

## THE PERCEPTION OVER THE CHANGE OF AXIS IN TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN TERMS OF A LIBERAL PERSPECTIVE BETWEEN 2002-2010

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### ABSTRACT

This article discusses a very extensively argued issue of Turkish policy between beginning of Justice and Development Party administration and Arabic Spring; the change of axis in Turkish foreign policy, and claims on Turkey is shifting from Western oriented foreign policy to Eastern orientation. Such discussion has been done and various articles appeared both on domestic and international media after AK Party won the elections in November 2002. Because the party was accused of being pro-Islamist. The article will discuss that Turkey has not suspended or lowered its relations with Western World, instead, initiated a more extensive and comprehensive foreign policy by including neighbouring countries, and countries that Turkey has historical, cultural, ethnic, and religious boundaries, and will analyse that such a development in Turkish foreign policy cannot be described as a change of axis, but practises in foreign policy is changing, from a realistic to a liberal foreign policy.

**Key Words:** *Change of Axis, Turkey's foreign policy, Ahmet Davudoğlu, liberal international relations theory.*

## 2002-2010 DÖNEMİ TÜRK DIŞ POLİTİKASINDAKİ EKSEN KAYMASI ALGISİNİN LİBERAL TEORİ AÇISINDAN ANALİZİ

### ÖZET

Türk siyasetinin AKP hükümetinin başlangıç döneminden Arap Baharına kadar olan süreçteki en çok tartışılan konularından olan Türk Dış Politikasındaki eksen kayması ve Türkiye'nin Batı eksenli dış politikasının Doğu'ya yönelmesi iddalarını Uluslararası liberal teori açısından Türkiye'nin Batı Dünyası ile ilişkilerinin askıya alınmasının sözkonusu olmadığını aksine tarihi, kültürel, etnik ve dini sınırları olan Türkiye'nin komşu ülkeleri de içine alan büyük ve kapsamlı bir dış politika başlatması ve Türk Dış Politikasındaki bu tür gelişmenin eksen kayması olarak tanımlanamıyacağı

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ortaya konulmuş. Ayrıca realist dış politika algısının yerini liberal ve aktif dış politika anlayışına bırakması incelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Eksen Kayması, Türk Dış Politikası, Ahmet Davudođlu, Uluslararası Liberal Teori*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Following AK Party's victory in 2002 national elections till arabic spring, critics on a possible change of Axis in Turkey's foreign policy started to appear first in International, then national media. For those who supported this claim, the ruling party was a pro-Islamist one, and it was the first time for Turkey that a pro-Islamist party would be ruling the "secular-democratic" state. Eventhough relevant authorities of the party, including Prime Minister and Secretary of the States during AK Part rule delared that Turkey would not be facing off Europe, full membership to EU and developing relations with USA would be their priority, such discussion started to appear again more intensively that a few years before. Prime Minister Erdoğan unexpectedly revealed anger to Israeli President Peres at Davos, and accused Israel killing innocent people, and exerting "improportional power" at its operations in Gaza. Turkey time to time criticised Israel's policy towards Palestinians, however, it was very first time for Turkey, a strategic ally of Israel in the region, to outburst anger and critisize harshly, which intensified criticisims of Turkey's changing of axis in foreign policy. AK Party won the elections in November 2002 and founded a powerful one-party government in the beginning of 2003, mostly because the party was accused of being pro-Islamist or at least the roots were so, however, the claim of changing axis intensified especially after Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erođan's one minute outburst against Simon Peres of Israel on 29 January 2003 in International World Economic Forum in Davos, Turkey's developing relations with Middle-Eastern countries especially with Syria, Turkey's closer participation in resolving dispute in Iraq, and Prime Minister Erdoğan's visits to Iran and Libya.

Those who claim Turkey has started its axis and foreign policy priority to Eastwards have various reasons; and not surprisingly, much of the such criticism and articles appeared on Israeli Media. Serious criticisims appeared especially on Jerusalem post; some even claimed that Turkey broke its connections with the West because of endemic corruption of its secular leaders which led to growth of Islamist leaders, and this was a an expected result of AK Party policies<sup>2</sup>. The core issue in the claims that Turkey breaking or weaking ties was, growth of pro-Islamist policies, as Glick

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<sup>2</sup> Caroline B. Glick, Jerusalem Post, 16 October 2009 and 12 August 2009

claimed, and such claims added that such an initiative by Turkey would only weaken Turkey's case in Kurdish issue and EU membership process that Israel has been supporting.<sup>3</sup> Further, Soner Çağaptay, a senior fellow and director of the Turkish Research program at Washington Institute based Turkey's new policy, or change in foreign policy priorities and preferences, were due to the ruling party's economic-Islamist policies.<sup>4</sup> David Phillips on the other hand, implied that Turkey's pro-Eastern policies resulted in a lack of trust for Turkey's Western allies, and Turkish Prime Minister should restore its relations with Israel to get US support. He also strongly implied that such a policy was a result of governments positive response to Islamist common man of Turkish society, which in the end would take Turkey to Middle East, not West.<sup>5</sup>

Davos crisis was followed by Turkey's very active foreign policy with the regional countries. First, frequent visits from and to Syria took place. Syria was on the list of "countries supporting terrorism", and PKK leader Öcalan lived in Syrian capital Damascus until 1998. In order to force Syria either to get and deliver Öcalan to Turkey or make him leave the country, Turkey even strongly implied that it will not hesitate use power against Damascus, the two countries were about to fight 11 years ago. As a result of mutual visits from Turkish and Syrian officials and government members, both countries decided to remove visa application for each other's citizens, and signed numerous treaties to develop relations, including developing trade and efficient use of water sources.

Syria was followed by Turkey's indirect support for Iran's effort to develop nuclear arms provided that it is for peaceful purposes, and Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Tehran on 26-28 October 2009. He was warmly welcomed by Iranian President Ahmadinejad, among the first targeted world leader by USA and Israel. To stress Iran's intention to develop relations with Turkey, Erdoğan was even received by Iran's religious leader Ali Hamaney.

Eyes started to concentrate on Turkey after Erdoğan's visit to Tehran, and declarations stating that both parties were very keen on developing relations on the basis of mutual respect. However, it was not the last to increase the curiosity of the concerned eyes who were worrying about the future of Turkey. Prime Minister Erdoğan visited Libya between 23-25 November 2009. He was again warmly welcomed by Kaddafi, leader of Libya, who caused one of the big scandals of Turkey's foreign policy in recent past years, during Erbakan's visit to this country. Yet Libya was one of the potential enemies of the Western World and was on the list of

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<sup>3</sup> Alon Ben-Meir, Jerusalem Post, 29 October 2009

<sup>4</sup> Soner Çağaptay, Jerusalem Post, 5 December 2009

<sup>5</sup> David Phillips, Boston Globe and International Herald Tribune

countries sponsoring international terrorism, prepared by US Department of State until May 2006. Syria, that Turkey had an incredible development with relations to, is still on this list!<sup>6</sup>

Describing the latest foreign policy developments of Turkey, I will try to discuss in this article the above mentioned question frequently asked in these days, whether there is a change of axis in Turkey's foreign policy. Understanding the question is vital because a misleading or misunderstanding due to spread of disinformation –either intentionally or not- will result in misjudgements. Such a discussion will no doubt affect Turkey's relations with Europe, Israel and USA. Media, as a very influential pressure group, could produce and deliver news to serve its own interest and have others misjudge the core event<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as a countries foreign policy is not entirely separate from local and domestic motives, promoting such a doubt will increase concerns of not only international lobbies, interest and pressure groups, but also local interest and pressure groups, which could be very influential and affective on governments. A declaration by industrialists and businessmen association revealing distrust to the government result in certain social unrest, and even could end in more serious results.

Considering the general situation, I will discuss in this article that in fact there is not a change in Turkey's foreign policy axis, instead Turkey is implementing a more inclusive and more comprehensive foreign policy. I will discuss that new developments in Turkey's foreign policy is not an Eastern oriented one and leaving the West aside, but *a late adaptation of new systemic structure in post cold war era*<sup>8</sup>. I will try to figure out that there is a change, but this is not in the axis of foreign policy, but Turkey realized that it is impossible for it to continue and develop its relations with Cold War mentality, and started pursuing a liberal international policy, to say in other words, the change is from realistic international approach of Cold War Era to liberal international policy. International systemic changes include the end of the cold war. One might expect, based on an international systemic analysis that Turkish foreign policy would change as a response to changes in the international system's distribution of power. For example, the disappearance of the Soviet threat, which compelled Turkey to enter into an alliance with the United States and Western Europe in the framework of NATO, could lead to a more independent Turkish foreign policy.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> State Sponsors of Terrorism

<sup>7</sup> For such an example, refer to news delivered by Jewish Telegraph Agency: Obama Rebukes Turkey's Leader on Israel, 8.12.2009

<sup>8</sup> Bülent Keneş, Türkiye-ABD ilişkileri, yalanlar ve gerçekler, Zaman, 9 December 2009

<sup>9</sup> Philip Robins, Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War, Washington University Press, Seattle 2003

Beforehand, a brief overview of Turkey's foreign policy during cold war era will be given, including relations with USA, NATO membership, relations with EU and Greece, then new instruments and characteristics of Turkish foreign policy will be outlined, which will be followed by explaining what the real change is.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF TRADITIONAL TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY**

By collapse of Wilsonian Idealism after the end of World War II and emergence of USA and USSR as superpowers, a great portion of the world, especially Euroarian zone was divided into two fronts, so called "The Western Block" led by USA and "Eastern Block", led by USSR. Turkey, as on the crossroads of East-West, at the very heart of Euroasia and Africa, due to its strategically importance geopolitics due to its easy access to Oceans and energy sources, had to face certain difficulties in the very first years of the new system in post World War II. Eventhough Turkey's intention and foreign policy strategy was pro-western in those years, Turkey did not neglect importance of USSR, and time to time had good relations with this country, yet it was among the very first countries to recognize Republic of Turkey. Moreover, Turkey signed one of its first international treaties with USSR, Moscow Treaty on March 1921 prior to promulgation of the Republic, which led to end of Eastern Front during War of Independence and made it possible for Ankara government to concentrate on more to Western front.

However, following World War II, especially after 1947, a serious period started for Turkey. Following Yalta Conference in February 1945, certain countries faced to decide to join in which side, being on American or Soviet block. The case for Turkey was more serious, Turkey had not joined World War II despite increasing pressure after Tehran Conference 1943, Churchill even proposed to exert pressure on Turkey to convince to join war by discussing the Status of the Straits<sup>10</sup>. Dream of Stalin was to spread its sphere of influence by gaining control over Baltic states, Eastern Europe, and Turkish Straits.<sup>11</sup>

It is possible to say that Turkey faced a serious security problem after World War II, developments forced Turkey to make a decision, which was joining one side. Turkey made its selection joining the Western block, as the dream of the country was to attain the contemporary civilization as

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<sup>10</sup> Banu Avar "Hangi Dünya Düzeni", Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul,2009 Page 38-39

<sup>11</sup> Paul R Viotti & Mark V Kauppi "International Relations and World Politics",Prentice Hall, New Jersey 2001,Page 65

mentioned by Atatürk, and Western World represented the contemporary civilization, as general acceptance and perception. However, Turkey maintained “sevres phobia” as Jung and Piccoli outlines<sup>12</sup>, and fear of loss of territory<sup>13</sup>.

As maintaining security and sovereignty was the first priority in these years, especially against “Soviet threat”. Truman Doctrine 1947 predicted US support to Turkey, where President Truman said Turkey deserves American attention and that integrity is essential to the preservation of order in the Middle East<sup>14</sup>. However, Turkey had to justify itself its capability and loyalty to its prospective alliance, thus decided to send troops to Korea, the first outbreak of the Cold War. Finally, Turkey, together with Greece, became member of NATO in February 1952. NATO membership was considered as the first and immediate priority to maintain security, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes even declared to press that “it was a must for Turkey to become a NATO member.”<sup>15</sup>

Major characteristics of Turkey’s foreign policy in Cold War Era is that almost entire foreign policy decision making process and foreign policy practices were shaped on the basis on security and threat, thus policies were mostly reactionary and crisis management oriented. NATO membership, as defined in above paragraph, was a result of threat threat sense. In this international system, drive of securing the borders instead of maintaining a unique place in international system became the basis of Turkey’s foreign policy in Cold War Era, and Turkey sometimes paid the results by ignoring its natural sphere of influences and other potential power centers.<sup>16</sup>

Another significant characteristic of Turkey’s Cold War foreign policy was passive, reactive, power was defined by military capacity, balance of power was assumed on deterrence policy. Foreign policy was always part of domestic agenda, only when crisis and developments occurred on vital issues such as Cyprus question and Armenian genocide claims. Soft power, the ability of a country to shape its region according to its own interests was not on the agenda. Foreign policy methodology was *issue* (such as Cyprus question) –*principles* (such as respect to territorial unity) - and *attitude* (classical diplomatic methods) based.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Dietrich Jung & Wolfgang Piccoli “Turkey at the Crossroads, Ottoman Legacies and a Greater Middle East, Zed Books, London 2001

<sup>13</sup> Pinar Bilgin “Turkey’s Changing Security Discourse – The Challenge of Globalism”, European Journal of Political Research, Vol: 44, Issue 1, p:184

<sup>14</sup> Modern History Sourcebook, The Truman Doctrine 1947

<sup>15</sup> Banu Avar: op.cit Page 43

<sup>16</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu “Stratejik Derinlik” Küre Yay.İstanbul 2009 Page 71

<sup>17</sup> Nimet Beriker Atiya “Eski Dünya Yeni Yaklaşımlar” Foreign Policy Feb 2001, Page 46-47

Regarding relations with European Union, the Union was trying to establish a security society. The aim of the Union was to establish a European Union in Europe and its environment creating a security society by means of developing democracy, human rights, free market economy, pluralist cultural and social order, Turkey on the other hand was struggling to create a domestic and international security zone in the Balkans, Middle-East, Mediterranean and the Caucasus by means of military campaign, powerful and influential state, and stable unitary state<sup>18</sup>. As Prof. Kirişçi defines, EU was creating a Kantian society wheres Turkey was practising a Hobsian world order<sup>19</sup>.

It could be rather surprising that Turkey, pursuing a realistic foreign policy, applying to become a member of European Union, which is an apparently liberal-idealistic project. European Union was established to maintain and preserve peace, welfare, development and social justice all over Europe, which was twice devastated by World Wars. It is not possible to explain Turkey's demand to become a member of the Union in 1980s because Turkey shared the same idea(l)s, instead, Turkey's will for EU membership is result of realistic essences. It was considered a way to cope with and overcome economic crisis, an influential way of securing secularism, and a mechanism to prevent any possible social conflicts and unrests.<sup>20</sup>

Turkey's foreign policy was limited to two important parameters for a very long time, first, securing itself under NATO umbrella against Soviet threat, and again within this security zone, indexing the diplomacy to relations with Greece, which is also a member of this front. EU membership is yet also a result of Turkey's struggle not to stay behind at its struggle with Greece<sup>21</sup>. Greece was long considered as a major threat against Turkey, thus was the reasons of having a strong army. Turkey drew "red lines" and declared certain issues such as expanding continental shelf of Aegean Sea from 6 miles to 12 miles, Greece claimed they had this right because Aegean Sea is an inner sea, Turkey harshly oppsed such claim as this would limit Turkey to a very narrow water space in the sea. As a means of deterrence policy, Turkey declared certain actions by Greece *casus belli* and revealed it will not hesitate using power in case such actions and measures taken by Greece. Events took place during Kardak crisis outbroke in January 1996, and attempts to border infringement in Cyprus and trying to capture Turkish

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<sup>18</sup> Ramazan Gözen "Türk Dış Politikasının Avrupa Birliği'ne Doğru Dönüşümü" Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika, Vol 2 Issue 6 text available at: <http://www.usak.org.tr/dosyalar/dergi/Kh9DKzKQgJj7JOScnpH7IlmVbA7F9g.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, 'Between Europe and the Middle East: Transformation of Turkish foreign policy', MERIA Report, Vol.8, No.1, Mart 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Ramazan Gözen Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu: op.cit, Page: 72

flag on August 14, 1996 were examples of the climax of tension in Turkish-Greek relations, and was enough to understand that both sides, especially Turkey was ready to use power. Turkey proposed resolving problems with Greece should be done by mutual negotiations between the concerned countries, i.e. Greece and Turkey, EU, and thus Greece on the other hand were in favor of taking the issues to international organizations. Cyprus questions has been the key elements in relations with Greece. Greece and European Union have been insisting on resolving the dispute by International Organizations under the leadership of United Nations, however, Turkey was in favor of maintaining the status in gained on the island after second peace operation in August 1974. Eventhough governments in Turkey said they support an equitable solution on the island, almost every government kept the fear that they could be accused of “sealing the island” by domestic politics. Leader of Welfare Party Necmettin Erbakan, who later became Prime Minister, even clearly declared in the Parliament that, the discussion for resolving the Cyprus question on the basis of a federation, instead, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus must be recognized by international society and role of USA and UN should be eliminated in this process.<sup>22</sup>

While European Union accused Turkey especially between 1986-1997 as security exhausting country as Turkey kept on military operations in Northern Iraq to elicit its security from ongoing attacks by separatist PKK, and alleged Turkey of its military and political interference in Balkans and Caucasus, and declared such operations and interference were against European Union standards, Turkey claimed the Union’s declarations and interference towards Turkey’s domestic and foreign policy as “interventionist, separatist, and improper”<sup>23</sup>

In this period, i.e. during traditional foreign policy practises, Turkey had a very limited options of foreign policy options. Turkey’s maneuvers to establish relations with countries other than Western Block were not welcomed by the Superpower of the pole, and could not have the opportunity to initiate its own policy, or had to pay the results.<sup>24</sup> Regarding relations with Middle eastern countries, Turkey preferred to pursue a controlled tension policy with Syria and at a lower lever with Iran.

The main concern of Turkey’s so called traditional foreign policy was, security. As Ziya Oniş describes, Turkey was a coercive regional power<sup>25</sup>, ready to employ force, using the threat of force and other

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<sup>22</sup> For video of Erbakan’s speech on this issue: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1tS1cpgsKw>

<sup>23</sup> Pinar Bilgin, “Clash of cultures? Differences between Turkey and the European Union on security”, Ali.L.Karaoşmanođlu (collected.), The Europeanization of Turkey’s Security Policy: Prospects and Pitfalls, Foreign Policy Institute, Ankara 2004

<sup>24</sup> For some examples of such results, refer to Banu Avar op.cit Page 46

<sup>25</sup> Ziya Oniş “Turkey and Middle East After September 11: The Importance of the EU Dimension” Turkish Policy Quarterly Vol:2 No:4

confrontational tools to of foreign policy. In addition, foreign policy making in general remained restricted to a narrow elite accustomed to viewing the surrounding world from the perspective of national security considerations<sup>26</sup>, which are practises of realist thought of international relations.

As for the Morgenthau's definition, the main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power<sup>27</sup>. In order to cope with threats, the policies of Turkey during 1940s to 2000s could be explained by the ideals of realism, which resulted in Turkey to pursue a powerful state policy in terms of military power, and did not include non-governmental institutions to its foreign policy.

The frequently used term "Traditional Turkish Foreign Policy" in fact covers a very narrow scope; it refers to keeping good relations with USA and European Union, being a loyal oart of NATO, keeping suspicious eyes on Middle-Eastern countries especially to Iran, and "*acting together with the world*". It should not be forgotten that the world is not composed of one alliance or pact, and yet interests of a country in alliance may not be our interests. Turkey had to refuse its historical heritage due to this systemic essence and its strong will to act together with the world, which in fact referred to Western block in general, and USA in specific.

Philip Robins contends that Turkish foreign policy has faced four challenges in four distinct periods of its history: (1) consolidating the emergent Turkish Republic through external recognition (1930s), (2) remaining neutral during the Second World War (1940s), (3) confronting the challenge of Soviet expansionism (the cold war era), and (4) responding to the end of bipolarity (post-cold war era). Robins examines these foreign policy issues in the last period.<sup>28</sup>

To sum up briefly the general characteristics of Turkey's foreign policy during Cold War, Turkey did –or could- not have numerous options in foreign policy practices. It was limited to threats from Soviet Union in the early years, and later crisis with Greece, Cyprus question, and a controlled tension with Syria in the later years. Lack of trust and suspicion about others were prevailing factors, as widely believed "We Turks have no friends but Turks". Arabs were charged as they did not like Turks, Iran would "export regime" to Turkey, Syria had territorial claims from Turkey, thus developing relations with these countries would be a threat to Turkey's national security

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<sup>26</sup> Kemal Kirişçi "Turkey's Foreign Policy in Turbulant Times" EU Institute for Security Studies, September 2006 Pg: 14

<sup>27</sup> Hans J Morgenthau "Politics Among Nations, The Struggle for Power and Peace, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, Mc Graw Hill

<sup>28</sup> Philip Robins, Ibid

and sovereignty, and weaken its power. *Maintaining the power, and establishing an order based on powerful military and unitary state* were two major characteristics of the era. To say it in other words, Turkey followed a realist and Hobsian foreign policy, as reasons and practices mentioned above.

### **3. LEVEL OF CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZED WORLD OR DREAM OF TURKEY**

Main aim to the Turkish nation was targetted by Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Republic, as to reach the level of contemporary civilized world, at all levels. This civilization should include utmost developments at all levels including arts, humanities, science, trade, industry, wealth, and leadership. As the term civilization itself should include the meaning of peace, Turkey, while developing to the level of contemporary civilization, should also contribute to peace. Moreover, as one aspect of development lies in the very heart of leadership, and setting an example to other states, restrictive and tension inspiring understanding of realist though were not applicable and practical for Turkey to realise its guided target by Atatürk. In order to develop economically, Turkey should trade more with new alternative markets, in order to develop humanitarian values, Turkey should share common humanitarian values with the whole world, in order to become amore industrialized world, Turkey should import know-how and new developments, regardless of the origin. Acting under the pressure of a potential threat and limit one's playground thus, constrained opportunities in all areas.

So as to realise the target shown by Atatürk, Turkey did not have many options in hand, but to review its foreign policy strategy, to consider interdependency of the states, from a more authoritarian state to a bottom-up politics which includes the demands and preferences of social groups and individuals<sup>29</sup>, take initiative and develop proactive policy rather than non-intervention and reactive, instead of maintaining the crisis, solve the problems, and instead of the idea that we are encircled with enemies, with the liberal theory of interdependency.<sup>30</sup> Now, lets have brief look ath these new elements of Turkish foreign policy.

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<sup>29</sup> Such policies collocate with Andrew Moravcsik's liberal theories of International Relations. See Andrew Moravcsik "Taking Preferences Seriously, A Liberal Theory of International relations"

<sup>30</sup> Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Power and Interdependence"

#### **4. NEW ELEMENTS OF TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY**

In order to understand the core and essence of change an analysis of elements in Turkish foreign policy especially after 2003 is necessary. Once consideration of these new elements and developments ignored, misleading argument that Turkey is changing its foreign policy axis to East could arise. In contrast to previous non-intervention if no direct threat towards the country, crisis oriented and reactionary international politics, Turkey initiated developing good relations with neighbouring countries especially with Syria and Iran, started pro-active international politics in regional crisis, set aside so-called “traditional Turkish Foreign Policy”, which could be summarised as “acting together with the world” and develop its own arguments, proposals and dettlement alternatives in international and regional conflicts, demonstrated strong will and intention to act as mitigator in Israeli-Syrian dispute and Iranian nuclear arms crisis, the agenda of Turkish foreign policy and diplomatic traffic from and to Ankara naturally increased. In the meantime, Turkey’s relations with USA did not have any interruptions, (The two latest coft-crisis with USA were Turkey refused to pass a law in the Parliament let US troops use Turkish territories while landing soldiers to Iraq in 2003, and detention of Turkish special task force troops in Suleymaniye, Northern Iraq by US troops in July 2003, however there is no evidence that the latter was a respond to Turkey due to its foreign policy preferences, yet Turkey were not so pro-active and so concerned in regional international politics in that year). Relations with European Union is always on the agenda, and first time in history of Turkish Republic Egemen Bağış was appointed as minister responsible from relations with European Union. Mr. Bağış was brought to this seat not for restoring the deteriorated relations, but to foster and speed up the membership process. Those who are in favor of realistic approach to international relations and desiring the continuation of a Hobsian order that Turkey had been implementing miss the new dimensions and elements of Turkish foreign policy recently, and neglect essences for Turkey to utilize its unique dynamics, also neglect that maintaining power has some other ways other than realists claim, thus criticise recent developments and perceive it as a change in the axis.

It is now a well-known fact that Turkey was not economically, politically, strategically and psychologically ready to face the consequences of post cold war era. In the first decade following the collapse of the Eastern Block, i.e between years 1990-2000, Turkey had to face two serious security crisis in Bosnia and Azerbaijan, it was seen that Turkey had neither psychological infrastructure, nor logistics and tactical preparation. Such a situation revealed the essence for Turkey’s policy makers to redefine

international location of Turkey, and develop new economic, social, cultural, geographic and political parameters within this location.<sup>31</sup>

Now let us have a brief look at some of the new elements and instruments of Turkish foreign policy:

#### **4.1. Cooperation Instead Of Conflicting**

As mentioned above, Turkey's the core of Turkey's foreign policy was shaped on the basis of "threat perception", and reaction to such threats. Perpetuating fortuitous conflicts with Syria, civil war and hosting separatist PKK terrorism with Iraq, and ideological concerns shaped the tense relations with its Middle-Eastern neighbours.<sup>32</sup> Regarding other neighbours; Greece, as described above, was one of the major threat concerns for Turkey, the other two neighbouring countries, Bulgaria and USSR were on the other front, and concerned in advance as potential threats, in fact USSR revealed certain demands regarding control over Straits and several cities in North-eastern part of Turkey. The perception was that Turkey was encircled by hostile nations towards itself, in a way locked to its borders, thus the ultimate priority was to secure borders.

However, what really needed to be done was, as Davutoğlu claims and had the opportunity to implement during his office since May 2009, to overcome such fears and bring Turkey in a position which could develop rational relations with its neighbours, and intensify its regional influence through transfrontier alliances.<sup>33</sup>

New perspective in Turkey's foreign policy was defined as "targetting zero problem with neighbouring regions, and maximum cooperation in all areas, and vision oriented from being crisis oriented" by Davutoğlu himself at take over ceremony at very first day of his office. So as to achieve this goal, Turkey started hosting major international summits such as International Water Forum.

Immediate results of this new development in Turkey's cooperative foreign policy action were removal of visa between Syria and Turkey, Libya and Turkey, and Jordan and Turkey. Turkey also removed visa requirement for Albania, which long before did not require visa for Turkish citizens. Treaty signing event with Syria was followed by an impressive and emotional ceremony by participations of more than ten ministers from both sides on Turkish-Syrian border. Both sides declared their strong and deep belief in this event will lead a vertical development of relations for both sides in all areas, including sharing water sources, trade, education, and social areas.

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<sup>31</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *op.cit* Page 73-74.

<sup>32</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *op.cit* Page 146

<sup>33</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *op.cit*

Regarding relations with Iraq and autonomous administration in Northern Iraq, Turkey changed its perception to Northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders. Due to the fact that Iraq and Turkey are neighbouring countries and nations in this geography, Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Turkmens other groups have been living in this area for more than thousand years, and will continue to live, utilizing a more cooperative policy appeared to serve maintaining a sustainable peace in the region. Instead of perceiving the authorities in the region as potential threat to security, Turkey started developing relations and find ways in peaceful methods. Moreover, In order to contribute to the democratic process in Iraq, Turkey also organized training programs for 350 Iraqi politicians from various political parties<sup>34</sup>

In order to contribute to political stability in Iraq, Turkey has followed four complementary paths of diplomatic relations: through the UN Security Council, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Iraq's neighbors, and ethnic and religious groups in Iraq. Among these initiatives, the Platform for Iraqi Neighbors has arguably been the most important. The platform met for the first time in Istanbul on January 23, 2003 to find a peaceful solution and continued its activities after the beginning of the Iraq war.

As part of this platform, the foreign ministers of related countries have met formally eleven times and informally three times in different locations such as Istanbul, Baghdad and Tehran. Through the platform, Iraq's neighbors all agreed on the territorial integrity and political unity of Iraq. Some of the meetings were attended by representatives from the European Commission and the United Nations as well as the Secretaries General of the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Conference. The UN Security Council has taken these meetings seriously and has requested further regional cooperation on the Iraqi question. Inspired by this initiative, the UN Secretary General established a consultation group involving the platform members.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, Turkey is playing an active role in making the Arab League and the OIC more sensitive to the ongoing issue of Iraq. Turkey engaged in backstage diplomacy by bringing together the Americans and the Sunnis on several occasions. During one such meeting before the elections in Iraq, the Sunnis agreed to end Sunni attacks while the Americans agreed to provide the conditions for a fair election<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Prime Minister's Speech, 28 February 2006

<sup>35</sup> Bülent Aras: "Davutoğlu Era in Turkish foreign Policy" SETA policy Brief, Brief Nr 32, May 2009

<sup>36</sup> Taha Akyol, "Neden Türkiye Başardı", Milliyet, 6 December 2005.

Developing relations with Iran, Russia, and Central Asian countries especially with Kazakhstan due to their ample energy sources should also be considered as result of this cooperative international policy and reducing problems. Turkey needs energy sources of all of these three countries, and has ethnic, cultural, linguistic connections with the latter. During Kazakh President Nazarbayev's visit to Turkey between 21-24 October 2009, both parties declared that relations between two countries were far beyond than relations of two countries.

Considering abovementioned few examples, Turkey realized the fact that maintaining its security could also be done by cooperating and reducing problems with neighboring and regional countries, and with countries and International Organizations that Turkey has certain boundaries such as Islamic Conference and Arab League. This no doubt is a result of a better and true understanding of the systemic structure in post cold war era and implementing relevant policies as required by the necessities of the regional international order.

#### **4.2. Inclusive, Not Hegemonic**

Another characteristics of new Turkish foreign policy is being inclusive rather than being hegemonic. During the first decade of post Cold War, i.e between 1990-2000, Turkey tried to develop hegemony-implying foreign policy claims, however, the outcome was positive as expected. "A Turkish world from Adriatic sea to China Wall" even constituted a severe unrest in newly independent Central Asian states and turned in time into an uncertainty to besiege these countries, and "brotherhood – cultural connection" declaims towards Muslim world was time to time confused by a potential threat perception from the South<sup>37</sup>.

Turkey instead not targets an inclusive approach for building peace and security based on the dynamics within these regions. Following this line of thought, Turkish foreign policymakers have gained a new self-confidence and political will to pursue peace attempts in the neighboring regions. Turkey now hosts Middle Eastern, Eurasian, and African leaders as well as high-level politicians and officials from Western countries, and facilitates platforms for the solution of conflicts in various geographies. Turkish policymakers try to overcome differences between countries in conflict through confidence-building measures and by acting as a mediator and facilitator to find solutions to chronic regional problems. Turkish policymakers' approach has enabled Turkey to emerge in the role of peace-maker in the periphery of the international system. As the driving force behind these developments, Davutoğlu's vision aims to prepare the ground

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<sup>37</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, op.cit Page 46-47

for a new peace consciousness in a wide geography extending from the Middle East to the steppes of Eurasia<sup>38</sup>.

As Aras argues referring to Davutoğlu, Turkish policy should aim to include all related actors, forming a broad coalition to solve problems and develop initiatives. In this sense, Turkey pursues its diplomacy carefully and modestly. Turkish policymakers keep an equal distance from all actors and avoid taking part in any regional alliances or groupings. Turkey's all-inclusive policy and equidistance policy satisfy the concerns of regional actors and assure them of the constructive nature of Turkish policies<sup>39</sup>.

#### **4.3. Proactive, Not Reactive**

The realist approach to international relations is a reactive, more passive policy defined by balances, whose basic instruments were crisis management, deterrence, strategic alliances and balance politics<sup>40</sup> that fully overlap Turkey's foreign policy. However, Turkey started pursuing a more proactive international policy in contrast to its previous non intervention and reactionary foreign policy understanding. Just to say a few examples; Turkey declared its strong will to mitigate Israeli-Syrian talks to come up to a solution on ongoing problems between two countries. Moreover, Turkey initiated a multilateral diplomacy covering Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan which resulted in foundation of Caucasian Stability and Cooperation Platform by suggestion of Turkey. Prime Minister Erdoğan defined the role of this platform as contributing efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region<sup>41</sup>.

#### **4.4. Including Ngos, Business Associations And Other Instruments In Foreign Policy**

During Cold War era, Turkish State approached suspiciously to most NGOs and interest groups, thus they very rarely became part of foreign policy instruments. As a reflection of realist thought, the only actors of international relations are the states themselves, thus international politics and relations have to be practiced only by the states<sup>42</sup>, NGOs, business associations and other interest groups were kept out of being parts and actors of Turkey's International Relations and foreign policy instruments. However, especially after 2004, foreign policy makers and government officials stressed a specific interest in certain NGOs, especially export-oriented businessmen associations. Realizing economic power and development is

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<sup>38</sup> Bülent Aras, Ibid, page 7

<sup>39</sup> Bülent Aras, Ibid, Page 9-10

<sup>40</sup> Nimet Beriker Atiyas, Ibid, Page 49

<sup>41</sup> "Kafkasya İşbirliğine Aliyev Desteği", Radikal, 20 August, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Tayyar Arı, "Uluslararası ilişkiler Teorileri, Çatışma, hegemonya ve İşbirliği", Alfa Yay. Bursa 2002 Sayfa: 164

part of state power; Turkey started utilizing potential of businessmen associations to develop Turkey's power and economic development. At this point, TUSKON's activities in cooperation with Foreign Trade Ministry worth mentioning, which organized several "trade-bridges" with countries from certain regions, resulting in a vast development in Turkey's export capacity and diversity of goods being exported. Turkey's export amount mounted to 170 billion USDs from 50 billion in the last 8 years, and Turkey became the 16<sup>th</sup> largest economy of the world.<sup>43</sup>

One of the characteristics of the traditional Turkish Foreign Policy was, civil society was considered as a threat and associated with foreign influence. In Turkey's new conception of national security and foreign policy, civil society has acquired some role.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, the government now supports Turkish education institutions in various parts of the world and considers them as voluntary ambassadors of Turkey. Students studying at such schools learn Turkish and a considerable amount of students come to Turkey each year to study at undergraduate and graduate levels, which have the opportunity of a better understanding of Turkey.

#### **4.5. Strong Intention To Resolving Problems And Increasing Importance Of International Organizations**

As mentioned, Turkey's foreign policy instrument in Cold War era was basically crisis management, and in a way it is possible to say that Turkey's foreign policy practises lived on such crisis; Turkey needed controllable crisis so as to have a strong drive to keep the concern of maintaining security. As basic principle of Davutoğlu's zero problem policy with neighbouring, Middle-Eastern and Euroasian countries, Turkey initiated referring role of international organizations and instruments in resolving disputes.

In order to resolve the long lasting genocide claims problems with Armenia, Turkey proposed establishing a bilateral, or multilateral commission composed of history scholars and leave them research what the historical fact was. Turkey has been claiming for a couple of years that such a historical problem is not possible to be settled by political discussions, instead, it should be dealt with the specialists of history. Another aspect of problems with Armenia, ongoing Armenian occupation in Karabagh region of Azerbaijan, Turkey has been using economic embargo on Armenia and Turkish-Armenian border is kept closed since 1990s. As a good will to

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<sup>43</sup> For a detailed analysis of relation between economy and foreign policy, refer to: Kemal Kirişçi: The transformation of Turkish foreign policy: The rise of the trading state, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, edited by Kirişçi et al, page 30-58.

<sup>44</sup> Kemal Kirişçi: *Ibid* Pg: 38

restore the relations, Turkey and Armenia signed a document was signed Zurich, Switzerland on October 10, 2009. Turkey asked Armenia to start direct negotiations with Azerbaijan and demanded Minsk Group to take a more influential role in resolving the problems.

Regarding Cyprus question, Turkey's general policy was to keep the post 1974 status quo, as Northern Cyprus was considered as a vital milestone of maintaining Turkey's security. However, Turkey strongly supported Annan Plan, a solution proposal prepared by Secretary General of the time Mr Kofi Annan. Turkey asked Turkish Cypriots to vote in favor of the referendum on April 2004 to establish a new common state with Greek Cypriots. This was a significant change from Turkey's status-quo is the solution, or solution is division of the islands into two separate independent state to a solution decided by the Cypriots themselves. As Turkish Cypriots voted 65% Yes to Annan Plan, Greek Cypriots voted against the plan by 75%.

Such developments and change reveal that there is a shift in understanding and preceiving threat and security. In the new systemic structure, it was not possible and reasonable to approach issues with presettled manners and attitudes. It was realized by Turkey that International Organizations and Institutions were now important actors of international relations, and cooretaion and interaction with such organisations and institutions would not constitute losing power, sovereignty, and weaken the state. On the contrary, the opposite could have the possibility of staying alone in international politics.

## **5. IS THERE A REALLY CHANGE OF AXIS, OR WHAT IS THE REAL CHANGE**

Turkey, as described above, had a limited playground during cold war era. Because it was located on the borderline of East-West front, it sometimes felt eastern pressure and develop relations with Western Block. However, such relations were not at global scale, and neither played a vital role in settling down problems, nor became part of any international event in the region that could inspire new dimensions in world politics. Instead, as Turkey's foreign policy was crisis oriented, Turkey itself became center of crisis several times such as receiving credits from USSR for economic development in 1960s, the Cyprus question in 1960s and 1974, continental shelf and undefined islets in Eastern Aegean Sea with Greece in mid 1990s.

Turkey's so called traditional foreign policy took place in this limited play ground, and practises were to large extent realistic as defined above. However, after 2 decades following the Cold War structure collapsed,

Turkey added new dimensions to its traditional foreign policy parties, parties and partners. After cold war, Turkey emerged as a middle scale natural regional partner, with regards to its strategically important location, and numerous new players in international politics that Turkey had historical, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and historical connections. As Davutoğlu argues, geopolitic location is anymore cannot be considered as the only way to maintain the security of the borders, instead, this geopolitic location should be an instrument to a gradual development in world politics and be a means of changing regional influence into a global influence<sup>45</sup>.

Liberal theory claims that the universal condition of world politics is globalization. States are, and always have been, embedded in a domestic and transnational society, which creates incentives for economic, social and cultural interaction across borders.<sup>46</sup> The intention of a new diplomatic style is the rejection of the term “the bridge country”. Davutoğlu asserts that Turkey is not the bridge country but the central country. If you're standing static while the conditions are dynamic, and you cannot adapt to the conditions. You need to have a diplomacy which is constantly moving.

Under the direction of Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkish foreign policy was tightly linked to the four principles of regional policy since the beginning. These are determined as high-level political dialogue, security for everyone, economic interdependence, and the preservation of multi-culturalism.<sup>47</sup> Therefore the ideas of Davutoglu regarding to foreign policy of Turkey is pretty close to liberal view. Important principle of the liberal theory of the state is that the state is not superior to other institutions. That is not to say that the state is an inferior institution. However, the state will generally be inferior to other institutions in the respective fields of special competence of those other institutions.<sup>48</sup>

According to liberal theory, international cooperation is therefore in the interest of every state. Military power is not the only form of power. Economic and social power matter a great deal too. Exercising economic power has proven more effective than exercising military power. A Turkey that has not domination on Asia cannot set her sights on Europe. This basic point of view has dominated the relations both with Middle-East and with Europe. Turkish foreign policy has put an end to qualify the associations of its political and economic relations and it has begun to open up new areas. This approach which is also integrates with the principle of zero problems

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<sup>45</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, op.cit Page 117

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, 2010 Liberal Theories of International Relations, Princeton University, 2010

<sup>47</sup> Foreign Policy dergisinin 2010 ve 2011 için 100 Fikir Adamı listesine giren Türkiye Dışişleri Bakanı Ahmet Davutoğlu Cairo Review'in sorularını cevapladı.

<sup>48</sup> Mark Cooray, The Liberal Theory Of The State The Role Of Government <http://www.ourcivilisation.com/cooray/btof/chap162.htm>

with neighbors has increased Turkey's influence in her territory as well as it has made Turkey more effective cooperation partner as expected. To create economic interdependence between countries and regions, not to disassociate with all state or non-state regional actors under no circumstances, to preserve the multi-cultural fabric in the territory, therefore to protect ethnic and religious diversity and to create zones of economic integration was "sine qua non" for the policy of zero problems with neighbors. The possibility of war was minimized with the development of economic relations between Syria and Turkey because why should they fight each other, while Antep and Aleppo doing shopping from one another. The abolition of visas was the most determinant step in the transition to life the approach of zero problems with neighbors. The visas were begin to abolish with Turkey's land and sea neighbors like Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Albania, and Georgia.

To understand the real change, a comparative analysis of Turkey's Cold War era foreign policy, and new foreign policy including elements as mentioned above is necessary. Analysing the latest foreign policy activities and practises of Turkish foreign policy, to reach the conclusion that Turkey is changing axis in its foreign policy is not a just conclusion. Turkey and USA are eager more than ever to develop relations and establish a model partnership which expected to have positive outcomes following Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to President Obama on 7 December 2009. Instead, Deputy State Secretary of US in charge of Middle East and Europe Affairs Phil Gordon declared that Turkey is not shifting face from West to East, USA and Turkey have a very good partnership in foreign policy<sup>49</sup>.

Turkey's development of perspectives in foreign policy was warmly welcomed by regional countries. Many articles on new dimensions in Turkish foreign policy appeared especially in Middle-Eastern and Western Media<sup>50</sup>. Turkey's constructive, inclusive and cooperative approach in international policy affected some Middle Eastern social scientist, Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, a professor of political science at Emirates University in Dubai defined this new process as: "There's a new kid in town and it's Turkey, not anyone else".<sup>51</sup>

**It is for sure that there is a change, but this change is not in the axis, i.e. Turkey turning East from West, but the core of the change is from one path, one dimensional policy axis imposed by Cold War Era structure which limited Turkey's international policy making field to a more inclusive, comprehensive, and multi dimensional international**

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<sup>49</sup> Zaman, 10 Dec 2009, Türkiye Batı'dan uzaklaşmıyor.

<sup>50</sup> Some of the articles include Turkey's soft tactics, Roula Khalaf, NY Times, 17 Nov 2009, Turkey moves back into the limelight, Roula Khalaf, NY Times 16 Nov 2009, Is Turkey Turning East Instead of West, Dan Bilefsky, Tehran Times, 29 Oct 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Roula Khalaf "Turkey moves back into the limelight", NY Times 16 Nov 2009

**politics. The change is from realistic international policy approach** –as the elements defined in part 2 – which were based on power politics, the state itself was the only actor of international politics, relations based on lack of trust, security dilemmas as essences of realist international politics<sup>52</sup> **to a liberal approach.** The key element of Turkey’s new foreign policy is peace and cooperation, which is the basis of liberalism. As Moravcsik argued while defining three basic elements of liberalism that states are not the only actors in international relations, instead, individuals and NGOs are also parts of international relations<sup>53</sup> that Turkey initiated as discussed in 3.4. Despite Cold War era, Turkey’s foreign policy agenda is not composed of only security matters, but social welfare, development, modernization, environment and such matters share important parts of foreign policy, which Liberal thinkers claim such topics are also subjects of international relations. In other words, security itself does not shape Turkey’s foreign policy practices, issues such as trade, economy, immigration have become important parts of Turkish foreign policy. All I discussed up to here was to highlight the differences between Cold War Era politics of Turkey and Turkey’s new foreign policy practices in terms of methodology and approach, the difference was not in the priorities of countries, but priority of purposes, which was security in the former, the latter being peace and cooperation.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Turkey, proposing cooperation instead of conflict, does not have practice, even intention to weaken its relations with the Western World. Due to the fact that such an intention or practice will be responded by USA and EU as leaving Turkey on its own. However, USA officials declared during Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan’s visit that USA and Turkey’s cooperation in the region is a model one. Moreover, Turkey is urging the EU to start new chapters in EU accession negotiations. Turkey has done considerable legal amendments, such as abolishing, state security courts and decreasing role of Military Courts, and the legislature passed many laws for adopting the legal system to EU as defined in Copenhagen Criteria. In addition, there is an increasing public awareness on Europe’s importance for Turkey and vis-à-vis. Unlike the discourse of governments a decade or more, saying “we are not in need of the common market, it up to them”, when the union required Turkey to make advances in human, social and democratic rights, the current discourse is such development is not merely done for the sake of the Union, but for supplying a better living standards of the citizens. While saying this,

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<sup>52</sup> Tayyar Ari, op.cit Page 164

<sup>53</sup> Tayyar Ari , op.cit Page 367

Turkey does not imply that Turkey will not insist on the membership, on the contrary, trying to convince the Union in terms contribution to peace and social development if Turkey becomes a member.

Visits from Ankara to Western countries and visits to Western countries from Ankara gives in idea about the level of Turkey's relations with Western World<sup>54</sup>. Instead, Turkey is being implementing a multi dimensional international politics, and now concerned about regional countries which were once intentionally kept out of the agenda due to systemic reasons. However, those who fail analyzing Turkey's new foreign policy perceive, and those who concern they will lose their importance, priority, and interests blame this new process and change of axis. Turkey has started setting the realist policies based on coercive power politics to a being power, adopting a more constructive role and promoting network of economical and political relations.<sup>55</sup>

The change is from one dimensional policy to multidimensional and from realist approach to liberal international foreign policy practices. As Prof Ergil defined, *Turkey's national borders are only relevant on paper. Turkey has cultural, linguistic, economic and ethnic spillovers in all directions. Now it is time to reap the rewards of this versatility. However, all of these opportunities had to be realized and utilized by the understanding that they were always there but never activated*<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> For diplomacy agenda of Turkey, refer to Ministry of Foreign Affairs <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/ekim.tr.mfa>

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