Turkey's Foreign Policy in a Changing World

Old alignments and new neighbourhoods

International Conference

Oxford
30 April - 2 May 2010
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
St Antony’s College, University of Oxford

30 April – 2 May 2010

TURKEY’S FOREIGN POLICY IN A CHANGING WORLD:
OLD ALIGNMENTS AND NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As any other academic event, international conferences depend on the hard work of many supporters and facilitators. The bigger the conference, the more support is needed from individuals and institutions. Turkey's foreign policy in a changing world, with its 45 speakers and over 150 participants was such a big conference and it became possible only thanks to the concerted effort and commitment of many colleagues and students. So many in fact, that we will only be able to mention a small fraction of them here.

Kalypso Nicolaïdis, Chair of SEESOX, inspired the convenors with her ‘thinking outside the box’ of conventional narratives and ostensibly insurmountable truths. In fact, this critical point of departure shaped the direction of many of the debates. We owe particular thanks to Bülent Aras, Turkish Visiting Fellow at South East European Studies at Oxford (SEESOX), who accompanied the preparatory phase of the conference from its inception and who made possible the visit and the much-noticed key-note lecture of Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. Sabancı University contributed with its cumulative intellectual power in the field of Turkish foreign policy. Nora Fisher Onar played a key role as facilitator between the two institutions and as the conference’s Istanbul liaison officer. Yeter Yaman and Despina Afentouli secured welcome expertise and support from NATO’s public diplomacy unit.

On the home front, we are grateful as ever to the Warden of St Antony’s College, Margaret Macmillan, who enthusiastically endorsed the event and brought it to a great start as chair of the keynote and the first panel. Special thanks also go to the Director of the European Studies Centre, Jane Caplan.

Julie Adams, Administrator of SEESOX, spent many weeks working on the logistics to ensure a smooth outcome. She was assisted by our committed Oxford D.Phil. students Funda Üstek, Vedica Kant, Yusuf Aytar and Onur Unutulmaz. Their enthusiasm contributed greatly to the intellectual atmosphere of the conference. Rebecca Adams Brubaker prepared, revised and edited this report in the most meticulous manner. We also thank Anne-Laure Guillermain for her assistance during the event.

Finally, we would like to thank all conference participants, whether keynote speakers, paper presenters or members of the audience, for their contributions to the debate: It is they who have turned Turkey's Foreign Policy in a Changing World into a veritable festival of ideas on the past, present and future of Turkey’s engagement with the world.

The Convenors, January 2011
INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, Turkey’s foreign policy has undergone profound changes. Unsettled by the end of the Cold War and in search of a new role in the emerging world order, Turkey’s foreign policy community has recently moved towards a proactive engagement with its diverse neighbourhood. The concept of Turkey’s ‘strategic depth,’ laid down in 2001 by Ahmet Davutoğlu, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, has provided the intellectual background to this new policy orientation.

Until recently, Turkey’s neighbours have seen it as a reluctant regional actor. Aided by such new soft power factors as expanding commercial relations, the establishment of Turkish-speaking schools and the influence of popular culture, Turkey’s role in its neighbourhood, from the Balkans to the Caucasus and the Middle East, has transformed significantly. The country is now seeking to establish itself as a partner in business, a centre of cultural attraction and as a hub for political mediation, aspiring to win the hearts and minds of its neighbours. In line with this new approach, Turkey started by changing its position towards the division of Cyprus and the Annan Plan in 2004 and later targeted frozen conflicts with Syria and Armenia. Such developments have created new spaces of engagement and set new rules for interaction that suggest a shift away from a zero-sum approach in international relations. The considerable transformation of social, economic, and political structures in Turkey has contributed significantly to the emergence of new forms of interaction.

Yet, the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine and its multidirectional outlook have also raised questions among international strategists: Does this policy denote the end of Turkey’s classical Western orientation? Is the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine compatible with Turkey’s long-term goal of the EU membership? Might close relations with countries like Iran, Syria and Sudan damage Turkey’s alliance with the US? Does the new policy entail a change in Turkey’s international security strategies which have for decades evolved around NATO? To what extent may Turkey’s re-engagement with the post-Ottoman space be perceived as a form of ‘Neo-Ottoman’ imperialism? Can Turkey become a regional power without resolving its internal ethnic and historical problems?

With such questions in mind, this conference sets out to examine Turkey’s new engagement with its neighbourhood from an interdisciplinary angle, highlighting the larger structural forces that led to Turkey’s recent transformation, the various dimensions of Turkey’s regional and international presence, as well as the role of new actors in the preparation and implementation of foreign policy.

On April 30th through May 2nd, 45 speakers and over 150 participants from around the world gathered at St. Antony’s College for the Oxford’s South East European Studies at Oxford-Sabancı University conference on Turkey’s Foreign Policy in a Changing World.

The conference was designed to address the need to look at the issues of Turkish foreign policy in a wider historical context. The diversity of panellists highlighted the interconnected nature of foreign policy and domestic politics especially in the case of Turkey and addressed not only the ‘high politics’ of hard security issues, but also the influence of soft politics and soft power. Most importantly, the conference initiated a decentring of the discussion on Turkish foreign policy. To this end, the series of presentations provided needed expertise on Turkey as seen from within and from abroad, expanding an inward-looking discourse to one which included voices and perspectives from Turkey’s immediate and distant neighbourhood.
Sabancı Visiting Professor, Ayşe Kadioğlu, introduced the conference with the observation, “Today the elite of Turkey feel as close to Tehran as they do to London, Paris and Brussels.” This situation exists in sharp contrast to the observation of a famous Turkish thinker from the turn of the 20th century. He, Kadioğlu explained, had characterised Turkey’s elite as “men running Westwards on the deck of a ship heading East.” Throughout the following three days speakers drew upon, expanded and challenged this imagery. Kadioğlu’s introductory remarks artfully captured the essence of the debate to come.

Before the keynote speech, Kerem Öktem drew attention to the wide range of academic activities and scholarly publications, which SEESOX has realised in the last five years. He underlined that the edited volumes on ‘Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century’ (2009) and ‘In the Long Shadow of Europe: Greeks and Turks in the Era of Post-nationalism’ (2010) have become standard works in the field of Turkish Studies and expressed his hope that this conference would also quickly be captured in a publication reflecting the debates ahead.

During the course of the conference, lecture halls were packed. Lively debate, critical engagement and collaborative brainstorming electrified each session. With such expertise and diversity of opinions, it was quite clear by the end that consensus on the direction of the change in Turkey’s foreign policy would remain elusive. Rather, panellists and attendées alike agreed that the conference served to fuel rich debate and expand the discussion into new realms.
Davutoğlu opened his presentation emphasising that he wished to speak from his expertise as an academic, rather than as a Foreign Minister. His speech, he said, would outline four central issues regarding his doctrine of ‘strategic depth’: the historical transformation of global world orders, the current order as he sees it, the Turkish position in this new global and regional order, and finally, an overview of some specific issues arising from this new context.

“We are currently in the fourth of great world orders” Davutoğlu explained. Following the traditional order, the colonial order and the Cold War order, the world has now entered an era of interdependence and global governance. In the geopolitics of the current era, “geography has lost some of its importance, yet traditional geographical regions are re-emerging in a cultural, political and economic sense.” The world, however, has yet to achieve a balance of power in this new era, which had produced a fragile political status quo.

For Davutoğlu, “The world cannot carry this imbalance” and thus “Leaders must interject certain values into the system to restore balance. Security and freedom are two of these key values—security and freedom for all of humanity and “not just for some people and some nations.”

Second, the current order is economically fragile. Thus there is a need to reform the structures of the previous order to better suit the current one. For Davutoğlu, justice must be inserted into the revision process and the ‘cultural concepts’ of the former orders need to be updated from a Eurocentric narrative to one that includes other peoples and civilisations in history.

Turkey can play an important role in constructing this new political, economic and cultural system. Tracing the history of Turkey through these orders, we find that Turkey was a leader in the traditional era, never colonised during the colonial order, and a wing of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) during the Cold War. Thus given Turkey’s influential role and history in the regional order, when crises strike, Turkish geopolitical responsibilities emerge. For Davutoğlu, Turkey’s neighbours in the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia expect leadership from Turkey because they believe that “Istanbul is the centre of a different tradition of order” than the Eurocentric one. In this new global era Davutoğlu proclaimed “I am not a minister of a nation state only.” Turkey, following a doctrine of proactive peace diplomacy, cannot wait for crises to emerge. Rather, it must take preventative action. In this new global order, “Turkey will be the litmus test” for tension between East and West, North and South.

Thus, given this new context, Davutoğlu justified the need for his ‘strategic depth’ doctrine based on four central principles: A secure neighbourhood based on a common understanding of security, pro-active, high-level political dialogue with all neighbours, fostering regional economic interdependence and finally, promoting “multi-cultural, multi-sectarian peace and harmony.” This final aspect, Davutoğlu urged, is essential given the diverse, cosmopolitan nature of Turkey’s region rooted in its history and identity. Freedom and security, however, underpin these core principles for “If you ignore security for freedom you will have chaos, and if you ignore freedom for security you will have a dictatorship.”
Davutoğlu concluded by calling for reform of Turkey’s political system, increased activity in global issues, support for UN reform, and more representative global governance. His doctrine, he explained, “is visionary, based on human rights, historical continuity, peace and stability. With this visionary approach we hope to contribute to the surrounding regions and to global peace.”

Discussion of the keynote speech

Davutoğlu’s speech elicited a barrage of questions: Two audience members asked about Turkey’s deteriorating relations with Israel given the new foreign policy doctrine. Davutoğlu responded that the key to peace in the region lies in finding ways to reintegrate the region, according to its historically diverse legacy rather than supporting Israel’s attempts to ‘purify’ the region. He emphasised that Turkey was ready to work with Israel on a solution but that Israel must decide if it is willing to change its attitude on cooperation and compromise. Turkey, Davutoğlu emphasised, will neither be silent regarding the suffering of Palestinians in Gaza nor demonstrate a stance of hard power towards Israel so long as Israel is willing to work with Turkey.

Ali Rıza asked Davutoğlu how the Cyprus issue factored into his doctrine of ‘zero problems with neighbours.’ In response Davutoğlu confirmed his commitment to good relations with all of Turkey’s neighbours and to maximising integration in the region. Yet, he also expressed frustration at the reticence of the European Union (EU) and Greek Cypriots to work for a solution considering all that Turkey and Turkish Cypriots did to support the Annan Plan. “With their continued attitude, it will be quite difficult for us to achieve a settlement, but [Turkey] will continue to do what we can.”

Mehmet Karlı commented that in this new global order, one of the few new values agreed upon by the majority of the international community is the need for international criminal justice. Given this rare convergence in the fragile current order, will Turkey, Karlı wondered, ever sign up to the Rome Statute to join the International Criminal Court (ICC)? Davutoğlu responded that Turkey’s rationale for hesitating to join was not because the ICC is incompatible with his doctrine of ‘strategic depth’ but rather because of concerns regarding international criminal law’s compatibility with Turkish domestic law. Turkey is, however, Davutoğlu assured the audience, considering support for the ICC as well as other international institutions.

Shifting the conversation, Othon Anastasakis addressed an issue on many audience members’ minds, “Is the EU going to be just one alternative [in Turkey’s new foreign policy] or will it still be of higher significance to Turkey?” Davutoğlu defended his global rather than EU specific analysis stating that he had meant his speech to focus on a global rather than regional perspective. Yet, regarding Turkey-EU relations of the future, Davutoğlu contended that no one could say that Turkey would today be a burden to the EU if it were to join. Rather, Turkey, as “economically dynamic, politically involved, and strategically providing peace” would be a great asset to Europe. “We hope,” Davutoğlu concluded, “European leaders will realise this new effect. I am optimistic as there is a re-awakening of Turkey’s assets and a realisation that soon Turkey will be a real global actor in European affairs.”
SESSION 1

Turkey’s changing place in the world

**Baskın Oran (Ankara University)**

*Turkey and the West in historical perspective*

Baskın Oran opened the first session emphasising that since the beginning of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey has always looked to the West. With the birth of the Turkish Republic, for example, as a strategic medium power, Turkey has based its foreign policy on two core pillars: keeping the status quo, and maintaining its Western orientation. To this end Turkey strives to maintain national borders and to preserve the existing balance. However, given Turkey’s new foreign policy doctrine, Oran asked, can we infer that it has changed its axis away from the West?

Historically, Western powers, fearing a deviation from a course they have taken too often for granted, have, on occasions, accused Turkey of shifting its axis away from the West. This contention is voiced every time Turkey attempts to diversify its Westernist policy to cope with drastic global developments or to capitalise on systemic changes to increase its regional autonomy. Yet, Turkey is currently undergoing major changes - from national capitalism to international capitalism, from a modern state and society to a pluralist state and society, and from Kemalism to post-Kemalism. All these changes are in the interest of the West because Western interests and maintaining the balance of power are synonymous. Thus Turkey’s attempts to balance power are always in the interests of the West.

While Turkey’s new foreign policy is reminiscent of a sort of Neo-Ottomanism influenced by the Justine and Development Party’s (AKP) religious stance, it is also reminiscent of Atatürk’s foreign policy based on strict Westernism and good neighbourliness. The irony of history, for Oran, is that those who seek a ‘change in axis’ within Turkey are not the Islamists but rather a section of the Kemalist nationalists. These secular nationalists call for change under the banner of ‘Euro-Asianism’ and anti-Western discourses of “Euro imperialism”.

**Hakan Erdem (Sabancı University)**

*Continuity/rupture in late Ottoman to Turkish foreign policy*

Erdem began, “The Ottoman Empire was an empire and Turkey is a Republic, and there are obvious differences as reflected in the foreign policy of both.” Thus, how can academics place the history of Turkey’s foreign policy against such a background of continuity and rupture? For Erdem, in assuming a case of rupture we are imagining an Ottoman Empire that never was. Rather, the Turkish Republic was the outcome of a series of transformations rather than one big rupture. Thus there were also areas of continuity. For example, the Republic owned up to Ottoman debt, maintained embassies and imperial institutions, and continued to use most Ottoman laws.

Additionally, the more profound transformations were actually based in the Ottoman legacy rather than signalling a break from this legacy. Thus while these transformations appeared to be ruptures, they were actually a form of continuity. Hence whether the current foreign policy
of ‘strategic depth’ is an area of continuity or rupture with the past is still uncertain. But, according to Erdem, “It is too early for the historians to decide.”

Discussion: Turkey’s changing place in the world

Rosan Şahin opened the discussion querying whether the new ‘activist’ Turkish foreign policy is really new. Oran proposed that the policy is neither new and neo-Islamist nor purely neo-Ottoman. Not neo-Islamist because Turkey is equally concerned with the Balkans, Greece and Europe as it is with the Middle East. And it is not neo-Ottoman because under the Republic, Turkey continued its relations with Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan due to their shared interest “in keeping the Kurds in their place.” Thus the current policy of ‘strategic depth’ is also quite similar to the Westernist foreign policy of Atatürk.

For Oran, “There is a determinism in the current foreign policy” – it is not temporary, “because every single state that was founded in this geography will follow the same main line of foreign policy – i.e. diversification of a Westernist foreign policy in order to have more autonomy.”

Dwelling on the link between the Ottoman Empire and contemporary Turkey, Karabekir Akkoyunlu asked Erdem whether a similar power struggle is occurring in Turkey today as that which occurred during the end of the Ottoman Empire. Erdem suggested that during the Ottoman period and early Republic the state prevailed as the main architect and regulator of identities. Due to civil society’s growing strength and the blossoming of the media, this control is no longer possible.

Before the session’s close, Othon Anastasakis asked the panellists whether they could connect the current change in Turkey’s foreign policy to changes within Turkish society – in other words “Is [Turkey’s] foreign policy shift fuelled from the top-down or the bottom-up?” Erdem responded that the new Islamist elites in Turkey are pursuing a continuous policy from their non-Islamist predecessors (excepting Turkish foreign policy of the 1950s and 1960s). While the AKP elites may have a ‘back to the future’ stance on certain issues such as the treatment of non-Muslims, for Erdem this is a good thing which may act to increase the legitimacy of their policies.
SESSION 2

Making sense of “Strategic depth”

Bülent Aras (Istanbul Technical University/University of Oxford)

What is the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine?

While acknowledging that the meaning of ‘strategic depth’ is constantly changing and developing, Aras based his presentation on Ahmet Davutoğlu’s book and his public speeches. Based on these sources, Aras described Davutoğlu’s ‘strategic depth’ doctrine as a theory of geopolitics – a theory of manufacturing a strong state. To this end, Aras explained “Davutoğlu provides ideational and material practices geared to create a strong state based on Turkey’s unique history and geography.” In his theory, Davutoğlu places Turkey, as a strong state, within a changing international environment. Given the failure of post-Cold War peace following 9/11, Turkey as well as other nations, have been thrown into a new world order. They must adapt or be challenged.

The conflicts of this new era - Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, and Iraq – all concern Muslims, are all multi-cultural and are all at the crossroads of economic activity. Thus these same conflicts are all subject to international intervention. Turkey can grow into a strong state by concentrating its energies of leadership and influence in these conflict regions. Turkey is in a unique position to be involved, as it shares historical and cultural ties with all of the regions in which these conflicts are located including the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus.

Ideationally, Davutoğlu’s doctrine is based on self-confidence, good-neighbourliness and stability at home. Methodologically, the doctrine is novel and visionary as well as integrated and inclusive. By ‘integrated’ and by ‘inclusive’ Davutoğlu means that Turkey should not take part in contending alliances but rather should work with all parties in a conflict to broker a solution.

Lastly, regarding the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine’s operating principles, Davutoğlu recognises that this doctrine must be balanced with security concerns. Yet a ‘zero problems with neighbours’ orientation means encouraging maximum cooperation, a multi-dimensional foreign policy, a new, highly-involved diplomatic style, and giving equal attention to Muslim and non-Muslim neighbours.

Ömer Taşpinar (Brookings Institute)

The US and the new Turkish policy

Reflecting the debate in Washington, Taşpinar began by dispelling the impression common in Turkey that the US-Turkey alliance is always high on the US agenda. Rather, Taşpinar argued, Turkey enters the US’s field of vision either when it moves closer to the Middle East or, when Turkey plays a more activist foreign policy in its own region. For example, following 9/11, Washington placed Turkey high on its agenda as part of the neo-conservative project to prove Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilisations’ wrong. At the time, the Bush administration had romanticised Turkey as ‘a model for the Muslim world, a model for the future.’ This US vision corresponded with Davutoğlu’s and his party’s vision for Turkey.

Such a representation of Turkey, however, was an anathema to Turkey’s Kemalist elites. These elites interpreted US support for Turkey as ‘a modern Muslim model,’ as synonymous with US
support for the AKP. This impression led to domestic divisions within Turkey, and, as Turkey was thus no longer willing to serve as a model for the US, it dropped off the US’s agenda.

The US is also aware of conspiracy theories within Turkey linking the US to support for the PKK. The US knows now how important the Kurdish issue is to Turkey and has responded by aiding in the capture of Kurdish leader Ocalan. Yet there is still bitterness in the US, particularly among the US military officials after Iraq. Turkey’s refusal to grant the US passage has led to an overall sense within the US military that “you cannot rely on Turkey like you used to be able to.”

In addition, Turkey and the US cannot agree on a common threat. For the US, it is the jihadist threat of terrorism and violent radicalism. For Turkey, the threat is ethnic (domestic) Kurdish terrorism. There are very few issues on which the Turkish secularists and Islamists agree, but the Kurdish issue is one of them. The secularists think that the Kurds lend support to the AKP. The AKP thinks the Kurds want to create a Kurdish state.

The US appreciates what Turkey is doing with its new foreign policy. It sees ‘strategic depth’ as Turkey’s attempt to come to terms with its identity. America does not think of the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine as an Islamist agenda. Rather the US believes Turkey is trying to come to terms with its Muslim and Kurdish identity with a vision that goes beyond Kemalism.

Regarding Turkey’s foreign policy approach however, two concerns remain. First the US is concerned by Turkey’s continued involvement with Hamas and the lack of sympathy for the Israeli security concerns. For the US, these two factors may be signs of a growing Islamist element in Turkish politics or of the growing influence of public opinion on politics. Second, the US is concerned with Turkey’s continued support for the Iranian regime and expects its cooperation on sanctions. These core concerns exist in the context of deteriorating relations between Turkey and the EU.

Raoul Motika (Turkey Europe Centre, Universität Hamburg)

“Strategic depth” and Europeanisation of Turkish foreign policy

Motika opened his speech with three questions: Is Turkey, under the current government, still willing to integrate into the sketchy foreign policy of the EU? Is such an integration still in the national interests of Turkey? And thirdly, is the EU still interested in incorporating Turkey into joint politics, given its new doctrine?

The concept of ‘strategic depth’, Motika argued, is not an obstacle for Europeanisation of Turkey’s foreign policy. Yet the concept “has brought the ideological core of the AKP to the surface and this is endangering Turkey’s accession prospects. Ultimately, Motika contended, there is a contradiction between the policy doctrine’s goal to turn Turkey into a powerful regional actor and the reality that being a strong actor means hampering the Europeanisation of Turkey’s foreign policy. Several problems arise from this contradiction:

First, if the EU decides to become more interventionist on foreign policy issues, its stance could come to conflict with Davutoğlu’s approach. Second, it is becoming more challenging to develop common EU foreign policy into which other countries can integrate themselves. Third, as long as Brussels is not able to pursue a solution-oriented stance on Cyprus and the Caucasus, Ankara will have to actively search for alternative partners to address these issues. Fourth, the EU and Turkey perceive the importance of democracy differently. This was most recently demonstrated in the two countries differing reactions to the Iranian elections. Fifth, according to the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine, a country’s value is predicted on its location and
its historical depth. Given that Turkey did not experience the transformative and unifying trauma of World War II as the other European states did, will Turkey be as willing as other member states to subordinate its territorial integrity and power to a common union? Finally, the success or failure of Davutoğlu’s policy will in turn reshape his doctrine. Turkey’s tightening relations with the Middle East, for example, may in turn, change Turkey.

To conclude, the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine itself is not a problem for Turkey’s integration into the EU. Rather the EU and its own inability to create a combined foreign policy on the one hand, and Turkey’s realpolitik experiences on the other, might both potentially endanger Turkey’s integration into the EU.

Özgur Mumcu (Galatasaray University)

“Strategic depth”: Much ado about nothing

Three core components constitute the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine: Zero problems with neighbours, the utilisation of cultural and geographic depth to form alliances, and the Renaissance of Ottoman civilisation. For Mumcu, the first element represents a dramatic shift in policy. Yet factors other than the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine played a more important role in its formation. Looking at Turkey’s relations with Greece, for example, rapprochement initiatives were a conscious political decision which began prior to the AKP’s election. Similarly, long-term UN efforts and domestic shifts in North Cyprus distinct from Davutoğlu’s doctrine were responsible for Turkey’s and Turkish Cypriots’ support for the Annan Plan in 2004.

The second factor, the utilisation of cultural and geographic depth to form alliances, is not novel. According to Mumcu, since before and after the Cold War, Turkey pursued a multi-dimensional foreign policy. What is quite new is the third factor: the change in Turkey’s relations towards other civilisations. There are contradictions in Davutoğlu’s policy regarding this factor. On the one hand, ‘strategic depth’ emphasises the need for interconnectivity in a globalised world. Yet the doctrine then emphasises the shared values of Muslim nations in alliance building. In addition, the doctrine promotes the need to support international laws to build solidarity. Yet the Turkish Minister of Defence announced that Turkey will begin selling arms to Sudan!

Given these contradictions, for Mumcu, it is not clear what Turkey’s new vision is for a new order. Yet the doctrine does seem to promote a double standard for Muslim actors and non-Muslim ones. “If this double standard is true, then the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine will become part of the ‘Clash of Civilisations’ rather than a remedy to overcome it.”

Discussion: Making sense of “Strategic depth”

Mehmet Karlı led off the discussion asking Aras to discuss tensions between the Turkish Foreign Minister and Prime Minister’s style in the context of the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine. Aras responded that there is a lot of debate, but ultimately “the Prime Minister has the final say.” Nathalie Tocci then asked Aras whether there was an inherent conflict between Davutoğlu’s doctrine and the EU’s goals and values. Aras replied that Europe is the main axis of Turkey’s foreign policy; Davutoğlu’s ideas have been shaped in a context that assumes Turkey is part of Europe. Thus the vision of the EU is an unchanging part of Turkish foreign policy.

Motika clarified his point for an audience member emphasising that his interest is in what the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine means for the EU – i.e. the doctrine portrays Turkey as a global player independent of EU integration. Yet Turkey wants to become a member of the EU. In addition, Motika stressed that there is no such thing as a consistent EU foreign policy. In several cases,
however, “it exists and clashes with Turkey’s foreign policy and this is the problem.” These clashes are most vividly seen in the EU and Turkey’s differing stances on Iran and Israel. “There are still many fields of cooperation between the EU and Turkey,” Motika assured, and the integration and combination of Turkish and the EU policies is advancing well.

An audience member then commented to Taspınar that the domestic problems in Turkey are not about secularists versus Islamists. Rather, he contended, they are about those who want to perpetuate the role of the military and those who want to stabilise and consolidate democracy based on European norms. If Turkey follows the former, the speaker concluded, it will move away from the EU and if it follows the latter it will move closer.

In response, Taspınar contended that it would be much easier for the West to work with Turkey rather than working around Turkey as Turkey really does matter to the West. “There is an image in the West, however, that Turkey is becoming more and more high maintenance and therefore a more difficult partner.” Taspınar agreed that the struggle in Turkey is not between Islam and Secularism. Rather that it is much easier to work with authoritarian states than to work with democracies (due to the inefficiencies and unpredictability of the parliamentary process, public opinion, etc). Thus, Taspınar predicted, as Turkey becomes more democratic, it might become more like France. However, he warned, if you try to explain the struggle in Turkey to Western ears as between democracy and authoritarianism, something gets lost in translation.

“In 2005 there was a romantacisation of the AKP. Post-2005, the West fears Turkey’s identity problems have begun to dominate the agenda. It is hard to make arguments that the AKP is a medium of democratisation given that it is viewed as a party with its own agenda for change. What gives the AKP party a sense of on-going prestige is that the other parties are hopeless as alternatives and as agents of change. Yet, for the West, the type of change the AKP is pushing for remains to be seen.”
SESSION 3

Impact of domestic developments on Turkish foreign policy

Fuat Keyman (Koç University)

Pro-activism in Turkish foreign policy: The global-local nexus

In the context of the global-local nexus, Turkey is facing two dilemmas. First, Turkish foreign policy is becoming more constructive and regionally engaging. Turkey is now able to alter the system and to make significant contributions. Simultaneously, however, there is a growing scepticism towards Turkey. Some are sceptical because they feel Turkey’s new foreign policy is an Islamist foreign policy and therefore that it is anti-Israeli, anti-modern, and anti-European. Others observe that Turkey’s regional engagement is based on historical and cultural affinities and worry that Turkey may become regionally confined. Further scepticism is based on the belief that Turkey’s pro-activism is an emerging reality and thus has unknown consequences. So far Turkey’s doctrine of engagement is trade-oriented rather than political, yet Turkey may transform this economic pro-activism to a political version.

The second dilemma facing Turkey is that the more interest there is in Turkey, the more it is talked about globally. The more it is talked about globally, the more its domestic insecurity increases. While you cannot maintain your attraction if everything is secure, domestic instability is an obstacle to ‘strategic depth’. For Keyman, the new Turkish foreign policy is one dimension of the great domestic transformations that Turkey is undergoing due to exposure to globalisation, Europeanisation, and post-secular modernisation.

A first key characteristic of this transformation is that it has produced an electoral hegemony. Supporters of Turkey’s opposition parties have no faith that their parties can actually win the elections. A second characteristic is that the centre-periphery paradigm had reversed; the periphery is now producing its own centres. These new centres are gaining power by using processes of globalisation. Their rise in power is leading to the decline of the centre. Thirdly, in this market-driven transformation, Islam is no longer the ideology of backwardness. It is now empowering the new Turkish middle classes. Finally, due to the AKP’s electoral hegemony and Turkey’s position as a new centre, the meaning of Turkish modernity is changing too. The growing new conservative middle class is making a claim to Turkey’s modernity. If we embed Turkish pro-activism in a larger context, the more Turkey becomes able to govern this transformation the more it can act like a powerful state. The less it is able to govern these changes, the more it will be divided internally.

Aysel Kadioğlu (Sabancı Fellow at University of Oxford)

Between reform and survival: The innovative choreography of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party

Kadioğlu discussed how domestic and international factors are interlaced in giving shape to the AKP. To this end she traced the growth of Erdoğan’s popularity as a leader representing new virtues of reform. Turkey’s new foreign policy Kadioğlu reiterated is proactive, dynamic, and constructive. The AKP’s rhetoric is matched with action as it is trying to harmonise Turkey’s legislation with the EU standards, promote economic liberalism, and rejuvenate the po-
political realm by adopting a political language and style of compromise. It is this style of compromise that is the secret to the survival of the party.

AKP’s new foreign policy moves emerged at a time when the US was looking for allies in the Muslim world in order to defy Huntington’s thesis of a clash of civilisations. The AKP – backed by the international context – followed a very vigorous policy vis-a-vis EU accession until 2005. By 2005, certain factors began to hold up this policy. First of all, during the Cyprus referendum in 2004, the AKP supported the Annan Plan in opposition to Turkish nationalist groups and military desires. Yet, despite the fact that the majority of the Turkish Cypriots approved the plan, the Greek Cypriots rejected it. A few weeks later, the Republic of Cyprus became a member of the EU. Second, despite substantial Turkish domestic reforms and the shift in foreign policy in 2006, the possibility of a train crash on Turkey’s road to EU accession loomed large and was expressed by EU officials. Third, and as part of this shift, some European leaders began to voice their opposition to Turkey’s accession to the EU. Fourth, on October 12th 2006, a French bill made it a crime to deny that Armenians were victims of genocide. This action enhanced feelings of anti-Europeanism in Turkey. These feelings have continued into other issue areas. Finally, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) did not lend support to the freedom of women to wear headscarves on Turkey’s university campuses. This frustrated the conservative Muslim women in Turkey as well as AKP leaders.

By 2007, the above factors plus Turkey’s domestic crises seemed to be jeopardising the very survival of the AKP. One of the most striking domestic downturns in the AKP’s welfare was the bombing in 2005 of a Kurdish bookshop in Şemdinli. This event was followed in 2006 by riots during the funerals of PKK militants in Diyarbakır, Batman, Siirt, and Istanbul. By the end of June 2006, the AKP government accepted a new anti-terror law in the parliament which reduced Turkey’s Kurdish issue into a problem of terror. Kadioğlu argued that the acceptance of this law is one of the most dark and undemocratic moments of AKP’s history in government. At the time, the AKP clearly chose to abandon reform in order to survive.

After securing electoral victory in 2007, AKP launched a “Kurdish opening” in the summer of 2009. Yet, by the end of that year the Turkish Constitutional Court closed the major Kurdish political party and some of the PKK militants who returned to Turkey with the promise and expectation of a pardon, were arrested.

According to Kadioğlu, the AKP moves with a particular choreography. It plays a sort of “trench war” in the political realm. It tries to avoid outright conflict for the sake of survival. For example, after taking a few steps forward the party returns to the trench, waits and then advances again on the same issues. This style of “wait and see” movement has undoubtedly a Fabian character and seems to be the most distinguishing feature of the AKP.

Nora Fisher Onar (Bahçeşehir University)

Democratic depth: The missing ingredient in Turkey’s domestic/foreign policy nexus?

Onar opened with Halbwachs’ assertion that collective memory is intrinsically social, malleable, and political. In Turkey, Onar explained, the debate over the past occurs on three levels: the social level of popular, intellectual history; the domestic policy level which includes new monuments to Ottoman heroes, bank notes, etc.; and the foreign policy level comprised of the doctrine of ‘strategic depth’ and Davutoğlu’s vision. Given these three levels, Onar argued that “when things change at one level they change at another” (Ricochet effect).
Currently, the pro-religious camp within Turkey is pushing an agenda that impacts all three levels. They are both eulogising the Ottoman past and seeking an ethnic cultural framework for conducting Turkey’s foreign policy. For Onar, the agenda has positively impacted Turkish domestic and foreign policy by increasing openings to minorities living in Turkey, enhancing the philosophy of ‘zero problems with neighbours,’ and through bolstering Turkey’s confidence.

Yet the pro-religious camp has also negatively impacted Turkey’s domestic and foreign policy. Most condemningly, it has prompted the adoption of a version of conservative communitarianism. On a social level, the new approach has increased neighbourhood pressure. On a domestic policy level, it has pushed for a majoritarian understanding of democracy. And finally, on a foreign policy level, the pro-religious camp has privileged relations with the Muslim Middle East over relations with non-Muslim regions.

Given these negative impacts, what can be done to assure the international community that Turkey is not turning East? Onar recommended that the AKP embraces the idea of democratic depth. Onar defined ‘democratic depth’ as a combination of historical depth and geostrategic pragmatism. “It includes a categorical commitment to the well-being of groups beyond the natural constituents of the pro-religious cohorts and the articulation and pursuit of substantive programs to this end.”

While Onar acknowledged that Erdoğan’s uncouth statements and efforts have undone Davutoğlu’s work to foster democratic depth, she urged that continuing to cultivate it would yield great benefits. For Onar, democratic depth could provide a framework for overcoming societal cleavages by consolidating reforms of the past decade. It could augment Turkey’s soft power in and beyond its region. It could shame the EU figures.

**Gareth Jenkins (Author/Journalist)**

*The shifting compass: Civil-military relations, political Islam and Turkish foreign policy*

Jenkins urged that when considering Turkey, observers must distinguish between a military tutelage system and one in which the military is micro-managing a country’s foreign policy. In a military tutelage system, the military will only intervene if it sees someone going off course or if it does not trust the politicians to pursue a proper course.

In recent times, traditional categories of military influence in Turkey have been quite altered. For example, Jenkins argued that the military is ambivalent about Turkey’s accession to the EU. The military is ambivalent because it knows that if Turkey joins the EU, it will become more developed economically. Yet, the military has reservations about the detailed plans and reforms that would come with the EU membership.

On other issues, however, the military is very decided. Cyprus, for example, is one of the most sensitive issues for the military. In Cyprus, there is a dual military tutelage system; the military is directly involved on the island and it sends individuals to represent its interests in Ankara. In 2004, the military was prepared to allow the Annan Plan to go forward not because they wanted the Annan Plan to go forward but because they were convinced that the Greek Cypriots would say “NO” in the referendum on the Annan Plan.

Since 2002, however, following the AKP’s election, the military’s institutional and personal contacts in the Turkish government disappeared. When Former Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf
Denktaş lost in 2005, the military also lost their local personal contact. Since 2005, the AKP has not been as involved as previous governments in following the line of the military. As a consequence, their relaxed approach has set off alarm bells within the military.

Relations with the US, Iraq and Israel are three other key foreign policy areas traditionally subject to the military’s influence. Given the Turkish military’s preference for and reliance on US hardware, it is unlikely that the military will jettison its relationship with the US for Russia, as some fear. Regarding Iraq, under the AKP, the military has been broadly supportive of dialogue with the Iraqi Kurds. Finally, Turkish foreign relations with Israel have been almost fully dominated by the military in the past. Looking at the contrast in Turkey’s relations with Israel at present, we see the most extreme example of the change from military to civilian government control. In conclusion, there is no single issue where the Turkish military dictates Turkish foreign policy.

Discussion: Domestic impacts on Turkish foreign policy

The panel sparked a range of questions regarding the AKP’s origins, influences, and mixed motivations. A PhD student from Kent asked about the nature and origins of the AKP. Keyman responded that the AKP learned a lot from East Asian examples initially, but that now it is paving its own way by demonstrating a new model based on free markets, communitarian values, and parliamentary democracy.

Comparing Onar and Kadıoğlu’s presentations, Kerem Öktem asked whether the concept of flexibility and reactive choreography could be reconciled with what Onar presented as a principle-based approach. Kadıoğlu agreed that the AKP cannot have a principled stance when it is shifting positions all the time. Yet, she argued, the party’s urge to survive politically has led to such choreography. The military tutelage structure and the opposition parties in the Turkish parliament have continually cornered the AKP. Thus the element of survival for the AKP is key.

Alper Rıza challenged Keyman’s representation of the AKP’s influence, given its short tenure in power. Keyman agreed that fundamental ideological switches do occur in functioning party systems, but that elections should be able to keep the pendulum swinging. In an electoral hegemony context, however, if other parties are not able to beat the AKP, then, Keyman argued, the problem goes beyond the electoral realm. “An electoral hegemony will create instabilities in the society particularly among the secular elite. This elite may start relying on other actors to protect themselves if they feel they no longer have a stake in the elections.”

Proffering a final question, Mehmet Karlı asked the panel whether the party is establishing a roadmap for an illiberal political system. Keyman responded that the most important feature of the Anatolian transformation is the rise of the middle class. Yet observers must be careful, he warned, not to reduce the Anatolian transformation to conservative modernity. If Turkey has domestic instability, it cannot have a proactive foreign policy in a sustainable way. Whether or not Turkey will become a liberal or illiberal country becomes a question of whether or not it can govern this transformation. Kadıoğlu added that constituents should be able to applaud and criticise their political parties rather than judging them on a single action. “Essentialism,” she stressed, “is not going to get us anywhere. Relativism is bliss.”
SESSION 4
Beyond high politics: New actors and networks

Şahin Alpay (Bahçeşehir University)

*The Faith-based Fethullah Gülen social movement and its impact on Turkey’s international relations*

Alpay’s presentation was based on his extensive experience following the movement as a journalist since 1996. For Alpay, in the last decade, Turkish civil society and social movements have had an increasing impact on Turkey’s foreign policy. Of the faith-based networks within Turkey, the Gülen movement is the most significant. This movement represents a growing sector of Turkish society that believes that Islam is compatible with modernity and that religion *can* be a force for modernity. This position sits in sharp contrast to that of Kemalist idealists who posit that Islam is not compatible with modernity. For Kemalists, if a society wants to modernise it needs to confine the role of religion to the private space.

Turkey has a peculiar kind of secular regime. It is secular in the legal sense. Its origins lie not in the Republic but rather in the early 19th century Ottoman Empire. By the time the Empire collapsed, the laws in Turkey were largely secular; Islamic laws only extended to family affairs. The Turkish Republic, in turn, extended the secular laws to include even the familiar and private sphere.

For Alpay, the Turkish state now controls and monopolises religion as a means of privatising it, controlling it, and using it as a tool in its identity project of Turko-Sunni homogenisation. Yet, despite the state monopoly on religion and bans on minority sects, Turkish Islam has remained very pluralistic. It is thriving, evolving and effecting profound social and political change.

Of the banned Islamic sects, Sufism, and the Nakşibendi branch of Sufi Islam, have had the greatest influence on contemporary Turkish politics. The Nakşibendi order has evolved in Turkey as Turkey has been going through a dynamic process of social change. Said-i-Nursi, an Islamic scholar and by education a member of the Nakşibendi order, broke from the order. In contrast with the established views of the Nakşibendi order, Nursi believed that a lack of constitutional government, lack of political freedom and lack of scientific knowledge and intellectual freedom were responsible for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

There were several offshoots from Nursi’s breakaway movement. The most significant of these offshoots is the Gülen Movement. There are three periods in this particular movement’s development. It began with Fethullah Gülen’s opposition in the 1970s to atheistic Communism, which he regarded as the biggest threat to Islam. During the second period, from the 1980s onwards, Gülen began to emphasise Islam in the service of Turkish nationalism. In the third phase, from the 1990s onwards, Gülen adapted to the changes occurring in Turkey and developed a universalistic understanding of Islam with wider appeal. In this final stage, Gülen began to emphasise moral and social Islam (rather than legal) Islam. He argued that Muslims have a duty to serve all humanity rather than just Muslims. He urged his followers not to proselytise but to represent what good Islam is by their deeds and their acts and accept people around them as they are.
Gülen also advocated democracy as the best way of solving differences in society. He defended secularism as a means of respecting many different faiths. He advocated market economies and the globalisation of Turkey and of its people. Gülen was even one of the first leaders to advocate Turkey’s integration with the EU.

For Alpay, Gülen’s movement is not a political movement. Rather, domestically, all Turkish politicians have had good relations with Gülen because they are aware that the Gülen movement is helping to privatise Islam and therefore helping to fulfil the dreams of the Kemalists. Internationally, the movement has left an impact on Turkey’s international relations by contributing to Turkey’s hard and soft power.

Serhat Güvenç (Bilgi University)

Think-tanks: New faces and voices in Turkish foreign policy?

While think-tanks influence Turkish foreign policy, there are a few key points to keep in mind regarding their role in Turkish politics. First, the emergence and survival of think-tanks depend on the availability of funds. Second, think-tank survival is a function of the presence or absence of freedom of association and expression in Turkey. Third, think-tanks tend to be more visible and vocal at times of crises in Turkey’s international relations. Fourth, think-tanks primarily are meant to target a domestic audience, and finally, they rise and fall in popularity depending on their relations with domestic partnerships.

In any analysis of think-tanks, Güvenç reminded the audience, it is important to make a distinction between ‘think thanks’ and ‘advocacy think-tanks.’ Prior to the 1960s, Turkish foreign policy rarely offered forums for competing ideas. Rather it was based on three pillars: Geography- premised on instability and rivalry-, the historical context, and a Western-focus. As this Cold War perspective was centred on military and security issues, key foreign policy actors were military and civilian bureaucrats.

Following the military coup of the 1960s, this reality changed: the 1961 Constitution extended freedoms of expression and association, increasing private capital’s influence on foreign policy. As a consequence, the Turkish business elite managed to establish the first Turkish think-tank. Their aim was to create a forum where economic and social issues could be debated openly and freely. The Istanbul Chamber of Commerce bankrolled the second, which focused on economic development and establishing relations between Turkey and the European Community.

In the 1960s and 70s, think-tanks aimed to provide an objective view of Turkish foreign policy to the Turkish public. After the Cyprus war of 1974 and subsequent problems with the West, however, think-tanks shifted their focus towards building consensus and improving Turkey’s links with the world. Undergoing even further transformation, following the Cold War, think-tanks began to form allegiances with specific political actors. These most often included political parties, non-governmental actors, and independent media outlets.

In summary, today think-tanks cannot influence or shape Turkish foreign policy unless they are co-opted by a party or their input is explicitly solicited. With power shifts, various think-tanks have risen and fallen. Currently, while Davutoğlu is in full control of foreign policy making, there is a lack of debate among Turkish think-tanks on key foreign policy issues. Is this because Turks have run out of divisive issues? Or, rather, is a new consensus emerging? In answer Güvenç cited a quote from Ömer Taşpınar: “If current trends continue, what we
will see emerging in Turkey is not an Islamist foreign policy but a much more nationalist, defiant, independent, self-confident and self-centred strategic orientation – in short, a Turkish variant of ‘Gaullism’.”

Kerem Öktem (University of Oxford)

*Projecting power: Turkish TV series and their external effects*

According to Öktem, the concept of ‘strategic depth’ is as much a maze as it is a foreign policy doctrine. The maze is made up in part of Turkey’s soft power, and one significant aspect of this soft power is popular culture. Popular culture is as important, or even more so than, economic and political power, but of course also mutually interdependent with the two. His overarching argument was that Turkish TV series and the images and values represented therein strike a particularly strong chord of identification and intimacy with audiences from societies that share some cultural traits with society in Turkey. Where such real or imagined commonalities are present, the argument went, TV series had a major impact of changing perceptions on Turkey, creating opportunities for product placement and the marketing of Turkey and Istanbul as destinations of desire. Especially in the Arabic speaking countries, but also in the Balkans, objects of popular culture have created a new image of Turkey as a successful mediator between modernity and tradition, between religious background and secular everyday lives.

Öktem developed his argument by exploring the term ‘soft power’ in a historical perspective. He suggested that the projection of culture as an element of diplomacy has its roots in 19th century France. Back then, the government-backed *Alliance Française* (a cultural institution set to promote French language and culture) paved the way for the dissemination of the French way of life as a marker of sophistication and modernity. Contrary to this state-led cultural promotion, however, the International Relations theorist Joseph Nye argued that soft power would come primarily from non-governmental sources. In the US case, soft power is created partly by and probably even more so in spite of government.

In the current case of Turkey we see the gradual expression of soft power through the medium of its soap operas. These series are most popular in areas formerly under Ottoman domination, especially in the Arab world and the Balkans. But also outside the Ottoman domains, in the Turkic speaking countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, the series are very well received. There is a wide range of TV series in terms of content and politics, but for the sake of brevity, I will speak of only two categories, which I call the ‘The Istanbul Dream’ and ‘The Turkish Nightmare.’

*Gümüş* (Silver) is an example of the first type of soap opera. It “portrays dramatic love stories of rich and beautiful people against the sweeping backdrop of the Istanbul skyline.” The show presents the ideal of equal gender roles within a cultural setting recognisable for viewing audiences in the Arab world and the Balkans. It displays Istanbul as exciting, exotic, and trend setting – just as the US cities have been places of attraction and desire of the Hollywood dream. Many Arab tourists, for example, are now visiting the sites of production and buying show merchandise.

*Ayrilik* (Separation) and *Kurtlar Vadisi* (Valley of the Wolves) could be defined as the prototypes of the second category, the ‘Turkish Nightmare.’ These shows consist of mafia dramas, glorify gang culture, machismo, and violence. In contrast to *Gümüş*, *Ayrilik* depicts the suffering of Palestinian refugees while it dehumanises Israelis and Jews. In one infamous epi-
sode for instance, an Israeli soldier shoots a Palestinian baby held up by his father as a sign of resistance. *Valley of the Wolves*, in a similar vein, depicts Turkey as an underdog taking revenge for the humiliation suffered at the hands of the US and Israel. *Ayrülk* is the only example of a TV series produced for the Turkish state broadcaster TRT, and it is noteworthy that its strongly ideological content—shaped very much by a solidly Islamist take on Israel—and its relatively less professional production failed to attract large audiences in the Arab world and Turkey comparable to the *Valley of the Wolves*. This case seems to demonstrate also the political limitations within which such series have, if they want to attract large audience.

Interesting from the perspective of viewing publics in the Balkans, in an earlier season of the same series and at a time when Kosovo was still recognised as a province of Serbia, it is depicted as an independent state. Hence, enthusing tens of thousands of Kosovars, the ‘Valley’s artists have become cult figures in Kosovo and among the Albanian communities of Macedonia. In a press conference in Prishtina, the show’s main character declared, to the cheers of tens of thousands that [For Kosovo to become independent] “was our hope and it has now happened!”

In concluding Öktem focused on two points. Firstly, he returned to Nye’s argument that soft power is produced both by and in spite of government. He hence argued that most of these TV series are in fact created by private production companies and TV stations that do not act on behalf of the government and are sometimes also criticised. They offer examples of how Turkey projects its values on some viewing publics as well as serves as a forum for product placement and industry influence. When a TV show becomes too ideologically driven—as was the case with the TV drama separation—and fails to reach a high dramatic standard, it cannot compete with the large appeal of soft TV dramas and it fails to develop an impact. Soft power appears to be influential precisely because much of the power of popular culture rises from societal and artistic forces outside government rather than from the government itself.

The second point, with which he ended, referred to the real impact of soft power. Öktem conceded that this is a phenomenon, which is very hard to measure. In fact, in Greece, and despite very high audience ratings for Turkish TV series, the large majority of Greeks remains suspicious of Turkey and thinks it is one of the major enemies. In many Arab countries, however, the TV series have contributed to a shift in the perspective on Turkey. But this shift was equally shaped by the strong approval for the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan’s emphatic rhetoric towards Palestinians and against Israel. It is nevertheless fair to argue, however, that the TV series reflect a new image of Turkey and project a set of values that is welcomed by large parts of the viewing audiences in Turkey’s neighbourhood. It will be the realm of further research on this topic to further clarify to what extent these changing perceptions will also change people’s view on Turkey when it comes to the realm of high politics.

Mehmet Karlı (University of Oxford/Galatasaray University)

*A reality check for Turkey’s economic depth*

Karlı drew the audience’s attention to the fact that the economy has taken a primary role in the formation of the AKP’s foreign policy. Two primary discourses dominate the AKP position. First the AKP promotes the idea that Turkey is a dynamic global economic power. This point is built on the assumption that Turkey’s market is now globally important, its economy is quickly growing and therefore dynamic, and finally, that Turkey is a strong trade power. The second AKP discourse emphasises the future potential of Turkey’s ‘New Economic Neighbourhood’ (NEN) comprised of North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the
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Balkans. Emerging economic relations with the NEN countries are at times presented as an alternative to Turkey’s traditional ties with Western Europe and the US. The leadership role that Turkey can play within the NEN is also an important part of this new discourse.

Karlı questioned the assumptions under-pining these two interconnected discourses. First claims that, Turkey is a global economic power, are inflated. Although Turkey ranks as the 16th (or 17th) largest economy, its share in the global output is a meagre one%. A similar reservation is also valid for the NEN whose share of the global output is nine%. These numbers are dwarfed by the size of the EU economy, which equals 29% of the global output. Although Turkey is not a global economic power, Karlı acquiesced that it is an important regional player. The Turkish economy is second only to the Russian one within the NEN.

Regarding the second claim, Karlı proposed that Turkey’s economy is dynamic in absolute terms but is actually not as dynamic when compared with the general growth of developing countries. Under the AKP’s leadership, Karlı demonstrated that Turkey developed at a rate slightly higher than the global average, yet still less than the growth rate of other developing countries. While Turkey reached an annual growth rate of 4.3%, the average for developing countries was 6.5%.

In the final part of his presentation, Karlı examined the trade related aspects of the aforementioned discourses. Turkish trade makes up 1% of global exports and 1.5% of global imports. It is noteworthy that, thanks to rising energy prices, the NEN overtook the EU in terms of their share of global exports. Their shares are 18% and 16% respectively. The NEN imports, however, are still substantially behind the EU imports. NEN and EU shares in global imports are 12% and 18% respectively. Karlı subsequently examined the impact of these developments upon Turkey’s external trade structure. He admitted that there has been an increase in the relative weight of the NEN in Turkey’s external trade. While the NEN’s share in Turkey’s exports has increased from 30% in 1996 to 40% in 2009, the EU-EFTA’s share has declined from 60% to 50% in the same period. A deeper analysis reveals that the main driving force of this relative increase, however, is the lifting of economic embargoes upon Iraq following the occupation and the Dubai construction boom. Similarly, the NEN’s share in Turkey’s imports has increased from 20% in 1996 to 30% in 2009, whereas the EU-EFTA’s share has declined from 60% to 40% in the same period. This increase in the NEN’s share, however, is in line with global trends. The main driving force of this increase is the rising volume and costs of energy imports mainly from Russia. Karlı concluded therefore that external factors drove the changes in Turkey’s external trade composition. In other words, the changes are not necessarily determined by Turkey’s emerging activism in the NEN.

Discussion: Beyond high politics
In the discussion that followed, audience members were eager to push speakers to further explain their points. Sir David Logan asked Alpay whether there was any significance to Fethullah Gülen’s continued residence outside of Turkey. Alpay reminded the audience that Gülen’s original grounds for leaving Turkey were for medical and not political reasons. Currently, however, Alpay explained that Gülen is hesitant to return for fear that the controversy over his influence in Turkey will be too divisive. Alpay added that Gülen does, however, desire to return.

Kadoğlu then asked Alpay about the financial sources of the Gülen movement. In answer, Alpay traced the history of the movement’s financing to the rise of the Anatolian new middle class in Turkey linked to the 1980s liberalising of Turkey’s economy. As the Gülen move-
ment represents an Islam compatible with modernity, he explained, Anatolia’s nouveau riche followed it in order to learn how to be devout and modern at simultaneously. “To trace accountability of the movement’s funding,” Alpay concluded, “one would have to look into the accounts of new Anatolian companies…[yet] All this talk about the incredible resources of the Gülen movement doesn’t hold…and after all who is transparent in Turkey?”

In response to Karlı’s presentation, Meltem Müftüler-Baç and Nathalie Tocci both asked for methodological clarifications. Müftüler-Baç stressed that while Turkey’s global economic power may be limited, its power within the NEN is quite substantial. Tocci challenged Karlı on how his results regarding the need to fine tune the importance of the NEN for Turkish trade would change if viewed from the micro perspective of Turkish border provinces rather than the macro perspective of Turkey as a whole.

Tocci also queried how the lack of democratic consolidation was reflected in TV series that Öktem had called the Turkish nightmare. He explained that the ‘Turkish nightmare’ promotes the normalisation of violence, glorifies the role of deep state actors, and creates an atmosphere infused with conspiracy theories and extreme nationalism. It is also important to keep in mind that soap operas like Valley of the Wolves have more of an impact on the shaping of political identities in the Turkish public than for instance public debates in the newspapers or TV policy debates. TV series that can be grouped under the ‘nightmare’ category promote values, which are not conductive to democratic processes and they carry these undemocratic values beyond the boundaries of Turkey. This makes them even more dangerous.

Reem Abou-El-Fadl closed the session with a question about the impact of the new Arabic language TRT channel on Turkey’s soft power diffusion in the Middle East. Öktem responded that TRT Al Turkiyah seems to have gotten of to a strong start. The opening sequence —a young man carrying a cup of Turkish coffee from Istanbul through the entire geography of the Arab world and then presenting it to the director of an orchestra in an Aleppine court—underlines a strong sense of cultural connection and intimacy. There is little question that decision makers and commentators in the Arab world will watch the channel. To what extent it will reach beyond this will, of course, be determined by the market. As an example, he explained how Palestinians identified with the first part of the Ayrılık. The latter half, however, did not go over well, due to Palestinians’ impressions that they had been misrepresented. Yet as the series was made for a Turkish audience rather than for the Arab world, Öktem concluded, it is not surprising that it would resonate more with Turkish concerns than with Palestinian ones. This may be one of the pitfalls the new channel might fall into and indeed one of the potential pitfalls for Turkish foreign policy in general.
SESSION 5

Significant regional relations I: Russia and the Caucasus

Aybars Görgülü (Sabancı University)

Turkish-Armenian relations: Moving from vicious to virtuous

Turkish-Armenian relations can be presented in two ways: either as one of the success stories of the AKP’s new strategic doctrine or as nothing novel in the context of a long history of fluctuating relations. The first perspective tells a tale of rapprochement beginning in 2008, when Abdullah Gül, the Turkish President, was invited to Yerevan for the joint football match between Turkey and Armenia. This perspective is based on three core assumptions: that Turkish-Armenian rapprochement is a test case for Turkey’s new foreign policy, that the Turkish-Armenian issue is a test case for the degree of domestic democracy development in Turkey, and finally, that Turkish-Armenian relations’ regional aspect is one of the most important developments in the South Caucasus region.

Turkish-Armenian relations are important for Turkey as they will serve as a test case for Turkey’s new policy. In addition, their improvement is crucial for maintaining good relations with the US and the EU. Armenia also has a strong interest in rapprochement. It primarily is concerned with ending its isolation, in long-term economic transformation, as well as in the potential of Turkey as a negotiating country with the EU.

Yet there are three core obstacles to establishing better relations. Concern over recognition of the land border between the two states is the first issue, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the second, and recognition of the Armenian tragedy as ‘Genocide’ is the third. Regarding recognition of the land border, this issue can be more easily solved as the Diaspora and the Armenian public’s demands for Turkish territory are not part of Armenian politicians’ policies and protocols. The concern over Nagorno-Karabakh, however, is not so promising. Although the conflict was frozen during the Cold War, it has been re-activated as a manifestation of a larger power struggle. Unlike the issue of border recognition, this issue is a significant obstacle to the normalisation of Turkish-Armenian relations.

Finally, there are two possibilities to break the deadlock on the Genocide issue. As a first alternative, Turkey could apply to the International Court of Justice and ask, “Do these parliaments (such as France and the US) have the authority to label the 1915 events as ‘Genocide’?” and, “How would the 1915 events be labelled according to the Article 2 of the Genocide Convention?” Or, as a second approach, Turkey could apply to the Permanent Court of Arbitration together with Armenia to settle the dispute bilaterally.

Despite these three obstacles, there have also been major breakthroughs in Turkish-Armenian relations, including the work of the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Committee (TARC), the ‘letter diplomacy’ between President Kocharian of Armenia and Tayyip Erdoğan, the ‘football diplomacy’, and most recently the ‘Zurich Protocols’ where Russia and the US offered their full support to rapprochement.

Taking stock of the current situation, Armenia is considering withdrawing from the rapprochement process as the process is growing too costly for Armenian leaders due to domestic
opposition. Thus the most challenging yet most important part will be the reconciliation part. In order for this to happen, borders must open and diplomatic relations must be established.

Giorgi Tarkhan Mouravi (Institute for Policy Studies, Tbilisi)

Paradoxes and complexities of Turkish-Georgian relations

It is important to see how other states perceive Turkey, even Turkey’s relatively small neighbours. In the eyes of Georgians, Turkey is dancing tango with four partners at once. Accordingly, Caucasians view Turkey’s foreign policy as paradoxical and controversial.

On the one hand, Georgia has ideal relations with Turkey. In the early Soviet period, Georgia became quite friendly towards its neighbour. In 1991, Turkey was one of the first countries to recognise Georgia’s independence. Since, there have been many positive developments including extensive migration of Georgians to Turkey, increased trade, and joint infrastructure projects. Given this strong basis of friendship, one would think there are few problems between these two states.

With time, however, more and more problems are arising. To understand the source of these tensions, it is important to understand the region’s history. First, Georgia and Turkey have a dramatic legacy of proxy conflicts, borders shifting, and exchanges of populations. Despite the post-independence period of rapprochement, problems remain. First, the intellectual atmosphere in Georgia is not conducive to good relations. For example, Soviet Turkologists tended to be suspicious and fearful of their subject and post-Soviet academics tend not to study Turkey. Second, Georgians harbour suspicions against Turkey for its support of the ethnic Abkhaz separatist movement. While Georgians understand moderate Islamism, Turkish influence in the Muslim areas of Georgia beyond trade relations fuels suspicion that Turkey is attempting to promote Islam. Third, Turkish goods are relatively cheap and low quality. This fact has, in turn, tarnished the image of Turkey. As soon as there is a free trade agreement with the EU, Georgia will likely shift its trade links to the EU for high-end goods and will substitute Turkish goods for even cheaper Chinese equivalents.

Finally, and most recently, the 2008 Georgian-Russian war created another crack in the foundation of Turkish-Georgian relations. Georgians resent that Turkey’s reaction was very slow, that Erdoğan immediately visited Moscow following the attack and most surprisingly, that Turkey blocked US warships from entering the Black Sea, en route to aid Georgia against Russia. These five combined problems give Georgians the impression that Turkey has a secret agenda and that its relationship with Russia is more important than its support for Georgia.

Alexander Iskandaryan (Caucasus Institute, Yerevan)

Relations in the Caucasus: Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan

For Iskandaryan, countries that have a common border with Russia have different relations than countries that do not. Many aspects of Armenia’s foreign policy, therefore is easier to understand in the context of its geographic position. For Armenia, geography matters; “There are risks that can come from neighbouring with former parent states.” Armenia’s geographical barrier is also a psychological one. As long as Armenia does not have to deal with the Russian threat, then pro-Western trends need not clash with pro-Russian ones.

Armenia is playing complimentary games because of its geography. It is landlocked, thus it must sustain relations with its two immediate neighbours. It does not have the luxury of dam-
aging its relations with close neighbours. Thus Armenia must keep an equilibrium between its regional partners and international players. For example, Armenia has not taken on the US as a main patron and it has sustained relations with Russia. Yet Armenia has also maintained normal relations with the US and Iran; despite its positive relations with Russia, it did not recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Armenia also borders Azerbaijan, with the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh still unresolved. It also borders Turkey, a country perceived in Armenia as Azerbaijan’s ally. Thus it is hard for Armenia to separate Turkey’s policy towards Armenia from Azerbaijan’s policy toward Armenia.

The Nagorno-Karabakh issue is too complicated and very recent for easy rapprochement. War veterans from this conflict are still living. Those who lost loved ones are still living. Thus the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is not just about mutual trust and forgiveness but also about the status of territories and those who live and have lived there. According to Iskandaryan, a zero sum logic dominates Armenia-Azeri relations, i.e. the perception that the stronger one of the two countries gets, the weaker the other will be. Despite these circumstances, however, a normalisation of Turkish-Armenian relations remains still possible.

**Discussion: Turkey and the Caucasus**

The discussion opened with a question about Armenian public opinion regarding Turkey’s attempts to act as a mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Iskandaryan agreed that Armenians do not perceive Turkey as a neutral player. This is because the Armenian image of Turkey is monolithic and rooted in its history and geopolitics. “In Armenia,” Iskandaryan emphasised, “we say ‘Turk is Turk’ - meaning that they don’t change.” Armenians he argued, lack an image of modern Turkey. It is essential to change their current image. Regarding the Armenian Diaspora’s perception of Turkey, Iskandaryan added, there is no one ‘Armenian Diaspora.’ There are many diasporas and they are very different. Even the East and West coast- US Armenian diasporas are very different.

“But reconciliation” – or image transformation – “cannot happen without recognition” Öktem inserted. Iskandaryan, concurred but added that recognition was just one step in a long process of reconciliation. The April 24th demonstration in Istanbul, he added, was “a huge step. Likely there will be more in the future.” “But what about the Turkish public?” an audience member wondered. Will not most of them be against recognition of the Armenian catastrophe as ‘genocide’? Iskandaryan answered the question from an Armenian perspective explaining, “For Armenian society, [Genocide recognition] is not about Turks. It is about Armenians. It is not about a practical thing, it is about identity. The genocide is part of the family history of ninety% of Armenians. To not use the term is like not recognising the event.”

He then advocated that the recognition issue be cut from the normalisation of Turkish-Armenian relations. “Whether you think there was a genocide or not, open the borders first.” The struggle for recognition of the genocide among the Diaspora Armenians, he conceded, might be even stronger now. But he added, “You cannot stop the Diaspora. They are American, Russian, French, Greek, etc. You can use them but you cannot stop them. For Diaspora Armenians too, especially the western Diaspora Armenians, genocide is a central part of their identity.”

Following this debate on Turkish-Armenian relations, Gareth Winrow asked Mouravi about Tbilisi’s perception of the Turkish role in Abkhazia. Georgians, Mouravi explained, through the 1990s perceived Turkey as ‘Europe-lite.’ But the more Turkey moves towards ‘strategic
depth’, the more Turkey’s importance, as a threshold to Europe is weakened. The relations between Turkey and Abkhazia are along these lines.

According to Mouravi, the Turkish government is not clear on its position towards Abkhazia. They have never shown open support for the separatist region yet they are open to dialogue on the issue. Mouravi explained that higher-level Turkish officials’ visits to Abkhazia, for example, have created disappointment in Tbilisi. “Georgians believe Turkey is working together with Russia and supporting Russia’s position on the issue.”

Bülent Aras challenged the source of this suspicion, that Turkey has a hidden agenda on the Abkhazian issue. To support his challenge, Aras cited Turkey’s public recognition of the sovereignty of Georgia and argued that Turkey’s contacts in Abkhazia are mostly humanitarian-based. “All of Turkey’s contacts,” he added, “have been in communication with Georgian authorities.” To this Mouravi replied that members of the Georgian public have continued to voice concerns with the asymmetries in economic and political power between the two countries.
SESSION 6

Discussion on Turkey’s International security commitments:
The continuing relevance of NATO

Jamie Patrick Shea (NATO)

NATO and Turkey

As a result of its ‘strategic depth’ doctrine, Shea opened, Turkey is facing strategic overload. It has become difficult for Turkey to reach out to new allies without seeming to distance itself from the old. Part of the credibility of having varied diplomatic ties is being able to deliver. Good relations have to be able to survive international foreign policy objectives, even though this is not always easy. This challenge will put Turkey’s foreign policy to the test.

At a fundamental time when NATO is reaching out, Turkey’s new foreign policy and its ability to create a network of good relations in its region, give Turkey an asset in the NATO alliance. Yet is Turkey’s new eastern orientation developing at the expense of its western alliance? For Shea this is an unfair and exaggerated dichotomy. Part of it is based on the reforms that have taken place as part of Turkey’s application to the EU. All of the links Turkey is building are going to help the international community’s objectives.

Turkey has a sense of actually being part of NATO and thus having leverage over both the EU and US. It is still committed to NATO’s mutual insurance policy. Thus as long as Turkey is not in the EU, NATO membership is an important lever on the EU. Turkey is actively involved in NATO-EU relations all the time. No matter how much NATO may need the EU more, Turkey will not have an interest in the EU and NATO getting too close until Turkey is itself more closely associated with the EU.

While NATO has been a good framework for managing relations with its own neighbours, Turkey sometimes feels left out of key NATO dealings. When the US and the EU grow closer, for example, Turkey feels that more and more business is done on the side between the EU and US – or that big powers dictate to smaller ones. Accordingly, sometimes the NATO agenda is not necessary responsive to Turkey’s security concerns.

With constitutional reforms in Turkey, NATO needs to have more of a political relationship with Turkish politicians as the Turkish military is now less powerful. There are a few things diplomats can do to encourage this. First they must be realistic on both sides: Turkey is not going to join the EU soon, nor is the Cyprus issue going to be solved in the near future. Thus neither side should demand major concessions before moving forward. Second, the EU should allow trade with North Cyprus so that Turkey can then lift its ban on Cypriot ships. Third, Turkey is not an ordinary EU candidate. Therefore, Turkey will have the right to a strategic dialogue with the EU alongside EU accession negotiations. Fourth the EU must accept such a strategic dialogue on Turkey. Davutoğlu has proposed precisely this type of partnership. Diplomats must find a way of not making these issues clash. Finally, key leaders must deal with the EU-NATO-Turkey relationship. Turkey has to have the same rights of participation in the EU CFSP that NATO gives to Norway, Sweden, and Finland and in return Cyprus should be able to join the NATO partnership. Shea believes all these things can be done in 2010.
There are responsibilities on Turkey as well. There has been an enormous push to democratise Turkey in the past years as the structures of the Kemalist state have been modified. On the one hand, it is important that the overabundance of power in some areas is not dominated by an overabundance of powers in other areas. On the other hand, Turkey cannot complain “when the EU holds a European country to European standards.”

Sir David Logan (Former British Ambassador to Turkey)

Turkey’s international security commitments: the continuing relevance of NATO

According to Logan, Turkey’s relationship with NATO is challenged first by the evolution in Turkey’s foreign and security policy, and secondly by the transformation of NATO in the post-Cold War era. As regards the first, the Soviet threat has been replaced by rapprochement with, and energy dependency on, Russia. There has been a striking development in Turkey’s relations with her neighbours in the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia, which would have been unthinkable during the Cold War. On the other hand, Turkey faces new threats, including Kurdish nationalism and separatism, violence in Iraq, a weak Lebanon dominated by external extremists, and an Iran apparently developing nuclear weapons.

As for NATO, the Alliance is in the process of developing a new strategic concept. There are strongly diverging views on its raison d’être based on members’ differing historical backgrounds and geographical locations. One key area of contention concerns how best to reconcile NATO’s role in defending NATO territory with its role in providing security, particularly through expeditionary operations and missions out of area. Turkey is part of a group that wishes to prioritise collective defence of the NATO area. One reason for this may be Turkey’s concerns over American-led NATO intervention in Turkey’s Arab and Muslim hinterland, as well as over conflicts in the Caucasus where Turkish and American policies diverge.

At the same time, Turkey values NATO in political as well as in defence terms because of the way it helps to locate Turkey’s international identity in a transatlantic framework. Like the UK, Turkey manages its relations with the United States, the Alliance leader, in part at least within this framework, even though (or perhaps because) the US often regards NATO as a toolbox for furthering its own security interests which are not necessarily shared by other members.

In that context, recent strains in Turkish-US relations include: Turkey’s close relationship with Russia which led her to distance herself from the US in its approach to the 2008 Georgia crisis, and potentially elsewhere in the Caucasus and Central Asia; major differences between the two countries on Iran; and Turkey’s newly developed relations with the Arab countries of the Middle East which, amongst other things, make it unlikely that Turkey will allow the US to use Incirlik for operational purposes.

While these differences will not lead to Turkish departure from NATO, they illustrate the challenges which confront Turkey in developing its new foreign policy concepts of “strategic depth” and “zero problems with neighbours” while at the same time managing its commitments and responsibilities as a NATO member.

Logan concluded that NATO is an extraordinarily effective and irreplaceable alliance. Yet strong leadership and its members’ willingness to adapt are essential to avoid its irrelevance. Free riding on NATO membership is neither prudent for Turkey nor healthy for NATO. NATO needs the full political commitment of Turkey and the important assets which Turkey brings to the Alliance if the process of NATO renewal is to succeed. Equally, implementation
of Turkey’s new foreign policy needs to be anchored in the framework of Alliance membership if this policy is to be fully successful.

Discussion: Turkey’s International security commitments

Panel Chair Bülent Aras led off the discussion with his own responses to Shea and Logan’s presentations. Aras emphasised that NATO gives mixed signals in Turkey’s neighbourhood. Sometimes these conflicting signals confuse regional players. For example, the Georgian leadership was sure that NATO would take care of Russia. Yet Turkey did not grant US ships access to the Black Sea when they came to Georgia’s aid. What critics miss, according to Aras, is that Turkey acted constructively by keeping NATO away from Moscow by blocking the US ships.

Within Turkey, Aras added, NATO is perceived as a guarantor of the country’s engagement with modernity. Acting from this perspective, Turkey is working to bring NATO in line with its own position on the need for more democratic representation within NATO. Turkey feels that small countries of NATO should have increased voice and burden-sharing in operations. In sum, Turkey has its own vision of the future of NATO.

In response to Aras, Shea contended that NATO policy in the Balkans is in sync with Turkish policies. If there are differences, they arise primarily regarding NATO’s role in Asia (including Georgia, Afghanistan, and Israel). As NATO becomes more involved in Asia, one of the crucial questions for Turkey and NATO will be: “Will we be able to put priorities in sync or will we go our separate tracks?” On this point, Sir Logan added that given US contributions to NATO and the original foundational pact exchanging US protection of the EU (including Turkey) against Soviet threat for the US leadership over the alliance, it would be difficult for Turkey to shift NATO towards a more democratic arrangement.

When the debate was opened to the audience, Tocci asked panellists in what ways Turkey could use NATO as a form of leverage for EU membership. Shea responded that Turkish pressure within NATO helps EU members to imagine alternative structures in which cooperation is possible. As the EU and NATO converge, NATO can build ground-up cooperation between parties.

In response to Alper Rıza’s comment that NATO had become more aggressive towards Russia, Logan responded that this was not the case. “It is clear that the proposal to deploy early warning systems was diplomatically unwise, but anyone who studies the issue could conclude that the deployment of ten missiles could not represent a real threat to Russia.” Logan concluded by stating that the era of immediate threats in the NATO region is over. NATO is now focusing on new types of threats including terrorism and cyber threats, as well as its ability to respond to threats beyond NATO borders. With the exception of the Kosovo air campaign, he stressed, NATO members would not join campaigns if they thought the campaigns were aggressive.
SESSION 7

Significant regional relations II: The Middle East

Reem Abou-El-Fadl (University of Oxford)

Arab perceptions of contemporary Turkish foreign policy: Cautious engagement and the question of independence

Turkey’s Arab opening is based on its ‘Zero Conflict with Neighbours Policy,’ as well as its policy of building up economic, educational, and cultural cooperation in the region. Arab states of the Middle East view this opening in differing ways. Non-border states, for example, tend to have less interest in Turkish affairs and fewer entanglements with it than states bordering Turkey. Abou-El-Fadl chose to focus her presentation on Egypt and Syria as they nuance this general trend. Overall, she described Arab perceptions of Turkish foreign policy as characterised by cautious engagement.

Egypt, for example, is a non-border state but it is also a mid-level power with a long history of regional leadership. Thus it feels the impact of Turkey’s opening more acutely than most other non-border states. In the recent past, Egypt has seen Turkey both as a buffer for Iran and as a partner in confronting concerns over the territorial integrity of Iraq, resulting in its participation in strategic dialogue talks with Ankara. However, Turkey is also a cause for concern among Egyptian state officials, in two primary areas: Turkey’s encroachment on Egypt’s traditional role as a regional mediator and the rising popularity of Turkey’s hardening stance towards Israel. Regarding the first issue, Cairo has responded to Turkey’s encroachment by accommodating it without giving up total control. The second change in Turkey policy is unsettling to Mubarak’s administration. It feels caught between the US and Israeli ties on the one hand, and Arab public opinion, which praises Turkish stances, on the other. Egypt responds by reminding its constituents of Turkey’s Israeli relations. The more Turkey asserts itself vis-à-vis Tel Aviv, however, the less effective this will be.

Syria offers an exceptional example of an Arab border state’s relations with Turkey. Historically, Syria has had tense relations with Turkey. Yet since Syria extradited the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, Turkish-Syrian relations have improved, especially on the economic and cultural track. Improving relations are build on similar key interests such as the containment of Northern Iraq, the Kurdish issue, a desire for zero conflict, and a tacit down-playing of traditional disputes. Besides these similarities, Syria and Turkey have important geostrategic interests that could converge in future, given Syria’s leverage with Arab and Iranian players, and Turkey’s relations with the US and Israel.

Focusing beyond individual Arab states, Arab civil society is also a sound barometer of Turkey’s growing leverage in the region. There is a broad perception that Turkey has returned to the region. Arab civil society approaches Turkey at a minimum with cautious engagement and at a maximum with conditional enthusiasm. Why? Engagement with Turkey is based on considerable admiration for certain elements of Turkish policy. Turkey has achieved some rebalancing within the American camp – gaining some independence while remaining inside it. It has close yet equidistant relations with all regional powers. Its critical stances regarding Israel have also drawn praise. Arab commentators perceive a connection between Turkey’s domestic stability – dealing democratically with the Islamist political challenge – and its strong
role abroad. Turkey has become a destination for the “Islamic dollar” added to the growing popularity of Turkey’s soft culture as a pull for tourism.

Yet noises of Arab approval need to be placed in context: they are loudest when implying certain demands made of Arab leaderships. Arab enthusiasm for Turkey remains cautious for several reasons. First, Arab civil society actors worry that Turkey may be returning to their region as an empire, as a temporary alternative to its EU orientation, or rather, just to expand its sphere of influence in order increase its EU bid. Arabs are also concerned about the sincerity of Turkey’s stance on Israel as well as Turkey’s true ability to act on this stance. To conclude, Abou-El-Fadl stressed that Turkey’s role will be tested based on its actions rather than just on its words, for, as Jamil Matar said, Arabs still perceive Turkish actors “as neither entirely from outside nor from among us.”

Karabekir Akkoyunlu (LSE)

_**Turkey’s Iranian conundrum: A delicate balancing act**_

Akkoyunlu opened his presentation arguing that the elephant in room of the conference was Turkey’s growing ties with Iran. Voices are bemoaning Turkey’s imminent loss to the West under Turkey’s AKP party, however, according to Akkoyunlu, there is no neatly defined dichotomy between looking East or West. For centuries Turkey has maintained stable ties with Iran and, in principle, ties with the West. Continuing this tradition, the AKP is currently walking a tight balance between Iran, the US and its own interests.

Turkey and Iran are often wrongly assumed to be natural adversaries due to their ideological differences. Their link, however, is neither based on ideology nor on regime type. Rather it is determined by geopolitics and a shared political and bureaucratic culture resulting from long-term interaction at the state level.

If ideology were the driving factor, then the two countries would have engaged in military conflict in the 1980s. If their continued good relations were based on political similarities then their leaders would probably be friendlier in their personal relations. More issues of interests between the two states converge than diverge, including the nuclear issue, trade, culture, linguistic links, etc. Turkey, for example, supported Ahmadinejad’s reelection not due to ideological sympathies, but rather because Turkey has never supported the prospect of upheaval in Iran as upheaval may lead to instability in Turkey.

In the face of growing military tensions between the US, Israel, and Iran, however, can Turkey continue to maintain a balance between these parties? According to Akkoyunlu, the answer depends on Ankara’s ability to react wisely and flexibly. Regarding the current state of affairs, Turkey has renewed its relations with the US under Obama, it has downgraded relations with Israel, and the US-Iran issue is currently unlikely to escalate due to competing concerns. In addition, regarding potential sanctions on Iran, other countries besides Turkey have interests in opposing sanctions, including Germany and Brazil. To manage these growing differences, Turkey should continue to play the role of the mediator, even if neither Iran nor the US takes Turkey’s role seriously. In the end, Akkoyunlu argued, it is the thought that matters.

Erdoğan’s inappropriate statements lambasting Israel and claiming that Muslims cannot commit genocide harm and jeopardise Turkey’s careful diplomacy. Turkey may succeed in becoming as powerful and confident as its leaders wish. Yet it must not allow hubris, as expressed through Erdoğan’s statements, become its un-doing.
Soli Özel (Bilgi University)

Turkey-Israel relations

Turkish and Israeli relations are characterised by theatrics and political and ideological discourses. Reviewing the history, Israel’s independence was problematic for Turkey; it was afraid Israel was going to be a Soviet outpost as the Soviets were the first to support Zionism and Israel. Thus while Turkey recognised Israel from its independent, it has had very timid relations with this nation.

The worst point of Turkish-Israeli relations was in 1980 when Israel announced that Jerusalem as Israel’s indivisible capital. Turkey responded but did not cut off relations. Following the Oslo Agreements, Turkish-Israeli relations reached their apex in 1995. Their rapprochement came within a particular domestic and international context. Domestically, Turkey’s Welfare Party had come out ahead of the other parties. For the key foreign policy decision makers, announcing improved relations with Israel was a way to show that they were in control. Internationally, a deal was struck between Turkey and Israel only thirty days after Turkey and Greece almost came to the brink of war over rocks in the Aegean, the so-called Kardak/Imia crisis. At the time, Turkey had problematic relations with six of its nine neighbours and it was receiving little encouragement from its allies. An opening with Israel meant a respite for Turkish leaders from regional antagonisms.

The Achilles heel of the Turkish-Israeli alignment, however, is the plight of the Palestinians. If it were not for the fact that the Oslo Agreement was signed, Turkish and Israeli rapprochement would have been far less likely. Oslo gave legitimacy to Turkey’s process of accommodation and security alignments with Israel. Conversely, the deterioration of the plight of Palestinians has made it harder for Turkey to maintain relations with Israel. Problems in Turkish-Israeli relations began with the 2000 Intifada. By this point, however, domestically Turkey had also changed and it no longer needed the Israeli alignment.

In conclusion, the problems between Turkey and Israel are not a function of ideology or politics. Under the AKP, there has been a degree of continuity in Turkey’s foreign policy towards Israel. This continuity arises from the fact that Israel is now cemented as the US’s primarily strategic partner in the region. Yet after the Iraqi war, which was meant to strengthen Israel’s position in the region, Israel has actually begun more vulnerable. The new administration in the US is looking to replace the alliance. Özel pointed to US statements in Davos, emphasising Turkey’s role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process as evidence for this shift. Thus, Özel concluded, there is a need for Israel to remain silent or at least no to complain too much as its strategic relationship to the US is now being questioned.

Taha Özhan (SETA, Ankara)

International dimensions of the Kurdish problem

The international dimension of the Kurdish question emerged after the occupation of Iraq. Before this, the Kurdish question was seen either as a domestic one, or as a regional one. Since the 2003 occupation of Iraq, the Kurdish question is now an international issue. From Turkey’s perspective, the Kurdish issue has been going on for the last thirty years. It is an issue of late nationalisation. It is a security issue as well as one of identity politics and terror as embodied by the PKK. It is a cross border social and political issue and an issue concerning Northern Iraq, the Iraqi Kurdistan.
Within Turkey, the Kurdish issue is played in a collection of different realms. First there is the experience of martial law and emergency rule in Southeast Turkey. Second there is the experience of Kurdish migration from Southeast Turkey to the big cities. There are terrible experiences of security forces forcibly emptying villages and transferring people. Added to these first two factors is the experience of the Kurdish Diaspora in the EU. They are growing in influence as many Kurdish intellectuals move to Europe. A fourth factor of the Kurdish issue is the Turkish publics’ own experience of the PKK and terror. Fifth, is the story of the Kurdish political experience and the parties that were shut down. Finally, there is the experience of Northern Iraq and of the economic opportunities and oil reserves.

Democratic opening is the main issue currently dominating the agenda of the Kurdish question. It is now more than a security issue. There is a lack of harmony between political reason and security concerns. Democratic reforms must be included in any approach.

The Iraqi war was meant to be a democratisation attempt in the Middle East. This is not what happened. Rather the war led to divisive splits between Sunni versus Shiite and the Kurds as another competing actor. Northern Iraq now has all the trappings of a government. The biggest problem for Iraqi Kurds, however, is what they should do with all their institutional instruments. Rather than deciding, the Iraqi Kurdish leadership is relying on the US to solve this dilemma.

To conclude, Özhan argued that the Turkish government must realise that Northern Iraq is not part of Turkey’s Kurdish issue. Solving the PKK problem must not be a precondition for Turkish relations with Northern Iraq. Rather, Turkey must have a policy of incremental steps. It will attain better outcomes with this approach than through other capitals and mediums.
Discussion: Turkey and the Middle East

There were many questions from the audience. The first came from Tocci and Motika on the cost of Turkey’s continued relations with Iran, especially vis-à-vis Turkey’s relation with the US. Akkoyunlu defended Turkey’s tightrope walk in the context of two important changes in US policy towards Iran: the change to the Obama administration and the Iranian elections and power struggle. Akkoyunlu explained that Turkey is trying to take advantage of the softer approach of the US towards Iran. Turkey is likely thinking ‘Can we get away with this?’” According to Akkoyunlu, the answer is a gamble. No one knows how the US will react.

Regarding Özel’s presentation on Turkey-Israeli relations, one audience member asked about the differences between the Islamists and secularists in Turkey with respect to their attitudes towards Israel, and enquired if the Turkish Islamists too often confuse anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism? In response, Özel pointed out that there are very few issues that bring Turkey’s secularists and Islamists together, and that one of those issues is their dislike for Israel.

Finally, an audience member asked Abou-El Fadl how she would evaluate the position of Egyptian Islamists towards Turkey. She responded that Muslim intellectuals look on the AKP favourably. They are interested in the pragmatic, harmonious connection with Islam that the AKP created. Yet for Abou-El Fadl, to improve relations in general, Turkey and Egypt need more than diplomatic dialogue. They need a debate beyond the elite level.
SESSION 8
Significant regional relations III: South East Europe

Nathalie Tocci (German Marshall Fund)

Why Cyprus remains critical to Turkey and the European Union

According to Tocci, the EU, Greeks, and Greek Cypriots used to argue that Cyprus’ accession process would act as a catalyst for the unification of the island. Their rationale was that the EU accession process would incentivise Turkish Cypriot cooperation. To the extent that Turkey also had ambitions to join the EU, the hope was that the draw of accession would also elicit Turkey’s cooperation.

To understand the change and reversal of Turkey’s policies towards Cyprus in 2003 and 2004, Tocci argued that we must understand this underlying logic. Observers believed that through Cyprus and Turkey’s EU accession processes there would be an overall Europeanisation of the Cyprus peace process. This perspective viewed Europeanisation as a top down, unidirectional process; i.e., European norms filtering through and having an impact on the local level.

Tocci accepted that this top-down process has occurred, yet she insisted that it is equally important to look at the reverse process of Europeanisation. For Tocci, Europeanisation also means the manner in which member states bring problems in at the European level. Greek Cypriots’ domestic argument for entering the EU, for example, was to Europeanise the Cyprus conflict. Yet, since its accession, Cyprus has acted as a formidable break on the EU process towards Turkey’s accession as well as towards opening direct trade with North Cyprus. This deadlock on Cyprus is symptomatic of the Europeanisation of EU policies.

In a context where one member state has succeeded in blocking attempts to push the regulation through, Tocci asked, “Who had been Europeanising whom?” Most EU member states think Turkish Cypriots’ isolation should be lifted to entail a gradual recognition. Yet the Republic of Cyprus has made the accession of Turkey conditional to progress on Cyprus. This, in turn, has turned Cyprus into the official shield for the concerns of other states which worry about the Turkish accession. The resulting failure of the EU to reward Turkish Cypriots for their support of the Annan Plan has led to a profound sense of betrayal among Turkish Cypriots and Turkey. This sense of betrayal in Turkey has also contributed to Turkey’s re-evaluation of their EU orientation.

There is still hope, however, for an improvement in EU-Turkey-Cyprus relations as much of the Europeanisation of EU-Turkish relations have happened in reverse. As a result of the Lisbon Treaty, for example, which led to an increase in the role of the European parliament, the situation underpinning EU-Cyprus relations has changed. Currently the EU parliament has a say over the direct trade regulations and there is a possibility that the parliament will vote to support direct trade. If this occurs, Turkey would likely reciprocate by implementing the additional protocol to its customs union agreement, which, in turn, would re-open the Turkish accession chapters that are currently frozen.
To conclude, Tocci observed that Europeanisation of the Cyprus problem is neither pointing to integration nor separation. Regarding citizenship, most Turkish Cypriots now have Cypriot passports. Regarding property, the recent ECHR ruling accepts the Turkish Cypriot property commission constitutes an effective domestic remedy. Regarding trade, if the Direct Trade Regulation were to pass in the European Parliament, there would be a normalisation of direct trade between North Cyprus and the EU. Following such a development, one could imagine a legal normalisation of the status quo not leading to settlement of the Cyprus issue but rather to a normalisation of the status quo until the time becomes right for a solution.

Othon Anastasakis (University of Oxford)

Turkey in South East Europe: perceptions and misperceptions of an ambitious regional policy

Turkey, as a foreign policy global player, is part of a multi-regional environment. This multi-directional foreign policy aims in principle to improve Turkey’s relations with its neighbours through the strengthening of cultural, historical or commercial bonds in regions that have shared interests with Turkey. Before anything else the ‘strategic depth’s’ success always depends on dynamics inside Turkey. Turkey is doing well and growing in confidence and this helps Turkey’s multi-regional foreign policy. Yet it is very important to note that the regions in Turkey’s neighbourhood are very different from each other. The Middle East is different from the Caucasus, Russia or the Balkans. The Balkan states stand out as European, as democracies where elites are under scrutiny, and as societies that quite advanced and relatively independent. In his presentation Anastasakis focused on the regional and local perceptions of Turkey’s engagement with the Balkan region and the perceived opportunities and limits to a Balkan regional approach.

From a Turkish perspective, why should Turkey engage with the Balkans? For Anastasakis, there are five primary reasons. First, there are historical grounds and implicit often over idealised Ottoman nostalgia in the Balkans for the Empire’s legacy of multiculturalism and co-existence. Second, Turkey has been acting as a patron for Balkan Muslims in Greece, Bulgaria, Albania and the countries of former Yugoslavia, a stance which is overemphasised by ‘strategic depth’s’ focus on building relations based on religious and cultural ties. Third, Balkan countries are experiencing a similar process of Europeanisation as that of Turkey. They comply and diverge from a Europe in similar ways. They gain their strength from Europe and have benefited from the influence of the EU pushing for increased democratisation. They also share commonalities in how they internalise Europeanisation as well as in the ways they exhibit trends of backwardness and resistance. There is a shared reality of strong conditionality whether post-accession or pre-accession. A fourth reason why Turkey should engage in the Balkans is on economic and commercial grounds and the increasing economic interdependence of the region. Turkey is prepared to invest abroad and now it has the economic might to do it. Its increasing economic size, its gradual economic growth and its customs union with the EU place Turkey in a very advantageous position in that respect. Finally, Turkey sees opportunities for mediation in regional conflicts in former Yugoslavia, between Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia and between Serbia and Bosnia.

The new role of Turkey in the Balkan region is shared by many actors in the Balkans and has led to the strengthening of bilateral relations between Serbia and Turkey and to the cultural and economic influence of Turkey in most Balkan states. However seen from a regional and local perspective there are also some misperceptions and shortcomings in this ambitious regional policy. First, the Ottoman Empire has a mixed legacy in the Balkans, as a period of multiculturalism and religious tolerance but also as a long period of backwardness and dislo-
culation from Europe. The Ottoman rule is seen by most states, including Greece, Serbia and Albania, as a time of divergence from the period of enlightenment and western civilisation. Second, there are limits as to how much Turkey can claim cultural similarity to Balkan Muslims without interfering with local cultures. In addition, Turkey’s interference, for example, might confuse local Muslims who see their Muslim identities as national identities rather than as part of an overall theocratic Muslim community.

Third, Europeanisation is also a source of divergence between Turkey and the Balkans. Western Balkan states would rather disassociate their accession process with that of Turkey’s for fear it will limit their own prospects. Fourth, economically the Balkan market is significant but not as big as others in the other neighbourhoods and there are limits with the small and often unstable markets of the former Yugoslav states. Finally, regarding crisis mediation opportunities, Turkey seems to be less of an honest broker in regional conflicts when it is personally involved, such as in the Aegean or in Cyprus.

Beyond these local perceptions and misperceptions regarding Turkey’s foreign policy, Turkey’s major challenge in its European neighbourhood is to convince Europe regarding its international democratisation, bureaucratic modernisation, and on the resolution of its own domestic conflicts. Just like Turkey, all the countries of South East Europe are going through an internal struggle between their own forces of modernisation and those forces that want to preserve a more convenient status quo which often runs contrary to what the EU is asking them to do. The conflict between islamists and secularists in Turkey is a more confusing picture as to where these modernising forces are to be found if the European project is to be the predominant common thread between all South East European countries.

Max Watson (University of Oxford)

Turkey and South East Europe: Regional links at a Tipping Point?

Max Watson opened with the controversial assertion that in 2010 ‘strategic depth’ means problems and opportunities to the West rather than to the East of Turkey. Greek, Balkan, European, and global governance crises have undermined the EU’s (and the West’s) credibility and confidence. This it is a closet disaster.

Cyprus must not hijack Turkey or EU policy. EU cohesion is in disarray following the crises in Greece. One challenge for Turkey will be whether it can fill the void in the case of Greece without offending Greece. To accomplish this, Turkey must pursue a reverse earthquake policy with Greece.

South East Europe was the last to be affected by the economic crisis. Thus Turkey is now the regional economic motor. It has bounced back far more quickly than any other regional player as a country that has benefited from its past crises. Regarding its economy, however, Turkey’s competitive advantage lies to the West.

Therefore, it is important to demolish the myth that economically, Turkey has now turned to the East. While dynamics are taking Turkey away from Europe, Europe is the source of investment in Turkey. Thus pegging itself in the West is an economic issue and not a political or cultural issue.

Some implications of this fact are that there is some evidence of Turkey’s eastward re-orientation. This, however, is a sign of health in Turkey’s economy. For Turkey’s competi-
tiveness these links are very important as well as for the political economy of the South East European region. But events may be approaching a ‘tipping point’: if the Cyprus situation deeply damages EU relations, this may accelerate Turkey’s eastward reorientation, especially away from links with Greece.

In summary, events in Greece represent a major opportunity for Turkey. Events in Cyprus are a serious risk. These assertions also hold for economic and political relations between Turkey and the South East European region, as well as for the EU’s role as a domestic political anchor. Thus, this is why, as Watson concluded, ‘strategic depth’ means looking West in 2010.

İbrahim Arınc (Durham University)

Energy politics in South East Europe

South East European states, Arınc asserted, are not major producers and users of energy. Rather, their general energy infrastructure is designed to be reliant on exports from the EU. Yet in the coming future, South East European states will become a new energy corridor to Europe through the ECT project. The aim of the ECT is to encourage regional cooperation to integrate natural gas and electricity markets, liberalise energy markets, and to create a healthy regional environment. Turkey has yet to sign the ECT treaty, however, as it is located between the suppliers and the market.

Regarding natural gas, Russia dominates the market. It is the price maker. 80% of natural gas passes through Ukraine. Thus there are a few main elements concerning the security of natural gas supply for South East Europe. The first concern regards the reverse flow capability of exiting and of new pipelines. Second is the interconnection of South East European transmission networks. And finally, the new pipeline corridor via Turkey is the third issue. Examples of current projects include the Interconnector, regional project between Turkey, Greece, and Italy; the Nabucco Project; the Trans-Adriatic pipeline (TAP); and the South Stream natural gas pipeline.

Turkey’s energy strategy in the region is dependent on a variety of factors. First, as a candidate for EU accession, Turkey will have to conform to EU energy regulations. Second though Turkey is one of the biggest energy markets in Europe, it is also dependent on Russian gas. On the supply side, however, Turkey stands equal to other gas suppliers. Finally, Turkey supports the pipeline projects envisaged to secure the energy supply for the region.

The ECT process will produce a healthy energy environment in South East Europe. Yet in order to have a well functioning energy system in the region, the energy networks must be integrated and interconnected. Natural gas is the most promising issue given the construction of new pipelines. While Russia may dominate in the realm of natural gas, Turkey is a key country in this context. Accordingly, it will shape the energy future of the region.

Discussion: Turkey and South East Europe

To open the discussion, Şahin Alpay articulated a question floating throughout the panellists’ presentations: Does Turkey’s new doctrine of ‘strategic depth’ conflict with Europeanisation? Tocci responded that the new doctrine will definitely help Turkey converge with the EU because the only way that Turkey can have ‘no problems with its neighbours’ is through the democratic consolidation within Turkey. Watson added that when a state is liberalising and opening to the world, domestic groups with an interest in the status quo will always be threat-
Turkey must therefore increase its public expenditure and education financing to address the human resource development issues resulting from its transformation. Otherwise, Watson warned, the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine may conflict with Europeanisation.

Anastasakis took a different approach, asking “Does Turkey have the best of both worlds with one foot in the EU and one foot out, given the state of the EU at the moment?” He proposed that even if this is the case, at some point Turkey will have to take a strategic decision to be in or out. Before, Anastasakis reminded the audience, the idea was that Turkey would benefit from the EU. Now, Turkey needs to make a long term strategic decision about what Turkey wants to do as the benefit of EU accession is no longer clear cut.

Regarding the Cyprus issue, Dimitris Sotiropoulos and Alper Rıza asked about the time frame for a Cyprus solution and the apparent disharmony between Davutoğlu’s ‘zero problems’ policy and his skirting over the Cyprus situation in his keynote address. Tocci addressed the latter question suggesting that rather than a contradiction between the situation in Cyprus and Davutoğlu’s ‘zero problems policy,’ she sees a contradiction within the ‘zero problems policy.’ As far as Cyprus is concerned, Turkey feels that since 2004 it has continued to be one step ahead on negotiations. For example, following the recent elections in North Cyprus, Turkey made a strong point of insisting that the peace process should continue. For Tocci, the question is, will these efforts be reversed in the current period?

Regarding a timeframe for a Cyprus solution, panellists agreed with Tocci’s bet on Europeanisation and the parliamentary process, but none were optimistic. Clement Dodd then proposed advocating a two state solution for Cyprus, to which Tocci replied that such an option was not in the offing. Rather, Tocci predicted a gradual normalisation of the status quo.

Still on Cyprus, another audience member asked Tocci why Turkey continues to block direct trade to Cyprus if it is not an issue of the EU Commission and if it is still one of the major obstacles to Turkey’s accession process. Tocci responded that though it is a bargaining process she does not agree with Turkey’s position. “It is shooting itself in the foot just as the Greek Cypriots are doing by blocking trade.” Clement Dodd asked whether or not the Greek Cypriots are trying to challenge the ruling on direct trade. Tocci responded that while the legal basis for the ruling is clear, it is not clear if the majority of EU members would be voting in favour of it as voting in the Council is made up of linkages between different issues. Her hunch was that there is a good chance the motion will pass.

Finally, moving from Cyprus to the Balkans, Akkoyunlu asked Anastasakis whether, in his opinion, Turkey plays as big a role in the mediation of Balkan conflicts as Davutoğlu suggested. Anastasakis replied that it is a positive development that Turkey is being active. Yet, at the end of the day, Bosnia is an internal problem. To bring Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats together on a high level is not too hard. Yet concerted pressure from abroad will not do much without concrete changes from below. Thus, Anastasakis believes, Turkey is limited in its ability to improve the situation.
CONCLUSION

Roundtable Discussion: Turkey, Europe and beyond: Tensions and cooperation in overlapping neighbourhoods

Kalypso Nicolaïdis opened the final session with a poetic summary of the three days of debate. She returned to Kadioğlu’s opening metaphor of Turkey as a Bosphorus ship steaming in all directions. “While it may have worried those of us prone to seasickness, we could imagine the minister [Davutoğlu] as the modern day Ulysses, tied to his mast to resist the mermaids of exclusivism.

Our journey together has persuaded me that this Bosphorus ship is not a Titanic ship—the ship is afloat and well. Nor is the ship a flying Dutchman, a fantasy in the mind of an academic-turned politician. Instead, with your brilliant presentations and debates you have demonstrated that even under tough academic scrutiny, and without the help of quantum physicists, this ship does indeed move in all directions at once!

With a brilliant table of intellectual mezzes and the Minister’s speech as the plat de résistance it is fitting that [Davutoğlu]’s roundtable be about Turkey’s cake: Can Turkey have its cake and eat it too? (I noticed that the Minister did not eat his dessert because he delighted us with the answer to the question —what is the “more” in “more than a Minister of a nation-state?” – not a neo-Ottoman messiah but a neo-Socratic citizen of the world).

With this introduction the Chair called on panellists to answer the final lingering question, “Can Turkey and its Minister of Foreign Affairs really be all things to all people? A Bosniak to the Serbs and a Serb to the Bosniaks; a Palestinian brother and Israel’s partner; Ich bin ein Berliner mais en francais s’il vous plait; a citizens of the world in Rio and a time keeper at Davos; a regional mediator and a competitor – softly or not softly; can it be of the North but represent the South as African friends were requesting the minister; and be of the West but represent the East? Indeed my friends can it be both killing babies softly with its soaps (courtesy of Kerem’s presentation) and build maternity clinics benignly with its check appeal everywhere?

How can Turkey’s ‘strategic depth’ be honed when its historic and democratic depth are found to be wanting? Under what conditions and how can contradictions be minimised and synergies be maximised between the different directions of Turkey’s new ‘strategic depth’?

To be more specific, a western anchor may serve Turkey’s eastern dealings –albeit with caveats, but what about from east to west? Are Turkish initiatives towards its eastern neighbours increase its credibility and influence in the West? What does the ‘strategic depth’ doctrine do to the prospects for the EU membership? It is not an easy case…Of course there has to be priorities and trade-offs. I could not help but notice that we heard very little about Europe and nothing about the EU in the Prime Minister’s speech. But, unless it was wishful thinking, I could hear that the Minister made the case all the more brilliantly that it was implicit that the road to Rome-Brussels lies through Damascus, Baghdad and Teheran.

Here is the vision: By honing its ‘strategic depth’ Turkey really is becoming the indispensable partner for the transatlantic alliance and in time an indispensable member for the EU. So my
question is less about sequencing and priorities and more about real and present, actual or potential, tensions and contradictions. As Alexander [the Great] demonstrated with great panache too - you can get stuck in Damascus, Baghdad and Teheran wherever your ship is heading!

In sum, we can hope that soon enough I will no longer hear when promoting EU membership for Turkey in Paris or Marseille, ‘But with Turkey we import a boundary with Iran, Iraq and Syria into the EU’ [expressed in horror], but rather, ‘With Turkey we import a boundary with Iran, Iraq and Syria into the EU!’ [expressed in jubilation].”

Joost Lagendijk (Sabancı University)

Lagendijk was the first to respond to Nicolaidis challenge by raising two issues: the dangers of the success of Turkey’s Doctrine of ‘strategic depth’ and the domestic limits on the depth of the doctrine abroad. Regarding the first concern, Lagendijk contended that if Davutoğlu is very successful in implementing his doctrine, it might make it harder for Turkey to enter the EU. As a strong player, with relative autonomy, Turkey would have to give up some of its autonomy when entering a union with other strong players with differing foreign policy agendas. “Would Turkey be willing to give up this autonomy? To no longer conduct its relations with its neighbours in the way that it wishes?” In order to join Lagendijk argued that Turkey would likely need to share a strong and coherent foreign policy with the EU. But this common policy is likely to constrict Turkey’s current policy.

Regarding the second issue, Lagendijk reiterated that the US and the EU are still concerned about Turkey’s unresolved internal issues. Turkey’s ability to solve its domestic conflicts is a more important hurdle to its accession than its foreign policy doctrine. In addition, there are domestic limits on what Davutoğlu can do, as the AKP, like any political party, needs to win the next elections. Thus Davutoğlu can only push so much with respect to sensitive issues like the protocols with Armenia.

Cengiz Aktar (Bahçeşehir University)

According to Aktar, Turkey’s new foreign policy is a policy in the making. Thus it does not necessarily have the means of its ambitions. For Aktar, it lacks a long-term view; it is sometimes contradictory, and clumsy. The doctrine is inclined towards mercantilism and real-politik.

In the post 9/11 world the West is having fundamental difficulty co-existing with Islam. As a result, the EU is too shy to deal with Turkey, despite its post 1989 ambitions to become a model and bring peace, prosperity and stability in its neighbourhood. Despite the ongoing alienation between Turkey and the EU, the former is seeking a destiny to become an actor, almost despite itself. Turkey is now acting as an avatar of EU's soft power in its neighbourhood.

Davutoğlu talks about the abolition of borders, the export of stability, and of freedoms. This is about Turkey who is taking advantage of its position and strength to export its soft power to broader regions.
Meltem Müftüler-Baç (Sabancı University)

Returning to history to answer Nicolaidis’ queries, Müftüler-Baç reminded the audience that in 1989 people believed that Turkey-EC relations were of no importance. After the Helsinki Summit, however, everyone started to pay attention to Turkish-EU relations. By 2010, however, the idea of Turkey in the EU has lost its glamour. For Müftüler-Baç, this may be in part due to the ups and downs of the accession process and partly due to the fact that the EU has failed to deliver on its promises.

Müftüler-Baç brought the debate back to the core issue, asking ‘What has shaped Turkey’s new doctrine?’ For her, a series of both domestic and international factors contributed to the current doctrine of ‘strategic depth.’ Domestically, the economic situation, Turkey’s internal politics and social struggles, and Turkey’s identity struggles influenced the new doctrine’s formation. Internationally, according to Müftüler-Baç the international configuration of power, increasing economic interdependence and a growing collective identity formation all set the stage for the doctrine’s birth.

When any one of these international or domestic factors changes, however, Turkey’s foreign policy might change in response. For example, one international factor is the international configuration of power at any given time. When the EU is a global actor on its own, then this will become an important factor influencing Turkish policy. But currently, due to internal division and a crisis of confidence, the EU is not sure where it is going.

Hasan Bülent Kahraman (Sabancı University)

Kahraman tackled Nicolaidis core questions by outlining three main periods in the making of Turkish foreign policy: the strategic period, the economic period, and finally, the EU period. Within the third period, Kahraman described key transitions including from Europeanisation to globalisation and from globalisation to regionalism. According to Kahraman, Europeanisation failed, globalisation transformed Turkey, and regionalism is rising throughout the world.

Turkey, he claimed, is part of this great transformation to regionalism. Regionalism is replacing globalisation and Turkey is becoming an actor in its region. In addition, the world is in a new cultural period. Islam is replacing Westernisation as a policy-making instrument. Discontinuity is replacing continuity. In this context Turkey is trying to create better relations. It is basing its actions on new concepts – concepts of re-territorialisation and re-connection. Turkey is now leading these transformations.

Response by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey)

Before opening the floor for Davutoğlu’s comments, the Chair summarised the questioned posed: Is Turkey acting as an avatar for the EU? And do Europeans know it? If the EU manages to form one common foreign policy would Turkey then be ready to follow it? Does Davutoğlu believe that EU membership would lead to an ‘un-deepening’ of Turkey’s neighbourhood relations? And finally, are there other alternative routes for Turkey to follow if the EU does not accept Turkey in due course?

In answering these questions, Davutoğlu chose to focus on two methodological issues: First, he explained that how a state perceives itself is more important than how it perceives others. Second, he promised to address the psychology of foreign policy as well as the process of policy-making.
In this new era of globalisation, we see crises as a reaction to the process of globalisation. For Davutoğlu, Turkey can contribute much to responding effectively to these global crises. The current crises need new intellectual discussions, new literature, and new approaches. “Torn countries [using Huntington’s term] contribute more to history than stable countries,” Davutoğlu asserted. “If you have questions [as a country], it means you have something to do. If you have crises, you have something to respond to. I feel the flow of the history. Therefore I can respond to the flow of the history.”

Regarding the psychology of foreign policy, Davutoğlu assured that Turkey is not being reactive but pro-active. No one asked Turkey to take these initiatives. The old Cold War framework of countries as either subjects or objects is over. As evidence, Davutoğlu contended that Turkey and the EU relations are not the relations of two static entities. Rather since the start of accession negotiations, the EU has changed and Turkey has changed.

Accordingly, Davutoğlu disagreed with Aktar that Turkey has become an avatar for the EU. Rather, “It has its own original, but ever transforming self.” Its values, and its three main principles of ‘strategic depth’, are compatible with the EU. For Davutoğlu, it is reductionist, Cold War logic to say Turkey must choose either the EU or the Middle East.

Regarding EU membership, the Foreign Minister disagreed that Turkey would be limited. Rather, he said, with Turkey’s accession, the character of the EU would change. “The EU must make a strategic choice looking to the future. Turkey has a vision for 2030, 2050 etc. What is the EU’s project? Does it want to be inclusive in the cultural sense? Does it want to be relevant in the political sense? Does it want to be competitive in economic sense?”

If so, then such a future will be a big challenge for the EU. The EU’s response to Turkey is a litmus test for how well it will meet these future challenges. Europe needs Turkey, for Turkey, with its expert knowledge of the broader region, can help the EU recognise its own strategic interests.

Davutoğlu’s final point addressed Turkey’s domestic restoration and its impact on foreign policy. He acknowledged that Turkey needs the EU for its democratic consolidation. Yet, in order to have this domestic restoration, Davutoğlu added that Turkey needs a new foreign policy paradigm. “If you do not eliminate the perception of threat in the minds of the people, you cannot have a freedom-oriented domestic politics…Zero problems with neighbours,” Davutoğlu explained, “is a message to my own people as well.‘ Only when Turkey is not worried for its own security can it focus on democratisation.”

In conclusion Davutoğlu declared: “Our European orientation will continue. Our role as a leading power in surrounding nations will continue. Our international partnerships will increase. We will work in all international fora and there will be a Turkish vision and approach in all issues. I think with our capacity we can do this.”

**Concluding Discussion**

The discussion opened with a query from a member of the Turkish Foreign Service on the role of individuals in forming Turkey’s foreign policy. Müftüler-Baç responded that one should not put too much weight on the role of individuals in a causative argument. The same questioner also asked what role the EU is expecting Turkey to play. Lagendijk responded that, most importantly, the EU is expecting Turkey to focus on Turkish domestic reforms, because the reforms expected of Turkey are domestic rather than foreign policy-related.
Secondly, Lagendijk continued, the EU expects Turkey to have no problems with its neighbours and to contribute to a developing EU policy. In fact, Turkey could use its EU regional power role strategically to convince French politicians of Turkey’s ability to help the EU play a more global role. Germany, on the other hand, would be happy to hear Davutoğlu say that Turkey has no ambition to be the second UK in the EU. It wants to hear Turkey say that it will be completely involved. In other words, different arguments play in different places. Finally, Lagendijk concluded, many Europeans would not want to hear Turkey say “We know everything better.”

Nicolaidis contributed that within the EU, actors are not aware of how Turkey’s new strategic role can serve the EU’s interests. Yet, because the Turkish debate overlaps with the essentialist angst of Europeans, Europeans perceive differences on foreign policy issues as more problematic than they really are.

The discussion then turned to Nathalie Tocci’s question on whether Turkey’s democratic consolidation is more important than its foreign policy efforts. In response, panellists grappled with whether Turkey’s domestic reforms might go astray without the overarching schema of the EU accession possibility. According to Kahraman, the question of whether or not Turkey can transform itself without outsiders’ pressure is a delicate one. The EU has played an important role in this context in that Turkey believes that the EU would include Turkey. Now Turkey believes its internal cultural values will contain the EU.

Aktar again challenged panellists on whether the process of Turkish domestic reform is sustainable without the EU dynamic. In Aktar’s own view, “The genies are out of the bottle in Turkey – blossoming. This is thanks to the EU reforms.” Externally pressured reforms, however, need an internal recipient. Might Turkey be able to open another country the way the EU opened Turkey Aktar posited, such as Syria? Turkey’s language of democracy, peace, and stability is a new language for Turkey. It is only just learning as it goes. The response from the EU, Aktar added, is unfortunately negative. The EU does not understand the importance of its own soft power.

Davutoğlu entered the debate concurring that there is a relation between democratic consolidation and the EU process. Whatever is happening in Europe has always been important to Turkey, for, according to Davutoğlu, whatever happens in Europe is also the destiny of Turkey. Thus Turkey has always tried to adapt to the developments in Europe: “The EU is very helpful because it is the backbone for our transformation, because we need [the EU].” The future of the EU with Turkey, Davutoğlu continued, will be one with no categories of civilisations but rather a hybridity of civilisations. The EU without Turkey, however, will be an inward-looking, less globalised, less competitive Europe.

In Davutoğlu’s opinion, Turkey has to prepare for both possibilities. “We cannot leave our destiny in the hands of others…The critical term here is inclusiveness; we have to be inclusive because we are everyone – we are the Caucasus, we are the Balkans, we are the Middle East, and we are Europe.”

To conclude the final discussion, Nicolaidis left the audience with a final image: “From this discussion we can draw a metaphor, that there are ties that do not constrict us anymore but ties that bind us. There are ties that bind Turkey with the EU, and with all of us.” Turkey, as Bosphorus ship, is bound to the ships of the world. These ships are being pulled in common and conflicting directions.
From left to right: Cengiz Aktar, Meltem Müftüler-Baç, Ahmet Davutoglu, Joost Lagendijk, Hasan Bülent Kahraman, Kalypso Nicolaidis
# PARTICIPANTS

## Speakers and Chairs

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<td>Alexander Iskandaryan</td>
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<td>Author and Journalist, Istanbul</td>
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<td>Ayşe Kadioğlu</td>
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<td>Mehmet Karlı</td>
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<td>Sir David Logan</td>
<td>Former British Ambassador to Turkey</td>
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<td>Margaret Macmillan</td>
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<td>The Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), Ankara</td>
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<td>Dimitris Sotiropoulos</td>
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<td>Giorgi Tarkhan Mouravi</td>
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## Attendees

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<th>Ceren Ak</th>
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<td>Ali Gumusay</td>
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<td>Fakhreddin Gurbanov</td>
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<td>Fatih Hassoylu</td>
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<td>Antigone Heraclidou</td>
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<td>Savas Kayaalp</td>
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CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Friday, April 30, 2010

Introductory Remarks
Conference convenors and Margaret MacMillan, Warden, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford

Session 1. Turkey’s changing place in the world
Chair: Margaret Macmillan (Warden, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford)
- Baskın Oran (Ankara University)
  *Turkey and the West in historical perspective*
- Hakan Erdem (Sabancı University)
  *Continuity/rupture in late Ottoman to Turkish foreign policy*

Session 2. Making sense of “Strategic depth”
Chair: Şevket Pamuk (London School of Economics)
- Bülent Aras (Istanbul Technical University/University of Oxford)
  *What is the 'strategic depth doctrine'?*
- Ömer Taşpınar (Brookings Institute)
  *US and the new Turkish policy*
- Raoul Motika (Turkey Europe Centre, Universität Hamburg)
  *Strategic depth and Europeanisation of Turkish foreign policy*
- Özgür Mumcu (Galatasaray University)
  *“Strategic depth”: Much ado about nothing*

Session 3. Impact of domestic developments on Turkish foreign policy
Chair: Gökhan Yücel (University of Oxford)
- Fuat Keyman (Koç University)
  *Proactivism in Turkish foreign policy: The global-local nexus*
- Ayşe Kadıoğlu (Sabancı Fellow at Oxford)
  *Between reform and survival: The innovative choreography of Turkey’s Justice and Development Party*
- Nora Fisher Onar (Başçeşehr University)
  *‘Democratic Depth’: The missing ingredient in Turkey’s domestic/foreign policy nexus?*
- Gareth Jenkins (Author-Journalist)
  *The shifting compass: Civil-military relations, political Islam and Turkish foreign policy*

Saturday, May 1, 2010

Session 4. Beyond high politics: New actors and networks
Chair: Bahri Yılmaz (Sabancı University)
Şahin Alpay (Bahçeşehir University)
*Fait-based Fethullah Gülen social movement and its impact on Turkey’s international relations*

Serhat Güvenç (Bilgi University)
*Think-Tanks: New faces and voices in Turkish foreign policy?*

Kerem Öktem (University of Oxford)
*Projecting power? Turkish TV series and their external effects*

Mehmet Karlı (University of Oxford/Galatasaray University)
*A reality check for Turkey’s economic depth*

Session 5. Significant regional relations I: Russia and the Caucasus
Chair: **John Beyer** (University of Oxford)

Aybars Görgülü (Sabancı University)
*Turkey-Armenia Relations: Moving from vicious to virtuous?*

Giorgi Tarkhan Mouravi (Institute for Policy Studies, Tbilisi)
*Paradoxes and complexities of Turkish-Georgian relations*

Alexander Iskandaryan (Caucasus Institute, Yerevan)
*Relations in the Caucasus: Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan*

Session 6. Discussion on Turkey’s International Security Commitments: The Continuing Relevance of NATO
Chair: **Büllent Aras** (Istanbul Technical University/University of Oxford)

Jamie Patrick Shea (NATO)
*NATO and Turkey*

Sir David Logan (Former British Ambassador to Turkey)
*Turkey’s international security commitments: the continuing relevance of NATO*

Session 7. Significant regional relations II: The Middle East
Chair: **Sabri Sayar** (Sabancı University)

Reem Abou-El-Fadl (University Oxford)
*Arab perceptions of contemporary Turkish foreign policy: Cautious engagement and the question of independence*

Karabekir Akkoyunlu (LSE)
*Turkey’s Iranian conundrum: A delicate balancing act*

Soli Özel (Bilgi University)
*Turkey-Israel relations*

Taha Özhan (SETA, Ankara)
*International dimensions of the Kurdish problem*

Keynote Lecture

**H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey
Sunday, May 2, 2010

Session 8. Significant regional relations III: South East Europe

Chair: Dimitris Sotiropoulos (University of Oxford)

Nathalie Tocci (German Marshall Fund)
Why Cyprus remains critical to Turkey and the European Union

Othon Anastasakis (University of Oxford)
Turkey in South East Europe: Perceptions and misperceptions of an ambitious regional policy

Max Watson (University of Oxford)
Turkey and Southeast Europe: Regional links at a tipping point?

İbrahim Arınç (Durham University)
Energy Politics in South East Europe

Conclusion: Roundtable Discussion: Turkey, Europe and beyond: Tensions and cooperation in overlapping neighbourhoods

Chair: Kalypso Nicolaidis (University of Oxford)

H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey

Joost Lagendijk (Sabancı University)

Cengiz Aktar (Bahçeşehir University)

Meltem Müftüler-Baç (Sabancı University)

Hasan Bülent Kahraman (Sabancı University)

Group photograph taken in the grounds of St Antony’s College
These books solely express the views of their authors.
About SEESOX

South East European Studies at Oxford (SEESOX) is part of the European Studies Centre at St Antony's College, Oxford. It focuses on the interdisciplinary study of the politics, economics and societies of South East Europe, and the region's interaction with Europe. Drawing on the academic excellence of the University of Oxford and an international network of associates, it conducts academic and policy relevant research on the multifaceted transformations in the region and on the historical and intellectual influences which have shaped perceptions and actions in this part of the world. In Oxford's best tradition, the SEESOX team is committed to understanding the present through the longue durée and reflecting on the future through high quality scholarship.

Visit our website at www.sant.ox.ac.uk/seesox
Turkey’s Foreign Policy in a Changing World

In the last decade, Turkey’s foreign policy has undergone profound changes. Unsettled by the end of the Cold War and in search of a new role in the emerging world order, Turkey’s foreign policy community has recently moved towards a proactive engagement with its diverse neighbourhood. The SEESOX-Sabanci conference sought to examine Turkey’s new engagement with its neighbourhood from an interdisciplinary angle, highlighting the larger structural forces that led to Turkey’s recent transformation, the various dimensions of Turkey’s regional and international presence, as well as the role of new actors in the preparation and implementation of foreign policy.