Abstract

Turkey, though founded after an Independence War, has pursued a peaceful foreign policy starting from the early years of the Republic. Following the motto of the founding leader Kemal Ataturk, “Peace at home, peace in the world”, she has implemented a peaceful foreign policy based on status quo between the two world wars and succeeded to exclude herself from the World War II, and eventually declared war to Germany and Japan only in order to become a founding member of the United Nations, which asserted to build up a peaceful world. She has sought for a membership in the European Union which is accepted as a kind of Kantian peace project for many years. Today, she is implementing a more assertive foreign policy and assuming an active peace-maker role in the conflict regions. She is executing mediator roles while taking a remarkable mission in the Alliance of Civilizations within the UN system. Some claim that she has been pursuing to construct a new Pax-Ottomana. Yet she sometimes falls short as a peace-maker. This paper will attempt to discuss the peace notion in Turkish foreign policy and analyze the promises and pitfalls of Turkey as a peace-maker.

* The author would like to thank Istanbul University Scientific Research Projects for funding the presentation of this paper at ISA’s conference with the project code BEK-20190.
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Keywords: Turkey, peace, diplomacy, foreign policy, Middle East

Introduction

“Peace” has always been a significant theme in Turkish foreign policy since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. She executed a peaceful foreign policy, rather than a revisionist one, despite some minor frictions. She pursued a balance policy during the WWII and excluded herself from the war. She then became a member of the Western bloc within the Cold War era and joined NATO. In the 2000s, she has begun to implement a new foreign policy while insisting on the emphasis of “peace”, regarding that she assumes peace-maker roles in different conflicts. She presents herself as a great contributor to global peace, harmony and cooperation. She has compassed some impressive work, yet especially in the recent years she is often criticized that she falls short to fulfill the ambitious foreign policy goals. This paper will try to analyze the “peace” theme in Turkish foreign policy historically and investigate how “peace” is employed in contemporary Turkish foreign policy.

“Peace” in Turkish Foreign Policy after the Independence War

Turkey is an exceptional country in the middle of Eastern and Western civilizations in terms of not only geography, but also culture and identity. The country is perceived as a Middle East country which belongs to the Eastern civilization by some, yet Turkey has a long modernization history starting from the late Ottoman Empire years and has turned her face towards the West since the 19th century. She is a unique country which combined Islam and democracy together.
“Peace”, which is mostly used to describe the absence of militarized and violent conflict, has always been a significant theme in Turkish foreign policy, though it is hard to make a definition of peace. In general terms, Turkey has always pursued to establish peaceful relations with other states. “Peace” has been a powerful discourse and a reference point in foreign policy. The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923 after an independence war following up the World War I. Although she combated against the Allied Powers of the WWI in the independence war, she made the choice of building good and peaceful relations with them and become a supporter of the status quo in the interwar period. She peacefully solved the remaining issues of Lausanne Treaty, she even made some concessions in order to prevent future conflicts. As Oran addresses, pursuing the status quo policy and Westernization has been the two main principles of Turkish foreign policy.¹

After the Lausanne Peace Treaty, Turkey has adapted a peaceful foreign policy, based on the motto of Kemal Ataturk, “peace at home, peace in the world”. As Sander points out, implementing such kind of a policy steadily, has provided Turkey a positive international status. History shows us that this is a very rare case after a liberation or independence war.² Unlike the revisionist countries, she pursued a peaceful foreign policy in the interwar period. Turkey executed a balance policy during the WWII. It was kind of a success that she refrained to go to the war. She continued commercial relations with the both sides of the conflict. The war was too close to come to an end as Turkey eventually declared war to Germany and Japan. It was a move

to get the opportunity of participating San Francisco Conference where the United Nations was established.³

After the end of the war, in the re-constructing process of Europe, Turkey not only became a member of the United Nations (UN), which was established in order to build up a peaceful world; but also joined the Council of Europe, the intergovernmental organization which was founded with the aim of promoting human rights, rule of law and democracy in 1949.

In the aftermath of the WWII, Turkey’s sending troops to Korean war in the pursuit of establishing peace needs to be mentioned. On 3 November 1950, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 377 A (V), with the title “Uniting for Peace”. The aim of the adoption of this resolution was to protect the Republic of Korea from the aggression initiated against her by military forces from North Korea. At the initial stage of this armed conflict, in June 1950, the Security Council recommended the Members of the United Nations to “furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area” (resolution 83 (1950) of 27 June 1950). The resolution could only be passed since the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), at that time, boycotted the meetings of the Security Council in order to provide the allocation of the permanent Chinese seat to the communist Government in Beijing.⁴ Upon UN’s decision of sending troops to Korea, Turkey sent 4500 troops at first, later the number of the Turkish troops exceeded over 6000. It should be noted that this move was seen as an opportunity to become a NATO (North Atlantic

Treaty Organization) member. Turkey was the second country after United States who sent the highest number of troops. It was significant since it was the first time Turkey involved in a military operation out of Misak-ı Milli borders which she refrains herself from the founding of the Republic.\(^5\)

In 1959, Turkey applied for partnership to the European Economic Community, the predecessor of the European Union (EU). In 1987, Turkey applied for membership to the European Community. Turkey- EU relations has a long history and Turkey has still sought for membership to the Union, which represents a kind of Kantian peace project and aimed to be a part of the European integration.

It is also noteworthy to address that Turkey dubs the military intervention to Cyprus\(^7\) that started on 20 July 1974 as the “Cyprus Peace Operation”.\(^8\) This is the first time that Turkey, after sending troops to Korea, sent troops outside of her borders.\(^9\) As it is called as “Cyprus Peace Operation”, it can be argued that Turkey regarded this intervention as a peace-keeping operation.

\(^5\) Misak-ı Milli (National Oath) is the manifestation of the decisions made by the last Ottoman Parliament on 28 January 1920. With the National Oath, it was declared to the world that the territories which were not occupied by the Allies at that time and inhabited by a Turkish majority were the homeland of the Turkish nation. It was foreseen that the country must be free and independent; all political, financial and judicial restrictions must be removed. The future of the territories inhabited by Arab majorities would be determined by referendum. The status of Kars, Ardahan, Batum and Western Thrace would be determined by referendum as well. Toktamuş Ateş, Türk Devrim Tarihi, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayımları, 2004, 4. Baskı, p. 108-109.


\(^7\) There was a violent ongoing conflict based on ethnic dispute between the Turks and Rums in the island. The operation took place in order to secure the Turks following the Cypriot coup d’état. It should be noted that the intervention was dubbed as the “Turkish invasion” by some international media, especially by the Greek side. The Cyprus issue has been a hot issue for Turkish foreign policy for very long time.


After the end of the Cold War, Turkey has assumed several peace-keeping operations in various regions. She has taken part in the peace-keeping operations in different countries like Haiti, South Sudan, Liberia, Kosovo, East Timor, Congo, Afghanistan, Ivory Coasts, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan.10

“Peace” in Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy

Turkey has been ruled by the Justice and Development Party for the fourth time since 2002, and it is possible to say that there are remarkable changes in Turkish foreign policy within these fourteen years. First of all, it can be argued that a new diplomatic style, a more dynamic and assertive foreign policy has been adopted. Turkish Prime Minister on-duty now, Ahmet Davutoglu, who before served as the advisor of the former Prime Minister Erdogan and as the Foreign Affairs Minister; and the President Erdogan are the two architects of this foreign policy. Davutoglu has introduced Turkey some new principles like visionary approach, zero-problems with neighbors, rhythmic diplomacy, proactive and pre-emptive peace diplomacy, security-democracy balance and soft power.11 It is obvious that, the narrative of these principles enable Turkey not only to shape a systematic foreign policy, but also to draw an identity of a global peace-maker.

Today, Turkey presents herself as a great contributor to global peace, harmony and cooperation. As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Council of Europe, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe (OSCE), several different organizations and a candidate of the European Union (EU), she has been pursuing to cooperate with the rest of the world and reach a peaceful international system. With the new dynamic, multidimensional, assertive foreign policy embracing different parts of the world, Turkey offers many promises for global cooperation and peace.

Starting from the early years, even before the Arab Spring, JDP has converted its attention to the Middle East region including Africa; which was once a part of the Ottoman Empire. Adopting the historical and cultural legacy of the Ottoman Empire, JDP has evaluated the Middle East as Turkey’s main area of influence. This stance has raised the axis shift and Neo-Ottomanism debates around the world. On the other hand, Turkey has also been subject to role-model debates considering if Turkey’s conservative Muslim party rule could be a successful role-model for the other Muslim Middle East countries.

According to Erhan, Davutoglu persuades the JDP leadership that Turkey has the capability to become a global power. To become a global power, she should first become a regional superpower. Davutoglu foresees that Turkey’s soft power instruments in her foreign policy towards neighboring regions, if efficiently used, would contribute her turning into a global actor. The Middle East, with its economic and cultural affiliation and geographic closeness to Turkey, is the major region to increase Turkey’s activism. In Davutoglu’s vision, considering Turkey as the most important country in terms of economy, military power and culture in a vast area
extending from central Europe to China; Turkey can establish an “order” in her vicinity.\textsuperscript{12} In other words, Turkey is supposed to build up peace within her near region.

“Peace” is intensively stressed as a reference in the “2023 Vision”, which refers to the goals list in many different areas by the centennial of the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The 2023 Vision is a kind of party manifesto which sets forth the ideals in areas such as foreign policy, economy, democratization, justice, science and technology, regional development, education, energy, customs and trade, national security, transportation and communication, etc. In JDP’s foreign policy vision, it is declared that JDP pursues a noble ideal of making Turkey a global key player of global politics and a major actor for regional peace and stability.\textsuperscript{13} JDP argues that Turkey is now seen as a source of inspiration from Morocco to Afghanistan and she has become a major player that contributes to peace and stability in her region and the global order.\textsuperscript{14} In the party’s vision, it is declared that Turkey is not party to any conflicts in her region; rather, she is sought after for contribution, vision and mediation. JDP promotes that with her democratic standards and economic development, Turkey has become an icon of regional peace and stability.\textsuperscript{15}

Turkey has assumed several mediator roles within her region in recent years. She has striven to bring internal reconciliation in Iraq, Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan, while constituting a trilateral cooperation mechanism with Afghanistan and Pakistan to ensure security and peace in

\textsuperscript{13} AK Parti, Political Vision of Ak Parti 2023, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 59.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, p. 57.
Afghanistan. She has sought for permanent peace and stability in Bosnia-Herzegovina, starting two different trilateral cooperation processes with Serbia and Croatia. She has taken part in the resolution process between the Government of Somalia and conflicting parties. She also played role for the peaceful resolution of Iran’s nuclear program issue through dialogue, at last till a few years ago while she had friendly relations with Iran.

The Alliance of Civilizations, the remarkable initiative in the area of interreligious and cross-cultural dialogue, is an important constitution in the pursuit of regional and global peace. It was established upon the offer of Zapatero, The Prime Minister of Spain in 2005 and was launched by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey. It was later adopted by the Secretary General of the United Nations and became a UN initiative. The Alliance attempts to build a broad coalition to cultivate cross-cultural tolerance and understanding in a world full of mutual distrust, fear and polarization particularly between the Islamic world and the West. The initiative aims to develop a political will to counter stereotypes, prejudices and misunderstandings among people and between groups with different religious and cultural identities. Under the UN structure, a Group of Friends was established in order to foster the understanding of international ownership of the Alliance. Today, it consists of more than 140 members including countries and international organizations. Turkey hosted not only the Second Annual Forum in 2009 but also the Alliance of Civilizations Partners Forum under the Replenishment Mechanism in 2012.

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In September 2010, Turkey and Finland initiated the “Mediation for Peace” initiative in New York under the auspices of the UN. This initiative grounds on the principles of coordination and complementarity for the success of a mediation process with the aim of elevating the significance of mediation in preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution and, consequently, triggering additional resources for mediation efforts. The initiative also aspires to widen the preventive diplomacy/mediation capacities of the UN, regional organizations and individual countries. The UN General Assembly adopted by consensus on 22 June 2010 the resolution (A/65/283) in line with these principles and objectives of the initiative. It should be stressed that it is the first resolution adopted by the UN regarding mediation. The initiative has attracted remarkable interest and the members of the “Friends of Mediation Group” have reached the number of 46 including 38 countries and 8 major regional and international organizations.18

Turkey’s soft power and public diplomacy, especially Turkey’s remarkable humanitarian diplomacy efforts should be regarded in this context. In parallel with the new enthusiastic foreign policy, she has recognized the importance of public diplomacy to extend her soft power capabilities in the new international climate and constructed a public diplomacy rhetoric based on values like conscience, brotherhood and Muslim identity. As one of the biggest donor states in the world in terms of foreign aid19, Turkey manages to exert her influence on Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Balkans and pursues to enhance her international prestige and image. She aspires to win the hearts and minds of people of these regions through humanitarian or development aids and attempts to establish long-term peaceful relations.

It is also significant to underline that the Turkish parliament rejected U.S. troop proposal in the Iraq war. The parliament failed to pass a proposal to let more than 60,000 U.S. troops to operate from bases and ports in the war with Iraq. The proposal had not much popular support, either. This case represents an example of the negative attitude of the parliament and Turkish people about involving in war.

The Shortfalls of Turkey as a Peace-Maker
Lately, it is a common comment that Davutoglu’s zero-problems with neighbors policy has collapsed. It is discussable if it’s collapsed because of wrong policies or it was just because of the international conjuncture, yet Turkey now has some issues with her neighboring countries and faces new challenges. This means a significant erosion for Turkey’s peace-building efforts. We observe deterioration of relations with Egypt, Israel, Syria, Iraq, Iran and lately Russia. While the developments in the regional politics challenge Turkey’s zero-problems with neighbors policy and there is an increasing debate on Turkey’s loneliness; Ibrahim Kalın, Erdogan’s Advisor on Foreign Policy, now says Turkey implements “precious loneliness” since she is executing a value-based policy, not one based on interests. Kalın notes he uses the phrase “precious loneliness” as a way to express Turkey’s “honorable stance” against coups and slaughters, as opposed to the world’s ignorance of the conflicts in Egypt and Syria.

Especially the Syrian war has affected Turkey in terms of not only the tragic refugee crisis and thus the ruin of social security within the country, but also the damage in national security. With

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the tragic refugee flow, the Syria issue has been turning to an internal issue for Turkey rather than a matter of foreign policy. Moreover, Turkey’s different cities, including the capital Ankara and the biggest city Istanbul, have been the target of terrorist attacks several times recently.

One can argue that one of the main challenges of Turkey as a peace-maker is the problematic of the domestic peace within the country. The reconciliation process of the Kurdish problem falls down and cease-arm between the Turkish government and PKK (the Kurdistan Worker’s Party) breaks off. The Kurdish problem, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Syria) problem, the crises occurred with the great refugee flow all connected and challenge Turkey.

Another obvious issue is the problems with Russia. Till short time ago, Turkey used to have good relations with Russia, like lifting the visa requirements. In late 2015, when a Turkish aircraft shot down a Russian jet, relations got deteriorated. The hostility stems from different policies on Syria. Two sides started to put economic sanctions towards each other. Russia accused Turkey even for buying oil from ISIS and supporting the terrorist organization.22 Besides, Moscow also blamed Ankara for letting fighters to cross the border into Syria to join ISIS and groups affiliated with al-Qaeda, while allowing wounded jihadist fighters to return to Turkey as well. As the Financial Times reports, tension between the two countries has reached a new peak as they step up military action in Syria in support of opposing sides, coming closer to direct confrontation in Syria’s increasingly internationalized war.23

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Conclusion

“Peace” has always been a reference point in Turkish foreign policy since the foundation of the Republic. She has pursued a peaceful foreign policy starting from the early Republic and the founder of Turkey, Kemal Ataturk’s saying “Peace at home, peace in the world” has been the motto that Turkish foreign policy has been based on. With JDP on power, while the stress on “peace” lasts, it refers to a new understanding of peace. JDP puts emphasis on “peace” while attempting to construct and shape a world where Turkey assumes a more active, regional leader role. She launches initiatives for constructing peace, she assumes mediator roles. Yet, there are some challenges that Turkey faces today. This is a rough time for Turkey since there is turmoil in her southern border, and some unrest within the country as well, especially in the south-eastern region. It can be suggested that Turkey has ambitious goals, yet the international political conjuncture puts some restrains that weaken her capabilities. On one hand the reconciliation process with the Kurdish citizens collapsed and cease-arm ended; while there are ongoing crises with the neighbors on the other. The Arab Spring and Syrian war have brought new problems, new threats to the political agenda. So, it is now unfortunately hard to draw an optimistic, peaceful picture within the region for the near future. Yet, one can argue, despite all the shortcomings, that the new threats especially in the Middle East have raised the importance of Turkey as an ally or as a partner since she stands as a unique, democratic, stable country in such a region full of turmoil and disorder.
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