

# SWP Research Paper

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik  
German Institute for International  
and Security Affairs



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## Foreign Policy and Self-image

The Societal Basis of Strategy Shifts in Turkey

RP 12  
September 2012  
Berlin

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ISSN 1863-1053

*Translation by Harriet Spence*

(English version of  
SWP-Studie 11/2012)

We thank the Stiftung  
Mercator (Essen) for its  
support for the translation of  
this Research Paper into  
English.

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**Foreign Policy and Self-image.**

**The Societal Basis of Strategy Shifts in Turkey**

As late as summer 2011, many European and American experts were voicing concerns at Turkey's new foreign policy. Recurring watchwords included "break with the West" and "neo-Osmanism". These concerns were triggered by Turkish conciliation with Syria, Ankara's refusal to tighten sanctions against Iran during the UN Security Council meeting and the rapid deterioration in relations with Israel. However, these were not the only misgivings: Turkish-Armenian reconciliation had stalled, Ankara's energy policy was drawing ever closer to Moscow's and, as far as Cyprus was concerned, Turkey was threatening to abandon the negotiation process, favouring international recognition of the Turkish State in the north of the island instead. Ankara simultaneously extended its diplomatic and economic relations with Islamic countries, and the Turkish leadership resorted to anti-Western rhetoric with increasing frequency. "Who alienated Turkey?", the West asked, and the Americans pointed the finger at Brussels, blaming the gridlocked EU accession process for Turkey's decision to look elsewhere.

In contrast to the atmosphere of despondency and accusation which reigned throughout 2011, a perhaps deceptive calm now prevails, for Turkey's close allegiance with the West appears to have been restored. After some initial hesitation, Turkey participated in the crisis intervention in Libya and is a cornerstone in the interstate cooperation aspiring for a regime change in Syria. As of spring 2012, Turkey was deemed a potential opponent by Teheran. Ankara agreed to the stationing of broadband radar on its territory within the context of NATO missile defence plans and also restricted trade with Iran. Ankara and Teheran also rival one another in terms of their relations with Iraq.

Does this mean that, in 2012, Turkey has reassumed its former stance, which it occupied prior to Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's decision to concentrate its policy on Turkey's immediate neighbours? And is the reestablishment of the strategic partnership between Ankara and Washington evidence that Turkey is also realigning itself to Europe and the European Union once more? If not, will the Turkish government endeavour to fall in line with the European Union, at least as far as its foreign policy is concerned? Or will the EU be forced to reconcile itself to a permanently

altered Turkey, this despite the intense collaboration between the Turkish and American governments? Will the EU have to renounce the idea that Turkey will ultimately have no choice but to turn to Europe, in spite of Ankara's current problems in the region, with Syria, Iraq and Iran?

The answer to these questions will depend considerably on the precise nature of the realignment of Turkish politics. A brief glance at Turkey as it is today reveals that the new foreign policy was not only triggered by altered international circumstances such as the end of the Cold War, but is also due to a transformed self-image and resultant new strategy. Within the framework of domestic power relations, this policy shift was facilitated by the fact that previously marginalised economic and social players were able to influence the structuring of foreign policy, an area which had hitherto remained a bastion of the bureaucratic and military elite. The economic interests of these new players and their notions of state and nation in addition to question of identity and the historic role played by Turkey are responsible for the perceptible shift in the country's self-image. In concrete terms, the end of the Cold War not only presented Turkey with an altered neighbourhood environment and, with it, expanded scope for foreign policy – it also resulted in the downfall of the foreign policy consensus and security paradigm cultivated by the former state elite, thus establishing a vital prerequisite to undermine the supremacy enjoyed to date by the military-bureaucratic elite in matters of foreign policy.

The resistance displayed by the Turkish military towards central interests of Western politics in the region – the Cyprus dispute in the case of the European Union and, for the USA, the war against Saddam Hussein – prompted both Brussels and Washington to view the conservative Muslim powers which have formed the government since 2002 as potential partners. With this, the EU and the USA successfully sanctioned the foreign policy pursued by the conservative Muslim government; a legitimisation which it had been denied in the light of continuing Kemalist ideology within Turkey. In consequence, Western politics played a significant role in ensuring that Turkish foreign policy became a matter for the elected government, thereby allowing those social classes which supported the ruling party to gain influence in foreign policy issues.

Among the most important groups to support the ruling party are export-oriented, conservative entrepreneurs from Anatolia. In the 1990s, early foreign

policy theorists within this economic group also included Turkey's current Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, whose book *Strategic Depth* is deemed a pioneering work in terms of the new foreign policy. Nevertheless, besides the wealth of erudition it contains, Davutoğlu's disquisition shares fundamental, profoundly culturalist perspectives held by other masterminds of this social spectrum.

Anatolia's conservative entrepreneurship is the chief paymaster of a new academic elite, which formulates and popularises an alternative to Kemalist ideology in its educational institutions, mass media and in newly created think tanks. Today, the former monopoly of knowledge and interpretation enjoyed by the Kemalist bureaucratic elite has descended upon foreign policy, precipitating the development of a new mainstream of thought in this area, which emanates directly from Davutoğlu's theories and relentlessly recapitulates the pertinent perspectives.

As a result, Turkey's new foreign policy skilfully escapes self-depletion in an altered foreign trade strategy as well as exclusive definition by a specific ideology of the ruling government. It is the result of an irreversible process, during which a new economic elite successfully advanced new political and academic elites, its close ideological allies, and the self-perception of state and society underwent a fundamental transformation.

The supplanting of the political elite and integration of major conservative groups within the economic and academic elites has resulted in a new normality in the population's perception of the country and its approach to foreign policy. Today, not only the government and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu view Turkey as the region's potential political and economic centre; the majority of Turkish citizens has also warmed to this image of their homeland. This has a far more lasting impact on Turkey's position in relation to Europe than on its connection to the USA.

## The Breakdown of the Security Paradigm

### The Foreign Policy Consensus of the Former Republican Elite

Leaving its respective propensities during various periods aside, the foreign policy consensus pursued by the Republic's former elite had revolved around three axioms:<sup>1</sup> firstly, Turkey viewed its Middle Eastern and North African neighbours as regions characterised by instability and stagnation that were potentially disquieting in consequence, disregarding the fact that Turkey was bound to these regions by strong historical and religious links. Secondly, Turkey oriented itself ideologically and strategically towards the West, both as a result of the above and owing to its immediate proximity to the Soviet Union, which was seen as a threat. Thirdly, the view prevailed that Turkey's recent history, marked as it is by separatism and territorial loss since the late Ottoman Empire, may not yet have been concluded, and that dangers including separatism (particularly in the predominantly Kurdish provinces) and state decay remained.

### Military Securitisation and Policy-making Capacity

Given these circumstances, it appeared logical to make military security the highest priority, which in turn explained and justified the military's decisive influence on foreign policy. A controversial party-political discussion regarding alternatives to the foreign policy concept was never held, and parliament had little influence as far as defining an agenda in this particular area of policy was concerned. In Turkey, foreign policy was a matter for "the State", i.e. the military and civil bureaucracy, and not for "the government", which was also dubbed "government of the parties" and whose ministers only had partial control over the ministerial bureaucrats. This distinction is firmly anchored in Turkish political dialogue, and has,

until very recently, remained an accurate description of the status quo<sup>2</sup>

Examples of how far-reaching foreign policy decisions can be made independently of popular opinion include the recognition of Israel (by Turkey as the first Muslim country in 1949), the active military participation in the Korean War (1950–53), NATO membership (1952), the refusal to recognise the Algerian government in exile (1958), the recognition of the Republic of Armenia (1991) and the close military cooperation with Israel (from 1996 onwards). The aforementioned rapprochement with Israel was initiated by the then Chief of Staff, İsmail Hakkı Karadayı, during the term of office of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, who cultivated a radical anti-Israeli rhetoric.<sup>3</sup> In the ensuing months, this closer cooperation with Israel went hand in hand with the gradual ousting of Erbakan's government by the generals.

After the Cold War ended, this system entered a state of deep crisis. The reasons for this development included political upheaval among Turkey's immediate neighbours, a rapid decline in the military's standing in the Western world, increasing challenges to the military-bureaucratic monopoly of knowledge and definition as regards matters of foreign policy and the emergence of new players in the aforementioned field.

### Foreign Policy Factors which Influenced the Collapse of the Security Paradigm

The end of the Cold War gave Turkey increasing leeway to shape its relations with the USA and European Union member states, which rapidly resulted in the weakening of the military and a decline in its dominance in the field of foreign policy. One milestone in this development proved the dispute amongst Western states concerning the war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. The position adopted by France and Ger-

1 Serhat Güvenç, *Seeking Influence in Foreign Policy-Making: Turkey's Experiment with Think-Tanks*, 2009, p. 2–3 <[http://khas.academia.edu/SerhatGuvenc/Papers/320350/Seeking\\_influence\\_on\\_Foreign\\_Policy-Making\\_Turkeys\\_Experiment\\_with\\_Think-Tanks](http://khas.academia.edu/SerhatGuvenc/Papers/320350/Seeking_influence_on_Foreign_Policy-Making_Turkeys_Experiment_with_Think-Tanks)> (accessed on 18.07.2011).

2 Semih İdiz, "Public Opinion as a Determinant of the New Turkish Foreign Policy", *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen (publication by the Southeast Europe Association)*, 50 (2010) 6, p. 40–45.

3 M. Hakan Yavuz, "Turkish-Israeli Relations through the Lens of the Turkish Identity Debate", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 27 (Autumn 1997) 1, p. 27.

many, which insisted on a UN mandate, provided backing for those factions of Turkish society which also rejected the war, and, to a certain degree, justified a ground-breaking development in the shape of the involvement of civilian forces in foreign policy. Turkey's sphere of influence as a state against the USA also increased as a result of this quarrel in the Western camp. The military-bureaucratic elite rejected the war because it feared that the USA's alliance with the Kurds in Northern Iraq would result in the establishment of an adjacent Kurdish state after Hussein's removal from power. The Turkish military viewed each step which brought the Kurds closer to forming an independent state in the Middle East as a contribution to the promotion of Kurdish separatism within Turkey. Deep mistrust of the USA on the part of the army and the republican establishment was the reason why the faction of the Republican People's Party (CHP) allied to the military rejected a bill submitted by the AKP government, which would have allowed the USA to open a second front against Iraq on Turkish soil. CHP spokesman Önder Sav described American warships in Turkish harbours as "enemy ships".<sup>4</sup> The General Staff, which, during these years, issued regular public announcements including "recommendations", "exhortations" and open threats, denied the request by the AKP government to invite the representatives to vote on the bill shortly before the ballot. This "betrayal" by the Turkish military made a lasting dent in its reputation in the USA.<sup>5</sup>

The military was also embroiled in a row with the EU. A clash of ideas in terms of foreign policy was observed, particularly as regards the Cyprus dispute. The military leadership insisted on the indispensability of Northern Cyprus as a "natural aircraft carrier" in order to maintain Turkey's security. As far as domestic policy was concerned, it was confronted by EU demands for political control of the armed forces. This resulted in the rise of influential figures within the military during this period, including Tuncer Kılınç. The former Secretary General of the National Security Council believed that Turkey and the West pursued contrasting strategic interests. Kılınç initially demanded the forging of new ties between Turkey and Russia and Iran, and subsequently a withdrawal from NATO.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in <[www.turkcebilgi.com/1\\_mart\\_tezkeresi/anskilopedi](http://www.turkcebilgi.com/1_mart_tezkeresi/anskilopedi)> (accessed on 08.03.2011).

<sup>5</sup> Soli Özel et al., *Rebuilding a Partnership: Turkish-American Relations for a New Era* (Istanbul: TÜSiAD, 2009), p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 31.

With this, the Turkish military leadership became a thorn in the side of both the European Union and the USA. The security paradigm and its Kemalist ideology, which had dictated alignment with the West for decades past, had proved dysfunctional within a matter of months. By contrast, the AKP leadership and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan promised democratisation, supported the Annan Plan for Cyprus and cooperated with the USA against Saddam Hussein. This earned the party the authority on the international stage it had sought and failed to find in the domestic arena. After all, the AKP had only been founded in 2001 and assumed the reins of government in 2002. Furthermore, if the party was assessed on the basis of the political parameters which existed in republican Turkey, its leading cadre's Islam-ist past, divested it of its political legitimacy to a great extent. Within Turkey's power structure, the line-up of ministers surrounding Erdoğan constituted, to a certain degree, a "government on call" which could be forced from office at any time via party prohibition procedures or resolute opposition from the military. However, international support prevented the implementation of plans for a coup d'état, which had been in the pipeline since the AKP's accession to power. The conflicts between the military and the republican establishment with the West in the guise of the USA and European Union were the decisive factors which allowed the AKP to undermine the bureaucratic elite's influence on foreign policy. Erdoğan was able to assert himself as regards the Cyprus dispute, urging acceptance of the Annan Plan in Northern Cyprus. A (civilian) government had succeeded in bringing its foreign policy approach to bear against the army generals for the first time in the history of the Republic of Turkey. And, with the West's assistance, a decisive dent was made in the protective shield held over foreign policymaking by the bureaucracy, a privilege which had, until then, safeguarded Turkey's connection to the West.

### **Domestic Factors which Resulted in the Rupture of the Security Paradigm**

The exceptionally high priority accorded to the security paradigm resulted in not only foreign policy, but also large swathes of domestic policy falling under the sway of the security elite which dominated the military and the Foreign Office. In their view, the exterior dangers to which the State was exposed were linked closely to internal threats. The "National Security



Document”, also known as Turkey’s “Secret Constitution” demonstrates this with particular clarity. As in previous editions, the version issued in 2006 cites “separatist terrorism” and “religious reaction” as the two chief domestic risks. In both cases, demands made by large parts of the population were linked with exterior threats. So the Turkish Kurds’ quest for cultural rights was interpreted as an initial step towards the foundation of a trans-border Kurdistan, which would undermine Turkey’s territorial integrity. Likewise, the insistence of broad segments of the Turkish population on a conservative lifestyle was attributed to Iran’s political influence within Turkey. In this way, Kurds and conservatives, significant social groups, were declared a threat to the Republic, which was, at the time, understood as a state housing a purely Turkish, westernised nation, terms used to circumscribe the principal content of the Kemalist state ideology. Thus, state ideology and the security paradigm granted the generals a decisive role in foreign *and* domestic policy.

The “National Security Document” was, in essence, a record of interior and exterior threats. All versions up to the current one, issued in July 2010, have been drafted by the Chief of Staff. The document was finalised by the Secretary General of the National Security Council, a post which was always held by senior members of the military.<sup>7</sup> At the time, the generals could justifiably expect that their drafts would be signed by the Prime Minister without objection and accepted as the basis of governance for the large range of security-related issues. The government did not succeed in gaining control of the manner in which the document was updated until October 2010.<sup>8</sup>

### Threat Scenario: Religious Reaction

The term “religious reaction” was employed in order to portray the social groups as a security risk which had provided the Islamist Welfare Party (RP) with crucial backing in the nineties, and which now constitute a significant proportion of the AKP’s electorate. However, in contrast to Welfare Party leader Necmettin Erbakan, Erdoğan cultivated a liberal economic rhetoric which consistently emphasised cultural liberties and resulted in the continual expansion of

his electoral base. At the height of its power in 1995, Erbakan’s party won only around a fifth of all votes (21.4 %) nationwide, while the AKP won the 2002 elections with 34.2 per cent. The military attempted to prevent the election of Abdullah Gül as President in 2007 by means of a memorandum. Erdoğan’s party subsequently won the early elections with a landslide 47 per cent. In 2008, the AKP narrowly avoided a party prohibition procedure, but triumphed at the following elections in 2011 with 49.9 per cent of votes cast. Extraparliamentary inventions by the military and senior judiciary in political manners consequently triggered an internal dynamic: ever-increasing parts of the electorate felt snubbed by this interference and declared allegiance to the ruling party.

Moreover, disclosures which could only have emanated directly from army operation centres intimated that members of the most senior military circles had strived deliberately to weaken the ruling party and criminalise religious communities (particularly the movement led by preacher Fethullah Gülen) directly after the formation of the initial AKP government in 2002. The apparent intention was to employ undercover operations as a means to exacerbate the tension and conflicts between religious and ethno-political factions such as Sunnis/Alevis, Turks/Kurds and Muslims/Non-Muslims. The exposure of this strategy during the so-called Ergenekon trials initially meant that the military was obliged to forfeit its position as a legitimate political player. Later on, its powers were rescinded even further and the generals lost their criminal immunity. In August 2011, 46 generals, 15 per cent of the total tally, were remanded in custody on charges of planning a military putsch.<sup>9</sup> That same month, the Commander-in-Chief of all military branches and the Chief of Staff resigned jointly in protest at the government’s actions – a first in the history of the Republic. However, by this time, the government was well-established and able to appoint successors without delay. April 2012 saw the start of the trial against the instigators of the coup d’état of 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980, who were still alive. The military intervention of February 1997, which took place without bloodshed, and the generals’ last memorandum in April 2007 are also pending trial. Today, the military’s influence on the civil government is largely dimin-

<sup>7</sup> Hale Akay, *Security Sector in Turkey. Questions, Problems, and Solutions* (Istanbul: Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation [TESEV], 2009), p. 12f.

<sup>8</sup> *Taraf*, 28.10.2010 and 06.07.2011.

<sup>9</sup> News portal *Kirpıhaber*, <[www.kirpıhaber.com/askeridavalar/generallerin-yuzde-15i-tutuklu-h24011.html](http://www.kirpıhaber.com/askeridavalar/generallerin-yuzde-15i-tutuklu-h24011.html)> (accessed on 17.10.2011).

ished; however, the latter remains only partially able to dictate the power balance within the army.

### **Threat Scenario: Separatist Terrorism**

In the parlance of the “Secret Constitution”, the term “separatist terrorism” referred to the Kurdish question. During the Second Gulf War in the early nineties, the USA and its allies carried out operation “Provide Comfort” in order to protect the Iraqi Kurds from Saddam Hussein, thus lending the Kurdish conflict an international dimension. Within Turkey, the aforementioned events gave the military an added opportunity to underscore its key role as regards this issue. In the wake of pressure exerted by the generals, the then weak coalition government recommended that parliament transfer control of military actions against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), whose members were, at the time, using the protection zone in Northern Iraq, created by the allies and no longer accessible by Saddam Hussein’s troops, as a retreat, to the National Security Council, a military-dominated committee.<sup>10</sup> As a result, solving the Kurdish conflict via the means of civilian politics became impossible for several years. The AKP government only succeeded in pursuing an independent policy regarding the Kurdish question when it increased its power via its close ties with Western states, this at the expense of the security elite. The same applied to social development. War-weariness had set in amongst the Turkish population in the wake of 28 years of conflict with the PKK. The military was subsequently accused of lacking interest in a cessation of hostilities, as these repeatedly reinforced the generals’ political power, even allowing individuals to profit from arms brokering and trade in narcotics.<sup>11</sup>

While approximately 90 per cent of the population had declared its support for the military in previous opinion polls, by early 2010 its position as most trustworthy institution had disappeared, as its backing dwindled to 63 per cent.<sup>12</sup> The chief beneficiary of this

development was civilian politics, primarily the government and its ruling party.

The government’s increase in power and strength over the Kemalist establishment consisting of military, judiciary and bureaucracy had the inevitable result that those social groups which supported the ruling party also gained influence in matters of foreign policy. Henceforth, the compatibility of foreign policy with the preferences of a military-bureaucratic elite was no longer sufficient. From now on, this had to reflect the interests of broader segments of society.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gencer Özcan, “Facing its Waterloo in Diplomacy: Turkey’s Military in the Foreign Policy-Making Process”, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 40 (2009), p. 91–92.

<sup>11</sup> Ekrem Pakdemirli in *Taraf*, 27.07.2011, Avni Özgürel in *Taraf*, 20.10.2008.

<sup>12</sup> *Taraf*, 25.01.2010. An identical figure was determined in 2011 in a study by the Kadir Has University, cf. *Radikal*, 18.01.2012.

## Green Capital: the Emergence of a New Economic Elite

### The Capitalist Rehabilitation of Tradition at the Turn of the Millennium in Turkey

In the latter half of the nineties, Turkey also experienced altered conditions for industrial production during the course of globalisation. Universal symptoms of this development included manifold product diversification, a trend towards lean production, an increase in international economic networking and the gradual deregulation of the markets by state authorities. In those industries and regions in which these new, more flexible forms of production established themselves, the social security of the workforce depended less on their political and trade union representation than on social networks which were either of a traditional nature, comparable to family relationships, or based on pre-modern identities, similar to religious and ethnic communities.<sup>13</sup> In a cultural environment of this nature, the economic and social organisation of society is viewed differently than is the case in established industrialised countries. The specific type of “modernism” created under such conditions is not presented as a combination of state-subsidised large-scale enterprises, trade unions, welfare state mechanisms, secularism and transnationally standardised lifestyles. On the contrary, this alternative form of modernism also accommodates small and medium-sized production facilities. Although its employees are integrated within international exchange networks, they continue to maintain and align themselves with their cultural traditions (family, origins, religion).

The Turkish version of this general phenomenon takes the form of small and medium-sized enterprises which have mushroomed in Anatolia’s conservative cities since the late eighties, quickly adapting to the requirements of the export trade and distinguishing themselves via unusually rapid growth rates. Their employees originate from the aforementioned socio-

moral milieu, while their younger managers embody the successful union of traditionality and globality.

This new, conservative class of entrepreneur from Anatolia received a self-confidence boost from the outset as a result of the fact that the Turkish State had achieved only mediocre success as far as its regulatory, planning tasks in the public interest were concerned, similar to the limited impact made by Turkish “big business” in its role as pacemaker in industrial production. This is explained by the fact that, until well into the eighties, the Turkish economy had succeeded neither in becoming a force to reckon with on the world market, nor in involving larger segments of Turkish society in industrial production or in a modern service sector, this in order to create even approximately egalitarian living conditions.

Despite what can only be described as modest success of the former economic elite, the large majority of state backing for the private sector in the form of export and investment funding continued to flow to major enterprises in the nineties, as well as to the five most well-developed provinces in which big business was usually based.<sup>14</sup> This policy was part of endeavours to establish Turkish-Muslim major industry, an intention which had already begun with the deliberate dispossession of the non-Muslim trade and manufacturing capital of the late Ottoman Empire and the early Republic. The dependency of the young Turkish-republican entrepreneurship on state contracts, infrastructural measures, protective tariffs and direct aid went hand in hand with an intimate intertwining of local bourgeoisie and secular, bureaucratic elites.<sup>15</sup> Turkey’s major economic crises of 1958/59 and 1978/79 triggered coups d’état by the military, as a result of which the bureaucracy tightened its grip on political and economic decision-making powers to an ever-increasing extent.<sup>16</sup> Since its beginnings in the early seventies, party-political

<sup>13</sup> Cf. here and as follows: Ayşe Buğra, *Islam in Economic Organizations* (Istanbul: TESEV, 1999), p. 11–15, and Sebnem Gumuscu, *Economic Liberalization, Devout Bourgeoisie and Change in Political Islam*, RSCAS Working Papers 19/2008 (Florence: European University Institute, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Murat Kaldırım, “Türkiye’de özel sektöre devlet teşviklerinin katkısı” [The Role of State Funding for the Private Sector], *Çerçeve*, November 1998, p. 64–72 (71–70).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ayşe Buğra, *State and Business in Modern Turkey* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> Ziya Önis, “Crises and Transformations in Turkish Political Economy”, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 9 (Autumn 2010) 3, p. 49ff.

Islamism had, for this reason, seen itself as the political representative of the Green Capital, i.e. Anatolia's conservative traders and small businesses, whose interests required enforcement against those of the major capital in Istanbul and in other industrial centres in the Western part of the country.

### The Green Capital and Its World View

5<sup>th</sup> May 1990 witnessed the creation of an association to represent the interests of the conservative business-people in the form of MÜSİAD, the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association. For decades, this group had been accused of religious fatalism, backwardness and the generally unmitigated rejection of all things modern. They now found themselves in a position to present religious tradition and their own socio-conservative milieu as a positive economic factor. The association took pains to emphasise that Turkey was now benefiting from a specific social structure, similar to other emergent economies in Asia. It posited that the establishment of tight networks between highly effective small and medium-sized enterprises would generate competition as well as guarantee flexibility and solidarity. Furthermore, employee integration within culturally defined mutually supportive groups would promote social cohesion, concurrently decreasing production costs. Finally, this way of life, beneficial for state, society and economy alike, could only be offered in Turkey by Islam, with its conservative social morality. Anatolia's religious elite had always rejected the westernisation and secularisation enforced by the State. Now, however, European modernity was principally defined as foreign, exclusively expedient, rational and anti-religious. The conservative entrepreneurs contrasted this modernity with the blueprint of a culturally monistic society in which conflicts failed to erupt for the simple reason that its members feel committed to a mutual mission. They championed the idea that a nation which was stable yet dynamic as a result of religious and cultural solidarity creates a state which is strong from an economical, political and military perspective and thus no longer dependent on the West.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Erol Yazar, "21. yüzyıla girerken dünyaya ve Türkiye'ye yeni bir bakış" [A New View of the World and Turkey Shortly Before the 21<sup>st</sup> Century], *Çerçeve*, May-June 1996, p. 32-34.

### The Foreign Policy Vision Conforming to the Conservative World View

The development of a foreign policy vision corresponding to this world view was the work of a group of academics which included Turkey's current Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who is today credited with creating the concept single-handedly. Although Davutoğlu excelled as a result of his broad historical knowledge and proclivity for a political science slant early on, he shared the essential principals of his reasoning with many other academics of the conservative spectrum. In 1996, five years prior to the publication of his highly acclaimed book *Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position*,<sup>18</sup> he and his colleagues explored various avenues which could result in a new foreign policy in several issues of the MÜSİAD association's journal. Portrayed as an important part of the Muslim-Turkish nation and as a major player in economic life, the conservative entrepreneurship played a crucial role in these plans. The Kemalist elite's foreign and domestic policies were described as being irreconcilable with the identity of the Muslim people and as a threat to the State's existence. It follows that foreign and domestic policy constituted two sides of the same coin. Thus Mustafa Özel, a pioneer of MÜSİAD, wrote: "If Turkey wishes to survive as a political entity, it must [...] 1. Retain its domestic unity, 2. Achieve economic growth on a large scale and 3. Develop the ability to benefit from its cultural geography [as regards foreign policy; author's note]."<sup>19</sup>

According to Özel, the preservation of Turkey's domestic unity cannot be achieved via an "ideology imported from the West", but solely via "a true connection with Islam, which is the key source of our world view".<sup>20</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu also expressed his views on the same question in the association's journal as follows: "In the context of domestic policy, the imposition of one exclusive identity [a European and secular one; author's note] is tantamount to the prevention of pluralism and the rejection of all alternative perspectives. As far as foreign policy is concerned, it goes hand in hand with the pursuit of a unilaterally oriented strategy [to the West; author's note]."<sup>21</sup> All theoretic-

<sup>18</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik derinlik: Türkiye'nin uluslararası konumu* (Istanbul 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Mustafa Özel, "Yirmibirinci yüzyıla girerken dünya sistemi ve Türkiye" [The World System and Turkey at the Beginning of the New Millennium], *Çerçeve*, May-June 1996, p. 54-61 (59).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, "21. yüzyıla girerken Türkiye'nin

cians consider it essential to democratise Turkey and its (Muslim) environment in order to overcome the secular-authoritarian regime.

As far as the *indispensability of economic development* and the central role played by conservative entrepreneurs were concerned, Mustafa Özel lamented the fact that the republican holdings had only opened up the world market a mere 2 per cent, despite all the state subsidisation. It was, in consequence, necessary to promote the small and medium-sized enterprises within the conservative trade association which focused on export.<sup>22</sup> At the time, well-known economist Sabahaddin Zaim had already demanded the demolition of the customs boundaries between the Muslim countries and the revocation of the mutual visa requirement.<sup>23</sup>

All authors who voiced their opinions in the association's journal at the time are linked by their vigorous *emphasis of the religious (Islam), ethnic (Turkishness) and historic ("Ottomanness") dimensions of their own identity*. On the other hand, the latter is, according to them, the reason why Turkey must turn its attention towards its immediate neighbours and do justice to its vocation as a regional power independent of the West. Although the authors differed fundamentally in their preference of specific neighbouring regions with which Turkey should intensify its relations, they were nonetheless united in their consistent rejection of their country's unilateral alignment with the European Union. This dissociation from the EU thereby acquired a long-term, strategic character, while relations with the USA would and should be generated by tactical deliberation. In those years, Özel's ideal partners were Japan and China, both of which, he posited, had been humiliated by the West. The economist created a vision of a "Union of the Silk Road", which included not only Central Asian states, but also Indonesia and Malaysia.<sup>24</sup> According to his colleague Zaim, history has assigned Turkey the task of taking responsibility for the "Islamic world of the North",

which re-emerged as a political presence in the wake of the Cold War. Here, Zaim refers to Muslim groups in the Balkans and new Central Asian states. He postulates that Turkey should expand its position within the "Islamic world of the South", i.e. the Middle East.<sup>25</sup> Davutoğlu justified what was, in his view, Turkey's appropriate foreign policy using historical-analytical arguments, which led to the same discovery of a profound antithesis between Turkey and Europe as the contrast determined by other conservative academics. Davutoğlu writes that, from a historical perspective, Turkey has neither contributed to the emergence of the contemporary world system, nor does it belong to the group of countries which was colonised during the course of this process. On the contrary, Turkey's history has been influenced far more significantly by the fact that "the Ottoman Empire constituted the political structure of the only civilisation which succeeded in establishing its rule directly against Europe".<sup>26</sup>

The notion of the Ottomans as a protecting power for the Muslim peoples against Europe and as a bastion of Islamic civilisation against the West is an established topos in the historical understanding of religiously conservative Turkish circles. Although Davutoğlu derived the European-Ottoman antithesis from insights based on modernisation theory and colonial history and from reflections on the evolution of the modern global system,<sup>27</sup> these multiple approaches ultimately had no influence on his national-romantic historical understanding and his conviction that Turks and, moreover, the Turkish State are fated to maintain a fundamentally confrontational relationship with Europe. Following this, Turkey's post-Ottoman-republican orientation towards the West is presented as both the result of European hegemony<sup>28</sup> and as a merely temporary aberration from a historically predetermined developmental trajectory. This grand scheme for Turkey's global historical mission does not permit the preference of specific regions in its imme-

uluslararası konumu" [Turkey's International Position at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century], *Çerçeve*, May–June 1996, p. 62–74 (68).

22 M. Özel, "Yirmibirini yüzyıla girerken dünya sistemi ve Türkiye" [see note 17], p. 59.

23 Sabahaddin Zaim, "Türkiye'nin Türk ve İslam dünyasıyla iktisadî münasebetleri" [Turkey's Economic Relationships with the Turkish and Islamic World], *Çerçeve*, January–April 1996, p. 66–76 (69).

24 M. Özel, "Yirmibirini yüzyıla girerken dünya sistemi ve Türkiye" [see note 17], p. 61.

25 Zaim, "Türkiye'nin Türk ve İslam dünyasıyla iktisadî münasebetleri" [see note 23], p. 66.

26 Davutoğlu, "21. yüzyıla girerken Türkiye'nin uluslararası konumu" [see note **Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.**], p. 62.

27 A similar view also emerges in the following, "Türkiye'nin dış ilişkiler stratejisi açısından Yedinci Beş Yıllık Kalkınma Planı" [The 7<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Development Plan from the Perspective of Turkish External Trade Policy], *Çerçeve*, January–April 1996, p. 77–79 (77).

28 Davutoğlu, "21. yüzyıla girerken Türkiye'nin uluslararası konumu" [see note **Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.**], p. 64.

diate vicinity. In Davutoğlu's geopolitical tableau, Turkey operates as the hub of an enormous Eurasian-African land mass.<sup>29</sup>

After organising its ranks within the MÜSİAD association, the conservative entrepreneurship endeavoured to "alter the traditional pro-Western orientation of Turkish foreign policy"<sup>30</sup>, striving for a rapprochement with Muslim countries. In August 1996, MÜSİAD permitted Anatolian entrepreneurs to go on foreign tours with Prime Minister Erbakan for the first time. The destinations visited included Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore.<sup>31</sup> This was just the start of a series of official trips to the Islamic world and Asia in which MÜSİAD delegations participated.<sup>32</sup> In 1994, an association report entitled *Economic Cooperation Among Islamic Countries*<sup>33</sup> attempted to convince Muslim states of the necessity for increased economic cooperation. In 1997, it appeared that a major step towards achieving this goal had been taken. The Developing Eight (D8) was constituted on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1997 in Istanbul at the initiative of and under the aegis of the former Prime Minister Erbakan,<sup>34</sup> whereby eight predominantly Muslim countries announced a close economic and technological collaboration. Erbakan presented the D8's formation as the first step towards the creation of Islamic unity and the "foundation of a new world".<sup>35</sup> However, as the Turkish military ousted Erbakan's government just one month later, primarily as a result of its foreign policy, the coalition remained largely ineffective despite a series of summit meetings. An attempt to revive the D8 was not made until early 2009, over eleven years later. On 20<sup>th</sup> February 2009, the AKP government signed a contract with the remaining D8 members which stipulated the estab-

lishment of a permanent office for the organisation in Istanbul.<sup>36</sup>

### The External Trade Policy Pursued by the Conservative Trade Associations under the AKP Government

It is no coincidence that the AKP retained and continued to develop Erbakan's D8 initiative. After all, there is considerable coherence between the Welfare Party and the Justice and Development Party and between Erbakan and Erdoğan, particularly as regards the relationship with MÜSİAD. In Anatolia, the AKP's party committees depended on the MÜSİAD networks in terms of personnel and organisation in the initial phase.<sup>37</sup> After the party's establishment in 2001, the industrialist's association had, in the majority of cases, organised foreign trips for AKP functionaries, and after the AKP's accession to power, the association gradually expanded its remit to include working visits and government consultations which had previously been coordinated by the semi-official Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK).<sup>38</sup> The AKP leadership actually succeeded in convincing the Green Capital in the wake of the Welfare Party ban and the resulting schism within the pro-Islamic movement. Much as the conservative entrepreneurs had felt close to Erbakan as regards the question of culture and identity, their rejection of his state-centred economic model was equally vehement.<sup>39</sup> However, the AKP's decision to secure the support of Western countries against the old elite with a pro-European approach to foreign policy and democratic reforms failed to result in a fundamental alteration in the association's long-term foreign policy visions.

In 2010, Mustafa Özel remained an intellectual pioneer within MÜSİAD, and continued to view Turkey's integration within its geographical region

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Heinz Kramer, *Die neue Außenpolitik-Konzeption der Türkei. Mögliche Konsequenzen für den EU-Beitrittsprozess* [Turkey's New Foreign Policy Concept. Possible Consequences for the EU Accession Process], SWP Comments 3/2010 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Buğra, *State and Business in Modern Turkey* [see note 13], p. 59.

<sup>31</sup> MÜSİAD report no. 18/1996 <[www.musiad.org.tr/detayArYay.aspx?id=167](http://www.musiad.org.tr/detayArYay.aspx?id=167)> (accessed on 29.01.2012).

<sup>32</sup> Various reports at <[www.musiad.org.tr](http://www.musiad.org.tr)> (accessed on 29.01.2012).

<sup>33</sup> MÜSİAD report no. 8/1994 <[www.musiad.org.tr/detayArYay.aspx?id=15](http://www.musiad.org.tr/detayArYay.aspx?id=15)> (accessed on 29.01.2012).

<sup>34</sup> The members are Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=gA2f5WahYQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gA2f5WahYQ)> (accessed on 29.01.2012).

<sup>36</sup> "Milletlerarası Andlaşma" [International Agreement], *Resmi Gazete* [Official Gazette], 16.02.2001, <[www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2011/02/20110216-2.htm](http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2011/02/20110216-2.htm)> (accessed on 29.01.2012).

<sup>37</sup> Sebnem Gumuscu/Deniz Sert, "The Power of the Devout Bourgeoisie. The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45 (November 2009) 6, p. 953-968.

<sup>38</sup> Özlem Tür, "Economic Relations with the Middle East under the AKP", *Turkish Studies*, 12 (2011) 4, p. 591.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Günter Seufert, *Neue pro-islamische Parteien in der Türkei* [New Pro-Islamic Parties in Turkey], SWP Research Paper 6/2002 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2002), p. 32.

and the involvement of neighbouring states in Ankara's politics as the only promising direction for his country. According to Özel, the Turks should, in principle, take a different approach than the Europeans, particularly if they wish to attain a similar goal. He posits that European nations have succeeded in overcoming the limitations of the nation state in terms of identity, politics and economics via the EU, without individual national identities suffering in the process. However, he deems this model unsuitable for Turks, Kurds and Arabs, as the cultural (denominational/ethnic) plurality of their populations clashes with the nation states' concept of cultural homogeneity. In order to ensure that the region's states remain political entities and can simultaneously overcome the drawbacks of the nation state, Turks, Kurds and Arabs would have to recall their mutual history and civilisation, returning to their joint roots.<sup>40</sup> As the chief state within this civilisation, Turkey would have to reach considerably beyond its boundaries into the region in order to avoid decline. For the approval of inner plurality demands both an entrenchment within the neighbourhood and is, concomitantly, a prerequisite for the same.<sup>41</sup> As another of the association's highly-respected economists summarises so succinctly, "the future lies in our roots".<sup>42</sup> In consequence, the vision of Turkey as a political and economic centre in the Middle East, *in fine* a regional power, continues within MÜSİAD. In 2010, the Ottoman Empire was idealised in the association's journal *Çerçeve* as an imperium which guaranteed legal equality and justice for all its inhabitants and prevented economic exploitation.<sup>43</sup> The turmoil in the Arab world was presented as an opportunity to "advance Turkey's unification with the Middle East" and make Turkey the region's most powerful country and a beacon for its resident intellectuals.<sup>44</sup> However, a simultaneous admission that the European markets

will remain of prime importance for Turkish export trade for the coming decade exists. In contrast to the nineties, authors are now being published in the association's journal who underscore the necessity of Ankara's cooperation with NATO and believe that the continuation of accession negotiations with the EU is essential to Turkey's democratisation and its reputation in terms of foreign policy.<sup>45</sup> The effective consolidation of the rule of a Muslim-conservative party has been instrumental in ensuring that reforms within the context of EU accession are no longer deemed a threat to the country's identity.

The association's former theoretician Ahmet Davutoğlu, Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister on matters of foreign affairs since the formation of the first AKP government in 2002 and Foreign Minister since May 2009, is now advancing similar arguments. In essence, Davutoğlu continues to adhere to his foreign policy vision. However, his explicit frontline positions – against the Kemalists in terms of domestic and against Europe as regards foreign policy – have now taken a back seat. His highly regarded work *Strategic Depth*, which appeared in 2001, is written from the same perspective as the essays he published in the MÜSİAD journal in the mid-nineties. This applies to his theory of a culturally motivated Turkish identity, historically anchored by the centuries-long confrontational dispute with Europe. Moreover, it also applies to his belief that the imposition of a secular-Western identity on the population went hand in hand with subordination to foreign political parameters as far as foreign policy was concerned. According to Davutoğlu, these politico-cultural estrangements can only be reversed together and simultaneously, and precisely this is required for Turkey to rediscover its actual identity. When referring to these topics in his standard work, Davutoğlu reproduced the positions he had previously adopted in his essays for the conservative entrepreneur's association, using verbatim quotes in many passages.<sup>46</sup>

In the light of the above, the European Union accession policy is an ambivalent issue as, on the one hand, it reinforces Turkey's Europeanisation and, with it, the "the different culture" parameter used by the

40 Mustafa Özel, "Merkez ülke yükseliyor" [The Central State is Burgeoning Forth], in: MÜSİAD, *Yükselen Değer Türkiye: Turkey the Rising Star* (Istanbul 2010), p. 85–97 (96).

41 Ibid., p. 97.

42 İbrahim Öztürk, "Yeni bir dünyanın eşiğinde Türkiye'nin konumu" [Turkey's Position on the Threshold of a New World], in: MÜSİAD, *Yükselen Değer Türkiye* [see note **Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.**], p. 283–300 (288 and 290).

43 Nevzat Yalçıntaş, "Osmanlı bağına basan topraklara müstemele ekonomisi davranışlarında bulunmadı" [The Ottomans Did Not Practice Colonial Economy in the Countries They Adopted], *Çerçeve*, December 2011, p. 62–67.

44 Oytun Orhan, "Arap baharı ve Türkiye" [Turkey and the Arab Spring], *Çerçeve*, December 2011, p. 22–26 (26).

45 Yaşar Yakış, "Arap baharı ve Türkiye" [Turkey and the Arab Spring], *Çerçeve*, December 2011, p. 114–123 (121), and Mesut Özcan, "Arap baharı ve Türkiye'nin orta doğu politikası" [The Arab Spring and Turkey's Middle East Policy], *Çerçeve*, December 2011, p. 124–128 (127–128).

46 Davutoğlu, *Stratejik derinlik* [see note 17], p. 66 and p. 91–92.

Kemalist elite to deny religious citizens equal political participation. More importantly, Davutoğlu claims that nowhere else are EU demands for political reform interpreted so strongly as the return of foreign hegemony as is the case in Turkey, the only accession candidate to assert its notion of modern statehood against European occupying powers.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, Brussels' calls for democratisation are effectively giving previously ostracised social strata opportunities for increased political participation. However, Davutoğlu suggests that this influence can only be positive in the event that the changes triggered by the EU are commensurate with the political endeavours of a nation which is defined according to strong cultural parameters, namely Turkish-Muslim ones.<sup>48</sup> This dichotomy results in politics which focus primarily on the consolidation of elements within culture and the economy that are putatively unique and particular to the Turkish Muslim nation while maintaining a concomitant awareness of the fact that ties with the European Union can bring concrete benefits.

An example of this attitude is an article by Ahmet Davutoğlu in a previously cited MÜSIAD publication. In 2010, the entrepreneur's association presented a record of its success regarding foreign policy entitled *Turkey the Rising Star*.<sup>49</sup> Here, the Foreign Minister described full EU membership as one of his chief political goals, but nonetheless continued to hold fast to his original foreign policy vision, which foresaw Turkey's transformation into both a decisive architect of the circumstances prevailing in its immediate vicinity, and, internationally, a trend-setting global player. Necessary steps to achieve these goals included the establishment of a free trade zone around Anatolia and the expansion of commercial dealings with neighbouring countries, which currently account for a third of Turkey's trade volume.<sup>50</sup>

The report also highlights the way in which state institutions collaborate with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) founded at the government's suggestion in order to realise this vision. In the report, the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC), which is currently chaired by the

Turkish President, is assigned a decisive role in the expansion of inner-Islamic trade.<sup>51</sup> The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) concentrates the majority of its projects on countries in the Islamic world, where its prime focus is the funding of Muslim-Turkish groups.<sup>52</sup> In 2005, approximately 200 predominantly Turkey-based NGOs formed the Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (İSDB/ UNIW) with support from the government in Ankara.<sup>53</sup> Its General Secretary Necmi Sadıkoğlu titles his article that "Turkey is the force uniting the Islamic world."<sup>54</sup>

However, MÜSIAD is not the only trade association with links to the AKP. The AKP's policies, which appeared moderate when compared to those of Erbakan's Welfare Party, enabled it to gain the support of new and additional sections of the electorate. The party also succeeded in expanding its social basis in terms of entrepreneurship. 2005 saw the foundation of the Confederation of Turkish Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON), which has acted in close consultation with the AKP government ever since.<sup>55</sup> TUSKON supported the government on crucial issues such as the referendum on constitutional amendments in September 2010. Prime Minister Erdoğan thanked the organisation at a TUSKON event by praising the association's members for earning their money in a manner condoned by the Islamic religion (*helal*), a sideswipe at the Republic's secular big business propped up by state subsidies.

However, TUSKON is more than an entrepreneur's association which is close to the government. It emerged as a result of an amalgamation of industrialist organisations from the regions of Marmara, the Aegean and Western Black Sea coast, the Black Sea

47 Ibid., p. 515.

48 Ibid., p. 517.

49 MÜSIAD, *Yükselen Değer Türkiye: Turkey the Rising Star* (Istanbul 2010).

50 Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Daha güçlü bir Türkiye" [A Stronger Turkey], in: MÜSIAD, *Yükselen Değer Türkiye* [see note 46], p. 33–40 (39f).

51 For information on COMCEC, see its website at <[www.comcec.org/EN/default.aspx](http://www.comcec.org/EN/default.aspx)> (accessed on 02.02.2012). Cf. also Kahraman Arslan, "İslam ülkeleri arasındaki ekonomik ilişkilerinin geliştirilmesinde Türkiye'nin rolü ve önemi" [The Role and Significance of Turkey in the Promotion of Economic Relations Between Islamic Countries], in: MÜSIAD, *Yükselen Değer Türkiye* [see note 46], p. 301–308.

52 Musa Kulaklıkaya, "Yükselen donör ülke Türkiye ve TİKA'nın Türkiye kalkınma yardımlarında rolü" [Turkey as Advancing Donor Country and the Role of TİKA in Turkey's Development Aid], in: MÜSIAD, *Yükselen Değer Türkiye* [see note 46], p. 73–83.

53 Founded by ministerial council decision <<http://idsb.org.en>> (accessed on 31.01.2012).

54 Necmi Sadıkoğlu, "Türkiye İslam dünyasının birleştirici gücüdür", in: MÜSIAD, *Yükselen Değer Türkiye* [see note 46], p. 99–107.

55 Conversation with Mustafa Özel in Istanbul on 14.12.2010.



coast, Central Anatolia, the Eastern Mediterranean and South-East Anatolia, which were, for their part, underpinned by local associations. As a result, TUSKON is an entrepreneurial grass roots movement which, unlike the employers' associations TÜSİAD<sup>56</sup> and MÜSİAD, has tens of thousands of members.<sup>57</sup> This high membership stands in the way of the association's adoption of an explicit ideology. It follows that at TUSKON, religion and the commandments of Islam are not on the agenda; instead, the focus is placed on social and national interests, civil equality and equal opportunities.

This combination of simulated neutrality and, simultaneously, policies aligned consistently to those of the AKP government has also been the hallmark of the *Hizmet* (Service [to God and society; author's note]) movement for several years now. This network, which is led by preacher Fethullah Gülen, is recognised as the largest civil society movement within Turkish Islam.<sup>58</sup> In the nineties, the Gülen movement vacillated between repudiation and downright hostility as far as its stance on Erbakan's explicitly Islamic movement was concerned. Today, however, the network provides the AKP government with nationwide support via its media and promotes it regionally, particularly in the predominantly Kurdish region. Other indications of close ties between the Fethullah Gülen movement and TUSKON also exist. On the one hand, the entrepreneur's association collaborates intensively with academics at Istanbul's Fatih University, the Gülen network's academic and intellectual flagship. On the other, TUSKON's foreign guests have expressed subtle yet calculated praise for "Turkish schools", in reference to educational establishments run by the Gülen network. Finally, the trade association has underlined the benefits of these schools for Turkish entrepreneurs striving to penetrate new markets and gain information about countries and their inhabitants, cultivating new contacts in the process.

In point of fact, conservative proprietors of small and medium-sized enterprises also constitute the financial backbone of the Gülen network. Its principal commitment is the education sector. A vast number of private primary and secondary schools at home and abroad and several universities are ascribed to the

network. Distinguishing features of these educational establishments include the stipulation of English as the primary medium of instruction, the insistence on Turkish as a compulsory subject, even for schools situated abroad, a strong emphasis on scientific subjects and the provision of across-the-board support for pupils and students in a gentle, yet determined effort to persuade them to adopt religiously conservative morals and ethics. The schools' orientation thereby reflects the reality of their sponsors' existence: just as the conservative entrepreneurs adopt state-of-the-art production and communications technology in their attempts to conquer export markets and nonetheless wish to remain devout Turks, pupils are, in turn, encouraged to open themselves to the world linguistically and methodically, yet concurrently develop a strong Muslim-Turkish identity and a socio-conservative morality.

Today, it is estimated that the Gülen network operates over 1,000 schools in around 120 countries outside Turkey. These schools attracted attention as early as the mid-nineties, long before the AKP took office,<sup>59</sup> which demonstrates that they and their activities are more than the mere civil society tools of the government in power since 2002. It would perhaps be more appropriate to refer to the network's influence on AKP policies, or to a joint vision of movement and party.

TUSKON's first major campaign, the initiation of the "foreign trade bridge between Turkey and Africa", an ambitious gathering of Turkish and African entrepreneurs, took place in 2006, proclaimed "the Year of Africa" by the Erdoğan government. The event entered its seventh round in late 2011. Other governmental and TUSKON campaigns are also closely coordinated. In December 2010, TUSKON established the "foreign trade bridge between Turkey and the Middle East" immediately after the "Levant Business Forum" had been founded between Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. TUSKON set up other foreign trade bridges with Eurasia (the states situated in the territory occupied by the former USSR) and with states in the Pacific region, China and India. Just as Fethullah Gülen and his network do not limit their educational activities in Muslim countries and among Muslim populations, TUSKON promotes global tapping of markets for Turkish products. Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan would

<sup>56</sup> The Association of Secular Large-Scale Manufacturers.

<sup>57</sup> See <[www.tuskon.org](http://www.tuskon.org)> (accessed on 06.01.2011).

<sup>58</sup> Yavuz Çobanoğlu, *Altın nesli'in peşinde: Fethullah Gülen'de toplum devlet, ahlak otorite* [For a Golden Generation: Society, State, Morality and Authority According to Fethullah Gülen] (Istanbul 2012).

<sup>59</sup> Şahin Alpay, "Fethullah Hoca'nın okul imperatorluğu" [Hodscha Fethullah's School Empire], series published in the daily newspaper *Milliyet* from 01.-05.11.1996.

like to see his country become one of the world's ten largest industrial nations by 2023, the centenary of the Republic's foundation. TUSKON's chairman Rızanur Meral has promised to "create 40,000 new [Turkish; author's note] exporters" in order to achieve this goal.<sup>60</sup> Its apparently inexhaustible momentum has catapulted the association to the top of the ranks of participants in the AKP's market diversification-oriented foreign trade policy, alongside MÜSİAD.<sup>61</sup> With its considerable membership of over 33,000 companies and its moderate rhetoric, TUSKON simultaneously represents a new political mainstream which is not explicitly anti-European, but is at one with Davutoğlu as regards the necessity for Turkey's increased independence and a vision of the country's assumption of a central role within its region.

### The New Foreign Trade Policy's Economic Rationale

MÜSİAD and TUSKON represent the expansion and concomitant regional and ideological diversification of the Turkish entrepreneurship, formerly located exclusively in the West of the country and predominantly Republican. This development is illustrated by the following statistics: in 2000, approximately 25,000 Turkish companies were active in the export trade, just four of eighty-one Turkish provinces exported goods exceeding the value of one billion USD annually, and only 3,055 Turkish companies exported goods to the value of at least one million USD per annum. In 2009, the number of Turkish export companies had increased to around 45,000, eleven provinces recorded exports worth in excess of one million USD and the number of companies exporting goods to the value of a million USD and above each year had risen to 8,817.<sup>62</sup> In the same year, small and medium-sized enterprises bore the brunt of Turkish exports with a share of 58.8 per cent.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Quoted according to Tür, "Economic Relations with the Middle East" [see note 30], p. 600.

<sup>61</sup> Öniş, "Crises and Transformation in Turkish Political Economy" [see note 13], p. 57; Shahin Vallée, "Turkey's Economic and Financial Diplomacy", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 9 (Winter 2010) 4, p. 71.

<sup>62</sup> Foreign Minister Zafer Çağlayan, "Son 10 yılda dış ticaretimizde yaşanan gelişmeler" [Development of our Foreign Trade in the Last Decade], in: MÜSİAD, *Yükselen Değer Türkiye* [see note 46], p. 199–206.

<sup>63</sup> Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu [Turkish Statistical Institute], *Haber Bülteni* [press release], no. 7, 11.01.2011.

It is inevitable that a group so crucial to the export trade will gain influence over foreign policy – even without the conservative entrepreneur associations' previously described ideological proximity to the government. The mere existence of an entrepreneurship and trade associations primarily aligned to foreign trade is a first for Turkey. This is because the entrepreneurs' customary mouthpieces, the Association of Turkish Chambers of Commerce and Industry (TOBB) and the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TÜSİAD) had long focused solely on the domestic market, which the State successfully protected from foreign competition by means of high import duties.<sup>64</sup>

The benefits of Turkey's new approach to foreign policy are substantiated by economic statistics. Although developed countries continue to be crucial for the Turkish economy as trade partners, their significance is waning. Thus, in 1999, the OECD states' share in Turkey's foreign trade was 71 per cent. By 2010, this figure had fallen to 50 per cent.<sup>65</sup> The situation on the EU market is less extreme, but nonetheless exhibits a similar tendency. In 2000, Turkey delivered 56.4 per cent of its exports to EU member states. By 2009, this figure had dropped to 46 per cent. In the same period, participation by African countries in the Turkish export trade rose from five to ten per cent, while the Asian countries' share increased from 14 to 25.4 per cent and the Middle Eastern countries' share from 9.3 to 18.8 per cent.<sup>66</sup> Member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), invariably accorded considerable attention by MÜSİAD authors, also succeeded in significantly expanding their share in Turkish exports. In 2000, OIC members accounted for 12.9 per cent of Turkish exports, a figure which had increased to 28 per cent by 2009.<sup>67</sup> This increase is exemplified below for several countries and regions using absolute figures. Between 2000 and 2010, Turkey's exchange of goods with Iran increased from 1.2 to 5.4 billion USD, with Russia from 5.1 to 22.7 billion USD, with Syria from 773 million to 1.8 billion USD

<sup>64</sup> Altay Atlı, *Businessmen and Turkey's Foreign Policy* (Paris: International Policy and Leadership Institute, October 2011), p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> Soner Çağaptay, *Op-Chart: Turkey's Changing World*, 30.01.2012, <[www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1812](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1812)> (accessed on 06.02.2012).

<sup>66</sup> All information according to Çağlayan, "Son 10 yılda dış ticaretimizde yaşanan gelişmeler" [see note 60], p. 204.

<sup>67</sup> Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, "Yükselen ülke Türkiye" [Turkey, a Rising Power], in: MÜSİAD, *Yükselen Değer Türkiye* [see note 46], p. 47.

and with Latin American countries from 735 million to 4.0 billion USD.<sup>68</sup> The USA is no longer one of Turkey's five major export markets, having been replaced by Iraq in 2009. The financial crisis has intensified this trend still further. Prior to the crisis, 60 per cent of Turkey's export growth was accounted for by Middle Eastern and North African countries. The European markets bore the brunt of the economic meltdown, and, as a result, the Middle East and Asia were the regions which, as export markets, made the most significant contribution to the recovery of the Turkish economy in the wake of the crisis.<sup>69</sup>

The high growth rates enjoyed by the Turkish economy in recent years can be understood only against this background. Between 2000 and 2009, the volume of Turkish foreign trade increased by 195 per cent, while export rose by 268 per cent.<sup>70</sup> As a result, Turkey now rightly perceives itself as an economic heavyweight in the region. According to figures released by the World Bank, Turkey's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008, which amounted to 800 billion USD, was the equivalent of over half the combined GDPs of Middle Eastern and North African countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel.<sup>71</sup> In August 2010, Minister of Trade Zafer Çağlayan commented that Turkey wished to create "a zone of prosperity in the heart of the Middle East" via the economic integration of Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, emphasising the fact that, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Turkey generated 82 per cent of the combined GDPs of these four countries.<sup>72</sup>

The opening of regional markets to foreign trade had also proved a successful means to alleviate the chronic development gap between Turkey's productive, affluent provinces in the West and the unproductive, economically stunted Eastern provinces inhabited predominantly by the Kurdish population. The sheer scale of this disparity is illustrated by the following. In 2007, the Human Development Index (HDI) figures for Istanbul and its Eastern neighbouring province Kocaeli were 0.857 and 0.869 respectively, commensurate with the scores achieved by Italy and

the Czech Republic. By contrast, the scores achieved by the predominantly Kurdish provinces of Bitlis, Muş, Ağrı and Şırnak in the East of the country were comparable with those of India: 0.579.<sup>73</sup> Between 2007 and 2010, the region's economic liberalisation precipitated an increase in export volumes of around 80 per cent in the Eastern provinces Mardin and Hakkari, while the provinces Urfa und Diyarbakir and Şırnak registered 100 and 120 per cent growth respectively. In the same period, unemployment in Urfa, Mardin and Şırnak decreased from 17 to 12.4 per cent, 17 to 9.1 per cent and 22.1 to 11.2 per cent respectively.<sup>74</sup> The following applies to Turkey's export industry as a whole: since the 2008 financial crisis, the provinces whose companies relied most heavily on exports to the MENA region have retained the most jobs, while those provinces which traditionally manufactured goods for European markets have recorded the heaviest decline in employment on a percentage basis. The relevant peak values are +23 per cent in the province of Ağrı on the border with Iran, and -12.5 per cent in Bursa, an industrial centre in North-West Anatolia.<sup>75</sup>

As a result, many Turkish citizens are able to absorb the substance of the new foreign policy rhetoric in their daily lives, experiencing a previously unfamiliar economic strength within their country at first hand. They are convinced by its ability to economically integrate smaller neighbouring countries, such as the Levant states, and perceive the political opportunity to place relations to Europe and the EU on a new and equal footing. In consequence, Davutoğlu's theories regarding the anchoring of Turkey within its geopolitical space and its role as a regional power have become a new standard *topos* in the Turks' self-image and in their perception of their country's global position. The manner in which Turkey's status in the region and the country's identity and "mission" have been presented and propagated have played a decisive role in this shift in consciousness.

68 Mehmet Babacan, *Whither Axis Shift: A Perspective from Turkey's Foreign Trade* (Ankara: SETA, 2010), p. 20.

69 Vallée, "Turkey's Economic and Financial Diplomacy" [see note Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.], p. 68.

70 Çağlayan, "Son 10 yılda dış ticaretimizde yaşanan gelişmeler" [see note 60], p. 202.

71 Quoted in International Crisis Group, *Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints* (Istanbul/Brussels, 2010), p. 9.

72 *Vatan*, 08.08.2010.

73 Quoted in Günter Seufert, *Turkey Expert Report, Sustainable Governance Indicators 2009 Project* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010), p. 18.

74 Turkish Statistical Institute, quoted in Meliha B. Altunisik/Lenore G. Martin, "Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East under AKP", *Turkish Studies* 12 (2011) 4, p. 581 and 582.

75 Serdar Sayan, *Export Performance of the Turkish Economy in the First Decade of the New Millenium* (Ankara: TEPAV, October 2011), p. 39.

## The Break with the Bureaucratic Elite's Iron Grip on the Ideology of Foreign Policy

In the era of the security paradigm, military dominance regarding foreign policy decisions was accompanied by what was, to all intents and purposes, a monopoly of knowledge and interpretation by the generals on foreign policy issues and strategic questions. At the turn of the millennium, pro-military journalists were still eager to alert the general public to the fact that politicians had a poor grasp of international and security-related circumstances and conditions, and that these topics were thus best left to foreign office and General Staff bureaucrats.<sup>76</sup>

### Precursors of Civil Think Tanks during the Cold War

If a “think tank” is construed as an institution dedicated to the creation of foreign policy and the advising and influencing of foreign policy players, then this term can hardly be applied to the first generation of Turkish think tanks. Several of these viewed themselves primarily as civil, foreign policy advocacy groups which represented Turkey's interests during international dialogue. This applies particularly to the Political and Social Studies Foundation (SİSAV), which assumed just such a role after the leaders of the 1980 coup d'état issued an all-party ban.<sup>77</sup> Alternatively, Turkish think tanks devoted themselves to the explanation and championship of foreign policy at home and abroad, such as the Foreign Policy Institute (DPE) and its quarterly publication (DPD). The journal and institute were founded in response to criticism of Turkey's connection to the West by a socialist and anti-imperialist trade union and student movement, and regard it as their duty to explain the country's current foreign policy to the international community, upholding it in the process.<sup>78</sup> Research institu-

tions established by the private economy with the overriding goal of speaking out against planning bureaucracy and advocating the alignment of Turkey's economy with EEC norms represented a more relevant type of think tank. The most prominent representative of this genre is the Economic Development Foundation (İKV), founded in 1965. In the nineties, the İKV became an important lobby for Turkish membership of the European Union, both at home and abroad.<sup>79</sup>

### “Scenic Revival” in the Wake of the Cold War

In the mid-nineties, Turkey's EU accession became a pet issue of TÜSİAD, the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association mentioned above, within which major industry is organised. Its reports on “Perspectives for [read: obstacles to; author's note] democratisation” created societal legitimacy for international democratic standards within Turkey and triggered outraged reactions by the military.<sup>80</sup> As far as foreign policy was concerned, TÜSİAD published a study entitled “Towards a New Strategy for Economic and Trade Diplomacy in Turkey” in 1998.<sup>81</sup> In the course of his criticism of the previous policy, its author, Mehmet Öğütücü, makes no reference to the “government”, but instead to the “centre”, by which he means the entanglement of military and bureaucracy. According to Öğütücü, this centre of power sought to popularise the impenetrable, economically autarchic nation state and deemed globalisation a Western conspiracy and form of neo-imperialism: However, globalisation and economic freedom, paired with economic dynamism, constituted an important opportunity for emerging economies.<sup>82</sup> Öğütücü uses

<sup>76</sup> Cf. the articles by Mehmet Ali Kışlalı in *Radikal*, published in 2001 and 2002.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. here and as follows Serhat Güvenç, “Türkiye'nin dış politikası ve düşünce kuruluşları” [Turkish Foreign Policy and Think Tanks], in: Semra Cerit Mazlum/Erhan Doğan (eds.), *Sivil toplum ve dış politika* (Istanbul 2006), p. 159–180 (164).

<sup>78</sup> See the DPE Institute's self-promotion at <[www.foreignpolicy.org.tr/](http://www.foreignpolicy.org.tr/)> (accessed on 18.07.2011).

<sup>79</sup> For further information on the İKV, see <[www.ikv.org.tr](http://www.ikv.org.tr)> (accessed on 18.07.2011).

<sup>80</sup> The 1997 and 1999 reports by Bülent Tanör proved groundbreaking in this respect.

<sup>81</sup> Mehmet Öğütücü, *Türkiye'de yeni bir ekonomik ve ticari diplomasi stratejisine doğru* (Istanbul: TÜSİAD, 1998) <[www.tusiad.org/bilgi-merkezi/raporlar/turkiyede-yeni-bir-ekonomik-ve-ticari-diplomasi-stratejisine-dogru/](http://www.tusiad.org/bilgi-merkezi/raporlar/turkiyede-yeni-bir-ekonomik-ve-ticari-diplomasi-stratejisine-dogru/)> (accessed on 20.07.2011).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

subtle intimation, expressed with sufficient clarity, to make resistance by the bureaucracy jointly responsible for the fact that Turkey's European policy has been treading water for decades. In future, he continues, civil society, particularly the economy, must be involved in the conception of foreign policy and has to draw on the advice of civilian experts.<sup>83</sup>

This period saw the first political fruits of the aforementioned İKV and the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), founded by the secular entrepreneurship<sup>84</sup>. Both institutions included socio-political matters in their remits in the wake of the adoption of the Copenhagen criteria. In terms of foreign policy, they dedicated themselves chiefly to the issues placing a strain on Turkey's relations with the EU and with the West as a whole: the Cyprus conflict, the Aegean dispute with Greece and relations with the EEC, EU and the USA.

One of the first think tanks not initiated by the economic elite was the Turkish Foundation for Social, Economic and Political Research (TÜSES), founded in 1989. Inspired by Germany's Friedrich Ebert Foundation, it was established in close conformity with the Social Democratic People's Party (SHP). Collaborations between newly-created think tanks and other political parties were common in the nineties. The Motherland Party (AnaP) collaborated with the Turkish Foundation for Democracy (TDV), founded in 1987, which shares a building with Germany's Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) in Ankara and is one of its project partners.<sup>85</sup> AnaP also cooperated with the Arı Movement, an NGO established in 1984 with excellent links in the USA.<sup>86</sup> The Right Path Party (DYP), the AnaP's centre-right rival at the time, took advantage of the İKV's expertise. In the early 2000s, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's newly-established AKP relied on the network of academics affiliated to the Association for Liberal Thinking (LDT), which was established in 1992.<sup>87</sup>

Within a mere decade, the bureaucratic decision-makers were thus confronted by civic institutions which vied with them for power of definition over

national interests in foreign policy and called the significance of the national security concept into question. The countless private television channels and radio stations which had emerged in the same period offered experts at the new institutions ample opportunity to influence public opinion.

### Military Headwind: Intellectual Reform for the Old Foreign Policy Elite

The bureaucracy made several attempts to regain its interpretational prerogative over foreign policy, reacting, on the one hand, with the establishment of state think tanks<sup>88</sup> and, on the other, with the encouragement and establishment of officially independent institutions which nonetheless shared its ideological convictions. However, a consolidation of power by the ruling party resulted in a decline in military influence, and the most high-profile of those think tanks closely aligned to the generals were either closed or veered in their stances, toeing the official government line.

In 1995, the Centre for Strategic Research (SAM) was founded at the Foreign Office. The centre publishes its reports and analyses in the English publication *Perceptions*. Today, the SAM is headed by Bülent Aras, a member of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's intellectual inner circle. A new publication series, *Vision Papers*, serves exclusively to disseminate articles written by the Foreign Minister.<sup>89</sup>

The National Committee for Strategic Research and Studies (SAEMK) was established in 1997 in order to harness the foreign and security policy know-how of Turkish universities. The committee was affiliated to the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), which supervises the country's universities. The General Staff and Foreign Office each appointed two members of the fourteen-person board, while the National Intelligence Organisation (MİT) appointed one member, this in accordance with the act passed on 7th November 1997, which stated that the purpose of the committee was to "monitor" and "evaluate" the strategic research performed at the universities, "to propose topics", "provide assistance" and "assign projects".<sup>90</sup> The act was

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 233 and p. VI.

<sup>84</sup> For further information, see the Foundation's internet site at <[www.tesev.org.tr](http://www.tesev.org.tr)>.

<sup>85</sup> Türk Demokrasi Vakfı, <[www.demokrasivakfi.org.tr/](http://www.demokrasivakfi.org.tr/)> (accessed on 19.07.2011).

<sup>86</sup> For information on the Arı Movement, see <[http://ari.org.tr/english/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://ari.org.tr/english/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1)> (accessed on 19.07.2011).

<sup>87</sup> Liberal Düşünce Topluluğu, <[www.liberal.org.tr/incele.php?kategori=MTU=>](http://www.liberal.org.tr/incele.php?kategori=MTU=>) (accessed on 19.07.2011).

<sup>88</sup> Güvenç, "Türkiye'nin dış politikası ve düşünce kuruluşları" [see note 76], p. 168ff.

<sup>89</sup> Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi, <<http://sam.gov.tr>> (accessed on 26.01.2012).

<sup>90</sup> *Resmî Gazete* [Official Gazette], (07.11.1997) 23163, <[www.yok.gov.tr/content/vie/450/183/lang.tr](http://www.yok.gov.tr/content/vie/450/183/lang.tr)>, particularly article 4 (accessed on 26.07.2011).

not revoked until April 2012, after which the universities regained some degree of overall independence, specifically as regards foreign policy issues.<sup>91</sup>

In early 2002, the General Staff established its own Centre for Strategic Research and Studies (SAREM).<sup>92</sup> The mainstream press welcomed the centre's foundation, which was intended to equip the generals with both expertise and theories as far as security policy was concerned, and with a new image-boosting and argumentational strategy in the face of an increasingly critical public.<sup>93</sup> In addition to foreign policy, the aforementioned core domestic threats of "separatism" and "religious reaction" numbered among SAREM's original research topics. The soldiers' think tank made the headlines in 2007 as a result of an experimental exercise held several months previously. The scenario's starting point was the assassination of the constitutional court's female president, which evoked negative memories of an attack on five state council judges just a few months previously.<sup>94</sup> SAREM was quietly closed in November 2011 in the wake of the general suppression of the military's role in politics.<sup>95</sup>

In the late nineties, the generals also encouraged the foundation of "independent" institutes. The Eurasian Strategic Research Centre (ASAM) was part of the fruit of these labours. In September 1997, the General Staff had forced the Islamic Welfare Party (RP) from power. The party was banned the following February, and, in April 1998, the armed forces initiated a campaign against the Green Capital. In order to restore equilibrium in its relations with the military, food manufacturer *Ülker* turned its attention to the Eurasian Strategic Research Centre (ASAM) from 1999 onwards. Established a few years previously, ASAM had been merely ticking over, but was transformed into Turkey's largest think tank as a result of the company's efforts. Over the course of the following decade, ASAM played a decisive role in the foreign policy discussion and succeeded in popularising the military-bureaucratic elite's security concept among large swathes of the population. The think tank paid particular attention to developments in Northern Iraq

with its high number of Kurdish inhabitants, where the declaration of a Kurdish (federated) state had to be avoided at all costs, which also applied to the Cyprus issue. ASAM's stance on the Cyprus dispute found striking expression in a now well-known quote by its director, Ümit Özdağ: "Each square centimetre inhabited by a Turk is more important than the entire European continent."<sup>96</sup> As the AKP government's political power escalated, ASAM's close orientation on the military's perspective proved increasingly inopportune. Özdağ was forced to vacate his directorial post in 2004 and *Ülker* discontinued its funding in 2009, after which ASAM finally closed its doors.<sup>97</sup> Although its director succeeded in opening a new establishment, the Turkish Institute for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a few years later, this has attracted little attention to date.<sup>98</sup>

Turkey's National Security Strategies Research Centre (TUSAM) was committed to a strict policy of Third World nationalism. This was opened in 2004 by the Turkish Metal Union (TMS) "as a reaction to the colonisation of Eurasian countries by global forces, particularly the G7 states".<sup>99</sup> The centre published the results of its research in the journal *Strateji*, which was included in the Kemalist daily newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (Republic) as a Sunday supplement. The Metal Union, which adopted an extremely nationalistic stance, favoured hotel complexes and casinos in the Turkish area of Northern Cyprus as locations to invest its members' syndical dues, where it also operated its television channel *Avrasya* (Eurasia) TV. In spring 2009, its chairman Mustafa Özbek, who had held office for 34 successive years, was arrested within the context of an Ergenekon trial (see above, p. 9), accused of having financed a terrorist organisation. The Union's new management closed the centre a few weeks later.

<sup>91</sup> *Taraf*, 15.04.2012.

<sup>92</sup> Stratejik Araştırma ve Etüd Merkez, accessible at the time via the now obsolete link <[www.tsk.tr/SAREM/SAREM\\_ANA.htm](http://www.tsk.tr/SAREM/SAREM_ANA.htm)> (accessed on 28.07.2011)

<sup>93</sup> *Milliyet*, 10.01.2002.

<sup>94</sup> The attack was immediately attributed to "Islamists". However, it was rapidly exposed as the work of extreme right-wing groups in league with the military.

<sup>95</sup> *Akşam*, 20.01.2012.

<sup>96</sup> Ümit Özdağ in *Radikal*, 10.03.2003.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. on ASAM:

<[http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avrasya\\_Stratejik\\_Arastirmalar\\_Merkezi](http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avrasya_Stratejik_Arastirmalar_Merkezi)> and <[www.eksisozluk.com/show.asp?t=%C3%BCmit%20%C3%B6zda%C4%9F](http://www.eksisozluk.com/show.asp?t=%C3%BCmit%20%C3%B6zda%C4%9F)> (both accessed on 28.07.2011).

<sup>98</sup> 21. Yüzyıl Türkiye Enstitüsü, <[www.21yyte.org/tr](http://www.21yyte.org/tr)> (accessed on 13.02.2012).

<sup>99</sup> The mission statement, quoted according to Bülent Aras et al., *Araştırma merkezlerinin yükselişi: Türkiye'de dış politika ve ulusal güvenlik kültürü* [Advancement of the Strategic Research Institute: Foreign Policy and the Culture of National Security in Turkey] (Ankara: SETA, 2010), p. 65.

## The Think Tank Scene Today

With this, the military's most prominent mouthpieces as far as foreign and security policy was concerned were silenced. Today, a monopoly of knowledge and interpretation on foreign policy by the former bureaucratic elite no longer exists. Instead, a new mainstream of research and consultancy regarding foreign and security policy has evolved, which takes the fundamental parameters of Ahmet Davutoğlu's thinking as its framework of reference. Emphatically liberal establishments including TESEV and the LDD, which have nonetheless discovered ways to coexist with the government on a series of foreign policy issues, stand apart from this mainstream.

Most of the new mainstream's think tanks are based in Ankara and almost all include the word "strategy" in their titles. The majority of their employees are young academics from the conservative milieu. The five think tanks described below maintain close ties with the government and are provided with considerable room for manoeuvre by the media. All five present themselves as NGOs, and three of them are at least partially funded by the conservative entrepreneurship.

The largest of these new think tanks is USAK, the International Strategic Research Organisation, founded in 2004 and sponsored by a registered association. The think tank is subdivided into nine institutes employing a total of 34 academic full-time workers and a large number of associate academics and fellowship holders. In its mission statement, USAK describes itself as "liberal", "idealistic" (because it declares itself "committed to humanity"), "society-driven", "democratic" and "conservative". This canon of values signals USAK's rejection of Kemalism's collective, nationalistic, bureaucratic, authoritarian and secular dimensions and its decision to distance itself from the old state elite. According to the think tank's website, it is financed exclusively via donations, membership fees and resources allocated by state institutions for research assignments. USAK maintains strong ties with the police, police academies and, as a result, with institutions in which the network surrounding Fethullah Gülen is closely rooted.<sup>100</sup> During his tenure, the USAK association's long-time president, Sedat Laçiner, who was appointed Rector of the Çanakkale University in late 2011, referred to the relationship between USAK and the AKP government

saying "The AKP government defends values we support. But we only support policies as we see fit."<sup>101</sup>

Laçiner was one of the first academics to publicly criticise the military's strategy in its efforts to subdue the PKK. Instead of deploying badly-trained conscripts under the command of the regular army, he suggested that the armed operations be transferred to the police, who should establish special units for this purpose. This strategic argument aside, the police force is prioritised as, since the end of the Ottoman Empire, it has been considered Muslim-conservative, while the military has advocated westernisation and secularisation.

Prior to his presidency of USAK, Laçiner headed the department of Armenian Studies at the previously mentioned nationalist think tank ASAM and also advised the Ministry of Education on "Armenian affairs". ASAM's focus on Armenia served primarily to elaborate arguments for the dismissal of accusations that the Ottoman Empire committed genocide against the Armenian people. Laçiner's professional background combines both change *and* the continuity of the former security paradigm. His *career* represents the leveraging of the military's political power and the emerging influence enjoyed by civilian actors.

Laçiner's *substantive orientation* is, by contrast, evidence of the continuity which prevails in some foreign policy contexts between the former state elite and the new Muslim-conservative powers; the issue of the Armenians, for instance, and, to a certain extent, the unresolved problem of the Kurdish population. Until 2007, sociologist Yusuf Ziya Özcan was another central figure at USAK, heading its Scientific Council until that year. In December 2007, State President Abdullah Gül appointed him President of the powerful Council of Education (YÖK), despite opposition by the majority of secular university rectors. Özcan cooperated closely with the government in his position as YÖK president. One result of this collaboration has been a large-scale revocation of the headscarf ban for female university students.

SETA, the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, is probably closest to the government.<sup>102</sup> In December 2009, a SETA subsidiary was opened in Washington, D.C. by the Prime Minister in person. In May 2009, SETA's founding director Ibrahim Kalın succeeded Ahmet Davutoğlu as foreign

<sup>100</sup> Avni Özgürel in *Taraf*, 13.02.2012.

<sup>101</sup> Wendy Kristianasen, "Turkey's Growth Industry", *Le Monde diplomatique*, 07.02.2010.

<sup>102</sup> Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı, <[www.setav.org/Default.aspx?Dil=tr](http://www.setav.org/Default.aspx?Dil=tr)> (accessed on 15.02.2012).

policy advisor to the head of government, and also holds the post of Coordinator of the Public Diplomacy Office in the Prime Minister's Office.<sup>103</sup> SETA also maintains close ties with the government in other areas. The director of the think tank's foreign policy division, Talip Küçükcan, formerly advised Yusuf Ziya Özcan, the aforementioned President of the Council of Education. Bülent Aras, Küçükcan's predecessor as director of the foreign policy division, is now President of the Centre for Strategic Research at the Foreign Office (SAM).<sup>104</sup> Former SETA researcher Zühtü Arslan now presides over the Police Academy. His former colleague at SETA, Gökhan Çetinsaya, was the founding rector of the Şehir University, established by the Science and Art Foundation (Bilim ve Sanat Vakfı), and was appointed the new President of the Council of Education in December 2011. In another twist, current Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu was another of the think tank's former directors.<sup>105</sup> Former SETA academic M. Mücahit Küçükylmaz currently heads the Internet and Public Relations Department at the Presidential Office. SETA publishes the very readable journal *Insight Turkey*. Its editor is İhsan Dağı, a leading academic critic of the military and columnist for the daily newspaper *Zaman*, which, on the other hand, is controlled by the Gülen network.

The mission statement of the Institute of Strategic Thinking (SDE), founded in March 2009, refers explicitly to Davutoğlu's foreign policy stance, proclaiming, with great self-assertion:

"SDE's foundation constitutes a core milestone on the route currently being negotiated by Turkey, as it steps out confidently with the awareness of strategic depth and historical responsibility [...] Not only should the new Turkey become a regional, but also a global power, and, in turn, SDE seeks to become our country's leading strategic institution."<sup>106</sup>

**103** Public Diplomacy Office <<http://kdk.gov.tr/kurumsal/koordinatör/12>> (accessed on 15.02.2012).

**104** News website *haberler.com*, 14.09.2010.

**105** "Davutoğlu'nun vakfı Tekel binalarını yıkacak" [Davutoğlu's Foundation Intends to Tear Down the Edifice of Monopoly Administration], [left-wing] news website *Sol Portal* (online), 20.12.2009, <<http://haber.sol.org.tr/kent-gundemleri/davutoglundun-vakfi-tekeli-binalarini-yikacak-haberi-21826>>; a biography of the foreign minister can be found in a Muslim discussion forum for young people at <[www.delikanforum.net/konu/12484-ahmet-davutoglu.html](http://www.delikanforum.net/konu/12484-ahmet-davutoglu.html)> (both accessed on 10.03.2011).

**106** See the Institute's mission statement on its website <[www.sde.org.tr/tr/sayfalar/15/sde-tanitim.aspx](http://www.sde.org.tr/tr/sayfalar/15/sde-tanitim.aspx)> (accessed on 15.02.2012).

Despite this state-centred, almost imperial diction, the Institute's "High Consultative Council" includes seasoned secular academics such as female economist Beril Dedeoğlu, who lectures at the French-Turkish Galatasaray University, and political scientist Doğu Ergil, one of the first critics of the State's Kurdish policy in the early nineties. Although SDE shares the fundamental paradigms of the AKP's foreign policy, it opposes any glorification of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>107</sup> It also enjoys close ties with ruling party AKP. The congress *Changing Global Power Balances and Turkey*, hosted by the institute on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> October 2010 in the late Ottoman Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul, was ceremoniously opened by President Abdullah Gül, former Speaker of the Parliament Mehmet Ali Şahin and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu.

TASAM, the Turkish-Asian Centre for Strategic Studies, was founded in 2003.<sup>108</sup> The serried ranks of deputies and advisors surrounding its director Süleyman Şensoy and the editorial board of TASAM's journal "Strategic Foresight" (*Stratejik Öngörü*) are constituted principally of former ambassadors. TASAM's rhetoric overlaps with Ahmet Davutoğlu's former pronouncements. Like Davutoğlu in his abovementioned publications from the late nineties, TASAM emphasises the necessity for Turkey to establish for itself a "hinterland", referred to here as the "security net" and comprising the Balkans, the Middle East, the Black Sea region and the Caucasus. It underlines the importance of institutionalising cooperation with these neighbouring areas while simultaneously expediting "identity creation" in the "Turkish and Islamic worlds".<sup>109</sup> TASAM maintains long-standing, stable contacts in the world's various regions and organises government-funded gatherings of politicians, diplomats, experts, industry representatives and journalists. As a result, the Centre is more akin to an instrument of second track diplomacy than it is to a think tank. The conferences organised by TASAM, which are financed by the Foreign Office, are frequently concerned with the question of how to influence international partners in order to enable Turkey to achieve concrete foreign policy goals, such as maintaining Iraq's territorial

**107** Yasin Aktay in *Yeni Şafak*, 10.01.2011.

**108** Türk Asya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi, <[www.tasam.org/index.php?sagblok=87](http://www.tasam.org/index.php?sagblok=87)> (accessed on 15.02.2012).

**109** See the research centre's mission statement at <[www.tasam.org/tr-TR/Kurumsal/Profil](http://www.tasam.org/tr-TR/Kurumsal/Profil)> (accessed on 14.02.2010).



integrity, strengthening its central government and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

STRATİM, the Centre for Strategic Communication, is a relatively young institution. Founded in 2008, it has coordinated the annual Istanbul Forum since 2009, whose keynote speakers to date have included Prime Minister Erdoğan, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu and OIC President Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu. STRATİM does not conduct independent research, instead acting as a civilian channel via which Turkish foreign policy is communicated.<sup>110</sup> The Centre is obviously government-funded. Some of its more prestigious staff members include long-time diplomat Yaşar Yakış, Foreign Minister in the first AKP government under Abdullah Gül in 2002–2003, and Suat Kınıklıoğlu, AKP delegate from 2007–2011, spokesman for the government's Foreign Policy Committee and chairman of the Turkish-American Inter-Parliamentary Friendship.

As a result, the new conservative economic elite and the AKP government have access to a large pool of specialists and institutions with foreign policy expertise, which share their joint vision of a new Turkey. This is the vision of a country which no longer depends on Europe, whose future lies in its neighbouring and broader vicinity and as whose natural epicentre it is universally acknowledged. Yet today, this vision is not only shared by the government and its affiliated think tanks, but also by the majority of the population.

**110** Stratejik İletişim Merkezi, <[www.stratim.org/tr/hakkimizda.html](http://www.stratim.org/tr/hakkimizda.html)> (accessed on 08.05.2012)

## Attitudes: a New Normality

### EU Membership – a Topic Discussed with Equanimity

At first glance, the continuing broad sympathy among the Turkish population for EU accession appears to contradict extensive public support for this new foreign policy vision. According to a recent study, 60 per cent of the population is in favour of inclusion in the European Union, while another survey puts this figure as high as 69 per cent.<sup>111</sup> However, just two thirds of those prepared to vote for Turkey's EU membership actually believe that this will occur in the foreseeable future, something which considerably undermines the issue's current significance. In point of fact, possible EU accession for Turkey is treated with far more sangfroid than in the previous decade. Back then, Turkey's fate, both positive and negative, depended on EU membership for large swathes of the population. Today, however, Europe is no longer considered the sole lifeline by those advocating accession. Furthermore, it is also no longer the threat it was once deemed by those opposing membership. In 2007, 58 per cent of respondents considered Brussels a threat to Turkey. By 2011, the EU merely fell into the "also-ran" danger category with a lowly 40 per cent.<sup>112</sup> Today, EU membership has become less a goal in itself for the majority of Turks than an instrument to facilitate their country's continued economic development, this in line with the new mainstream thinking on foreign policy.<sup>113</sup>

**111** Ersin Kalaycıoğlu, *EU in Turkish Politics: Status and Prospects*, (Istanbul: Sabancı University, 2011), and Mensur Akgün et al., *Foreign Policy Perceptions in Turkey* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2011). International studies usually arrive at lower figures. For instance, the GMF's Transatlantic Trends for 2010 put Turkish support for EU membership at 41%, quoted in William Chislett, *Turkey's Islamist Party Wins Third Term of Single-Party Rule* (Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, 2011).

**112** Kalaycıoğlu, *EU in Turkish Politics* [see note 111].

**113** Cf. Akgün et al., *Foreign Policy Perceptions in Turkey* [see note 111].

### Iran, USA and Israel, Surprising Enemy Stereotypes, Distance to the West and to NATO

Freed from the constrictions of the West, the new foreign policy has met with applause throughout the country. The Turkish population has an independent view of its neighbouring regions and its country's central position in their midst which differs considerably from the perspectives prevailing in Western Europe. In a survey held in early January 2010, 57 per cent of the population deemed Iran's nuclear programme a threat to Turkey.<sup>114</sup> However, 60 per cent was opposed to an embargo or other sanctions against Iran.

What initially appears a contradictory stance conceals a deep mistrust of the policies imposed in the region by Western countries, which also emerges in other survey results. Thus according to the aforementioned poll, almost half the respondents expressly welcomed the statements made by Prime Minister Erdoğan in Teheran in late October 2009. On this occasion, the Turkish premier had encouraged Iran in its peaceful use of nuclear energy, criticised a one-sided focus by the West on Teheran in the struggle against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and castigated Israel for its possession of the same. A few weeks later, on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Turkey abstained from voting on a bill condemning Iran during a ballot organised by the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In December 2010, after having joined Brazil in a Security Council vote against the tightening of sanctions against Iran in May of that year, another survey produced quite similar results. According to this poll, 47 per cent of respondents shared the view that Teheran should be permitted to use nuclear energy in a peaceful manner, and only 38 per cent opposed its neighbouring country's nuclear programme.<sup>115</sup> The majority of survey participants did not agree with the purported inseparability of peaceful and belligerent

**114** Cf. Özer Sencar et al., *The New Face of Turkish Foreign Policy* (Ankara: MetroPoll Strategic and Social Research Centre, January 2010).

**115** Akgün et al., *Foreign Policy Perceptions in Turkey* [see note 111].

use of nuclear energy by Iran as suggested by Western states. In the same survey, a mere four per cent agreed with the view that Iran was one of Turkey's enemy states, while 40 per cent thought this was the case as far as Israel was concerned.

Other polls confirmed extremely critical views of both Israel and its main ally, the USA. In 2007, for instance, 82 per cent and 68 per cent perceived the USA and Israel as primary sources of danger respectively.<sup>116</sup> By 2011, the order had changed, with Israel scoring 75 per cent and the USA 57 per cent in the "threatening state" category.

The fierce scepticism against NATO which has developed among the Turkish population since 2004 goes hand in hand with this stance.<sup>117</sup> In 2004, 67 per cent of Turks still considered NATO as "essential to their country's security". By 2010, this figure had fallen to just 41 per cent. During this period, no significant change was observed among the populations of NATO states in general (from 68% to 66%). If the Turkish respondents are split *according to their political party preferences*, the first thing to attract attention is the fact that supporters of the extreme right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), once NATO's most zealous advocates, have become their staunchest sceptics. While, in 2004, just 24 per cent of these voters had deemed the alliance "no longer essential to their country's security", this figure had risen to 72 per cent by 2010. CHP supporters had expressed the greatest reservations against the alliance with 40 per cent in 2004. By 2007, they occupied second place after the MHP faction with 59 per cent. By contrast, AKP voters, who had, in 2004, achieved a mid-field ranking of 32 per cent rejection, occupied the most positive stance towards NATO in 2010, with a rejection rate of 52 per cent.<sup>118</sup> As a result, supporters of the party whose government has made it its mission to achieve greater independence from the USA and EU and which intends to make Turkey a regional power, ironically appear to be the political faction which sets greatest store by NATO integration within Turkish society. The principle reservations maintained by MHP and CHP voters against the alliance reflect the alienation of the state-centred elite, with its proximity to the military, from the USA and Europe, as highlighted in

the opening chapter (p. 7 ff.). This estrangement of the secular-nationalist opposition from Europe and the USA explains why the AKP's foreign policy, which seeks to achieve greater independence from Western countries, finds more support in the country than that bestowed on the ruling party itself.

### Successful Foreign Policy: a Strong, Independent Turkey

As it happens, just 29.9 per cent of the population affirms its satisfaction with Turkey's overall development in the aforementioned survey of January 2011, while 53.5 per cent applauded the government for its "successful" or "very successful" foreign policy. During this period, survey respondents considered Ahmet Davutoğlu the most successful cabinet minister.<sup>119</sup> The TESEV poll painted an identical picture, revealing that, in December 2011, 65 per cent of respondents generally agreed with the new foreign policy.<sup>120</sup> At the time, the AKP enjoyed approximately 45 per cent support in the opinion polls. With this, the new foreign policy has considerable backing in Turkish society, which is far greater than the already strong support for the ruling party.

It follows that all activities initiated by Turkey which make it appear an independent or even a leading player in its region are welcomed far beyond the confines of the AKP electorate.<sup>121</sup> Visions of Turkey as a model for the Middle East (77%), impartial moderator in the Middle East peace process (75%) and peace-making power in the Caucasus (74%) meet with great applause. The fact that the expansion of relations with Russia (70%) and Turkish participation in military peace missions in Afghanistan and Lebanon (70% and 58% respectively), i.e. decisions conforming with the policy pursued by Western countries, are simultaneously deemed worthy of praise is due to the fact that all these activities strengthen Turkey's central role within its region.

The Turkish population's mistrust of the intentions and policies of Western countries on the one hand and its simultaneous desire for Turkey to play a central role in its region on the other result in attitudes and views which initially appear difficult to reconcile. In

<sup>116</sup> Cf. here and as follows: Kalaycıoğlu, *EU in Turkish Politics* [see note 111].

<sup>117</sup> Ebru Ş. Canan-Sokollu/Burcu Ertunç, *Turks Are Getting Apart from NATO*, BETAM Research Letter 11/110 (Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University, 06.05.2011).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Sencar et al., *The New Face of Turkish Foreign Policy* [see note Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.].

<sup>120</sup> Akgün et al., *Foreign Policy Perceptions in Turkey* [see note 111].

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

early May 2011, for instance, almost 60 per cent of respondents agreed that mass protests in Arab countries were the result of political machinations by Western states, while just 30 per cent viewed them as expressing a desire for democratic reform.<sup>122</sup> Concurrently, 60 per cent also demanded that Turkey support the protest movements. Just 28.5 per cent endorsed an intervention by international forces [i.e. the West; author's note]. However, almost 50 per cent supported an intervention by Turkey.

The desire for a policy which increases independence and promotes Turkey's interests is also evident in attitudes to NATO. When it comes to warding off an attack on an ally via the deployment of a country's own troops, only the population of Slovenia is more reluctant than that of Turkey (64% and 69%, average within all NATO states: 79%). Nevertheless, the Turkish population is, simultaneously, more willing to dispatch its soldiers abroad to end civil war than any other state with the exception of Slovakia (88% and 85% respectively; average within all NATO states: 64%). As far as safeguarding national raw material supplies is concerned, however, Turkish citizens are more inclined to send out their troops than respondents from all other NATO states (Turkey 77%, average 50%).

<sup>122</sup> Cf. here and as follows Özer Sencar, *Halkın Suriye olaylarına ve gündem konularına bakışı* [The People's Opinion of the Events in Syria and Other Current Issues] (Ankara: MetroPoll Stratejik ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Merkezi, May 2011).

## Implications for Europe's Position on Turkey

For Turkey's former elite, Western European countries functioned as a political (nation state) and cultural (secularisation) model. As far as security policy was concerned, the connection to Europe and the West seemed the only option. As a result, Turkey was predestined for a status of cultural and political remoteness which was rejected by Ahmet Davutoğlu, who invoked the Turks' tradition and civilisation and the history of the Ottoman Empire. As far as the Foreign Minister is concerned, this period of Turkish marginalisation is just one episode in the history of Turkey which has finally been overcome. Today, this assessment is shared by a new and aspiring economic elite, by the overwhelming majority of foreign policy experts and by large swathes of the population.

The political, social and economic developments which have contributed so decisively to the establishment of this new normality within Turkey appear irreversible. This applies equally to the collapse of the republican security paradigm, whose constituent foreign and domestic policy components have now ceased to exist. Important events in this context include the end of the Cold War and the elimination of taboos surrounding central domestic threat scenarios, namely reactionary Islamism and Kurdish separatism. This also applies to the weakening of the former state ideology and the resultant delegitimisation of extra-parliamentary veto powers, of the military, political bureaucracy and supreme judiciary.

Like ruling party AKP itself, the ambitious entrepreneurial elite and new pool of foreign policy experts financed by it embody the socio-conservative population's successful integration within politics, the economy and educational establishments. For decades, the old Kemalist establishment either blocked political participation by this section of Turkish society directly, or channelled their energies into the aggravation of ethnic and religious tensions. Socio-conservative members of the population are united by an experience of exclusion which exceeds the limits of class and region. This experience also spawned a political discourse which represents an alternative to Kemalism and rejects cultural westernisation dictated from above just as vehemently as a political connection to the West which apparently brooks no alternative.

The encounter between the political, economic and educational integration of the religious, socio-conservative population and processes of economic and cultural globalisation enabled this milieu's elites to redefine their stance on modernism and present themselves as supporters of an alternative modernity. Their previous knee-jerk rejection of westernisation and connection to the West (including EU membership) has now been replaced by a self-assured strategy which perceives Turkey as a potential regional centre and comprehends the country's own pace of development in the context of global change.

Those involved deem the sustained economic success and the contribution made by the latter to an initial alteration in the grave development gap between the affluent West and languishing East of the country as the most important confirmation of the new strategy's validity.

Approval for the new foreign policy's fundamental parameters extends far beyond the AKP's electorate. This is underlined by the new foreign policy's compatibility with an explicitly nationalistic stance, and refers to a series of conflicts between the former republican elite, the EU and the USA.

What are the consequences for the European Union? Despite all this, can it continue to count on a similarly quick relationship fix with Ankara which mirrors Washington's apparent success in this department since summer 2011? Or should it resign itself to creating a fundamentally new relationship with Turkey?

Turkey's relations with the European Union and a number of its member states on the one side and with the USA on the other are affected by the new foreign policy in quite different ways. Notwithstanding the stir created by Turkey's policies on Iran and Israel, its relationship with the USA appears to have been less affected by the realignment of Turkish foreign policy in a *structural* sense than its ties with the European Union.

Military and security policy concerns were always at the forefront of the Turkish-American cooperation, which is of a strongly instrumental nature. Although major crises are possible, political about-turns, as in the current case of the NATO broadband radar, often

smooth things out. In addition, the USA is reliant on the existence of a strong Turkey in the region in the wake of only modest success as regards its Near and Middle East policies in the past decade. Only a strong Turkey can act as a source of inspiration for the Arab world's predominantly Muslim countries in a political, economic and socio-political sense. And, from a US perspective, only a strong Turkey can play a useful, strategic role in the region, acting as a countervailing force to Iran and as an indispensable political and military ally as regards crisis centres like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Turkey's immense significance for the USA gives Ankara considerable political leeway as far as Washington is concerned. And it uses this freedom when shaping its relations with Israel and Russia, doing so in a manner which partially contradicts US perceptions and interests, yet fails to seriously threaten the strategic collaboration between Ankara and Washington. On the contrary, Turkish-American relations have rarely been better than they are at present – in the wake of the unrest in the Arab world.

By contrast, Turkey's relations with the European Union and several major EU member states are in far poorer shape. Turkey's relationship with Europe has always been ambivalent. The relationship was marked as greatly by resistance to foreign influence in the Middle East and mistrust of European attempts at democratisation in Turkey itself as it was by the vision to become part of Europe in terms of culture and civilisation, as well as in terms of economic and security policy.

The paralysed state of the EU accession process and simultaneous consolidation of the hegemony enjoyed by the new religious socio-conservative elite threatens to undermine the vision of Turkey's Europeanisation both in terms of foreign and security policy *and* as regards civilisation, while concomitantly strengthening the "negative" aspects of relations with Europe, characterised as they are by foreign policy competition, cultural alienation and domestic mistrust. Economic and technical exchanges with Europe remain the most powerful unifying element and essential corrective factor against a continued deterioration in relations. Their significance for Turkey is still considerable. However, the European Union's influence is dwindling in this area, too, in proportion to the newly emerging powers and to the benefit of the region's markets.

The Cyprus conflict, the renewed securitisation of Turkish foreign policy in the context of Iran, Iraq and Syria and the looming competition with France in

Northern Africa are all issues ideally suited to provoking a further decline in EU-Turkish relations. Nevertheless, Turkey remains the regional player closest to Europe, particularly in a Middle Eastern context, which is simultaneously capable of exercising the most positive influence within this framework.

As a result, European politics would be well advised to seize the opportunity offered by the more philosophical stance currently adopted by the Turkish leadership and population as regards their country's admission to the European Union. Precisely because Turkey is no longer seeking membership at any cost, the obstacles impeding the progress of accession negotiations and rooted in the domestic policies of several EU states should now be navigable. Nothing would counteract the pervasively culturalistic interpretation of personal identity in Turkey more effectively than a revisitation of the grounds for the fundamental rejection of Turkish membership by the governments in EU partner states.

## Abbreviations

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
AnaP	Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party)
ASAM	Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi (Eurasian Strategic Research Centre)
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
COMCEC	Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
D8	Developing Eight
DEİK	Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu (Foreign Economic Relations Board)
DPD	Dış Politika Dergisi (Foreign Policy Journal)
DPE	Dış Politika Enstitüsü (Foreign Policy Institute)
DYP	Doğru Yol Partisi (Right Path Party)
EEC	European Economic Community
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
İKV	İktisadi Kalkınma Vakfı (Economic Development Foundation)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
İSDB/UNIW	İslam Dünyası Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları Birliği/Union of NGOs of the Islamic World
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Foundation e.V.
LDT	Liberal Düşünce Topluluğu (Association for Liberal Thinking)
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Movement Party)

MİT	Millî İstihbarat Teşkilâtı (National Intelligence Organisation)
MÜSİAD	Müstakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği (Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
RP	Refah Partisi (Welfare Party)
SAEMK	Stratejik Araştırma ve Etüdler Milli Komitesi (National Committee for Strategic Research and Studies)
SAM	Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi (Centre for Strategic Research)
SAREM	Stratejik Araştırma ve Etüd Merkez (Centre for Strategic Research and Studies)
SDE	Stratejik düşünce Enstitüsü (Institute of Strategic Thinking)
SETA	Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı (Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research)
SHP	Sosyaldemokrat Halk Partisi (Social Democratic People's Party)
SİSAV	Siyasi ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Vakfı (Political and Social Studies Foundation)
STRATIM	Stratejik İletişim Merkezi (Centre for Strategic Communication)
TASAM	Türk Asya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi (Turkish-Asian Centre for Strategic Studies)
TDV	Türk Demokrasi Vakfı (Turkish Foundation for Democracy)
TESEV	Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı (Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation)
TİKA	Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency)
TMS	Türk Metal Sendikası (Turkish Metal Union)
TOBB	Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği (Association of Turkish Chambers of Commerce and Industry)
TUSAM	Türkiye Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejileri Merkezi (Turkish National Security Strategies Research Centre)
TÜSES	Türkiye Sosyal Ekonomik Siyasal Araştırmalar Vakfı (Turkish Foundation for Social, Economic and Political Research)
TÜSİAD	Türk Sanayicileri ve İş Adamları Derneği (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association)
TUSKON	Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Turkish Businessmen and Industrialists)
USD	US Dollar
YÖK	Yükseköğretim Kurulu (Council of Education)

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