assad regime.

A strong foreign policy must be backed by an adequate economic growth and such was the case of Turkey. Wherein, in the wake of the new millenium, has seen its GDP grow at a rate of 8% yearly, dropping down to 4% during the last year yet it remains much higher than the EU average.

Turkey understood what role its position on the map could play in reinvigorating its economy: located between East and West, wet by the Aegean Sea, the Mediterreanean Sea and the Black Sea,, Turkey works as a perfect corridor for both a naval and a pipeline communication hub.

In order to achieve this, Turkey is partner of many international organization, such as the Arab League, the United Nations, NATO, Cooperation for the Black Sea, etc. Providing it a great variety of important trade partners.

This dissertation seeks, in the end, to analyze Turkish new foreign policy with Erdogan and the AKP in power, through three different theoretical approaches: realism, liberalism and neo-neo synthesis.

The first one, will help us understand why is Ankara trying to emancipate itself from its main allies: US, NATO and EU. We will examine how strong turkish foreign policy had become since Recep Tayyp Erdogan's AKP was elected for the first time in 2002.

The second one, liberalism, will explain how internal and foreign agenda are overlapping in function of Turkey's economic development. what decisions has Ankara made to climb amongst the fifteen most powerful countries and what role did the EU play.

Through the neo-neo synthesis, we will understand how Turkey's might use different approaches, neo-realist or neo-liberal combined to Keohane's complex interdependence, to fulfill its objectives.