

Party Competition Over Turkish Foreign Policy: Understanding Policy Revisions of the Rival Parties

Türk Dış Politikasında Parti Rekabeti: Rakip Partilerin Politika Revizyonlarını Anlamak

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Abstract

Why do parties change policy positions? Theories of party competition analyze this question by looking at how parties respond to their voters, to their rivals, to the lobbying groups, or to the results of the past elections. The research on the motives of change in Turkish foreign policy (TFP) partially accounts for such factors from the domestic level. This article is interested in the relative impact of party competition over TFP. To this end, it analyses and compares foreign policy positions as presented in the successive election manifestos of the mainstream Turkish political parties. The analysis rests on all the pre-election party programs of the ruling Justice and Development Party, the Republican Peoples Party and the Nationalist Action Party in the period from 2002 to 2018. The article solely concentrates on sections of these parties' election programs that are devoted to foreign policy. First, it examines transformations regarding parties' general framings about TFP visions and then analyses party policies and adjustments regarding Turkey's relations with the West, Middle East, and other regions. The article also examines the level of the resemblance of parties' foreign policy proposals with their rivals' proposals from the previous electoral period. The findings of this article are expected to help understand parties' choices for particular foreign policy positions, as well as, contribute to the existing discussions on the magnitude and determinants of change in TFP.

Keywords: Turkish Foreign Policy, party competition, party positions, manifestos, Turkey-EU relations, Turkey-US relations, Middle East

Öz

Siyasi partiler politikalarını niçin değiştirirler? Parti rekabeti teorileri bu soruyu analiz ederken, partilerin seçmenlerine, rakiplerine, lobi gruplarına veya bir önceki seçim sonuçlarına nasıl cevap verdiklerine bakmaktadır. Türk dış politikasındaki (TDP) değişimin nedenlerini inceleyen çalışmalar bu tarz ulusal alt sistem düzeyinden faktörlerin etkisine kısmi olarak açıklama getirmektedir. Bu makale parti rekabetinin TDP üzerindeki görece etkisi ile ilgilenmektedir. Bu amaçla, Türkiye'deki ana akım siyasi partilerin birbirini takip eden seçim manifestoları analiz edilecek ve bu manifestolarda sunulan dış politika pozisyonları hem birbiriyle hem de dönemsel olarak karşılaştırılacaktır. Analiz, iktidar partisi olan Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi ile Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi ve Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi'nin 2002-2018 dönemindeki seçim öncesi parti programlarına dayanmaktadır. Makale bu partilerin parti

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programlarının yalnızca dış politikaya ayrılan kısımlarına odaklanmaktadır. Öncelikle partilerin genel TDP vizyonlarındaki dönüşümler incelenecek, daha sonra partilerin Türkiye'nin Batı, Orta Doğu ve diğer bölgeler ile ilişkileri üzerine geliştirdikleri politikalar ve yeni düzenlemeler analiz edilecektir. Makale ayrıca partilerin seçim manifestolarındaki dış politika önerilerinin rakip partilerin bir önceki seçim döneminde sundukları önerilerle benzeşme boyutunu da inceleyecektir. Makalenin bulgularının partilerin dış politika tercihlerini anlamaya yardımcı olması ve TDP'deki dönüşümün boyutu ve açıklayıcıları ile ilgili mevcut tartışmaya katkı sunması beklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Dış Politikası, parti rekabeti, parti pozisyonları, beyanname, Türkiye-AB ilişkileri, Türkiye-ABD ilişkileri, Orta Doğu

1. Introduction

The reasons for long-term changes in foreign policy can be looked at the international level and international structural conditions are undeniably crucial in shaping states' long-term political and economic interests which, in interaction, create the main incentives for adjustments in foreign policy. Reasonably, states fine-tune their foreign policies in response to the changes in their international environment (Larrabee, 2010; Kardaş, 2013). However, drives for periodic adaptation to particular foreign policy rhetoric and practice should also be traced at the domestic level. Over the last two decades, multiple transformations have been taking place in and around Turkey which makes the country an interesting case study for understanding changes in foreign policy. Coming to the power of a conservative government – led by Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) – coincided with Turkey's European Union (EU) candidacy and thus resulted in a period of unwavering European orientation. However, this process was quickly disrupted with the stalemate in Turkey's EU accession. The Arab Spring, the Syrian War, and the Refugee Crisis also significantly limited the sustainability of TFP towards the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions. Given the turmoil in the traditional axes of TFP, AKP tried to adjust its foreign policy formulations and increasingly developed an interest in activism towards alternative regions. This has led to shift of axis (Oğuzlu, 2008; Öniş and Yılmaz, 2009; Çağaptay, 2009; Öniş, 2011; Başer, 2015; McLean, 2015; Aydın-Düzgit, 2016) or alternatively greater autonomy arguments regarding TFP (Kennedy and Dickenson, 2013). A group of scholars also provided empirical test of these arguments through systematic analysis of Turkey's transforming interactions with foreign countries including visa policies (Aygül, 2014), signing of international agreements (Aydın-Çakır and Arıkan-Akdağ, 2017), trade patterns (Tezcür and Grigorescu, 2014) and high-level visits (Kuşku-Sönmez, 2019).

The literature also sought to address the potential explanations for the changes in TFP. For instance, as an explanation for Turkey's distancing from the EU, Öniş, and Yılmaz (2009) pointed to AKP's weak commitment to Europeanization and EU's negative signals. Oğuzlu (2008) who initially observed Middle Easternization of TFP, later anticipated a return to pro-Western foreign policy based on pragmatic concerns and sought to support this argument in light of developments such as the refugee deal with the EU, as well as, the potential cooperation against ISIS, the crisis in relations with Russia, which was also predicted to increase the vitality of NATO for Turkey's security (Oğuzlu, 2016). Looking at trends in public opinion, Kennedy and Dickenson (2013)

alternatively found support for greater autonomy in TFP, rather than a shift of axis from West to East or from secular to a more Islamic dimension. On balance, AKP sought engagement with several different regions and countries which helped achieve an increase in trade volumes and foreign direct investment into Turkey (Meral and Paris, 2010).

Another central debate within the TFP literature is about the weight of ideational versus economic factors in shaping foreign policy. Kirişçi (2009), for instance, pointed to the linkage between Turkey's new geographical orientations and interests of the export-oriented industrialists. In a similar vein, Meral and Paris (2010, p. 85) argued that it is pragmatism forced by domestic pressures rather than ideology which drives AKP's foreign policy activism. Other scholars sought to analyze the relative impact of ideational factors. İpek (2015), through her study of Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajanlığı*, TİKA) activities, argued that convergence between shared normative values of the foreign policy elite and the strategies to advance material interests together with an enabling political environment is crucial to understand changes in TFP. Winslett (2012) also underlined the essence of domestic political processes and mainly investigated the impact of party competition as an additional factor. Winslett demonstrated how the party competition may jeopardize the previous policy choices of the government and constitute significant pressure for reform of these policies through his case study of AKP's decision to adopt a more hardline approach in 2006 regarding the dispute over Cyprus.

This summary of the literature displays three main lines of debate for explaining changes detected in TFP. The first debate is between the change of axis versus autonomy arguments, the second between domestic versus international causes of TFP and the third between ideology versus material interests as other significant determinants of TFP. This article seeks to contribute to these debates through analysis of party competition over the conduct of foreign policy which so far captured minor attention in the TFP literature. For explaining changes observed in parties' policy positions, the literature on party politics contemplates on several different factors. These include public opinion (Adams et al., 2004; Meyer, 2013) –perhaps the most studied and most supported (see in Fagerholm, 2016)-, parties' bad performance in previous elections and leadership change (Harmel and Janda, 1994), or policy shifts by rival parties (Budge, 1994; Laver, 2005; Adams and Somer-Topçu, 2009). Others even considered the impact of factional constraints over policy shifts made by political parties (see Budge et. al., 2010). The empirical research in TFP literature mostly overlooked such factors from the domestic level and failed to provide causal models as to how these different sets of domestic incentives interact with foreign policy rhetoric and practice.

This article analyses foreign policy-related statements in the election manifestos of Turkey's major political parties publicized during the last 5 national elections. Since 2002, along with the ruling AKP; the Republican Peoples Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) and the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) have been the other major actors of party competition in Turkey with their ability to enter the Turkish parliament and their governing, or coalition potential. Since Turkey passed to a presidential system of government in April 2017,

political parties started to cluster around two major alliances – ‘the People’s Alliance’ by AKP and MHP versus the ‘National Alliance’ by CHP, Good Party (*İyi Parti*, İP) and Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*, SP), as well as, with the outside support of pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP). The emerging coalitional presidentialism of Turkey increased the threshold to be elected as the president, therefore enhanced the coalition and blackmail potential of different parties. The analysis in this article focuses on the five consecutive national elections from 2002 to 2018 during most of which İP, SP and HDP were unable to enter the Turkish parliament. HDP represents a distinctive case. The party could not pass the 10% threshold during 2002, 2007 and 2011 elections, yet showed remarkable success during the 2015 double parliamentary elections and won several seats in the parliament. In November 2016, HDP leaders along with a few other HDP parliamentarians were convicted on terrorism charges and detained, hence once again the party was effectively marginalized from the scenery of Turkish party politics. Nevertheless, the future analysis should definitely incorporate these minor parties, since they already became significant actors of Turkish party politics with their pre-election coalition potential.

With these caveats, the article solely scrutinizes foreign policy positions developed by AKP, MHP, and CHP which were the main political actors of party politics in the period selected for analysis. Following the analytical model offered by Adams and Somer-Topçu (2009), it seeks to ascertain if and how the Turkish political parties have changed their foreign policy positions in line with their rivals’ proposals from the previous electoral period. By utilizing Comparative Manifesto Project Data, Adams and Somer-Topçu studied 25 democracies and tried to show that “parties tended to shift their policy positions in the same direction that their opponents had shifted their policies at the previous election” and such shifts happen within particular ideological families (Adams and Somer-Topçu, 2009, p. 825). In terms of coding procedure, the Manifesto Project Data is based on a rather strictly quantitative analysis. Scholars turned election manifestos into data (see Budge et. al., 2001; Klingemann et. al., 2006; Volkens et. al., 2013) through a coding procedure which creates code categories that seek to apprehend the most relevant policy issues and goals, and then basically calculate term frequencies (Merz, and Lewandowski, 2016). Whereas most manifesto studies focus on issue salience and position-taking of political parties, some recent studies also recommend to utilize manifesto data to comprehend the reasons for parties’ “references to the past (party records), promises about the future (pledges) and attacks on competitors (negative campaigning)” (see Dolezal et. al., 2018).

Taking stock of this literature and following a rather qualitative logic, this article provides an in-depth study of successive party manifestos of the Turkish political parties and traces changes in rhetoric and practice across a set of foreign policy issues as solely expressed in the party manifestos. The analysis starts with the collection of all the pre-election party programs of AKP, CHP, and MHP in the period from 2002 to 2018. The analysis solely concentrates on sections of these parties’ election programs that are devoted to foreign policy. It examines transformations regarding parties’ general framings about TFP visions, then analyses party policies and adjustments regarding Turkey’s relations with the West, Middle East, as well as, engagement with

other regions. For example, under the section on relations with the West, we examined different parties' policy positions and suggestions regarding Turkey's relations with the EU, Cyprus, NATO, US, Russia, and Greece. We elaborated on the details of each relationship that provide our main data to evaluate the change in foreign policy positions (Table 1 – on the details of the Cyprus issue – illustrates our procedure which helps determine and compare policy positions across parties and time). By looking at how parties shift attention across issues as their foreign policy agenda, the findings are expected to provide significant insights about the Turkish political parties' strategic choices for the adoption of particular foreign policy positions and help substantiate the existing arguments on the magnitude and determinants of change in TFP.

2. Comparison of general foreign policy framings in party manifestos

Even before coming to power in 2002, AKP in its very first election manifesto offered a multi-axial foreign policy towards different regions and particularly emphasized Eurasia as an alternative to the prevailing Transatlantic focus in TFP (AKP, 2002). Indeed, AKP was not the first to offer such adaptations in TFP. Following the Cold War, particularly during the term of İsmail Cem as Foreign Minister in the late 1990s, there were already strong references to advantages of Turkey's geography and that Turkey should better utilize these advantages and its foreign policy should become multi-dimensional and active towards different regions, especially in Eurasia (Örmeci, 2011, p. 236). Following these earlier suggestions, all the major parties accentuated the need for adopting a multi-dimensional and active foreign policy towards different regions, yet it was particularly AKP which openly and perhaps most enthusiastically pronounced the need for an 'axis change' in TFP. A differentiating proposal of MHP was to make Turkey a country which does not solely adapt to others' foreign policies and instead act as a leading country concerning world-scale policies and the party rather directed its attention towards improving relations with the Turkic World (MHP, 2002), whereas CHP alternatively emphasized the primacy of the EU in TFP (CHP, 2002). During the 2007 electoral period, AKP featured that its main foreign policy goal is to make Turkey a leading actor both regionally and globally, instead of being a defensive and passive country which is only responding to crisis situations (AKP, 2015a). This goal approximated that of MHP's vision for international scale role for Turkey as proposed back in MHP's 2002 manifesto. Alternatively, CHP verged to the idea of making Turkey a regional role model, as well as an active defender of democracy and peace (CHP, 2007). MHP attacked the government arguing that TFP had gone bankrupt with directionless policies (MHP, 2007, p. 114) and called attention to the realistic nature of its own vision in the sense that it first aims to make Turkey a regional power and then a global power by 2023 (MHP, 2007, pp. 9-10). Adjectives such as multi-directional, decisive, consistent, realistic and dynamic were utilized in defining MHP's vision (MHP, 2007, p. 113).

In 2011 manifesto, AKP came up with a long list of adjectives when defining its foreign policy vision. These include positive, proactive, humanitarian, visionary, holistic, multi-directional and multi-dimensional, which is based on societal legitimacy, on understanding of the new dynamics

of the world in a realistic way, on the principles of justice, economic development, as well as democratization, which is not reactionary, which also idealize normalization, win-win in bilateral relations, and zero problem with the neighbors (AKP, 2011). AKP also underlined Turkey's role as a mediator in several international conflicts and its performance in terms of utilizing soft power tools such as humanitarian aid. CHP, alternatively, put democratization of foreign policy to the very core of its vision and in this respect promised to create new mechanisms of participation in TFP which would be made available to all the concerned institutions (CHP, 2011, p. 121). CHP also emphasized the peace, development, security, and welfare of the Turkish citizen, not to mention its outstanding European orientation. CHP set forth some additional principles including nonaggression, egalitarianism, respect for human rights and freedoms, solidarism, respect for international law and trust towards international institutions, multilateralism, as well as integrationism (CHP, 2011, pp. 121-124). Unlike such positivist and constructivist tone in AKP and CHP's exhaustive TFP visions, MHP openly asserted that the party would not abstain from adopting deterrence policies towards countries which target Turkey's national interests and those who carry animosities of the past to present (MHP, 2011, p. 185). MHP's nationalist discourse seems to be influential over such foreign policy rhetoric, which also explains the party's preference towards improving relations with the Turkic World. In 2015, different political parties rhetorically went off in all different directions. AKP placed humanitarianism to the forefront and took on the responsibility to rush to help of the needy populations around the world, whereas CHP continued to advocate its citizen-based, European oriented foreign policy, and MHP differed with respect to its priority areas – primarily the national interest and orientation towards the Turkic World.

Changes in the organization of region and country based sub-titles under foreign policy sections of successive election manifestos also hint about Turkish political parties' specific regional orientations. In AKP's 2007 manifesto, the sub-titles were respectively devoted to the neighboring countries, Cyprus, neighboring regions, Turkish world, Middle East, Iraq, the European Union, Transatlantic relations, US and so on. In 2011 manifesto, relations with the EU were promoted to the top in this list followed by Cyprus, US, and the Balkans which can be interpreted as AKP's readiness to recalibrate foreign policy axis back to the Transatlantic relations. 2015 onwards, AKP refrained from listing countries and regions in its manifestos and instead sought to emphasize its achievements utilizing sub-titles such as 'Effective, fair and esteemed foreign policy', 'Contributions to the agenda of global development', or 'regional and international cooperation'. Alternatively, in MHP's 2015 manifesto, Turkic World ranked first in the ordering of regions followed by Cyprus, the European Union and the US, the Russian Federation, and the rising powers. CHP once again gave the utmost importance to the EU, followed by the Middle East and Turkey's neighbors in this region, US, Greece, Cyprus, other neighbors, and farther regions. CHP and MHP continued to rank-ordered regions in terms of their importance for TFP and one can therefore easily interpret their main regional orientations. AKP appeared to be rather ambiguous about showing a proclivity for a specific regional orientation, which clearly indicates AKP's ambition to become autonomous in the conduct of foreign policy.

The above discussion about the main principles and orientations of TFP as observed from the election manifestos of major political parties suggests that during every election period, AKP considered making some minor adjustment changes to its foreign policy vision which moderately reflects on its opponents' proposals. For instance, when MHP in 2002 suggested a foreign policy that does not adopt to predetermined policies but leads social, economic and political policies on a world scale, similar rhetoric was embraced and reframed by the AKP in featuring the main goal of its foreign policy in the next election period. When crafting its extensive foreign policy vision put forward in 2011 manifesto, AKP included new aims and methods such as democratization and implementation of a multi-directional foreign policy which were some suggestions by rival political parties from the previous electoral period. Instead, the ideological positioning of the political parties seems to be more influential over the general frames of their foreign policy rhetoric and conduct and limit the capacity of parties when seeking to adjust these frames. The following sections turn towards more practical dimensions of foreign policy and provide an in-depth comparison of alterations in policy proposals about the details of Turkey's relations with different countries and regions.

3. Party positions and policy adjustments about relations with the Western world

Before AKP's accession to power in 2002, the European orientation of TFP had already been cemented with the start of Turkey's EU candidacy at the Helsinki Summit of 1999. This has led AKP to keep relations with the European states high on its foreign policy agenda and comply with the EU requirements. In 2002, CHP appeared to be the most fervent supporter of Turkey's EU process defining it as a project of societal transformation. During this period, MHP adopted a much less optimistic view of Turkey's future in the EU arguing that this depends on the opinion of the EU public and the EU administrations.

In its 2007 manifesto, AKP devoted a special heading to the EU and listed the government's achievements. Encouraging progress in Turkey's EU process should have led AKP to embrace very positive rhetoric and willingness to carry out reforms. During this period, CHP and MHP fiercely expressed their dissatisfaction with AKP's management of Turkey's EU relations. CHP especially criticized the 'open-ended' design of Turkey's EU negotiations which suggests the possibility of less than full EU membership. MHP criticized AKP for the concessions made and the EU for its unwillingness to accept Turkey as an equal member. Despite slowness in the accession process and the vetoes of certain EU countries, AKP sustained its positive EU rhetoric in 2011 redefining full EU membership as its strategic goal, yet claiming also that the EU should not engage in preferential treatment of Turkey (AKP, 2011, p. 277). CHP allocated much space to how it would help realize Turkey's full EU membership in 2011 manifesto, whereas MHP during this period noticeably drifted to a more anti-EU position suggesting that the frame of Turkey-EU relationship should be redefined and that the party would no longer consider EU as an issue of destiny (MHP, 2011). Nevertheless, MHP agreed to continue accession negotiations on the

condition that this process does not challenge Turkey's other significant foreign policy interests (MHP, 2011, pp. 188-189).

In the next electoral period, AKP shifted its attention from the EU accession process to developing bilateral relations through potential areas of cooperation such as Customs Union, visa liberalization and financial cooperation. Preserving its discourse about the EU as a strategic goal, AKP redefined relations with the EU as accompanying Turkey's other foreign relations, instead of being an alternative (AKP, 2015b, p. 324), whereas CHP and MHP preserved their previous views about Turkey's EU process. In 2018, AKP once again put the emphasis on extending its relations with the EU outside the negotiation framework. This was marked by five EU-Turkey summit meetings since 2015 organized to discuss the agenda of bilateral cooperation above and beyond Turkey's EU accession. CHP (2018, p. 120) criticized that the EU membership perspective of Turkey had been weakened and that the party promises to reinstate the goal of full membership, while MHP (2018, p. 106) continued to argue that TFP shall not be categorically confined to the EU axis. Overall, Turkish political parties' visions with respect to Turkey-EU relations seem to have followed rather dissimilar paths. MHP, although never pledged to be totally against Turkey's EU membership, had always been the most critical and frosty with respect to Turkey's EU process and displayed a steady estrangement from a pro-EU position. CHP, on the other hand, continuously and unequivocally promised to work towards realizing full EU membership. When compared with these two extremes, AKP seemed less explicit about its EU attitude.

Another critical international issue that concern Turkey's relations with the West are its historical land dispute with the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) due to isolation of the Turkish community residing in the Northern part of this partitioned island and represented by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The initial suggestion of AKP was a system similar to the one in Belgium with one state and two communities (See Table 1). MHP alternatively proposed an association structure between two-state and two communities. CHP, which formerly refrained from detailing its own proposal, later in its 2011 manifesto recommended a fair and sustainable settlement based on the acceptance and equality of both communities. In due course, AKP came closer to CHP's position and argued for a fair and sustainable solution that considers the political will of both communities as common owners of Cyprus (AKP, 2018, p. 296).

Table 1. Development of Party Positions in Party Manifestos on Issues Related to Cyprus Dispute

	AKP	CHP	MHP
Suggestions for the settlement of the Cyprus conflict	Two communities one-state solution (2002) A fair and sustainable negotiated solution that consider the political will of both communities that they become common owners of the Island (2018)	A fair and sustainable peace based on the equality of both communities which can be accepted by both communities (2011)	Association structure with two regions, two states and two communities (2002)
Turkey's guarantor status	Represents the basis for Turkey's positive contribution to the Cyprus conflict (2015)	Depends on the request of the Turkish Cypriots (2011)	Shall be protected at all costs (2002)
The EU in relation to the Cyprus dispute	Complains about the complicating impact of RoC's EU membership prior to settlement in the Island (2002) Criticizes the EU for making Cyprus a prerequisite for Turkey-EU relations (2007)	Criticizes the signing of the Additional Protocol as a concession (2007)	Promises to unravel Turkey's EU process and the settlement of Cyprus dispute (2007) Criticizes the EU for making Cyprus a prerequisite for Turkey's EU membership (2015)
The Eastern Mediterranean in relation to Cyprus	Sets as a strategic goal the protection of the balances and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean (2007)	Promises to turn the Eastern Mediterranean into a peace basin (2011) Promises to increase Turkey's power in the Eastern Mediterranean and ensure the fair share of energy sources (2015)	
Welfare of TRNC	Gives examples to investment, infrastructure projects and financial aid to the Island (2015)		Promises to give financial aid, improve trade and defense cooperation (2007)
United Nations' settlement solution	Sees the problem in Cyprus as a United Nations agenda item (2007)	Against Annan Plan (2007)	Supports diplomatic talks with the Greek Cypriot side under the auspices of the United Nations (2018)
Activities towards TRNC's international recognition	Lists successful policies as regards improving TRNC's international status (2007)	Promises to increase efforts for TRNC's international recognition (2011) Active diplomacy strategy towards TRNC's international recognition (2015)	

From the very beginning, MHP argued for Turkey's effective guarantor status over TRNC, whereas CHP suggested in 2011 that such status should depend on the request of Turkish Cypriots. AKP delivered an opinion about Turkey's guarantor status in 2015 and argued that it represents the basis for Turkey's positive contribution to the Cyprus conflict. Concerning the EU's involvement in the conflict, all the political parties adopted a critical position (Table 1). AKP complained that

the EU makes Cyprus a prerequisite for Turkey-EU relations. CHP criticized AKP for signing the Additional Protocol which tied Turkey's EU process to the Cyprus dispute. MHP similarly pledged that the party will work towards unraveling Turkey's EU process and the Cyprus dispute. In 2007, AKP promoted a settlement through the mediation of the United Nations (UN), whereas CHP criticized the UN General Secretary Kofi Annan's settlement plan. MHP came closer to the AKP's position in 2018 arguing that the diplomatic talks should rather proceed under the UN auspices. In 2007, AKP also sought improvement in international activeness of TRNC. In this respect, TRNC started to seek representation in international organizations, as well as, opened representations in different countries. In 2011, CHP approximated AKP's rhetoric and pledged to increase efforts for TRNC's international recognition. CHP for the first time in 2011 mentioned its ideal of turning Eastern Mediterranean into a peace basin and put even more emphasis on this issue in its 2015 manifesto. Increasing the welfare of TRNC was first pronounced in MHP's 2007 manifesto and MHP promised to give financial aid, improve trade and engage in defense cooperation. Policies that relate to the welfare of Cyprus through investment and financial aid, as well as infrastructure projects also found a place in AKP's 2015 manifesto.

Another major dimension of Turkey's relations with the West concerns its membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which provided a forum for sustaining Turkey's integration with the Euro-Atlantic community. Despite the centrality of NATO for Turkey's security, the Turkish political parties had allocated limited space to Turkey's NATO relations within their party manifestos. In 2002, AKP only mentioned that Turkey contributes to NATO and also underlined that AKP will work to ensure Turkey's place within the newly emerging European security strategy. CHP similarly evaluated NATO as an asset for Turkey and claimed Turkey's rightful place within projects about a future European Army. In 2007, AKP and CHP continued to pay attention to Turkey's NATO relations and whereas AKP continued to emphasize Turkey's contributions, CHP promised to help Turkey attain a more effective role within NATO. In 2011, CHP brought forward a new proposal about altering NATO's arrangement and giving more weight to the protection of international peace and security. In 2015 manifesto, AKP put the emphasis on strengthening NATO's political and military effectiveness, whereas CHP concentrated on the responsibilities of NATO members and stated that the alliance should work in harmony with the UN Security Council. Interestingly, none of the political parties expressed any assessment in their 2018 election manifestos concerning discussions about the unraveling of the NATO alliance and Turkey's future role for European security. Instead, AKP and CHP continued their previous shallow statements about strengthening of the alliance or ensuring that NATO members fulfill their responsibilities. MHP remained silent about developing any position about NATO or Turkey's NATO membership in its election manifestos from 2002 to 2018.

Relations with the US also occupies a central place within Turkey's Western relations. MHP had been the first to propose the development of a strategic cooperation structure with this country (MHP, 2002, p. 121). In 2007, AKP also proposed seeking a more structured relationship with the US although without naming it as strategic cooperation. CHP blamed AKP for promoting Greater Middle East Project of the US and argued that the content of the US-Turkey strategic

vision document remained empty due to a set of disagreements with the US on issues such as Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Iraq (CHP, 2007, pp. 15-16). MHP also disparaged AKP for falling under the influence of the US, yet continued to endorse Turkey-US strategic partnership ideal. In the following period, improving Turkey-US relations was termed alternatively as a 'model partnership' by the then US president Barack Obama in his April 2009 visit to Turkey. Under such a model partnership, an Economic Coordination Mechanism was established demonstrating also AKP's interest in developing economic relations. CHP (2011, p. 126) alternatively argued for seeking new dimensions in Turkey-US relations including economic, cultural and scientific interactions whereby the business and the universities would be made active players of Turkey-US cooperation. AKP could not achieve the anticipated in Turkey-US relations, as two countries grew away from each other especially since the coup in July 2016 attempted by Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) in Turkey. Turkish officials requested from the US to extradite *Fethullah Gülen* –the leader of FETÖ – , also demanded concrete US support to Turkey in its fight against PKK terrorism, and other terrorist groups such as PYD/YPG in the Syrian border. CHP alternatively pledged that during their administration, Turkey-US relations will be designed outside of such considerations about Turkey's regional interests (CHP, 2018, p. 121).

During the period under analysis, Turkey's relations with Russia also gradually gained prominence. It was only AKP in 2002 that made a special reference to Russia underlining the need for cooperative relations instead of rivalry in the shared regions. In 2015, AKP distinguished Russia as an important partner and noted that the party seeks to sustain the already improving relations. CHP for the first time reserved a special and a lengthier section on Russia in its 2011 manifesto stressing economic, cultural and energy relations, as well as common contributions to regional peace. In 2015, CHP expounded its willingness to provide the necessary mechanisms to warrant contacts among sub-state actors of the two countries and provided wide coverage of potential issue areas for cooperation. MHP similarly allocated lengthier space to Russia in 2015 defining this country as a regionally important ally. MHP put the emphasis on the importance of Turkish-Russian cooperation and the development of common economic projects for the resolution of frozen regional conflicts, as well as, for the development of regional cooperation in the shared regions. Turkish political parties also could not remain indifferent to the March 2014 crisis which erupted with the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. Part of the reason for Turkish political parties' reaction to this conflict concerned Crimean Turks' security. Whereas CHP openly stated that the party does not recognize the annexation, other parties refrained from openly stating their position and argued that they work towards resolution of the conflict on the basis of international law or through dialogue with Russia.

Other than relations with these major powers, Turkish political parties additionally developed an interest in policies for the improvement of Greek-Turkish relations. In 2002 manifesto, AKP promised to increase economic interactions as a step towards resolution of the existing complex problems, yet in the following manifestos, Greece was dropped from AKP's foreign policy agenda. CHP (2002) proposed to ameliorate Turkey's problems with Greece through a meaningful dialogue process and in the following electoral periods CHP continued to be the only

party allocating space for Turkish-Greek relations openly mentioning the Aegean crisis (CHP, 2018, p. 122). MHP also joined the discussion about the Aegean crisis arguing that the party would not allow Greece to annex islands and islets with internationally uncertain status (MHP, 2015, p. 251).

4. Party positions and policy adjustments concerning Turkey's relations with the Middle East

AKP pointed to a normalization process in Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern countries in its 2011 manifesto and embarked upon removing physical boundaries between Middle Eastern populations and Turkey. To this end, AKP promised to continue establishing High-Level Strategic Cooperation Councils, eliminating visa procedures and realizing full economic integration. These policies and a vision for the enhancement of societal integration in the region are indicative of AKP's increasing alignment towards the Middle East. AKP also referred to the Arab Spring and underlined its support to the Middle Eastern populations fighting for their rights and liberties (AKP, 2011, p. 275). CHP similarly declared its support to these democratization efforts and promised lasting friendly relations with all the Middle Eastern and Islamic countries (CHP, 2011, p. 129). In 2018, CHP also announced its vision for a region centered foreign policy and promised to establish Middle East Peace and Cooperation Organization whereby Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey would be the founding members (CHP, 2018, p. 124). Back in 2002, MHP proposed to initiate such a regional structure alternatively called the Eastern Mediterranean Union through which the party seeking to establish a coordination mechanism with the Middle Eastern countries including Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Egypt (MHP, 2002, p. 121).

Turkish political parties also paid attention to Turkey's bilateral relations with neighbors in the Middle East. Post-war turmoil in Iraq should have led both the government and the opposition to heavily concentrate on the crisis in this country. AKP took an active role in the establishment of the Neighboring Countries of Iraq Platform, urged for Sunnis' accession to the political processes in Iraq, as well as provided logistic support to Iraq's post-war economic needs. AKP also carried to the agenda of the parliament the 'March 1 Memorandum proposal' which concerned the US troops' utilization of the Turkish bases and ports in the event of a war with Iraq. The memorandum was rejected due to a no vote by CHP and around 100 parliamentarians from AKP. CHP took pride in chairing a few meetings that would help protect the rights of Turks living in Iraq and criticized AKP for failing to contribute to such policies and for not sending Turkish troops for action against PKK bases in Northern Iraq (CHP, 2007, p. 1). Similarly, MHP supported a strategy of deterrence for eliminating the threats originating from Iraq (MHP, 2007, p. 120). Turkish Parliament authorized the army to carry out operations towards Iraq in late 2007 and AKP launched its first limited operation only targeting the rebel PKK in February 2008. MHP had been the first to comment on the security of Turkomans living in this region as another major problem that concern Turkey (MHP, 2011, p. 190). In 2015, CHP also brought forward the issue of Turkoman's problems and additionally talked about the issues of establishment of

democracy in Iraq, making Iraq a primary trade partner, as well as preventing threats originating from this country (CHP, 2015, pp. 183-184). In 2018, AKP also mentioned that it worked towards preventing other ethnic groups' from outraging the rights of the Iraqi Turkomans (AKP, 2018, p. 291).

Threats to national security posed by the Iraqi and Syrian crisis, particularly the ISIS extremism had created an opportunity for Turkey and Iran to lately recalibrate their bilateral relations and seek partnership despite their image as competing for regional powers. Among others, CHP had been the first to discuss a vision to improve Turkish-Iranian relations with a special section devoted to Iran in the 2015 election manifesto. MHP did not provide any particular policies regarding Iran in its manifestos and only mentioned its willingness to engage in common regional projects. AKP sought to regularize bilateral relations with Iran through Turkey-Iran High-Level Cooperation Council meetings the first of which took place in Ankara in June 2014. When Russia intervened in the Syrian Crisis and initiated the Astana Peace Process in January 2017, this had tipped the balances in Syria and fashioned a forum for formalizing the security arrangements among the Astana troika –Russia, Iran and Turkey. In 2015 manifesto, AKP refrained from specifying any policies or methods with respect to the resolution of the Syrian Crisis, yet later underlined its contributions to the Astana process as the guarantor of the opposition in Syria (AKP, 2018, p. 297). CHP alternatively stressed that the party would not side with any actors of this conflict and in this respect sought to differentiate its Syria policy from that of AKP (CHP, 2018, pp. 27-28). MHP put the emphasis on the need for the encirclement of security threats originating from the country, as well as Turkey's contributions with respect to ending the civil war, economic progress of Syria and realization of its democratic transition (MHP, 2015, p. 253). MHP firmly sided with the AKP government and supported Turkey's conduct of cross-border military missions such as Operation Euphrates Shield and Operation Olive Branch which were aimed at eliminating terrorist threats to Turkey. On this subject, CHP also pointed to the need to end the terror originating from Syria and yet additionally stressed its willingness to swiftly conclude the continuing military missions (CHP, 2018, pp. 125-126).

Turkish political parties also allocated conspicuous space to Israeli-Palestinian conflict in their election manifestos. AKP supported the Palestinian National Unity Government of Fatah and Hamas, stated that normalization with Israel is unlikely until Israel stops its attacks against Palestine and remove its embargo against Gaza (AKP, 2015b, p. 329). CHP displayed a rather impartial position arguing to reject Islamic radicalism and anti-Semitism, also criticizing AKP for inviting the Palestinian Hamas to Turkey. MHP declared its support to Palestine in 2015 for taking part among the independently recognized nations.

Another differentiating aspect of AKP's foreign policy towards the Middle East had been its willingness and increased activism to improve relations with the Muslim countries. In 2002 manifesto, AKP promised to work towards improving the structure and international status of the Islamic Cooperation Organization (ICO). AKP (2007, p. 234) also praised Turkey's hosting of ICO meetings, as well as the improvement and institutionalization of Turkey's relations with

the Gulf States and the Arab Union, as well as, sought to improve the conditions for realizing a system of Preferential Trade among the ICO countries. Such arrangements demonstrate that AKP's activism towards Muslim countries cannot be solely associated with AKP's high esteem for their Muslim identity but also should have triggered by pragmatic reasons. In their election manifestos, other parties did not develop any special interest concerning Turkey's relations with the Muslim world instead of their vision to represent a model for these countries.

5. Visions of the rival parties concerning Turkey's engagement in 'other' regions

Starting from its first term, AKP developed interest in improving Turkey's relations with regions traditionally outside the purview of TFP. In 2007 election manifesto, AKP detailed its vision for becoming one of the most active countries in Africa as well as in Latin America regions by 2023. The opposition had been less concerned and undecided about developing strategies towards these distant regions. CHP particularly referred to Africa in 2002 manifesto, promising that the region will be included among the activity areas of TFP. Once AKP undertook a policy of opening to Africa, the region dropped off the opposition's radar and neither CHP nor MHP mentioned Africa in their 2007 election manifestos. In 2011, MHP only referred to this region along with others such as the Far East and South East Asia signifying the remoteness of Africa for MHP's TFP envisagement. CHP dedicated a special section on Africa in 2011 and 2015 manifestos, promising to improve several aspects of relations. MHP also treated Africa separately in its 2015 manifesto and pledged to deepen Turkey's relations in this region. Both CHP and MHP ceded to talk about Africa in their 2018 manifestos which point to ambivalence concerning their real interest in the region, whereas the government remained assertive and decisive about long-term programming of the Africa pillar of the TFP. Another faraway region for TFP was Latin America, which nevertheless attracted the interest of AKP starting from 2007 manifestos, whereas other parties had been less concerned about this region. CHP, however, promised in its 2015 manifesto to make Turkey a respected actor in Latin America and improve relations with socialist parties of this region through utilizing its presence within the Socialist International.

Turkic Republics of Central Asia had also been a neglected line within the grid of traditional TFP. Observing this limitation, all the political parties promised to revive these neglected relations. Solid policies to achieve such an objective were proposed by MHP which offered establishment of Strategic Partnerships and mechanisms of structural cooperation such as the Turkish World Energy Council, as well as the Turkish World Scientific and Technological Cooperation Centre. MHP also proposed foreign aid to these countries and the formation of a Turkish World Ministry in Turkey which would be responsible for carrying out policies regarding Turkey's cooperation with the Turkic World and Eurasia. CHP mostly focused on cultural contact listing priority areas such as language education, technical cooperation, or common research projects (CHP, 2018, p. 124). AKP also concentrated on the cultural aspect of relations with this region through aid to projects such as the establishment of *Manas* University in Kyrgyzstan and *Ahmed Yesevi* University in Kazakhstan, or support to the establishment of *Yunus Emre* Cultural Centers

which were created to promote Turkish language culture and art. So far, 56 such centers became active, also new branch offices continue to open around the world. Regarding bilateral relations, High-Level Strategic Cooperation Councils were initiated with Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. Since 2009, these countries also cooperate through a multilateral platform called the Turkish World Council.

The Caucasus is yet another neighboring region of Turkey, but it reserved a modest space under the foreign policy frames of the Turkish political parties. Following the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008, AKP proposed the formation of a multilateral regional dialogue mechanism called the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform. This process resulted in unexpected Turkish-Armenian normalization. Yet, the process became untenable as Turkey and Armenia failed to agree on the issues of Nagorno Karabagh conflict and the allegations about the Armenian genocide. Despite these bones of contention, AKP continued to mention that it seeks normalization of relations with Armenia in the upcoming periods (AKP, 2015, p. 331). Similar to AKP, CHP discussed the terms for Turkey's normalization with Armenia in its 2011 and 2015 manifestos arguing that Armenia should abandon its allegations about genocide and should withdraw from Azerbaijan's territories. CHP also proposed the initiation of contacts with Armenia at the grassroots level including categories such as civil society, business, and students. MHP approached the region from a materialist perspective proposing an encompassing economic cooperation structure named 'Eurasian Union' which would include countries from Caucasus, Central Asia, Turkish Republics, as well as Turkey's other Eastern and Southern neighbors (MHP, 2002, p. 121). In its election manifestos, MHP refrained from providing a foreign policy solution to Turkey's protracted conflict with Armenia.

China and other rising economies of South East Asia had also attracted particular attention to the Turkish political parties. AKP sought dialogue partnership with ASEAN and signed the Friendship and Cooperation Agreement in 2010 in an effort to help the private sector to gain greater access to the Asian markets. The opposition parties also concentrated on economic and trade relations with these dynamic economies. Besides, AKP addressed and carried to the agenda of the world public opinion the problems of Muslims living in Myanmar and the Philippines, underlining its humanitarian aid to these suffering communities (AKP, 2018, p. 292).

AKP carried out a visible and active diplomacy for maintaining dialogue among the conflicting countries of the Balkan region, sought to further improve Turkey's already strong relations with Bosnia-Herzegovina, keenly promoted the declaration of independence by Kosovo in 2008, supported the Balkan countries' integration with the Euro Atlantic structures, and employed its popular strategy of trilateral cooperation with Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and also with Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. Furthermore, Turkey cooperates with Balkan countries through the Southeast European Cooperation Process (SEECP) and chaired the institution between June 2009 and June 2010. In the earlier election manifestos of the opposition parties, the Balkan region was mentioned along with other nearby regions such as the Middle East and the Caucasus and the opposition parties rather concentrated on the development of common

economic projects. In 2011, CHP fixed its attention to the consolidation of the political setting that emerged after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and argued for the improvement of bilateral and multilateral cooperation for the stability of the region. CHP promised for good relation with all the Balkan countries and underlined that it would not give credence to religious and ethnic radicalism in the region (CHP, 2015, p. 189). MHP's election manifestos failed to designate any policies regarding Turkey's relations with the Balkan countries.

6. Conclusion

This article compared foreign policy visions, orientations and regional strategies as proposed by major Turkish political parties in their election manifestos between the 2002-2018 period. The findings, first of all, show that foreign policy had been a highly contested dimension of Turkish party politics. Party ideology seems to be influential over the variation regarding general foreign policy frames, rhetoric, and orientations of different political parties. Rival parties stick to their foreign policy positions over long periods of time and mostly remained resistant to change. Nevertheless, when minor adjustments to foreign policy strategies and rhetoric occur, they show some similarities with rival parties' suggestions and criticisms from the previous period. The article does not interpret such adjustment changes in TFP to be a factor of the pressures by rival parties, it, therefore, does not claim to reveal how major political parties – by way of their foreign policy suggestions – impact the government or vice versa. The article rather reviews the transformations and correspondence among different political parties in foreign policy discourse and practice as articulated in their election manifestos.

MHP's nationalist discourse had been markedly influential over its general foreign policy rhetoric and especially its preference towards improving relations with the Turkic World. There had been also significant correspondence between AKP's conservatism and its inclination towards supporting the rights of Muslim communities and the party's liking for improving Turkey's relations with the Muslim world, whereas a continuous European orientation found more emphasis under CHP's foreign policy rhetoric which is popular with its secularist and social-democratic identity. It was not only AKP but also the opposition which pointed to a need for a multi-directional TFP demonstrating that AKP government's choice for new foreign policy directions cannot be solely linked with its ideology or favor for certain countries and regions, instead, such a choice was apparently driven by exigencies of Turkey's international environment. Nevertheless, its emphasis on multi-dimensionality led the AKP government to gradually refrain from evincing its alignment with a specific region or group of countries, whereas CHP and MHP continued to stick to their previous policy of openly communicating their main orientations towards particular regions.

An in-depth comparison of parties' specific policies towards different regions and countries point to a process of increasing interaction among their foreign policy strategies. For instance, we especially see such interaction in policy strategies developed towards the dispute over Cyprus.

Parties gradually came close to each other's position concerning their proposals about the resolution of the conflict, UN arbitration, efforts for TRNC's international recognition and the welfare of the islands' residents. It is also interesting to observe similarities in parties' approaches towards particular countries and organizations. For instance, Turkish political parties were all reluctant to discuss Turkey's relations with NATO, although this collective security organization represents a major aspect of Turkey's foreign and security policies. Another noticeable similarity was that all the parties under analysis gradually developed greater interest in improving Turkey's relations with Russia which should have been motivated by the growing strategic importance of this country. The opposition, however, had fallen behind the government for developing policies towards certain alternative regions such as Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Balkans. Once AKP developed a policy of opening to these regions, opposition parties became less confident and less interested in developing Turkey's relations with these alternatives, except MHP's comprehensive program to improve Turkey's ties with the Turkic Republics in Central Asia.

The above analysis portrays that parties had tried to avoid rather than engage with their rival's foreign policies. Still, there had been instances that they made some minor adjustment changes and altered their strategies in line with the others' previous proposals. Instead, international structural conditions and party ideology seem to have been much more critical for understanding their major foreign policy choices.

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