"Cyprus: From a Strategic Military Base to A Basin of Cooperation and Integration in the Mediterranean"
by

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Contours of Traditional Foreign and Security Policy of Turkey

When Republic of Turkey was established it perceived three threats.
- Religious fundamentalism
- Ethnic separatism
- domination of Turkey by the Soviet Union (external threat)

The alignment of Turkey with the 'West' became quite clear in the context of the Cold War.
- Financial aid through Truman Doctrine (1947)
- membership of the Council of Europe in 1949
- NATO membership in 1952
- associate membership of the EEC in 1963

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As a result, Turkish foreign and security policy had been under the absolute control of the conservative statist ruling elite, also known as the Turkish military-bureaucratic establishment, which have been seen by many people as the best guard against the threats posed to the republic.

The Turkish military-bureaucratic establishment is comprised of the Kemalist military elements as well as civilian bureaucrats who regard themselves as the guardian of the secular republic – sort of the *praetorian soldiers*.

For them, foreign policy and security issues are too important to be left to the debate in the public domain. Rather, such issues should be within the competence of the Turkish military-bureaucratic ruling elites.

Hence, the country's regime itself had been, until very recently, under the tutelage of the Turkish military-bureaucratic establishment.

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In other words, in foreign and security related issues the decisions were by and large taken until very recently by the *appointed* state elites (i.e., the Turkish military-bureaucratic establishment) rather than the *elected* government elites.

With the end of the Cold War, the dominant paradigm – *Realpolitik* – was challenged and questioned by liberal perspectives.

The idea that the issues of *high politics* of the Cold War (i.e., war, security/defense, military issues, and so forth) were losing their priority and importance and that the issues of *low politics* (economy, democracy, human rights, environmental and social issues)

It was at this point that Turkey could not adapt to the global trends successfully. Turkey by and large followed its Cold War conservative and narrow-visioned foreign and security policy during the 1990s.

The capacity, attention and the room for maneuver for Turkish foreign and security policy were heavily curtailed by three chronic domestic problems: Economic crises, political instability and terrorism.

It was against a tough domestic background and an international background which was full of uncertainties due to the constantly transforming international system that Turkey was designing and implementing its foreign and security policy, in addition of course to the tutelage regime of the Turkish military-bureaucratic establishment.

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How was (is) Cyprus Traditionally Perceived by the Ruling Elite in Turkey?

The Turkish military-bureaucratic establishment has always regarded Cyprus as a strategically vital region for the security and defense of Turkey. By and large, there are two categories of security discourse used by the Turkish military-bureaucratic elites in their attempt to legitimize their foreign and security policies vis a vis Cyprus:

(i) perception of encirclement in case Cyprus is 'lost' to an unfriendly power, such as Greece, and
(ii) perception of Cyprus as 'geographically part and a natural extension of Anatolian heartland' in which case Cyprus is treated as an integral part of Anatolia's/Turkey's defense and security.

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After the declaration of the TRNC (Turkish Republic of Cyprus) in 1983, the use of 'motherland – babyland' (*anavatan* – *yavruvatan*) discourse became very popular which replaced the 'natural extension' argument by a new argument 'equating the survival of the TRNC with that of Turkey.' The 'motherland – babyland' 'metaphor serves to emphasize both indissoluble and sacred linkages between 'motherland' Turkey and 'babyland' Cyprus and the unity of their fate and destiny.'

Hence, for the Turkish military-bureaucratic elites, weather described as an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier,' a 'missile launching pad,' a 'control tower,' or a 'springboard for the conquest of Anatolia from the south,' Cyprus should never be lost to Greece. In parallel, whether Cyprus was described as a 'natural extension of Anatolia' or as 'babyland' with 'indissoluble and sacred' ties with 'motherland' Turkey, Cyprus should be perceived as part of Turkey's defense and security. In either case, for the Turkish military-bureaucratic elites security of such a strategically important island that poses an 'imminent threat' for Turkey necessitates the use of hard power, such as military intervention if needed and stationing of Turkish troops on the island.

Until recent years, Cyprus issue was highly 'securitized' and 'bureaucratized' by the Turkish military-bureaucratic elite. In other words, the issue was presented by the military-bureaucratic elite as a 'national cause' as well as a highly technical issue that necessitates only 'state policy' to manage it. In that regard, framing the issue as a matter of 'state policy' that could be handled solely by the 'state elites,' prevented the discussion of the issue in the public domain. This in return resulted in lack of emergence of alternative arguments or novel ideas on the solution of the Cyprus issue.

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Changing Principles in Turkish Foreign (and Security) Policy:
The AKP and the Davutoğlu Effect

Starting with the 1999 Helsinki Summit where Turkey was declared a 'candidate country,' more and more changes in the traditional Turkish foreign and security policy behavior have been observed. The changes in the Turkish foreign and security policy have been more visible and pronounced especially since the November 2002 election that brought AKP to the government (Sözen 2005). Clearly, AKP is following a new set of principles in foreign policy making. According to Foreign Minister and former chief foreign policy advisor of Prime Minister Erdoğan, Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, the current Turkish foreign policy making is based on five fundamental foreign policy principles (Sözen 2010):

1. Balance between *freedom* and *security*.
2. *Zero problems* with the neighbors.
3. *Multi-dimensional* and *multi-track* policies.
4. A new *diplomatic discourse* based on *firm flexibility*.
5. *Rhythmic* diplomacy.

These are quite novel principles compared to such principles as *caution*, *status quo* and so forth of the traditional Turkish foreign policy making. Does the current Turkish foreign policy making really operate on these five principles? According to Sözen (2010), these principles have started to be entrenched in Turkish foreign policy making, and hence inevitably influencing Turkey's security policies which are intertwined with foreign policy issues.

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A New Policy in Cyprus: A Paradigm Shift from Hard Power to Soft Power

Foreign policy and security policy are domains that are inseparable and hence are very much intertwined. In that sense, in parallel to the recent paradigm shift in Turkish foreign policy, one can also see a paradigm shift in Turkish security policy.

Zero problems with neighbors and a new Diplomatic Discourse based on Firm Flexibility

> The fruits of Davutoğlu's 'zero problems with neighbors' policy are now seen very clearly in Turkey's relations with Iran, Iraq, Syria, Russia, and Greece. There are two exceptions to Turkey's positive relations with its neighbors: Cyprus and Armenia. However, even in these cases, Turkey has always been the first to take the initiative to normalize its relations with them.

Turkey still actively supports the UN efforts and the current peace negotiations that aim to find a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem based on established UN parameters: that is, establishing a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation based on the political equality of the two communities in Cyprus. In that sense, neither Armenia nor Cyprus is an exception in Turkey's actively pursuing the policy of 'zero problems with neighbors.' However, Turkey's 'zero problems with neighbors' policy has to be reciprocated by the intended neighbor – that is, *it takes two to tango*.

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During the AKP government, Turkey silently stopped using *casus belli* and projected the idea of bi-lateral dialogue and even international arbitration in solving the problems in the Aegean with Greece. The AKP government went so far to remove Greece as a threat from the National Security Policy Document (NSPD), in addition to Russia, Iran and Iraq. This is a big shift from the traditional Turkish foreign and security policy in general as well as more particularly towards Greece.

Dubbed as the *Red Book*, the country's top security document lists the threats Turkey faces as well as policies as to how Turkey should deal with these threats. The content of the NSPD has always been negotiated by the government and the army. The document was once regarded as even above the constitution until recent years when the Turkish military-bureaucratic elite had the upper hand in the foreign and security policy domain. In the new document, Greece, Iran, Iraq and Russia are regarded as 'new allies' with whom Turkey cooperates and establishes 'common vision,' rather than 'primary threat' which was how they were described in the previous NSPD.

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Turkey's change of foreign policy and security discourse can be best observed in the Cyprus case. AKP's Cyprus policy has showed a big change from the traditional Turkish foreign and security policy. AKP came to power with an election program in which 'no solution is the solution in Cyprus' or 'status quo in Cyprus is the solution' policies of the military-bureaucratic establishment were rejected. Instead, AKP promised to solve the Cyprus problem. In that regard, AKP suggested that the 'Belgian model' should be seriously considered for the solution of the Cyprus problem. Moreover, Prime Minister Erdoğan repeatedly stated that Turkey's Cyprus policy was based on the 'win-win' philosophy. During the New York negotiations in early 2004 before the Cyprus referenda, Erdoğan even went so far to say that Turkish side will always be 'one step ahead' in the Cyprus negotiations signaling the new Turkish foreign and security policy on Cyprus. This was a clear sign of a new principle of Turkish foreign policy at work: *firm-flexibility*. Davutoğlu explains firm-flexibility principle as 'knowing what you want and being *firm* on this issue, yet being as *flexible* as possible in demanding and negotiating on this with the other side.

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For Davutoğlu, a solution in Cyprus is part of a bigger jigsaw puzzle. In other words, a solution in Cyprus, aside from good neighborly relations between Turkey and Greece, is a necessary element for the transformation of the Eastern Mediterranean into a basin of peace, cooperation and stability. That is regarded as the key for the future of the energy lines that passes through the Eastern Mediterranean that connects Asian and the Middle Eastern energy resources to Europe.

In an interview on 13 January 2010, Davutoğlu stated that there are golden opportunities in Cyprus and stressed the importance of reaching a solution in Cyprus:

> We are open to all methods, as long as these methods do not prolong the process (of reaching a solution in Cyprus)… Turkish-Greek relations are on the right (positive) perspective. We think that good neighborly relations (between Greece and Turkey) will contribute to the settlement process in Cyprus. Papandreou government supports this process. We do not have a threat perception (from Greece). I do not think that our Greek neighbors perceive a threat from Turkey. On the contrary, we have bright neighborly relations ahead and the solution of the Cyprus problem will contribute greatly to this bright future.

During a visit to Greece in April 2010, Davutoğlu went a step further in suggesting that Greece and Turkey should establish their common future together – which could be seen as a clear sign that Greece is no longer perceived as a threat to be included in the NSPD by Turkey. For Davutoğlu, the aim is to reach 'zero problem' and 'maximum cooperation.' 'The fate and the future of Turkey and Greece are the same… When the two countries establish their common future together, there will not be a need for mutual defense.' Instead, he suggested that resources from the security sector should be channeled to education which he stated that in the recent years that was the case in Turkey.

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Domestic-Foreign Nexus

Changes in the Turkish foreign and security policy cannot be understood separately or independent from the domestic dynamics. Indeed there is a very strong link between the domestic reforms and democratization steps carried out and the shifts away from the traditional securitized foreign and security policies in the 2000s. Since the 1999 Helsinki Summit, Turkey has been behaving more like an EU member state - committed to solving its foreign policy and security issues through dialogue and peaceful diplomacy (Sözen 2005).

One important dimension of democratization of Turkey is the normalization of civilian-military relations. This means that the more or less monopoly of the military-bureaucratic elites on the foreign and security issues needed to end and give way to a regime where the elected ruling elites (the government) call the shots. However, this has not been an easy process. Though the military-bureaucracy tutelage seems to come to its end especially with the Ergenekon trial and the most recent Supreme Military Council - YAŞ (*Yüksek Askeri Şura*) - decisions, nonetheless it is not over, yet.

In spite of a lot of domestic tension between the government elites and the conservative opposition supported by the military-bureaucratic elites, the democratization steps and the reforms for eventual EU membership in the domestic domain have helped creating an environment where once taboo issues were put to the popular public debate. The more Turkey gets democratized, the more foreign and security issues become de-bureaucratized and hence de-securitized.

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Of course, Cyprus was not an exception. On the contrary, the Cyprus issue, in addition to the Armenian issue and the relations with the regional government of northern Iraq, has been a battle ground on which the military-bureaucracy elites fight the government elites for the control of the regime in Turkey.

Through the use of securitized discourse, the government is blamed for its pro-solution, 'one step ahead' Cyprus policy as if it were selling the 'national cause' down the drain or 'losing Cyprus.' The government, on the other hand, responds by blaming the opposition for being pro-status quo which is equated by the continuation of the military-bureaucracy tutelage on Turkey. The government in its public campaigns, such as in the recent meetings to gather support for the referendum on the constitutional changes scheduled on 12 September 2010, describes the status quo as 'preventing greater Turkey' to emerge as a global actor.

It seems like that so far the AKP government has been more successful than the opposition as a whole in gathering the support of the necessary masses in legitimizing its domestic as well as foreign and security policies.

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Achieving the Objectives through Soft Power and Beyond

During the AKP government, Turkey became more aware of its soft power potential. In Davutoğlu's words, Turkey started to use its 'geographical and historical depth' (Sözen 2010: 109-110) in its relations with the neighbors intended to be based on 'zero problem' and 'maximum cooperation.' Through this vision Turkey has dramatically increased its relations and cooperation with its neighbors in multiple sectors – mostly in soft issue areas like economy, culture, education and so forth, in addition to classical state-to-state security matters.

However, Turkey's intensifying its relations in recent years with its neighbors, such as Iran, Syria, Iraq and Russia led to a huge debate regarding the allegation that Turkey's foreign policy has shifted its axis from the West to the East.

It is clear to many observers that due to a combination of both external and internal developments Turkey has been implementing soft power much more than it traditionally had in its foreign and security policy issues.

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Conclusion

The democratization steps and the reforms in the domestic domain reflect also on Turkish foreign and security domain. Since the 1999 Helsinki Summit, Turkey has behaved like an ordinary EU member state - committed to solving its foreign and security policy issues through dialogue and peaceful diplomacy, that is, through soft power.

Turkish foreign and security policy in the new millennium, however, has started to respond to the paradigm shift in the systemic level due to the end of the Cold War by filling in the new expanded playing field with new or modified strategic visions and tools on multiple numbers of issues which were non-existent in the earlier periods of the Turkish Republic. Hence, since the beginning of the new millennium objective observers have been witnessing *new contours* – in terms of softer elements - in Turkish foreign and security policy. Cyprus issue is, by no means an exception in this new paradigm.

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Unlike traditional securitized policies, Turkey's 'win-win' and 'one-step-ahead' policies in Cyprus, accompanied by its clear and proactive support of the UN mediation efforts for a comprehensive solution in Cyprus manifested itself very clearly by Turkey's open support of the UN peace plan in 2004.

Since then, Turkey continued to openly support a solution based on established UN parameters in Cyprus. The foreign policy architect of the current Turkish government Davutoğlu claims that this is part of a grand vision of peace, stability and maximum cooperation and wealth sharing in the Eastern Mediterranean that includes, besides the other neighbors, Greece and a settled Cyprus problem where the Greek and Turkish Cypriots enjoy a just and lasting solution. Judging from Davutoğlu's recent track record, there is no doubt about his sincerity. However, actualization of his vision will be tested by many factors in the future, including but not limited to the normalization of military-civilian relations in the domestic front and level of entrenchment of his new principles in Turkish foreign policy.

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